



Country Lawyer and Other Stories for the Screen

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During the 1930's and 1940's, William Faulkner often found it necessary to work in Hollywood as a modestly paid screenwriter to buy the time which allowed him to concentrate on his novels. The three narratives contained in this volume were written during the early 1940's for Warner Bros. As stories or narratives they are undistinguished, marred by sentimentality, melodrama, and simple unbelievability. Two of them -- "Country Lawyer" and "The Life and Death of a Bomber"--reflect the patriotic atmosphere and fervor of the times in which they were written, the years of World War II. The third -- "The Damned Don't Cry"--is Faulkner's version of the kind of overwrought melodrama or "weeper," centered on a good woman done wrong, that was popular at the time.

Because of the complexity of plotting and the number of characters involved in each of these stories, it is difficult to imagine any of them having been made into a film. As Louis Daniel Brodsky and Robert W. Hamblin, the editors of the volume, recognize, the main interest of these narratives derives from their kinship to Faulkner's far greater novels. Of the three stories, "Country Lawyer" is clearly the best, echoing numerous characters and story lines from some of Faulkner's finest novels. It is also the most enjoyable to read on its own. "The Damned Don't Cry" is interesting, as the editors note, because of its protagonist Zelda O'Brien, an interesting addition to the ranks of Faulkner's female characters. Weakest of the three is "The Life and Death of a Bomber," an often bizarre piece of wartime propaganda.

These stories, which come from Louis Daniel Brodsky's extensive Faulkner collection, should be recognized as Faulkner marginalia, of importance more to the Faulkner scholar or devotee than to the general reader. Also, it should be noted that in the case of "Country Lawyer" and "The Damned Don't Cry" Faulkner was working with the material of other writers, although, inevitably, he made the stories his own.

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