

LUCKY MAN

Horton Foote's three acts.

BY JOHN LAHR

In 1933, the worst year of the Depression, the sixteen-year-old Horton Foote left his home town, Wharton, Texas, to become an actor. He became a playwright instead, and during the long and prolific career that followed—he wrote more than sixty plays and thirteen screenplays, and won two Academy Awards (“To Kill a Mockingbird,” “Tender Mercies”) and a Pulitzer Prize (“The Young Man from Atlanta”)—Foote lived in Manhattan, Pasadena, Nyack, and New Hampshire. But, no matter how far he wandered from the pecan trees, sugarcane, cotton, and grass farms of Wharton’s rich alluvial flatland, he continued to live his imaginative life within the geography and the history of his home. For four decades, Foote’s mother, Hallie Brooks Foote, sent her son daily bulletins about the goings on in Wharton, which is sixty miles south of Houston, fifty miles from the Gulf. “I knew all the whites, at least by sight, and I knew many of the blacks by their given names,” Foote wrote, in his 1999 memoir, “Farewell,” of his home town, which, in his youth, had a population of about three thousand. At the end of a visit there in the early forties, Foote wrote to his future wife, Lillian Vallish, about his fascination with the place: “I hear the tales and get reports of the inner lives. I see them unmask themselves and I know that . . . that inner thing that seeks to destroy and flay people is at work here. But I have an impersonal feeling about it all that I’ve never had before.” Wharton was Foote’s omphalos and his literary inspiration: “my contained world, my garden, my Eden.”

Foote’s first one-act play, written at the suggestion of Agnes de Mille, was “Wharton Dance” (1940). His first full-length play, “Texas Town” (1941), revolved around the social life at Outlar’s drugstore, on Wharton’s main drag. Almost all Foote’s plays reimagine the socioeconomic and moral history of

Wharton (renamed Harrison); they also record the tribulations of his own fraught family line, as its members struggled to adapt from the old agrarian South to the new industrial South. “The Orphans’ Home Cycle,” a series of nine plays (eight of which were written between 1974 and 1977), tells the saga of Foote’s father’s journey from a miserable childhood—abandoned by his mother at age twelve—to a happy marriage. (A streamlined three-part version of the cycle was mounted, for the first time, in September, at Hartford Stage, and will open at the Signature Theatre Company’s Peter Norton Space, in New York, in November.) “If a poet knows more about a horse than he does about heaven, he might better stick to the horse,” Foote was fond of saying, quoting the father of his favorite American composer, Charles Ives. “Someday the horse might carry him to heaven.”

Foote, who died on March 4, 2009, just ten days short of his ninety-third birthday, was not a weathered, macho, West Texas cowboy or, as he put it, one of the “rich, greedy, vulgar cattlemen building impossible empires . . . on the vast plains.” He was a bookish, courtly East Texas gent, who could trace his ancestry back to Albert Clinton Horton, the first lieutenant governor of Texas (who sold off his Alabama plantation in order to settle there, in 1834). After his parents died, in the early seventies, Foote took up semipermanent residence in the old family home, on a half-acre plot, whose back yard, filled with ancient pecan trees, faced the back yard of what had been his grandparents’ house. Toward the end of his life, his favorite thing was to be driven on a forty-minute circuit around the environs that his plays had turned into myth. Foote’s car journey took him from his house—whose front porch “proudly” resembled Atticus Finch’s in the 1962 film “To Kill a Mockingbird”—to the town square,

alluded to in “The Man Who Climbed Pecan Trees” (1981); past the site of Outlar’s drugstore; then right onto Milam, where Foote’s father ran the struggling haberdashery that features in “Cousins” (1983) and “The Death of Papa” (1997); to Richmond Road, where Foote’s relatives inhabited the beautiful, sycamore-shaded homes that were the center of the drama in “Courtship” (1978) and “The Carpetbagger’s Children” (2001); then out of town, often on a route that led through Burr, Iago, Boling, New Gulf, Pledger, and on to East Columbia, where Foote’s great-grandparents’ house fell into the Brazos River, and where the smell of salt air and dirt, the scudding clouds blown in from the Gulf, the old houses and low horizons are recognizably the backdrop for “The Trip to Bountiful” (1953); then back into town, past the family cemetery, about half a mile from Foote’s house, where his great-grandparents, his grandparents, and his parents were buried. (Foote is now buried there, too.)

In this landscape, Foote found the hint of eternity that he expressed through one of his most famous characters, the aging, benighted Carrie Watts, in “The Trip to Bountiful,” who escapes the oppressive apartment of her son and his unpleasant wife in Houston and makes a long journey back to her rural home town: “Pretty soon it’ll all be gone, . . . this house . . . me . . . you,” she tells her son when she gets there. “But the river will be here. The fields. The woods. The smell of the Gulf. That’s what I always took my strength from. . . . We’re part of all this. We left it, but we can never lose what it has given us.”

“Change was an early acquaintance in my life,” Foote said. His work is both a witness to change in Texas—Reconstruction and its aftermath (“Convicts,” 1977), the influenza pandemic (“1918,” 1979), the collapse of the cotton economy (“The Death of Papa”), the exodus to the cities (“Bountiful”), the nineteen-eighties oil bust (“Dividing the Estate,” 1989)—and a meditation on his own survival. “He was haunted by the often inexplicable result of how a person’s life turned out,” his eldest daughter, the actress Hallie Foote, said. “Why his three uncles ended up as

they did”—Tom Brooks, an alcoholic merchant seaman, died in his forties; Speed Brooks, a drug addict, did time in San Quentin; Billy Brooks was beaten by his boozy wife—“and why others did not. He talked about being the last. He kind of marvelled at that.”

“I listen a lot,” Foote said, in his last recorded interview, given in January, at Hartford Stage. “If I ever teach writing again, I’d say the first lesson is to listen.” As he portrayed himself, Foote was a snoopy kid, with an “obsessive interest in the details of people.” “When I was growing up, I spent half my time in the house listening,” he wrote. As an eavesdropper, he was spared nothing. “I was never told to leave the room, no matter how gruesome or unhappy the tale. And so early on, I learned to accept the most tragic events as part of life,” he said. “I heard in lurid detail of hurt feelings, suicide, jealousies, passions, and scoundrels of all kinds.” (In “The Death of Papa,” a character remarks of the ten-year-old Horace Robedaux, Jr., Foote’s alter ego, “I’ve never known a more inquisitive child. We have to be careful how we talk around him, too. He hears everything.”) Foote, born Albert Horton Foote, Jr., claimed that more than half his plays began as tales told to him by his father, Albert Horton Foote, Sr., who was known in the family as Big Horton. (Foote was dubbed Little Horton.)

Foote called himself a “theatre rat.” At the age of twelve, before he’d ever seen a professional play, he dedicated himself to the stage. “I . . . just awakened one day with the sure knowledge that I wanted to be an actor,” he wrote. There were no actors in Wharton; there were no actors in his long family line. Except for a troupe of travelling players who came to town once a year, Foote had never even met an actor. He read movie magazines and sent away for the autographs of silent-film stars. But Foote’s obsession with acting had nothing to do with celebrity and everything to do with storytelling. In the South, where making conversation was both a valuable skill and a kind of blood sport, the successful storyteller was venerated. As the family’s first son, first grandson, first nephew, and first great-nephew, whose maternal grandfather was the richest man in the county, Foote lived his youth at the center of an unusual



Foote, circa 1998. “Change was an early acquaintance in my life,” he said.

amount of attention. (His mother and father had eloped—against her parents’ wishes—and a year of silence followed, until Foote’s birth reunited the generations.) For Foote, acting—with its gratifying thrill of being taken in by the admiring gaze of others—provided a simulacrum of his family’s adoration. In “The Actor” (2002), his only strictly autobiographical play, Foote humorously dramatized his bewildered father’s struggle to come to terms with his son’s ambition:

HORACE: It’s hard to describe, Daddy. It’s just like something came to me and said, you want to be an actor.

HORACE, SR.: I never heard of such a thing. Did it say aloud, “You want to be an actor”?

HORACE: No, sir, not really, but I heard it.

HORACE, SR.: I understand you heard it, but was it a man’s voice or a woman’s voice?

Foote won his father over. Instead of investing in a profitable oil-well consortium, Big Horton sold off his only parcel of land in order to pay the tuition for Foote’s two years at the Pasadena Playhouse, in California. After graduating, Foote moved to New York City, which became, he said, “my university.” Between 1935 and 1942, supporting his acting habit with various odd jobs, including busboy, elevator operator, and bookstore clerk, Foote made the acting rounds, and also the social ones. “Horton, you’re one of the few people New York seems to agree with,” Tennessee Williams, another regional Young Turk who dreamed of changing the shape of commercial theatre, said.

Foote’s optimism carried him through what he called “the sheer thing of survival, the sense of will-this-ever-end”; he was open, curious, charming, dili-

gent, and indefatigable. He welcomed the world, and, in due course, the artistic community welcomed him. Through a combination of hard work and good fortune, he found himself caught up in the slipstream of modernism. He befriended the dancers Jerome Robbins, Valerie Bettis, Doris Humphrey, Agnes de Mille, and Martha Graham. (Foote's fascination with dance—he wrote scenarios for Bettis and Graham—gave him an appreciation for the resonances of gesture, space, and body line.) As an actor, and then as a writer, he hooked up with Mary Hunter's American Actors Company, which was dedicated to developing regional voices and to cre-

ating an Off Broadway theatre movement. The company mounted Foote's "Texas Town," "Out of My House" (1942), and "Only the Heart" (1944). Crucially, more by accident than by intention, he also found his way into Method acting lessons with two recently arrived émigrés from Stanislavsky's Moscow Art Theatre, Andrius Jilinsky and Vera Soloviova, who taught that "to create truth on the stage, you must be acquainted with your own truth." (To Foote, this strategy became bedrock; throughout his life, he maintained an aesthetic of unvarnished narrative truthfulness.) By degrees, he came to know other Method acolytes, among

them Lee Strasberg, Stella Adler, Franchot Tone, Clifford Odets, Sanford Meisner, and Tennessee Williams.

Foote thought of Williams, who was eight years older, as "artistically my big brother." He followed his lead in rejecting the schematic ideological drama of the thirties and writing plays that embraced the personal instead. "We must remember that a new theatre is coming after the war with a completely new criticism, thank God," Williams wrote to Foote, adding, "All these people are going, going,—GONE!" Still, to a promiscuous bohemian pessimist like Williams, the sanguine, bushy-tailed Foote seemed positively square. "A pineapple ice-cream soda," he called Foote behind his back. "I regard Mr. Foote with a somewhat uncharitable reserve," Williams confided to his agent, Audrey Wood, in 1943. "Rivalry has something to do with it, I'm sure, but I find his great warmth and ingenuousness seeming a little spurious."

As writers, Williams and Foote were opposites. Williams was a hysteric who wanted to seduce the audience with the truth of his lament; Foote's plays bore witness to the emotional truth of history. Williams wrote out of a sense of absence, Foote out of a sense of fullness. Williams was a romantic who destroyed himself for meaning; Foote was a conservative who made meaning of the world he sought to preserve. In his storytelling, Williams was melodramatic and extravagant; Foote preferred a sly, understated simplicity. "I've tried to be more theatrical, more sensational. It's not my style," he said. "I admire Shakespeare greatly, and deeply love to read him, but his is not my favorite type of theatre. Often it embarrasses me and also I don't believe a lot of it." In Foote's plays, the big dramatic events happen offstage. Foote examined the ripple, not the wave. He was a quiet voice in noisy times.

Both Williams and Foote arrived on Broadway in the mid-forties. In the postwar boom, Americans were released from fifteen years of self-sacrifice to pursue their own destinies. Williams caught the shift in mood toward self-fulfillment; Foote did not. "The Glass Menagerie" (1945) pioneered a new psychological expressiveness on the American stage and made Williams a



"Brooklyn is the Manhattan of the other boroughs."

star; Foote's "Only the Heart" was panned by the critics ("talky, old-fashioned and dull," the *Times* called it) and closed after six weeks. For the next five years, Foote retreated to the King-Smith Studio School, in Washington, D.C., where he managed the theatre program, directed the modern repertoire, explored non-narrative forms of drama with Valerie Bettis, who was also in residence, and wrote four one-acts that were mounted at the school's theatre. In 1949, citing Treplev's judgment in "The Seagull"—"I'm coming more and more to the conclusion that it's a matter not of old forms and not of new forms, but that a man writes, not thinking at all of what form to choose, writes because it comes pouring out from his soul"—Foote returned to New York and to his Broadway ambitions.

Foote's plays "The Chase" (1952) and "The Trip to Bountiful" were staged in New York, but received little attention. Unlike the major playwrights of the period—Williams, Arthur Miller, William Inge—he had no axe to grind, no moral posture to strike, no rebarbative wit to peddle, and none of the sensational theatrics that thrilled commercial audiences. Things happened in Foote's stories, but nobody was blowtorched, castrated, raped, eaten alive, or snowed in with a beautiful woman; nor did anyone commit suicide for the insurance money. Foote could not make a living or a reputation on Broadway.

With the arrival of television, in the early fifties, however, he found immediate success. Between 1952 and 1954, Foote wrote ten teleplays for the Philco Playhouse, which made his name. He became part of the legend of TV's Golden Age, the writer whose teleplays inspired Paddy Chayefsky to take up the form. The one-hour format eliminated the talkiness that had plagued Foote's early work, and the camera intensified the presence of his characters, whose situations lacked a certain visceral wallop on-stage. Television taught Foote the dynamics of dramatic characterization; the simplicity of his story lines now worked for him, not against him. And his work attracted an array of America's finest actors, including Lillian Gish, Pauline Lord, Jo Van Fleet, Kim Stanley, GERALD

dine Page, and, for the film version of "The Chase," Marlon Brando. Television brought Foote to a mass audience and created a market for his writing. He added the Goodyear Playhouse and the Gulf Playhouse to his list of employers. And when TV production shifted from New York to Los Angeles, in the late fifties, his success proved a calling card to movie producers and to screenwriting. For the next seven years, Foote shuttled back and forth between New York and Hollywood.

"Keep your ear to the ground and concentrate on honesty," Williams wrote to Foote in 1944. Throughout his career, Foote did just that. From the ordinary, he teased out a subtle song, which was at once true and tender. In his screen adaptation of Harper Lee's "To Kill a Mockingbird," for instance—"a work of such quiet and unobtrusive excellence that many people have commented the film's dialogue was lifted chapter and verse from the novel. This is simply not so," Lee wrote—the widower Atticus Finch sits on a porch swing after putting his two children to bed and overhears their conversation, and the loss beneath their words:

SCOUT: Jem?
 JEM: Yes?
 SCOUT: How old was I when Mama died?
 JEM: Two.
 SCOUT: And how old were you?
 JEM: Six.
 SCOUT: Old as I am now?
 JEM: Uh-huh.
 SCOUT: Was Mama pretty?
 JEM: Uh-huh.
 SCOUT: Was Mama nice?
 JEM: Uh-huh.
 SCOUT: Did you love her?
 JEM: Yes.
 SCOUT: Did I love her?
 JEM: Yes.
 SCOUT: Do you miss her?
 JEM: Uh-huh.

Robert Duvall, who made his film-acting debut as Boo Radley, the subnormal next-door neighbor who saves the lives of Finch's children, and who appeared in six other Foote projects, including an Academy Award-winning performance as the fallen country singer Mac Sledge, in "Tender Mercies," compared Foote's dialogue to "sandpiper prints." "They're very delicate," he said. "It's very deep, very specific. His work you have to let lay there and find its own impetus."

Nowhere in Foote's canon is the cumulative momentum of the mundane more powerful than in "Tomorrow" (1972), Foote's inspired film adaptation (based on his 1968 stage version) of a 1940 Faulkner short story. A low-budget masterpiece, directed by Joseph Anthony, the movie flashes back from a murder trial that has ended with a hung jury, and is narrated by the defense lawyer, who can't fathom why one hold-out on the jury—a plainspoken Mississippi farm laborer named Jackson Fentry (Duvall)—wouldn't vote to acquit an upstanding rancher, H. T. Bookwright (Jeff Williams), who is accused of murdering a cattle thief and lowlife, Buck Thorpe, who was running off with his daughter. "He was not only no good, but dangerous," an exasperated juror says of Thorpe. "I can't help it," Fentry drawls politely. "I ain't gonna vote Bookwright free."

The story that unfolds in flashback—Sarah Eubanks, a pregnant woman, abandoned by her husband, lands on Fentry's doorstep; he takes her in and, as she is dying in childbirth, promises to care for her son, whom he then rears—is entirely Foote's invention. Thorpe, it turns out, was that boy, until he was stolen away by the brutal family of Sarah's husband. Foote's uncanny ability to expand another writer's narrative was an offshoot of his ability to listen. (Faulkner liked Foote's version so much that he shared his royalties with him.) In Faulkner's tale, Foote heard the themes of enduring suffering and enduring love, on which his own plays ruminated. "I've known people the world has thrown everything at . . . and yet something about them retains a dignity," Foote said. Fentry is a monument to this kind of stoic courage. At the finale, he rides away from the courthouse on his mule; the lawyer's voice-over follows him out of town and down a winding dirt road:

I could never have guessed Fentry's capacity for love. I suppose I figured that comin' where he came from, that even the comprehension of love had been lost out of him back down the generations where the first Fentry had to take his final choice between the pursuit of love and the pursuit of keepin' on breathin'. The lowly and invincible of the earth—to endure and endure and then endure, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Only the last sentence is from Faulk-

ner's story; the rest stand as a testament to Foote's belief in the goodness of mankind.

Foote, who rebelled against the fire and brimstone of the Methodist preaching he grew up with, became a Christian Scientist in 1953. "I am deeply religious but I never write from that point of view," he said. "I don't proselytize." Foote believed that "spiritual values lead you to hunger for more spiritual values." The placid surfaces of his stories conceal an undertow of the eternal. Hymns frequently signal this immanence. In "The Trip to Bountiful," for instance, Carrie Watts's hymn-singing implies her spiritual restlessness and her longing for transcendence. "The Carpetbagger's Children," three Southern sisters' counterpointed monologues about their family legacy, ends with an elegiac performance of the hymn "The Clanging Bells of Time": "And we hush our breath to hear / And we strain our eyes to see / If the shores are drawing near / Eternity! Eternity!"

In his own household, Foote often repeated the Christian Science axiom "Divine love always has met, and always will meet, every human need." He read the *Christian Science Quarterly* and did his Bible lessons every day. "I think it sustained him," his daughter Hallie said. "He felt that there was something bigger than he was out there, and he respected that. It encouraged him to follow his instincts rather than impose something on them." The constant flow of his work was evidence of his faith, which worked as an antidote "to being fearful or shut down," Hallie said. Foote himself gave God credit for his literary productivity: "That doesn't come from me—that is, I reflect qualities of God," he said. In an undogmatic way, his plays are more often than not demonstrations of spiritual grace; they try to trap a sense of the miraculous in the ordinary. In "Tender Mercies," for instance, the newly baptized Mac Sledge is saved from the hell of alcoholism and the waste of his life and talent by the love of a woman and her son, who literally and symbolically give him a new song. In "Bountiful," Carrie Watts tells the sheriff who takes her the last miles of her odyssey, "Before I leave this earth, I'd like to recover some of the dignity . . . the peace I used to know." She finds salvation not, as expected, in the land but in the journey. She can now re-

join her family and live out her days in harmony, instead of in resignation. That internal harmony also defined Foote; of his almost unnerving calm, Harper Lee said, "He's like God, only clean-shaven."

In "The Last of the Thorntons" (2000), a play about memory and history, set in an old-age home, a demented and intransigent resident, Annie, speaks only one line: "I want to go home. I want to go home," she says. The word "home" haunts the play, as it does Foote's oeuvre. Home, for Foote, is both secular and sacred; it is where you are known and remembered, where pain can be understood, where healing can take place. His characters may struggle within the framework of family; outside of it, however, they suffer a spiritual attrition. In "Convicts," for instance, the godless Soll Gautier, a paranoid and barbarous seventy-eight-year-old plantation owner who exploits the prisoners who work his fields, dies in hellish fear and isolation, unloved and unmourned by his family. "Don't leave me here alone, defenseless, to have my throat cut," he says not long before he dies.

In "Dividing the Estate," Foote's finest play, the avaricious members of the Gordon family, which is land rich and cash poor, are desperate to sell off their homestead and its five thousand acres to sustain themselves during the eighties oil recession. "I don't have all I need," the backbiting daughter Mary Jo says. "We owe money to everybody. We can lose our cars, our house." But the matriarch, Stella, doesn't want to sell; she reminds her children that her own family got through the Great Depression without selling their land. "Just look at what is surrounding us," she says. "Fruit markets and fast-food restaurants. That's what happens when you sell your land." When Stella dies, the prospect of a windfall lifts her children's bedraggled spirits. Lawyers are hired, heirlooms squabbled over, plans made. In the fractious hubbub of calculation, the spoiled Gordon clan learns of inheritance taxes, legal fees, declining land values, and debts; their million-dollar bonanza shrinks to a pittance, and probate forestalls any chance of cashing in for at least a year. They can't borrow on their inheritance; they need to take a bank loan on the property to pay off the estate taxes. The Gordons' only economic recourse, finally, is to move in together in the old house.

"Every night I'm going to pray. On bended knee—pray," Mary Jo says. "That we strike oil, so we can divide the estate."

Foote described the saga of the struggling hero of "The Orphans' Home Cycle," Horace Robedaux, as "the search of the dispossessed . . . seeking and finding a home." As a boy, Horace, like Foote's father, is cast out by his mother after his father dies. She moves to Houston with her new husband and young daughter, leaving Horace to live with his grandparents and more or less grow up by himself. "I am no orphan, but I think of myself as an orphan, belonging to no one but you," he tells his new bride in "Valentine's Day" (1980). "I intend to have everything I didn't have before. A house of my own, some land, a yard."

The cycle takes its name from Marianne Moore's poem "In Distrust of Merits": "The world's an orphans' home. Shall/we never have peace without sorrow?" The sorrow with which Foote contended was both his father's and his own. In life, Big Horton, a victim of parental neglect and misfortune, was possessive of his wife's attention and competitive with his three sons. Foote never felt that his father loved him enough. (Big Horton's favorite was his handsome second son, Tom, who had just got an acting contract with Warner Brothers when the Second World War broke out; Tom enlisted in the Air Force and was shot down over Germany in 1944.) "The Orphans' Home Cycle," according to Hallie, was her father's "way of trying to understand and forgive his father." The saga, however, ends on a note of uncertainty. "This is my home," Horace insists in the cycle's penultimate line. "Don't be so sure," his ne'er-do-well brother-in-law replies. "Don't be so sure about anything, Big Horace. Not about anything in this world." In the end, Big Horton, who became demented and lived with Foote for a time, didn't recognize his son. He actually uttered the punishing line that Foote used in "The Last of the Thorntons": "I want to go home."

Foote's own dispossession was not from family but from the New York theatre. Despite his popularity in Hollywood, by the mid-sixties he found his plays drowned out by the raucous, polemical atmosphere of the era. His simple regional stories were, once again, not the style of the moment. Many of his collaborators had died or had left the theatre scene; the

new generation of theatremakers didn't know his name. In 1965, with twenty thousand dollars, Foote bought fifty acres in New Boston, New Hampshire, and retreated to the wilderness. With four cats, two dogs, a Shetland pony, four children, and his wife, Lillian, he settled into a Revolutionary-era house on a dirt road to wait out the nation's trauma. Foote was no backwoodsman. He was not mechanical or athletic; he didn't cook or clean. "He didn't do anything," Hallie said. "He just wrote." In winter, he wrote in the attic, in summer in a hut nearby. It was a thin time. "I'd often talk of finding something else to do," he said. "Lillian was selling real estate and we both loved antiques. I'd say, 'Maybe I'll open an antiques shop.' She'd always say, 'Stick to the writing.'"

After the deaths of his father, in 1973, and his mother, in 1974, Foote slowly moved his family back to Wharton. It was there that he conceived the idea of his "Orphans' Home Cycle"—an epic endeavor that took him a decade to complete. He followed the cycle with the Academy Award-winning screenplay for "Tender Mercies." Foote's reemergence on the American scene in the early eighties was as sudden as his disappearance had been. The 1985 movie version of "The Trip to Bountiful" earned him another Academy Award nomination for best adapted screenplay, and Geraldine Page an Academy Award for best actress.

Foote went on writing until the end of his life. It was not his style, in life or in writing, to call attention to himself. As a result, the quality of his work is high; the public awareness of it is low. Because he broke no new artistic ground and staked no intellectual claims, he has only a minor place in American theatre history. But, within the limits of his compassionate vision, he was an expert storyteller, who achieved something that no other modern American playwright has: he had not only a second but a third act. At present, his screenplay "Main Street" is in production; "The Orphans' Home Cycle" is in performance; a biography, "Horton Foote: America's Storyteller," by Wilborn Hampton, has just been published; and *The Horton Foote Review: The Journal of the Horton Foote Society* continues to debate the issues and nuances of his oeuvre. "He had a gift and an ear," Hallie said. "There's a side of me that feels like that was a kind of a divine thing. He was lucky." ♦