

Reviews

All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II. By Ann V. Collins. (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012. Pp. xviii + 195, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$48.00, cloth)

Longtime readers of *Arkansas Review* will recall the special August 2001 issue, edited by the late C. Calvin Smith, on the Elaine Massacre of 1919. That same year, Grif Stockley's book on the subject was released by the University of Arkansas Press. Both events marked the beginning of an era of open discussion over the events in Phillips County, but though these and numerous other works have tackled individual race riots, or thematically linked events (such as the Red Summer of 1919), the race riot as a phenomenon has remained, compared to lynching, relatively under-theorized, with few works tackling it on a national or even regional scope.

Attempting to fill in this gap is Ann V. Collins's *All Hell Broke Loose*, which has a national focus but does contain detailed case studies of two Delta race riots: New Orleans (1900) and Phillips County, Arkansas (1919). Collins defines the race riots of the era as "rational, extralegal, relatively short eruptions of white-on-black violence aimed at influencing social change" (p. xvi). In her survey, she identifies three conditions that must be met to produce a tipping point that spurs violent white mobilization: "certain structural factors—primarily demographic, economic, labor, political, legal, social, and institutional features; cultural framing, or actions and discourse by both whites and blacks to further their own causes; and a precipitating event, the immediate spark that ignites

the violence" (p. 5). The author then examines an array of riots in detail—Wilmington (1898), New Orleans (1900), Atlanta (1906), East St. Louis (1917), Tulsa (1921), Beaumont (1943), and six examples from the Red Summer of 1919—with an eye toward how these three conditions were met in each case, examining the parallels that arise in black-white competition for jobs or political power, local leaders and newspapers playing up racial hatred, and the accusations of black-on-white rape or murder that often proved the catalyst for mob violence when the other conditions had been met.

All Hell Broke Loose would be well paired with Rory McVeigh's *The Rise of the Ku Klux Klan: Right-Wing Movements and National Politics* (2009), which emphasizes how the Klan of the early twentieth century emerged due to more than just racism, given the economic and social challenges faced by middle-class whites, who experienced a perceived power devaluation relative to other groups. Collins, too, reveals a concern with the politics of anti-black mobilization, moving beyond outdated mob psychology to illustrate how anti-black pogroms served the fundamentally conservative aim of restoring a real or imagined status quo.

However, the book does exhibit a few shortcomings. Collins holds that some fifty riots occurred from the Progressive Era through World War II, but this numeration seems to ignore many rural episodes; after all, there are nearly twenty events from this period that fall under the rubric of "race riot" in the online *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* alone, including the brutal Catcher Race Riot of 1923, which, like the Elaine Massacre, occurred in a primarily agricultural area. Although she fairly successfully avoids the pitfall of redundancy in her selection of riots, Collins does not examine a single case which ended in the actual

expulsion of an entire black community, aside from very brief allusions to the 1905 and 1909 riots in Harrison, Arkansas, and the 1923 riot in Rosewood, Florida, though such would seem to exemplify, to an extreme, the restoration of white control over local economies and politics so often the motivation of such events. In addition, by defining race riots exclusively in terms of white-on-black violence, she ignores the parallels between such events and anti-immigrant riots of the period, such as the later anti-Chinese riots in Los Angeles, California, in 1891 and Tonopah, Nevada, in 1903.

That said, *All Hell Broke Loose* does mark an advance in the scholarship on race riots. As Christopher Kyriakides and Rodolfo D. Torres point out in *Race Defaced: Paradigms of Pessimism, Politics of Possibility* (2012), there has been a growing tendency, following World War II, to identify racist actions as the product of an irrational hatred, making racism an individual, psychological problem rather than something related to the larger social structure. By contrast, Ann V. Collins demonstrates that even those events of collective violence which might seem most removed from rationality had a rational, if evil, core. We can, therefore, begin to understand the horrors of our shared past and, by understanding, perhaps prevent their recurrence in the future.

--Guy Lancaster



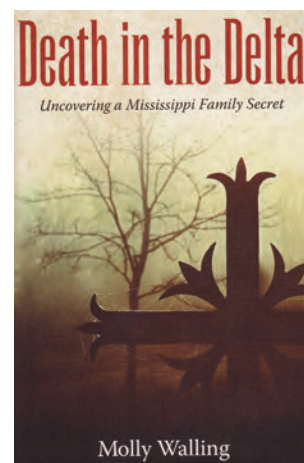
***Death in the Delta: Uncovering a Mississippi Family Secret.* By Molly Walling (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012. Pp. xii + 220, acknowledgments, a note on sources. \$28.00, hardback)**

In 1946, a white, 24-year-old World War II

veteran and his two brothers participated in a shootout at a gas station-turned-bar in Anquilla, Mississippi, killing two other veterans, both African American. Sixty years later, Molly Walling learned that her deceased father and her uncles reportedly were the assailants. Launching a search for the paper trail, Walling made multiple trips from North Carolina back to her ancestral Delta home. She visited courthouses and newspaper archives, interviewed friends and contacts, then friends of friends and contacts of contacts, always coming just short of incontrovertible evidence of her father's role. Was he the one who pulled the trigger? Why did he and his brothers even go to the improvised bar? And why did they shoot Simon Toombs and David Jones? Multiple sources had their own theories, including her mother, a county attorney, an elderly eye witness, and her prickly aunt. But she found no substantive documentation. Charges had long been dropped, and the incident buried.

In *Death in the Delta*, Walling effectively weaves the mystery of the murders with childhood memories of her landed, extended family and erratic, alcoholic father, newspaperman Jay Fields, who could not maintain employment and moved his young family from Mississippi to Tennessee to Virginia. Driven by her love for him, Walling combed his articles and letters for clues to his troubled psyche, wondering whether guilt about the murders caused his self-destructive behaviors.

Librarians, county employees, and relatives of the murdered men were open and helpful to her, while Walling's family and friends tried to dissuade her, clammed up when she asked them about it, or were too intimidating to question at



all. Wrestling with loyalty to family “honor” and the need to expose sixty-year-old truth, she chose a fine, difficult line between the two: “Let me be clear. It is not my intention to reinjure or denigrate anyone, but rather to tell you my story” (p. xii). That is laudable, as is forgiving long-past offenses. Her adored Mamaw, the revered and feared matriarch of Walling’s paternal family, would not have approved. “I struggled with the certainty that my writing about Dad, Bill, and Tom would make her very unhappy,” Walling says. “There would be no way for me to pursue this story were she still alive. I would not forsake her love” (p. 118). But by admitting she would have sacrificed truth to avoid offense, Walling lets her own need take priority over the result she seeks: “If my beloved family and I can bear to look unflinchingly at our history and tell ourselves the truth and if we can allow ourselves to own our past and our human failings, there is hope for forgiveness, even reconciliation” (p. 216). Unclear is whether Walling believes she has done so on her family’s behalf, or whether she is pleading with recalcitrant relatives to come along.

Honor, especially in a family who still called their 1940s cotton farm a “plantation” (p. 3), is a loaded concept. In *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (1982), Bertram Wyatt-Brown described white male dominance masquerading as honor as the “keystone of the slaveholding South’s morality” (Wyatt-Brown, p.vii). King Evans, the 93-year-old African American shootout witness, told Walling the Fields brothers went to the Pan Am bar to shut it down. “Your daddy thought he could just tell the customers to go home,” Evans said. “This is an example of ‘absolute power corrupting absolutely.’ Do you know what I mean?” (p. 56). Walling understands, but wishes she didn’t. By every measure, Mississippi ranked first in white-on-black violence and the impunity with which perpetrators carried it out. Pointed statistics about lynching, poverty, and education, and more about the dramatically oppressive sharecropping system would have given

readers a better historical framework for the story. Ancestors like Walling’s are expertly examined in Kristina DuRocher’s *Raising Racists: The Socialization of White Children in the Jim Crow South* (2011). Rather than drowning his guilt with alcohol, as Walling postulates, her father may have been a product of his white supremacist upbringing, too weak to overcome it.

Memoir writers can convey insights inherently unavailable to them as children. In an interview on her website, Walling says she avoided offering conclusions so readers could draw their own. But of a childhood domestic servant she says, “the thought of Azurine’s round, black body in the kitchen was reassuring” (p. 141). The description leaps from the page in ugly relief. Standing before the dilapidated site of the Pan Am bar while researching the murders, Walling says, she underwent a racial epiphany. One wonders why, then, she let her memory of the servant stand without comment. By not leading us toward her conclusions, she surrenders power as writer-narrator, letting readers define her in her own story.

Walling could have delved deeper into privileges of skin color and resulting attitudes, including miscegenation, which may well have been a factor in the murders, though she shies away from it. She credits others “who have tackled the issue of black/white relations” (p. 219), but absent are giants Lillian Smith, Katharine DuPre Lumpkin, and Larry L. King. Dubbed “The White Southern Racial Conversion Narrative” by Fred Hobson in *But Now I See* (1999), the hard examinations of their Southern backgrounds do not shrink from firm criticism, however tempered with love.

Without proof of her father’s role, Walling must come to terms with another probable though gigantic fault in an already deeply flawed man. She lands on the side of love and forgiveness, but not without cost. By the telling, she has alienated loved ones. By walking the line between love and a clearer indictment of entrenched racism, she leaves readers without a fuller understanding of the potent effects of a

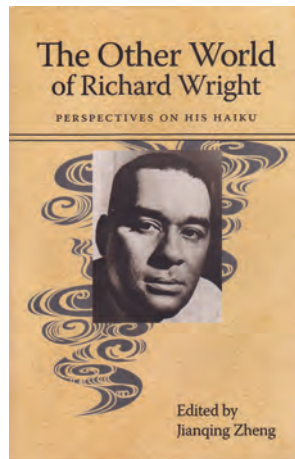
Lost Cause heritage. No one doubts the difficulty of Walling's undertaking. She joins the increasing ranks of whites scrutinizing their families and backgrounds, with an eye toward racial justice. Some examinations will be harsher than others, but all are worthy undertakings. It's about time.

--Stephanie Harp



***The Other World of Richard Wright: Perspectives on His Haiku.* Ed. by Jianqing Zheng. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011. Pp. xx + 202, \$55.00, cloth)**

Near the end of his life, while in self-exile in France and suffering from amoebic dysentery, Richard Wright was introduced to haiku. Embracing the genre as a form of physical, mental, and spiritual therapy, Wright produced more than 4000 haiku, 817 of which were first published as *Haiku: This Other World* in 1998. In the introduction to *The Other World of Richard Wright*, editor Jianqing Zheng observes that these poems have received limited critical attention, and he hopes this collection of ten essays will “provoke thinking about the poetic and cultural values of Wright’s haiku” (p. xiv). This anthology performs the much needed service of gathering key scholarship into one volume and introducing numerous themes that run through



Wright’s haiku and connect to his earlier works.

Nature references are an essential element of traditional Japanese haiku, and the essays collected here offer insights into how Wright engaged nature to achieve a sense of harmony. In “Richard Wright’s Haiku, Zen and the African ‘Primal Outlook upon Life,’” Yoshinobu Hakutani argues that Wright used nature imagery to express the view that nature “is humanistic, not materialistic” (p. 6) and concludes that such an outlook allowed Wright to “observe an object or phenomenon in nature from a perspective devoid of thoughts or feelings” and thereby “achieve a harmonious union with nature” (p. 7). Jianqing Zheng argues, in “Nature, the South, and Spain in Haiku: This Other World,” that Wright was able to achieve in his haiku the “calmness, balance, and harmony” that he could not find when writing fiction and non-fiction (p. 150). Meta L. Schettler, in “Healing and Loss: Richard Wright’s Haiku and the Southern Landscape,” notes that Wright uses “images of the Southern landscape . . . as shifting constructs” (p. 45) as he “creates a space of healing within this new genre . . .” (p. 54), and Shawnee D. Campbell in “Female Imagery, Exploitation, and Richard Wright’s Journey to His Other World” demonstrates that Wright employs conflicts between nature and culture to reveal the exploitation of women and young girls.

This collection also explores how various elements of Japanese culture influenced Wright’s thinking. Toru Kiuchi in “Zen Buddhism in Richard Wright’s Haiku” argues that Wright made a concerted effort to incorporate teachings of Zen Buddhism into his haiku, and Sanehide Kodama in “Japanese Influence on Richard Wright in His Last Years: English Haiku as a New Genre” offers close readings of several of Wright’s haiku to demonstrate Wright’s embracement of Japanese aesthetics. Although Richard A. Iadonis, in “‘I Am Nobody’: The Haiku of Richard Wright,” probably indulges in overstatement when observing that Wright “radically reinvents the haiku form” (p.

71), he offers the intriguing insight that Wright undercuts the possibility of Zen oneness in his haiku by focusing upon anti-colonial and anti-imperialistic issues and by injecting African American subjectivity. This discussion of reinvention and oneness continues in “Inverting the Haiku Moment” as Thomas L. Morgan argues that Wright depicted humans’ disjuncture—rather than union—with nature to suggest the disharmony within human society.

Growing naturally out of such discussions of culture is the topic of post-colonialism, a topic addressed by most of the critics in this collection. For example, Iadonis demonstrates that Wright used images of disharmony to highlight the impact of post-colonialism, and Schettler points out that in his haiku Wright “revives and recreates African American history” in order to re-examine and control his relationship with a culture that had once tried to dominate him (p. 44). Nakachi notes that although America’s initial fascination with Japan may have faded in the 1920s, African American artists held a continued interest in Japan and that Wright used haiku to “challenge the Western hegemony in literature” (p. 145). Sachi Nakachi in “From Japonisme to Modernism: Richard Wright’s African American Haiku” observes that Wright’s interest in Japanese culture prompted him to explore post-colonial concerns and that he was part of an African American movement that perpetuated Western interest in Japanese culture into the years following World War II.

The closing essay, Lee Gurga’s “Richard Wright’s Place in American Haiku,” offers an assessment of the literary quality of Wright’s haiku. After providing an overview of the elements of haiku and analyzing why some of these haiku fail or succeed, Gurga considers Wright’s place in American haiku. He explains that although Wright appears to have been attempting to write western forms in a haiku manner rather than trying to write haiku, he should be considered an important innovator in American haiku. Gurga observes that several of

Wright’s haiku “are excellent” and that “many of [them] are not” (p. 177), and he suggests that readers “celebrate Wright’s work in haiku for what it is, sometimes seriously flawed, but the best of it is among the best haiku that was being written in English at the time” (p. 178).

The Other World of Richard Wright is a treasure trove of critical insights into Wright’s life, his fiction and nonfiction, and his haiku. This volume accomplishes its editor’s goals; the topics and themes identified in this volume, when coupled with 817 haiku in *Haiku: This Other World*, provide scholars numerous opportunities to further explore of the worlds of this major American writer.

--Phillip Howerton

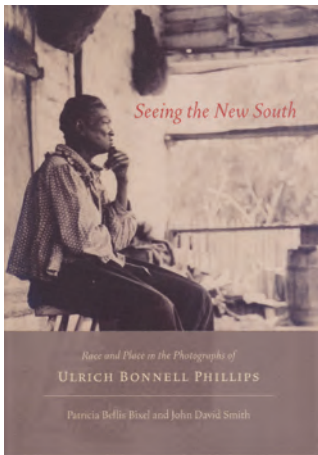


***Seeing the South: Race and Place in the Photographs of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips.* By Patricia Bellis Bixel and John David Smith. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013. Xx + 111, preface, acknowledgments, chronology, appendix, Phillips’s annotations to photographs, index. \$29.95, cloth)**

This arresting collection of photographs either taken or collected by the legendary historian of the American South, U.B. Phillips, is compiled by historians Patricia Bellis Bixel (Maine Maritime Academy) and John David Smith (University of North Carolina at Charlotte). Because Bixel and Smith treat the photographs with the delicacy and sophistication of skilled curators who do not want their textual analysis to overwhelm the visual power of the photography, this slender volume has the feel

of a particularly well-done catalog from a museum exhibition. Two introductory essays provide useful insights into the life and work of U.B. Phillips and some clues about how to interpret the images that follow. The editors demonstrate deliberate and powerful restraint, allowing the photographs to speak largely for themselves. They are also sensitive to the fact that the images will likely deliver different and multiple messages, and they acknowledge that the photographs in this collection are “particularly rich and open to myriad assessments” (p.41).

Bixel and Smith take a nuanced view of the famed historian who was notable for the foresight he exhibited in his landmark study *American Negro Slavery* (1918), which demonstrated that the institution of chattel slavery was worthy of systematic study. Indeed today the study of slavery is one of the richest fields of inquiry in United States history. How-



ever, Phillips’s prescience was clouded by his insistence that slavery was a kind of “school” that could teach the skills of civilization to the members of an inferior race. The editors do not attempt to soften the racial insensitivity of

Phillips or gloss over the fact that both his scholarly work and his photography were imprinted by his prejudices, but they do remind the reader that Phillips was very much the product of his upbringing. Studying his work yields not only insights into the plantation past that he sought to document but also into the racial thinking of the Jim Crow world that Phillips inhabited. Phillips, who famously and convincingly declared in 1928 that white supremacy was the central theme in southern history, was

obsessed with the idea of race, a preoccupation that led him to travel to Africa and to create a photographic documentation of that journey, examples of which are printed in *Seeing the South*.

Phillips was skilled at locating primary materials and in building important southern archival collections. His instincts as a collector led him not only to take photographs of his beloved region but also to accumulate samples of the work of other southern photographers. For example, Bixel and Smith convincingly demonstrate that Phillips owned many photographs taken by African-American photographer Robert E. Williams of Augusta, Georgia. It is unclear how Phillips came into possession of this work or even precisely how many photographs in Phillips’s collection of photographs should be attributed to Williams, however their presence in his archive is significant. This work includes invaluable posed portraits of black southerners as well as less formal snapshots of the black community taken between 1882 and 1908. The dignity of the black subjects in many of these images and the visual documentation of, for example, the horror of a Georgia chain gang add complexity to the condescension and racism Phillips exemplifies elsewhere.

Phillips demonstrated an artistic sensibility both in acquiring the affecting work of other photographers and also in his own pictures. Together they moodily document the kind of grand southern homes that spawn moonlight and magnolia fantasies. They also capture verdant southern foliage that seems to swallow the manmade objects in the frame and the melancholy ruins of the plantation past that was the subject of the scholar’s historical writing. Bixel and Smith point out that the photographic record Phillips left behind is also notable because it offers pictorial documentation of the lives of the southern poor. The editors note that “long before Farm Security Administration Photographers captured their images on film, poor white farmers and their families posed in front of spare mountain cabins and on vine-en-

twined porches for Phillips's agents" (p. 25). The South, as seen through the eyes of U.B. Phillips, is a contradictory one that is characterized by the racism and poverty that the camera cannot help but to capture, but it is also a place of forward looking possibility not yet tainted by the historical reality of what actually happened. This sense of hope is captured in one of Robert Williams's photographs of a young African-American boy wearing a top hat and carrying a cane who looks evenly and confidently forward, straight at the lens.

--Jennifer Jensen Wallach



***The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South.* By Andrew W. Kahrl. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. 422, maps, photographs, notes, primary sources, acknowledgments, index. \$ 39.95, hardback)**

In *The Land Was Ours*, Andrew Kahrl has crafted a richly detailed study about the racial discrimination African Americans endured as they accumulated, populated, and later lost beachfront property along the Chesapeake, the Carolina coastline, and the Gulf of Mexico. Black people sought private leisure spaces because Jim Crow laws and practices deliberately excluded them from predominately white coastal resorts. They cherished these spaces because they served as a refuge from their jobs and from the harsh, daily reminder of American racism. This respite was further accompanied by African American agency and entrepreneurship. Like their white counterparts, blacks often acquired waterfront property and obtained wealth from "the pennies of working blacks in

search of moments of pleasure and relief" (p. 13). African Americans further purchased and developed these properties to engage in racial uplift activism.

Kahrl's work also speaks to the diversity among African Americans by examining the interplay of race and class in black leisure spaces. Some African American beaches catered to prominent blacks who wished to avoid "both the sting of prejudice and the indignity of forced association with the social inferiors of their race" (p. 90). Highland Beach, Maryland, built by Charles Douglass, the son of abolitionist Frederick Douglass is one such example. According to Kahrl, when persuading African Americans to purchase lots there, he assured them that the beach would be preserved for "our group" (p. 90). National Association of Colored Women founder Mary Church Terrell and former Louisiana governor P.B.S. Pinchback owned homes in the exclusive enclave. And, much like the residents in predominately white coastal areas, elite blacks employed legal devices such as property owners associations and restrictive covenants to prohibit their poorer counterparts' access to these "black privatopias" (112).

Non-elite African Americans, on the other hand, were often subjected to environmental racism as they were restricted to inferior and often dangerous waters and "colored" beaches (p.13). In chapter four, poignantly titled "Surviving the Summer," Kahrl analyzes how the reengineering of urban shorelines "in the interest of commercial and residential development," white public officials decisions' about the areas deemed "suitable for black bathers," and African Americans' exclusion from all-white, but public recreational spaces in New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Norfolk, Virginia forced urban poor and working class blacks to frequent leisure spaces that compromised their health and their lives (p. 116-117).

Most notably, Kahrl discusses how the racialization of leisure spaces contributed to the deaths of poor black children who drowned in

New Orleans because Jim Crow laws left them no choice but to swim in the city's rivers and canals. But the drowning deaths of black children also prompted African American activism. In Little Rock, Arkansas in the summer of 1949, parents protested after three black children drowned in the Arkansas River. They blamed the city for its failure to provide safe and supervised recreational facilities for black children. (p. 150).

In the post-World War II years, Jim Crow laws and the racialization of recreational spaces led African Americans to seek refuge at black owned beaches during the summer months. Black property owners pursued capitalist ventures, which included competition for white dollars, and what Kahrl termed "black-oriented cultural industries" (p. 179). Carr's Beach in Annapolis, Maryland and Mosquito Beach on James Island, South Carolina for example, provided enterprising black landowners with opportunities to turn their property into lucrative entertainment and leisure venues. Unfortunately, black owned beaches were often undercapitalized and underinsured. African Americans who owned waterfront property were further disadvantaged by the dismantling of Jim Crow laws, manipulated by land speculators, devastated by environmental disasters, and dispossessed by the allegedly colorblind "effects of modern coastal capitalism" (p. 257). Coastal residential development quickly came to mean the displacement of African American landowners who often sold their property for pennies on the dollar and who could no longer afford to live on the land they had once owned.

According to Kahrl the "desegregation of beaches and the de-racialization of coastal real estate markets" and the closing of African American beach resorts is a "story of progress" (p. 257). Perhaps. But it also led to the loss of valuable black owned land and the displacement of former owners who often had nowhere else to go.

This valuable work provides an important and little known analysis of American racism,

African American landownership, and the racialization and de-racialization of recreational and leisure spaces in the twentieth century. It should be required reading for wide variety of courses on 20th century American History.

--Cherisse Jones-Branch



***A Short Ride: Remembering Barry Hannah.* Ed. by Louis Bourgeois, Adam Young, and J. W. Young. Foreword by Neil White. (Oxford, MS: Vox Press, 2012. Pp. xxvi+225, editor's note, foreword, list of photographs. \$19.00, paper)**

As a tribute to the late Barry Hannah, in *A Short Ride* Louis Bourgeois, Adam Young, and J. W. Young have collected almost forty essays and other items that chronicle various individuals' experiences with Hannah, the man and his writing. According to Bourgeois, the editors chose essays that "best reflected the writer's encounter with Hannah on a truly personal level" (p. xix). Contributors mainly include Hannah's former students, although the volume also contains occasional reflections by fellow professors, Bourgeois's interview with Hannah, and several poems. It is fitting, too, that the editors print three selections by Hannah, an essay about dogs, his reflections on the late Larry Brown, and Hannah's "Introduction" to the 2002 issue of *The Yalobusha Review*, and illustrate the volume with over thirty pages of photographs.

In his Foreword to the collection, White notes "a common theme" (p. xxiii) reflected in the various essays: that "Everyone wanted to be around Barry" (p. xxiii), the mythic man with the enigmatic personality. As White comments, there were "two Barry Hannahs. One was

drunk, rowdy, tormented and indecent. The other was sober, gentle, charming, and generous" (p. xxi). Hannah's popularity is commented on by many of the contributors, who frequently use words like genius, kind, funny, honest, thoughtful, charitable, and humble. At the same time, they note Barry's raucous side: his drinking heavily in his earlier years; his shooting holes in the floorboard of his MG to empty the water after a heavy rainstorm or an arrow through a window of his home; his smoking cigarettes while carrying an oxygen tank; or his "agitating the Christian calm of Oxford on his Harley Davidson" (p. 47). Yet, David Madden writes, Hannah's "wild behavior" was "perhaps more rumored than real" (p. 98).

In their anecdotes, many of the contributors reveal that Barry Hannah was the reason that they went to study writing at the University of Mississippi or the University of Alabama or planned a visit to his area. Sometimes, simply taking a friend's word for it that they needed to meet Hannah, they moved across the country to encounter this cutting-edge fiction writer on the streets of Oxford or Tuscaloosa, in the classroom, at a writer's workshop, in a bar, at a party, or in a local bookstore. J. W. Young, for instance, moved from California and Anna Baker from Montana to study with Hannah in Mississippi, while Maude Schuyler Clay traveled from New York City to interview him. A. N. Devers recalls encountering Hannah while an MFA student in Bennington, Vermont, and Jody Hobbs Hesler recounts her time with Hannah while participating in the Juniper Summer Writing Institute in Amherst, Massachusetts. American painter Glennray Tutor went to Senatobia, Mississippi, to hear Hannah read at the invitation of well-known Arkansas poet Miller Williams. Regardless of the type of experience, the contributors remember their encounters with Hannah well enough to convincingly pen them years later, capturing the spirit of a truly unique individual and expressing their appreciation of the time and talent that he so willingly shared.

Hannah was known both for his frank criticism of and his generosity to his students and their work. He not only read their manuscripts and offered advice, but also gave them books by other writers to read, his home phone number, and rides around Oxford, took them fishing or to lunch, and conversed with them on the balcony at Square Books. Occasionally he submitted talented young writers' work to prize anthologies, endorsed their book manuscripts to publishers, or simply stopped by their homes to tell them how much he had enjoyed reading their latest stories. The volume's contributors concede that despite his brutal critiques of his students' writing, if anything Hannah gave the aspiring writers' work more respect than it deserved.

Equally noted are Hannah's own contributions to contemporary literature, where "he relished scandal" (p. 105) and expected writers to "thrill" their audiences. His writing, contributors remark over and over again, was a new force to be reckoned with. James Tighe compares Hannah to an American Borges or Chekhov and his work to that of a Category-5 hurricane with stories capable of "blow[ing] us away" (p. 160). For M. O. Walsh, hearing Hannah read "was like seeing Hendrix at Woodstock" (p. 178), and for Glennray Tutor, "it was like receiving a high dose of literary radioactivity" (p. 165). Hannah was famous for telling his students that a story could end only one of two ways: with a chain gang massacre or a ghost.

Two of the most insightful essays in the volume offer critical analyses of Hannah's work. In "Econ 101 with Barry Hannah," Neil Conway provides a thoughtful reading of "Nicodemus Bluff," which comments on the dangers of embracing materialism, a topic too often ignored by the literati, but easily tackled by Hannah. In "Thrill Me: Barry Hannah in Memoriam," William Giraldi considers the postmodernist nature of Hannah's oeuvre, which he compares to "a theater of the absurd with overtones of Ionesco in which spiritual isolatos and vagabonds have become severed from civiliza-

tion and the laws it requires to work” (p. 49), although he acknowledges that Hannah’s violence is superseded by that of his contemporaries, including William Gay, Thom Jones, and Cormac McCarthy.

A Short Ride is a welcome addition to the mere handful of book-length studies previously published on Hannah’s life and writing: Martyn Bone’s *Perspectives on Barry Hannah* (UP of Mississippi, 2007), Ruth D. Weston’s *Barry Hannah: Postmodern Romantic* (LSU Press, 1998), and Mark J. Charney’s *Barry Hannah* (Twayne, 1992). The collection stresses that Barry Hannah was indeed an individual worth knowing and a writer worth reading. It is a testament to the importance of the Barry Hannah myth so aptly noted by Alex Taylor: “the sacred belief that something rich and meaningful can be smithed from the heat of lived experience” (p. 158).

--Catherine Calloway



The Ongoing Burden of Southern History: Politics and Identity in the Twenty-First-Century South. Ed. by Angie Maxwell, Todd Shields, and Jeannie Whayne. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. Pp. xix +208, preface, acknowledgments, contributors, index. \$42.50, cloth)

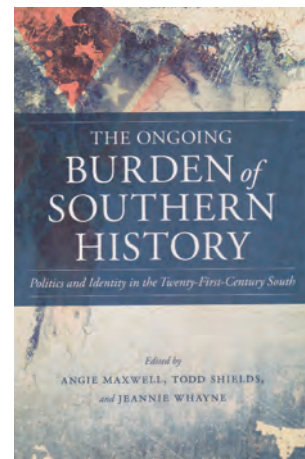
This insightful collection of essays based upon presentations at the 2010 Diane Blair Legacy Conference at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville examines the influential collection of essays C. Vann Woodward wrote and revised to demonstrate the southern past mattered to those who wanted to change the

American present. The editors of *The Ongoing Burden of Southern History* insist that Woodward still matters. The contributors, coming from a range of disciplines, honestly reveal that this ambition is a tall order.

The essays in Woodward’s *The Burden of Southern History* most commonly explored here are the touchstones on southern identity, the populist legacy, irony and the southern perspective, and civil rights. The latter piece appeared initially in the 1968 revised second edition, and it is this version, more somber than the first, to which the contributors often turn.

James Cobb opens the collection with an elegant and penetrating intellectual biography of Woodward (based, as is apparently the case with most of the essays, on earlier scholarship). Woodward wrote for a contemporary audience with the aim of reinforcing the drive for reform, particularly in civil rights, by declaring the south was not the prisoner of heritage or culture. Insisting upon the agency of any generation to alter course, Woodward in Cobb’s view understood the “therapeutic” consequence of his writings. Yet, writing a functional history has its perils. Cobb candidly notes Woodward’s interpretations have gone through the familiar progression of refutation and then neglect by recent historians covering the same ground he once held against all comers. Cobb concludes that what is left of Woodward’s legacy is his eloquence and lucidity that persuaded the audience of his time that history lurched rather than flowed. This, of course, suggests that Woodward in the 21st century is a historical subject for current scholars and not their guide.

Patrick Williams usefully reminds us that



indeed the explanatory power of Woodward's south loomed large and obscured a host of actors. The Redeemers who overwhelmed Woodward's favored Populists were indeed history's losers due to their victory over the virtuous. Williams compellingly explains, based upon wide reading, that the triumph of the forces of reaction well may have been a democratic expression of the wool-hats longing for a small-proprietors' republic. Leigh Anne Duck irrefutably notes that Woodward also left others out of the conversation on the matter of southern identity. Woodward was not precise as to the characteristics of this identity beyond a shared history but there was no mistaking his assumption that it was white southerners who were bound by a common historical experience. Duck observes that while Woodward failed to make use of African-American writings in mounting a defense against the decadent romanticism he ascribed to the 1930s Agrarians, his project did lead him to anticipate a movement for social justice, a "Third Reconstruction," that would overturn the racial and class hierarchies mistakenly trumpeted by whites as the hallmarks of southern identity. Still, Woodward's reference to a Third Reconstruction in *Burden* is a brief, fleeting cry of hope in the midst of a bleak assessment of the unraveling of the civil rights movement in 1968.

Hanes Walton, Jr. and his co-authors extract a sunnier assertion from *Burden's* Reconstruction essay, although one that jars slightly against Woodward's admonishment that the era cannot be understood without stirring irony into tragedy. They commend Woodward for observing that the inaugural political participation of the freedmen avoided militancy in favor of upholding democratic institutions and procedures. The authors' use of cumulative voting data from southern counties to absolve white as well as African-American voters from responsibility for early 20th century elite hegemony aligns with Woodward's perspective but appears far from conclusive. Employing the same approach to the 2008 election, the authors detect

diversity within racial voting blocs that has eluded other observers while agreeing with Wayne Parent (see below) that white ballots for Obama combined with solid African-American support provided the margin for victory in a few southern states. Perhaps truly in the spirit of Woodward, Walton remains uncertain as to whether Republican dominance in the south represents a Third Reconstruction bolstering democracy or revival of old inequities even as African-Americans continue to alter the region's political tradition.

Charles S. Bullock agrees that African-American voters indeed transformed southern politics but insists the development refuted Woodward's pessimism rather than fulfilled his best hopes. Woodward feared by 1968 that the gains of the Second Reconstruction were dissolving in a replication of the 1870s calamity. Bullock largely forgets Woodward after the opening pages of his essay to bring to bear his impressive earlier research on the effects of the Voting Rights Act and the relative lack of controversy surrounding the congressionally approved extensions. (The decision by the Roberts Court, unknown at the time of this review, on whether Section 5 of the VRA survives may compel a reassessment).

Wayne Parent unfurls the spreadsheets to sail downwind from meditations on cultural identity to locate an empirically based southern political identity. Comparing 2008 presidential returns of three Deep South states with those of Virginia and North Carolina as well as the US as a whole, Parent concludes that the modernizing Upper-South resembles America while the Lower-South provinces remain at odds with the nation and distinctively southern. These calculations do argue for the vitality of discernible identity for at least a portion of the region. But then there are always other numbers. Border states such as Arkansas, Texas, and West Virginia were as averse to the Obama candidacy as those in the heart of Dixie, while even greater majorities on behalf of Senator McCain unfolded in Plains and Far Western states.

Robert McMath in an astute essay blurs Woodward's own southern identity. McMath, an influential historian of Populism, sets aside arguments as to the nature of Populism to show how Woodward's treatment of the topic illuminated the formation and evolution of social movements in general. Unmooring Woodward from the south, McMath locates him among those public intellectuals in post-World War II America who feared affluence and military power were steering Americans into a sterile complacency and arrogance. McMath asserts Woodward was indeed a southern historian but in effect nationalizes his ironic stance by cogently revealing that wariness of *Pax Americana* was not peculiar to the one American region shadowed by military defeat.

The Ongoing Burden of Southern History will only enhance readers' appreciation for Woodward's achievements as well as deepen their understanding of the south. In so doing, the volume clarifies how the understanding of the region has diverged from Woodward's interpretations and that Woodward would have expected no less.

--Ben Johnson



***Things You Need to Hear: Collected Memories of Growing Up in Arkansas, 1890-1980.* Ed. by Margaret Jones Bolsterli. (Fayetteville: The University Arkansas Press, 2012. Pp. xviii +149. \$24.95, cloth)**

I have always held that there are two reasons to read personal narratives: to relate to others whose experiences are similar to our own, or to live vicariously through those whose experiences are not. The essential quality that

makes either worth our time is our common humanity. Whether we have or have not had first-hand experience with an act, a tool, a place, an era, or a culture, we can understand how humans would react—how we would react—in a given situation.

In *Things You Need to Hear*, edited by Margaret Jones Bolsterli, we are presented with a series of “informants” who share their experiences with us in short bits, arranged by subject. Some will find themselves in the lives of those informants, and will relish in the memories of community, family, work, school and play they present to us. Others will find themselves carried backward, in the body and mind of the informant, seeing and feeling the events of a time and place completely foreign to them, and yet, surprisingly familiar.

Some context is provided regarding the creation of the work, its inception as a companion to an exhibit at the Old State House Museum and the source of the materials, many of which came from oral histories taken by the author herself during work on other projects. While admirable, the effort to fill in with excerpted written text to cover a broader range of backgrounds, locations, and experiences—they mainly serve to enhance by contrast the depth of simple truth that is represented in the text of the spoken-word transcriptions. These are the real gems of *Things You Need to Hear*.

For all that Bolsterli laments in her commentary, scattered among the short anecdotes in the book, about the loss of human contact with the onset of an increasingly technological world, her text provides, in its very creation and existence, a solution to the dilemma she poses. There is a sense in the stories, often repeated, that



laments but also marvels at the loss of the places and cultures that built up around the activities described, to remember as if there, then suddenly finding oneself . . . here, a relatively short time later, in a completely different world.

One must also admire the quality of the editing. The experience of reading the book, once the informants are introduced with background information and later only identified by name, is that the experiences are becoming unified, that the cotton chopping, the sense of class, the shame and anger of perceived inferiority or the shame and guilt of perceived superiority, the simplicity of life, the wonder of and about that simplicity in the context of a modern existence, are all coming from one increasingly unified mind. We are favored with the opportunity to explore those, now common, memories, and it is indeed a rich remembering.

Some common threads are particular to our collective Arkansan memory, such as the sense of inferiority and a need to prove ourselves. A retired executive addresses this, and struggles with the underdog's dilemma of finally winning, as he relates his first thoughts after becoming the CEO of the largest company in the state, alone in his new office, "You didn't think I was worth anything? You thought I was nothing? You thought I was scum. Look at me now," followed by his realization of the futility of such thinking once success has been achieved.

As much as *Things You Need to Hear* fronts a didactic intent, underlying it is a sense that the speakers need to express, to tell these stories as much, even more, than their listeners "need" to hear them and for no other purpose than to know that these experiences are a part of them, something that brought them a step closer to the place and the person they are today. There is cognizance that what they are describing, in many cases, is gone, and it is the province of their individual life and the lives of those of their particular generation, one they cherish because it belongs to them. As one informant puts it, "It's something I wouldn't want to see my children have to do, but I wouldn't

mind having to do it again."

Because of the effect of the aggregated experiences, one can find surprises. Reading along about one woman's experiences working a cotton field for her family, I was suddenly confronted with the image of workers in a field, singing Michael Jackson tunes, and my mind raced to alter the depression era images I had already conjured up, and replace them with a rural south in the seventies and eighties, one I was more familiar with, and left amazed by the similarity.

I experienced this reading various others, where my assumptions, not just of time and place, but of race and even gender were proven wrong. This was the truly magical experience of the book, one that left me no longer trying to pinpoint those contextual clues, but finding myself taking it all in and embracing every anecdote and every story as almost my own.

Paul Ricoeur noted that for memories to become history, they must be forgotten, and then rediscovered by those who do not share the memory. If memories have value as historical fact, aside from confirming this or that detail of an event or a time, it has to be that they convey much more of what it is like to be human in a context that no longer exists. Margaret Bolsterli, in *Things You Need to Hear*, has provided not only the informants' stories but also a manner to convey them as an historical aggregate, combining the personal and the historical in such a way that neither is diminished. A fine accomplishment and an entertaining read.

--Michael Hodge

