



Looking Out for Others:

How Can Rider in “Pantaloons in Black” Push Us to See More than Just His Death?

“Ah’m snakebit. Ah kin pass wid anything . . . Ah kin pass even wid miss-outs. But dese hyar yuther boys—”
— Faulkner, “Pantaloons in Black”

William Faulkner keeps the focus on Rider in “Pantaloons in Black,” tracking him across fields, woods, swamp, and jail. And yet Rider’s restless movement, his request not to “lock me up,” and his warning to Birdsong about “dese hyar yuther boys” all point beyond his life and his death. A story entirely about Rider seems to make our main character feel claustrophobic. If we follow his lead, we, too, will try to escape having the story reduced to a deputy sheriff’s punchline.

“Pantaloons in Black” connects us to the huge body of Faulkner’s work. Our character, Rider, runs all over the fictional landscape Faulkner created, Yoknapatawpha County, and that landscape connects Rider to the many other stories layered under and over his own. **Faulkner wrote 68 stories set in this county!** And the stories he tells span several centuries.

Rider’s story pushes us to look up and out to these other stories. If, even in death, he’s looking out for the other men who have been cheated of their money, refusing to go along with old habits and hierarchies, how might we echo him by considering some of the old cultural patterns Faulkner describes—and challenges—in his other stories? Even before we get a chance to read more of Faulkner’s fiction, we can use the *Digital Yoknapatawpha* site to begin mapping geographical proximity and cultural struggles that persist despite the passing of decades. Unlike many Faulkner characters, Rider is not related by blood to the characters of these other stories, but that should only encourage us to recognize connections beyond those of family and bloodline. How and where does Rider claim kinship with history and culture, and then work to redefine his place in relation to them?

Start here: http://faulkner.iath.virginia.edu/?section=s_2&text=GDM&start=129&stop=152

You may find that you see Rider’s story differently if you play around with the tools on the main map page for our story. How do character and place connect, and how can this map reshape our understanding of what matters in this story?

You might also consider some of the other tools on the site. You’ll find them through the toolbar at the top of the map page, and you’re welcome to explore anything on the site. Below, however, I offer some suggestions for where to find materials that are particularly relevant for readers of “Pantaloons.”

Manuscripts: <https://faulkner.drupal.shanti.virginia.edu/node/13352?canvas>

“Pantaloons in Black” is largely untouched as Faulkner revises the stories of *Go Down, Moses*, but what changes do you see him making in the manuscript pages? How good are you at reading his handwriting?



Genealogy: <https://faulkner.drupal.shanti.virginia.edu/node/16774?canvas>

Although Rider only rents his cabin from Roth Edmonds, the head of the long-standing McCaslin clan, the remaining stories of *Go Down, Moses* show us several generations of the McCaslin and Beauchamp family unfold. The opening story, “Was,” focuses on Tomey’s Turl, who is listed as born in 1810, and the novel concludes with the death of Samuel Worsham Beauchamp, in 1940. What changes take place over that time, other than new generations replacing the old?

Audio: <https://faulkner.drupal.shanti.virginia.edu/node/12791?canvas>

What can we learn from listening to Faulkner respond to the questions of college students about his work?

Cemeteries: <http://faulkner.iath.virginia.edu/YokCemeteries.html>

Here, and in the essay linked to on this page, we might gain more information about the cemetery where our story begins, when Rider stands at his wife’s grave.

Illustrations: <http://faulkner.iath.virginia.edu/media/resources/MANUSCRIPTS/GDMMS1.html>

Here you’ll find the first page of the original magazine publication of “Go Down, Moses.” This is the Molly/Mollie of Molly and Lucas Beauchamp, the couple that Rider holds in high esteem as he envisions his future with his young wife, Mannie. After Mannie, Rider, and even Lucas have died, Molly Beauchamp remains. And here, in this striking image, she grieves her grandson in the novel’s final story. How does this image shape or reshape our priorities in reading this story?

Photographs: http://faulkner.iath.virginia.edu/family/photograph_locations.php

How much do you know about the world of rural Mississippi, half a century or more ago? To get into Faulkner’s imaginary world, it helps immensely to know more about the world in which he lived. Which photographs help you understand more fully the world he describes, and how?

In your responses to any of the materials linked above, be sure to follow Rider’s lead: how does the material help us recognize the connections that bind the individual to his or her culture? How does identifying those relationships help the characters reshape them?