

Reviews

Vicksburg 1863: The Deepest Wound: Battles and Leaders of the American Civil War. By Steven Nathaniel Dossman. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014. Pp. ix-xv + 147, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$48, hardcover)

The campaign for and siege of Vicksburg was perhaps the key event leading to the defeat of the Southern Confederacy and as such has been studied heavily. Edwin C. Bearss devoted 2,219 pages in three volumes to the campaign, Shelby Foote devoted 368 pages of his mammoth Civil War history to Vicksburg, Terence Winschel and William Shea covered it in 242 pages—the list goes on. With *Vicksburg 1863: The Deepest Wound*, Steven Nathaniel Dossman boils the campaign down to 147 succinct, highly readable pages using the words of not only the generals but the soldiers and civilians who lived through it.

Dossman states the case bluntly from the beginning: “The national survival of the Confederacy depended upon control of the Mississippi River” (p. 1). The author ably summarizes the events in Kentucky, Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi in 1862 that, along with Union operations in Virginia, “pressed the Confederacy to the brink of total defeat” (p. 15) and set the stage for Vicksburg. And while much of the action takes place in Mississippi, he does not ignore the importance of the Trans-Mississippi Department (the establishment of which “hampered cooperation between Confederate armies on either side [of the river] and would later play a key role in the Vicksburg Campaign” [p. 20]) in the struggle, both as a source of men and materials for the Confederacy and as the place where Lt. Gen. Edmund Kirby Smith attempted

“the only serious southern attempt to aid Pemberton’s trapped Army of Vicksburg” (p. 117).

The fate of Vicksburg depended largely on the commanders of Union and Confederate forces, and Dossman assesses their relative talents capably: John C. Pemberton,

chief of the Confederate Army of Vicksburg, “an able administrator but cautious commander” (p. 19); Joseph E. Johnston, commander of the Confederacy’s Army of the West, who “approached his new assignment with hesitation and a seething resentment of [Confederate President Jefferson] Davis, with whom he had maintained a long-standing feud since the beginning of the war” (p. 20); and Union General U.S. Grant, whose “decision to march his army into the interior of Mississippi with a limited supply chain ranks as one of the boldest gambles of the entire war” (p. 56). Grant’s audacity, aided by Pemberton’s timidity and Johnston’s vacillation, would decide the fate of Vicksburg.

Dossman also skillfully assesses the Vicksburg Campaign in the evolution of the “hard war” policies that Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman would pursue for the duration of the Civil War as they sought to crush the Confederacy. “The Vicksburg Campaign pioneered the use of hard war against the southern home front in ways that Mississippi civilians could never have imagined before” as Union troops foraged liberally from the countryside for food and fodder, Dossman writes. “Although little genuine fighting had taken place thus far in the campaign, Grant’s army had weakened the South’s



will and ability to continue the war more by economic warfare than by actual combat” (p. 59). The capture of Jackson and subsequent destruction of its railroad and industrial capacity “would be the first significant instance of hard war in the western theater” (p. 68). Sherman would report that “Jackson will no longer be a point of danger. . . . The inhabitants are subjugated. They cry aloud for mercy. The land is devastated for 30 miles around” (p. 141). The Union general would use the lessons he learned in Mississippi to devastating effects a year later in his march through Georgia.

The story of Vicksburg is largely the story of its siege, and Dossman unsparingly recounts the suffering of both soldiers and civilians reduced to living in caves and enduring increasingly shorter supplies as “observers on both sides joked that General Pemberton had been replaced by ‘General Starvation’” (p. 114). As one Confederate woman remembered, “we had to buy water by the bucketful and serve it out in rations, so that we realized what thirst meant, and were often hungry. . . . We tasted a mule-steak once, but did not like it; it was tough and very dry” (p. 113).

Inevitably, Vicksburg fell, with Pemberton surrendering the city on July 4, 1863, the same day a Confederate attack on Helena, Arkansas, was defeated and the Army of Northern Virginia began its long retreat from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. And while the latter is often cited as the beginning of the end for the Confederacy, Dossman puts the fall of Vicksburg and, a few days later, the surrender of Port Hudson, Louisiana in perspective: “An estimate of the Confederacy’s overall killed, wounded, and captured during the campaign from May 1 to July 17 . . . surpasses 46,000. That figure far exceeds General Robert E. Lee’s losses at Gettysburg and does not include the increasing number of desertions that resulted from the repeated defeats” (p. 145). In addition, “Federal forces captured 254 cannon in the Vicksburg campaign, including 85 pieces of heavy artillery. In contrast, Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia

did not lose a single gun in the Gettysburg campaign and actually captured three cannon in the battle” (pp. 145-6). The Confederacy’s material losses at Vicksburg would never be replaced. William Tecumseh Sherman cannot be accused of hyperbole in declaring the city “the most valuable conquest of the war” (p. 133).

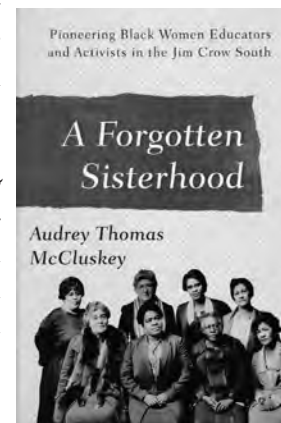
Steven Nathaniel Dossman’s *Vicksburg 1863: The Deepest Wound* provides a concise account of the turning point of the Civil War, rich in detail and first-person accounts by the men and women who endured it. It would be a worthy investment for both public libraries and the Civil War buff’s home bookshelf.

--Mark Christ



***A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South.* By Audrey Thomas McCluskey. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014. Pp. ix-x+155, notes, milestones and legacies bibliography, special collections, index. \$39.99, hardcover)**

Audrey Thomas McCluskey has written a history that deeply informs the rapidly growing historiography of black women’s unsung and underappreciated civil rights activism. *A Forgotten Sisterhood: Pioneering Black Women Educators and Activists in the Jim Crow South* explores how women like Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie



Helen Burroughs, Lucy Craft Laney, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, founders of Bethune-Cookman College, National Training School for Negro Women and Girls, Haines Institute, and Palmer Memorial Institute, respectively, employed educational access to counteract and remediate racial injustice. McCluskey argues these women incorporated both W.E.B. DuBois's call for a "talented tenth," to lead and uplift, and Booker T. Washington's "bootstrap philosophy" as a part of their mission to improve conditions among African Americans (p. 11). Both concepts were found in the curriculums of the schools they established. Indeed, these women were further members of the National Association of Colored Women, founded in 1896. Its motto, "Lifting As We Climb," informed the uplift work in which they engaged within the confines of racial segregation.

Bethune, Burroughs, Laney, and Brown, were part of a generation of educated black women who came of age in the post-Reconstruction South as political and social opportunities deteriorated for African Americans nationwide. As a cadre of "a forgotten sisterhood of like-minded women," several of whom were friends who shared similar organizational memberships, McCluskey asserts that they were "among the striving class of blacks who had gained access to education through a combination of mentorship, diligence, and bountiful faith" (p. 2). They were further black women who due to their race and gender, endured a particular form of oppression that made it that much more difficult for them to effect change for African Americans. Yet, they embraced teaching as their natural calling as women and respectability politics in order to disprove racist stereotypes about African Americans. In doing so they became part of the matrix of institution building that helped black communities survive and even thrive in an era of harsh racial oppression.

A Forgotten Sisterhood is divided into eight brief but informative chapters. Chapter one discusses the historical context that made

it necessary, critical even, for these "daughters of slavery" to create educational opportunities for their people. They understood well the work that was necessary, not to mention dangerous, to dismantle assumptions about black inferiority following the Civil War and Reconstruction and the role their gender played in enacting these changes.

Chapters two and three focus on Lucy Craft Laney, founder of Haines Institute in Georgia, which she operated for nearly fifty years. Referred to as an "activist educator" by the author, Laney was considered one of the most influential African American women of her era and an advocate for gender, educational, and racial justice. Furthermore, the Haines Institute curriculum went above and beyond the standard industrial training most often available to African Americans and included classical education. This underscored Laney's activism by challenging myths about African American intellectual inferiority.

Chapters four and five are dedicated to Mary McLeod Bethune and Charlotte Hawkins Brown. Bethune, the founder of Bethune-Cookman College, was, according to the author, the only black woman to establish a grammar school that later became an accredited university. A Laney mentee and one time teacher at Haines Institute, Bethune was actively involved in the black women's club movement, served as the president of the National Association of Colored Women from 1924-1928 and then in 1935 created the National Council of Negro Women. It was also during the New Deal years that she was appointed director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. An accomplished woman to be sure, Bethune's work and activism, like that of the other African American women chronicled in McCluskey's book underscored her interpretation of the "racial uplift ideology" designed not only to "acquit black women of the scurrilous charge of immorality" so often used to justify their sexual exploitation, but to also outfit them with

the necessary skills to support themselves and their families (p. 57).

The final chapters highlight the memories of former students who attended Charlotte Hawkins Brown's Palmer Memorial Institute in the 1940s and 1950s and Nannie Helen Burrough's racial and feminist activism as the head of the National Training School for Negro Women and Girls. They further explicate the ways in which black women created and sustained southern educational institutions by utilizing female and interracial networks. These networks provided critical financial assistance through their access to wealthy white donors, but they further speak to how black women educators adeptly navigated and manipulated racialized and gendered spaces to produce unprecedented educational opportunities for African Americans. Despite its brevity, *A Forgotten Sisterhood* is a useful read for those who seek to understand how African American women used educational access as a form of civil rights activism in the Jim Crow South.

--Cherisse Jones-Branch



***Slaves of the State: Black Incarceration from the Chain Gang to the Penitentiary.* By Dennis Childs. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. Pp. 280, \$22.50, paperback)**

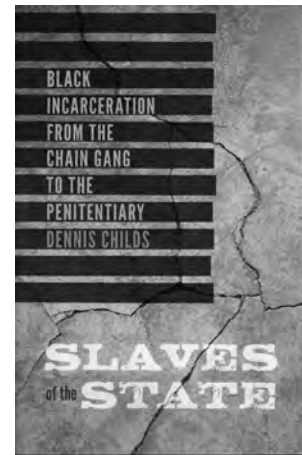
The subject of prison reform has become an increasingly popular issue in the United States. Some public officials, not to mention journalists and activists, have made it clear that the present inmate population—somewhere between 2.2 and 2.3 million—is immoral and unsustainable. Regardless of whether Americans will pursue meaningful prison reform, the fact remains: the United States has the largest

prison population on earth. The origins of our country's prison problem, as Dennis Childs shows, are dark, violent, and racist—in short, it's a problem involving the continuation of slavery in our society.

For Childs, slavery has persisted under various guises—most notoriously in convict leasing and on prison farms—to become what he calls “neoslavery.” Despite his focus on the historical aspects of US prisons, Childs, who teaches literature and ethnic studies at University of California, San Diego, does not provide a comprehensive account of American prisons, or even of one particular prison. Instead, he gives us snapshots of the prison problem as seen through fiction, legal documents, and photographs.

Childs begins his book with an examination of how twentieth-century prison conditions in Georgia parallel scenes in the Tony Morrison novel *Beloved*. Childs argues that Morrison's book, though set in the antebellum period, informs historical readings of the post-Civil War prison system. In one vivid symbol of twentieth-century “neoslavery,” Childs examines a “Land Based Slave Ship,” a Georgia prison cart from the 1930s, in which inmates were chained inside like circus animals—or, more to the author's point, like Africans on the slave ships of the Middle Passage.

Childs makes a keen insight when he sees the Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution as an emancipation document that freed the slaves but which also allowed for slavery to continue so long as it was considered “punishment for crime.” Childs shows that abolitionist Charles Sumner opposed the wording of the



amendment, but his concerns were not heeded by the majority of Congress. The “punishment for crime” loophole allowed for southern states to buy and sell black convicts, who were often imprisoned—for petty crimes, or because their convictions rested on flimsy or non-existent evidence—by whites eager to keep blacks under control and to profit from their forced labor.

In what I found to be the book’s best and most interesting chapter, Childs examines the dark history of Angola in Louisiana, the largest maximum-security prison in the United States, which today has 6,300 inmates living on an 18,000 acre working farm. Childs focuses his attention on a photograph of a black minstrel group at the prison. One inmate, named James Bruce, was known as a “queer” among his fellows. In 1948, he murdered the prison superintendent’s wife before escaping, and Bruce’s body was discovered several days later by police. The official verdict was death by drowning, though Childs rightly believes officials were likely responsible for his demise.

In a concluding chapter, Childs examines the horrific 1930 fire at the Ohio State Penitentiary in which 322 inmates were killed. One of the survivors was Chester Himes, who wrote an account of the fire in his novel *Yesterday Will Make You Cry* (written in the 1930s but not published unabridged until 1998). The book was graphic, and despite the large role homosexuality plays in prison culture, Himes’s publisher deleted a large portion of the book due to its frank depiction of a gay relationship.

Childs’s book is a timely and impassioned account of the inherent injustice of the American legal system, which, for racist reasons, has sought to keep African Americans at the bottom rungs of society. Childs’s book, though, as well intentioned as it is, will test the patience of even the most sympathetic reader. One reason lies in his limitations as a historian. For example, he sees the Jim Crow South emerging as early as 1866, though segregation was not truly established in the South until the 1890s. Childs also claims the black codes were put in place

immediately after the end of the Civil War, but that was true only in Mississippi. He also accepts Tony Morrison’s absurdly high figure of “60 million or more” as the death toll for the “Middle Passage and plantation imprisonment” (32). I wondered why Childs used *Beloved* as an analytical framework when there is so much about prisons in the historical record (Arkansas’s prisons have been particularly neglected) that scholars have not made well known.

A bigger problem than the factual lapses in the book is in the weaknesses in Childs’s overall thesis that the modern American prison is nothing more than a continuation of antebellum slavery. In stressing continuity, Childs oversimplifies the story. Clearly a prison farm like Angola, where its black inmates still pick cotton, evokes obvious comparisons to Old South plantations. But the prison farms were quite different from the convict leasing system that dominated the South from the Reconstruction era to the early 20th century. The farms, as brutal as they were, were actually an improvement on convict leasing, which for thousands of men, proved a virtual death sentence. The prisons farms were also an alternative—although, again, a brutal one—to lynch mob “justice.” I am not suggesting that the prison farms were chiefly created in order to dampen white citizens’ passion for lynching. But the creation of the prison farms around 1900—Cummins, Angola, and Parchman among them—happened at a time when the South was undergoing a period of consolidation—legally, economically, and politically. High-profile lynchings persisted into the 1960s, but the construction of prison farms coincided with a decline in lynching.

Perhaps the book’s biggest drawback is its writing style. It is a cliché that academics publish unreadable prose. In fact, many scholars can write in a pleasing, accessible manner. Childs’s book, however, would have benefited from a much more straight-forward style. Instead, the reader encounters passages discussing the “counter-historical, counter-epistemologi-

cal, and counter-pedagogical value of [prisoners'] muzzled and submerged transmissions" (113) or "the critical suspension of a presupposed normative manliness and a self-possessed heroic model of resistance in respect to the hypercircumscribed positionality of the dominated represents an apposite point of entry . . ." (123). At the risk of taking such passages out of context, they give you an idea of what to expect should you pick up this book.

More exhausting than Childs's love of fifty-cent words ("fungible" grew particularly tiresome) is his carelessness with terminology. The book throws around provocative words and phrases such as "genocide" and "US empire." A discussion of "empire" is particularly unsuited to his analysis, since prisons are mostly run by states and have little to do with whatever the United States is doing overseas (GTMO excepted). The book occasionally uses "capitalist" as a pejorative term, though the author's methodology isn't especially Marxist. Furthermore, it is irresponsible for an author to call the US prison system a creature of "liberal white supremacist misogynist" thinking without defining liberalism (classical or modern?) or examining how misogyny plays a part in his story. The vast majority of prisoners, historically speaking, have been men, and the author gives no serious attention to the subject of female prisoners.

Childs's looseness with his wording and terminology ultimately undermines his intention. To say that the history of American prisons is really just a continuation of slavery deprives the word "slave" and "prison" of their very meaning. To call oneself a "prisoner" is very different from calling oneself a "slave." A twenty-first century man living in a cell 23.5 hours a day at a supermax prison is very different from the antebellum slave, who, as historians have shown for decades, often exerted surprising amounts of freedom amid his or her bondage. In some respects, prisoners are worse off than slaves, in other ways better off. Most prisoners will be freed one day after their sentence ends. Before

the Civil War, most slaves were in bondage for life.

Slaves of the State is an insightful and impassioned but ultimately frustrating book. At its best, it provides a memorable look at certain aspects of America's prison system. At its worst, it is too willing to substitute theoretical jargon for historical rigor. Hopefully, however, it will spark debate in graduate seminars across the country.

--Colin Edward Woodward

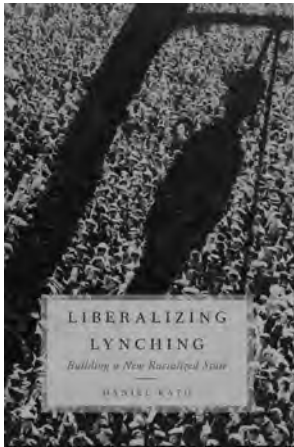


***Liberalizing Lynching: Building a New Racialized State.* By Daniel Kato. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. x + 215, acknowledgements, conclusion, notes, index. \$39.95, hardcover)**

On August 17, 1903, fifteen white men descended upon a sawmill in the Poinsett County community of Whitehall, where they proceeded to terrorize the black workers there in an effort to drive them out of such employment. In prosecuting these "whitecappers," the US attorney interpreted the Thirteenth Amendment as marking a vast expansion of federal power, arguing that if these black workers were not free to contract their own labor, then they existed, by virtue of the violence done them, in a state of slavery. Three of the defendants were convicted but appealed to the US Supreme Court, which, in the case of *Hodges v. United States* (1906), overturned the conviction of these alleged vigilantes, arguing, in part, that although people had the right to be safe from violent attacks, the bestowal of citizenship upon African Americans meant that they should take up their plight with state and local authorities rather than the federal government.

Such cases, according to political scientist

Daniel Kato, exemplify the federal government's embrace of "constitutional anarchy" as a means of avoiding its responsibility to protect the rights of African-American citizens. After all, Southern racist violence such as lynching struck at the core of national sovereignty, for what is the purpose of government if not to protect citizens from violence? Thus have many commentators on lynching concluded either that the United States constituted a weak state, the federal government simply not possessing the power needed to protect the lives and liberties of its citizenry, or that the nation was an illiberal apartheid state, the federal government



being the font of anti-black violence. By contrast, Kato, in *Liberalizing Lynching*, argues that the three branches of the federal government colluded in pursuing a policy of inaction. In this schema, "political officials successfully mischaracterized what was actually a political

arrangement made by politicians into a matter of state rights that was to be resolved by the courts" (15), just as the courts, like in the above example, insisted upon their own helplessness.

Kato begins in the Reconstruction era, with the occupation of the former Confederacy being undermined by uncertainty regarding jurisdiction (whether military or civil courts had primary authority), as well as by President Andrew Johnson's regular sparring with Congress. In this dysfunctional environment, extremist groups like the Ku Klux Klan were "able to garner the support of a majority of white Southerners because they appeared to be effective in restoring a semblance of stability and order" (39). Meanwhile, the Republican Party began to abandon the civil rights of freedmen in order to broaden its appeal in the South. Irreconcilable differ-

ences within Congress led to the brunt of federal rights enforcements falling upon the US Supreme Court, which was reluctant to take the lead—and manifested that reluctance in its opinions. One prime example of this was the *Slaughter House Cases*, which arose from white butchers in New Orleans, Louisiana, suing their state in protest of a law that would centralize slaughtering and butchering, arguing that such a statute deprived them of the "privileges and immunities" outlined in the Fourteenth Amendment. In its ruling, the Supreme Court decided against the butchers, in part because they were white, thus interpreting the amendment as "bequeathing extraordinary power to the federal government that was to be used solely for the emergency of race" (93). The later *United States v. Cruikshank* case, arising out of the 1873 Colfax Massacre in Louisiana, carried this further by insisting that federal intervention was only sustainable when individual states were trying to deny rights to their citizens, not when citizens were engaging in private acts against each other, even if those acts were racially motivated. As the Republican Party narrowed its focus, racial violence such as lynchings no longer carried the same political connotation they did during Reconstruction, when to threaten African Americans was a means of threatening the much-hated party of Lincoln. However, depoliticizing racial violence was, in fact, a political decision, one carried out to obscure lynching's transformation "from a tactic of political change to an object of political containment" (111). The active non-enforcement of laws on the part of federal authorities created an environment of license at the state and local level that "enabled racist local customs and practices to decide what qualified as murder"—and thus was likely to be prosecuted—"versus what fell into the category of a lynching" (129). The federal government began bringing an end to this dual state system by the middle of the twentieth century. As Kato makes clear, decisions like the one by President Dwight Eisenhower to intervene in the deseg-

regation of Little Rock Central High School did not rely upon new laws, thus indicating that the federal government had always possessed the authority to protect the rights of the citizens but had, because of ill political winds, reneged on this responsibility for the better part of the century.

A few small errors aside (the Little Rock crisis happened in 1957, not 1956, for example), Kato's book constitutes a truly fresh take on the subject of lynching, one which eschews the easy answers of Southern racism and mob mentality for a deeper meditation upon the nature of political violence—and how the political is often obscured when acts of violence are dubbed “random” or “savage.” Moreover, in his conclusion, Kato questions the potential of liberal remedies to the problem of racial violence in the present day by observing how “the very machinations of liberalism have come not only to administer the killing,” as with the death penalty, “but also to exonerate the killer and admonish those who are angry about the killing,” as exemplified by recent acts of police violence (157). Amid a wealth of recent studies on lynching, *Liberalizing Lynching* stands out as the sort of work likely to shape academic perspectives on lynching for years to come.

--Guy Lancaster



***Faces like Devils: The Bald Knobber Vigilantes in the Ozarks.* By Matthew J. Hernando. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2015. Pp. ix-xii + 221, illustrations, notes, index. \$60.00 hardcover)**

The vigilantes who operated in southwestern Missouri in the late nineteenth century still ride the hills in Branson's tourist district, but the history of this secret organization has re-

mained elusive. Several studies have narrated the Bald Knobbers' activities, but these histories have not satisfactorily explained the evolution of this group. In *Faces like Devils*, Matthew J. Hernando grants this history the justice it deserves by offering a balanced, thorough, and analytical study of the rise and fall of the Bald Knobbers. Hernando delivers the history that has been missing by examining the social context in which this group formed, probing differences between Bald Knobber clans, and detailing how officials successfully combated these vigilantes.

Hernando provides a detailed overview of American traditions and regional realities that fostered the creation of the Bald Knobbers. After discussing numerous instances of American vigilantism and how these were related to several political traditions, such as the right to alter government, direct democracy, and popular sovereignty, he argues that “a full understanding of the Bald Knobbers requires an analysis of the people and the land that gave rise to them” (p. 19). He points out that guerilla warfare during the Civil War taught the locals how to harm one another, had galvanizing effects on their political allegiance, desensitized them to violence, and created long-term animosities and that crime and violence increased after the war because “[m]any of the criminals, who had military experience as soldiers or guerillas, used the skills they learned in wartime to make a new livelihood for themselves as outlaws” (p. 43). He also demonstrates that changes in the resident population contributed to regional tensions when the primary source of immigration shifted from the Upland South to “states such as Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, and



Kansas” after the war and that many of these new arrivals were professionals and businessmen desiring law and order (p. 46).

A key contribution of *Faces like Devils* is Hernando’s examination of the divergent motivations of the Bald Knobbers of Taney County and the later Bald Knobbers of Christian and Douglas Counties. He observes that the two groups “exhibited such stark differences in their goals, tactics, and membership that it is sometimes difficult to see how they were considered part of the same group,” and then points out that the overarching motivation of the Taney County vigilantes was protecting economic progress while later groups were concerned more with moral order (p. 17). To open his examination of these groups’ differences, Hernando uses the initial actions taken by each as examples of their contrasting ideologies. He explains that the first violent action of the Taney County Bald Knobbers was the storming of the county jail and the lynching of two prisoners charged with assaulting and wounding a storeowner and his wife. In contrast, he points out that some of the earliest violent actions of the Christian County clan included whipping men who “abused or neglected their families” or “made a public nuisance of themselves” (p. 118) and destroying a saloon the vigilantes believed was taking money that “should have gone to supporting . . . families” (p. 119).

Earlier studies narrated the major happenings of the Bald Knobber’s decline, but Hernando moves beyond narration to offer a close study of the legal strategies used to cripple the organization. He categorizes the two central strategies as “carpet bombing” and “cut off its head” (p. 161), and he explains that the carpet-bombing consisted of bringing numerous charges against as many Bald Knobbers as possible to demoralize the members and that officials followed this action by attempting to cut off the group’s head by bringing serious and well-substantiated charges against its leaders. He observes that these strategies were effective because many Bald Knobbers could not afford

legal representation, were the main source of income for their families, and were offered lenient sentences for cooperating, and he adds that the harsh sentences meted out to the leaders most responsible for the group’s actions (four were sentenced to death) demonstrated that future vigilantism would not be tolerated.

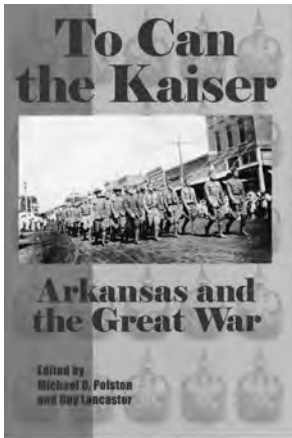
Faces like Devils has numerous other strengths, such as sobering depictions of the Bald Knobbers’ crimes, discussions of the consequences of this group’s violence, a detailed narration of a jail escape, and analysis of how the Ozarks was treated in the national media during this era. At a higher level, this book demonstrates the difficulty of arriving at a balanced and meaningful history when the past has been distorted by biased sources, and it also serves as a reminder that our justice system is a thin, fragile surface over the abyss of social chaos.

--Phillip Howerton



***To Can the Kaiser: Arkansas and the Great War.* Edited by Michael D. Polston and Guy Lancaster. (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2015. Pp. 160. contributors, further reading, index. \$22.50, paperback)**

In the beginning months of 1914 old European alliances would be tested by the rising nationalism both within and outside its borders. The assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 further kindled these tensions and, in combination with numerous other factors, led to the beginning of the “Great War.” At the outset of this “European” conflict, Americans, including Arkansans, were of the general opinion that the war was unlikely to affect them directly and, thus, they were un-



likely to become involved. This proved to be an erroneous assumption. Despite having boasted during his 1916 presidential campaign that he had kept America out of the war, recently re-elected President Woodrow Wilson reversed his position of

isolationism following the loss of American lives and property to German U-boat activity in the Atlantic Ocean and Germany's renunciation of an earlier treaty assuring that American ships would not be targeted.

Preparations for war are never simple and, as Michael D. Polston says, "When war was declared in April 1917, the nation was ill prepared to enter a modern war that had been raging for three years" (p.36). In *To Can the Kaiser: Arkansas and the Great War*, the editors, Michael D. Polston and Guy Lancaster, bring together a collection of essays, presented as chapters, which explore the effects of World War One on Arkansas and its people. With the publication of a single-volume work examining the profound changes wrought upon the state and its citizens by the war, the book fills a void, which has hitherto been lacking, in the documentation of the state's history.

Starting with "Arming Arkansas: Putting the State on a War Footing" by Stephen Teske, each essay addresses aspects of Arkansas's preparedness and contribution to the nation's involvement in World War One. There is some repetition of subject matter; for example, Teske and J. Blake Perkins both address propaganda. However, each author approaches the topic in a unique fashion, thus adding to the body of scholarship allowing for an inclusive, rather than exclusive, exploration of the subject matter.

Teske's introductory essay examines how

America entered the war and gives a brief overview of Arkansas's contribution to the war effort including propaganda; mobilization of non-traditional workers, such as women; construction of training and munitions facilities; support of the war effort by volunteers and the Red Cross; the re-integration of soldiers into civilian life; and the economic effects of the conflict upon the state. The second and subsequent essays provide a more focused view of different parts of Arkansas's involvement in the war effort while providing a commentary on the social and financial effects of this response and on the State of Arkansas during the second decade of the 20th century.

Of particular interest in the social commentary is chapter eleven "Plague!: The 1918 Influenza Epidemic in Arkansas" by Nancy Hendricks. This chapter eloquently explores the origins and transmission of the disease throughout the world, Arkansas's response to the disease, and its effects on the military and civilian populations of the state. Of particular note is the lack of media reporting of the disease despite its enormous impact and mortality. The pandemic is estimated to have claimed fifty million lives worldwide compared with approximately nine million killed in the war. Hendricks postulates that the lack of reportage was partly due to the fact that "what sold was the excitement of war" (p.137). She further suggests that "public health officials [were] disinclined to declare the disease a threat" (p.137) partly because of the fact that influenza was not included in the agency's guidelines as a health threat and also in an attempt to prevent panic among the state's inhabitants.

The final essay, "Memorializing the Great War" by Mark K. Christ, closes the book with an exploration of how Arkansans chose to honor the sacrifices and achievement of its citizens killed during service in The Great War and the controversy created by how the sacrifices of these citizens should be recognized. Two distinct points of view emerged: traditional "war memorials" with the names of the dead/missing

engraved on states and plaques and “living memorials” including “bridges, parks, libraries, playgrounds and community centers” (p.148) which would form a part of the communities they served and “contribute to the reconstruction of America and meet the needs of communities” (p.148). Christ concludes his essay and, thus, the book by noting that twenty-first century Arkansans continue to remember those who serve their country in foreign wars.

Michael Polston and Guy Lancaster do an excellent job of bringing together in one volume a collection of essays that portray Arkansas at a pivotal time in both United States and world history. *To Can the Kaiser: Arkansas and the Great War* should definitely be on the recommended reading list, if not included as a required text, of any Arkansas History class.

--Simon Hosken



***The Little Rock Crisis: What Desegregation Politics Says About Us.* By Ravi K. Perry and D. LaRouth Perry. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pp. vii-xvi + 225, list of figures, preface, acknowledgements, appendix, notes, references, index. \$105, hardcover)**

The purpose of this well-researched text is to document the historical changes that resulted from the bravery of the nine teenagers who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. After the Little Rock Nine integrated and the majority graduated from Central High School, this historic act of courage changed life for African Americans throughout Arkansas. This text is organized into four parts. The preface and introduction include an

overview of how and why this text was written. Part I focuses on the lasting implications of the Little Rock Nine’s resilience. Part II includes a contemporary perspective on the outcome of the event.

In the introduction, a case study method is employed in the authors’ journey to unveil the impact of the Little Rock Nine and the desegregation politics that followed in their footsteps. The authors conduct this study using primary and secondary documents, statistical data, and interviews, detailing many of the historical published works leading up to their own writing project. They explore the purpose and implications of each of these previous research projects, positioning their work as one that focuses on the lived experiences of those who subsequently benefitted from the desegregation efforts of the Nine. *The Little Rock Crisis* also describes the tensions that existed in the city during the desegregation of its public spaces, and it documents the lives of those impacted and involved in the battle to end segregation.

Part one of the text focuses on the relations between the black and white populations in Little Rock. Also, this section examines the relations among African Americans themselves. Some African Americans wanted the changes that the Brown legislation yielded. Others



were afraid of how whites would respond because of the open hostility and overlooked crimes against African Americans by highly organized white supremacist groups. Melba Pattillo Beals’s biography of her experience as one of the Little Rock Nine discusses this trepidation in her book. In other words, many members of the African American community were afraid of reprisals by white supremacists. There-

fore, the inaction of fearful African Americans made it difficult to enact change and to make strides toward racial progress. This fear and inaction on the part of African Americans in Little Rock shows that, although Jim Crow laws were being abolished across the South, the social structures and invisible social codes of segregation still influenced their behavior.

Daisy Bates, a journalist who documented the civil rights movement in Arkansas, is profiled in this chapter as well. Her story, about finding out the truth about her family and the effect that desegregation had on her life in terms of identifying the men that tore her family apart, helps to provide the backdrop for this chapter. Bates went on to make numerous strides through her civil rights work as president of the local NAACP branch in Arkansas. This chapter also provides individual profiles of the entire Little Rock Nine, both as they fought to desegregate Central High School and in their experiences later in life; and, by profiling the most outspoken segregationists of the era and their role in the series of mobs that inflicted fear, violence, and outright harassment and crimes upon the black people desegregating Little Rock, it does something that few previous books have done. Using the proliferation of accounts by the black press during this period, the authors show the legacy that the segregationists passed down to their children as well as their actions in forming mobs to collectively fight desegregation and defend their investment in a system of skin color privilege that allowed whites to inflict terror, crimes, and financial inequality against blacks with impunity and protection under the law.

Part two, incorporating the final chapters in the book, discusses how the desegregation efforts in Little Rock in the 1950s continue to influence the civil rights work that is done in the present day. The authors look at the contemporary population and discuss whether real progress is still happening. Where does the new revitalization of the historic Central High leave the existing African American population? Do

they stand to benefit from their tax dollars being used to fund a school to which they may have no access? What has happened to the history embedded in this school regarding the national landscape for civil rights? This section also provides several personal narratives of current African American residents of Little Rock. The profiles are powerful and help to provide a picture of community engagement and of the legacy of civil rights activism that the Nine prompted in present day Arkansas.

The Little Rock Crisis: What Desegregation Politics Says About Us is a powerful reminder of the true effects of desegregation. This book is well written and engaging, contains sound research methods, and depicts a constant reality for current civil rights activists in Arkansas. It should be required for all courses that focus on issues related to race relations, segregation, and diversity within the United States. Students in education, sociology, psychology, anthropology, history, and African American studies would benefit from reading this work. The authors do an outstanding job of building upon previous research into this highly documented historical event that will especially benefit those seeking to become scholars of the civil rights era and its legacy.

--Tiffany A. Flowers



***Klandestine.* By Pate McMichael. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2015. Pp. 320, \$26.95, cloth.**

When asked to review *Klandestine* by Pate McMichael, I initially considered declining because of the memories I associate with the traumatic era of assassinations of the 1960s that I experienced as a young girl. I remember vivid media images of racial unrest, the Vietnam War, and the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in Dallas about three hours from my

home town, Paris, Texas. That very weekend my two best friends and I watched in horror as Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald on live television. We were 13-year-old girls who could not make sense of what was happening in the world around us. When I heard about Martin Luther King's assassination five years later, I was an 18-year-old high school senior—a month away from graduation. One month following my graduation, Robert F. Kennedy was shot and killed in California during a campaign event and the war would rage in Vietnam for another seven years. History can sometimes be uncomfortable—especially for people who lived through trying times exemplified by the events of the 1960s.

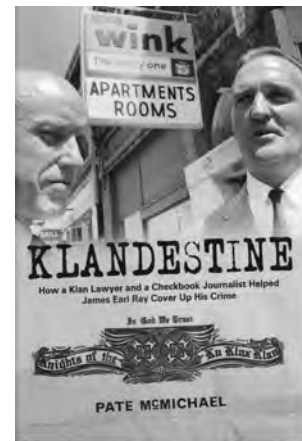
The town where I grew up consisted of majority white residents, one Hispanic family who ran the local Mexican food restaurant, no Jews, and an African American population that was totally segregated in a four to six block area located in the northwest quadrant. My high school did not integrate until 1967 and with help from our football coaches, the process went smoothly and without incident. Because of intense media coverage about unfolding events throughout the South, my community was informed about what was happening in Philadelphia, Mississippi, Selma, Alabama and Little Rock, Arkansas. Pate McMichael's foray into the deepest darkest hours of the southern experience is sobering and troubling and brings back vivid memories of the past. He portrays events fairly and factually without editorializing; however, this book contains an underlying tale of intrigue and mystery, murder and mayhem. McMichael skillfully portrays a network of seedy characters that include shyster lawyers, a journalist for hire, crooked politicians, cops that are bought and paid for, and murdering Klansmen.

With regard to Dr. King's killer, James Earl Ray, he was always somewhat of a mystery to me. I knew he was a drifter who eluded authorities until they caught up with him at Heathrow Airport 64 days after Dr. King's assassination.

After that, I did not care to follow his trial or its aftermath. I was too weary of war, death, and racial hatred. With more than a little trepidation, I picked up McMichael's book and was immediately drawn in by his sharp and lucid writing style. *Klandestine* delivers on many different levels and is rich with details about not only the King assassination but events leading up to that terrible day at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. McMichael's ability to bring all the characters in this drama to life is one of the reasons this book is so compelling and such a great read.

Chapters in *Klandestine* are short and staccato—each packed with a punch detailing various aspects of the events prior to, during, and after the King assassination. McMichael, with a steady hand, paints portraits of all the major players in a saga that does not spare unflattering details about their personalities. William Bradford Huie, a checkbook journalist who pays for Ray's story, is a man who inflates his own worth and manages to manipulate judges, lawyers, and James Earl Ray to suit his own interests. After the Associated Press announced that Ray had received a \$10,000 bonus from Huie, he offers no apologies with the following statement, "I don't particularly like paying somebody for his story, but often there is no other way of getting at the truth" (p. 35).

The first of Ray's attorneys, Arthur J. Hanes, "Klonse" for the United Klans of America, is a staunch segregationist and strong supporter of Alabama Governor, George Wallace. An opportunist and publicity hound, Hanes and his unlikely partner, Huie, pursue their own versions of the truth. Their story reads like a Hitchcock movie filled with Cuban gun runners, a mysterious



“blond” Latin man who operates in the shadows of Ray’s mind, and unconfirmed bullets from the bushes near the Lorraine Hotel; all informing Huie’s journalism and Hanes’s defense. McMichael leads the reader through Huie’s and Hanes’s web of conspiracies that are in many ways a product of the times. Many Americans were nervous about the future and distrusting of the government following the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Huie and Hanes, educated and successful men, were aware of the fact that many people felt there was some sinister plot at work and they both hoped to secure fame and fortune on the coattails of James Earl Ray.

Klandestine never disappoints. Even though the reader knows the final outcome, McMichael fleshes out little known details that come from years of investigative reporting. The chapters that deal with the 1963 church bombing that killed four young African American girls and the murder of Viola Liuzzo in 1965 are particularly difficult to read. These were the days when the Ku Klux Klan emerged as an anti-integration domestic terrorist group. Leaders of the organization had ties to the highest levels of state and local government and they could pay for defense by expensive lawyers such as Arthur J. Hanes. McMichael documents a very important and awful time in our nation’s history. His book answers many questions but with the eye of a skillful storyteller, he leaves us with a second generation conspiracy theory articulated by Arthur Hanes, Jr.: “In 1968 on the eve of trial, the State was absolutely confined to a theory that one man, James Earl Ray, . . . killed Dr. King. Ray told us the reason the rifle was in Memphis was that it was part of an operation to bring guns from Mississippi down to New Orleans to Cuban revolutionaries” (p. 270). To this day, some people still wonder if Ray acted alone.

--Dianne Dentice



***Courthouses of Georgia.* By George Justice. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2014. Pp xi-xiv + 343, glossary of architectural terms, note on the text, acknowledgements. \$34.95, hardcover)**

Courthouses of Georgia serves as a comprehensive pictorial guide to Georgia courthouses, which is carefully crafted to appeal to a wide audience. The book profiles one courthouse for



each of Georgia’s 159 counties, representing a diversity of architectural styles and time periods. Its thoughtful organization enhances its usability across audiences, from a ready reference source for historic preservationists to a striking visual tour for potential visitors.

Ross King, executive director of the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), provides the foreword. The book commemorates the centennial of the ACCG, with additional support from the University of Georgia Press and the Georgia Humanities Council.

In the introduction, Larry Walker shares stories from prominent Georgian civic leaders. These stories often invoke an awed and inspiring tone, but they also acknowledge past injustices. “The courthouses of the state of Georgia stand as monuments to the best and worst in all of us,” states Chuck Byrd, former lieutenant governor of Georgia (p. 6). Overall, Walker emphasizes the often overlooked role courthouses

play in everyone's lives, from birth until death.

The book identifies nine tourist regions of Georgia, which serve as the basis for the book's organization of courthouse profiles. The book moves through each region, starting from the north and moving downward from west to east. Grouping the counties by tourist regions is not only helpful for those planning a visit to a certain area, but it also allows readers to readily compare the different styles within a region to others.

Each courthouse profile consists of two pages: the left page provides a brief narrative and the right page depicts an image of the building. George Justice, a professor of history at the University of North Georgia, provides a concise narrative for each building. Justice focuses on describing the courthouse's most notable architectural features. He also notes when each county was founded and for whom it was named. A helpful sidebar lists essential information about each building, including its address, year completed, architectural style, designer, material, what year (if applicable) the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and its current use.

The profile is accompanied by a photograph taken by Greg Newington, a fine art and commercial photographer. His images capture the majesty of the courthouses that so many Georgians fondly recall in the book's narrative. The reverence voiced in the introduction is supported by Newington's gorgeous imagery. Newington also skillfully varies his shots, avoiding a repetitious series of similarly-angled images, yet still showcasing each courthouse in its best light.

The selection of courthouses to profile for each county was also thoughtfully done. "The choices were made in an effort to demonstrate the variety of architectural styles that sweep the state's county seats and to contrast the diversity of development throughout the history of those courthouses that remain standing," explains George Justice (p. 347). The book accomplishes its mission of reflecting a diversity of styles,

spanning across three centuries of Georgian history.

For readers unfamiliar with architectural vocabulary, a useful glossary is located in the back pages of the book. The glossary could have been enhanced to include definitions of the different architectural styles highlighted in the book, but Justice's clear and consistent descriptions throughout the text do not make such definitions a critical need.

Overall, *Courthouses of Georgia* is a worthy commemoration of the centennial of the ACCG. It not only depicts a strong showcase of beautiful courthouse structures, but it also emphasizes the impact that courthouses have on our daily lives. More than mere pictures—which given the quality would be a worthy volume in itself—the book offers introspective commentary that underscores and honors the role courthouses play in our everyday lives.

The Courthouses of Georgia would be a fine addition to any library and serves as an invaluable reference guide to scholars, citizens, and tourists alike.

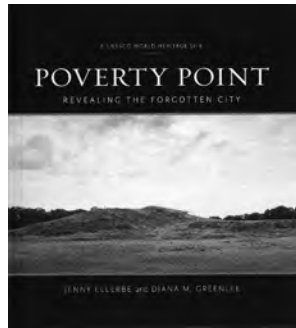
--Shannon Lausch



***Poverty Point.* By Jenny Ellerbe and Diana M. Greenlee. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Pp. ix + 121, notes, glossary, references, index. \$39.95, hardcover)**

The convergence of art, history, and science has been eloquently woven together in this book concerning one of the most unique and mysterious archaeological sites in America. Photographer Jenny Ellerbe and archaeologist Diana Greenlee take us on a tour of the 3500-year-old Poverty Point site in northeastern Louisiana. Ellerbe leads us on this journey

through both the lens of her camera and the curiosity of a Delta native who has long wondered about the monumental earthworks so near her home. Greenlee helps answer these wonderings by carefully explaining the science of archaeology and the history of the investigations at the site. This collaboration is best described by Ellerbe herself: “This book is structured much like our conversations—my wanderings and musings, her research and data. It is a blending of art and science that is meant to expand Poverty Point from just an archaeological site to be studied, to a city and culture to be experienced” (p. 3).



Poverty Point is located along Bayou Maçon near the town of Epps in Louisiana. The 345-acre site was purchased by the state of Louisiana in 1972 and is now managed as a state historic site by the Office of State Parks. The significance of the Poverty Point site and culture has resulted in its designation as both a National Historic Landmark and a National Monument. In 2014, the site was given the prestigious international recognition of being added to the World Heritage List by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), one of only twenty-two such sites in the United States. This book is an outgrowth of much of the authors' work to prepare the nomination of the site for the World Heritage List.

It is no surprise that there are earthen mounds at Poverty Point. Native Americans in the Mississippi Delta region of northeast Louisiana began building the earliest mounds in what is now the United States around 3800 BCE. Although mound building at Poverty Point did not begin until 1700 BCE, the sheer size and complexity of the raised mounds sets the site apart from anything that came before or after. The site contains six mounds and a se-

ries of semi-circular raised ridges that span nearly six miles in length. The ridges supported the homes of a large population in an era prior to development of agriculture, something archeologists long thought not to be possible for hunter-gatherer communities. Poverty Point stood as America's first city for six-hundred years, trading for resources that came from throughout the Mississippi Valley and much of the eastern United States. Exquisite tools and decorative objects were made at Poverty Point, but perhaps most famous are the baked clay balls, known as Poverty Point Objects, that were used in earth-oven cooking.

Sometime around 1100 BCE, the people of Poverty Point moved away and the site fell silent. Exactly why the site was abandoned is still unclear. Ellerbe captures this mystery brilliantly with her vivid descriptions:

I walk through acres of dry, cut grass that rests like tufts of hay on the soft ground. All is beige and dormant. From the empty expanse of ocher, a dozen small birds rise before me, as if they were born of the brownness and released at the sound of my footsteps. I walk on, and it happens again and again. From nothing, from the grass . . . flocks of birds. And so the Poverty Point people appear before me at times, when I least expect them, when I am walking their city, when they rise from seemingly nowhere. (p. 31)

Ellerbe breathes life into this ancient place in a way that no scientific report could ever manage and in the process allows the lay-reader a glimpse into the past that is difficult to accomplish with the typical arcane literature of archeology. When ascending the 72-foot-tall Mound A, Ellerbe again ponders the deeper questions of her journey:

Once on the summit I wonder who would have been allowed up here in ancient times. Everyone? Only the elite? And what would they think of me now as I try to find them, try to envision their city stretched below me? I mentally cut down

the trees in the plaza, build houses on the ridges, replace the barrel circles with wooden posts and add people, hundreds of them, maybe thousands. I sniff the air for smoke and fish scales and listen for the thud of celts pounding against wood. In brief moments it comes to life, loud and bustling, shining and clear and full, before it slips though my imagination and reality returns. (pp. 53-54)

The book is unlike any other I have come across and is a delight to read. Ellerbe's photographs provide us with amazing views of the Poverty Point landscape, but her inquisitive descriptions paint mental views that give us even more insight into the mystery of an ancient culture. Greenlee balances these questions by providing as many answers as possible all the while keeping the discussion entertaining and informative. Together they have achieved a successful union between art and science. Hopefully, we will see more works of this kind in the future.

--Glen Akridge



***Katrina: After the Flood.* By Gary Rivlin. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015. Pp. xiii-xvi + 412, author's note, epilogue, acknowledgements, notes on sources, index. \$27.00, hardcover)**

Combining the tenacity of a political scientist seeking the "big picture" with an anthropologist's love of culture, Gary Rivlin delivers a sophisticated yet readable narrative about the people that made a difference in post-Katrina New Orleans, one that will resonate with readers inside and outside of academia.

Some of Rivlin's change makers are public figures such as New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin, Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco, and

Arkansan James Lee Witt, the Beltway-savvy administrator brought in by Governor Blanco to help the state find federal relief funds. Others are probably unrecognizable outside the Crescent City. Alden McDonald, President of Liberty Bank, was one such obscure figure whom Rivlin credits as a change agent par excellence. McDonald scrambled in the days after Katrina to get his New Orleans East bank online with its interbank network so that customers could withdraw funds from ATMs. He succeeded on September 9, 2005, and from that day forward, his reputation as the George Bailey of post-Katrina New Orleans was well earned. McDonald upped the amount customers could withdraw from ATMs, picturing them displaced, stranded and desperately needing cash. He forgave loan payments for four months and later restructured loans so that delinquent customers could pay as little as \$10 or \$20 per month to avoid default.

In Lakeview, a community in central New Orleans, Connie Uddo's family was among the first to move back to the flooded neighborhood. Disgusted at the slow pace of the recovery, Uddo decided to take matters into her hands, leading the effort to clean up her corner of Lakeview and freely offering assistance to other families coming back to the neighborhood. Shedding her usual political apathy, she became a fully engaged community activist, a role model for others. Her home was designated a



Beacon of Hope, a place where people returning to Lakeview from evacuation could find the resources to get back on their feet—a working phone, a fax machine, running water and advice on where to find volunteers willing to repair damaged homes. Uddo selflessly merged her project with Freddy Yoder's block-by-block

campaign and Will Hood's St. Paul's Homecoming Center. Due to efforts of people like Uddo, Rivlin gives Lakeview credit as a place that was maximally self-sufficient, not waiting for or being dependent on the federal government for help.

A crucial moment in the recovery occurred when Kathleen Blanco held back Louisiana's oil lease revenue from the federal government to leverage more aid to Louisianans who had lost homes in the storm. This action got the Bush Administration's attention, and Louisiana homeowners received \$4.2 billion in federal aid. This money together with funds appropriated by Congress gave stressed out mortgage holders a fighting chance at something resembling a full recovery.

There are fewer such heroics as the narrative proceeds. Rivlin leaves the firm impression that the recovery is incomplete, a work in progress that began to stall in 2008. Governor Blanco's program to entice residents to return to New Orleans, called the Road Home, ran into administrative problems, sending the Governor into retirement. Then, some of the early change makers, who had labored so admirably after the flood, became burned out as they discovered there was so much more to do and shrinking supplies of money for their efforts as donors began to exhibit "Katrina fatigue." Malik Rahim, who worked tirelessly for the Common Ground Relief Collective coordinating a sea of out of towners streaming in to help rebuild Lower Ninth, was exhausted and could not push ahead any longer. Mayor Nagin, similarly, grew tired and less efficient as the years passed. Though praised for being the steady hand on the ship in the months after Katrina, he was far less productive in shaping a vision for his city's future and following it through to fruition. As his political support eroded, he was perceived differently. His early heroics now looked more like self-interest than altruism. Former colleagues spoke to prosecutors, who learned that Nagin had directed millions in city contracts to a home restoration company that

had assisted the mayor's family with a lucrative countertop installation business. Ray Nagin now resides in a Texas prison, the first mayor in the Crescent City's corrupt history to be convicted and jailed on corruption charges for crimes committed while in office.

Rivlin's superb storytelling does not ignore the sensitive issues of race and class that have divided New Orleans since the Civil War. In fact, such issues are not far from the drama that unfolds on every page. He notes that the New Orleans Business Council, which famously huddled in Dallas thirteen days after Katrina, essentially got the city of its post-Katrina dreams—a New Orleans that was smaller, taller ("build up, not out"), whiter and more efficient. As a result, affluent Uptown thrives while the much beleaguered Lower Ninth Ward is in a position to become, sadly, a greenspace to absorb the next big storm surge. Even with ten years to reflect on what this means for that community, this part of Rivlin's account is still very painful and difficult to read.

Perhaps the most sobering statistic quoted in this book comes from the United States Postal Service, which reports that only 32 percent of Lower Ninth residences that received mail before the storm now do so. At this pace the Lower Ninth Ward would not be fully repopulated until 2040, assuming that no more storms hit. Should this prediction turn out to be true, the 2005 storm may become a sociological event of multigenerational magnitude. Hurricane Katrina, the slow-motion disaster, could be remembered just as vividly for its slow-motion recovery.

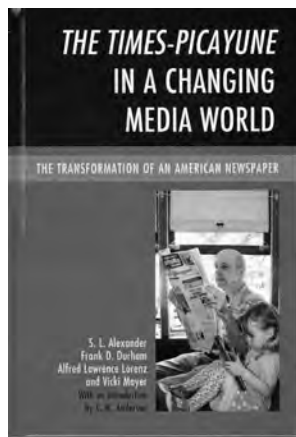
--Stan Weeber



"The Times-Picayune" in a Changing Media World: The Transformation of an American Newspaper.
By S. L. Alexander, Frank D.

Durham, Alfred Lawrence Lorenz, and Vicki Mayer. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014. Pp. 131, index. \$75, hardcover)

It reads more like an obituary than a history. *“The Times Picayune” in a Changing Media World* by S.L. Alexander, Frank Durham, Alfred Lawrence Lorenz and Vicki Meyer, covers the birth, life and demise of a great institution, New Orleans’s hometown paper, that survived wars, floods and pestilence, only to shrink and fade at the hands of corporate owners more interested in gutting the corpse than saving the patient. Alexander and Lorenz, professors at Loyola of New Orleans, Meyer of Tulane, and Durham, a New Orleanean presently stationed upriver at the University of Iowa, couple a rousing history with a content analysis of the current *Times Picayune* at the end in a nifty requiem for the once-great newspaper.



Technology was the paper’s lifeblood, and its downfall. *The Times Picayune* started at the dawn of the high-speed penny-press era in 1837 and found its footing with the telegraph in the Mexican War of the 1840s. It was one of the biggest newspapers in the south during the Civil War and a vehicle of moderation during reconstruction. It was professional and sometimes outrageous during World War I, World War II and the civil rights era, often giving coverage to minority voices and communities in a city that is a gumbo of races and cultures. Even as the internet age came along, the owners tried to keep up, and when the flood waters rose in 2005, heroic writers and editors kept the presses running and the emails flying, an effort which

won a Pulitzer.

But shortly thereafter, Advance Publications, a conglomerate with few ties to the city, bought the paper and, like so many other publications, began laying off staff. In 2012, in a further cost-cutting measure, the paper ceased daily publication, becoming a three-day-a-week operation, leaving New Orleans as one of the biggest cities in the nation without a daily newspaper.

The smaller *Advocate* of Baton Rouge filled the vacuum with a daily New Orleans edition, leaving *The Times Picayune* as at best a shadow. But the authors make it smell like a corpse. The last part of the book details the content of the new paper. It has more celebrities and features, and much less news than it did a decade earlier. In essence, it’s like throwing some dirt on the grave.

The authors tell a colorful story well and do a fine job coupling academic research with narrative history. The sad thing is that the history, while in a unique and colorful place, is not a unique situation. It’s a story playing out at newspapers throughout the nation.

--Jack Zibluk



***The Rising Water Trilogy.* By John Biguenet. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Pp. ix-xiv+215, forward, acknowledgements, notes, about the author. \$24.95, paper)**

John Biguenet isn’t shy when it comes to expressing his opinions and attitude towards the 2008 collapse of multiple levees surrounding New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina had passed by the sinking city. In his introduction to the trilogy, Biguenet explains how the three plays work together to present different facets

of suffering and coping during the flooding and in the months following. He doesn't leave his audience wondering whom he blames, saying blatantly, "When a country fails to maintain its infrastructure, when it ignores climate change, when it de-



professionalizes government service because of ideological contempt for governance itself, when it allows poverty to fester, when it encourages racism through coded speech, when it refuses to hold responsible for the consequences of their policies those leaders who devised them, then what happened in August 2005 is not about the place where it happened. It's about the people who let it happen. And because no one was held accountable, it will happen again. New Orleans is simply where the future arrived first" (p. 9). Biguenet sets the stage for a political commentary through his strongly worded introduction, but what he delivers is even more moving than the most political documentary.

In the first play of the series and the trilogy's most emotional, *Rising Water*, Biguenet writes lines that stab his audience with emotions ranging from anger to guilt. The scene is New Orleans on the night the levees failed. A married couple is sheltering in their attic, reminiscing about the past and worrying about their neighbors. Through their conversations, they, along with the audience, come to understand that New Orleans had been missed by the majority of Katrina and was now flooding due to a levee breach. Complementing the rising water, the metaphor of anchoring runs throughout this first play. The couple is anchored to the house metaphorically for its memories and their life together, as well as literally for their last chance of survival on its roof. During their conversa-

tions, which audiences are left to believe were the characters' last, Camille and Sugar make poignant remarks that seem directed toward audience members. For example, during a chat about ghosts, Camille asks, "You think the dead don't have a claim on us?" (p. 33). Questions like these pull at the audience members' hearts. As a reader or viewer, a person feels the responsibility Camille lays on the living. It is as though she speaks from the grave to remind the living that we have a responsibility to the dead to prevent a tragedy like New Orleans from happening again. Slowly, the couple realizes that they are lost as the sirens throughout the town begin to wail, indicating that the sirens are dying alongside nearly 1,500 people. This first play demands the reader to pause and take some time to reflect and breathe before moving on to the second in the trilogy, *Shotgun*.

Shotgun proves to be the weakest of the three plays. Biguenet continues his political commentary through a love story that crosses color lines. Though his content is valid and relative, his deliverance resembles a teenage drama played out under the eyes of an overbearing parent. Longer dialogue mingles with clichés and the worn out trope of parental disapproval of a child's dating choices. Within the love story, Biguenet reveals the insurance frauds, price inflations, school district chaos, and dangerous clean up processes that took place in the months following the wake of Katrina. Again, his opinions are not subtly hidden within the play, but projected openly throughout.

Biguenet concludes his trilogy by introducing hope for the future in *Mold*. Though there was tragedy in New Orleans, the characters in *Mold* find a way to move into their new future and leave the past, along with the mold, behind. The couple, Trey and Maria, experiences the insurance woes many faced after losing everything in the flood. The insurance adjuster and city volunteer introduce legislators and the political climate in the first post-Katrina year through their discussions. From their dialogue,

the audience realizes the depth of the betrayal and corruption that gripped New Orleans both pre- and post-Katrina. The characters also express concerns over the environmental damage left behind by the flood. As Maria highlights, the receding waters left behind “poisons—the pesticides, the gasoline, the mercury”—to saturate the ground and further destroy New Orleans (p. 211). This is just one example of how Biguenet brings to light details that outsiders had not before considered in the case of New Orleans.

His three plays work together to speak to both New Orleanians and outsiders about the tragedy of the levee breach after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Survivors of the flood can relate to Biguenet’s characters and their dilemmas, while outsiders can empathize with the characters and survivors in a way they hadn’t before. The political context associated with the levee breach—the failure of a government reaction and corruption on every level, including that of Home Depot and other private contractors—is presented through relatable, real characters in a way that acts as a call to action for the audience. Biguenet calls upon his audience to sympathize with all victims and survivors of the levee breach while asking the same audience to never let the government or any institution abuse citizens in this way again. His works, though cliché in *Shotgun*, significantly impact any reader and/or audience member.

--Leslie R. Malland



Celestial Navigator: Writing Poems with Randall Jarrell. By Heather Ross Miller. (Hammond, LA: Louisiana Literature Press, 2014. Pp. 66. \$14.95, paperback)

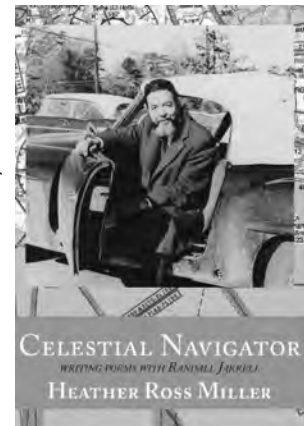
Books often teach via chapters of explana-

tion, using a few examples as illustration. Heather Ross Miller does the opposite in *Celestial Navigator: Writing Poems with Randall Jarrell*. She teaches using three chapters of poems with minimal explanation. In this, she pays homage to her own teacher, the poet Randall Jarrell, but also she reveals the kind of teacher and poet that she herself is now.

Miller provides her intent in her author’s note at the beginning of her book. “These are my attempt to show what a presence and energy he [Jarrell] brought to my own development as a writer at a young age, continuing as a student, then with my young family, and finally with inevitable losses on all sides,” Miller summarizes. The elements of this list parallel the three chapters of the book: chapter 1, “children, gods, and men,” which shows how a child experiences the world, be that child Miller, Jarrell, or the reader; chapter 2, “girls,” which reveals the speaker no longer a child but not yet a woman, with others in similar transition; and chapter 3, “losses,” of many things, including Jarrell, but overall the perspective that was before. Through such loss comes gain.

Throughout this collection, which operates as a sort of story, Miller shows what it takes to be a poet:

1) Poets must work with the truth. This does not mean that the poems themselves must be true, although they can be. It means poems must come from a place of truth. This can be a description so well constructed that we share in its sensation, such as the world of “Big Front Doorsteps,” in which we explore every sense and are even licked, or “Ghost Deer,” in which we share the impact of hitting a deer and the aftereffects. No matter the appeal to the senses, the poem must be grounded in a truth, a meaning,



so that the audience finds a significant connection. Miller recognizes how hard dealing with the truth can be in poems such as “Telling the Truth” and “Tears of Things.” War weaves through many of the poems. As difficult as the truth can be, we must not forget, as do the characters in “Infant Innocence.”

2) Poets must be true to others. This includes acting with insight, honesty, generosity, and kindness. There is no reason to squash someone else’s enthusiasm just because you can, Miller shows in “In the Dining Hall.” Likewise, just because you do not understand a poem does not give you the right to ridicule the poet, as Miller sketches in “Laurels.” If you direct that energy into working with the poem, you might appreciate it after all.

We look up to people in positions of authority such as poets and teachers. Miller shows this relationship cannot be taken lightly. Teachers are honest in their criticism. In “The Workshop,” when a poem is not working, you have to say so, but when it works, you sing its praises. Teachers help students learn to experiment. Jarrell’s challenge of using different colors and tools during composition is an exercise that Miller passes down in “Writing it Down.” Teachers encourage their students to take risks. “Stick out your finger, / . . . burn with your name” (p. 50), Miller describes in “Post Script 2.” Teachers empower their students by listening to them and helping them realize the value in their own experiences. “He in turn told them to claim these things, / hold on for dear life, bravely pull them out of the air,” she writes in “Teaching” (p. 24). Teachers work to draw out the voice of each student, as Jarrell does for the speaker in “Family Bibles.” In “But Most of the Time,” she recalls “how he’d raided and praised my own / lost treasures of deep and buried things, / those things down next to the bone” (p. 26).

Miller acknowledges that even the best of us will fall short sometimes. This comes clear in “The Woe That Is In Marriage,” in which the speaker’s marriage during college disappoints

her teacher, as he holds the then-common assumption that “once a girl married, her life was over, / her talents gone to the man, the infants, / her poems left her forever, / dead and gone” (p. 36).

3) And so lastly, but most importantly, poets must be true to themselves. Miller redefines the Renaissance when the speaker feels her unborn daughter kick in “Two Girls in a Library.” She knows that a woman’s literary life does not end with marriage and children, and her teacher glimpses this, too, when he spies all the books in her house in “Charms.” In “A Clay Jar,” Miller emphasizes how you must be in touch with yourself. In “Post Script 1,” the speaker and her teacher urge us to “Dig out the rough geography of your hearts. / Find things to say, / things supremely good” (p. 46).

The first poem in Miller’s collection ends with the line “so the children can eat” (p. 1), and the final poem ends with the line “the children must eat” (p. 66). Thus, Miller guides us full circle. We cannot forget the children we all were. We cannot forget the children coming. What does a poet do? What does a teacher do? Miller reveals the ideal of these being one and the same.

--Angie Macri



***Night Train.* By Gordon Osing. (New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2015. Pp. vii + 53. \$12, paperback.)**

Night Train, by Gordon Osing, is a fine collection of long-lined, well-wrought, and deeply discerning letters to a great number of musicians, poets, and artists who inhabit his collective consciousness. It begins with Berryman and ends with Basho, shifting between death and life. The result is a joyous wisdom that spreads across the expanse of this tiny book: “. . . the child laughs tossed in the air, no

matter / hands are waiting below” (p. 6). Laughter is a way of seeing the world, “what all language is.” (p.7). Osing could easily be described as a narrative poet, but it’s a storyline more in the tradition of Miles Davis, veering off path before plowing back into the minutiae of his obsessions with language and philosophy. On the other hand, he knows how to let a story unfold. “The Lake Patrol” is a quiet, chilling meditation on the authorities who watch our neighborhoods, how they simultaneously comfort and haunt us within our daily lives. At the core of this collection is a minor epic, “Gamblers: An Essay,” which guides us into a Dante-esque rendering of the world of Tunica, Mississippi and the inhabitants of the casinos: begging to Jesus, pouring out of tour buses, dancing in only to walk out in abject silence, and the occasional legendary big win. Money is God, and the faithful never lose faith, even when they cannot pay the rent. Tunica speaks the language of deception and hope in the same breath or, as Osing calls it, “celestial welfare” (p.21).

Perhaps the defining character of this collection lies within its moments of smoldering anger, whether they be directed toward Rush Limbaugh or Jerry Lee Lewis. Limbaugh is easy to despise because he is a clown, but “The Killer” is more nuanced because he possessed a kind of depraved genius which imploded over time.

Famous as Beethoven
in Berlin you are, where good and evil
run everything. (p. 4)

If there is any joy to be found in Osing’s anger (and there is), one senses a desire on the poet’s part to keep people honest. Osing explores the horrible relationships of Lewis with the women in his life, as well as his over-inflated ego: a music man who failed to understand music in any meaningful way.

An ideology of Blues is in the house, and
you can’t love what you cannot believe, or
believe what you can’t love, and that means
women. (p.5)

One of my favorite poets, the late Larry Levis

was far more confessional than Osing but just as beautifully complicated. In one of his final poems, Levis wrote about his relationship with trees, an overwhelming expression of solitude and mindfulness. In many ways, these poems feel as if Osing is saying farewell to so many who have influenced him (or at least occupied space in his mind), while also embracing them as the flawed, often failed, human beings they were. As he writes in “Letter to Oblivion”: “I belonged to myself in the beginning / and didn’t know it, so I absorbed them . . .” (p.45).

Clearly, Osing has struggled with, and suffered through, the religious extremism of Western culture. It would be impossible to pin him down to any religious affiliation despite the fact that religion consumes him. He is a vigilant spiritualist, intolerant of the petty mechanisms of religion, but clearly on the lookout for whatever is good, whatever is joyous. Osing’s final meditation on Basho is a fine example of self-reflection without sentimentality or melancholy. It opens with fourteen lyrical lines that approximate a sonnet before launching into the long, almost prose-like stanzas that he typically favors. It is an effortless shift between genres, and that is one of Osing’s great strengths: he understand his tools.

As a young professor, Osing spent time in Asia, writing, studying, and exploring a culture which continues to baffle most Americans. In choosing a Japanese poet to converse with, Osing is led deep down into his roots, where he discovers the Shinto shrines within the objects and locations of his own youth. None of us are entirely comfortable with our ancestry, but Shinto attempts to acknowledge it at the deepest levels and Osing desires that universal journey. In an era of



Ancestry.com, Osing is an old spirit rendered new: “I began this as a game but soon enough / it turned into something I had to live for” (p.53).

--Marck L. Beggs



***In the Creole Twilight: Poems and Songs from Louisiana Folklore.* By Joshua Clegg Caffery. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Pp. xi + 63, notes. \$22.50, hardcover)**

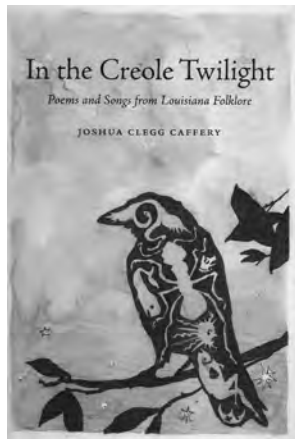
Joshua Clegg Caffery, a folklorist by training, is fascinated by the way that ancient stories and song forms persist into the present. Speaking in 2014 at the Library of Congress, Caffery cited J. R. R. Tolkien’s comment that *Beowulf* resounds in English consciousness as “a memory over the hills, an echo of an echo” (Library of Congress, “Traditional Music of Coastal Louisiana: 1934 Lomax Recordings,” YouTube 9 May 2014) and suggested that Louisiana folklore reverberates in similar fashion: “As there are no hills in South Louisiana, we might say memories over the marshes or faint lights in the swamp” (“Traditional Music”).

Caffery, who grew up on Bayou Têche near Franklin, Louisiana, is also a musician—a founder of The Red Stick Ramblers and long-time member of Feufollet—for whom the close ties between song and lyric poetry are para-

mount. His first book, *Traditional Music in Coastal Louisiana*, traces Alan and John Lomax’s 1934 collection trip into the Louisiana countryside, building on their field recordings of folksongs and folklore. In homage to the Lomaxes, Caffery called for a more authentic appropriation of old forms—“antiquarian in a good way” (“Traditional Music”)—rather than overly glib borrowings such as the sprinklings of fiddle and French that sometimes pass for Louisiana culture. Now his recently published book of original poetry, *In the Creole Twilight*, appears to fulfill his own directive by reworking vintage material with awareness and appreciation of its roots. Comparable use of Arkansas folklore exists in poet Greg Brownderville’s first book, *Deep Down in the Delta*, although Brownderville’s renderings of Woodruff County lore are more prose-based, less purely lyrical than Caffery’s.

In the Creole Twilight abounds with traditional forms, from villanelle to pastourelle, from concrete poem to a list poem made of local proverbs. Many of the poems are ballads, loosely speaking: while they lack the intricate stanzaic pattern of literary ballads in the strictest sense, they have strong narrative elements, regular stanzas, and frequent refrains. Their content is a juicy mélange of love, murder, and revenge, the stuff of fairy tales cast in cypress-filtered light. Ghosts and omens, legends and enchantments recur, the dire matter unfurling with relish through thumping rhyme and wheeling refrains. Throughout the collection the poet plays the role of fiddler-bard, who summons listeners—

Come all you fine young children,
Those who are wise and willing to hear.
Those who are brave will all gather near,
And all are advised now to listen.
“The Feufollet of Irish Bend” (1–4)
—entertains them, and sends them on their way:
The fiddler arrives and you form the ring.
Someone has to start the song,
And that is why you sing.



“The Poet Begg for Charity” (21–23)

The book is enjoyable as both scholarship and entertainment, and even in an overall strong collection certain poems shine. “Sunfish and Loom,” a dialogic poem based on shapeshifting, turns local images into a mercurial, tender chase. “The Loup-Garou” takes a staple of Louisiana ghost lore and gives it a psychological spin—suggesting that monsters are but phantoms of our terrible estrangements. “A Letter to Pierre Grouillet,” “The Ring and the Cormorant,” and “Claude Martin’s Last Requests” are entrancing and accomplished renditions of old tales. Many settings tease at the changes and continuities from olden times to new, with such contemporary twists as gender reversals; modern idiom such as “store-bought boots” (“Sunfish and Loom,” 9) and “good old boy” (“Captain Russel,” 28); and artifacts of our day from phones to toy dinosaurs.

An informative notes section illuminates the poems’ origins and broader literary context, including a “nod to George Herbert” and classical parallels. Sometimes Caffery relates his creative process: “I wrote this poem one morning after having spent the previous evening reading to my daughter from Dr. Seuss.” His conversational, quietly humorous tone is more like a songwriter’s patter than academic annotation.

The notes affirm the folksongs’ endurance and prevalence as well as their complex lineage. Beyond the familiar distinction in south Louisiana cultures between Cajun or Acadian (France–Nova Scotia–Louisiana) and Creole (direct-from-France French, Spanish, Indian, and African), Caffery’s work lifts up less-recognized strands, including Portuguese, Alsatian, Irish, English, and Haitian.

Transferring oral lyrics to the page presents challenges. Poets must establish meter, place rhyme and refrain correctly, and echo the original diction and syntax without being singsong or stilted. Ideally, they keep the delights of vocal song—repetition and surprise, the pleasure of the beat and the pleasure of deviation—

while launching and sustaining subtler themes. This is a tall order, and Caffery does not always manage it to perfection. For example, in “Giantess Bride,” “Home from the Forest,” “The Crow and the Swallow,” and “The Shepherdess Queen,” the meter lurches from iambs to anapests, tetrameter to trimeter to pentameter, in ways unrelated to the sense of the lines. Metrical fillers, such as “you see” (“The Crow and the Swallow,” 5) and “both great and small” (“Home from the Forest,” 43), detract from the finesse of the rhyme or are simply incorrect, as in “Captain Russel has a field / filled with bulgur wheat” (“Captain Russel,” 22)—for “bulgur,” despite its satisfying rhythm, does not pertain to wheat in the field. More enjambment, along the lines of “A Paper of Pins” or “I Sent a Swallow First,” would have relieved the thud of mostly end-stopped lines; in “Wooden Leg” and “Blackbird’s Heart,” unnecessary commas further clip the line endings. Such issues might go unnoticed in sung lyrics but are jarring on the printed page.

Still, these are minor distractions, and the book succeeds overwhelmingly in several important ways: It manifests the vigor and ongoing relevance of the folk tradition. It extends the life of many old tales and songs, not only preserving them and making them more widely available but doing so in an attractive hardbound volume with the added assets of pen-and-ink drawings by the author and cover art by his wife, Claire Caffery. Any slight flaws are integral to its art, like calluses squeaking on strings or distresses in the grain of a cypress armoire—proof, in the end, that *In the Creole Twilight* is the real thing.

--Hope Coulter



***Hot Music, Ragmentation, and the Bluing of American Literature.* By Steven C. Tracy. (Tuscaloosa: Uni-**

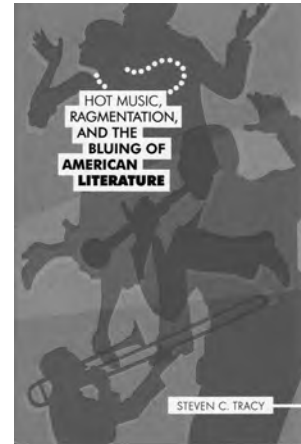
versity of Alabama Press, 2015. Pp. ix-xvii + 537, acknowledgments, introduction, index, appendices, works cited. \$65, hardcover)

Steven Tracy is a talented singer and harmonica player who continues to make contributions to Cincinnati's blues community. He also is a major scholar who writes prolifically on a range of topics but specializes in African-American studies in general and on blues music in particular. His new book merges well over three decades of his participation in blues scenes and literary study in a major contribution to blues and literary scholarship. This hefty volume articulates relationships between blues music and literary expression from the late 1890s into the 1930s. Additional volumes are currently in the works that continue the story of this vibrant legacy. When completed, Tracy's planned trilogy of scholarship will serve as required reading for anyone interested in relationships between African-American musical expression and 20th century American culture. This first contribution is a landmark volume in this ambitious project.

Tracy's encyclopedic knowledge of blues music and blues artists is matched by deep insights into relevant writers who were engaged with blues aesthetics and mores. Initial chapters that link the early history of blues with modernism yield intriguing insights on virtually every page. His feel for the music and his engaging writing style masterfully complement each other in a virtuoso performance. In this respect, he enacts what Tracy terms the "bluing" of literature. A central idea, here, is that blues performance—blues cultural expression, style, and aesthetics—has had a major influence on writing. By emphasizing the feel of blues in addition to its message, Tracy offers his readers an experience of this bluing and ragmentation that he backs up with major scholarship.

Tracy articulates "bluing" as imbuing the spirit of the era with an awareness of the chal-

lenges and hardships of the time. It's central to the blues ethos of realistic endurance in the face of depressing circumstances. The author and musician shows how this bluing is expressed in ironic blues phrases like "laughing to keep from crying" and in the optimism of the



lyrical motif "the sun's gonna shine in my backdoor, someday." He explores how this emphasis on facing the cold realities of life is evident in a range of cultural expression, from blues lyrics to poetry, short stories, novels, and dramatic works.

But, bluing isn't the only feature of the music's influence on literature. Tracy also writes of "ragmentation" as a stylistic device that disrupts the conventional rules of musical composition and performance. It's a system of rules that often are used for breaking the rules. We hear it in ragtime, blues, jazz, gospel, and other musical genres, and Tracy demonstrates how ragmentation is evident in literature. More importantly, he delves into the depths of this process to demonstrate how style and content interanimate each other in music as well as in writing. Tracy's own scholarship sparkles with this aesthetic value. The examples are too numerous to cite, but Tracy's understanding of the implications of stylistic changes is evident in passages such as this one that portrays Langston Hughes' encounter with blues musicians: "The bulk of the blues singers he encountered in Harlem and Chicago, and in Montmartre, were females as loquacious, bodacious, and hellacious at times as they are deceived, bereaved, and grieved at others. They, too, are America—diverse, and 'somewhat' free" (327). These types of witty, even hip, phrases show up throughout Tracy's writing. They're fun to read, and Tracy's

style never feels contrived: it would be difficult to accuse him of posturing. Rather, his own use of bluing and ragmentation contributes to the insights he offers. It's a scholar's response to the idea that if you have to ask "What is jazz?" then you're never really going to know. And it works.

After he deduces relevant themes of bluing and ragmentation in the music, itself, Tracy shifts his focus to literary expression. He looks at writers in relation to historical eras and specific locations, including Chicago, Washington DC, Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York City, and into European cities. By blending scholarship on literary scenes and their representative movements with specific literary genres, Tracy explores a range of writers. The expansive focus is too complex to explore fully in a review, but his treatment of works by W.E.B. DuBois, Howard Odum, John Jacob Niles, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Ezra Pound, James Weldon Johnson, and even Walt Whitman are especially compelling. The book ends with a discussion of the early drama of the Harlem Renaissance—termed the *New Negro Renaissance*—and the early 20th century drama. The last chapter is titled "Enter Stage Left," and it foreshadows important themes that Tracy will undoubtedly explore as he writes of 1930s drama in his next volume. The related ideas of bluing and ragmentation, in this discussion, have the potential for stimulating new scholarship on the importance of American dramatic works of the 20th century, and Tracy provides a firm basis for recognizing the importance of African-American cultural expression within the larger milieu of American theater—notably American musical theater.

Another important element of the book is in Tracy's integration of "popular blues" into the overall scholarship on blues music. To his credit, he avoids tossing his readers into the thorny patch that entangles us when we explore questions of authenticity. Rather, he rightfully asserts that we need to look at the wide scope of blues music and blend the folk blues with the popular blues traditions. This approach is im-

portant and resonant with scholarship that emphasizes the importance of vaudeville in the origins of blues. The glaring omission, however, is the sketchy treatment of pre-blues music that is generally termed "reels" or "reals." Scholarship that looks at the importance of African-American string band music and the careers of black songsters, for example, suggests a deeper and wider history to blues music. Tracy also provides only limited discussion of Piedmont blues traditions. These types of omissions not only create too many rigid dichotomies within the history of blues music but they also reinforce the implicit racial segregation that underlies assumptions about musical history. The mutual influences between blues and early country music within this history, for example, would add to Tracy's scholarship. In particular, there's an implicit origin myth of "blues from the Delta" that seems to underlie assumptions that support the dichotomy between folk and popular blues. The symbolism inherent in this idea is relevant to wider themes that Tracy discusses, and perhaps its resonance will emerge in subsequent volumes. I offer this critique not so much as a scholarly quibble. Rather, it's an issue that I'm sure that Tracy has encountered, and I'll be interested in reading the author's insights into bluing and ragmentation in the early country music of the 1930s and 40s.

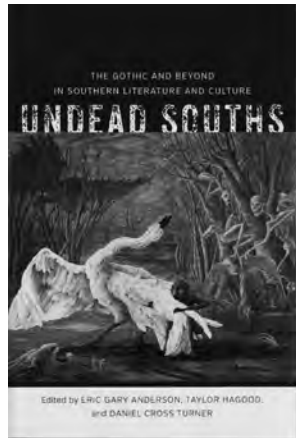
--Gregory Hansen



***Undead Souths.* Edited by Eric Gary Anderson, Taylor Hagood, and Daniel Cross Turner. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Pp. + 260, afterword, works cited, contributors, index. \$42.50, hardcover)**

Undead Souths seeks to expand and rede-

fine the genre of the Southern Gothic. The collection is ambitious in its scope, focusing on canonical writers such as Poe, Faulkner, and Cormac McCarthy, as well as including popular culture works such as *The Walking Dead*. The central motif that ties the essays together is the trope of the undead, most often imagined as a zombie.



The collection attempts to redefine the Southern Gothic within a postmodern and post-structural discourse. The Southern Gothic as a genre and concept is stripped of its monolithic and limiting definition and emerges as southern gothics. The inclusion of Native American and Caribbean texts and ideas as influences on southern gothic effectively expands the genre as one influenced by sources other than the Civil War, slavery, and rotting plantations.

While post-Romero zombies haunt our popular culture landscape today, this collection of essays takes us back to the origin of the zombie in the American imagination, which is the zombie of Caribbean culture. Discussing the undead in Faulkner's fictional world, Melanie Benson Taylor poses the question "what happens to a culture locked in obstinate, perpetual denial? Perhaps things like zombies happen" (p.89). While many of the essays focus specifically on the undead as a figure haunting the American South, others see a wider implication.

The gothic south haunts the American imagination as fears and desires become projected onto a geographical region with a troubled and troubling past. As Elsa Charley states in her examination of Faulkner's and Caldwell's short stories: "There is something about the South that makes it the perfect background for stories of specters, haunted mansions, and hid-

den secrets. An unfathomable region of the mind, it is haunted by the innumerable ghosts of its past" (p. 112). To confront the gothic south is to confront the buried secrets, dark thoughts and deeds, and decay of the American past. Boundaries between North and South, master and slave, and hegemony and otherness are transgressed in southern gothic.

The collection juxtaposes Romantic representations of the South in literature and film with the grotesque and unruly gothic representations. As Amy Clukey points out, while mainstream Hollywood was turning out paeans to the Lost Cause such as *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and *Jezebel* (1938), low-budget Hollywood horror films such as *White Zombie* (1931) and *The Devil's Daughter* (1934) were painting a very different image of plantation life. Rather than simply looking back to pre-Civil War plantations, these films and others deal with the persistence of plantation life in locations such as Haiti. Clukey argues that "if romance idealizes the white man's burden to take up the civilizing mission, then horror suggests that the white man's own claims to civilization are tentative at best" (p.134). In true gothic tradition, these films make it clear that the horrors of the past are not past at all.

Zombies taunt and devour the living just as the past does. However, they are unable to communicate with us. The secrets of the past, life, death, and resurrection that they possess remain hidden in their blank eyes and meaningless actions. Because they are both too present and too absent they terrify the living. In a striking essay about southern gothic representations of Emmett Till, Brian Norman argues that fictional attempts to portray an undead Till largely fail because we want answers from him that he cannot give us. Likewise, in Elizabeth Bradford Frye's and Colman Hutchinson's examination of Civil War battlefield photography, both past and present, the images do not provide us with answers, but merely pose further questions: "Ultimately, the images raise the question, what remains of the war today?" (p. 41).

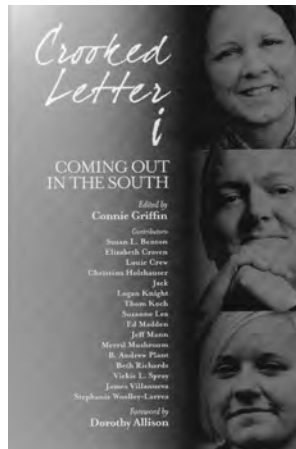
Undead Souths eloquently expands the notion of southern gothic as a genre. The collection will be of interest to readers engaged in gender studies, African-American studies, and posthuman studies, among others. It is a significant contribution, adding to our understanding of the subversive power of the gothic to trouble and haunt us.

--Cyndy Hendershot



***Crooked Letter i: Coming Out in the South.* Edited by Connie Griffin. (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2015. Pp.207. \$25.95, paper)**

Crooked Letter i is an uncompromisingly beautiful amalgam of stories that exemplify strength, love, and troubled identifications within the Southern and often rural perspective on the coming out process. I say process because it is exactly that. Laying bare the contents of one's soul to family members and friends is only the first step. In her introduction, Connie Griffin calls the experience a "complex, kaleidoscope of disruptively confusing feelings revealing a gradual, often reluctant realization of one's difference" (p. 13). It is an ever-evolving discourse between heteronormative social expectations and personal fulfilment. *Crooked Letter i* does a brilliant job of exemplifying this process by presenting a cross-section of gay, lesbian, and transgender Southerners from all age ranges and



localities. The inspiring stories collected here each have their own beauty, but seem to speak with an almost univocal message: we are here, we are important, and we deserve to be happy.

The book's foreword, so eloquently delivered by Dorothy Allison, reminds us that even the "disreputable poor," the "rednecks with bad attitudes" (p. 9), have a story to tell and that story is important. Her two pages in this book harken back to her collection of stories entitled *Trash* (1988), which changed the face of LBGTQIA writing for all those that would follow it. For me personally, when I read "River of Names" I was appalled, delighted, and comforted that maybe my own story could be told, maybe I had a voice after all. That realization, I believe, is what each author demonstrates in this anthology of voices. Each one tells someone in their life "something so private it resonates from the very core of one's sense of self" (p. 13).

Logan Knight's "Late News," is a wondrous exposition on what it is like to quietly assimilate into dominant heterosexual culture, and the potentially disastrous effects of doing so, and becomes a manifesto for anyone who might find themselves stifled by the society in which they live. It can be easy to "fall in love with the chance for a normal life" (p. 37) but that life can be wrought with exhaustion and guilt. Beth Richards, in "The Third Time" reminds us that no matter how much we plead with our biology, it won't change, and that for LBGTQIA youth, puberty can come with voicelessness and avoidance tactics. She eloquently states, "If puberty is hell for straight kids, it's something like hell with double-crooked road maps for those who aren't" (p. 65). "Love and Death and Coming Out," by B. Andrew Plant, offers the reader a beautiful rendition of what it means to come out in slow stages, reminds us that coping mechanisms are okay, and exemplifies that not relating to one's own gender is often a large part of the stress in coming out. Sometimes you must own your difference and make it work for you, as he says: "I didn't just act different, I didn't

just feel different, I was different” (p. 115). Rejection within the gender comes again in Susan Benton’s “The Other Side of the Net,” encapsulated in a narrative of sexual awakening and self-discovery, never leaving out that the Southern tendency to “protect family skeletons, even if we might be curiously proud of them” (p. 140), can create a confusing and complicated coming out. Stephanie Woolley-Larrea in her “Straight as Florida’s Turnpike” revamps the coming out process to include that of her daughter revealing herself to be straight to her two Lesbian mothers. She reminds us of the sacrifices we make in life and in trying to find our identities, trying on “personalities the way Barbie goes through outfits” (p. 151).

As a gay man myself I have come to recognize the value and importance in the coming out process, especially when it is complicated by rural or Southern spaces. We are different but certainly not deficient. So, let’s “shatter the silence within which so many live” (p. 15). Give me the anarchists, the reformers, the freaks, the outsiders, and the “crooked ones,” and I will show you a group of people that may not fit into the limiting social atmosphere they live in but whose differences cast a beautiful light onto the entirety of their surroundings. Shine on you beautiful miscreants!

--Justin Cook



New Perspectives on Language Variety in the South: Historical and Contemporary Approaches. Edited by Michael D. Picone and Catherine Evans Davies. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015. Pp. v-vix + 769, contributors, index. \$59.95, cloth)

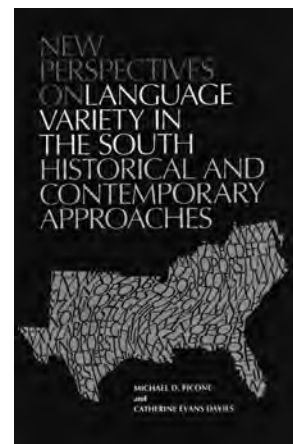
This third installment of the Language Va-

riety in the South (LAVIS) series brings together essays devoted to the examination of linguistic diversity of the South, updating and broadening the work of the earlier volumes. The present volume includes forty-three essays in addition to an introduction (giving history of the LAVIS projects and contents of the previous volumes) and conclusion. One will recognize some familiar names, including Guy Bailey, Connie Eble, Michael Montgomery, Cynthia Bernstein, Thomas Nunnally, Robin Sabino, and Walt Wolfram, just to name a few.

With such an extensive and comprehensive volume, it is difficult to give an effective and useful review. Its scope is broader than that of the two previous volumes, the first focusing on “perspectives in Black and White” and the second which “revisited,” expanded, and updated the first. This new volume goes even further—and although any college or university library would do well to have all three, if it had to settle for only one, this would be the volume to have.

In such limited space, one can do little more than give a sense of the scope of such a collection. Of the volume’s two main divisions, Part I, “Historical Approaches,” begins with a section on “Indigenous Languages,” providing an introduction on the Native American languages mainly in the Southeast and more narrowly focused essays on the languages of Caddo, Ofo, Timuca, and the link between Cusabo and Taino. Not surprisingly, the introductory essay by Pamela Munro is the most accessible to the non-specialist and provides enough information to supply a context for the more specific essays, making them more approachable.

The second section, “Earlier Englishes of



the South,” and the one of most interest to this reader, provides five essays which explore the early sources/influences of the South’s English. Michael Montgomery begins by arguing that the British settlers’ English of the eighteenth century, particularly the latter half was the variety that really took hold in the South. Other essays further examine these early Englishes by mining a variety of sources including plantation records, song lyrics, regional grammars, and a previously neglected collection of Americanisms. Those who like tables and charts will be pleased with the article on Southern American English grammar by Jan Tillery.

“The African Diaspora” deals largely with early African American dialects. The essay by Laura Wright on early slave language and creole will interest the historically minded, with Gerald Van Herk’s “Regional Variation in Nineteenth-Century African American English,” along with Thomas Klein’s on Gullah-Geechee, appealing to the more linguistically inclined.

“Earlier French of the Gulf South” contains two essays: a general but detailed one, “French Dialects of Louisiana: A Revised Typology”; and Michael D. Picone and Connie Eble’s sharply focused treatment of the transition from French to English as evidenced in the documents of the Prudhomme family of Louisiana. As good as these essays are, one cannot help but wish for another entry to provide a fuller picture.

Part II deals mainly with a contemporary cross-section of southern speech. It begins with a general section, “Across the South,” which provides three readable essays that update the DARE project, and ends with an essay by Guy Bailey predicting the future of southern English based on current and expected demographic population changes.

“English in the Contemporary South” takes up much of the remainder of the volume and is subdivided into “Persistence and Change” (technically heavy); “Discourse Approaches” (three essays) dealing with storytelling, journalism, and the use of “ain’t” in novels and movies; “African American Language Issues” (three es-

says); “Black and White Speech and the Complexities of Relationship,” (five essays); and “Language and Identity” (three essays.) The last three sections could make up a slim volume of their own. The standouts are Salikoko Mufwene’s “Race, Racism, and the Study of Language Evolution in the America,” Robert Bayley and Ceil Lucas’ offering on Louisiana ASL, and Cynthia Bernstein’s unexpected and fascinating account of Southern Jewish English. However, the driest and most technical essays also lurk in these sections.

After that, the volume sweeps up outlying matters with comparatively brief sections on “Louisiana French” and “Latino Language Issues,” the latter a subject which will most likely be given more attention in the next volume with the recent waves of immigrants from south of the border. Essays here study bilingualism and ask if “Spanglish” is a proper term for linguists to use. Following is a rather curious and political section on “Language in the South and the Public Interest,” much of which argues that linguists who make careers and comfortable livings off various speech-dialect communities should find ways of “giving something back” to those communities, as though increasing knowledge and understanding were somehow not enough. Last is a formal concluding chapter by Walt Wolfram on “Perspectives, Achievements, and Remaining Challenges” indicating future directions for study and emphasizing the importance of sharing understanding of language variation in formal public education settings.

One achievement of *New Perspectives* deserves to be recognized and applauded. The editors “made it one of their priorities that all the essays be understandable to the educated reader as well as to the specialist in the field . . . [and] to keep specialized jargon to a minimum, to use transparent language, and to provide clear examples of the phenomena being analyzed” (13). With only a few exceptions, the editors succeeded in these laudable goals, especially in a field like linguistics which is notorious for its impenetrable prose. The organization of the

volume with its various subdivisions (especially in the second half) can be confusing since the editors aim more at inclusion than proportion, but that is more a problem for a reviewer treating the whole than a reader who will dip in and sample the parts.

Linguists, professional and amateur alike, can look forward to the next LAVIS volume in about a decade. Although each new volume is superior to the preceding ones, *New Perspectives* will be a difficult act to follow when it comes to subject breadth and especially readability.

--Jerry L. Ball



Delta Symposium XXIII: Caring for Community Call for Papers

The Department of English and Philosophy at Arkansas State University opens a call for papers and presentations for the twenty-third annual Delta Symposium **April 5-8, 2017**. The Delta Symposium features scholarship on a wide variety of expressive forms that are resonant with Delta history and culture. Individual and panel presentations on topics relevant to the history and culture of the Arkansas and Mississippi Deltas are welcome. Special consideration will be given to proposals that specifically address this year's theme of "Caring for Community." Participants are invited to explore how culture and history are integral to life in various communities in the region.

The Delta Symposium presents work from multidisciplinary approaches including literary criticism, cultural studies, history, anthropology, folklore, ethnomusicology, sociology, speech communication, and heritage studies. Although proposals that have direct connections to Arkansas and the Delta are especially welcome, more general proposals that also address the theme and southern history and culture will be considered. The deadline for entries is December 16, 2016. Each entry should consist of the following: Presenter's name and affiliation and a 150-word abstract of the presentation as well as a current Vita (2 pages max). Please include your address, phone number, e-mail address, and the technical needs for your presentation.

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