

# The Society for the Study of Southern Literature



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## NEWSLETTER

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### From the Editor:

Winter looms in the Ozarks, as we send along a new issue of the Newsletter. I want first to announce that we now have two new assistant editors, Lori Bailey and Renée Farmer, both of whom are outstanding graduate students here at the University of Arkansas. As did their predecessors, Laura Lease and Melanie Simpson, Lori and Renée completed almost all of the work in putting the Newsletter together, and thus they deserve the credit for what I think you will all agree is its excellence.

Since you are now holding the Newsletter in your hand, you probably have figured out that we didn't send it to you electronically. We're still hoping to make that change sometime in the future, but right now the SSSL does not have anyone looking after its web page (which, last time I looked, gave information for 1998 or thereabouts). Once the SSSL hires a webmaster or finds a generous volunteer for the task, we should be in business, not only to make the newsletter available from the web but also to get out current information and announcements.

Once you've turned a few pages, you'll see that this Newsletter is a bit different from the two previous ones. We've added a bit of heft with a feature article by Greg Brownderville on voodoo practices in the Arkansas delta. We've still got loads of useful information—who's doing what, where, and when—but we thought that the Newsletter would profit by some real writing. We hope to continue including feature essays in upcoming newsletters and would love to hear proposals for future articles. Just get in touch the usual way: [sssl@uark.edu](mailto:sssl@uark.edu). And when I say proposals, I mean for you to write, not us.

One more thing before I bust out of here to go tend to my collards: Don't forget to vote for the executive board (ballot enclosed) and to pay your annual dues.

Bob Brinkmeyer

# A Message from the SSSL President:

This is a busy time for SSSL. Jon Smith is leading a Symposium in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, December 11-15, on Postcolonial Theory, the U.S. South, & New World Studies. We will look forward to a report on this first-time program jointly sponsored by SSSL and ALA. For those of us attending MLA in New York City, we can attend two SSSL-sponsored programs, one on “The Poetry of Dave Smith and Charles Wright,” chaired by Victor Strandberg, and one on “Southern Drama in Performance,” chaired by Diana Ferris. The Hugh Holman Award for “the best work of literary scholarship or literary criticism” in 2001 will be presented during Professor Strandberg’s program, beginning at noon on December 29. The topics for all of these program are new ones, provocative and timely.

Joe Millichap, a member of the committee which chose this year’s Holman winner, tells me the works considered for the award came from about 25 publishers, most from Southern university presses. They included critical work in a variety of genres, including monographs, biographies, collections of essays, and editions. Approaches included traditional ones as well as those drawing upon new theoretical ideas. Authors were established figures and newcomers, male and female, academics and independent scholars, Southernists as well as those from other fields. Last year’s winner was Patricia Yaeger’s *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women’s Writing, 1930-1990* published by the University of Chicago Press in 2000. As we consider books published, regular journal offerings, our own meetings and programs at MLA and ALA, it is clear that scholarship in Southern literature is thriving with a rich variety in approach and continuing to cover new topics.

I also note from our biennial meeting in Louisiana that our membership now includes many young scholars, some giving papers as graduate students, others as beginning assistant professors. It strengthens our organization to have participants at a meeting come from 25 states and several from England. It also suggests that Southern literature as a part of the curriculum has moved far beyond the time when it was taught only in Southern schools. The Southern Studies Forum of the European Association for American Studies is active and meets biennially as we do. (If you are interested in this organization, contact Stuart Kidd, University of Reading, England, s.s.kidd@Reading.ac.uk.) Those of us who have taught Southern Literature in other parts of the world know how interested those students are in our field. At the University of Bonn several years ago, for example, I had 36 graduate students enrolled in a seminar on Southern Women Writers which I taught with Lothar Honnighausen, Head of the North American Studies Program and a Faulkner scholar.

The second Richard Beale Davis Award for “Distinguished Lifetime Service to Southern Letters” will be presented at our 2004 meeting in Chapel Hill. This award may go to a writer or to a scholar; Ernest Gaines was given the first one in 2002. The committee to choose the 2004 winner includes Bill Andrews, Robert Phillips, and Anne Rowe. If you want to nominate a candidate, send the name to Bill Andrews. The winner is expected to attend the meeting and speak to those assembled.

Our organization has grown and changed with the times. As we move along into the twenty-first century, we are facing the reality that the printed and mailed Newsletter is too expensive. It actually takes all of our dues money to support it. Wisely, Bob Brinkmeyer and Bill Andrews have been discussing taking the Newsletter online. To accomplish this Bob needs a webmaster. If you are qualified and are interested in helping with this project, please contact Bob at [sssl@uark.edu](mailto:sssl@uark.edu). SSSL thrives because of the work of so many people: Bob Brinkmeyer, who edits the Newsletter; Jeff Abernathy, who has taken on the job of secretary-treasurer; Veronica Makowsky, who maintains the Listserve; the Board members; those who coordinate sessions for MLA and ALA; the Bibliography Committee chair; the committees who select the winners of awards and nominate Board members; the many people who are needed to produce a biennial meeting; and all of the people who present papers and chair sessions for SSSL, MLA, and ALA as well as the people who attend those sessions.

On behalf of all of us, I thank those people and many others who are not listed. It has been a pleasure for me to serve as president of SSSL these last two years.

Dorothy M. Scura

# UPCOMING EVENTS & CALLS FOR PAPERS

**Special Session of the Walker Percy Society at the ALA Meeting** in Cambridge, MA, on May 22-25, 2003

**Topic:** Walker Percy as a Social Critic

**Deadline for Submissions:** December 15, 2002

Proposals/Abstracts should be mailed to John F. Desmond, Whitman College, Walla Walla, WA 99362

**Thirteenth Annual Meeting held by The Robert Penn Warren Circle** meeting on the campus of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, 25-27 April 2003, and invites papers (15-20 minutes). Western Kentucky University is the home of the Center for Warren Studies and the Warren Library. Warren's hometown, Guthrie, KY, and his birthplace are less than an hour by car from Bowling Green.

**Topic:** Any aspect of Warren's life and work

**Deadline for Submissions:** January 15, 2003

Please send inquiries and/or papers or detailed proposals to Pat Bradley, Department of English, Box 70, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132  
(615)-904-8128  
pbradley@mtsu.edu

**South Central Modern Language Association (SCMLA)**

Hot Springs, Arkansas

October 30- November 1, 2003

**Topic:** Welty and Technology

Chair: Sarah Ford

This panel will examine the various images of technology in Welty's fiction: from planes, trains, and automobiles to cameras, phones, and radios. Papers could discuss how these markers of the modern age and a mass-market economy figure into a body of work rooted in largely rural and specific places. Potential topics are how aspects of modern transportation affect the narrative structure of works or how characters use and react to modern technology or how traces of modernity reconfigure pastoral settings.

**Deadline for Submissions:** January 15, 2003

Papers or abstracts should be sent to Sarah\_Ford@baylor.edu

**Edited volume entitled Just Below South: Performing Intercultures in the Caribbean and the Southern United States**

This project will investigate the unprecedented cultural performances that have emerged and continue to emerge out of areas linked historically by colonization and the slave trade, as well as by migration, travel, and tourism.

**Topic:** Caribbean and U. S. South as a distinctly regional interculture.

We seek both essays focusing on embodied performance—dance, music, staged and street theater, and the performance of everyday life—and on performance in or *as* literature. We welcome work on canonical as well as less- or unknown performers/writers/texts.

Potential topics and approaches include:

- Current and historical representations of colonization
- Performance within tourist economies
- Ritual performance
- Textual and/or literary performativity
- New concepts of regionalism and nationalism
- Regionalized intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality
- Expanding the discourse of postcolonial inquiry
- Rethinking concepts of modernity and postmodernity
- Caribbean and/or Southern Studies and the academy

**Deadline for Submissions:** December 31, 2002

Please send submissions and/or questions to Jessica Adams at jdevi@umich.edu

**Forum for Modern Language Studies**

**Forthcoming Special Issue on the U.S. South**

The journal Forum for Modern Language Studies (Oxford UP) will bring out a Special Issue tentatively entitled The U.S. South, edited by Jon Smith (Dept. of English, Mississippi State University), in Spring 2004. FMLS generally has a wide, cross-disciplinary readership, chiefly from Modern Languages and English/Anglophone/American Studies backgrounds, as well as a more specialist audience for individual Special Issues.

**Topic:** Literatures and Cultures of the U.S. South

The critical methods deployed in the volume will be as diverse as possible. Possible approaches include queer Southern studies; black Southern cultural studies; Southern literature or individual writers in postcolonial, New World, and/or global contexts; the South in/on film and in film theory; ecocriticism; working-class Southern literatures; studies of literary and cultural productions by Southerners of ethnicities other than "black" and "white." We especially encourage proposals that synthesize multiple methodologies.

**Deadline for Submissions:** December 19, 2002

Prospective contributors are invited to send proposals for articles in the form of a 300-word abstract and will be asked to submit articles in final form by the strict deadline of 31 August 2003. Articles should be around 5,000 words long, including footnotes, and must conform to the FMLS stylesheet, available on request. The editor will be happy to discuss individual suggestions. Communications via e-mail are preferred, at jon@ra.msstate.edu; or write to Dr. Jon Smith, Editor, FMLS: The U.S. South, P.O. Box 5272, Mississippi State, MS 39762-5272. Articles which do not find a place in the Special Issue will be considered for general issues of FMLS, of which there are two per year.

**Edited Collection on Barry Hannah's Fiction**

**Topic:** Essays that encompass one or more of the following themes:

- Hannah and postmodernism (as a literary style or aesthetic, esp. Hannah in comparative context with other postmodern writers)
- Hannah and postmodernity (the representation, mediation and/or criticism of the cultures, economies, societies, etc., of postmodernity)
- Hannah as Southern, postsouthern or anti-Southern writer (esp. in comparative context with other Southern, American or international writers)
- Masculinity (the Southern male (anti-) hero, gender relations, anxieties over masculinity in the contemporary South/postmodern world)
- Race and/or class (including Hannah in relation, or contrast, to "grit" or poor white Southern writers such as Harry Crews, Dorothy Allison, or Larry Brown)

**Deadline for Submissions:** December 15, 2002

Proposals between 300-500 words should be sent to the following: Dr. Martyn Bone, School of American and Canadian Studies, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD, England  
martyn.bone@nottingham.ac.uk  
martyn@snapbone.fsnet.co.uk

## Devil of the Blues

By Greg Alan Brownderville

Of all the blues singers ever to wail a note, the late great Peetie Wheatstraw stands out as one of the most intriguing. In Cotton Plant, Arkansas, where he grew up, Wheatstraw is vividly remembered as a dangerously alluring genius. He became immensely popular in the 1930s after leaving the Delta for St. Louis and establishing himself as a recording artist. An affable gentleman from Cotton Plant fondly recalled the days when Wheatstraw would come back home to Woodruff County and play on the front porch of the plantation house at McClelland (along with Pumpkin Bend, Augusta, and McCrory, which are mentioned later in this essay—Cotton Plant and McClelland are located in Woodruff County, Arkansas):

Word would spread that he was back in town, and a huge crowd would gather to hear him play, whites and blacks. He was a natural-born singer, I'm here to tell you. Them was good times. That was before I got saved. They'd be gambling and everything else out there, playing a card game called Georgia Skins. The plantation owner at McClelland was lenient with blacks, tried to let us have a good time. Peetie would play piano up till midnight, then switch over to guitar. It was a big deal when he come home. He was a star. Peetie Wheatstraw, the Devil's Son-In-Law!

The Delta is the land of the Devil's music. Anyone familiar with blues mythology knows about the connection between a mysterious, magical figure colloquially referred to as "the Devil" and a certain line of famous blues singers. According to my research, it all started in the late 1920s with two seminal bluesmen—Peetie Wheatstraw and Tommy Johnson. At approximately the same time, Johnson began spreading the word that he had been granted mastery of the blues by a big, black guitar wizard at the crossroads and Peetie Wheatstraw started calling himself the Devil's Son-In-Law.

In an article for the June 2001 BluesNotes, Greg Johnson tells the story of Wheatstraw's death. On December 21, 1941, at the height of Wheatstraw's career, he was driving over a railroad crossing in East St. Louis when a train hit his car, leaving Wheatstraw dead at the age of 39. There is something eerie in this story: The Devil's Son-In-Law, brutally killed at the crossroads. One day at a picnic table in Cotton Plant, a dapper, bluesy-voiced black man told me what happened to Wheatstraw's body after it was brought back home to Woodruff County:

He buried right up there [near Cotton Plant]. And, when he died, they say his old man Sam Bunch said, "Well, if he the Devil's son-in-law, then he ain't got no business in the church." He didn't get no funeral, nothing. I wasn't nothing but a young boy then. But Peetie Wheatstraw made a song up: "Ooh, well, well, the Devil's Son-In-Law." His folks took that serious. He didn't never go to church. He didn't have nothing on his mind but them blues. I never did get to know him. He had red lips, and, boy, he was bad with that guitar.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ghede, god of sex and death, is a Voodoo loa, or deity, of the crossroads. In Haiti, Ghede is often seen in a tall black top hat and a long black tail-coat (Deren 107). Compare this account with Newbell Niles Puckett's description of the Southern Negro's Devil:

... when going about on the earth, the Negro devil (most often) has the appearance of a gentleman, wearing a high silk hat, and a frock coat ... (Puckett 550)

A figure very similar to the Haitian Ghede and Puckett's Negro Devil appears in many Woodruff County folktales. He is commonly seen near a crossroads, a cemetery, or, as is often the case, both simultaneously. Sometimes, as in Haiti, he holds a cane.

Locals say that McCrory's Sands Apartments were built on a graveyard (Ghede's territory). At Sands, a

woman named Essie sees a ghost who resembles a variation of Ghede Haitians know well—the old, witty beggar dressed as a ragamuffin. Essie claims the spirit smokes in her apartment. In Haiti, Ghede smokes incessantly.

Unlike Essie, her child seems to see and communicate with the spirit often. Laughing as if being entertained by a clown, the child seems anything but scared. The spirit, to Essie’s astonishment, even helps with bathing the child. Moreover, at night, in the Sands parking lot, one can hear the gleeful laughter of children. Ghede is much honored for his compassion and love for children. He is known as their protector.

In Haiti, Voodoo serviteurs sacrifice black goats to Ghede. The Devil has at times appeared to Southern blacks as a black billy-goat (Puckett 551). This makes another link in a long chain of evidence suggesting that Ghede is one of the loa behind the word “Devil” in traditional Southern black folklore.

Another crossroads loa I see in this Devil is Carrefour, or Carry-4, to use the clever spelling employed by comic book writer Alan Moore. Bluesmen who have performed crossroads rituals to achieve mastery of the blues report encounters with a “big, black man” at midnight, and they stress the importance both of not looking around and of waiting until the spirit is gone and all is quiet before starting toward home with one’s magically tuned guitar (Puckett 554).

Said to be his strongest at midnight, Carry-4 is indeed a big, black man at the crossroads. He is a “huge and straight and vigorous” loa, around whom no one as much as whispers or even smiles (Deren 101). Carry-4 might, at any time, loose the demons of misfortune and deliberate, unjust destruction on the world, two themes recurring in the lives and songs of bluesmen.

Near a Woodruff County burial mound (a kind of graveyard), two ghosts have been seen—one who smokes and one who holds his hands up in the air. As noted previously, Ghede loves to smoke. Carry-4 often holds his hands up, every muscle of the back and shoulders bulging with strength (Deren 101). Ghede’s role as god of sex is a fitting one for a patron of virile, blues-singing lady-killers, as is Carry-4’s role as a dark and dangerous, fearsome man unleashing shadowy forces. Perhaps he is the element of tragic, untimely destruction in the stories of Wheatstraw and others linked with the Devil of Southern black folklore. In the haunting song “Me and the Devil Blues,” Robert Johnson moans, “You may bury my body down by the highway side.” Like Johnson, a Woodruff County mojo man named Nubby is believed to have sold his soul to the Devil. At a young age, Nubby was robbed, killed, and dropped off “by the highway side.” Like Jezebel of the Old Testament, a mojo woman named Aunt Roxie was eaten by dogs, according to a storyteller in Cotton Plant. Suffering the same fate as a black cat she once had boiled in a Voodoo ritual, Roxie was reduced to a pile of bones. Like Wheatstraw, Nubby, and Roxie, Robert Johnson died prematurely. Someone poisoned his whiskey at a Delta jookhouse. Three days later, he died at the age of twenty-seven, setting a bleak trend. Jimi Hendrix, Jim Morrison, Kurt Cobain, Janis Joplin, and other musical giants also died at twenty-seven.

\* \* \* \* \*

In Haiti, the God of the Crossroads is Legba, “an old tattered man shuffling down the road, with his crude twisted cane or crutch, . . . an old peasant who has worked his fields hard all his life and is now at the end of his powers” (Deren 99). The eerie sculpture of a black man’s head that once stared out from a tree at “Nigger Head Corner,” a fork in the road above Augusta, is probably a symbol of the God of the Crossroads. Wade Antney, a well-respected black farmer who, after emancipation, was given land he had worked as a slave, created the sculpture and placed it at the crossroads to celebrate his life and land. We might see Antney as an avatar of the Haitian Legba.

In Dahomean myth, Legba becomes associated with dogs after proving he can turn a carved statue into one. The Devil of Southern black folklore sometimes manifests as a light-colored dog. Fred McDowell, the late great bluesman from west Tennessee, sang of a mysterious canine:

Me and my white dog started, honey, walkin’ out in Jackson Park.

It takes a man's appetite, Lord, honey, just to hear my white dog bark.

There it is, the magical dog of Legba, and we see it again and again in Woodruff County folklore. Legba's ritual color is white, and his darker associates, Ghede and Carrefour, add contrast in the veritable festival of black-white crossroads imagery.

Legba can be found at the entrance to the invisible Voodoo world, the portal pierced by bluesmen at the midnight crossroads. Devotees in Haiti and the United States implore him, "Papa Legba, open the door." A Woodruff County storyteller recalls:

This chain on the door, it crawled across the door from one side to the other as if it was a snake and then went back in place. The door knob, it was just like a vacuum had pulled on it and it was pulled through the back side of the door; then it came back in place. After this, it was a man like no man I've ever seen before on this earth. He was nearly tall as the door and he was glittering white like snow. And he just appeared through the door with both hands with his fingers stretched out pointing directly at me. And it was some kind of, like, fire rays that all was coming to my body. And he was saying something to me, but I never could figure out what he was saying. But after he was finished with what he came to do, he just made a few steps backwards and he went through the door just as he had come in.

The glittering white spirit in this tale may indeed be Legba, the door a manifestation of the portal to the Voodoo realm. The slithering chain can reasonably be interpreted as Simbi, serpent of the crossroads and a powerful god of magic.

Legba is highly qualified to be a patron of bluesmen. In Dahomean myth, he is known as a cosmos-roaming trickster, a rambler rarely bound by boundaries. He makes magic with the best of them, defies authority figures, and is sexually implacable. He also makes a habit of creating scandals. In one Dahomean tale (Herskovits 142-48), the king, citing this very tendency as the reason, declares Legba unfit for domestic life. But Legba tricks his way back into the king's favor and, before the story's over, is with the monarch's daughter, making the beast with two backs.

Legba's most obvious qualification as a patron of bluesmen is his musical prowess. He is a traveling funeral singer, *par excellence*, known for superb improvisational skills and for getting a lot of tips—cowry shells, in this case. The paradox of finding joy in song at a funeral catches the very essence of blues, which is transcendence—transcendence of deep grief through great music.

It is said that Legba holds the hand of Carry-4, and Carry-4 the hand of Ghede. These three powerful crossroads loa, it seems to me, are heavily emphasized components of the Devil of the Blues, that ghostly guitar-wizard at the crossroads. This Devil is the Delta's most vivid personification of a spiritual totality taking in the whole exquisite Voodoo pantheon, the entire mythological world, in fact. The crossroads is the point where flesh and spirit intersect—where the lust and the dust and the wonder of the body meet the shimmering color and passion of the gods.

In the heart of the Delta, the gods are still alive.

*(Pumpkin Bend native Greg Alan Brownderville has nearly completed a book with the working title, Mysteries of the Delta—Folktales of Woodruff County, Arkansas. His email address is gregbrownderville@yahoo.com.)*

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### African American Review

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- Schroeder, Patricia R. "Rootwork: Arthur Flowers, Zora Neale Hurston, and the 'Literary Hoodoo' Tradition." 36.2 (2002): 263-73.
- Simmons, Ryan. "'The Hierarchy Itself': Hurston's Their Eyes Were Watching God and the Sacrifice of Narrative Authority." 36.2 (2002): 181-94.

### American Literary History

Special Issue: Race and Antebellum Literature, Fall 2002.

### American Literature

- Joseph, Philip. "The Verdict from the Porch: Zora Neale Hurston and Reparative Justice." 74.3 (2002): 455-83.

### Faulkner Journal

- Godden, Richard. "A Fable...Whispering about the Wars." 17.2 (2002): 25-88.
- Jones, Jill C. "The Eye of a Needle: Morrison's Paradise, Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!, and the American Jeremaid." 7.2 (2002): 3-24.

### Mississippi Quarterly

- Abate, Michelle Ann. "Reading Red: The Man with the (Gay) Red Tie in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury." 54.3 (2001): 293-312.
- Ahern, Kathleen M. "Images of Pushkin in the Works of the Black 'Pilgrims.'" 55.1 (2001-02): 75-86.
- Bauer, Margaret D. "Ellen Gilchrist's Women Who Would Be Queens (and Those Who Would Dethrone Them)." 55.1 (2001-02): 117-31.
- Bunch, Dianne. "Dangerous Spending Habits: The Epistemology of Edna Pontellier's Extravagant Expenditures in The Awakening." 55.1 (2001-02): 43-62.
- Costello, Brannon. "Hybridity and Racial Identity in Walker Percy's The Last Gentleman." 55.1 (2001-02): 3-42.
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- Ford, Sarah. "Rewriting Violence in Eudora Welty's Losing Battles." 54.1 (2000-01 ): 23-36.
- Gifford, Terry. "Terrain, Character, and Text: Is Cold Mountain by Charles Frazier a Post-Pastoral Novel?" 55.1 (2001-02): 87-96.
- Haddox, Thomas F. "Repeating with a Difference: New Readings of the Quixotic and the Religious in Southern Literature." 55.1 (2001-02): 133-40.

Holstein, Suzy Clarkson. "Into the Swamp at Oblique Angles: Mason's In Country." 54.3 (2001): 327-36.

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Patterson, Laura S. "Ellipsis, Ritual, and 'Real Time': Rethinking the Rape Complex in Southern Novels." 54.1 (2000-01 ): 37-58.

Piacentino, Ed. "Searching for Home: Cross-Racial Bonding in Charles Frazier's Cold Mountain." 55.1 (2001-02): 97-116.

Rippetoe, Rita. "Unstained Shirt, Stained Character: Anse Bundren Reread." 54.3 (2001): 313-26.

Roberts, Terry. "O Lost: A Family History." 55.1 (2001-02): 63-74.

Skaggs, Merrill M. "Viola Roseboro': A Prototype for Cather's My Mortal Enemy." 54.1 (2000-01): 5-21.

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Special Issue: John Faulkner, Fall 2001.

Witschi, Nicolas. "Reading Flannery O'Connor." 54.3 (2001): 399-404.

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- Anderson, Maureen. "Unraveling the Southern Pastoral Tradition: A New Look at Kate Chopin's At Fault." 34.1 (2001): 1-13.
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- Farrell, O'Gorman. "Languages of Mystery: Walker Percy's Legacy in Contemporary Southern Fiction." 34.2 (2002): 97-119.
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- Hagwood, Taylor. "Faulkner's 'Fabulous Immeasurable Camelots': Absalom, Absalom! and Le Morte Darthur." 34.2 (2002): 45-63.
- Holladay, Hilary. "Black Names in White Spaces: Lucille Clifton's South." 34.2 (2002): 120-33.

- Kraver, Jeraldine. " 'Mobile Images': Myth and Resistance in Nikky Finney's *Rice*." 34.2 (2002): 134-47.
- Kurant, Wendy. "The Power of Love: The Education of a Domestic Woman in Mary Boykin Chesnut's *Two Years*." 34.2 (2002): 14-29.
- Manning, Carol S. "Hurston and Welty, Janie and Livvie." 34.2 (2002): 64-72.
- Owen, Jim. "Phoenix Jackson, William Wallace, and King MacLain: Welty's Mythic Travelers." 34.1 (2001): 29-43.
- Shaheen, Aaron. "Seizing the 'Bounty of This Virtuous Tree': The Sexual Underpinnings of Jeffersonian Pastoralism in *Brother to Dragons*." 34.2 (2002): 73-96.
- Wagner-Martin, Linda, Lucy Ferriss, and Robert M. West. "Race and Class in Faulkner." 34.2 (2002): 148-64.
- Wu, Cynthia. "Expanding Southern Whiteness: Reconceptualizing Ethnic Difference in the Short Fiction...." 34.1 (2001): 44-55.
- Wyatt-Brown, Bertram. "William Styron's *Sophie's Choice*: Poland, the South, and the Tragedy of Suicide." 34.1 (2001): 56-67.
- The Southern Quarterly**
- Boren, Mark Edelman. "The Southern Super Collider: William Faulkner Smashes Language into Reality in *As I Lay Dying*." 40.4 (2002): 21-38.
- Byrd-Cook, Linda J. "Reconciliation with the Great Mother Goddess in Lee Smith's *Saving Grace*." 40.4 (2002): 97-112.
- Chaney, Michael A. "Touring the Spectacle of Slavery at Magnolia Gardens Plantation." 40.4 (2002): 126-40.
- Chinn, Nancy. "Slavery as Illness: Medicine in Willa Cather's *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*." 40.4 (2002): 68-82.
- Cullick, Jonathan S. " 'A Valuable Connection': Communication and Communion in Walker Percy's *The Thanatos Syndrome*." 40.4 (2002): 113-25.
- Disheroon-Green, Suzanne. "Whither Thou Goest, We Will Go: Lovers and Ladies in *The Awakening*." 40.4 (2002): 83-96.
- Maus, Derek. "Another Roadside Epiphany: Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood* and Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* as Religious Satires." 40.4 (2002): 53-67.
- Noble, Bonnie J. " 'Laud and Love her simply': Lucas Cranach the Elder's Madonna in the North Carolina Museum of Art." 40.4 (2002): 4-20.
- Special Issue: Robert Hazel, Spring 2002.
- Wall, Carey. "Ritual Technique and Renewal in Eudora Welty's 'Kin.'" 40.4 (2002): 39-52.
- The Virginia Quarterly**
- Peacock, James. "The South in a Global World." 78.4 (2002): 581-94.

## *For the Next Issue . . .*

Tell *your* story. In an essay of up to 350 words, write about how you first became interested in Southern literature. What Southern author or work first excited, troubled, or otherwise engaged you? How has your reading, teaching, writing, or understanding of Southern literature changed over time?

Please send responses by email to [sssl@uark.edu](mailto:sssl@uark.edu) by March 15, 2003. Be sure to include your name, title, and university affiliation.



## Members in the Spotlight

On November 17, 2002, North Carolina Literary Review editor **Margaret Bauer** of East Carolina University appeared on a panel concerning publishing in small literary magazines at the North Carolina Writers Network. She is also teaching a course on Southern literature being offered for the first time at East Carolina University; the class is full!

In 2001 **Ben Fisher** was named “Teacher of the Year” at the University of Mississippi; upon being presented with the award he delivered “Poe and 1890s.” He was also named William Winter Scholar (2000-2001), an honor awarded by the Mississippi Humanities Council. Fisher’s recent presentations include the following: “Simms’s Poetic Southern Gothic” at the Simms Society Session, ALA (2002) and “Poe’s ‘King Pest’ in the Folio Context” at the Poe Studies Association session, ALA (2002).

A special session organized by **Joan Wylie Hall** “Audre Lorde, New Yorker” has been accepted for the MLA’s December 2002 meeting in New York, and she is collecting Lorde’s interviews for a volume in the University Press of Mississippi’s Literary Conversations Series.

**Linda Hollandsworth** is currently working with William Sessions on an edition of short stories by Elizabeth Hester.

**M. Thomas Inge**, an English professor at Randolph-Macon College and internationally recognized authority on popular culture has accepted an appointment as Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Louisville in Kentucky for the spring semester of 2003. While there, Inge will teach a course on the history of animation and its artistic importance in American culture. Since 1984 Inge has been on the faculty of Randolph-Macon College where he teaches courses on Walt Disney, Southern literature, and American humor. He is co-editor of a four-volume reference work, *The Greenwood Guide to American Popular Culture* (2002).

During the spring **John Lowe** presented his paper “Penal Confinement as Fact and Metaphor in the Fiction of Ernest Gaines” at the College Language Association in Memphis in April of 2002. He also traveled to Stresa, Italy, in July of the same year to read his paper “In the (Bull)ring with Ernest Hemingway and Richard Wright” at the International Hemingway Association Conference.

The North Carolina Literary Review, published by East Carolina University and the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association, recently celebrated its tenth anniversary with a special issue featuring topics covered in the preceding ten issues. Among the contributors to this issue is SSSL member **Jim Watkins** of Berry College. Also included in the issue are two chapters that had been cut from Mabel Wolfe Wheaton’s biography of the family of her brother, Thomas Wolfe, and an original story by Fred Chappell. (For a complete table of contents and other NCLR information, see [www.ecu.edu/nclr](http://www.ecu.edu/nclr).)

**Mary Ann Wimsatt** is currently working on a book about Baldwin, the only one of the major Old Southwestern humorists on whom no book has been published. From 1994 through 1999, she served as Chief Scholar for “StoryLines Southeast,” a radio program that was part of a larger series, “StoryLines America,” a joint project of National Public Radio and the National American Library Association that was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Broadcast from WUNC, “StoryLines Southeast” aired in the region from October through December 1999.

## Postcolonial Theory, the U.S. South, and New World Studies

Jon Smith

Mississippi State University

When Bob Brinkmeyer asked me to compose a short piece on postcolonial theory, the U.S. South, and New World Studies—the subjects of an upcoming joint ALA/SSSL Symposium in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, a special issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*, and a forthcoming (soon! soon!) edited collection from Duke University Press, all of which I'm involved with in one way or another, I thought of just submitting, tongue partly in cheek, one of those in/out lists:

### IN

Edouard Glissant  
Marvelous realism  
Caribbean space  
Postcolonial theory  
Liminal spaces  
Comparatist studies  
Global-southern Faulkner  
Latino & Asian Southernnesses  
New Orleans/Atlanta (as paradigms)  
Wars of 1848 and 1898  
Tell My Horse  
Hybridity

### OUT

The Nashville Agrarians  
K-mart realism  
Sense of place  
Resistance to theory  
Mason-Dixon line  
Exceptionalist studies  
U.S. Southern Faulkner  
Black & White Southernnesses  
Jefferson/Mayberry (as paradigms)  
War of 1861-1865  
Their Eyes Were Watching God  
Binarisms (e.g., in/out)

Such lists tend to lose in glibness what they gain in pith, but this one I derived pretty much empirically. In helping assemble the program for the Puerto Vallarta conference and the essays for the Duke book and helping edit *Mississippi Quarterly*, not to mention attending two of the last three Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conferences and the last three or four MLAs and SSSLs, I've now read or heard over a hundred essays, papers, and abstracts taking items from the left column as their starting point. Most of these appeared in just the past year.

What's going on? I'll outline four premises here, some of which have already been noted by Fred Hobson in his introduction to *South to the Future*.

- 1) Postcolonial theory and globalization more broadly have enabled us to see Southern culture not as distinctive within the U.S. but as remarkably similar to other colonized regions, from Southern Italy (Kreyling, Doyle) to Latin America and the Caribbean (Cohn, Ladd, Handley). Woodward, of course, said something similar a long time ago, but today the emphasis is less on the "experience of defeat" than on the "experience of colonization." Black Southerners weren't "defeated" in 1865, but for much of the region's history virtually *all* Southerners experienced a colonial relation

to Northeastern capital. Charles Chesnutt, for example, reminds us just how thoroughly Black Southerners got the short end of *that* stick.

- 2) American Studies is morphing into New World Studies, and the new methodologies, often derived from such plantation-Caribbean thinkers as José Martí, Edouard Glissant, and C.L.R. James, often work better on the plantation South than on the rest of the U.S.
- 3) Because these new methodologies incorporate from the get-go literal and cultural race conflict and race mixing, they are also turning out to work better on much of the South than our own Agrarian-descended models, by which in recent years we have tried rather unsuccessfully to cram Black Southerners and white women into paradigms constructed by and about white men.
- 4) Postcolonial theory is trying to move past easy distinctions between First and Third Worlds. The U.S. South shimmers uncannily as both Self and Other not only before the imperial gaze of the London or New York metropole but also before the global-southern gaze of what Srinivas Aravamudan has called the tropicopolitan. In other words, both Yankees and, say, Spanish Americans tend to look at the South and see, alternately and simultaneously, aspects of themselves they acknowledge and aspects of themselves they disown. As it turns out, the South is every Narcissus' mirror (including its own).
- 5) Scholars are finally realizing that there is no understanding American culture without understanding African American culture, and no understanding African American culture without understanding the South.

As a result of all this, Southernists suddenly find themselves potentially more central to literary and cultural studies than we perhaps have ever been. Such centrality requires, however, a certain shift in training. In five years, the ideal recently-minted Ph.D. in Southern literature will be able to

- 1) Place Southern literature in relation to postcolonial theory as easily as a Caribbeanist can do so today, with a similar sense of tension between local and global models;
- 2) Read French/or Spanish;
- 3) Teach a course in New World plantation fiction;
- 4) Teach a course in minority Southern literatures other than African American; and
- 5) Talk about Texas and Cuba as easily as about Virginia and Mississippi.

Who *wouldn't* hire such a scholar?

# Recent Or Forthcoming Member Publications

- Bauer, Margaret. "Ellen Gilchrist's Women Who Would Be Queens (and Those Who Would Dethrone Them)." *Mississippi Quarterly* 55.1 (2001-02): 117-31.
- Desmond, John. "Flannery O'Connor and the Symbol." *Logos* 40.4 (2002).
- . "Where is that Voice Coming From? Walker Percy and the Demonic." *Christianity and Literature*. Summer 2002. (Plenary address delivered at the Southern meeting of the Conference on Christianity and Literature, New Orleans, Feb. 2002).
- Fisher, Ben. "Poe and Detection [Again]." *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 1.1 (2000): 17-23.
- . "Poe and the John-Donkey—A Nasty Piece of Work." *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 29 (October 2000): 17-41.
- . "Poe and the Gothic Tradition." *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 72-91.
- . "'To Distinguish Between One that Translates and One that Invents': Some Recondite Beckford Legacies." *Fictions of Unease: The Gothic from Otranto to the X-Files*. Ed. Andrew Smith, Diane Mason and William Hughes. Bath: Sulis, 2002: 43-57.
- . "Mary Noailles Murfree." *The History of Southern Women's Literature* Ed. Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. 187-92.
- Fowler, Doreen. "Carson McCullers' Primal Scenes: The Ballad of the Sad Café." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 43.3 (2002): 260-70.
- . "Psychoanalytical Criticism of Faulkner." *A Companion to William Faulkner Studies*. Ed. Charles A. Peek and Robert W. Hamblin. Westport, CT: Greenwood, forthcoming.
- . "Reading the Absences: Race and Narration in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*" *Faulkner at 100: Retrospect and Prospect*. Ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000.
- . "Revising *The Sound and the Fury*: *Absalom, Absalom!* and Faulkner's Postmodern Turn." *Faulkner and Postmodernism*. Ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and John Duvall. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2002.
- . "Tracing Racial Assumptions: Teaching Faulkner's 'That Evening Sun.'" *Teaching Faulkner. Methods and Approaches*. Ed. Stephen Hahn and Robert W. Hamblin. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000.
- . "William Faulkner." *An Encyclopedia of American Literature of the Sea and the Great Lakes*. Ed. Jill B. Gidmark. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2000.
- . "William Faulkner's Influence." *The Companion to Southern Literature*. Ed. Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda MacKethan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2001. 253-54.
- Hall, Joan Wylie. "Dialect Literature" and "Vernacular Voice" in *The Companion to Southern Literature*. Ed. Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda H. MacKethan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. 206-7; 931-32.
- . "Louisiana Writers of the Postbellum South." *The History of Southern Women's Literature*. Ed. Carolyn Perry and Mary Louise Weaks. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. 201-9.

- . "Ann Patchett's 'Imagination Travel.'" *The Southern Register* (Winter 2002): 13-14.
- . "Arriving Where She Started: Redemption at Scrabble Creek in Lee Smith's *Saving Grace*." *Pembroke Magazine* 34 (2002): 91-9.
- . "Living 'Amid Romance': Ethnic Cultures in Ruth McEnery Stuart's *New Orleans Stories*." *Songs of the Reconstructing South: Building Literary Louisiana, 1865-1945*. Ed. Suzanne Disheroon-Green and Lisa Abney. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002. 64-74.
- Hollandsworth, Linda. "'Sophisticated Acts': The Friendship of Flannery O'Connor and William Sessions." *The Southern Quarterly* 38.4 (2000): 93-100.
- Inge, M. Thomas. "Al Capp's South: Appalachian Humor in *Li'l Abner*." *Studies in American Humor*. 3.8 (2001): 4-20.
- . "Collaboration and Concepts of Authorship." *PMLA* 116 (2001): 623-30.
- . "Frontier Humor and Class Conflict." *American Humor*. Ed. Micael Nolan. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2001. 64-70.
- . "Humor in the United States." *Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*. 2nd ed. Ed. George Perkins, et al. New York: HarperCollins, 2002. 929-34.
- . "Humor: 1900 to Present." *The Companion to Southern Literature*. Ed. Joseph M. Flora and Lucinda MacKethan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2002. 356-61.
- . "Poe and the Comics Connection." *Edgar Allan Poe Review* 2.1 (2001): 2-29.
- . *The Humor of the Old South*. Ed. Thomas M. Inge and Edward J. Piacentino. Lexington, UP of Kentucky, 2001.
- . "Vanderbilt and Beyond: The Legacy of the Fugitives." *Southern Literary Journal* 34 .1 (2001): 140-43.
- Lowe, John. "'Satisfy My Soul': Resurrecting Hurston from the Archive." *The World and I* 17. 5 (2002): 195-207.
- . "'Let the People Sing!' Zora Neale Hurston and the Dream of a Negro Theatre." *Southern Women Playwrights*. Ed. Robert McDonald and Linda Paige. Tuscaloosa, AL: U of Alabama P, 2002. 11-26.
- . "The Fraternal Fury of the Falkners and the Bundrens." *Mississippi Quarterly* 54.3 (2001): 595-624.
- . "Joaquin Murieta, Mexican History, and Popular Myths of Freedom." *Journal of Popular Culture* 35. 2 (2001): 25-39.
- Millichap, Joe. *Dixie Limited: Railroads, Culture, and the Southern Renaissance*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2002.
- . *Classical Literature, American Culture, and the Southern Renaissance*, forthcoming.
- Piacentino, Ed. "Searching for Home: Cross-Racial Bonding in Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain*." *Mississippi Quarterly* 55 (2001-02): 97-116.
- Pridgen, Allen. *Walker Percy's Sacramental Landscapes: The Search in the Desert*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP; London: Associated U Presses, 2000.
- . "James Lee Burke's *Dave Robicheaux: The Search for Home*." *The Southern Quarterly*, forthcoming.
- Wimsatt, Mary Ann. "Bench and Bar: Baldwin's Lawyerly Humor." *Humor of the Old South*. Ed. M. Thomas Inge and Ed Piacentino. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 2001.

## Nominees for the SSSL Executive Council

Cast your vote by checking four names. Detach this ballot, and send to Jeff Abernathy, Office of Academic Affairs, Illinois College, 1101 West College Avenue, Jacksonville, Illinois 62650. Deadline for receiving ballots is **January 20, 2003**.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Susan Harrison** is a professor of Rhetoric and the Associate Dean of General Education at Eckerd College where she teaches writing and literature. She served as the Vice President of the Eudora Welty Society in 1999 and 2000, then as President in 2001 and 2002. She is the author of *Eudora Welty and Virginia Woolf: Gender, Genre, and Influence* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1997) as well as articles about Eudora Welty and other Southern writers. Currently she is working on a study of Southern fiction and the civil rights movement.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Ed Piacentino**, professor of English at High Point University in North Carolina, is a specialist in Southern literature. His books include *The Humor of the Old South* (edited with M. Thomas Inge, 2001), a facsimile edition of T. S. Stribling's *Birthright*, a facsimile edition of *Doesticks: What He Says*, by Mortimer N. Thomson, and *T. S. Stribling: Pioneer Realist In Modern Southern Literature* (1988). He has also published numerous articles and reviews in American and Southern literature and culture in such journals as the *Mississippi Quarterly*, *Southern Literary Journal*, *Southern Studies*, *Studies in American Humor*, *American Literature*, *American Quarterly*, *South Atlantic Review*, *Poe Studies*, *South Carolina Review*, *Studies in Short Fiction*, and *Studies in Popular Culture*. He has presented papers and lectures at SSSL, SAMLA, NEMLA, Popular Culture Association of the South, Popular Culture Association of America, Philological Association of the Carolinas, and the University of Nottingham in England. He has contributed articles on Southern writers and culture to *A Companion to Southern Literature*, *Southern Writers: A Biographical Dictionary*, *Encyclopedia of American Humor*, *American Humor Magazines and COM! IC Periodicals*, and *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. *Intersecting Paths: The Continuing Legacy of the Humor of the Old Southwest*, a collection of new essays by various contributors he has edited, is currently under review at Louisiana State University Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Gary Richards** received his Ph.D. from Vanderbilt in 1996 and is currently an assistant professor of English at the University of New Orleans. Specializing in gender and sexuality in Southern fiction, he has published on Truman Capote, William Goyen, Beth Henley, and Alfred Uhry in the *Southern Quarterly*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, and *Journal of Homosexuality*. Louisiana State University Press anticipates a spring 2004 publication of his study *Lovers and Beloveds: Sexual Otherness in Mid-Twentieth Century Southern Fiction*.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Riché Richardson** received her Ph.D. in American literature from Duke University in 1998. She is currently an assistant professor of English at the University of California, Davis, where she specializes in African American literature with an emphasis on studies of the South in the United States. Her other interests include critical theory, cultural studies, and feminism and gender studies, including masculinities and the relation of feminism and philosophy. Most recently, she was a 2001-2002 Ford Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University. Her forthcoming and developing publications treat topics such as the status of the South in formations of race and masculinity in the African American context, Southern rap, psychoanalysis, race, and masculinity in contemporary African American literature and film, and the utility of transnational and diasporan perspectives in the contemporary Southern turn in black studies and American studies. She is working to complete a book-length study entitled *Masculinity, Black Identity and the South: From Uncle Tom to Gangsta* and is co-editing an anthology entitled *Blackness in Global Contexts*, which includes proceedings from a national conference held at UC Davis in the spring of 2002 that she co-coordinated with Moradewun Adejumo. Riché is a Montgomery, Alabama, native, and her interests include collecting Southern folk art and making mixed-media appliqué art quilts.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Judith L. Sensibar** is a professor in the English department and Affiliate in the Women's Studies and Humanities Programs at Arizona State University. Author of *The Origins of Faulkner's Art* (U of Texas P, 1984) and the forthcoming *Faulkner and Love: Maud Falkner, Caroline Barr, and Estelle Oldham Falkner* (Yale UP), she has served as the Prose Fiction Delegate to the MLA General Assembly (1998-2000) and on the Executive Committees of the SSSL/MLA Discussion Group (1996-2000) and the Faulkner Society (1992-1994, 1997-) where she has organized MLA sessions on Southern memoirs and novels that included speakers such as Minrose Gwin, Deborah McDowell, Barbara Ladd, and Thadious Davis.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Jon Smith** is currently assistant professor of English at Mississippi State University and Managing Editor of the *Mississippi Quarterly*. His essays and essay-reviews on Southern literature have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Literary History*, *Contemporary Literature*, the *Faulkner Journal*, the *Southern Literary Journal*, and the collection *South to a New Place*. With Deborah Cohn, he is coediting *Look Away! Postcolonial Theory, the U.S. South, and New World Studies*, forthcoming from Duke UP, and his book project *Southern Culture on the Skids: Punk, Retro, Narcissism, and the Burden of Southern History* is under advance contract with UP of Mississippi. He is directing the December 2002 joint ALA/SSSL symposium on "Postcolonial Theory, the U.S. South, and New World Studies."

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Fill out and detach and this sheet, include a check for \$10 made out to the Society for the Study of Southern Literature, and send your request to Jeff Abernathy, Office of Academic Affairs, Illinois College, 1101 West College Avenue, Jacksonville, Illinois 62650. (Members receive two Newsletters.)

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Please include your name and affiliation. Submit information in any of the following categories. Please use a separate sheet.

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### What's Inside:

- Information on SSSL Executive Council Nominees & Ballot
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