

The best essays in the collection focus on the most central Southern authors, William Faulkner and Eudora Welty. Folks presents a convincing discussion of *The Sound and the Fury* by placing the novel in the context of Faulkner's biography during the composition of the book. He sees the novel shaped by the author's "awareness of the absence of a framework of traditional belief within which one's personal ambition of artistic fame or romantic fulfillment might be tempered by the certainty of one's role within a particular community or a historical culture" (39). Welty's story "The Wide Net" serves Folks to demonstrate that "a paradise of contentment within a traditional order of existence" (69) is the only worthwhile goal of human enterprise.

Folks has greater difficulty fitting the works of the post-World War II authors into his overall frame. Novels such as Richard Wright's *The Outsider*, William Styron's *Lie Down in Darkness*, and James Agee's *A Death in the Family* as well as Flannery O'Connor's collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge* lend themselves quite easily as evidence to indict the shortcomings of a modern age characterized by destruction and meaninglessness, but like the authors and their characters, Folks can see "no workable alternative" (117).

In A Time of Disorder presents a number of essays that—taken individually—present some interesting readings and interpretations of texts from the American South. But what the book does not—and cannot—provide is the coherent reading of a segment of American literature that the introduction had raised hopes for.

Laurence M. Porter and Eugene F. Gray
Gustave Flaubert's "Madame Bovary." A Reference Guide
Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. Pp. 182 + xlii. \$54.95
Reviewed by Timothy Raser

To the Greenwood Guides to Fiction has been added a guide to *Madame Bovary* by Laurence Porter and Eugene Gray, and now the seminal work of modernism is represented in a series that provides "comprehensive introduction[s] to major works of fiction." Professors Porter and Gray have divided the task between themselves: to the book's seven chapters are added a bibliography and an index. This work strives to be comprehensive and balanced regarding *Madame Bovary*, which has elicited innumerable critical responses, and the division of labor between two very different scholars is an appropriate response to this task. The book supplies overviews and generalities, and does not explain or interpret as much as it refers readers to other works where more in-depth treatments are available. The authors refer to the excellent 1986 edition of the novel edited by Bernard Ajac; translations are the authors'. The choice of an inexpensive edition is commendable and, in my opinion, outweighs considerations of textual authority. In this instance, however, it is unfortunate, as

Garnier-Flammarion has since discontinued the edition, making it somewhat difficult to find passages cited.

After an introduction relating the important stages of Flaubert's life, Porter provides a chapter-by-chapter summary of the novel. Such paraphrase is very useful for navigating a work where innovative use of the imperfect defies attempts at linear recall, and where three characters answer to the name "Madame Bovary." "Content" describes how Flaubert composed *Madame Bovary*: the possible sources of episodes, how these were organized, and how the author put them into language. A fascinating timetable correlating the long writing of the novel with diary entries and specific dates is provided. "Contexts" and "Ideas" are the work of Gray, who presents restoration France, where religion was losing ground to science, the world of medicine into which the writer was born, and the romantic and realist movements in the arts. This information is invaluable for understanding the bleak existence Emma seeks to avoid, the place where Charles falls in the medical establishment, and the attitudes to adopt when entertaining Emma's dreams. "Ideas" deals largely with Flaubert's "impersonal" style, his paradoxical gambit to find artistic beauty in the dreary Normandy countryside. In "Narrative Art," Porter presents a comprehensive view of Flaubert's workmanship. Excellent views of plot construction, character development, and description of setting are set off by more detailed concerns: irony, point of view, use of the imperfect, free indirect style.

With "Reception," Porter relates how *Madame Bovary* has fared over the past 150 years: its contemporaries detected a masterpiece, without specifying exactly how such excellence was achieved. Henry James returned to it over and over as his own style developed. For Sartre, it became an example of "objective neurosis." It elicited admiring parodies and imitations by Proust, Nabokov, and even Woody Allen. Porter usefully provides a table of authors influenced by the work. *Madame Bovary* has produced films, and those too are commented. The co-authored "Bibliographic Essay" sorts the works of the bibliography proper into different kinds of studies, commenting on prominent examples of each field. The index references names and concepts, and is very helpful for navigating the vast amount of information presented.

In sum, this reference guide is an excellent resource, an invaluable tool for those whose study of the great novel is just beginning, and a useful way to broaden horizons for those who have already had that pleasure.