

# the Southern Register

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE • WINTER 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI



## Ted Ownby Named Director of Center

After searching far and wide for a new director for the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, it turns out the ideal candidate was in the Center's own backyard. Former interim director Ted Ownby, professor of History and Southern Studies, was chosen to take the helm as permanent director in December.

"We did a full scale, international search, and we had lots of candidates who applied and visited campus and at the end of the process we had not hired anyone," Ownby said. So this fall, he decided to apply.

Ownby, who earned his BA from Vanderbilt and MA and doctorate from Johns Hopkins, is a coeditor of the forthcoming *Mississippi Encyclopedia* and coeditor of the *Gender* volume in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. He is the author of two books, *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865–1920* and *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty, and Culture, 1830–1998*, and he has edited collections of essays on slavery, the role of ideas in the civil rights movement, and manners in Southern history.

He said he enjoys working with the wide range of people and activities at the Center. "I realized a long time ago that part of what attracts people



David Wharton

Ted Ownby

to Southern Studies is the freedom to be creative, through interdisciplinary scholarship or through connections between scholarship and the rest of the world. That freedom has brought the Center people who have unique abilities," Ownby said. "The Center encourages new ideas, and our academic program draws majors and graduate students who are willing to have a unique degree. The students tend to be open-minded and have their own ideas about what an education should be, and our

faculty and staff both respond to and help shape a lot of those ideas."

Ownby says that it is crucial that Southern Studies keeps changing. "Part of the excitement of this program is that the students change, academia certainly changes, and the South itself keeps changing. Part of our job is to take the topics that bring people to Southern Studies, study those topics well, and also to expand the range

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

HAPPY NEW YEAR. This is my first column as the new director of the Center. Since Charles Wilson became Kelly Gene Cook Chair of History and Southern Studies in fall 2007, I have been serving as interim director. When the Center conducted a search for a new director last year, many of us hoped to hire someone from outside the University of Mississippi. The goal was to hire someone with a different set of experiences and some new ideas. When that search did not end with the hiring of a new director, I decided to apply the position, hoping both that I understand what works well at the Center and also that I can help us develop some new ideas. I was flattered to be offered the position of director in December.

In the various discussions that were part of the interview process (being interviewed by friends was odd, but not really painful), I mentioned a few principles I would try to use as director.

First, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture begins with the academic program. One of many things the original designers of the Center did absolutely right was to put the teaching of students in an undergraduate and graduate program at the center of our mission. Many academic institutions come and go or, worse, start and stagnate, in part because they fail to generate the excitement and new ideas and need for relevance that comes from teaching students. I am excited by efforts many colleagues are making to broaden Southern Studies teaching in various directions, among them the global South, foodways, racial definition and reconciliation, studying and making film, and discovering new theories about place and region. Making sure teaching and scholarship remain at the center of Southern Studies means, among other things, making connections between outreach and teaching, keeping graduate funding in mind in discussing new projects, and—always—keeping up with current scholarship.

Second, the Center has long relied on partnerships with various departments around the University, and I want to continue those partnerships, making sure we are all benefiting from them, and develop new ones. The range of the Center makes it ideal to keep building new and even better bonds with those outside Barnard Observatory.

Third, the Center and its alumni and friends have over the past three decades developed a set of accomplishments and skills we can continue to use for the benefit of the program. For example, we can invite interested Southern Studies alumni to visit and, when possible, give presentations, or we can start working to put more photography by Center faculty and staff and alumni on the walls of Barnard Observatory. We can call on Southern Studies alumni to consider becoming more involved in making financial contributions to the Center. Above all, we can use suggestions.

Finally, I am encouraging faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends to start discussing new ideas so the Center will be ready to be pursuing them by the time we complete our encyclopedia projects. The *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, published in 1989, its successor *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, and the not-yet-published *Mississippi Encyclopedia* have been extraordinary in making the Center a place that sets agendas for scholarship, identifies and publishes the work of new and established scholars, and brings that scholarship together in accessible ways. *The New Encyclopedia* just published the 12th volume (*Music*) of an eventual 24-volume set, and the *Mississippi Encyclopedia* will be ready to be published in 2010. We need to make plans so that, when our last encyclopedia volume is published, we are pursuing other ideas.

So, I encourage everyone reading the *Southern Register* to send ideas—big or small, complimentary or critical, similar to past projects or completely new, simple or impractical, inexpensive or virtually unfindable—to me at [hownby@olemiss.edu](mailto:hownby@olemiss.edu) or by mail at Barnard Observatory. The faculty and staff will consider all of them in discussions we will have about new possibilities in the coming months.

Just a word about the help friends and colleagues offered in my time as interim direc-

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*continued on page 29*

# Living Blues Symposium Set for February 26–27, 2009

Focused on documenting the blues, the *Living Blues* Symposium includes dedication of the *Living Blues* Trail Marker by the Mississippi Blues Commission, an address by David Evans as the Early Wright keynote speaker, a sampling of some recently digitized Alan Lomax

Recordings from the University's Blues Archive, and a jam session with the audience. A special edition of *Thacker Mountain Radio* and a *Highway 61 Radio/Southern Foodways Alliance* reception also are planned.

"We will also have a field recording panel discussion with George Mitchell and University of Georgia art professor Art Rosenbaum," said Mark Camarigg, *Living Blues* publications manager. "Mitchell was the first to record R. L. Burnside in 1967, and Rosenbaum just received two Grammy nominations for his recent box set, *Art of Field Recording, Volume I: 50 Years of Traditional American Music Documented by Art Rosenbaum*."

The symposium culminates February 27 with an 8 p.m. performance by soul and gospel singer Mavis Staples at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts. From her early days of sharing lead vocals with her groundbreaking family gospel group, The Staple Singers, to her storied solo recordings, Staples has been an inspirational force in modern popular culture and music.

Symposium sessions are free and open to the public except the Staples concert. Tickets to the concert are \$24 for general admission and can be purchased by calling 662-915-2787.

"On Friday, February 27, *Living Blues* and the Blues Archive will receive a Blues Trail Marker from the State of Mississippi Blues Commission. It is the first trail marker in Lafayette County and is sponsored in part by the Oxford Tourism Council," Camarigg said.

The Mississippi Blues Trail features



more than 120 historical markers and interpretive sites located throughout the state and will continue to be developed in phases as funding becomes available. Phase 1 of the Trail consisted of nine markers that were funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Greg Johnson, curator of the University's Blues Archive, will unveil some newly digitized audio and video from the Alan Lomax Archive. "Much of what we know about the history and development of blues music and culture was passed along to us through the research of David Evans, George Mitchell, Alan Lomax, Jim O'Neal, and others," said Johnson. "We'll be able to hear stories from the pioneering days of recording previously unheard musicians for scholarly and commercial purposes. We'll hear how academic and fan-based pursuits of the blues exposed this music to worldwide audiences."

Symposium sessions are to be held in Barnard Observatory. Sponsors include the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Oxford Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, Mississippi Development Authority, the University's Department of Archives and Special Collections in the J. D. Williams Library, and Austin's Music.

For more information, call 662-915-5742 or e-mail [info@livingblues.com](mailto:info@livingblues.com), or go to [www.livingblues.com](http://www.livingblues.com). For assistance related to a disability, call 662-915-7236.

REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY

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of topics to study. A lot of people assume that Southern Studies is about just one or two things—that it's about race, or poverty. Or it's about religion, or literature, or music. Or that it's all wrapped up in a history where the concept of the South used to matter to a lot of people but doesn't matter so much anymore. Or that it's about what C. Vann Woodward called 'the burden of Southern history.'" Ownby continues, "In fact, Southern Studies is about all those things, but it is about more than that, and it is always changing."

Glenn Hopkins, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, said Ownby was a perfect fit for the Center. "Ted Ownby has been a member of the faculty of the Center for 20 years and is intimately familiar with all aspects of the Center's work," said Hopkins. "This knowledge, along with his leadership and deep belief in the mission of the Center, made him an obvious choice for director."

To Ownby, being director means trying to be a partner with numerous ongoing projects, including *Living Blues*, the Oxford Conference for the Book, the Southern Foodways Alliance, two encyclopedias, and documentary projects.

"I think that everything starts with teaching and academics," Ownby said. "I want to keep building new partnerships inside and outside the University, and encourage Center faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends to think of big, new ideas. The Center has done some extraordinary and far-sighted things and we need to keep looking ahead. I look forward to seeing what happens next."

Beyond that, there is another reason Ownby continues after two decades at the University. "Being at the Center has been a way for me to be part of a pretty exciting set of projects and questions and possibilities. We study serious things, but it's usually fun here," he said.

REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY



**JANUARY**

- 21 "South Apopka: A Community Portrait: A Gammill Gallery Talk"  
Bob Michaels, Documentary Photographer  
Apopka, Florida
- 28 "Oxford Film Festival: The Previews"  
Michelle Emmanuel, Molly Ferguson, and Micah Ginn, Coordinators  
Oxford Film Festival

**FEBRUARY**

- 4 "University Media Production Film Projects"  
Rebecca Batey, Eric Feldman, and Ferriday Mansel  
Southern Studies Graduate Students
- 11 "USpeak: Giving Voice to College Students"  
Artair Rogers, Winter Institute Intern
- 18 "One Mississippi: Bringing College Students Together"  
Melissa Cole, Winter Institute Intern
- 25 "Documenting the Blues at Ole Miss"  
Greg Johnson, Blues Archivist, Special Collections  
Williams Library



## Brown Bag Lunch and Lecture Series

### Spring 2009

The Brown Bag Luncheon Series takes place each Wednesday at noon in the Barnard Observatory Lecture Hall during the regular academic year.

Scott Barretta, Host,  
Highway 61 Blues Radio  
Mark Camarrigg,  
Managing Editor  
Living Blues Magazine

**MARCH**

- 4 "Football Flashbacks: Classic Film Footage from the Ole Miss Archives"  
Micah Ginn, Producer Director, University Media Production  
Joe York, Filmmaker, University Media Production
- 11 "The Second Strange Career of Jim Crow"  
Will Hustwit, Instructor  
Department of History

**SPRING BREAK**

- 25 Oxford Conference for the Book:  
A Preview

**APRIL**

- 1 "A Photographic Survey of Oxford"  
Documentary Photography Students
- 8 "Should Christians Dance?: The American Play Party"  
Alan Spurgeon, Professor of Music
- 15 "Thacker Mountain Radio Hour: A History"  
Mary Warner, Southern Studies Graduate Student
- 22 "Mississippi Folk: A Summer Preview of Traditional Art, Music, and Culture in the Magnolia State"  
Mary Margaret Miller, Heritage Program director, Mississippi Arts Commission
- 29 "Singing the Gospel in the Springtime"  
University of Mississippi Gospel Choir

Lynn &amp; Stewart

Gammill



Gallery

## Exhibition Schedule

January 21–March 26, 2009  
Bob Michaels  
*South Apopka: A Community Portrait*

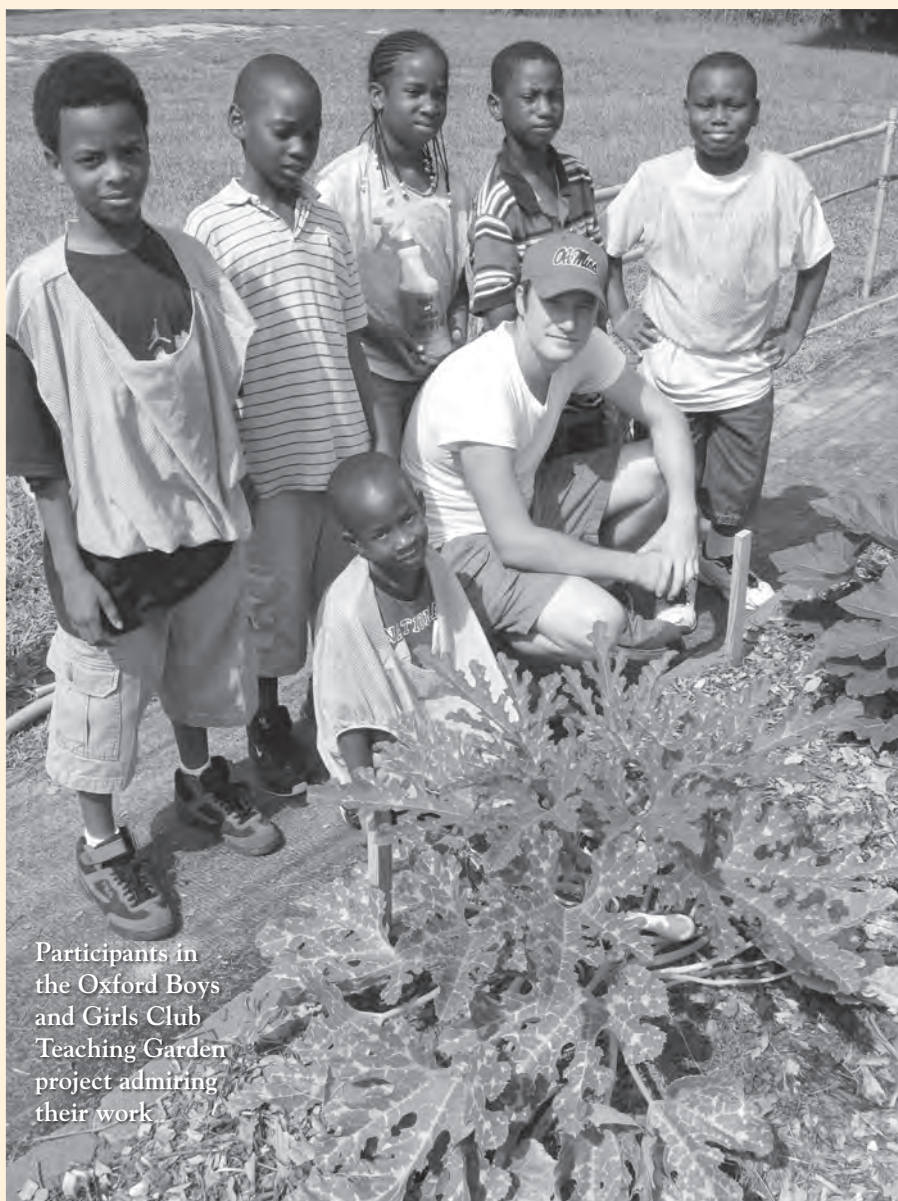
March 30–June 12, 2009  
Documentary Photography Students  
*Oxford, Mississippi:  
A Photographic Survey, 2008*

The Gammill Gallery, located in Barnard Observatory, is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m., except for University holidays. Telephone: 662-915-5993.

# Local Children “Dig” Gardening

Interest in environmental education is gaining momentum across the country. As individuals and groups turn their attention to issues of sustainability, there is a growing desire to introduce the importance of these topics to children. Global warming, food politics, and health issues are interrelated subjects that students at the Oxford Boys and Girls Club are exploring through a new Teaching Garden program. The joint efforts of the Barksdale Clubhouse, the Oxford Gardening Club, and the Southern Foodways Alliance helped implement an education program in which local Boys and Girls Club participants from ages six to 12 are involved in all aspects of caring for a 40-foot-by-120-foot vegetable and herb garden, including planting, watering, weeding, fertilizing, and harvesting. The mission of the Boys and Girls Club Teaching Garden is to help students understand the role of food in life—the garden stresses the importance of proper stewardship of the land and an appreciation for nature while promoting improved nutrition and academic success by highlighting healthy foods through educational programming.

The master plan of the Teaching Garden is to incorporate permanent raised beds divided into five parts including a *friendship garden*, which will consist of items donated by local residences and planted by students and their parents; a *native plant area* to be used for teaching children about identifying, using, and planting native plants and vegetables; an *herb garden* consisting of both edibles and ornamentals; a *flower garden*, which will attract beneficial insects and promote aesthetic enrichment; and a *vegetable garden*, which will provide the bulk of the students’ learning experience. Although not officially certified, the Teaching Garden adheres to and promotes organic methods of plant production in order to educate students on the benefits of environmental sustainability and proper stewardship of the land. There are plans to eventually expand the learning experience into the Boys and Girls Club’s kitchen by implementing curriculum that promotes healthy eating options through the students’



Participants in the Oxford Boys and Girls Club Teaching Garden project admiring their work

Anya Croner

preparation and cooking of the produce they raise in the garden.

The summer 2008 pilot program was a great success. The students eagerly anticipated their daily garden experience, and while this was most of the the participants’ first time in a garden, others brought a previous cultural appreciation of gardening from growing up spending time helping to tend their families’ plots at home. The garden produced a wide range of vegetables, herbs, and flowers, including five varieties of heirloom tomatoes, local favorites such as squash and okra, and several types of flowers. Students made weekly donations to the local food bank and enjoyed the rest

of the large summer harvest with their families.

There is a desire to expand the program in 2009, with a focus on community involvement. Volunteer opportunities exist this summer for anyone willing to donate time to work with the students, and individuals with previous gardening experience are welcome to assist in program and activity planning. Funding donations are also welcome. Anyone interested in participating in the Oxford Boys and Girls Club Teaching Garden can contact me at [cmnicho1@olemiss.edu](mailto:cmnicho1@olemiss.edu).

CALE NICHOLSON

# Southern Studies Alumni and Their New Jobs

In hard economic times, it is easy to imagine that new graduates may have difficulty finding jobs they want. The happy news is Southern Studies graduates continue to find new and interesting positions. Here is a short albeit incomplete list of some of the program's graduates and the positions they have taken within the past year.

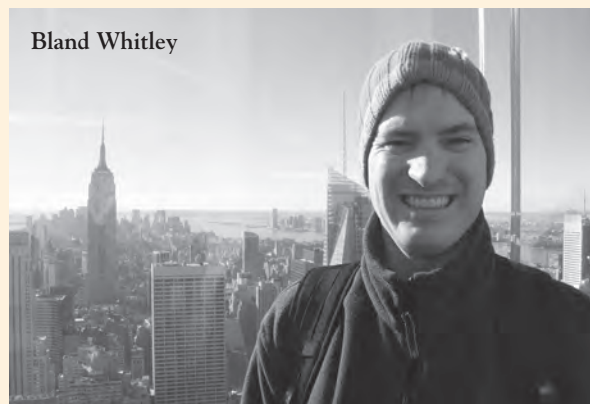
Mary Margaret Miller (MA 2007), with a graduate degree in Southern Studies and an undergraduate major in journalism and minor in Southern Studies, seems ideal for her new position as director of the Heritage Program of the Mississippi Arts Commission in Jackson. A Greenwood native, she has moved back to Mississippi after some time working in communications in Nashville. Teresa Parker Farris (MA 2005) is the marketing coordinator at the Newcomb Art Gallery at Tulane in New Orleans, where she is teaching classes on folklife in Louisiana. Governor Bobby Jindal recently appointed her to serve on the Louisiana Folklife Commission. Here on campus, Aaron Rollins, a current master's student, will become a recruiter for the University of Mississippi Graduate School.

Hicks Wogan (MA 2008) is working in Washington, D.C., at the Newseum, where he researches and writes exhibits.



Beth Boyd

Becca Walton Evans (MA 2008) is the development coordinator for the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah. Sarah Abdelnour (MA 2008) took a position as operations logistics associate at Teach for America in New York City. Miranda Cully (MA 2008) teaches school in Oxford while also working at *Living Blues*, and Mark Coltrain (MA 2008) has taken a job in the library at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte. Laura Anne Heller (BA 2000) has started work at a new position as archivist/librarian at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City. Katherine Huntoon (MA 2007) has a new position as director of exhibition programming at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond. Bland Whitley (MA 1996) moved from Richmond to Princeton to work for the Thomas Jefferson Papers. Ellie Campbell (MA 2006) has returned from England to Oxford, where she works in Special Collections at the John D. Williams Library. Rebecca Domm (MA 2008) is interning for a law firm in Nashville, and numerous alumni are either lawyers or lawyers in training. Joyce Miller (MA 1992) has moved to New Orleans, where she is helping organize KnowLA: The Online Encyclopedia of Louisiana for the Louisiana Humanities Center.



Bland Whitley



Mary Margaret Miller



Hicks Wogan

Bert Way (MA 1999) is preparing his work on Southern environmental history for publication while he has a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of South Carolina. Molly McGehee (MA 2000) teaches English at Presbyterian College in South Carolina, and Kerry Taylor (MA 1998) is teaching history at the Citadel. Anne Evans (MA 2000) teaches writing at Metropolitan State College of Denver. We are happy to say that Elizabeth Boyd (MA 1989) returned to the University of Mississippi as visiting assistant professor of Southern Studies for the spring semester 2009.

Some Southern Studies alumni who do not have



new jobs have new books. Amy Schmidt (MA 2007) is associate editor of *The Civil Rights Reader*, a project visiting scholar Julie Buckner Armstrong developed at the William Winter Institute for

Racial Reconciliation. Joel Rosen (MA 1993), who went from Southern Studies to a PhD in sociology, is coeditor of a new book, *Reconstructing Fame: Sport, Race, and Evolving Reputations*, and Anne Percy (MA 1994) has recently published her *Early History of Oxford, Mississippi*. Sally Graham (MA 1992) produced a series on world ecology for CNN International. Amy Wood (MA 1995) is the author of *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*, to be published this spring in the New Directions in Southern Studies series at UNC Press. Here at Barnard Observatory,

John T. Edge (MA 2002) is general editor of the Cornbread Nation series, which recently published its fourth volume, and Jimmy Thomas (MA 2007) is managing editor, working under Charles Reagan Wilson, of *The New Encyclopedia Southern Culture*, which has new volumes on music, politics and law, and agriculture and industry, with gender on the way.

Other alumni are no doubt doing fascinating things in their professional, personal, and creative lives, and they should feel free to send us their news. Also, please visit the “Alumni” section of the Center’s Web site for more on our graduates.

TED OWNBY



## News of Current Undergraduate SST Students

Matt Hopper became the second student to win the Robert C. Khayat Scholarship, and in the fall Jennifer Lawrence became Miss Ole Miss.



# MISSISSIPPI DELTA LITERARY TOUR, MARCH 22–26

The Mississippi Delta Literary Tour, set for March 22–26, 2009, will again travel across the Delta countryside exploring the region's rich literary, culinary, and musical heritage. The tour will be based at the Alluvian Hotel in downtown Greenwood and will travel to Indianola, Clarksdale, and Greenville, making stops along the way in the communities of Money, Tutwiler, and Merigold.

The Delta tour is \$575 per person for all program activities, eight meals, and local transportation. **The fee does not include lodging.** Remember to sign up early. Only a limited number of places are available, and they will go fast.

Group accommodations are offered at the Alluvian, in downtown Greenwood ([www.thealluvian.com](http://www.thealluvian.com)). **Rooms at the Alluvian require a separate registration.** Standard rooms are priced at a discounted rate of \$170. Call 866-600-5201 and ask for the Literary Tour rate. Also call the hotel to inquire about rates for luxury rooms and suites. Additional rooms have been set aside at the Greenwood Best Western, 662-455-5777, or the Hampton Inn, 662-455-7985.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 22 - GREENWOOD

- 3:00 p.m. Registration—Alluvian
- 4:00 p.m. Welcome by Jimmy Thomas at Turnrow Book Company  
Reading by John Pritchard
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner at Delta Bistro

## MONDAY, MARCH 23 - INDIANOLA

- 8:00 a.m. Alluvian Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Depart for Indianola
- 9:30 a.m. Bus tour of Indianola by Scott Barretta, with additional comments by Steve Yarbrough
- 10:00 a.m. "The Delta Blues," talk by Scott Barretta  
Guided Tour of B. B. King Museum by Scott Barretta
- Noon Lunch at Club Ebony
- 1:00 p.m. Talk on Craig Claiborne by Marion Barnwell
- 2:00 p.m. Reading by Steve Yarbrough
- 3:00 p.m. Return to Greenwood
- 4:00 p.m. Art Tour of Alluvian by William Dunlap  
Delta Photography Slideshow by Maude Schuyler Clay
- 5:30 p.m. Depart for Carrollton
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner at Carroll County Market, with Martha Foose

## TUESDAY, MARCH 24 - TUTWILER, CLARKSDALE, AND MERIGOLD

- 8:00 a.m. Alluvian Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Depart for Clarksdale—Luther Brown and Henry Outlaw, tour guides. Visit Little Zion Church and Robert Johnson's Grave Site.  
Drive through Money
- 10:00 a.m. Visit Tutwiler Community Education Center for Gospel Music

- Noon Lunch at the Cutrer Mansion
- 1:00 p.m. Program at Cutrer Mansion  
"Tennessee Williams," talk by W. Kenneth Holditch
- 2:00 p.m. Bus tour of Clarksdale by Panny Mayfield.  
Tour of St. George's Episcopal Church. Talk on Tennessee Williams's work by John Pritchard.  
Walking tour of Downtown Clarksdale. Visit Cathead Records. Visit Delta Blues Museum
- 5:00 p.m. Tennessee Williams porch plays at Panny Mayfield's house
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner at Panny Mayfield's House
- 8:00 p.m. Visit Po' Monkey's

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25 - GREENVILLE

- 8:00 a.m. Alluvian Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Depart for Greenville
- 10:00 a.m. Greenville Bus Tour, led by Mary Dayle McCormick, ending at William Alexander Percy Memorial Library. Welcome by Franke Keating. View Greenville Writers Exhibit and Jane Rule Burdine's Photography Exhibit
- 11:00 a.m. "Greenville Writers," talk by W. Kenneth Holditch
- Noon Lunch at the Home of Billy and Lisa Percy
- 1:30 p.m. E. E. Bass / Greenville Arts Council.  
Welcome by Kathryn Lewis. "The History of Greenville," talk by Hugh McCormick
- 2:00 p.m. "Hodding Carter Jr.: His Greenville Legacy," panel with Curtis Wilkie, moderator; Hodding Carter III, Jere Nash, Julia Reed
- 3:00 p.m. Readings by Charlotte Hayes, Gayden Metcalfe, John Pritchard, and Steve Yarbrough
- 4:00 p.m. William Alexander Percy graveside reading by Mary Dayle McCormick. Marathon book signing at McCormick Book Inn with Marion Barnwell, Jane Rule Burdine, Hodding Carter III, Maude Schuyler Clay, Maggie Dunlap, William Dunlap, W. Kenneth Holditch, Franke Keating, Gayden Metcalfe, Jere Nash, John Pritchard, Julia Reed, Curtis Wilkie, and Steve Yarbrough
- 5:30 p.m. Cocktails at Home of Clarke and Judy Reed
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner at Doe's Eat Place
- 8:00 p.m. Depart for Greenwood

## THURSDAY, MARCH 26 - OXFORD CONFERENCE FOR THE BOOK

- 8:00 a.m. Alluvian Breakfast
- 9:00 a.m. Depart for Oxford (1.5 hours)  
Oxford Conference for the Book, dedicated to Walter Anderson on the University of Mississippi campus, March 26–28

Register for the tour by calling 662-915-5993 or going to [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com).



# Jimmy Thomas Talks about the Mississippi Delta Literary Tour

Jimmy Thomas grew up in the towns of Leland and Greenville in the Mississippi Delta, studied literature and philosophy at the University of Mississippi, and worked for Guideposts magazine in New York before returning to Oxford in 2003 as managing editor of *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. He is coordinator of the Mississippi Delta Literary Tour sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. When asked about the origins of the Delta Tour, this is what he had to say:

The Mississippi Delta is a place that we study pretty closely here at the Center, in part because of our geographical proximity to the region but more so because it is just so rich with what folks think about when they consider “Southern culture.” I mean, the food in the Delta includes some really iconic Southern fare, such as barbecue, soul food, catfish, and hot tamales, as well as some foods that might not immediately leap to someone’s mind who’s not from Mississippi, including a lot of ethnic foods, like Italian, Chinese, and Lebanese cuisine. These ethnic groups have been in the Delta for generations, and they’ve been living and cooking there so long that they’re really a part of the fabric of the Delta.

In addition to the food there’s, of course, the blues and gospel music. One can’t talk about the Mississippi Delta without mentioning the blues. The blues is certainly one of the region’s biggest contributions to Southern culture, and the feeling you get when you listen to the blues is almost palpable in the Delta.

Then there’s the literature. Mississippi is arguably the nation’s most prolific state in terms of producing great literature, and it shouldn’t be surprising that a large number of authors come from the Delta. A place so rich in history and culture almost couldn’t help but inspire such creativity. Greenville, in particular, has produced—and continues to produce—an impressive number of talented writers, including everyone from William Alexander Percy, David Cohn, and Shelby Foote to Ellen Douglas, Julia Reed, and Beverly Lowry. Writers Gayden Metcalfe and Charlotte



Jimmy Thomas at Club Ebony in Indianola, Mississippi

Hayes have recently brought particular renown to the Greenville book scene with their bestselling *Official Southern Ladies' Guide* series.

By 2003, folks here at the Center had been thinking for some time about how we could promote and bring people from far away to the Delta, to have them interact with the culture and the people, and in turn step into a place that they had perhaps only read about or seen in the movies. Back in early 2003, after the Southern Foodways Alliance began its successful “eating” tour of the Delta before SFA’s annual symposium in Oxford, Ann Abadie, the associate director here at the Center, approached me and Amy Evans, who has done a lot of great work by conducting interviews and gathering oral histories of Delta restaurant owners, cooks, and tamale makers, about putting together a literary tour of the area. We based the tour out of Greenwood since it was easy to get to and was home of the new Alluvian Hotel, developed by Viking Range, an early sponsor of SFA and the Center.

The first literary tour was in 2004 and included the towns of Greenwood, Greenville, and Clarksdale. We’ve returned to all three towns each year since, but we’ve also traveled to Cleveland, Carrollton, Yazoo City, Indianola, Merigold, and Tutwiler in various years. We always focus on writers from each town and, naturally, libraries and bookstores, such as McCormick Book Inn, are ideal destinations for a literary tour. But we’ve also visited a number of blues sites, such as the Delta Blues Museum

in Clarksdale, Club Ebony in Indianola, and Robert Johnson’s gravesite outside of Money. And we always go to Tutwiler for gospel music.

The central focus is always the literature of the place we’re visiting, but we spend a lot of time talking about—and sampling—music and food, as well as Delta history. At this point we could almost rename the tour something like the Mississippi Delta Cultural Tour, but it has gotten

so popular that we’d hate to confuse things. And really, the focus does remain on the literature. Like William Faulkner wrote in his novel *Absalom, Absalom!*, “Tell about the South. What’s it like there. What do they do there. Why do they live there. Why do they live at all.” I think that’s what Delta writers do best, and I think that’s what we’re trying to do by conducting this tour—tell about the Delta. What it’s like there, what folks do there, and even give a glimpse into what’s like to live there.

We generally have between 20 and 30 folks sign up for the tour, and they come from across the U.S. to attend—from San Francisco to Connecticut to North Carolina and Georgia. We always encourage the public to attend the lectures, which are open without charge. I think that even the locals who attend the talks stand to learn a little something about where they live, because the sharing of ideas and knowledge is what the tour is really based on. That’s the central notion regarding scholarship, I think—the gathering, interpretation, and sharing of facts and ideas—and that’s something we’re trying to do with the tour. But it’s not so scholarly that it’s not also “fun.” We Delta folks have a unique sense of community and hospitality, and there’s a lot of visiting that goes on between Deltans and our guests on the tour. In that way, I think those who come to the Delta get to experience something that they wouldn’t be able to do by reading a book. It’s pretty special, but then again, the Delta is a pretty special place.

# OXFORD CONFERENCE FOR THE BOOK, MARCH 26–28

The conference is open to the public without charge. To assure seating space, those interested in attending should preregister. Reservations and advance payment are required for the optional cocktail buffet on Thursday (\$50). All proceeds of the cocktail buffet will go toward supporting the conference and are tax deductible. Participants are invited to make additional tax-deductible contributions to help support the conference. The John Davis Williams Library will host a light lunch at noon on Thursday, March 26, for the Walter Inglis Anderson exhibition and talk. **To register for the conference, call 662-915-5993 or go to [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com).**

## THURSDAY, MARCH 26

Thursday's luncheon program will be at the John Davis Williams Library on the University campus; all other program sessions on Thursday will be at the Lyric Theatre, located at 1006 Van Buren Avenue, two blocks west of the Oxford Square.

- 10:00 a.m.** Registration Begins: Barnard Observatory
- 11:30 a.m.** Exhibition *Walter Anderson and World Literature*  
John Anderson, curator; Jennifer Ford, moderator; Patricia Pinson, comments
- Noon** Lunch hosted by Julia Rholes, Dean of University Libraries
- 1:30 p.m.** Welcome: Richard Howorth, Mayor  
Walter Anderson Overview: Christopher Maurer, presenter
- 2:30 p.m.** Walter Anderson Panel: William Dunlap, moderator; Patti Carr Black, Seetha Srinivasan
- 3:30 p.m.** Walter Anderson Panel: JoAnne Pritchard Morris, moderator; Bill Anderson, John Anderson, Leif Anderson, Mary Anderson Pickard
- 5:30 p.m.** *Thacker Mountain Radio*; Jim Dees, host; The Yalobushwhackers, house band; Visiting Authors and Musicians
- 7:00 p.m.** Dinner with the Speakers: Isom Place (Reservations Required)

## FRIDAY, MARCH 27

Program sessions on Friday morning will be at Fulton Chapel on the University campus; program sessions at 1:30, 2:30, and 3:30 p.m. on Friday will be at the Lyric Theatre, located at 1006 Van Buren Avenue, two blocks west of the Oxford Square. The 5:00 and 7:00 p.m. sessions will be at Off Square Books.

- 9:00 a.m.** Literature for Young Readers 1: Rosemary Oliphant-Ingham, moderator;  
Readings/Remarks: Trenton Lee Stewart
- 10:30 a.m.** Literature for Young Readers 2: Susan Phillips, moderator; Readings/Remarks: Jay Asher
- Noon** Lunch – on your own

- 1:30 p.m.** Poetry: Readings and Remarks in Celebration of National Poetry Month; Ann Fisher-Wirth, moderator; Camille Dungy, Jimmy Kimbrel
- 2:30 p.m.** Eudora Welty's *Collected Stories* and 100th Birthday Celebration  
Pearl McHaney, moderator; Peggy Whitman Prenshaw, presenter
- 3:30 p.m.** "Portraying Politicians": Curtis Wilkie, moderator; Hodding Carter III, David Maraniss, Julia Reed
- 5:00 p.m.** Book and Author Promotion: Margaret-Love Denman, moderator; Lynda and Jim O'Connor, presenters
- 7:00 p.m.** Open Mike: Poetry & Fiction Jam: Alicia Casey and Corinna McClanahan, moderators

## SATURDAY, MARCH 28

Program sessions on Saturday will be at the Nutt Auditorium on University Avenue.

- 9:00 a.m.** "The Endangered Species: Readers Today and Tomorrow": Elaine H. Scott, moderator; Claiborne Barksdale, Pamela Pridgen, Trenton Lee Stewart
- 10:00 a.m.** "Writing after Katrina": Ted Ownby, moderator; Emily Clark, Jerry W. Ward Jr., Joyce Zonana
- 11:00 a.m.** Readings and Remarks: Jesse Scott, moderator; Major Jackson, Deborah Johnson
- Noon** Lunch – on your own
- 2:00 p.m.** "Reviewing Books in Cyberspace": J. Peder Zane, moderator; John Freeman, Haven Kimmel, Lydia Millet
- 3:00 p.m.** Readings and Remarks: Lyn Roberts, moderator; Jack Pendarvis, John Pritchard, Steve Yarbrough
- 4:00 p.m.** "News, Novels, and the Sport of Books": Richard Howorth, moderator; Leonard Downie Jr., John Freeman, Terry McDonell
- 6:00 p.m.** Book Signing: Off Square Books

## ELDERHOSTEL FOR BOOK CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

An Elderhostel program will take place during the 2009 Oxford Conference for the Book. Cost is \$597 per person, double occupancy, for conference programming, a special Elderhostel-only session with a Faulkner expert, tour of Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak, four nights' lodging, all meals from dinner March 25 through breakfast March 29, and local transportation. Elderhostel participants must be 55 years old or older or traveling with someone at least 55. To register, call toll-free, 877-426-8056 and ask for program 12317-032509. For information, call program coordinator Carolyn Vance Smith in Natchez, 601-446-1208, or e-mail her at [Carolyn.Smith@colin.edu](mailto:Carolyn.Smith@colin.edu).



Walter Inglis Anderson (1946)  
Bill Hottel  
Courtesy Walter Anderson Family

The Sixteenth  
**Oxford Conference for the Book**  
The University of Mississippi • Oxford, Mississippi  
March 26–28, 2009

**The 16th Oxford Conference for the Book** celebrates the life and legacy of Mississippi Gulf Coast artist, author, and naturalist Walter Inglis Anderson (1903–1965) on the opening day with authors, scholars, and family members talking about Anderson's life and work. The J. W. Williams Library is sponsoring *Walter Anderson and World Literature*, an exhibition curated by the artist's son John Anderson. The Department of Theatre Arts is offering three performances of *The Passions of Walter Anderson*, drawing on the artist's letters, travel logs, and stories to celebrate his art and the profound inspiration his work provides artists.

## PERFORMANCES

***To Kill a Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee and dramatized by Christopher Sergel.**

Wednesday, March 25–Saturday, March 28, at 8:00 p.m., Sunday, March 29, at 2:00 p.m., Fulton Chapel. **Special Matinee for Local Schools Thursday, March 26, at 10:00 a.m.**

Showing the segregated South of 1930s Alabama through the eyes of Scout Finch, one of American literature's most beloved characters, this is a story about prejudice and the courage and character of those who rise above it.

"... a classic of moral complexity and an endlessly renewable fund of wisdom about the nature of human decency." —*Time*

### *Walter Anderson and World Literature*

"Along with thousands of paintings, sculptures, block prints, and writings, Walter Anderson (1903–1965) created over 9,500 pen-and-ink illustrations of scenes from *Don Quixote*, *Paradise Lost*, Pope's *Iliad*, and Bulfinch's *Legends of Charlemagne*. He also drew inspiration from such sources as *Paradise Regained*, *Temora* from *The Poems of Ossian*, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle*."

—from *Illustrations of Epic and Voyage*, edited by Redding S. Sugg Jr. (University Press of Mississippi, 2006)

Walter Anderson "is Mississippi's greatest artist . . . [and] was also a poet and a writer who attempted to interpret the natural world of the Gulf Coast. . . . At his death 82 volumes of his journals were discovered. *The Horn Island Logs of Walter Inglis Anderson* (1973) contains portions of these journals, mostly written on Horn Island. A revised edition was published in 1985; both were edited by Redding Sugg Jr."

—from *Touring Literary Mississippi* by Patti Carr Black and Marion Barnwell (University Press of Mississippi, 2002)

### **The Walter Anderson Project**

The Walter Anderson Project is a performance event in honor of the life and work of one of the finest and most prolific artists of the 20th century. Conceived, produced, and performed by faculty and students of the Department of Theatre Arts, the Lott Leadership Institute, and some members of the Ole Miss Forensics Team, this piece celebrates Anderson's work through dance, music, movement, and, most importantly, his own words. The title of the performance is *The Passions of Walter Anderson*. Through Anderson's letters, travel logs, and stories, we celebrate not only his art but the profound inspiration his work provides us as artists.

Please join us in Meek Auditorium for this unique event. We are honored to share it with you at 7:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, March 27 and 28, with a special Sunday matinee at 2:00 p.m. on March 29. Tickets are general seating and are free; they can be reserved at the UM Box Office. The UM Box Office will also accept donations to be given to the Walter Anderson Restoration Project, which is working to restore Anderson's artwork that was damaged in Hurricane Katrina.

Rhona Justice-Malloy, Chair and Professor of Theatre Arts, The University of Mississippi.

**University of Mississippi (UM) Box Office**

**Telephone: 662-915-7411.**

**Web: [www.olemiss.edu/depts/tickets/](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/tickets/)**



# Denman to Lead Writing Workshop

Last November, Margaret-Love Denman was lucky enough to spend five weeks as a fellow at Hawthornden Castle International Retreat for Writers in Midlothian, Scotland. The castle overlooks the valley of the river North Esk, just to the south of Edinburgh. Comprised of a 15th-century ruin, with a 17th-century L-plan house attached, Hawthornden has been restored and, since 1982, has served as a writers' retreat. The retreat houses five writers at a time, from any part of the world. "The accommodations were lovely," Denman said. "We were in the middle of nowhere, with no phone and no internet." But Denman thrived in the secluded atmosphere. "I finished my book and did a revision," she said.

Other fellows included a Japanese poet, a novelist from Cornwall, England, a playwright, and another poet. Previous Hawthornden Fellows include Les Murray, Alasdair Gray, Helen Vendler, Olive Senior, and Hilary Spurling. "We talked about work, and it was so delightful because the average person is not interested in hearing about the writing process," Denman said. "It was nice to have someone else who knows about looking at a sentence all day and wondering if it's in character."

Denman, who is originally from Oxford, received her BA (1961) and MA (1966) from the University of Mississippi. In 1990 Viking published her first novel, *A Scrambling after Circumstance*, which was released by Penguin in 1991 in its Contemporary American Fiction series. The novel was nominated for both PEN/Faulkner and PEN/Hemingway awards. She joined the faculty of the University of New Hampshire-Durham in 1991 as a



Margaret-Love Denman

Perry Smith

professor of English. From 1993 through 2007, she directed the University's creative writing program. In 2001 she and Chicago writer Barbara Shoup compiled *Novel Ideas: Contemporary Authors Share the Creative Process*, a collection of interviews with 23 well-known authors, including Richard Ford, Lee Smith, Michael Chabon, Tony Hillerman, Wally Lamb, Sena Jeter Naslund, and Alice McDermott.

After many years of snowy New Hampshire, Denman decided she was ready to return to the South. The South was also ready for her to return, with a position as the coordinator for the off-campus writing center for the satellite campuses of Ole Miss in Southaven and Tupelo which began in January 2008.

Denman said her work so far this semester has been interesting. "Most of the students there are nontraditional," she said. "They send me a draft online and I can comment sentence by sentence."

The biggest lesson she tries to teach is that a writer doesn't get it right the first time and revisions are always necessary. "I'm constantly reminding students that the difference between good writing and great writing is rewriting."

"The students have made remarkable progress. I'm on campus in Tupelo and Southaven two days a week and I'm also online. My real job is to make it so that I don't have a job—so the students get good enough that they don't need me."

Denman said that she hopes to add teaching assistants for each of the writing centers so that help is available both on-site and online. "Our students often have other jobs and kids, and they may have had freshman English 15 years ago, but they're quite serious and want to learn. They're to be greatly admired because what they've chosen certainly is not easy and takes genuine commitment."

Denman will also revisit a writing workshop at the 2009 Oxford Conference for the Book, which she taught in 2007. The daylong workshop, titled "Mining Your Raw Materials," is open to 20 writers and is set for Wednesday, March 25, at the Downtown Grill on the Oxford Square. The attendees discuss language and perspective as well as their own projects.

"My goal for the day is to allow each author a chance to look at whatever he or she brings to the workshop, to look at it as a work in progress and to develop a strategy for moving ahead with the work. A writer needs to be able to hear what is helpful for his work, use it or not. I trust that the day spent talking about writing and looking at the work will send each of these writers back to the page with ideas and enthusiasm.

"For me, I think teaching writing helps my own writing. I hope my students find the day useful, productive. The idea of disparate things coalescing into a workable whole is a wonderful moment," Denman said. "I'm a working writer, I don't pretend to have the answers, I just have the strategies."

For more information about Denman's workshop, or to register, visit the Oxford Conference for the Book Web site: [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com).

## CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOP - MARCH 25, 2009

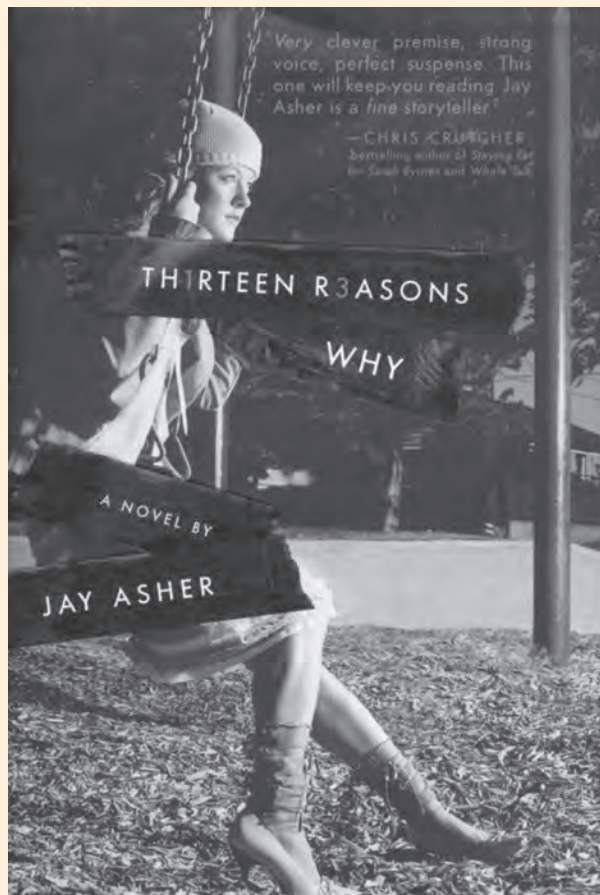
Margaret-Love Denman will offer a daylong workshop, "Mining Your Raw Materials," on Wednesday, March 25, at the Downtown Grill on the Oxford Square. The workshop is open to 20 writers. The workshop fee of \$250 includes evaluation of up to 20 double-spaced pages submitted beforehand, a private 20-minute session with the instructor during the March 26–28 Oxford Conference for the Book, attendance at all conference events, lunch and refreshments on Wednesday, and dinner on Thursday. Also, each registrant will receive a copy of *Novel Ideas: Contemporary Authors Share the Creative Process*. The fee does not include lodging. First come, first served. To register for the workshop, call 662-915-5993 or go to [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com).

REBECCA LAUCK CLEARY

# Reasons to Read

Jay Asher's novel, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, has been selected for the 2009 Young Authors Fair ninth-grade book, and it is the perfect choice. Asher is 33, an avid blogger, and a fan of young adult literature. *Thirteen Reasons Why* is his first novel, but he has written picture books and worked at three bookstores and two libraries so he can safely say he knows something about the biz. When asked why he prefers to write for teenagers, Asher says that "too much time writing books for adults has a horrible, long lasting, effect on authors—it makes them dull! . . . Also, teenage characters offer amazing benefits to writers. Every experience at that age is much more intense than at any other point in life. Why? Two reasons: (1) for the first time in our lives, we're viewed as ultimately responsible for our actions (which means we're also responsible for the consequences), (2) raging hormones. Combine both of those elements and the story writes itself . . . almost."

Within the first few pages of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, high school junior Clay Jensen finds a ratty cardboard box on his doorstep full of audio tapes from Hannah Baker, a classmate who has recently killed herself. "Hello boys and girls. Hannah Baker here. Live and in stereo. . . . I'm about to tell you the story of my life. More specifically, why my life ended. And if you're listening to these tapes, you're one of the reasons why." The novel is told in 13 chapters and each chapter deals with an event during Hannah's teenage years, since she moved to the small town she and Clay and the other 12 "reasons" have shared since middle school. The stories range from innocent first kisses on the playground to queen-bee bullying and backstabbing best friends. Among the more serious episodes are date rape and the consequences of drunk driving.



Asher walks a fine line here. Today's (and yesterday's) teenagers are inundated with high school drama and adolescent angst, but there is nothing cliché or after-school-special about this book. Yes, we have seen teen suicide before. We've seen sex crimes and mean girls and testosterone-fueled slugouts. But what we haven't seen is a cardboard box full of audio tapes and the voice of a dead girl. A dead girl determined to point fingers.

"I'm not saying which tape brings you into the story," Hannah tells her listeners. "But fear not, if you received this lovely little box, your name will pop up." Along with Clay, the reader wonders how he will ultimately fit into Hannah's story. He wracks his mind to think of a time he hurt her, but all he can manage to come up with is that he might have actually loved her. Little by little he unearths these feelings and comes to terms with the fact that he'll never

have the chance to save her. Clay walks through his neighborhood, passing the scenes of the crimes committed against Hannah Baker and even those crimes she herself committed. In the end, when his story is finally told, he's possibly even more confused than before. Troubled by what he has heard, Clay ultimately makes a decision to help another girl. A girl who is, for now, very much alive, but has, until the night of the tapes, remained only in the periphery of his daily life.

Nearly every young person who reads this book in March when it will be distributed to all Oxford ninth graders—thanks to generous donations by the Oxford Literacy Council and Square Books Jr.—will be connected to a suicide. It's inevitable. A friend of a friend. A cousin. A boy on the baseball team. A girl across town. A classmate. The sadness and anger and pain lingers a long time,

all the way to adulthood. Jay Asher has taken that lingering emotion and written it down for a new generation. Asher has said in interviews that he got the idea from walking through a museum, listening to the cassette-tape woman's voice through earphones. A voice with no body. It's my hope that the readers of *Thirteen Reasons Why* will take what they read in these episodes of one girl's life and put them to good use. Like Clay, I hope they will start to pay attention.

Jay Asher will talk to the ninth-grade students at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, March 27, at Fulton Chapel. He will also sign his book at Square Books Jr. that afternoon and at Off Square Books on Saturday, March 28. Asher is working on another novel for teen readers, but his fans can keep up with him in the meantime at [www.jayasher.blogspot.com](http://www.jayasher.blogspot.com).

SALLY CASSADY LYON

# O'Connors Offer Book and Author Publicity Session

So, you've written the book and found a publisher. Now what? For many authors, the writing and editing are the easy parts. But getting copies book to reviewers? Writing press releases? Hiring a publicist? Not all publishing houses, probably only a handful of them, have their own in-house publicity departments. It's up to you the writer to beat the pavement and get the word out yourself.

Fear not, dear writer! At this year's Oxford Conference for the Book, Lynda and James O'Connor, who operate a husband-and-wife public relations firm in Chicago, will lead a workshop titled "Promoting Your Book and Yourself." The O'Connors will discuss effective ways to acquire media coverage beyond book reviews, explain how to find and contact members of the



media, and explore creative ways to get favorable exposure. In addition, Lynda and Jim will cover such topics as using the Internet and viral marketing, over-

coming fear, and the pros and cons of hiring your own publicist.

Lynda and Jim O'Connor have operated their own public relations firm in Chicago for 20 years and have specialized in promoting books and authors since 2006, beginning with Jim's book, *Cuss Control: The Complete Book on How to Curb Your Cursing*. *Cuss Control* took the duo to over 100 television programs, all the way from *Oprah* to the *O'Reilly Factor*. Their clients call the O'Connors "tireless, tenacious, creative, enthusiastic and dedicated."

We look forward to welcoming Lynda and James O'Connor to the 2009 Oxford Conference for the Book. They will appear Friday, March 27, at 5 p.m. at Off Square Books.

SALLY CASSADY LYON

## Book Conference Panels Address Politics, Reading, Book Reviews, Writing

Journalist Curtis Wilkie will discuss "Portraying Politicians" with authors Hodding Carter III (*The Reagan Years, The South Strikes Back*), Julia Reed (*Queen of the Turtle Derby and Other Southern Phenomena, The House on First Street*), and David Maraniss (*First in His Class: A Biography of Bill Clinton, The Prince of Tennessee: Al Gore Meets His Fate*, and a forthcoming biography of President Barack Obama). This panel is scheduled for Friday, March 27, at 3:30 p.m.

On Saturday, at 9 a.m., educator Elaine H. Scott will moderate a panel titled "The Endangered Species: Readers Today and Tomorrow," with author Trenton Lee Stewart talking about his experiences in writing for young readers; Claiborne Barksdale giving a report on the work of the Barksdale Reading Institute; and Pamela Pridgen telling about the Mississippi Reads project. Also, at 10 a.m., Center director Ted Ownby will talk about "Writing after Katrina" with Tulane University professor Emily Clark, who is writing a book about the hurricane's impact on New

Orleans; Joyce Zonana, author of *Dream Homes: From Cairo to Katrina, an Exile's Journey*; and Jerry W. Ward Jr., whose newly published memoir, *The Katrina Papers*, combines intellectual autobiography, personal narrative, political/cultural analysis, spiritual journal, literary history, and poetry.

Three panels are set for Saturday afternoon, beginning at 2 p.m. with "Reviewing Books in Cyberspace," moderated by J. Peder Zane, former book review editor and current "Ideas" columnist for the *News and Observer* in Raleigh, North Carolina. This topic is timely, since the *Washington Post* recently shut down the print version of its *Sunday Book World*, one of the last stand-alone book sections in the country, but is publishing the section online. Panelists will be memoirist and novelist Haven Kimmel, fiction writer Lydia Millet, and John Freeman, former president of the National Book Critics Circle and a prolific critic who reviews more than 100 books years a year for scores of publications.

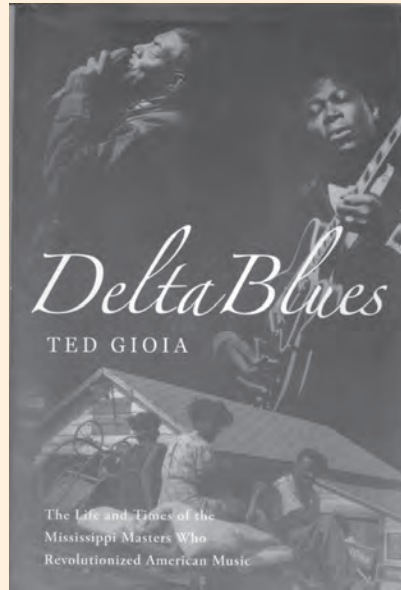
Freeman, recently named American editor of the British literary journal *Granta*, will also be on final panel of the day, "News, Novels, and the Sport of Books," moderated by Oxford mayor and Square Books owner Richard Howorth. Other panelists for the 4 p.m. session will be Leonard Downie Jr. and Terry McDonell. Downie worked for the *Washington Post* for 44 years, beginning as a summer intern in 1953 and serving 17 years as editor, when the newspaper won 25 Pulitzer Prizes. He is the author of four nonfiction books and *The Rules of the Game*, a recently published novel set in a newsroom in Washington, D.C. McDonell was managing editor of *Sports Illustrated* from 2002 until 2007, when he was named editor of the Sports Illustrated Group. A novelist (*California Bloodstock*) and television writer (*Miami Vice, China Beach*), McDonell has wide publishing experience, having served in various editorial and executive capacities for *Outside, Rolling Stone, Newsweek, Smart, Esquire, Sports Afield, Men's Journal*, and *Us*.

# Reading the South

*Delta Blues: The Life and Times of the Mississippi Masters Who Revolutionized American Music.* By Ted Gioia. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008. 449 pages. \$27.95.

*Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the Emerging Urban South.* By Michelle R. Scott. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008. 199 pages.

Gender trouble, the pretext for so many blues songs, is also a perdurable undercurrent in blues scholarship, one evident in the two books under review. Although a couple of obscure female performers such as Geechee Wiley and Mattie May Thomas surface briefly in Ted Gioia's *Delta Blues*, the music he explores—and brilliantly—is, as he tells it, essentially an all-male club, one whose members never sold many records but were American artists of the highest order. In line with received practice, he barely mentions Memphis Minnie—a Delta blues singer and guitarist—and says not a word about her sisters in blues, all of them Delta-born: Lucille Bogan, Lil Green, Denise LaSalle, Zora Young, and Big Time Sarah. LaSalle, in particular, has remained notably popular with a black female fan base for the last 30 years, primarily in the Deep South. Regardless of her Delta origins, and precisely *because* of her popularity (which includes an annual homecoming day in Belzoni, the “farm-raised catfish capital of the world”), she's extruded from the dusty, hard-luck story of Delta blues and shifted sideways into a well-dressed, sassy, black-owned bin called “soul blues,” the better to enable a particular kind of narrative in which an obscure American folk music valued by a coterie of white male collectors suddenly catches fire during the



so-called blues revival of the 1960s, gaining a huge white audience while never finding much favor across the tracks or back down home. “The fan base that supports the economic viability of the Delta blues today,” Gioia argues, “is disproportionately white, well educated, and living outside the state of Mississippi.” I know exactly what he means, but it also depends on how you tell the story.

To Gioia's credit, the story that he *does* tell in *Delta Blues* has never been told more thoroughly, judiciously, or compellingly. A jazz pianist, the author of five previous books, including *The History of Jazz* and *The Imperfect Art: Reflections on Jazz and Modern Culture*, Gioia hasn't just synthesized the mass of scholarly, biographical, and autobiographical studies published since Robert Palmer's *Deep Blues* (1982), but he's interviewed a Who's Who list of feuding folklorists and blues revivalists, including Gayle Dean Wardlow, Mack McCormack, David Evans, Stephen Calt, and Dick Waterman, and arbitrated their conflicting accounts with remarkable finesse. Readers familiar with Palmer's book will encounter some familiar signposts—blues' African origins, W. C. Handy in Tutwiler, Charley

Patton at Dockery's, Robert Johnson at Three Forks, Muddy Waters at Stovall—but also many new facts and original interpretations.

Gioia's approach to the Delta blues is informed by a poetics of loss, blind luck, and contingency, a keen sense of both the turning points that made a difference in how the music entered American history (Charley Patton's Gennett recording sessions on June 14, 1929, “the moment when the Delta flexed its muscles”) and the fact that countless Delta musicians, had they too been recorded rather than merely showing up in other musicians' awed reminiscences, could have markedly reshaped our sense of the tradition.

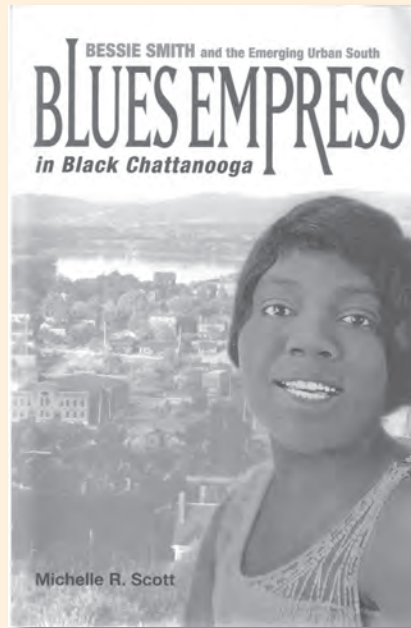
Gioia's greatest achievement, however, is his writerly ability to bring the African American performers at the core of his study alive as a series of highly individuated creative artists, each responding to a different aesthetic horizon, each animated by a distinct skill set and spiritual orientation. Son House, for Gioia, is “the failed preacher who brought his fire-and-brimstone to the pulpit of the blues, showed that this music could journey beyond the limitations of popular song, tapping into powerful currents of soul-weariness and transcendence that no tunesmith had hitherto broached.” Skip James becomes “the most distinctive vocalist the idiom has yet produced. His mournful, epicene wail, with its distinctive timbres, evoking an incongruous mixture of feminine and masculine qualities, had little in common with the rough-and-tumble delivery so typical of James's contemporaries.” Yes indeed, Gioia loves him some Delta blues! But these rhetorical flights are informed, every step of the way, by his thorough research, musician's deep knowledge of musical craft, and—not least—his desire to shed light rather than retail the same old tired myths.

Still, there remains that nagging woman question, and it's one that histo-

rian Michelle R. Scott directly addresses at the beginning of her somewhat more academic study, *Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga: Bessie Smith and the Emerging Urban South*. “The representation of a traditional blues performer as a wandering, guitar-playing adult male is more common in the public memory than that of a young adolescent girl. Why was a young *girl* on the street—the center of the public sphere and an almost exclusively male domain?” As a former street musician in Harlem and one who has actually played the Bessie Smith Strut on Chattanooga’s Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard—formerly Ninth Street, where Smith herself worked the cobblestones—I read Scott’s book with fascination, admiration, but also frustration.

A skilled researcher, Scott has labored mightily to flesh out the sketchy picture we have of the young Bessie Smith, before “Downhearted Blues” (1923) launched her as a national star. That fleshing-out process begins with a long windup. The first two chapters of *Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga* scarcely mention the Blues Empress, offering instead an extended portrait of Chattanooga’s beleaguered but burgeoning African American community from the end of the Civil War through the turn of the century. Scott argues effectively, in line with Robin D. G. Kelley and Tera Hunter, that Chattanooga’s saloons, eating houses, and pool halls—working-class black leisure spaces—helped maintain black collective morale even as Jim Crow legislation increasingly curtailed black mobility in the public sphere, offering a rowdy alternative to the considerably more staid houses of worship and fraternal organizations.

When Bessie Smith enters this picture with her birth in 1892, Scott strives to see her and her migrant family, recently arrived from Alabama, as both representative and individuated, and here trouble begins to arise. Even as Scott depicts Smith’s career arc, which takes her within a decade from the impoverished shanties of Blue Goose Hollow to the street-side spot



she began to work with her brother Andrew in front of the White Elephant Saloon, the scholar is forced repeatedly to couch her narrative in the conditional—could, probably, would have been, might, may have, undoubtedly—because of the lack of certain key facts about Smith herself, such as where she actually attended church as a girl. Conjectural history, however skillfully executed, remains problematic.

Still, despite this shortcoming and a tendency to idealize Smith as an exemplary racial and gender subject, *Blues Empress in Black Chattanooga* is an important addition to contemporary blues studies, one that synthesizes, recontextualizes, and extends the work of a number of earlier biographers.

ADAM GUSSOW

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*The Influence of Tennessee Williams: Essays on Fifteen American Playwrights.*  
 Edited by Philip C. Kolin.  
 Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008. 229 pages. \$39.95 paper.

Any drama fan would understand Broadway critic Joe Dziemianowicz’s recent remark: “The economy is more troubled than a Tennessee Williams heroine.” Unfortunately, the economy is less resilient. The playwright died in 1983, but his fictional heroines still have more life in them than the global financial markets. Anika Noni Rose played Maggie in last year’s African American revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*; in December, Rachel Weisz was chosen as Blanche DuBois for a forthcoming London production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Less well-known Williams plays, and even unknown Williams plays, have endured as well, sometimes springing forth in surprising places. Early in the new year, *Camino Real* was staged in Cardiff, Wales; and the first production of *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, completed in 1960, took place in Chicago. “It is not every day that a dead playwright gets a world premiere,” reviewer William Scott wryly noted.

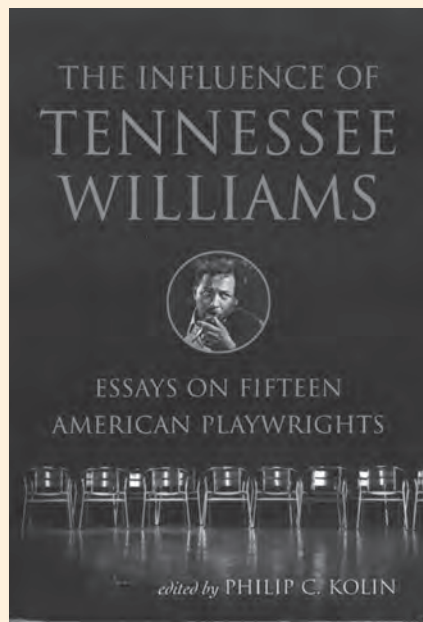
But Williams is not a typical dead author. Philip C. Kolin, editor of *The Influence of Tennessee Williams*, has published several previous books on the Mississippi-born dramatist, and no one is better qualified to comment on his significance. “Despite the vagaries of critical opinion,” Kolin says, “Williams’s canon towers above any other American dramatist’s.” Moreover, Tennessee Williams is “unquestionably, the most influential playwright America has ever produced.” The astounding range of his impact on other playwrights from the United States is the subject of the 15 studies in this book. Each focuses on a separate writer: William Inge, Neil Simon, Edward Albee, A. R. Gurney, Lorraine Hansberry, Adrienne Kennedy, John Guare, Sam Shepard, August Wilson, David Mamet, Beth Henley, Christopher Durang, Tony Kushner, Anna Deavere Smith, and Suzan-Lori Parks. Acknowledging that even this long roster of Broadway standouts is limited, Kolin refers the reader to a different assemblage of in-



fluences, scholars, and dramatists (notably Lanford Wilson and David Henry Hwang), in *South Atlantic Review* for Fall 2005, a special issue Kolin edited on “Tennessee Williams in/ and the Canons of American Drama.”

Some playwrights comment on Williams directly or echo his protagonists’ names and words in their own works, but Kolin and his fellow essayists do not confine themselves to allusion hunting. Nor do they dwell on the “anxiety of influence,” a phrase popularized by critic Harold Bloom to describe a creative artist’s uneasy grappling with the inheritance of literary ancestors. Instead, these essays “illustrate the varied, subtle, complex, and provocative ways Williams relates to these playwrights and they to him.” Kolin explains that, while some dramatists have “welcomed and shared his characters, themes, and techniques in their works,” others have “reshaped and recast” Williams, “borrowing but parodying his art, sometimes with the (un)kindness of strangers.” The authors examined in *The Influence of Tennessee Williams* “represent a valid cross-section of major female and male, white and black, straight and gay, traditional and experimental, prize-winning dramatists whose work, like Williams’s, has left or is leaving a legacy of greatness to the American theatre.” The essayists’ critical approaches are equally varied, drawing on biography, U.S. history, feminist and queer theory, drama history, psychology, race studies, mythology, and other frames of reference. Contributors include Michael Greenwald, Susan Koprince, David A. Crespy, Arvid F. Sponberg, Nancy Cho, Thomas Mitchell, Annette J. Saddik, Sandra G. Shannon, Brenda Murphy, Verna A. Foster, John M. Clum, Kirk Woodward, Harvey Young, and Harry J. Elam Jr.

In addition to his essay on the mutual influence of Williams and Edward Albee, Crespy (a playwright himself) contributed the volume’s intriguing final segment, “Swimming to Chekhovia:



Edward Albee on Tennessee Williams—An Interview.” Albee describes Williams as “something of a sadist” in his later years, and he bluntly observes that *Glass Menagerie* “would be an infinitely better play without the narrator in it.” At the same time, he praises Williams for “the reality of the characters, the music of the language,” and he comments on their shared attention to the “tragic sense of life,” reflected in their characters’ failures: “The sadness of all that.” Other essayists treat other sorrows. Sponberg suggests that the “itinerary of paternal consciousness in Williams’s tragedy” influenced Gurney’s comedy; Foster believes there is a “symbiosis of desire and death” in works by Williams and another Mississippi playwright, Beth Henley; Clum sees marriage as a “period of adjustment” in Williams and Durang; for Murphy, the “artist in extremis” is a concern of Williams’s late plays and Mamet’s early ones; according to Elam, Williams and Parks portray “sexual indiscretions and transgressions”; similarly, Young points to the centrality of “taboo topics” in Williams and Smith.

Discussions of Parks, Smith, and other African American dramatists enhance the great value of the essay collection. Comparing Williams to Lorraine Hansberry, Cho emphasizes “their status as ‘social playwrights’—

both deeply in tune with mid-century America and sharply critical of its values.” Madwomen, “cinematic flashbacks, poetic flights of rapture/rupture, nightmares, and violated bodies” appear in *Streetcar* and in Adrienne Kennedy’s early plays, says Kolin. Shannon discovers “common ground” between Williams and August Wilson in their “fiercely nontraditional and experimental playwriting.”

At the annual Key West Literary Seminar this January, novelist and social critic Gore Vidal praised Tennessee Williams as America’s “best playwright.” Vidal recently completed one of his old friend’s unfinished plays, *In Masques Outrageous and Austere*. As Kolin remarks in *The Influence of Tennessee Williams*, Williams’s drama seems “ubiquitous,” and his voice is even “posthumously proactive.”

JOAN WYLIE HALL

*Barthé: A Life in Sculpture.*  
By Margaret Rose Vendryes.  
Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008. 229 pages.  
\$40.00 cloth.

James Richmond Barthé was born in Bay St. Louis on January 28, 1901, to a hard-working Creole family, the only child of Clemente and Richmond Barthé. He was christened in Our Lady of the Gulf Roman Catholic Church in the Bay and attended Saint Rose de Lima School. In *Barthé: A Life in Sculpture*, author Margaret Rose Vendryes notes his penchant for art at a young age: “Everyone knew that Clemente’s boy could draw because he showed his art to anyone and everyone.”

Displaying an obvious talent, the young Richmond Barthé was guided by several mentors and patrons. Landing in Chicago in 1924 to study at the Art Institute of Chicago, “the only African American attending fine arts classes,” he showed two sculptures

in the 1927 Chicago Woman's Club Exhibition that garnered plaudits and launched his career.

Vendryes positions her biography of Barthé through his art: "What follows is a documentation and close reading of Barthe's figurative masterworks—his oeuvre's biography, if you will. The thematic choices he made also reflect Barthé's psychology and help us know more about the man as much as his subjects and objects." She does chart a narrative timeline of Barthé's life, his friends, relationships, homes, illnesses, and recoveries. All are placed alongside his work of the corresponding period.

This much is clear about Barthé: his art was a critique of our culture. An artist is a being of highly sensitized feeling, a scribe via art of his emotions and intellect in response to the sentiment of the time. Art alters perception to the good. Vendryes states correctly that Barthé "took on the challenge of the human figure as the ultimate storyteller."

Beyond his technical mastery of the male form, the 1939 bronze *Stevedore* reset the American view of the African American citizen. Here was a handsome black man, muscular and clear-eyed, naked to the waist, grasping a rope. He was performing manual labor, yet unbowed and proud. At a time when black folks were depicted as subservient and ignorant, this sculpture lifted the day worker to a quietly revered place of honor, an iron pillar of grit, an aspiration.

Barthé the critic used his sculpture to revise our collective vision and to engender a forward movement in our interracial dialogue. *Stevedore*, with his determined yet graceful carriage, disavows previous caricatures and dignifies the dutiful. *Stevedore* is submissive to no one, but intelligent and patiently clear in the message that he will overcome prejudice and ignorance through honest effort.

The effect of *Stevedore* is metaphysical. It simultaneously evokes and dismisses tired and unsurpassable



conceptions while at the same time coherently and convincingly recalibrating our societal context and frame for racial perceptions. Barthé created a new reality. He then nudged it further again and again through *Inner Music*, *The Seeker*, and *Black Majesty*, all bronze sculptures cast in the 1960s.

After a stint in Jamaica, the expatriate returned to the United States in poor health and finances. Barthé died in California in 1989.

Barthé was revolutionary in the milieu of his time, and he remains so. Vendryes summarizes the impact, "Barthé had a way of seeing manifestations of important traditions in popular culture and pulling it all together in commanding works that speak with dignity and respect."

Barthé's art rests in the National Portrait Gallery, in the Whitney Museum of American Art, and at the entrance to Champ de Mars in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. His sculpture is also included with the permanent collection of the Lauren Rogers Museum in Laurel, Mississippi.

Hopefully, with restored interest in this native artist, James Richmond Barthé will someday be honored in his home state of Mississippi.

SCOTT NAUGLE

*The Civil Rights Reader: American Literature from Jim Crow to Reconciliation.*

Editor, Julia Buckner Armstrong, associate editor, Amy Schmidt. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009. 363 pages. \$24.95 paper.

*The Civil Rights Reader* is a unique collection that uses fiction, poetry, drama, and nonfiction to show a range of perspectives on the nature of civil rights activism, the human and creative sides of life for people denied those rights, and the possibilities for writers who wanted to express a range of emotions over issues of race, white supremacy, African American life, struggle, survival, and—broadly defined—politics.

*The Reader* is a unique book reflecting the unique choices made by the editor and associate editor, who, when confronting questions of how to limit their topic, seem always to have chosen the broadest possible definitions of their topic. First, they defined civil rights broadly. It has become somewhat common to understand the civil rights movement as a long effort without clear beginnings and without an ending. This collection applies and demonstrates the usefulness of that approach, dividing the book into three sections, "The Rise of Jim Crow," "The Fall of Jim Crow," and "Reflections and Continuing Struggles." The project also has a broad definition of literature, ranging from easy-to-choose works everyone would expect to some more obscure works that may come as surprises. The collection also uses a broad definition of American literature, not segmenting civil rights writing into a subfield of African American literature.

Editor Julie Buckner Armstrong and associate editor Amy Schmidt (then a Southern Studies MA student) developed this project at the William Winter Institute for Racial

Reconciliation, where they worked hard to develop a book useful in thinking about both texts and settings. To show the significance of the historical settings of the texts, they began the three sections with discussions of historical backgrounds, and they conclude the book with a timeline of civil rights events. To show the significance of literary genres, the section introductions also discuss new developments among writers of in those periods. And to show the importance of individual circumstances of the authors, a one- or two-page biography of precedes each work of literature.

Collections of primary sources tend to have their greatest use and longest life in undergraduate classes, and this volume of just 351 pages should work well in classes in History, English, African American Studies, and Southern Studies. The sources, even when they are excerpts of much longer works, are long and thorough enough to introduce the entire work, and many of the shorter works appear here in full. At its best, the volume goes beyond the possible limits of an anthology as a collection of individual sources, and it should be a useful and powerful volume for many readers. Through the choices the authors made and the power of the literature itself, authors often seem to speak to each other. Thus, readers may understand the work of, for example, Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, Lillian Smith and James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Nikki Giovanni, and BeBe Moore Campbell, at least a bit better because we can read them within the same book, perhaps reacting to the same issues, sometimes reacting to each other, and always contributing their own unique perspectives.

TED OWNBY

## Friends Honor Barry and Susan Hannah with Creative Writing Scholarship

Novelist and short story writer Barry Hannah and his wife, Susan, have been honored by their friends Howard and Sylvia Lenhoff of Oxford with a scholarship endowment in their name at the University of Mississippi, where Barry Hannah is a writer in residence and Howard Lenhoff is an adjunct biology professor.

The Lenhoffs' gift of \$25,000 creates the Barry and Susan Hannah Creative Writing Scholarship in the Department of English.

"Barry Hannah is really very special; he's a national treasure," said Howard Lenhoff. "We're hoping that this is a seed gift that will encourage his many, many friends and students to give something that will allow more students an opportunity to study with Barry."

"We are especially grateful to Howard and Sylvia Lenhoff for this generous gift," said Patrick Quinn, chair of English. "This scholarship will allow gifted young students to study with Barry Hannah, the master of the short story and one of the most important writers of our time."

The Lenhoffs spent the majority of their careers at the University of California, Irvine, where Howard is a professor emeritus of biology and Sylvia served as director of relations with schools and colleges. They retired to Oxford six years ago. Soon after they relocated, they attended a discussion on Hannah's work.

"We got interested, and we started reading his work," Sylvia said. "We called him soon after that to see about taking a class from him. He was so gracious and let us in the class, even though it was already full."

"As a scientist, I'd written plenty of academic papers," Howard said. "But I wanted to learn to write in a different style. Barry teaches that every story needs a beginning, middle, and an end, and the end has got to be something 'wow.' That's his secret. . . . I'd like to see the scholarship grow to provide support to more than just one student."

SONIA WEINBERG THOMPSON

### Poets and Fiction Writers to Read at Book Conference

- Jay Asher, author of *Thirteen Reasons Why*, a book for young readers; lives in Los Angeles, California
- Camille Dungy teaches at San Francisco State University, author of the poetry collection *What to Eat, What to Drink, What to Leave for Poison*
- Major Jackson, author of the poetry collections *Hoops* and *Leaving Saturn*; teaches at the University of Vermont and the Bennington Writing Seminars; poetry editor of the *Harvard Review*
- Deborah Johnson, author of *The Air between Us*, a novel, and several historical romances under the pen name Deborah Johns; lives in Columbus, Mississippi
- Jimmy Kimbrell, 2008-2009 Grisham Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi; director of the creative writing program at Florida State University; author of two volumes of poems, *The Gatehouse Heaven* and *My Psychic*
- Jack Pendarvis, author of the novel *Awesome* and two collections, *The Mysterious Secret of the Valuable Treasure: Curious Stories* and *Your Body Is Changing: Stories*; lives in Oxford, where he was Grisham Writer in Residence at the University of Mississippi in 2007-2008
- John Pritchard, author of *Junior Ray* and *The Yazoo Blues*; lives in Memphis, Tennessee, where he has taught college-level English for more than 30 years
- Trenton Lee Stewart, author of two books for young readers, *The Mysterious Benedict Society* and *The Mysterious Benedict Society and the Perilous Journey*; lives in Little Rock, Arkansas
- Steve Yarbrough, author of three story collections and four novels; teaches at California State University at Fresno

# Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Announces Two Lifetime Achievement Award Winners in Celebration of Its 30th Anniversary

The Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters (MIAL) has chosen Marshall Bouldin III and Elizabeth Spencer as recipients of Lifetime Achievement Awards in celebration of the organization's 30th year. The presentations will be made at the annual awards ceremony and banquet on June 13, 2009, at the Lauren Rogers Art Museum in Laurel.

Awards will also be given for works shown, published, or performed in 2008 in the categories of visual arts, photography, fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and music composition (classical, popular). Artists must have significant ties to Mississippi and must have been nominated by an MIAL member. Judges for the various categories are chosen from outside the state.

Cited as "the South's foremost portrait painter" by the *New York Times*, Mississippian Marshall Bouldin III has painted more than 800 persons from all



Marshall Bouldin III



Elizabeth Spencer

Sam Tava, Montreal, 1977

walks of life, including William Faulkner, Governor William F. Winter, Sister Thea Bowman, and Richard M. Nixon's daughters Tricia and Julie. Bouldin lives in Clarksdale, where he worked on his family's cotton farm until beginning his career as a full-time portraitist in 1956.

Elizabeth Spencer has published nine novels, including *The Light in the Piazza*, three story collections, and her memoir of growing up in Carrollton, Mississippi, *Landscapes of the Heart*. *The Light in the Piazza* was made into a motion picture in 1962 and a musical that ran on Broadway for 504 performances in 2005–2006.

According to George Bassi, director of the Lauren Rogers Art Museum (LRMA), "A highlight of the annual awards banquet will be the official opening of an exhibition featuring MIAL award winners in visual arts and photography over the past 30 years. Drawn from both public and private collections, this exhibit will be on view throughout the summer of 2009 at LRMA and will be a virtual 'Who's Who' of Mississippi artists."

Mark Wiggs of Jackson, vice president of MIAL and coordinator of the nomination process, reports a grand total of 46 nominations in seven categories.

“We have a robust field of worthy entries throughout all categories,” Wiggs says, “most fitting for MIAL’s 30th anniversary celebration.”

- In the category of Fiction are nominees Howard Bahr, Ellen Gilchrist, Carolyn Haines, Darden North, John Pritchard, and Jesmyn Ward.
- The Nonfiction category includes Chris Asch, Douglas A. Blackmon, Gloria J. Burgess, Rick Cleveland, Rheta Grimsley Johnson, Robert McElvaine, Noel Polk, Julia Reed, Maureen Ryan, and Jerry Ward.
- Poetry nominees are Beth Ann Fennelly, Brooks Haxton, Mary Ann O’Gorman, and Yvonne Tomek.
- In Visual Arts are Lea Barton, Vidal Blankenstein, Andrew Bucci, Gerald DeLoach, Kat Fitzpatrick, Ed McGowin, Lucy Phillips, H.C. Porter, Paul Temple, and Andrew Cary Young.
- Photography nominees are Jane Rule Burdine, Will Jacks, Jane Robbins Kerr, Panny Mayfield, Butch Ruth, and Cameron Woodall.
- Music Composition—Concert Music nominees are Samuel Jones, Albert Oppenheimer, Andrew Owen, Steve Rouse, Logan Skelton, and Nancy Van de Vate.
- Music Composition—Popular Music nominees are Caroline Herring, Bobby Lounge, 3 Doors Down (Matt Roberts), and Tricia Walker.

Recipients in each category will be awarded a cash prize and a Mississippi-made gift. Past winners include Walker Percy, Ellen Douglas, Willie Morris, Tom Rankin, Natasha Trethewey, Richard Ford, Samuel Jones, Lee and Pup McCarty, and Clifton Taulbert.

Ann Abadie of Oxford serves as president of MIAL. Jan Taylor of Jackson is treasurer, Margaret Anne Robbins of Pontotoc is secretary, and Noel Polk of Starkville is past president.

Among the founders of MIAL were William Winter, Cora Norman, Aubrey Lucas, Noel Polk, and Keith Dockery McLean.

Anyone may join MIAL. For more information about joining and about attending the awards ceremony and banquet, visit the Web site, [www.ms-arts-letters.org](http://www.ms-arts-letters.org).

DOROTHY SHAWHAN

## Tennessee Williams Festival Set for October 16–17

The 17th annual Mississippi Delta Tennessee Williams Festival honoring America’s premiere 20th-century playwright will be held in Clarksdale October 16–17, 2009, with Coahoma Community College as sponsor. The 2008 festival was recorded by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) for a documentary to be broadcast to a radio audience of 13 million.

The 2009 festival will continue to explore influences of the Mississippi Delta on Tennessee Williams with particular emphasis on his early play *Spring Storm*. Written in 1937, *Spring Storm* was unpublished and rediscovered in 1996 in the Harry Ransom Humanities Center at the University of Texas in Austin. The drama, described as a precursor of *Orpheus Descending*, was first performed in Manhattan in 2004.

The multifaceted Williams Festival includes a literary conference with top scholars giving presentations and leading panel discussions, film screenings, live dramas, receptions and porch plays in the historic district where the playwright spent his childhood, and an acting competition for high school students performing monologues and scenes from Williams plays.

The literary conference and acting competitions take place on the CCC campus. Staged readings, live dramas, and receptions are scheduled at Oakhurst Middle School and Clarksdale’s historic district, including the Cutrer Mansion, St. George’s Episcopal Church, Clarksdale Station, and the renovated Greyhound Bus Station.

For additional information and background, visit the festival’s Web site: [www.coahomacc.edu/twilliams](http://www.coahomacc.edu/twilliams) or call CCC’s public relations department: 662-621-4157.

Thanks to Coahoma Community College and other organizations, including the Mississippi Arts Commission, the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Rock River Foundation, and other donors, the event is free and open to the public.



Meeting inside St. George’s Episcopal Church following an organ recital at the 2008 festival are (from left) church organist David A. Williamson, BBC producer Carmel Lonergan, the Rev. Bo Keeler, actors Tammy Grimes and Joel Vig.

Panny Mayfield

# Welty at 100

April 13, 2009, marks the 100th anniversary of the birth of Eudora Alice Welty, whose *Collected Stories* is the Mississippi Reads selection for this year. The Eudora Welty Foundation, the Eudora Welty Society, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Southern Literary Trail, the *Eudora Welty Review* (heretofore the *Eudora Welty Newsletter*), and many other entities are confirming plans to celebrate the Welty Centennial. Peggy Whitman Prenshaw will deliver a Centennial Address at the Oxford Conference on the Book at the University of Mississippi this March.

Many of the plans are noted on the Eudora Welty Foundation Web site ([www.eudorawelty.org/index.html](http://www.eudorawelty.org/index.html)) with links for details and schedules. For example, the Eudora Welty Society Centennial Conference has organized more than 30 scholars, emerging and seasoned, for 20-minute presentations. The academic conference is confluent with the Southern Literary Festival (both April 16–19 in Jackson, Mississippi) so that all can share in the celebrations: readings by Elizabeth Spencer, Richard Ford, Ann Patchett, and Alfred Uhry; commentary by the Honorable William Winter and Welty's friends Patti Carr Black and Suzanne Marrs; music by Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kate Campbell, Claire Holley, and Caroline Herring; *The Ponder Heart* mounted by New Stage Theater; *Eudora Welty in New York* photograph exhibition on view at the Mississippi Art Museum ([www.msmuseumart.org/](http://www.msmuseumart.org/)), and more.

In Oxford, Natchez, Yazoo City, and elsewhere in Mississippi, celebrations of Welty's photographs and fiction will reward knowing and new audiences. Celebrations are also planned outside the state. In Atlanta, for example, the Georgia Center for the Book ([www.georgiacenterforthebook.org/](http://www.georgiacenterforthebook.org/)) will present a series of three "University in the Library" lectures on Welty, and on April 13, Georgia State University will host Danièle Pitavy Souques for a Centennial Lecture followed by a celebration with a photograph exhibition and readings from Welty's fiction by actors Brenda Bynum and Tom Key.

Numerous publications will celebrate the Welty Centennial. The spring 2009 *Mississippi Quarterly* will publish a special Welty issue with a dozen essays and a checklist of scholarship from the last 20 years. The *Eudora Welty Newsletter* will celebrate the Centennial with its first issue of the *Eudora Welty Review*, an annual journal to be produced each spring. More than 25 of the essays written during the 32 years of the *Newsletter* will be reprinted in this inaugural issue. Thereafter, *EWR* will accept submissions for new critical essays and textual and bibliographical notes ([www2.gsu.edu/~wwwewn/](http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwewn/)). The University Press of Mississippi is publishing two Welty titles this spring: *Eudora Welty as Photographer* with 40 photographs by Welty (30 without prior publication) and essays by Pearl McHaney, Sandra Phillips, and Deborah Willis, and *Occasions: Selected Writings* by Eudora Welty with stories, essays, tributes, and recipes not collected in Welty's other books.

Readers of the *Southern Register* are encouraged to join the celebrations and to contact the Welty Foundation to have their programs listed among the Centennial Events.

PEARL MCHANEY

## And Speaking of Miss Welty ...

Do you have a nephew who just may be the next Wendell Berry? A daughter who can channel her inner O'Connor with a flick of a pen? Or does the pizza boy aim for Richard Wright-like greatness? If so, encourage these young people to enter stories and poems for consideration in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture's annual Eudora Welty Awards. Schools may submit one entry per category. Students should be Mississippi resident ninth through twelfth graders and must submit

writing through their high schools. Maximum length of short stories is 3,000 words and of poetry, 100 lines. Winners and nominating schools will be notified in May. First place carries a \$500 prize and second place, \$250, plus recognition by Center director Ted Ownby

at the opening of the 2009 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference on campus in July. Entries are due by April 15, 2009, and are judged by University of Mississippi English professors. Applications and submission requirements have been sent to all Mississippi public and private high schools, but if you know a Mississippi student currently enrolled in high school outside the state or who is homeschooled, e-mail [slyon@olemiss.edu](mailto:slyon@olemiss.edu) or call 662-915-5993 for a copy. A PDF of the application will appear on the Web site soon for download.

SALLY CASSADY LYON



# Mississippi Reads 2009: Eudora Welty

Mississippi Reads is a statewide initiative to encourage schools, book clubs, and libraries as well as all readers to read and discuss a single work by a Mississippi author. Previous choices were William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* in 2007 and Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children* in 2008. The 2009 Mississippi Reads selection is *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*.

Eudora Welty was born in 1909 in Jackson, Mississippi. Her education included Mississippi State College for Women in Columbus and Columbia University in New York City. Hired to photograph the rural South during the Depression for the Works Progress Administration, her first efforts to be published were three photos in *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State* in 1938.

Never married, Welty lived a life full of travel and friends. Mexico, Europe, Ireland, New York City, and San Francisco were favored spots where she toured and wrote for weeks at a time. Her friendships with other writers, Reynolds Price, Ross MacDonal, and Elizabeth Bowen among many, were rich in correspondence and lasted a lifetime. Welty died in Jackson in 2001.

The definitive life story of Miss Welty, *Eudora Welty: A Biography* by Suzanne Marris, was published in 2005. Marris was a close Welty friend and is a professor of English at Millsaps College in Jackson.

While Welty may be best remembered for her short stories, she was also a prolific book reviewer for the *New York Times*, and published several novels and the best-selling memoir *One Writer's Beginnings*.

There is an overexposed, iconic image of Eudora Welty that is diminutive and ultimately reductive to her work. For some, Welty fits easily into the stereotype of Southern grace and charm, the nice, stooped, white-haired old lady who shopped at Jitney Jungle Number 14 in the Jackson neighborhood of Belhaven.



**Eudora Welty.** Kay Bell. 1950s. *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* covers, from top: original edition, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980; paperback edition, A Harvest Book • Harcourt, Inc., 1982; paperback edition, A Harvest Book • Harcourt, Inc., 1982; British edition, Penguin Books, 1983; The Library of America edition, 1998.

In reality, the powerful prose of the courageous Welty demands that readers think about the unheard, the unvoiced, and the overlooked among them. Welty did not shy from issues of great social importance.

Included in *The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty* is "Flowers for Marjorie," set in Depression-era New York City. A young couple expecting their first child finds meager existence in a one-room walk up flat. The husband, Howard, is jobless and devoid of prospects. Both he and his wife, Marjorie, left Mississippi dreaming of a better life.

Their frustration is verbalized by Howard, "Just because you're going to have a baby, just because that's a thing that's bound to happen . . . that doesn't mean everything else is going to happen and change!"

Much like the impending birth, Welty sets the story's tension against the subtext of advancing time. Clocks backdrop the story's action: "The ticks of the cheap alarm clock grew louder and louder as he buried his face against her, feeling new desperation in every moment in the time-marked softness and the pulse of her sheltering body." And later, "The purse, like a little pendulum, slowed down in his hand."

Truly lost and alone in a concrete city of millions, away from the Mississippi he understood, Howard's only recourse, in his wracked mind, was to stop time: "Like a flash of lightning he changed his hold on the knife and thrust it under her breast."

Welty knew that Howard's situation would, and still does, hold resonance within contemporary culture. Surrounded by people, yet he was alone. Commerce and skyscrapers straddle him, yet he remains jobless. In love, yet he could not provide. Far from home and a safety net, none was cast for him to grasp.

Marris recounts that night, at the height of the civil rights violence in 1950s Mississippi, Welty continued to lecture at a historically black institution, "even though speaking at Tougaloo involved some personal danger." In her stories "A Worn Path" and "The Demonstrators" her stance on racial equality is explored.

"How do we tell a story? Our own way," writes Welty in *Eudora Welty on Short Stories*, a privately published book she presented to friends as a 1949 New Year's greeting. "A story is not the same thing when it ends as it was when it began. Something happens—the writing of it. It becomes. And as a story becomes, I believe we as readers understand by becoming too—by enjoying."

First Faulkner, then Wright, now Welty—how fortunate can we be as Mississippians to have these literary mirrors to reflect our truer selves? To participate in the statewide discussion of Miss Welty's *Collected Stories*, visit the program's Web site at [www.mississippireads.org](http://www.mississippireads.org) or contact program administrators at [mississippireads@gmail.com](mailto:mississippireads@gmail.com).

SCOTT NAUGLE

The Mississippi Reads project is partially funded under the federal Library Services and Technology Act administered through the Mississippi Library Commission for the Institution of Museum and Library Services.

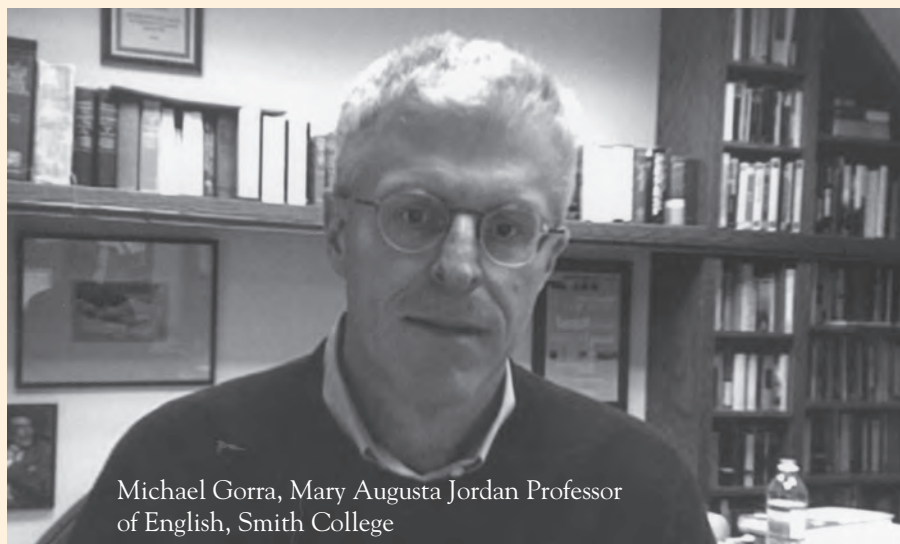
# Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha

## “Faulkner and Mystery” • July 19–23, 2009

In one sense, of course, mystery has always been a part of the Faulkner experience: the mystery of a prose and a narrative technique that still puzzles, even as it continues to dazzle. The mystery that is the theme of the 36th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, however, has to do with the apparent fascination this Prince of High Modernism had with one of the most popular forms of fiction of his time: the mystery novel, the novel of crime and detection, of burgeoning complication, of suspense and violence.

For five days, in a series of plenary and panel presentations, Faulkner scholars will hold forth on the ways in which Faulkner made use of the techniques of mystery writing, in the who-dunnits of *Knight's Gambit* and *Intruder in the Dust*, the violence and legal machinations of *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun*, the unresolved puzzles of identity and motive for murder of *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*

Appearing at the conference for the first time will be Hosam Aboul-Ela, University of Houston, Michael Gorra, Smith College, and Sean McCann, Wesleyan University. Professor Aboul-Ela is the author of *Other South: Faulkner, Coloniality, and the Mariategui Tradition* and translator of the novel *Distant Train*, by Ibrahim Abdel Meguid. Professor Gorra is the author of *The English Novel at Mid-Century*, *After Empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie, The Bells in Their Silence: Travels through Germany*, and editor of the forthcoming Norton Critical Edition of Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. Professor McCann is the author of *A Pinnacle of Feeling: American Literature and Presidential Government* and *Gumshoe*



Michael Gorra, Mary Augusta Jordan Professor of English, Smith College

*America: Hard-Boiled Crime Fiction and the Rise and Fall of New Deal Liberalism.*

Returning to the conference are Susan Donaldson, College of William and Mary, Richard Godden, University of California at Irvine, Donald Kartiganer, University of Mississippi, Noel Polk, Emeritus, Mississippi State University, and Philip Weinstein, Swarthmore College. Additional speakers and panelists will be selected from the “Call for Papers” competition.

In addition to the scholarly presentations there will be a special panel of fiction writers who have worked in what is loosely called the crime genre, and they will discuss their fiction and Faulkner's and how they may relate to each other. The writers are Ace Atkins, the author of six novels and short story collections, including *Wicked City* and *New Orleans Noir* and the forthcoming *Devil's Garden*; Jere Hoar, author of the novel *Hit Man*, the collection of stories *Body Parts*, as well as TV scripts and more than 40 scholarly and other magazine articles; and Daniel Woodrell,

author of eight novels, including *Give Us a Kiss: A Country Noir* and *Tomato Red*, and his most recent, *Winter's Bone*.

Other program events will include sessions on “Teaching Faulkner,” conducted by James Carothers, University of Kansas, Charles Peek, Emeritus, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Terrell Tebbetts, Lyon College, and Theresa Towner, University of Texas at Dallas; a discussion of “Collecting Faulkner” by Seth Berner; and an exhibition of Faulkner books, manuscripts, photographs, and memorabilia at the John Davis Williams Library. There will also be guided daylong tours of Northeast Mississippi, the Delta, and Memphis; a picnic served at Faulkner's home, Rowan Oak; and “Faulkner on the Fringe,” an “open mike” evening at the Southside Gallery.

Discount rates for the conference are available for groups of five or more students. Inexpensive dormitory housing is available for all registrants. Contact Robert Fox at [rfox@olemiss.edu](mailto:rfox@olemiss.edu) for details. There are also a limited number of waivers of registration for graduate students. Contact Donald Kartiganer at [dkartiga@olemiss.edu](mailto:dkartiga@olemiss.edu) for details.

Further information on the program, registration, course credit, accommodations, and travel can be found on the conference Web site: [www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner](http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner).

DONALD M. KARTIGANER

The 15th Annual Southern Writers, Southern Writing Graduate Conference is set for July 16–18, 2009, at the University of Mississippi. Both critical and creative pieces will be accepted, dealing with all aspects of Southern culture. Submissions to the conference are not limited to literary studies—we are interested in all interdisciplinary approaches to Southern culture. Scott Romine, University of North Carolina-Greensboro, will give the plenary lecture. Students whose papers are accepted may register for the 36th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference at a reduced rate of \$100 registration fee. Contact [swwgradconference@gmail.com](mailto:swwgradconference@gmail.com) or visit [www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner](http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/faulkner) for more information.





# SOUTHERN FOODWAYS REGISTER

The Newsletter of the Southern Foodways Alliance

“What enters or leaves the doors of our bodies is the basis of morality.” —Lillian Smith

## 2009 Events

**Our calendar is full.  
Won't you join us?**

April 18: **Potlikker Film Festival** in Washington, D.C. Look for new films on buttermilk and catfish and farming at the festival, hosted by Johnny's Half Shell. Registration will open on the SFA Web site in March.

June 12: **Craig Claiborne Tribute Dinner**, Astor Center, New York City

June 13–14: **Big Apple Barbecue Block Party**, New York City

June 26–28: **Mountain Empire: Cornbread at the Carter Fold and Fast Cars in Bristol**, the annual SFA summer Field Trip. Explore music and food and drink as we walk the fine state line between Tennessee and Virginia. Registration info available late spring.

August, date TBD: **Potlikker Film Festival**, Athens, Georgia

September, date TBD: **Viking Range Lecture**, University of Mississippi

October 28–29: **Delta Divertissement**, Greenwood, Mississippi. Our annual debauch in the Delta is the ever popular prequel to the symposium. Our H.Q. is the Alluvian Hotel; our intent is experiential learning.

October 29–Nov. 1: **12th Southern Foodways Symposium**, Oxford, Mississippi. Our focus this year is food and music. We'll eat, we'll dance, and we'll learn a few things.

## President's Letter

Folks are attracted to the Southern Foodways Alliance for a variety of reasons. Some of us are passionate about food history, others wax nostalgic over endangered recipes, and many enjoy the party that a bowl of gumbo or a bottle of bourbon engenders. All of these things, and more, attracted me to the SFA, but what truly won me over was the organizational commitment to gathering a myriad of people at a common table. Our organization is mindful of racial and social and economic injustices. We work to be change agents in our region.

The year 2009 has just begun, and we're off to a good start. At our annual Blackberry Farm dinner and benefit, Emile DeFelice, of Matthews, South Carolina, was inducted into the Fellowship of Farmers, Artisans, and Chefs. During the same weekend, an auction yielded about \$60,000 for the SFA. This money will fuel our documentary and programming efforts.

Answering President Obama's call to service, the Southern Foodways Alliance on Martin Luther King Jr. Day catalyzed an ongoing Skillet Brigade of food-focused volunteers. This effort is a way for SFA members to band together with other nonprofit organizations while working toward a better South. We've just begun. A team in Atlanta is working with Slow Food Convivium leader (and SFA member) Judith Winfrey. In New Orleans Sara Roahen and crew are working with Share Our Strength. In Tyler, Texas, Leigh Vickery is teaching cooking classes to underserved children; in Nashville, Thomas Williams is working with soup kitchens. These projects reflect important actions that give life to our mission statement.

This year, we celebrate foodways and musicways. We begin with a Potlikker Film Festival in April in Washington, D.C., and we follow with a Field Trip to the cradle of country music, Bristol, Tennessee—which is, of course, cheek-to-jowl with Bristol, Virginia.

I look forward to working with the staff, the board, and membership to enhance the SFA's mark on our cultural fabric. Many thanks for the opportunity!



Emile DeFelice

heall + thomas photograph

ANGIE MOSIER

## Introducing the Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Foodways Alliance

Craig Claiborne, a native of the Mississippi Delta, born in 1920, helped change how Americans ate, how they entertained, and how they understood food. In spite of his influence over a core component of American culture, developed during his 30-year tenure at the *New York Times*, Claiborne is, today, underappreciated.

At an event to be staged on June 12, 2009, at the Astor Center in New York City, the SFA, along with the State of Mississippi, will celebrate his life and legacy. And the SFA will announce the naming of its Lifetime Achievement Award, in honor of Claiborne.

Among the facets of his life to be explored by a panel of three New York City-based experts, and feted by Mississippi-based chefs, are Claiborne's Southern upbringing, his formal culinary education, and his career as a preeminent food writer.

Claiborne was born in Sunflower, Mississippi, on September 4, 1920. Several years later the family moved to the nearby Delta town of Indianola, where his mother opened a boarding house. That Southern, food-focused home environment played a paramount role in influencing how Claiborne later covered food.

Claiborne received formal culinary training at the Swiss Hotelkeepers School in Lausanne, Switzerland. Prior to that education, he earned a journalism degree from the University of Missouri and tasted a number of ethnic foods while serving in World War II and the Korean War. All experiences impacted his culinary career. Claiborne was the first male to edit the food page for a major American daily. He introduced the star-rating system to the American restaurant review. He wrote about the personalities behind the food and historical context relevant to the food. We will acknowledge the numerous careers Claiborne bolstered (Jacques Pepin, Marcella Hazan, Paul Prudhomme, etc.) as well as the mark of Pierre Franey on his own career. Claiborne was the first widely read proponent of world foods.

GEORGEANNA MILAM CHAPMAN

## On the SFA Bookshelf

In preparation for our 2009 symposium, focusing upon the intersections of food and music, we're stocking our bookshelves with books and CDs. Here's a quick look at a few of the titles on the shelf.

### Books

*Country Music U.S.A.*, Bill Malone

*It Came from Memphis*, Robert Gordon

*Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South*, Patrick Huber

*Rhythm Oil*, Stanley Booth

*Swamp Pop: Cajun and Creole Rhythm and Blues*, Shane Bernard

### CDs

*American Routes: Songs and Stories from the Road*, Nick Spitzer

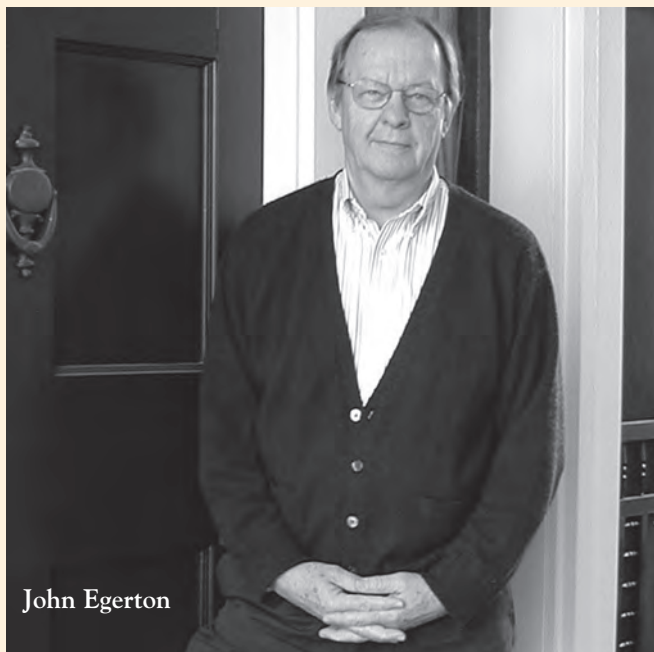
*Doug: A Rock Opera*, the Coolies

*Greens from the Garden*, Corey Harris

*Too Much Pork for Just One Fork*, Southern Culture on the Skids

*The Unreleased Recordings (Mother's Best Flour)*, Hank Williams

## Egerton Prize Jury at Work



John Egerton

For his work in chronicling and championing the cause of civil rights in America, and for his contribution to our understanding of the power of the common table, the Southern Foodways Alliance has established the John Egerton Prize for Foodways Scholarship.

The \$5,000 prize, underwritten by an endowment, and awarded annually, recognizes artists, writers, cooks, scholars, and others whose work documents and celebrates the diverse food cultures of the American South and addresses issues of race, class, gender, and social justice, through the lens of food.

The first winner, to be announced this spring, will be selected by a juried panel of the following:

- Makale Fabre Cullen, Center for the Urban Environment, New York City
- Ann Cashion, Johnny's Half Shell, Washington, D.C.
- Malcolm White, Mississippi Arts Commission, Jackson
- Reid Mizell, Tula Communications, Atlanta, Georgia
- Kevin Young, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia

HENRY MENCKEN

# Jason Ringenberg: From Scorcher to Farmer

In the mid-to-late '80s and early '90s, Jason Ringenberg, a tall drink of water given to sporting a 10-gallon hat and star-spangled suit, probably lit more Southern towns afire than General Sherman. Considered too country for rock radio and too rock for country, the alt-country act Jason and the Scorchers nevertheless developed a huge following and went on to tour with the likes of R.E.M., The Replacements, and others. Many music writers (this one included) see Ringenberg and Co. as founding fathers of the Americana music movement, too often attributed to other Johnny-Cash-come-latelies.

Of course, as an important band—in September, the group was presented with the Americana Music Association's lifetime achievement award—they were horribly mismarketed, battled tooth and nail with their label for years, and were finally dropped. The band broke up and folks went their separate ways (although they occasionally reunite, usually for charity). Ringenberg went on to release a series of critically acclaimed solo pieces, and hotshot guitarist Warner Hodges became an in-demand session and touring guitarist.

The Jason Ringenberg biopic, as it might be played on CMT or some similar network, would be the usual story of second acts, a look at how our upbringings can rise up and reclaim us even as we least expect it. You see, Ringenberg grew up on his family's Illinois hog farm, exploring the nearby forests and fields. His goal as a child, he says, was to be a forester. Instead, he became a rock and roll star with children of his own.

These days, he spends most of his time raising his newest creation, a children's performer with the nom-de-rock "Farmer Jason." In this latest guise, he hopes to teach kids about ecology, the natural world, Native Americans, and the land around them.

Ringenberg says he first got the idea when, about to leave



on a solo tour in 2002, he noticed how much his two young daughters, Addie Rose and Camille, listened to tot-gear artists like Raffi. Deciding to create a CD for them, he cranked out a short E.P. When he returned, the results were in: they loved it—as did all of their friends. "These days, when I prepare songs, I test-drive them with that very same audience," Ringenberg says.

"I want Farmer Jason to hearken back to a different kind of time for children," Ringenberg explains on his Web site. "I wanted him to sort of feel like the wonderful upbringing I had on the farm. Hopefully, listeners will get some of that feeling of rural life. With the farm animals and life on the farm, it's an absolutely wonderful way to grow up. It's definitely a dying thing, since very few people live a rural life anymore. It's so sad

what's happened to the family farm. It's now a thing of the past. Even so, my dad still hangs in there. He's in his 80s and still has his 120-acre farm and his little old corn-picker and his International 400 tractor."

Ringenberg says his guise as Farmer Jason isn't just some passing fancy—he's in it for the long haul and has more offers to play dates than he can currently book.

"Playing these songs has allowed my creative juices to flow freely again," he says. "These kids can tell when you're not genuine, or genuinely passionate, about what you're doing. When you get down to it, there isn't a big difference handling a room full of drunken adults and a gang of hopped-up 5-year-olds."

And now both love his music.

For more information visit [www.farmerjason.com](http://www.farmerjason.com).

TIMOTHY C. DAVIS

# An SFA Potlikker Film Fest Primer

If you've ever had trouble explaining to your friends what the SFA is exactly, you should mark your calendar and prepare to haul them to the next SFA Potlikker Film Festival, to be held on April 18 at Johnny's Half Shell in Washington, D.C. These events, sponsored by Jack Daniel's Tennessee Whiskey, offer a first-rate introduction to the Southern Foodways sensibility.

For starters, it's really more of a party than your typical silent-in-the-dark film festival experience. Guests will soak up live music, a delicious array of local vittles, cold beer, and, of course, some savory shots of Potlikker.

But the main event is a series of bite-sized documentaries produced and directed exclusively by the Center for Documentary Projects at the University of Mississippi. While the exact line-up is still to be determined, it will include titles such as *Buttermilk: It Can Help*, which debuted at October's symposium.

*Buttermilk* is a profile of 2008 Ruth Fertel Keeper of the Flame winner Earl Cruze of Cruze Family Dairy in east Tennessee. Not only will you revel in the interviews of family patriarch and consummate flirt Earl Cruze, you'll begin to wonder why buttermilk isn't a part of your daily regimen.

Other items on the bill include *Jones Valley Urban Farm*, Matthew Graves's tranquil and colorful account of Birmingham's own inner-city Victory Garden, and this corre-

spondent's personal favorite, the racy *Hot Chicken*.

Whatever the roster, attendants will be reminded why they came to like this organization in the first place. Using a mixture of humor, honest camera work, and historical footage, each documentary shines a respectful spotlight on the folks responsible for our Southern food traditions.

"The great thing about documenting these people is that we pay attention to the ones who don't get highlighted, but have made great contributions to our culture," filmmaker Joe York says.

The festivities will be hosted by SFA board member (and James Beard Award-winning chef) Ann Cashion at her Capitol Hill eating house, Johnny's Half Shell. Cashion hopes that the event will not only help spread the gospel of the SFA, but introduce folks to another side of D.C. Cashion says, "It's a very Southern town. It's a very African American town, and we hope this event will give people the opportunity to remember that."

If you can't make it to the festival, remember that you can watch these documentaries any time on the new SFA Web site [www.southernfoodways.com](http://www.southernfoodways.com).

ASHLEY HALL

## SFA Contributors

**Georgeanna Milam Chapman**, a native of Tupelo, Mississippi, wrote her master's thesis on Craig Claiborne.

**Timothy C. Davis**, associate editor of the SFA newsletter *Gravy*, is a Charlotte, North Carolina, native currently living in Nashville, Tennessee. He has written for magazines including *Saveur*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Mother Jones*.

**Ashley Hall**, an Alabama native and lapsed journalist, sells juice in Atlanta for Kermit Lynch Wine Merchant. She is associate editor of the SFA newsletter *Gravy*.

**Henry Mencken**, a native of the South, now lives and writes beyond.

**Angie Mosier**, SFA president, is a freelance writer and food stylist.

## SOUTHERN FOODWAYS ALLIANCE



### MEMBERSHIP

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# Call for Submissions

*Studies in American Culture* welcomes the submission of essays on all aspects of American culture, including studies of the literature, language, visual arts, and history of the United States, and from all scholarly and critical approaches.

Because we receive so many submissions on literature, the editorial board especially welcomes studies of art, music, theatre, rhetoric, political science, sociology, history, or any other area related to American Studies. We will consider any essay that explores an interesting dimension of American culture but are particularly eager to receive submissions that approach their subjects from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Our diverse readership includes academics and nonacademics from a variety of disciplines and backgrounds. We prefer essays that engage in sophisticated analysis while avoiding alienating jargon.

Submissions for the October 2009 issue (32.1) must arrive by **April 1, 2009**.

For submission requirements, visit our Web site: [www.vmi.edu/SiAC](http://www.vmi.edu/SiAC).

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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Rebecca Lauck Cleary** is a communications specialist in the Office of Media and Public Relations at the University of Mississippi.

**Adam Gussow**, associate professor of English and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi, is the author of *Mister Satan's Apprentice: A Blues Memoir*, *Seems Like Murder Here: Southern Violence and the Blues Tradition*, and the recently published *Journeyman's Road: Modern Blues Lives from Faulkner's Mississippi to Post-9/11*.

**Joan Wylie Hall** teaches in the English Department at the University of Mississippi. She is the author of *Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction* and articles on Tennessee Williams, William Faulkner, Grace King, Frances Newman, and other authors.

**Donald M. Kartiganer** holds the William Howry Chair in Faulkner Studies at the University of Mississippi and is director of the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. In addition to his work on Faulkner, he has published articles and book chapters on a number of modernist writers and theorists, including Conrad, Eliot, W. C. Williams, Kafka, Hemingway, Welty, Philip Roth, Freud, Kierkegaard, and Murray Krieger.

**Sally Cassidy Lyon** works at the Center, as the director's assistant. She is a Gulfport native and Sewanee graduate. She lives in Oxford with her husband, Dalton, an orange tabby cat, Patty MacTavish, a dog, Scout, and a daughter, Lucy Rose Lyon, born October 21, 2008.

**Pearl McHaney**, associate professor of English at Georgia State University, is the editor of the *Eudora Welty Review* and of collections of book reviews Welty wrote and received. This spring McHaney will publish *Eudora Welty as Photographer* and *Occasions: Selected Writings by Eudora Welty*.

**Scott Naugle** is a regular contributor to the *Sun Herald* and other publications. He opened Pass Christian Books in 2003. Hurricane Katrina swept away the building that housed the bookstore, but not the business. The new store opened in Pass Christian/DeLisle on November 1, 2006.

**Cale Nicholson** is a second-year student in the Southern Studies master's program. As a graduate assistant for the Southern Foodways Alliance, he has coordinated the Teaching Garden at the Boys and Girls Club in Oxford, Mississippi.

**Ted Ownby**, director of the Center, holds a joint appointment in Southern Studies and History. He is the author of *Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1965–1920* and *American Dreams in Mississippi: Consumers, Poverty, and Culture, 1830–1998*. He is working on a book about the conflicting definitions of family life in the 20th-century South.

**Sonia Weinberg Thompson** is a communications specialist at the University of Mississippi Foundation.

*continued from 2*

tor and now as a new director. Writing about my predecessors Charles Wilson and Bill Ferris, Associate Director Ann Abadie, and many other friends among the faculty, staff, Advisory Committee, alumni, students, and administrators runs the risk of the kind of clichés and unnecessary adverbs that I try to discour-

age in the writing of my students. Worse yet, effusive thanks risks using the language well-dressed actors use in receiving awards. So, to avoid clichés, adverbs, and effusive language, let me say thanks.

TED OWNBY

# Southern Culture Catalog

## Civil Rights in the Delta

Journalist Curtis Wilkie in conversation with Patti Carr Black, Emmett Till's cousin Wheeler Parker, Sumner residents Frank Mitchener and Betty and Bill Pearson, Henry Outlaw of the Delta Center for Culture and Learning at Delta State University, and former Mississippi governor William F. Winter. March 29, 2006.

Color, 60 minutes.

DVD1148 . . . . . \$20.00

Friends . . . . . \$18.00

Scene at courthouse in Sumner in 1955 during the Emmett Till murder trial

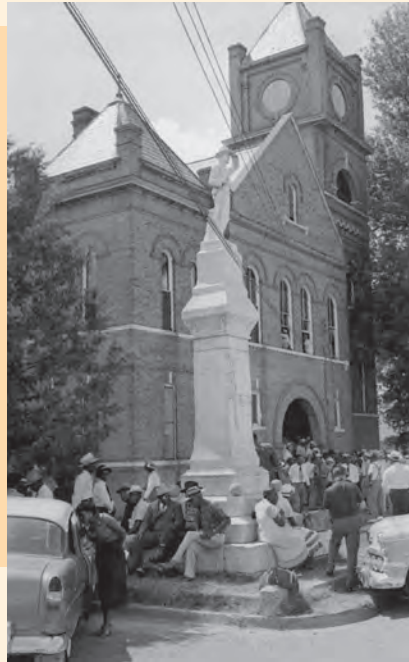


Photo Courtesy: Memphis Commercial Appeal

## Faulkner's Mississippi: Land into Legend

Transforms the fiction of William Faulkner's mythical Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha into the reality of Oxford and Lafayette County, Mississippi, with quotations from Faulkner's writings correlated with appropriate scenes. The first motion pictures inside Faulkner's home are presented along with rare still photographs of the writer. Narrated by Joseph Cotton. Script by Evans Harrington. Producer, Robert D. Oesterling, University of Mississippi Center for Public Service and Continuing Studies. 1965.

Color, 32 minutes.

DVD1069 . . . . . \$25.00

Friends . . . . . \$22.50

## "Are You Walkin' with Me?" Sister Thea Bowman, William Faulkner, and African American Culture

Overview of programs Sister Thea presented at the annual Faulkner Conference from 1980 through 1989. Produced by Lisa N. Howorth,



Center for the Study of Southern Culture, 1990.

Color, 30 minutes.

DVD 1016 . . . . . \$25.00

Friends . . . . . \$22.50

## William Faulkner Stamp Ceremony

A 22-cent Literary Arts Commemorative stamp honoring William Faulkner was issued by the United States Postal Service during a ceremony at the University of Mississippi on August 3, 1987. The DVD of this program includes remarks by author Eudora Welty, Faulkner's daughter, Jill Faulkner Summers, and others.

Color, 34 minutes.

DVD1231 . . . . . \$25.00

Friends . . . . . \$22.50

## The Eleventh Oxford Conference for the Book Poster (2001)

Poster features Richard Wright photograph by Carl Van Vetchen.

M9903 . . . . . \$10.00

Friends . . . . . \$ 9.00



## The Dain & Cofield Collection Posters

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Dain Poster M1034 . . . \$18.95

Cofield Poster M1033 . \$18.95

Faulkner's World Exhibit Poster M1789 . . . . . \$10.00

## William Faulkner and Eudora Welty

This film features Eudora Welty at the opening session of the 1987 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. Welty reads from her story "Why I Live at the P.O." and answers questions about her work and Faulkner's.

Color, 34 minutes.

DVD1104 . . . . . \$25.00

Friends . . . . . \$22.50

**Books** All New, Limited Number of Copies Available

**The South: A Treasury of Art and Literature**

This richly illustrated volume includes well-selected texts and images from more than 300 years of life in the American South. Edited—and signed—by Lisa Howorth. 384 pages; 120 color, 100 black-and-white illustrations. Only a few copies of this 1983 publication are left. Cloth. B1006 ..... \$150.00 Friends .....\$135.00

**Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference Proceedings**

Studies in English, Volume 14  
1974 conference papers by Malcolm Cowley, Elizabeth M. Kerr, and David Sansing along with transcripts of discussions by Joseph Blotner, Evans Harrington, and others. Paper. B1020 ..... \$25.00 Friends .....\$22.50

**Studies in English, Volume 15**

1975 conference papers by Cleanth Brooks, William Boozer, Carvel Collins, Blyden Jackson, Richard Godden, and Elizabeth M. Kerr along with transcripts of discussions by Victoria Black, Christine Drake, Howard Duvall, Robert J. Farley, Lucy Howorth, Mary McClain, Phil Mullen, William McNeil Reed, Dean Faulkner Wells, and others. Paper. B1021 ..... \$25.00 Friends .....\$22.50

**The South and Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha**

1976 conference papers by Daniel Aaron, Michael Millgate, Darwin Turner, John Pilkington, Evans Harrington, Shelby Foote, Linda Weishimer Wagner, Victoria Fielden Black, and Louis D. Rubin Jr. Paper B1022 ... \$15.00 Friends .....\$13.50 Cloth B1023... \$30.00 Friends .....\$27.00

**The Maker and the Myth**

1977 conference papers by Calvin S. Brown, Albert J. Guerard, Louis P. Simpson, Ilse Dusoier Lind, and Margaret Walker Alexander. Paper B1024 ... \$15.00 Friends .....\$13.50 Cloth B1025... \$30.00 Friends .....\$27.00

**Faulkner, Modernism, and Film**

1978 conference papers by Malcolm Cowley, Hugh Kenner, Thomas Daniel Young, Horton Foote, Ilse Dusoier Lind, and Bruce Kawin. Paper B1026 ... \$15.00 Friends .....\$13.50 Cloth B1027... \$30.00 Friends .....\$27.00

**Fifty Years of Yoknapatawpha**

1979 conference papers by Joseph Blotner, Michael Millgate, John Pilkington, Merle Wallace Keiser, James G. Watson, Noel Polk, and Thomas L. McHaney. Paper B1028.. \$15.00 Friends .....\$13.50 Cloth B1029... \$30.00 Friends .....\$27.00

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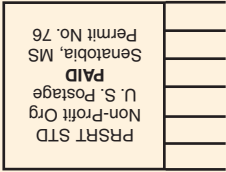
**United States:** \$3.50 for first video or other item, \$1.00 each additional item sent to the same address. **Foreign:** \$5.00 for each item.

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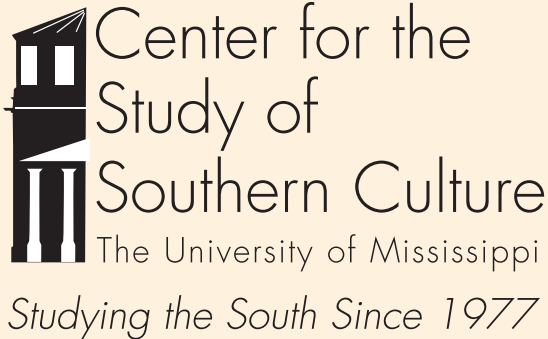
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