

The Society for the Study of Southern Literature



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NEWSLETTER

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From the Editor:

Summer is now upon us, the heat and humidity rolling in. I love it. I mean, how you could be interested in Southern literature and culture and not appreciate one of the region's defining characteristics? Climate matters. I lived in Finland for a year. Believe me, climate matters. Jay Watson has just finished a year in Finland, and I'd bet he'd back me up on this. Right, Jay?

This issue marks year two from Fayetteville, and for now at least it looks like the newsletter will stay here. (I don't mean to hog the editorship; if someone else is dying for this position, let me know.) Eventually, once some financial and technical matters can be ironed out, we'd like to move to an electronic edition and an up-to-date homepage. But we're still looking for funding, and, as no one needs telling, these are lean times, particularly at state schools. I'm confident, however, that we'll be up and running in the near future.

I'm already looking forward to next year's conference, and particularly to hearing the headliners Charles Burnett, Bill Ferris (hey, Bill, no renditions of "You Are My Sunshine," please), and Lee Smith. The Tar Heels throw good parties, I mean conferences. Anyway, I hope as many of you as possible will be able to attend. Bill Andrews has a good bit to say about the theme of the conference in his SSSL President's message on page two. It's gonna be good.

Thanks go out to this year's assistant editors, Lori Bailey and Renée Farmer, who have done superb jobs. You'll see the work of the new assistant editors, Christopher Howland and Betsy Wood, come fall. Enjoy your summer.

Bob Brinkmeyer

A Message from the SSSL President:

In the midst of the 101 things we find ourselves doing as we sprint to finish the semester, I send everyone in the SSSL a somewhat breathless hello. Although I've been president of the Society since the first of this year, this is my first opportunity to speak to you in this new capacity and to thank you for the support you've given to the activities of the Society. In particular, I want to express gratitude, on behalf of myself as well as the Society, to the following colleagues, who were willing to stand for election to our Executive Council and who were elected earlier this year. The four new members of the council are: Ed Piacentino (High Point College); Riché Richardson (University of California-Davis), Judith Sensibar (Arizona State University), and Jon Smith (Mississippi State University). They will serve on the council until 2005.

The main task of the president of the SSSL, I've learned, is to coordinate the planning and execution of the society's biannual conference. Here's where we are thus far regarding the 2004 SSSL conference. It's going to be held in Chapel Hill the last weekend in March, from the 26th to the 28th. Three outstanding people—Charles Burnett, Bill Ferris, and Lee Smith—have agreed to be plenary speakers at the conference. Burnett, a Mississippi native and long-time resident of Los Angeles, is one of the most critically acclaimed independent film makers in the United States. He is best known for his 1990 film, *To Sleep with Anger*, starring Danny Glover, which won numerous awards, including the National Society of Film Critics award for best screenplay of 1990. Ferris, also a Mississippi native and currently a member of the UNC-Chapel Hill faculty, has made major contributions to the interdisciplinary study of the South, exemplified most notably in the monumental *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, which Bill co-edited with Charles Reagan Wilson in 1989. Lee Smith, whose roots in southwestern Virginia have given contemporary southern fiction some of its most lively and enduring characters, is, as every reader of this column already knows, one of the most admired and most enjoyed novelists on the literary scene today. Her most recent novel, *The Last Girls* (2002), is a New York Times bestseller.

The theme of the conference is *Place, Grace, and Race in Southern Literature*. Although papers are welcome on any one of these three pivotal subjects in southern literature, past and present, investigations of the intersections of two or three of these subjects are especially solicited. "Place" can mean a specific locality or region, whether southern or non-southern, or an imagined variant of a locality or region. "Grace" may be interpreted in a specifically religious or spiritual sense, or in a more metaphorical fashion. "Race" may pertain to peoples typically identified by color or national heritage (African Americans, European Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, etc.) or to peoples identified typically by ethnicity (Cajun, Creole, Jew, Irish, etc.) or both. Send inquiries or proposals to me: wandrews@unc.edu. If you're interested in organizing a session for the conference, please let me know. I'm especially interested in papers and sessions concerned with pedagogy, film, and interdisciplinary approaches to southern culture and literature.

Besides putting on the conference, I also want to find a way to revive and maintain the SSSL's web site <<http://www-dept.usm.edu/~soq/sssl.html>> in a fashion that would be timely and useful to our members and to those beyond our ranks who read, study, and teach southern literature. If you have suggestions about what the web site ought to be and do, and particularly if you have expertise and willingness to help develop and maintain the site, please let me know.

William Andrews

UPCOMING EVENTS & CALLS FOR PAPERS

Southern Women Writers Conference

Date: October 16-18, 2003

Location: Berry College, Mt. Berry, Georgia

Theme: "Self-Locations / Dislocations"

Deadline for Abstracts: July 1, 2003

Web Site: <http://www.berry.edu/swwc2003/>

Submissions may be sent via email as attachments in MS Word format or by regular mail to: Southern Women Writers Conference, Berry College, PO Box 490350, Mt. Berry, GA 30149.

Critical and creative submissions invited that explore the full range of approaches to self-location and dislocation used by women in and of the South, including but not limited to:

- Fiction, poetry, and memoir by canonical and non-canonical writers
- Non-discursive works (film, photography, performance art, etc.)
- Works by non-native southerners set outside the traditional boundaries of the South
- Works set in distinctive sub-regions of the South (Appalachia, Sea Islands, Acadiana, etc.)
- Works by women who have been marginalized by race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, etc.

Critical Submissions: Please send 300-word abstracts or completed papers that can be read aloud in twenty minutes. If submitting a proposal for a panel, please include the names of participants and abstracts for individual papers.

Creative Submissions: Please submit creative work (poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction) appropriate to the conference's thematic focus, for a twenty-minute reading. Authors of creative work should be women who meet at least one of the following criteria: were born in or raised in the South; currently reside in the South; write about the South.

Featured Speakers: Dorothy Allison, Marilou Awiakta, Kelly Cherry, Rosemary Daniel, Frances Smith Foster, Faye Gibbons, Lorraine Lopez, Tayari Jones, Karen McElmurray, Sandra Meek, Carlyle Poteat, Janisse Ray, Melanie Sumner, Helen Taylor, Natasha Tretheway, and D. C. Wright. Singer-songwriter Iris DeMent will perform.

For more information, email co-chairs Dr. Carrie Baker and Dr. Jim Watkins through the Web site (see above) or call Susan Burr, secretary of English, Rhetoric, and Writing, at 706 368-6995.

The **School of English at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece**, in cooperation with the **Southern Studies Forum of the European Association for American Studies** will hold an international conference on "Southern Ethnicities" in Thessaloniki on **October 16-19, 2003**. For more information contact:

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South Atlantic Modern Language Association (SAMLA)

Date: November 14-16, 2003

Location: Atlanta, Georgia

Topic: Subversion in the Fiction of Lee Smith

Deadline for Abstracts: April 25, 2003

Chair: Dr. George Hovis (george.hovis@murraystate.edu)

This panel will explore varieties of subversion in the work of Lee Smith, which might include those related to Appalachian identity, southern identity, sexuality, religion, women's education, consumer culture, class, gender, race, issues related to aging, or other aspects of Smith's fiction that unsettle or overturn conventional notions. Please send abstracts to Dr. George Hovis (george.hovis@murraystate.edu) by April 25, 2003. Questions, call 270 762-4723.

In recognition of Lee Smith's election as the Honorary Member of SAMLA for 2003 and her participation in the 2003 Convention.

In Memory of Richard S. Kennedy

1920-2002

Richard S. Kennedy served as president of SSSL in 1989-1990. A professor of American literature at Temple University at the time of his election to that office, he had previously taught at Rochester University and Wichita State University following his graduation from Harvard, where he launched his study of and editorial work on Thomas Wolfe. His critical examination of Wolfe's work resulted in *The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe*. His editorial efforts on Wolfe's behalf included an edition of *Welcome to Our City* and *The Notebooks of Thomas Wolfe*, co-edited with the late Paschal Reeves. His tenure as an officer of SSSL led to special sessions on the literature of New Orleans and to the publication of *Literary New Orleans in the Modern World* and *Literary New Orleans: Essays and Meditations*. Kennedy's leadership in prompting the organization to begin holding biennial gatherings away from the customary meetings at MLA and SAMLA helped to create a more closely bonded group and added spice and flavor to programs.

Besides his focus on Southern writers, Kennedy did major work on E. E. Cummings, including a biography, *Dreams in the Mirror*. At the time of his death he was pushing towards completing a biography of Robert Browning.

John L. Idol, Jr.

Tributes:

He was my teacher. He was my mentor. He was my friend. Richard Kenedy came into my life in an enchanted fashion: I needed a three-credit course on Wednesday afternoons so that my husband could drive me to Temple as I was too scared to drive there myself, and my four-year-old son was in daycare, so that I was able during this time frame to go to class and be back before he arrived home. So I took this course after nine years away from school and discovered not only Thomas Wolfe and Aline Bernstein—but my own angel. And Richard was my angel for the rest of his life.

No one has supported me with such fervor. No one has believed in my talents more than he. No one was a greater teacher. I will love and miss him to the end of my days.

Suzanne Stutman
Pennsylvania State University

American literature was graced by having Richard Kennedy as a scholar and teacher. Dick's special interests were Thomas Wolfe and E. E. Cummings, an indication of the breadth of his tastes. No other Wolfe scholars that I know of were addicted to Cummings. Both writers were modernist neo-romantics, one with a fictive world on a large scale, the other, on a small scale. When he told me of his interests, I wondered: An appreciation of Wolfe and Cummings—is it possible? Then I read Dick's work and knew it was. The most indelible memories I have of Kennedy come from the time when we literally "ran SSSL," when

I was president and he vice-president, and then he was president and I, past president. I thought I was an idea man, and Dick knew he was. At the executive committee meetings when someone called “Dick” the two of us answered. SSSL was soon awash in ideas, an annual meeting at SAMLA, every two years at a campus, promotion of the Holman Award, and that remarkable New Orleans meeting, where both of us shepherded the appearance of David Herbert Donald. We discovered that I had made transportation arrangements for Donald and so had Dick. I believe he commented, “Can’t you do anything right?” Actually, we recognized that we got a good many things right. When he became president, he complimented me: “You have been good for SSSL.” I hope so. I am sure of this: Dick Kennedy was good for many things, for SSSL, for Wolfe, for Cummings, for Temple University and for his many friends of whom I was fortunate to have been one.

Richard J. Calhoun
Alumni Professor Emeritus
Clemson University

Dick Kennedy: what a gentleman. I remember how very courteous and welcoming he was to me when I first joined the Thomas Wolfe Society, when the meeting was held for the first time at Harvard. His shepherding of scholars young and old was a trademark of his; and I suspect many like myself continued their membership in the Society because of Dick’s influence and kindness. I was particularly grateful to him because he had received sorry treatment by my father, the then-executor of the Wolfe estate, who had refused Dick, the young graduate student, early access to the Wolfe files at Houghton. My father set back Dick’s career with Wolfe, but fortunately not for long. Knowing that history between Kennedy and Edward Aswell, I had occasion a year later to apologize on behalf of my father

to Dick. We were walking together across Brooklyn Bridge in another of the famous Wolfe Society outings when I brought the subject up. He was witty and wry in his remembrance to me, just as he was in his talk on the subject at another of the Society meetings. Dick Kennedy, you were the best: a scholar, a weaver of words, and a consummate gentleman.

Mary Aswell Doll
Savannah College of Art and Design

Elizabeth Nowell (my mother) met Dick Kennedy when he was a graduate student at Harvard and she was digging through the Thomas Wolfe materials at Houghton Library. She fell in love with him and his beautiful wife, Ella, and later his daughter (her namesake) Liddy. There are ten years’ worth of letters between Nowell and Kennedy, many about Wolfe, many others about more personal things, like the best supportive garments for Ella during her first pregnancy or the antics of Nowell’s mother, the aptly named “Gaga.”

I too fell in love with Dick, first when I was a child and again in 1982 when he coaxed me into attending a Thomas Wolfe Society meeting. Since then I have been the fortunate recipient of his knowledge of Wolfe and others and his gentle, generous, wonderful affection. He is one of the people who will dwell in my heart forever. (And though such a statement sounds stupidly corny, I think that it is true.)

Clara Stites
Dartmouth, Massachusetts

SELECTED RECENT SCHOLARSHIP IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE

African American Review

Chappell, David. "The Civil Rights Movement as a Religious Revival." 36.4 (2002): 581-96.

American Literary History

Kodat, Catherine Gunther. "Faulkner and 'Faulkner.'" 15.1 (2003): 188-99.

Sundquist, Eric J. "In the Lion's Mouth." 15.1 (2003): 35-8.

American Quarterly

Mitchell, Mary Niall. "'Rosebloom and Pure White,' Or So It Seemed." 54.3 (2002): 369-410.

Mississippi Quarterly

Bruce, Dickson D. "Sentimentalism and Honor in the Early American Republic: Revisiting the Kentucky Tragedy." 55.2 (2002): 185-208.

Chourard, Géraldine. "Vision and Division in 'Kin' by Eudora Welty." 55.2 (2002): 247-70.

Gold, Susanna W. "A Measured Freedom: National Unity and Racial Containment in Winslow Homer's *The Cotton Pickers*, 1876." 55.2 (2002): 163-84.

Richards, Gary. "'With a Special Emphasis': The Dynamics of (Re)Claiming a Queer Southern Renaissance." 55.2 (2002): 209-29.

Tipton, Nathan G. "Queer Be Dragons: Homosocial Identity and Homoerotic Poetics in Robert Penn Warren's *Brother to Dragons*." 55.2 (2002): 231-46.

The Sewanee Review

Clark, William Bedford. "Letters from Home: Filial Guilt in Robert Penn Warren." 110.3 (2002): 385-406.

East, Charles. "Discovering Eudora Welty." 110.3 (2002): 426-37.

Moschovakis, Nicholas R. "Tennessee Williams and the Ambivalence of Success." 110.3 (2002): 483-90.

Pratt, William. "Donald Davidson: The Poet as Storyteller." 110.3 (2002): 406-19.

Simpson, Lewis P. "Lionel Trilling: Critic and Artist." 110.3 (2002): 490-502.

Sullivan, Walter. "Another Southern Connection: Allen Tate and Peter Taylor." 110.3 (2002): 465-71.

The Southern Literary Journal

Dyer, Joyce. "Reading *The Awakening* with Toni Morrison." 35.1 (2002): 138-54

Haspel, Paul. "George Washington Cable and Bonaventure: A New Orleans Author's Literary Sojourn into Acadiana." 35.1 (2002): 108-22.

Jackson, Robert. "The Emergence of Mark Twain's Missouri: Regional Theory and Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." 35.1 (2002): 47-69.

McKee, Kathryn B. "'Honey, Yer Ain't Harf as Smart as Yer Thinks Yer Is!': Race and Humor in Sherwood Bonner's Short Fiction." 35.1 (2002): 28-46.

Maquire, Roberta S. "Kate Chopin and Anna Julia Cooper: Critiquing Kentucky and the South." 35.1 (2002): 123-37.

Miller, Jeffrey W. "Redemption Through Violence: White Mobs and Black Citizenship in Albion Tourgée's *A Fool's Errand*." 35.1 (2002): 14-27.

Robinson, Angelo Rich. "Race, Place, and Space: Remaking Whiteness in the Post-Reconstruction South." 35.1 (2002): 97-107.

Schmidt, Peter. "Command Performances: Black Storytellers in Stuart's 'Blink' and Chesnut's 'The Dumb Witness.'" 35.1 (2002): 79-96.

Watson, Ritchie Devon. "'The Difference of Race': Antebellum Race Mythology and the Development of Southern Nationalism." 35.1 (2002): 1-13.

The Southern Quarterly

Chung, Hyeyurn. "The Myth of Objectivity in T.S. Stribling's Birthright and Unfinished Cathedral." 41.1 (2002): 51-66.

Herring, T. Scott. "Makeovers: Regional Universalism and the Newer South's Public Spheres." 41.1 (2002): 87-106.

Levitsky, Holli G. "Suicide and Sex: The Cost of Desire (is Death)." 41.1 (2002): 29-38.

Maguire, Roberta S. "Walker Percy and Albert Murray: The Story of Two 'Part Anglo-Saxon Alabamians.'" 41.1 (2002): 10-28.

Pridgen, Allen. "James Lee Burke's Dave Robicheaux: A Search for Home." 41.1 (2002): 67-79.

Roberts, Brian R. "Predators in the 'Glades: A Signifying Animal Tale in Zora Neale Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God.'" 41.1 (2002): 39-50.

Smith, Harriet Elinor, and Michael B. Frank. "Mark Twain's 'Spelling Match' Speech." 41.1 (2002): 5-9.

The Southern Review

Memoir Essays:

Core, George. "Louis D. Rubin Jr.: A Man for All Seasons." 38.4 (2002): 681-89.

Hobson, Fred. "Louis Rubin, Newspapering, and the Autobiographical Impulse." 38.4 (2002): 690-703.

Ravenel, Shannon. "'I Want You to Think about Something': Louis D. Rubin Jr. and the Establishment of Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill." 38.4 (2002): 704-11.

Rubin, Louis D. Jr. "Riddle Me This." 38.4 (2002): 723-41.

Simpson, Lewis P. "Louis Rubin: A Charleston Jew, Boat-Building, and the Shaping Form of Memory." 38.4 (2002): 712-22.

Essays:

Coley, Lem. "'A Conspiracy of Friendliness': T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Allen Tate, and Bollingen Controversy." 38.4 (2002): 809-27.

Ladd, Barbara. "'Longing for the Future' in Donald Harrington's The Architecture of the Arkansas Ozarks." 38.4 (2002): 827-42.

Polk, Noel. "Editing All the King's Men." 38.4 (2002): 849-61.

Runyon, Randolph Paul. "A Problem in Spatial Composition: On the Order of Or Else." 38.4 (2002): 861-80.

Samway, Patrick. "Toward Evaluating the Biographies of William Faulkner." 38.4 (2002): 880-89.



**Do you have ideas for future
Newsletters? If so, let us hear from you!**

We welcome your ideas and suggestions for the Newsletter, and we thank all those who have contributed to past issues. What would you like to see in future issues? We are especially interested in articles, essays, book reviews—any piece of writing you'd like to submit for consideration. Just drop us a line at the University of Arkansas, Kimpel Hall 333, Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701, or email us at sssl@uark.edu.

MEMBERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Members wish to extend special gratitude to **Jeff Abernathy** of Illinois College for serving as the SSSL's secretary-treasurer, for keeping track of all our address changes and membership dues. A hearty "thanks" from all!

Sarah Catlin Barnhart, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Missouri, recently received an honorable mention for her paper, "'The Secret's in the Sauce': Southern Women Writers' Alternative Kitchen Traditions," from the American Folklore Society Women's Section Eli Köngas Maranda prize committee. A revised and expanded version of the essay was solicited by Karen Beardslee and James Kirkland for their book, *From San Quentin Gumbo to Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café: Foodways in Life and Literature*, forthcoming from the University of Alabama Press.

Walter Brasch, professor of journalism at Bloomsburg University, was the recipient of the first annual Dean's Award for Excellence in the College of Liberal Arts. The honor is based upon teaching and research. Brasch's recent book is *Brer Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the 'Cornfield Journalist': The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris*.

Robert H. Brinkmeyer, Jr., professor and chair of English at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and editor of this publication, was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 2003. The award will allow Brinkmeyer to complete the research and writing of his book, titled *The Fourth Ghost: European Totalitarianism and the White Southern Imagination, 1930-1950*, which will challenge the notion that Southern writers at this time were isolated from the concerns of the world at large.

M. Thomas Inge read papers on "Faulkner and Guimaraes Rosa: A Brazilian Connection" at the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference in Oxford in July and "Agrarians All! or Southerners Without Masters" at the Southern Studies Forum of the European Association for American Studies meeting at the University of South Carolina in October 2002. He gave the commencement address for the class of 2002 at Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk.

In October 2002 the New York State Council for the Humanities awarded **Dr. Burton R. Pollin** one of its posts in its Speakers' Lecture Series. He will thus be presenting "Poe as the Father of Modern Science Fiction" in five public talks in New York State in each of the years 2003 through 2005. Pollin's scholarly work, chiefly on Edgar Allan Poe, as well as his environmental-betterment pursuits in Westchester County, New York, have won him a request by Marquis Who's Who in the World to allow them to include in their 2003 volume his biographical data, now in Marquis Who's Who in America of 2001 and 2002. Pollin also has two articles in progress: (1) a comparative article concerning three major musical compositions by contemporary composers of Europe, inspired by or incorporating texts of Edgar Allan Poe, to be published in the spring issue of a Poe journal, and (2) his fourth "supplement" to May Garretson Evans' 1931 book, *Poe and Music*, which will appear in the fall 2003 issue of another Poe journal. The latter article consists of about 300 detailed items of worldwide musical compositions, all inspired by or using themes and texts of Poe's works, with an introduction concerning general trends and outstanding developments in this material.

Miriam J. Shillingsburg, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Indiana University South Bend, delivered the 80th annual Commemorative Lecture of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, October 6, 2002: "The Apocalyptic Vision of 'The Masque of the Red Death.'" Copies of the booklet (and others) may be ordered by going to www.eapoe.org and clicking on "publications."

RECENT OR FORTHCOMING MEMBER PUBLICATIONS

- Beck, Charlotte H. Robert Penn Warren: Literary Critic. Edition: The Complete Literary Criticism of Robert Penn Warren. Forthcoming (U of Tennessee P).
- Bonner, Tom, ed. and contributor. Special issue of Mississippi Quarterly on John Faulkner. 54.4 (Fall 2001).
- . The Epistolary Poe. Baltimore: The Edgar Allan Poe Society and Library of the University of Baltimore, 2001.
- . "Nurse." War, Literature, and the Arts 12.2 (2000): 75-80.
- Gleeson-White, Sarah. "Revisiting the Southern Grotesque: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Case of Carson McCullers." The Southern Literary Journal 33.2 (2001): 108-23.
- . Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers. Forthcoming (Alabama UP, June 2003).
- Hall, Joan Wylie. "Ann Patchett." American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies. Supplement XII: Kathy Acker to Richard Russo. Ed. Jay Parini. New York: Scribner's, 2003. 307-24.
- Inge, M. Thomas, and Dennis Hall, eds. The Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture. 4 vols. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- . "Portrait of the Professor as a Failed Cartoonist." International Journal of Comic Art 5.1 (Spring 2003): 21-30.
- . "William Faulkner and the Graphic Novel." International Journal of Comic Art 5.1 (Spring 2003): 214-19.
- Jones, Susanne W., and Sharon Monteith, eds. South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002.
- Nisly, Lamar L. Impossible to Say: Representing Religious Mystery in Fiction by Malamud, Percy, Ozick, and O'Connor. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002.
- Ritter, Alexander. Charles Sealsfield—Vormärzliterat, American Author und politischer Mittler (Charles Sealsfield—Pre-March-Novelist, American Author, and Political Mediator). Forthcoming (Vienna: Praesens, 2003-2004).
- Szczesiul, Anthony. Racial Politics and Robert Penn Warren's Poetry. Gainesville, UP of Florida, 2002.
- Shillingsburg, Miriam J., guest ed. Special issue of Southern Quarterly on Gilmore Simms. Contains 11 articles and an introduction, representative of the range of Simms' works, with special emphasis on his poetry, less-well-known fiction, and dramatic interests. Forthcoming (Winter 2003).
- , guest ed. Special issue of Studies in the Novel on Gilmore Simms. Contains 9 articles and an introduction, representative of Simms' novels, including Indian, Border, Domestic, Spanish Colonial, Revolutionary War, and Gothic fiction. Forthcoming (Summer 2003).
- Weathersby, Robert W., II. "Joseph Holt Ingraham." Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 248: Antebellum Writers in the South. Second Series. Ed. Kent Ljungquist. Detroit: Brucoli Clark Layman, 2001. 167-76. (Weathersby wrote the original article on Ingraham twenty years ago for the third volume and was one of a select few authors allowed to re-envision and rewrite their original entries in DLB 3.)

Members Remember First Encounters with Southern Literature, Share Teaching Experiences

We thought spring would be a good time for us all to pause, recall, and celebrate why we do what we do—why we read, teach, write about and care about Southern literature. So we solicited your responses in the fall issue of the Newsletter. We wanted to hear about what authors or works first excited or troubled you. We wanted to hear about your teaching experiences. Here's what you had to say.

Diving In

I was introduced to southern literature during my first two years of undergraduate study at the University of Arkansas as Suzanne McCray, Assistant Director of the Honors Program and Assistant Professor of English, prepared my classmates and me to attend *Crossing the Lines: A Conference on Contemporary Southern Writers*. At this convening of southern women writers, hosted by our university in the fall of 1997, I had the pleasure of listening in on the round table discussions and lectures of some of southern literature's imminent writers—absorbing their ideas and their collective ability to look at the very world in which I lived and soundly articulate both the promise and the malevolence in what they saw there.

I have continued to return to these women and their colleagues—Betts, McCorkle, Ansa, Cox, Abbott, McClarey, Smith, Glasgow, Hannah, McCullers, Wright, Tate, Welty, Hurston, Toomer, Caldwell, and Faulkner—not only because they have become old, if sometimes despondent, friends but also because what I find in their writing simultaneously comforts and haunts me. I am heartened by the succoring power of tightly-knit communities and extended families; I am wounded by the injustices of racism and class discrimination and poverty. For better or for worse, this is the world in which I was raised, in which I will raise my family, in which I will study and teach, in which I will live out my days.

To me, studying southern literature is like diving into a pool of lukewarm water—just chilling enough to prevent me from being too comfortable—just warm enough to keep me diving in again and again.

Laura K. Lease

Durham Technical Community College
and Oxford University Press

Learning to Teach

There is nothing in the world more satisfying than giving advice and having someone take it. There is nothing that gives me more pleasure than introducing students to pieces of literature that I love, stories and novels and poems that are as much a part of my life as my childhood memories. At Vanderbilt I learned to love Shakespeare. At Millsaps College I was introduced to modern poetry by Doctor George Boyd and to William Faulkner by Eudora Welty. “Publish each healer that in city lives. Or country houses at the end of lanes. Look shining at, new styles of architecture, a change of heart.”

How could I live without “Petition” by W.H. Auden?
How could I live without *Go Down, Moses?* Or *The Town, The Hamlet*, and *The Mansion*?

I feel a “holy hush of ancient sacrifice,” when I offer these works of genius to my students. Faulkner speaks to them as he did to me. Many of them are from the rural south. He says to them, you are not alone, this is our common heritage, we are driven and beautiful, we plot and fall in love and strive for goodness, we trust our kin and are haunted and sustained by the past, we die and new people take our place in the sun.

I would like to think that I am teaching but really I am just passing the baton. I give them books to read and every week I have them write for thirty minutes about what they have read. It's not a test, just an open-book, in-class writing assignment with a list of ideas and questions I give them. They write dazzling answers to the questions. They make moral judgments and chastise themselves for being judgmental, they see their own grandmothers in Ursula Buendia and tell their own family histories in answer to Faulkner's stories.

I had worried that reading was going out of style in the United States. I was wrong. Over and over students tell me they “can't wait to get out of school so I'll have time to read.” All I am doing is opening some doors. I am dazzled and honored to get to do it.

Ellen Gilchrist

Writer-in-Residence
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Miss Amelia and Me

My first encounter with Southern literature occurred when I was fifteen years old, a high school sophomore. My father, a high school English teacher, gave me “The Ballad of the Sad Café” to read. Already over six feet tall, I felt an instant affection for poor Miss Amelia, who “early in youth had grown to be six foot two inches tall which in itself is not natural for a woman.” We both had dark hair and “peculiar manners.” I was able to twist Miss Amelia, by most accounts a tragic figure, into an empowering role model for myself. From this work I quickly moved on to *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, which I would like to say I understood better than her novella, and on from there to most of her other works. When I reread “The Ballad” as an undergraduate, I was enthralled with it once again, but this time I could better appreciate the magical, mythological, folkloric elements of the tale. I find it funny now to remember how, upon my first reading, I identified with Miss Amelia from the very beginning of the story, despite her litigiousness, something which probably would have confounded McCullers to no end.

Sarah Catlin Barnhart

President, English Graduate Student Association
University of Missouri-Columbia

The Lure of the Banned and Self-Definition

My father served on the local school board in the small southern community in which I grew up. As part of a general trend of many small communities, banning books was not uncommon. Angry parents would present an “immoral” book to the school board, one of the board members would review the book and then decide its looming fate. When I was fourteen the latest banned book sat in my living room, William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. When I approached my dad, he told me that the book was considered “immoral” by several parents and that he was asked to review it. From that moment, the book sitting in my living room possessed, for me, an ineffable aura: Addie Bundren’s wooden coffin on the front cover became a symbol of something I wasn’t supposed to know. Of course, as any good southern child would do, I smuggled the book into my bedroom and absorbed its pages in one night. Faulkner’s story about the Bundren family captured my southern imagination and, though I didn’t realize it then, was the beginning of a self-awareness of what it meant to be southern. Unlike my interest in southern literature, which has a marked naissance, my interest in southern culture just exists, much like a memory over which I have no control. Because I’m rooted within the culture, I’m inextricably bound up with its issues and problems, whether I’d like to be or not.

When Simone de Beauvoir sat down to explain herself to herself, she was struck with surprise that the first thing she had to say was “I am a woman.” While I understand Beauvoir’s frustration, I find myself grappling with my own southernness as much, if not more, than gender. And so, as I sit down to explain myself to myself I am struck with the feeling that I must first write, “I am a Southerner.”

Betsy Wood

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“The Hideous Institution”

My siblings and I used to laugh every time my mother got off the telephone with a Southern operator or business contact. She would come away with her accent back in full force and call us “y’all” until our ridicule subdued her into an appropriate diction, such as Kansas’ “you guys.” But it wouldn’t be until my thirties that I would understand the force of Mother’s Southern upbringing, see her need for proper appearances in the light of notions of gentility, and relate her quirky demand for Hushpuppy shoes for all her children to propriety. I was born in New Mexico and grew up on a sixty-acre farm in Kansas in a dilapidated mobile home, but neither lack of finances nor my father’s beans-and-cornbread approach to spending money kept my mother from buying our clothing at Henry’s and Macy’s. No child of hers would ever be seen in dresses or shoes from a discount store.

Mother’s mother raised her properly in Columbus, Mississippi, and instilled rigid if not brutal notions of personal appearance. When I was sixteen, we drove to Mississippi to visit this grandmother whom I hadn’t seen since I was a toddler. She met us as we drove up into the gravel parking lot of her BBQ restaurant in the blistering heat of August. My heart warmed as she walked towards me with arms outstretched, until she glanced down and took in my summer shorts. She said, “Oh honey. You got my knees. I’m sorry.” But then she wrapped me in her arms, and with what sounded like genuine affection said, “You look just like I did when I was sixteen; of course, I was much thinner.”

If I had lived near Grandmother growing up, I might have been more prepared for my sixteen-year relationship with my mother-in-law, a Pentecostal minister’s wife and daughter, also from Mississippi, who would meet me at the door of our church before the rest of the congregation could catch sight of me to frantically offer me her lipstick.

I've lived in the South now for over a decade, but I can never claim to be a Southerner. However, Southern literature has provided a reflection and an illumination of my relationship with the three women who fulfilled a maternal role for me. When I first read the words of Katherine Anne Porter's chinless Eva Parrington, "Ah, the family, the whole hideous institution should be wiped from the face of the earth. It is the root of all human wrongs," I instantly understood the irony behind the need both to reject the impossible Southern ideal of feminine beauty and to respect the insistent need to believe in some sort of beauty for women whose lives were at many times tragic and barren. By the time I started graduate school and decided to specialize in Southern literature, I already loved my mother, grandmother, and mother-in-law in spite of what I saw as their ridiculous need for superficiality. Porter's lesson to me was not to love them in spite of it, but to love them for it—to accept the ironic, ridiculous needs in all of us.

Cassandra Colvin

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Speaking the Unspeakable

With a dumb-founded look and a slightly reddened face, I met my freshman composition class's response to Richard Wright's "The Man Who Was Almost a Man." As a second-year teaching assistant, I'm sure my students were accustomed to a steady utterance of "well," "what I mean to say is," and "uh" when I tried to explain concepts or answer questions. This time, however, my visible incompetence was not a result of lack of articulateness but rather utter surprise. My discomfort materialized in the form of sweat rings on the underarms of my sweater as half of the class insisted that Wright's story does not address race issues but that it is universal in its depiction of one fellow's transition from boyhood to manhood. In response, I made a pitch about considering the historical context, about considering the different ways in which the story's protagonist, Dave, meets opposition, about recurring themes in Wright's work. So unconvincing I was that one of my students, after tiring of defending his assertion that this story is not about race, signaled his ducking-out of the discussion by laying his head on the desk; another girl rolled her eyes. I swore never to broach the topic of race again, already envisioning how the next semester would rely on a new syllabus, a reading-list that would conveniently omit literature that addresses difficult topics.

In the midst of my mental revising, I realized who would be the first to go—Southern writers. Writers such as Richard Wright, Lillian Smith, Katherine Anne Porter, and William Faulkner would have no place in my re-envisioned class, for they make us uncomfortable. They speak the unspeakable subjects—racism, rape, apostasy—gently gripping the backs of our necks, turning

us toward what is often unpleasant, and whispering, "Look." But it is this ability to make me uneasy that I love about Southern writers and their literature, and it is because of this ability that I know these writers need to appear on the reading-lists of literature classes that I teach. I'm still learning from this teaching experience, still considering my students' angle, still wondering how to speak about racism. And I have yet to make a change to the syllabus.

Lori Bailey

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Southern Literature, Religion, and Self-Discovery

Growing up in the South is an ultimately fulfilling experience. Slow living, hospitality, the importance of family and friends—all of these characteristics make an already vibrant region even more colorful. Another aspect of life that is inextricably linked with the South is religion or spirituality. As a child of the South, I was immersed in organized religion; consequently, religion and spirituality became an important aspect of my life, especially in my adolescence. In my experience, however, a recurring problem in the South and in organized religion is a resistance to change or new ideas; Southern people, and especially religious Southern people, are often intolerant. Growing up homosexual in the South was not easy, and realizing my religion's aversion to homosexuality was not any easier.

As I became aware of my sexuality as an adolescent, I also began to recognize the rampant homophobia that surrounded me, especially within the confines of organized religion. Spirituality became very important to me in this phase of my life because it gave me an escape from my own struggles. In God's eyes, I was acceptable. Yet as I began to understand the hypocrisy and fundamentalism that is so pervasive in organized religion, I became disillusioned. Apparently, I was not acceptable. Religion, whose fundamental quality is supposed to be love, did not accept me, and I was broken by the rejection.

I abandoned organized religion during my high school years. I wanted nothing to do with a system of beliefs that forced me to stifle myself; I already stifled myself and my sexuality because of the pressures of society. College, however, opened a door for me that I did not expect. Hendrix College fosters an environment of acceptance and tolerance. Indeed, sexuality is completely peripheral to the majority of Hendrix students that I have encountered, and this environment was one in which I would thrive. As I continued on my journey of self-discovery, Southern literature became important to me. It allowed me to examine and learn from the self-discovery of characters from the South, characters to whom I could relate. During this time, an

open dialogue about my spirituality and my sexuality not only occurred between my friends and family and me but also between the characters from Faulkner and O'Connor and Welty and me. I also began to re-explore my spirituality during this time. Although broken by organized religion, I was not shattered, and with the help of spiritual advisors and a very nurturing church environment, I rediscovered the pieces and how to put them back together. My college years engendered an epiphany that I was completely unprepared for, one in which I decided to live according to the dictates of my conscience and my God. Literature, but especially Southern literature, was integral in bolstering me along my journey of self-acceptance and helping me to find security and peace within the confines of religion.

Christopher Howland

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

You're Still the Ones: Faulkner and O'Connor

Ten summers ago when I was thirty-something I met the Bundrens. I met Quentin Compson and Hazel Motes. I had the good fortune of stumbling into Professor Skip Hays' class and having him unleash the modern Southern novel on me. We read some Faulkner and then we read some O'Connor. We read some other writers, too—but you never forget your first when they're that startling. After graduation, I went back for an eight-year stint in business. For a while I sold turkey parts—beaks and feet and gizzards and feathers—over the phone during the day. At night I read. And I kept reaching for the Southerners.

So I came back for more. I now have the intentional good fortune of reading Southern literature under the wise tutelage of Professor Bob Brinkmeyer. Life is good in his Faulkner seminar, although back-to-back reading of Faulkner in the dark month of February can bruise the heart and mind. What *kind* of people “endure and prevail”?

But Faulkner has his lighter moments, as do I. I grew up in northern Louisiana hearing front-porch stories of dogs and mules and land and people. Who knows these things better than Faulkner? I have heard the message of itinerant country preachers such as O'Connor's Haze Motes' grandfather, “a waspish old man . . . with Jesus hidden in his head like a stinger.” My mother's family, an odd mix of cynics and dreamers and belly-laughers, could step from the pages of such fiction. One member, to our great sorrow, went the way of Quentin; he went looking for his shadow at the river's bottom. Such fiction helps me remember a past I no longer want to forget because it is mine.

So thank you, William Faulkner, for digging up every clod of Mississippi dirt and showing that the soil everywhere is basically the same. And thank you, Flannery O'Connor, for counterbalancing rampant relativism, for believing in the mystery of the heavens. Together your lives' work continues to remind me that to be fully human—puny and grotesque as that sometimes is—I have to laugh. I have to dig deep and gaze high. I have to care about the past, the present, and eternity.

Renée Farmer

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Freak

As a girl I discovered and read Flannery O'Connor with the same sort of clandestine pleasure I would have a book on sex. Eventually, someone was going to figure out what I was up to and take it away. The bizarre characters, like Hulga in “Good Country People” and the Misfit in “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” the relentlessly awkward situations, and the overwhelming comic depravity gave me such a voyeuristic kick it was addictive. Then I was mesmerized by the unapologetic embrace of freakishness (something I still love about southern literature) and the fact that there were so many recognizable elements from my own experiences growing up in a small community in the Ozarks. It was as if someone had painted a landscape whose trees and fields were intensely familiar. The verbal expressions, physical descriptions, and especially the relentless weight of hard, sanctified religion struck home. Later, I would take this interest even further with *Wise Blood* and the self-mutilating Hazel Motes.

My mother and her family introduced me to the charismatic preaching that influenced parts of my childhood using much of the same language and reasoning. Through the softly lilting voices of closed-eyed ministers, their mellifluous tones now reminding me of the voices of poets I hear today, a bellowed JESUS! or BURN IN HELL! or even speaking in tongues mixed in with a sermon, similar to the last one, would startle me out of drowsy indifference. The angry, punishing hopelessness of this God I was expected to embrace did not seem to make anyone I knew very happy. My own home was solidly middle class, but apparently, due to the burden of poverty many of the worshippers such as my mother had experienced (my generation was the first from her side not to grow up far from a paved road, wearing feedsack underwear), the only pleasure that could be found was looking forward to being dead. Furthermore, the geographical isolation of these hills I was raised in was a unique breeding ground for genuine characters as rare and unusual as any I have ever read. Yet all this familiarity is actually only a minor reason why I love this region's fiction. After all, no matter

how much you claim you identify with and recognize the characters, they are luckily not autobiographically based on you or anyone you know. For me, the truth is that the more unabashedly bizarre the character, the more sickly sweet the realization is of the dark similarities between him and yourself, no matter where you are from.

There is a delicious suspension of the laws of polite society in my favorite southern stories and novels that revolve around the lives of poor whites. It is something of a train wreck fascination, I suppose. As an adult I would read *Child of God* by Cormac McCarthy with the same sort of disgusted interest I would have examined a strange grub revealed while raking leaves. However, even though I now study the full gamut of southern fiction, my first love will always be O'Connor because of her flawless representation of hard-bitten, charismatic religion, and especially her ample use of the freak. This may reveal some sort of deep-seated illness or repressed childhood trauma I should have long ago been in therapy for, but I really don't care. Now I can unashamedly testify why I love it, as my mother would remind me, in front of God and everybody.

Rose M. Bunch

M.F.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Coming Full Circle

I began my love affair with Southern literature as an adult. I discovered that I could go home again with Wolfe, Faulkner, Welty, Percy and others. Reading Southern authors brought me back to the gentle days on an Ozark farm—ones in which I got up early to pick huckleberries around the pond with my grandmother, competed with my cousins on a rope swing down by the Woolsey Bridge, and went reluctantly on Sundays to Friendship Community Church where my boisterous grandfather preached loudly and unkindly.

When I was eight years old we moved to the North. People that I encountered there were not charmed with Southerners—especially those from Arkansas. I pragmatically discarded as much of my Southern self as I could. I grew tired of being asked to say certain words and whether or not I wore shoes in Arkansas. I then moved with my parents to another continent, coming back for year-long visits to Arkansas. By this time my favorite books were those centered at English country manors and when I traveled I told people that I was from Missouri (we had lived a year in Missouri)—just a little further north, but it seemed an innocuous enough state that I could probably avoid the typical questions. I knew that I was betraying my heritage and my family, but it was easier. I could not always defend the South, because of my ambivalence about it.

The South that I am from is a place of contradictions. The grandmother who often scolded me while quoting Bible verses was the same grandmother who settled comfortably into the orange chairs and gossip of her beauty shop—a beauty shop not unlike the one in Eudora Welty's "Petrified Man." We knew the Snopes and we knew the Compsons, and we were somewhere in between. We were taught to say "yes ma'am" and "no sir" to adults, but it was fine to have complete disdain for the alcoholic who lived down at Stony Perch, the African Americans who might try to get our parents' jobs, and anyone who was Catholic. It was Christian and heathen, a place I at once loved and hated.

I have, however, found that it is really impossible to shake being Southern. It is in my veins; it's not something I can separate from the rest of me. The South's distinct personality, reflected in our brave and vulnerable literature, is funny, awful, joyous, sad, gentle, harsh, lovely and ugly. As I've grown to accept it, I have come to realize that Southern literature is universal. Southern literature makes me laugh, shake my head, cry, shudder, and realize, finally, that it is about me—us—really, all humanity. After all, isn't this what we constantly discover about humanity—the contradictions? The contradictions abound on every continent and in every people, and I, a Southerner, say—Thank you, O'Connor, Penn Warren, Smith and Wright. Thank you for holding up the mirror so that we can see our very indeterminate selves.

Karon Reese

M.A. Student, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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- Upcoming Events & Calls for Papers
- Tributes to Richard S. Kennedy
- Personal Essays from Members
- Membership Renewal

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