

Paul Ruffin
Regents Distinguished Professor of English
Box 2146, English Department
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX 77341-2146

Phone 936-294-1429
Fax 936-294-3070
e-mail eng_pdr@shsu.edu

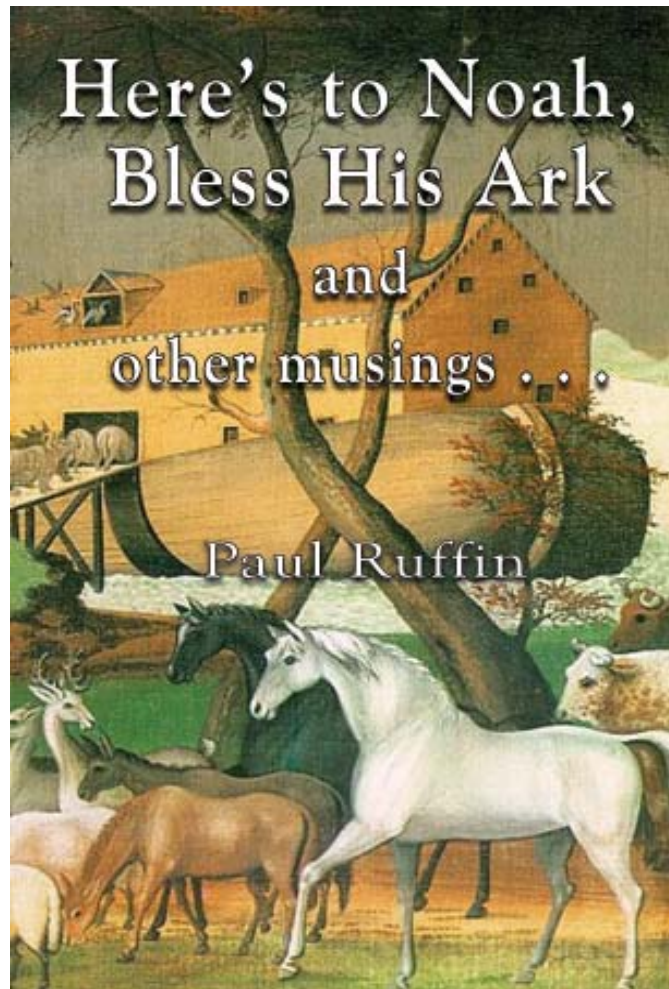
Recent books by Paul Ruffin

*Here's to Noah, Bless His Ark
and other musings . . .*

Essays

(2005)

Stone River Press



In this, his first collection of nonfiction, Paul Ruffin, best known for his fiction, poetry, and edited works, gives us a broad sampling from his treasure chest of hundreds of column pieces and essays published over a fifteen-year period in newspapers and journals/magazines such as *Southern Quarterly*, *Southwest American Literature*, and *Texas Magazine*.

In this amazingly eclectic book, Ruffin provides the reader with rollicking essays like “Workshopping a Cowboy Poem,” the tender “Girl in the Well-Lighted Place,” the poignant “Dust to Ashes, Ashes to Dust.” You have paraded before you family, food (for the stomach and for thought), folks, foolishness, and a whole lot of fun.

ISBN 0-9728775-3-3 (cloth), 0-9728775-2-5 (paper)

Castle in the Gloom

(novel)

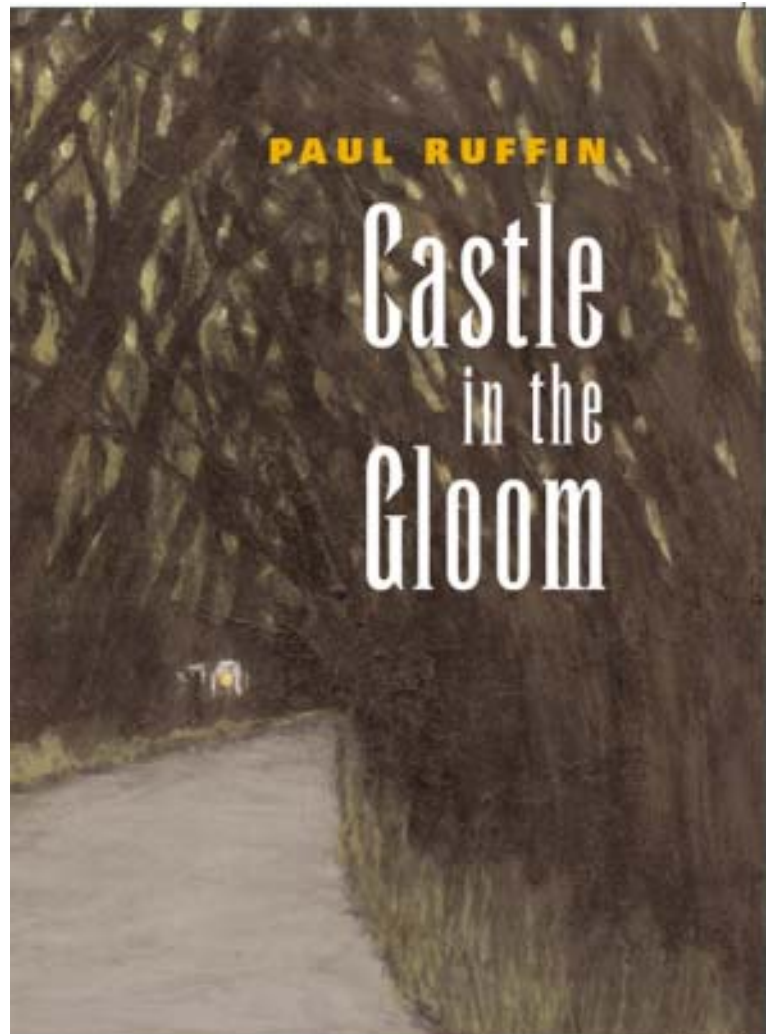
2004, University Press of Mississippi

A literary thriller in which terror and captivity salvage a disintegrating marriage.

“In a wonderful shotgun wedding of the boldly comic and the genuinely macabre, of fast-moving, page-turning suspense and a bouquet of surprises, Paul Ruffin’s new novel, *Castle in the Gloom*, offers us the very special pleasures of his fiction, among them memorable writing, dimensional and convincing characters, strong plot and clear story line, an evocative sense of place and time, and a credible love story. *Castle in the Gloom* is a novel to savor and enjoy.” —George Garrett, author of *Death of the Fox*, *The King of Babylon Shall Not Come Against You*, and *An Evening Performance*, and some forty other books.



Paul Ruffin



ISBN 1-57806-618-2 (cloth)

The Book of Boys and Girls

(poetry)

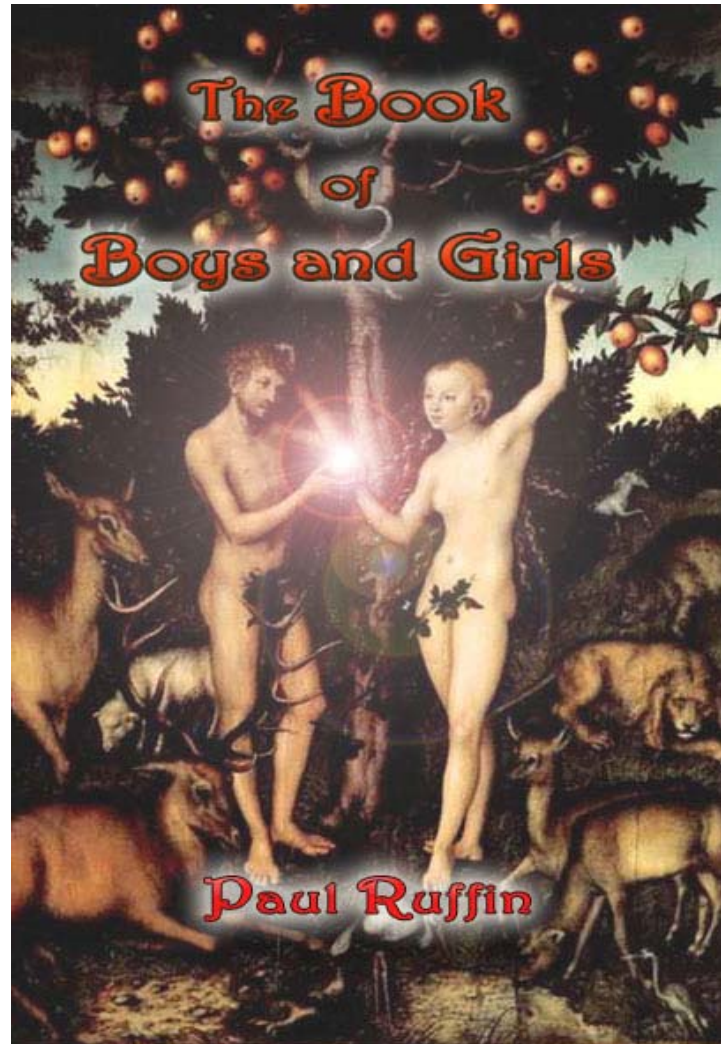
2003

“*The Book of Boys and Girls*, the latest collection of poems by gifted poet Paul Ruffin, gives us the art and craft of a poet who has long since found his unique voice and is now writing at the peak of his powers. These are audacious love poems, at once witty and wise, lighthearted and deeply serious. They sing and shine. Taken altogether, they gracefully become “the only poem of the world / worth the writing or worth the knowing.” —George Garrett, Poet Laureate of Virginia.

“New poems from that various and surprising writer Paul Ruffin are always worth sitting up and paying attention to. The first two-thirds of *The Book of Boys and Girls* mainly comprise one immense love letter to the female of the species—young and old, mothers, lovers, wives—then the poet turns to boys, manhood, and maleness, and the result is a seamless whole. Engaging, readily understandable, Ruffin’s poems nevertheless have depths that challenge us. For any skeptical reader who wants to start with a small sampling, I’d recommend ‘To a Female Student,’ ‘Redneck with Hair on His Back,’ and ‘The Woman Who Made Love on Frost’s grave.’ Read those and I’ll bet you’ll want more.” —X. J. Kennedy

“[Ruffin’s] poems are audacious and funny and full of word-play that surprises and delights” —Tom May, *Dallas Morning News*

“[Paul Ruffin] is one of the permanent persons of letters in the Lone Star State. *The Book of Boys and Girls*, his fifth book of poetry, is a series of love poems and unlike many books of poetry, it is not a grab bag of assorted works but rather a unified whole, as the title suggests. . . . I find this book a breath of fresh air. The language is tough and truthful.” —Robert Phillips, *Houston Chronicle*.

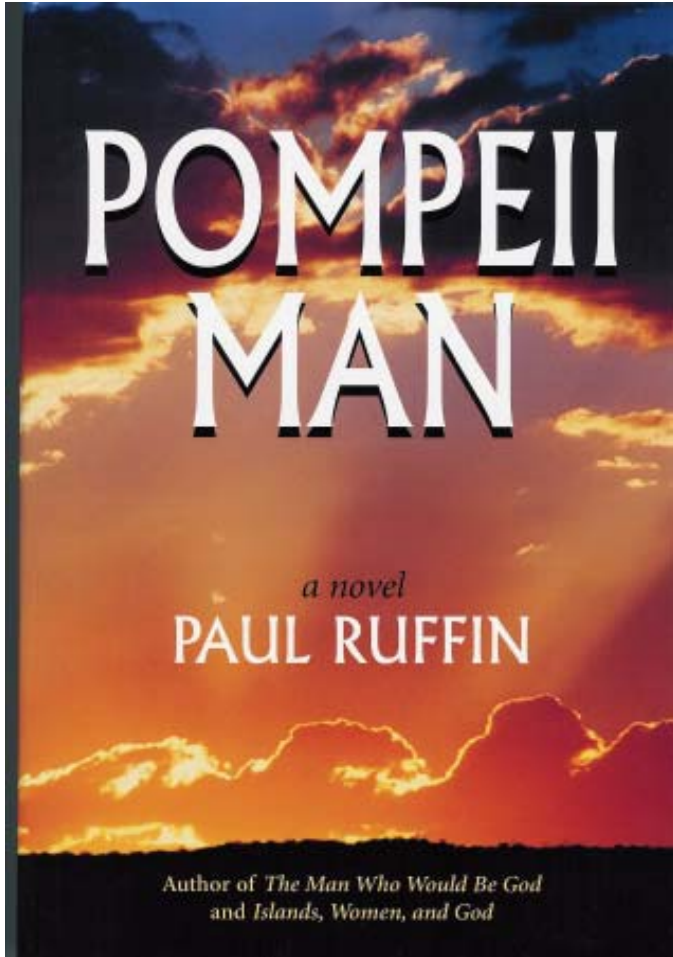


Other comments on Paul Ruffin’s poetry:

“Paul Ruffin’s poetry is open, fresh, strong, believable, and imaginatively resourceful. Its tone is personal and convincingly human, and, though friendly and likable, also aware of the dark possibilities. He is worth anybody’s time, to read and learn from.” —James Dickey

“I am very much taken with *Our Women*. Paul Ruffin is a poet of rare generosity and compassion and courage. In their complexity and joy, his poems remind me of the women I have loved, and of those I have wished to love. His gift is a strength and a tribute.” —Willie Morris

Listed as an
Outstanding American Novel
in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*
Yearbook, 2002.



Pompeii Man

(novel)

2002

praise for POMPEII MAN

"I have long admired and enjoyed the work of Paul Ruffin, and here, in the form of a solid, page-turning thriller, *Pompeii Man*, are the qualities that mark his writing – a strong, clear story line, a deep and accurate sense of place, characters dimensional enough to contain contradictions and to offer surprises, and, above all, a style that moves easily between the lyrical and the satirical, the colloquial and the elegant. *Pompeii Man* is something special."

– George Garrett

author of *Death of the Fox*, *The Magic Striptease*,
and *The King of Babylon Shall Not Come Against You*

"Demonstrating Paul Ruffin's perfect dialogue, flawless pacing, and interior daring, *Pompeii Man* is this master storyteller's finest yet, a compelling, white-knuckle read that, like all the best stories, takes you on a trip you didn't expect to take to a place you didn't expect to go, and leaves you breathless at the ride."

– Janet Peery

author of *Alligator Dance* and *The River Beyond the World*

"Paul Ruffin's *Pompeii Man* reminds me of all those wonderful film noirs of the forties. His New Orleans is steamy and mysterious. This novel is a page-turner, and I couldn't put it down."

– Richard Bausch

author of *In the Night Season* and
Good Evening Mr. and Mrs. America and *All the Ships at Sea*

"Ruffin gives the reader a strong and accurate sense of place, and a clear, definitive story line. The dialogue of his New Orleans street talk is perfect. Add strong plot and you have a real thriller, a page-turner." —Robert Winship, author of *The Brushlanders*, *Every Man Also*, and *Flannery's Crossing*

"The conclusion of *Pompeii Man* is a series of hairpin twists and turns that are unexpected, shocking, and ultimately satisfying. In addition to an action-filled plot, the book has a full and interesting cast of characters, richly realized settings that will resonate with readers, and an in-depth exploration of what can happen when two civilized people step into a nightmare." —Jane Hinton in *The Commercial Dispatch*

Set on the Mississippi Coast and in New Orleans, *Pompeii Man* is the story of the descent of an innocent couple into a hell of fear and violence, a world that neither of them could have imagined in the Big Easy, city of music, good food, and Old South charm. The reader watches in horror as Stafford loses his wife to a terrifying night of assault, rape, and sodomy in the dark heart of New Orleans, manages to get her back home, then loses her again, this time perhaps forever, except for the emergence of a detective who takes a personal interest in the case and driven by his imagination and determination sets off, with librarian Stafford his only back-up, to find the woman and destroy the drug lord and pimp who holds her, a man whose villainy has earned him the street name Satan.

ISBN: 0-945083-03-3 (cloth)
0-945083-04-1 (paper)

Listed as one of the
Best Story Collections of 2001
in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*
Yearbook, 2001.

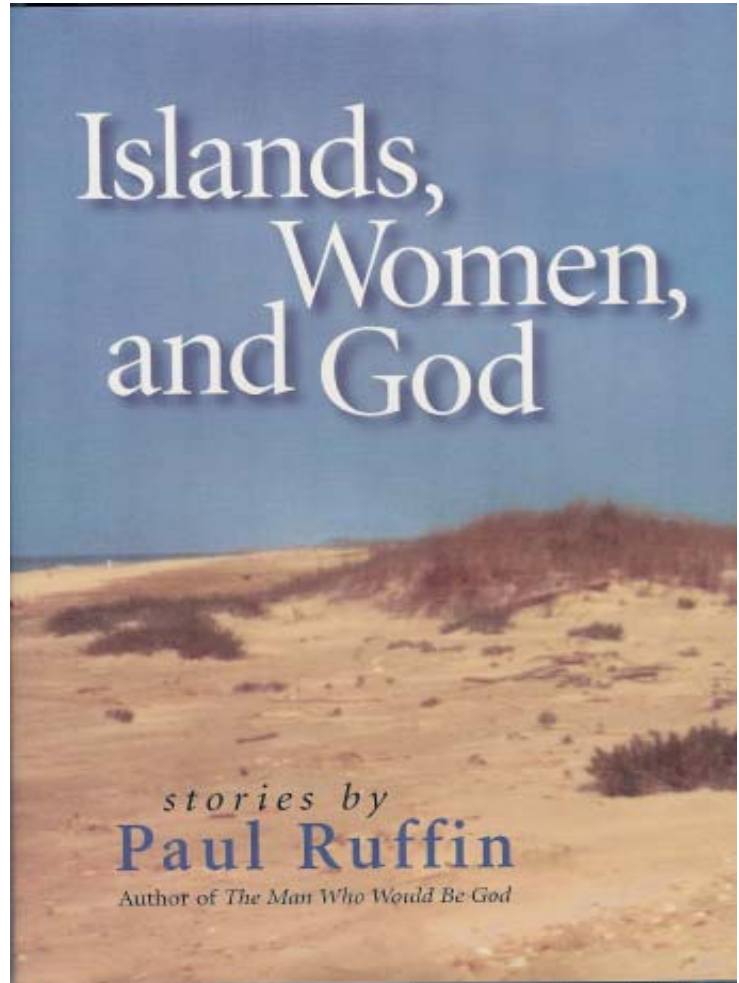
Islands, Women, and God

(stories)

2001

“With his second collection of stories, Paul Ruffin makes another significant contribution to Southern and American letters. In spare, muscular prose seamless as a tendril of kudzu, Ruffin probes, with haunting insight, the light, darkness, and yearning of the human heart.” (Larry Thomas, author of *Amazing Grace*)

“Periodically a writer comes along whose flashlight shines a little brighter, probes a little deeper and more discerningly into that cave we call life, with the result that now and then we get a glimpse of something we never saw before. Such an author is Paul Ruffin, whose *Islands, Women, and God* gives us that whiff of something we find in unusual relationships. Already a well-known writer of short fiction, a poet, and a novelist, Ruffin in this work turns up the blower, as well as the acuity.” (Robert Winship, author of *The Brushlanders, Every Man Also, and Flannery’s Crossing*)



“The author’s background as a poet shines in his careful selection of words and phrases, so this collection demands a slower, more careful reading than might at first be apparent. Made, it would seem, more for bedside table or as a traveling companion, these stories should be absorbed, savored and contemplated as individual pieces; only then can their thematic and stylistic ties be fully appreciated.” (*Dallas Morning News* review by Clay Reynolds, novelist)

“Ruffin has a sharp eye for the things that matter in our lives and a pitch-perfect ear for the way we talk to each other. He knows well that in the tales we love most, laughter and tears are inextricably mixed.” (George Garrett, *Dictionary of Literary Biography Yearbook, 2001*)

“*Islands, Women, and God* is an astonishing book. Every page is beautifully written, splendidly rendered and bold. In a time when American writers seem to strive to either shock or soothe, Ruffin instead gives us an honest vision of what lies beneath the veneer of manners and society. He is a master of language and a peerless teller of tales, and he will surely be known as one of the best writers of his generation.” (*Houston Chronicle* review by Eric Miles Williamson, author of *East Bay Grease*.)

ISBN: 0-9651359-8-5 (cloth)
0-9651359-9-3 (paper)

Winner of the 1997 Mississippi

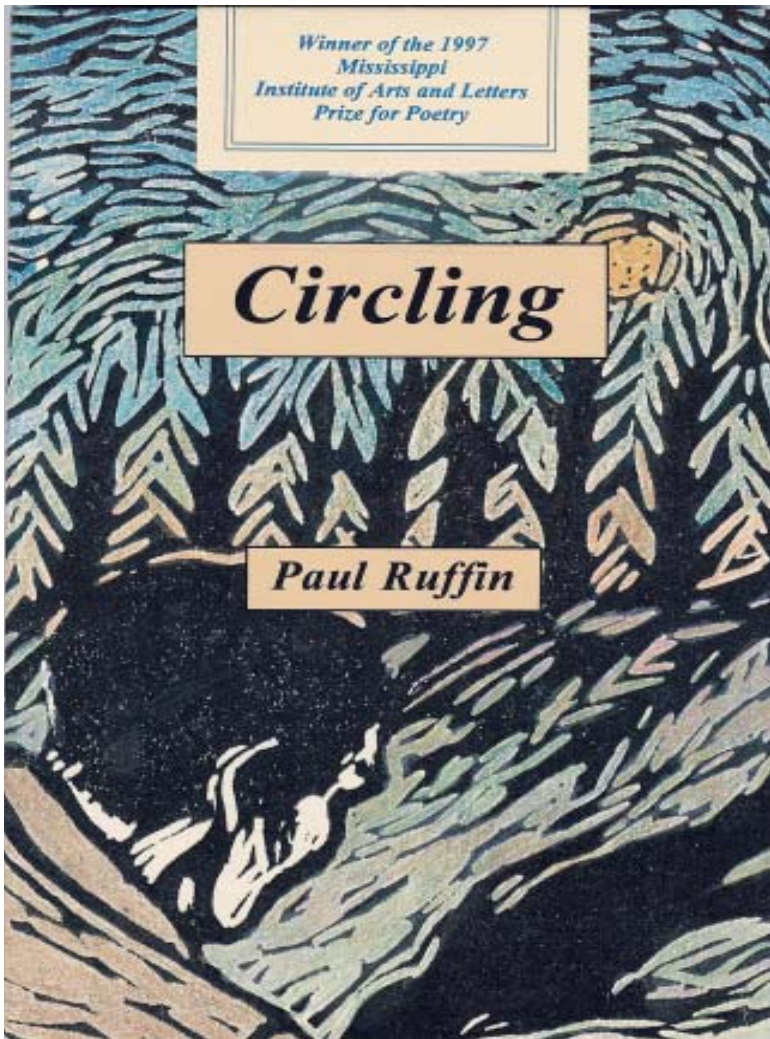
Institute of Arts and Letters

Poetry Award

Circling

(poems)

1996



“Paul Ruffin has as much to tell us as we have ears to hear, and he tells it in a voice that pretends not to know about lines and music and resolution. It’s a voice for everyone who reads English, a voice with which he makes poems—good poems—even for people who don’t read poetry. There would be fewer such people if more people knew the poetry of Paul Ruffin.” (Miller Williams, Contest Judge)

A masterful storyteller, Paul Ruffin proves himself in *Circling* to be a rare lyricist as well. These are powerful poems that challenge a reader’s emotions. While crafted with deep knowledge of the past, Ruffin’s poems carry the fresh scent of open land, rather than the smell of the library. —X. J. Kennedy

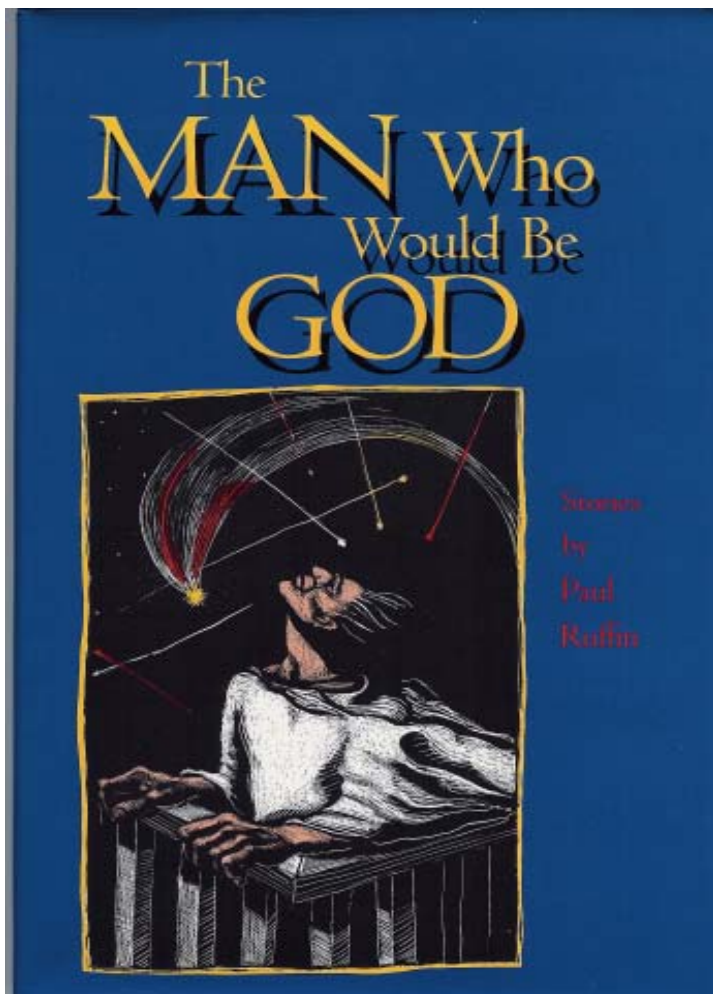
“Paul Ruffin’s *Circling* is a collection of poems mostly about country life, farming, and fishing, and while the bucolic mode is hardly new, Ruffin gives it to us vividly and with an earned authenticity that makes it as fresh as it was when Theocritus and Virgil dreamed it up.” (David Slavitt, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 1996)

“The poems are full of moments of grace, as when a child experiences for the first and only time walking on a frozen pond in Mississippi, or when the farmer apologizes to a fruit tree for severing its feeder roots in order to make it bear fruit.” (Robert Phillips, *Houston Chronicle*)

“Here’s a beautiful book, with some strong, broad-shouldered poems, written with clarity, insight, and a sense of wonder about the good old ways—the ways that most of us, cramped in apartments or on postage stamp lots in cities—can now only imagine.” (Chuck Taylor, *Small Press Review*)

“Paul Ruffin’s fine collection of poems, his fourth, is the genuine article. These are wonderful poems of the everyday world—poems about fishing, raising cattle, living in a family. Ruffin, a master of the narrative lyric, has written a collection of poems that are believable, more believable than much of what is being written today.” (Michael Lieberman, *Tar River Review*)

ISBN: 0-889150-00-2 (paper)



The Man Who Would Be God

(stories)

1993

“Mr. Ruffin’s poignant stories linger in the memory like the scent of wood smoke—or gun smoke—on the skin.” (Susan Lowell, *New York Times Book Review*)

“The talented Ruffin has an ear for language and dialogue and writes with a hardened American elegance.” (*Library Journal*)

“... a worthwhile assortment of short fiction that would enhance any regional or general fiction collection.” (*Booklist*)

“... sharply etched sketches and stories.” (*Kirkus Reviews*)

“Mostly set in East Texas, the tales often present the dark side of human nature, their physical and psychological violence leavened by humor.” (*Houston Chronicle*)

“... it is especially satisfying, in an age where the short story seems to have long since fallen out of favor, to find a new collection as gripping as Paul Ruffin’s *The Man Who Would Be God*.” (*Southwestern American Literature*)

“Whether he is writing of East Texas, as he often does here, Alabama, or West Texas, his eye for significant detail and his ear for dialogue are impeccable.” (*Journal of American Studies*)

“Ruffin’s background as a poet is revealed in these meticulously wrought, deceptively simple stores of human relationships told in a near-Faulknerian tone and use of detail.” (*Fort Worth Star Telegram*)

“A lot goes on in Ruffin’s stories—honest observation of people and places, and then a series of delicate literary games . . . even though these are not all ‘poetic’ stories one can sense the meticulous care in the crafting of the sentences.” (*Dictionary of Literary Biography*)

“The fact that these tales . . . contain some staggeringly beautiful writing seems almost beyond the point . . . They document a way of life that still exists for many, and do so in language that at times crosses over into the country of sheer beauty.” (*Gruene Street*)

“Ruffin’s stories are a celebration of the act and art of storytelling.”—**George Garrett**

“By turns funny, sweet, earthy, and fantastic, Paul Ruffin’s stories are wholly involving. They take over a reader’s life; they seize her imagination; they steal her heart. Call them not stories, then, but enchantments, for this is a book that binds the reader as if with a spell.”
—**Kelly Cherry**

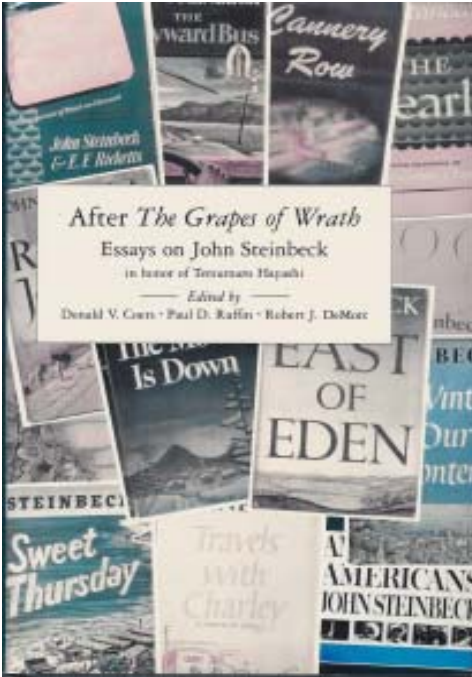
“Of the same mind as the cowboys at the dying Double Star who sit evenings watching for the white-robed man who would be God and fearing less that he may not appear than that they might not be there to see him, the reader of these stories does not question the reality of experiencing Paul Ruffin’s fictional world so much as he is grateful he was there and he is haunted by what he has seen.”—**Allen Wier**

“Ruffin has created a fictional cosmos in East Texas as fully fleshed as Faulkner’s corner of Mississippi. Ruffin’s touch, his instinct for the telling detail and memorable utterance, breathe life into a region and its culture. A most impressive fictional debut by this poet.”
—**Gordon Weaver**

Southern Methodist University Press

ISBN: 0-87074-354-6 (cloth)
0-87074-363-5 (paper)

Books Co-Edited by Paul Ruffin

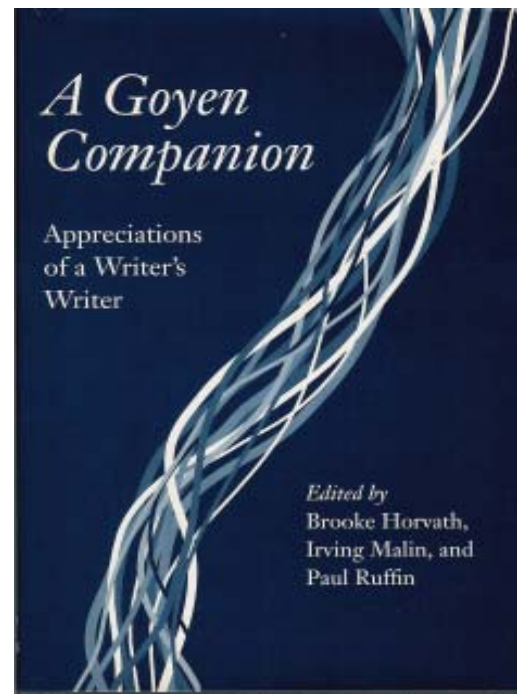


Ohio University Press, 1997

“What about John Steinbeck after *The Grapes of Wrath*? This collection in honor of Tetsumaro Hayashi provides a much welcomed, contemporary response to this often-asked question about a relatively overlooked, enigmatic period of Steinbeck’s career.”
(Yasuo Hashinguchi, Yasuda Women’s University)

University of Texas Press, 1995

“The fullest, most comprehensive critique and appreciation of Goyen’s work ever published, this collection of essays and comment is very welcome. It will be the starting point for all study of Goyen’s work from now on.” (Reginald Gibbons, author of *Williams Goyen: A Study of the Short Fiction*)



University of South Carolina Press, 1993

“Is there a Southern literary tradition? Yes. Is there ‘rebellion’ within it? Yes. (Read the foreword and afterword while standing in the bookstore.) And is this a book of good stories by good writers, including some of America’s finest? Yes. (Buy the book, go home, and read.)” (Clyde Edgerton)

