ABSTRACT

BRUCE LAMONT. Reading William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily,” “Dry September” and “Fox Hunt” in their Historical and Discursive Contexts. (Under the direction of Professor Michael Grimwood.)

Modern literary critics and general readers collectively consider William Faulkner to be one of our nation’s greatest literary figures. Like all exceptional literature, many of Faulkner’s works withstand the test of time by remaining relevant beyond the period in which they were produced. In 1930 and 1931, William Faulkner published a number of remarkable stories in some of the leading magazines of the day. Among them “A Rose for Emily” and “Dry September” have become two of his most popular and widely anthologized stories. “Fox Hunt,” despite strong narrative virtue has sustained less attention. Historicizing these three stories allows the modern reader to understand and appreciate them in a variety of historical contexts that generally go unnoticed because they have vanished into history. Prominent issues, or even seemingly mundane occurrences or historical trivialities, can increase modern readers’ understanding of the stories and enrich their reading experience of them. Situating them in their historical environments reveals that Faulkner was very much in tune with the current events and the prominent social issues of the day. While his stories refrain from addressing any specific public-policy issue explicitly, they often integrate newsworthy topics and content discussed and debated by the leading newspapers and magazines of the period. Situating each story within its historical context reengages it with the competing cultural narratives and popular discourses that helped, to varying degrees, shape and inform it.