

A READER'S COMPANION

for David Huddle's

The Faulkes Chronicle

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Background Notes

1. Whereas my previous novels had been years in the making, *The Faulkes Chronicle* was composed and completed quickly. I had a respectable first draft at the end of three months.

2. Unlike my earlier novels, *Faulkes* was composed in a linear fashion. For the most part, the paragraphs and sections were written in the order in which they appear in the book.

3. From the first sentence, the end of the book was a given, though exactly how I would manage the writing (or even envision the scene) of that ending remained up in the air until the hours of actually composing the closing paragraphs. This, too, was very different from my experience with my previous novels.

4. There's not a lot of autobiography in the novel, but there are two notable instances of the book's using my own experience. The drowning of the twins was something that happened to classmates when I was in fifth grade—except that the real twins were boys. I've written about that drowning in my first book of poems, *Paper Boy*, in my second collection of stories, *Only the Little Bone*, and in a few other places.

5. In the past few years I've lost three close friends, two of them to cancer, and at the time of this writing I have four more close friends who are gravely ill with cancer.

Interview

with Peter Biello, Vermont Public Radio's

Cancer has the power to transform the lives of those who are struck by it, as well as the lives of close family members. That's the theme of the new novel by Burlington writer David Huddle. *The Faulkes Chronicle* focuses on Karen Faulkes, the matriarch of a large family — very large, with more than two dozen kids—and how the family's relationships are tested by her cancer.

But cancer has an unexpected side effect on Karen Faulkes: it makes her seem unusually beautiful. For her insular, plain-looking family, this sudden beautification feels like a betrayal. The idea for the mother's transformation came from Huddle's own experience when one of his friends underwent a similar change as a result of chemotherapy, he said.

"I'm not sure that I would call her beautiful or pretty, but somehow, the chemo affected her in a way that made her much more appealing, which was startling and a little bit disturbing," he said.

Cancer also touched Huddle's life more directly a few years ago. His mother-in-law had been in the hospital more than a month when she released to die at home. "So my family, and my wife's sister's family, and boyfriends and husbands—there must have been maybe twenty of us in the house in the presence of that death," he said. "It was quite a moving experience. Huddle says the theme of *The Faulkes Chronicle* was informed by that experience. "Even though I think all of us would say that it was a very good thing that we were there in the presence of the matriarch's dying, it really set us off. We sort of ricocheted off each other, walked around the house. It's almost as if, even though we had known it was coming, it was like an emotional explosion that seemed to hit everybody in a different way."

In writing his new novel, Huddle says he wanted it to be an "unsentimental journey." Huddle says, "the mother is a character who is always giving the straight-arm to sentimentality. She just won't have it very much, even though it's very clear that she cares deeply about all these kids, her whole family."

Hear a longer version of this interview on Vermont Public Radio's website:

digital.vpr.net/post/interview-david-huddles-new-novel-faulkes-chronicle

Home Death

(an unpublished piece of creative nonfiction)

Tubes, machines that hum and groan, dials, needles, bottles, lights that blink. Hard enough to sit beside her bed in the hospital and watch her struggle to speak or breathe or remember our faces.

◆◆◆

"I just don't see how we can handle it." This is the younger daughter speaking. "I'm sorry," she says, "I'm not a nurse, I'm not a doctor." Her voice and face show she feels overwhelmed and helpless. But she's speaking our thoughts aloud, so we know deep down it's anger and fear working on her.

Now the older daughter speaks quietly. "We know she wants to die in her own house. How can we say no to that?"

We don't want this to be so, but the older daughter is right. "The hospice people will help us," she says. She looks from one to another of us.

We keep quiet.

Nurses and doctors, with all their skills and knowledge, have failed to make her better. With all its equipment and technology, the hospital has made her worse. Hospice people, so far as we know, have nothing beyond sympathy to offer. We have little faith in them. Even so, we know that if we don't allow Teresa to come home, we'll be ashamed the rest of our lives. We've already had forty days of driving to and from the hospital. It can't be much worse than that.

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Teresa comes home.

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That is a way to say it, a way to think of it. As it transpires, Teresa has little to do with the journey. She's barely sentient. Strangers lift and roll in the gurney, lift and slide Teresa's body across to the other strangers on the far side of the bed we've had placed in the middle of the big family room. All these professional strangers lower Teresa onto the immaculate sheets awaiting her. She's lost so much weight.

Then they murmur and go away. It's just us with her now.

◆◆◆

The daughters fuss with her covers, her gown, her hair. They croon to her. Maybe she hears them. We've situated the bed so that it faces the bank of windows that look directly into the huge old ash tree at the center of her back yard. The January sunlight is flinty. Almost any time we glance out there we see squirrels, cardinals, chickadees, and sparrows moving through that tree's limbs.



Liz and Pete, Lindsey and I, Bess and Nick, Molly and Ray, Lindsey (my niece) and Phil, Carrie and Rich—daughters and granddaughters, husbands and boyfriends. We're couples. We're the ongoing family. We're a little lost in the big room with Teresa lying in the middle of it. Some of us sit down, some stand, others move out of the room, then come back. She's very still. Whatever it was we feared at the hospital isn't here, but something else is. We don't have a name for it. We're all grown-ups, but that's beside the point.



Sometimes she makes sounds—wordless utterances. Sometimes she opens her eyes, but she gives no sign she knows what or whom she's seeing. The closer we stand to her bed, the more doubtful our own presence feels. Are we really here now? Debatable. Her labored breathing is what's real.

In this bed, in this room, in this house, Teresa is just herself. No apparatus, no tubes, bottles, or machinery. She's calm and still. A woman in a bed. Resting. On her way out of this life.



When the front doorbell rings, I answer it. The hospice nurse, Sally, introduces herself. "Come in, come in," I say. I hold the door wide. "Thank you for coming." I clasp her hand. "We're so glad to see you." Her face tells me she forgives me for gushing like this. She makes her way toward the back of the house, stops to meet each family member along the way. She wants to be sure she gets our names. She takes her time. Our snippets of speech are shrill, off-key. Sally's voice sounds the true melody here. We follow her into the big room. Sally takes a chair right by Teresa's shoulder. She takes Teresa's hand and speaks to her in such a low voice that we can't hear the words. Teresa gives no sign she's heard or noticed Sally. We, however, are changed. Calmed a little. Not quite ourselves, but settled down.



We cook together in spite of Teresa's kitchen being too small for us all to fit into without bumping into each other, but that's all right with us. It's not even really cooking--it's just heating up food that has been brought to us by the neighbors. But evidently we need to be in this kitchen, bumping into each other, saying excuse me, patting each other's shoulders, touching, squeezing, brushing against each other. We breathe in the smell of warming ham and bread, potatoes and green beans. It makes us ravenous and merry. This

isn't so bad, after all. So what if death is milling around right here with us in the kitchen? We load our plates and carry them to the dining room.

The older daughter says grace while we stand behind our chairs.

◆◆◆

We've mostly finished eating when Sally's voice comes to us from the hallway. "Her breathing has changed."

◆◆◆

Here is how it happens. The older daughter sits at one side of the bed, the younger on the other side. The others of us sit on the sofa or in chairs pulled close. Sally stands not quite in the circle. Teresa's breaths seem to be minutes apart. But she's here. She's still here.

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I'm her daughter's husband. She isn't my mother. But I feel it when it happens. Light as a finger touching my chest. There. Then not.

Heirloom: On the Difference Between Vito Corleone and August Renoir

This essay appeared in *The WRUV Reader: a Vermont Writers' Anthology*, edited by Chris Evans, WRUV-FM, Burlington, Vermont (pp.158–66)

1.

Throughout my childhood a wooden cabinet with oddly punched-metal panels in its doors and shelves full of useless scraps and jars sat out on our back porch adjacent to the weekly-used wringer washing machine. Long ago that cabinet had been carelessly painted white, but the years of weather, along with dust from the driveway, had darkened it into a profoundly undistinguished shade of grayish brown. On an afternoon, when I was about eight, it seemed logical to me to hack at that thing with the butcher knife, thereby gouging triangles of wood out of its top edge, giving it an improvised serration that seemed to me quite appealing. When my mother appeared on the porch and discovered what I'd done, she got in my face and instructed me as follows: A) If I ever played with a butcher knife again, I'd be very, very sorry; B) I had better learn to respect things that belonged to grown-ups; and C) the thing that I had just irreparably ruined was a pie press that had belonged to great grandmother Akers, that could not be replaced, and that was—didn't I understand?!—an *heirloom*. You might think that experience would have instilled in me a lifelong respect for heirlooms. Not so. Sixty years later the very concept of *heirloom* just pisses me off.

2.

I'm with my family at the Trattoria Delia in our hometown of Burlington, Vermont. About a third of the way into my second beer, I enter a euphoria that may last until my bedtime. My happy trance can arrive in other settings, but a basic requirement is the presence of my wife and my daughters. As Professor Springsteen puts it, "Nothing feels better than blood on blood." Tonight, after many months of separation, we're all together; Bess's husband, Nick, and Molly's husband, Ray, are also with us, and these sturdy young men contribute to my sense of well-being. We're all dressed up and moderately gleeful. Lindsey and Bess and Molly—to whom fashion matters—are radiant in their dresses, their faces are flushed with the pleasure of this occasion. Our server Lisa, a thin, dark-haired young woman, whom we vaguely know from past evenings at the Trat, chats with us as she makes her way around the table, pouring the wine. With my elevated spirits, I realize that this Lisa is appealing in ways I haven't previously recognized. Not a beauty, not all that dressed up, she's nevertheless "made herself attractive," as my late mother-in-law used to say. I get a notion to raise my glass to her and say, "Lisa, you're family tonight." But I've learned to watch what I say when I'm drinking. What I intend to be a compliment may be taken as an insult. So I'll not risk startling anyone with an untoward comment. Also when I'm blissful like this, I know I'll maintain my mood longer if I keep quiet. Therefore I seal my lips and look around the room, beaming good will in every direction. I discover that such beaming actually enhances my euphoria.

3.

We know this picture, don't we? The patriarch wants to impose his happiness on everyone. At a wedding Don Corleone generates love and generosity. In his day job Vito is an angel of death, but at this celebration he becomes an angel of family values. He wants everyone he sees to enjoy themselves—and to bear in mind that he is responsible for their pleasure. In his silence Vito Corleone beams good will at the assembled family members and friends as a plantation owner looks over his property. We're talking *possession* here, aren't we? Vito's beaming is an assertion of ownership. I want these people to be happy because, whether they know it or not, *I own them*.

4.

This evening the Trattoria Delia is filled with attractive women, at least one at every table, a few presenting themselves as desirable but most of them attractive in a more familial way. My Aunt Elrica was grotesquely fat and somewhat unpleasant, but in certain comfortable family settings—I realized this when I was about thirteen and in the act of scrutinizing her—my freakish aunt became charming and her face took on a cherubic sweetness. Full disclosure here—I'm an everyday voyeur, have been so for as far back as I can remember, and though I do my looking in a gray area of appropriateness, I sometimes take in women's faces with such intensity that I feel guilty. Desire, however, is not an issue here. The pleasure I take in this moment is not from wanting anything but from savoring what I already possess. In fact it is the freedom from wanting that defines this kind of pleasure. It's a relishing of the facts that I'm alive, that I can see, and that what I see instills in me a quiet joy. But—and here's the thing—I feel as if I'm witnessing life at its intersection with art. Or I'm inhabiting a moment that hovers between ordinary experience and cinema or painting. I'm in the movie version of Renoir's "La Moulin de la Galette." Except that Sargent has painted my wife, Tissot my daughter Molly, and Manet my daughter Bess. And by golly it's that naughty genius Modigliani who's made his way into the Trattoria this evening to paint a vivid version of pale undernourished somewhat gawky but nevertheless scintillating Lisa.

5.

Well here you have it. Because I've perceived them to be beautiful, I have converted every woman I can see into a work of art. In the privacy of my mind, I've turned them into objects. Of course my sons-in-law and the male diners of the room have also been dragged onto my mental movie set, but this merely testifies to the ravenous nature of my objectifying consciousness. What's my defense? It's an artistic act I've committed here, not a sexual one. In fact, my imagination is acting stand-offish and reclusive with what it is constructing. I don't want to interact with anyone, don't want to converse with any of these ladies. I just want what I have. To sit still, to be in the midst of my family, to see what I'm seeing, and to beam good will in every direction. Possession is the topic here. In this moment of writing, I am converting the intangibility of my experience in the Trattoria into a made thing--something I both make and own simultaneously. I make it in order to share it. Which is to say that it will bring me only small pleasure simply to write this account in order to read it over and over to myself.

6.

All right, here's what concerns me: Am I not obnoxious in my thoughts and feelings here? Am I not congratulating myself on my fine perceptions, honesty, and generosity of heart? Am I not claiming the right to be "special" in separating myself off from the people I'm with, the very people I'm praising and claiming to love? Wouldn't correct behavior here be simple conversational engagement with the members of my family? Understand, please—I haven't made a decision to peel off from the roundtable formation of my family in order to indulge in self-deceiving egotism. Withdrawing into the self is a natural inclination, ordinary and human—and maybe legitimized, or deemed socially acceptable, by my claim to being an artist. If an artist drifts into his or her own thoughts on a social occasion, it's a higher calling. Otherwise we're just talking about rude behavior.

7.

Let's say that I could compose a written version of my restaurant evening that would be as compelling, cheering, and illuminating as "La Moulin de la Galette¹." There've been times when looking at his portraits of young women and girls, I've been certain that Renoir was a dirty old man and/or possibly even a pedophile. But unlike, say, Toulouse-Lautrec's work, Renoir's paintings seem to me more about the people he painted than about himself. Also, the people in his paintings are healthy, happy, vigorously and vividly alive. One might argue that such a vision of human beings is a lie, that it offers false hope, and that it is commercially convenient. But what one would probably not argue is that it is egotistical. Truth, lie, or money-making scheme, a Renoir painting keeps Renoir out of sight, or at least well in the background. I propose that "La Moulin de la Galette" is a selfless, spiritual, and communal act.



1

Renoir delighted in 'the people's Paris', of which the Moulin de la Galette near the top of Montmartre was a characteristic place of entertainment, and his picture of the Sunday afternoon dance in its acacia-shaded courtyard is one of his happiest compositions. In still-rural Montmartre, the Moulin, called 'de la Galette' from the pancake which was its speciality, had a local clientèle, especially of working girls and their young men together with a sprinkling of artists who, as Renoir did, enjoyed the spectacle and also found unprofessional models. The dapple of light is an Impressionist feature but Renoir after his bout of *plein-air* landscape at Argenteuil seems especially to have welcomed the opportunity to make human beings, and especially women, the main components of picture.

--<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/renoir/moulin-galette/>

8.

But I also propose that artistic behavior is always—even in the painting under discussion here—suspect. Hope, love of the world, a passion for beauty and/or truth—these may all mother a piece of art into the world, but its father is always ego. Sometimes, when I'm looking over a piece of my writing, it's as if I've caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror and seen just how obnoxious, inconsiderate, socially imperializing, exploitive, egotistical, and self-aggrandizing I can be. My restaurant euphoria can easily lead me to write something like that. Not okay.

9.

What's the difference between Renoir and the Godfather? For starters, let's say that the former is motivated by the desire to give while for the latter the desire to possess is the dominating impulse. When Renoir sees beauty in its perishable form, he uses his labor and his talent to convert what he sees into something permanent. When Vito Corleone sees beauty, he wants to have it in his living room. Renoir wants to make "La Moulin de la Galette." The Godfather wants to buy it.

10.

I've visited only a few homes whose occupants collect art. One of them was a penthouse on Park Avenue whose walls were festooned with what were probably the minor² paintings of Degas, Monet, Cezanne, Manet, Pissarro. The collector was a fellow named Julian Glass, whose family had made a lot of money from oil in Oklahoma. This was when I was a graduate student at Columbia. Julian had invited my wife and me for cocktails, because he was acquainted with my in-laws. Julian's haughty manners suggested that he didn't invite any of us to his place so that we would like him. He didn't seem to care about that. When he spoke about his paintings, however, he clearly wanted to make an impression on us. In my case, he certainly did. I've remembered him and his party for forty-one years: He was the man who—with money that he'd done nothing to earn—had purchased those paintings and hung them on the walls of his impossibly expensive Manhattan residence. He wasn't a criminal, he wasn't an artist, but he was a man of taste. Here is what I think about Julian Glass—he was someone whose life was devoted to the acquisition of heirlooms. Not necessarily pieces of furniture, though his penthouse was furnished with antiques that I'm certain were valuable. He was a man who defined himself in terms of his possessions.

11.

Artists define themselves in terms of what they make.

12.

² I recognized none of the paintings I saw on Julian Glass's walls, though I believed that I recognized them as the work of painters with whose famous works I was familiar.

These paragraphs are—this composition is—what I have made out of my transcendent evening with my family at the Trattoria Delia. I can't completely know what I think of it, because I'm in the throes of conceiving it. I do know it's not beautiful in the sweet way of most impressionist paintings; if there's one thing we can say about this second decade of the twenty-first century, it is that there's nothing sweet about it. Nor does my composition possess the gaudy, thrilling, and compelling beauty of the Godfather movies. I worry that what I have here is a feeble and forgettable pile of words. But every human being who seeks to make art learns to put aside such doubt and suspicion. Yes, of course, very likely these pages are obvious candidates for the recycle bin. I'm going forward anyway. I'm just about to reach my conclusion. My pulse is up a little. I get excited when I think I might finish something.

13.

As for that pie press on the back porch: My mother rescued it. When Great Aunt Blanche died, she left my mother a little money, some of which went to the refurbishment of Grandmother Akers's pie press. Somehow the hacking I'd done to the top right-hand edge was undone. The wood—oak, I'm pretty sure it was—was sanded and polished into a handsome state. The perforated tin panels that I now realize were for ventilation must have been replaced, because they looked new. About the time I was flunking out of the University of Virginia, the pie press moved into our dining room. New wallpaper gave that room a new look; the pattern my mother chose was repeating scenes of fox hunting--red-coated riders posed on horses; horses jumping over white wood fences; dogs, horses, and riders racing across meadows. Never mind that no one in our family had ever even seen a fox hunt, let alone participated in one. The pie press asserted that in spite of being country bumpkins, we were a sturdy and substantial family.

14.

My relationship with my family has never been an easy one. Thinking about that wallpaper now makes me want to snicker. But I don't even smile, because my mother will come back to visit my dreams and get in my face again. She will speak to me of respect. Of what merits respect. Inevitably she and I will discuss the pie press. She will nod her head toward its boxy presence, its dignified place in the home where she raised my brothers and me. *Look at that*, she'll say. *It's an heirloom. It represents something.* I'll nod and tell her I understand. When my mother was alive I knew better than to argue with her—I certainly know better than to do it now that she's dead. She doesn't have to know that I never think of that pie press without feeling an itch in the palm of my right hand. It wants to take up the butcher knife again and resume its important work.

Out-take from *The Faulkes Chronicle*

**(a section that was completely revised into the section
that became pages 255–60 of the published book)**

“IT HAD A LOT OF CLOUDS IN IT,”

she says. She stops and puts the handkerchief to her nose a moment.

I make a little humming noise—you’ve heard me do it a thousand times. It means *I’m sorry this is sort of painful for you and please do go on with what you’re about to tell me*. Or that’s what it meant on this occasion.

“And the boy,” she says. “The boy in this story. Took a lot of walks. He liked to walk beside a creek that was near where he lived. He liked looking at birds or turtles or sometimes even just leaves that caught the light in a certain way. He was a boy who was greedy to see things. And from taking those walks, he figured that out about himself. It worried him a little. He liked it better being out there by himself than he liked doing things with his friends. This boy—” She stops and applies the handkerchief again. “I hate hearing myself tell it like this,” she says. Her voice is suddenly nasal from the handkerchief pressing the side of her nose.

“But I like it,” I tell her. I wait a minute. Then I say, “When you tell it, I can see the writing. I can see the illustrations.”

She takes a deep breath and looks straight ahead out the windshield. I’m not sure if she’ll keep going, but I know better than to say anything else. I can tell that your mother feels very precarious. Like she’s walked out on a tightrope across something that scares her.

“So this boy also figured out he wasn’t really normal. When he was out walking in the places where he walked, he loved being the way he was. Even if it felt like his eyes were eating up the world. Everything he saw—and especially the animals and birds and the water in the stream--told him it was fine to be that way. It was only in school or with his family or any other people that he worried about how he felt. Like he wanted to be somewhere else. So at school and with his family he practiced acting normal. He got good at it. He had friends. His family respected him. He asked for a camera for Christmas, and his parents gave it to him. The camera made him act even stranger—it made him look really carefully at everything, to see if it might be a picture he wanted to take. He felt like his eyes might set whatever he was looking at on fire.”

She glances over at me to see how I’m taking it. I nod. I’m not pretending to like it. “Clouds?” I say.

“This is the really silly part,” she says. “I even thought it was silly when I made it up. The boy was out walking in the late afternoon. He was about to take a picture of a

mockingbird, but it flew away before he could focus on it, and while his eyes followed the mockingbird, he noticed this cloud catching the sunlight. It was a huge billowing orange shape up over the trees. The boy didn't think. He just snapped the picture. He'd had the camera ready in his hands with his finger on the button. *Who takes a picture of a cloud?* he asked himself. But then he was able to remember how the cloud looked in his camera's viewfinder, and he decided there was a chance it would be a great photograph."

She gives me another glance.

"I've seen pictures of clouds," I say. I don't think I'm telling a lie, but I might be. I hope she won't ask me where I've seen them or who the photographer was. I take a chance. "It wasn't because they looked like a cow or an elephant or anything real. Like in that game your parents get you to play when you're a little kid. It wasn't that. These were just cloud shapes. Really good cloud shapes."

"And colors," she says. And I think I see a little smile shadowing her face. "The boy walked up a hill away from the stream so he could get a better view of the clouds. The sun kept going down while he walked up there, and when he got to the top it was like this view of a whole galaxy of clouds scattered out across the skypink and orange and gold and gray, and this molten silver. Even though he worried he might be wasting film, the boy couldn't help taking picture after picture, until it got dark, and he knew he'd better get home. It was almost dinnertime when he walked into his house, and his dad called out from the living room to ask him where he'd been. And he said 'Taking pictures.' And his mom called out from the kitchen, 'When can we see them?'"

This time when your mother looks at me, her face has changed. *She likes her own story.* That is the news that comes to me, and I'm pretty thrilled with it. Now that she's told it to me, it doesn't seem silly to her any more. So I really like it that she's changed her mind about that cloud story. Because I've made that happen for her. Sure, to myself I take credit for it, but I know better than to say that to her--*See how I made you feel better?*—because I know saying it will just kill it. Instead, I say, "I bet he doesn't want to show his parents those pictures."

She nods. "He has to lie about it," she says. "And that's the really interesting part of the story. That he has to tell that lie to protect himself. He tells them, 'I think I used the wrong setting. I probably wasted a lot of film.' And his parents tell him that that's too bad but that he's probably learned a valuable lesson from it. Then while they're eating dinner, he has to pretend to be sad because none of his pictures will come out."

"But I'll bet he can hardly wait to get that film developed and see what those cloud photographs look like," I say.

She looks at me and nods, and I look her. You might even say we beam at each other. After a while, I ask her if she's ready to go, and your mother says she is.

Also

(an unpublished prose poem)

CAN YOU SPEAK ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF MYSTERY IN YOUR CHILDHOOD? There was a sealed-up cistern outside my grandparents' kitchen, with a small crack in its side, through which my brothers and I dropped pebbles and listened to the small silence before the faint splash when the stones struck the water. Also once I climbed an apple tree and found a flicker's nest with baby flickers in it. Also in fifth grade Joe and Charles who were my friends drowned in New River, and I saw each of them pulled up out of the brown water by rescue squad men out in boats who'd dragged the bottom with hooks on ropes. Also, on my grandfather's desk in the back of his tool shed was a paperweight that contained a black and white photograph of an entirely unclothed woman. Also when I was an acolyte, I saw sweat break out on the priest's forehead when he lifted the cup of wine and said, *This is my blood.*

TO WHAT EXTENT WAS FEAR A PART OF YOUR CHILDHOOD? A recurring nightmare was of a man breaking through the walls of my bedroom to do harm to me, though the man's features were not clear to me, nor was the nature of the harm he intended to do. From this nightmare I woke crying and calling for my mother. You see I wasn't ever afraid she wouldn't be there if I called. You see I wasn't ever afraid my father would stop going to work in the morning and coming home in time for supper. I was a little bit afraid of my white-haired Aunt Inez, who looked like a man, who'd been in the asylum and who stared at me but wouldn't talk. Also the staircase in Grandma Lawson's house frightened me—it had no banisters.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR CHILDHOOD MADE YOU WHO YOU ARE NOW? My mother's beauty and vanity, the cats I grew up with (Hooker, Blackie, and Short Circuit), my intense desire to have a hummingbird for a pet, and a sequence of seven or eight days in a row that I was bee-stung while walking across the field to my grandparents' house and my mother heard my crying and ran to fetch me, pulled out the stinger, and dabbed the stinging place with Witch Hazel. Also *Rose, Rose, I Love You* over the radio in the car as we drove over the mountain to Hester's Drive-in. Also I think my mother felt ashamed of being vain over her beauty. Also my older brother gave us nicknames—our father was Doodles, my younger brother was Vladimir, I was Spider-nose. Mother was Mother.

Proofreading notes for *The Faulkes Chronicle*

(by Lucy Gardner Carson, Tupelo Press)

The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. (CMS16)

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed. (MW11)

GENERALLY:

- bad breaks:
 - a word broken more than once at end of line/beginning of next line
 - a word at end of line/beginning of next line with both an em dash and a hyphen at end of line
 - try very hard to avoid breaking a personal name at end of line
- ellipsis points - standardize as #...#
- prefixes (e.g., co-, multi-, non-, pre-, re-, etc.) - closed up per CMS16 & MW11: e.g., coresidents, multicolored, noncommittal, nondrinking, nonfiction, nonprofit, nonswimmers, preschool, rearranged, reopen - but non-Faulkeses
- vertical spacing - Why is there more vertical space between paragraphs on pp. 261–265?
- page numbers - I may be imagining this, but sometimes it looks like the page numbers are not all the same size; e.g., p. 1 and maybe p. 2 vs. p. 3? I would think this cannot be the case if they are styled headers & footers, but one never knows ...
- Is 2nd line of 2-line header the same pt size as first line; i.e., pp. 66, 110, 143, 161, 214, 233, 268 look fine, but I'm not sure about, for example, pp. 53, 105, 138? (I may be imagining this)

SPECIFICALLY (per CMS16 and MW11):

- 24/7 - but “twenty-four seven” in dialogue
- anorexic
- any more vs. anymore - “Do you have any more bananas?” vs. “You don’t sell bananas anymore?”
- awestruck - 1 word
- backyard - 1 word
- Benny Goodman
- big band - lc
- bow tie - 2 words
- dances - names of dances lc (e.g., jitterbug, the shag, swing dancing) but cap Lindy
- Dr Pepper - no period in drink name
- Dr. - not spelled out except when used alone (“Help me, Doctor!”) in direct address, per CMS16: 10.16
- facedown (adv)
- field mice - 2 words
- footstool - 1 word
- forevermore - 1 word

- frontier woman - 2 words
- Gallery 50C
- gang member - 2 words
- good-bye, per MW
- good night, per MW
- grown-up (n & adj & adv)
- half hour (n) vs. half-hour (adj)
- half squat
- half step (n) - 2 words
- half-truth (n)
- Hollywood's Restaurant
- impresario
- is - cap in title
- jitterbug - lc
- Jr. - no comma before, per CMS16:6.47
- lollygag
- mixtape - 1 word
- New Age - cap
- ninety-eight percent - spell out in direct discourse, per CMS16:13.42
- palomino - lc
- passel
- pay phone - 2 words
- picnic basket - 2 words
- prayer - the Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep prayer
- RN, PhD, etc. - no periods in academic degrees, per CMS
- schoolbook - 1 word
- schoolteacher - 1 word
- Seventy-Third Street - spell out numbered streets up to 100, per CMS16:9.52
- shorebird - 1 word
- smart aleck - 2 words
- song title - rom title cap in quotes
- spaceship - 1 word
- storyteller - 1 word
- streamside - 1 word
- streetwalker - 1 word
- supermodel - 1 word
- tabletop - 1 word
- theater - not theatre
- three a.m.
- truck stop - 2 words
- upside down (adv) vs. upside-down (adj)
- vice president, per CMS16:8.21
- West - cap in "out West"
- wheelchair - 1 word

- whirligig
- work-shirt - hyphen ok

OH, HOW ENTERTAINING! I started listing and keeping track of all the kids as I went along, in case anything popped up — and it totally paid off and made me feel like the best proofreader ever, yay!

As I was reading, it didn't bother me as a reader that there are apparently 28 offspring; nor did the lack of explanation of whether or not they are all biological, or if biological, whether or not this is even physically possible given the mother's age, which is 52. And then there's the fact that several of the kids appear to be less than 9 months apart in age but not obviously twins. I was just enjoying the book as presented; I didn't scrutinize the kids' ages because anything bugged me as a reader, only because I felt that, as a proofreader, I should. So maybe the author could be queried about these points?

That said, I found a prize-winning error:

- C.J. is 9 (pp23, 56) or 10 (pp74, 124) and “only a year younger than Tony”; but **Tony is 15** (p 25)

Other oddities that make you wonder, if you think about them (but maybe most readers won't think or wonder about them):

- Angela, 12-1/2 (p 55) - but if Isobel is 12 (p 25), how does that work? Or maybe Isobel is 11 (p63)?
- Creighton, “not even 11” - but C.J. is 10
- Kathryn and Pruney are both 13 but there's no mention of twins (not that that means they're not)

Faulkes children and their ages:

1. Angela, 12-1/2
2. C.J., 9 (p 23), “will turn 10 soon” (p 56), “10 years old now” (p 74), “just a year younger than Tony” (p 105 - **but Tony is 15**), “10-year-old stickler” (p 124)
3. Carlton
4. Cassie
5. Colleen
6. Creighton, “not even 11” (p 123)
7. Delmer Junior
8. Desiree
9. Eli, same grade as Larry
10. Emily
11. Franklin
12. Isobel, 12 (p 25), 11 (p 63)
13. Jack
14. Jane, oldest girl, about to leave the house for college
15. Jennifer
16. John Milton
17. Kathryn, 13

18. Larry, same grade as Eli
19. Leopold, "starting walking a few months earlier" (p 16)
20. McKenzie, 8-1/2
21. Patrick
22. Peter
23. Pruney/Brunhilde, 13
24. Robert, college student at Bard
25. Sarah Jean
26. Susan
27. Tony, "He's 15 and becoming quite a litigious young fellow" (p25), "C.J. is just a year younger than Tony" (p105 - **but C.J. is 10**)
28. William

Other minor corrections are marked on the pages.

Thanks. — lgc

Amazon Customer Review by Luigi Salerni

On the surface, David Huddle's newest wonder of a novel is about death and dying except that it isn't about death or dying. It's about celebrating life in all of its quirkiness and beauty. It is about family intimacy, grace, and the power of loving unconditionally. It is classic Huddle territory: the territory of the heart. It is also classic Huddle in that it is gloriously funny and never sentimental—two facets of his world that never cease to give me a sense of joy and wonder in the face of life's pain, disappointments, and mysteries. *The Faulkes Chronicle* is a novel in a style like no other. It is a meditation. It is a coming of age novel in reverse as it embraces the end of life as a quiet gift of remembrance and of celebration of the wonder of small moments that add to a kind of contemplative epiphany.

David Huddle's fiction is always character driven which is one of the many reasons why I like his work so much. In *The Faulkes Chronicle*, the reader is thrust into the Huddle universe quickly only to shift downward to wander leisurely on a journey of discovery that always seems new, unique, and at the same time breathlessly familiar even when it is not really familiar at all. It is a gift of intimacy that Huddle shares through his narrative world where the characters are engaging and true even when they are contradictory or adrift from one another.

There is a gentleness of spirit to Huddle's writing. I don't mean weakness; I mean intimacy. I mean intensely personal as if he is next to you alone and quietly sharing some secret revelation he just that moment discovered for himself. *The Faulkes Chronicle* is like holding someone you love in the deepest reservoir of feeling and renewal without ever being obvious about either.

To my mind, there are two ways to read *The Faulkes Chronicle* (or perhaps the best way is a combination of the two). Read it like you read most novels: as rapidly as your interest dictates, or read it like a series of poems where you read one stanza or one complete poem at a time and put it down luxuriating in the profoundness of image or the power of a passage that you contemplate and savor. What has been revealed through the chronicle of multiple lives moving through the labyrinth of conflicting desires, you come to a resting place of solace and understanding of what is ultimately out of your control.

David Huddle's *The Faulkes Chronicle* has such a generosity of spirit that even if you don't like it, I think you might love it. I liked it and loved it in equal measure.

More Links for David Huddle

Tupelo Press web-pages for *The Faulkes Chronicle* and
David Huddle's previous novel, *Nothing Can Make Me Do This*
www.tupelopress.org/authors/dhuddle

"The Stile," a poem published by *Coal Hill Review*
www.coalhillreview.com/the-stile/

"Burned Man," a poem featured on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac*
<http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/index.php?date=2011/02/03>