

Reviews

clementine hunter: her life and art.
By Art Shiver and Tom Whitehead. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012. Pp. xix + 152, foreward, preface, appendix, notes, bibliography, index, \$36.00, cloth)

This book is a clear overview of the life of the Louisiana artist Clementine Hunter. Author Tom Whitehead knew Hunter for the last twenty years of her life, and was instrumental in providing her with supplies and bringing her art to the attention of others. This book documents his experiences and recollections, while also bringing together the research and reminiscences of others. Author Art Shiver got to know Hunter much later in her life. As both authors come from a journalism background, the book is very clear about the basic facts and details of Hunter's life. A foreward is by Lee Kogan, Curator Emeritus at the American Folk Art Museum. There are 68 color plates. Since the artist was illiterate and left no body of journals or letters, a publication by two who knew her is especially important as biography.

The opening chapter, "A Moment of Recognition," describes Hunter's reception of an honorary degree from Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana, in May 1985, when she was 98 years old. This chapter summarizes the amazing life story of a woman, her grandmother a slave, who picked cotton before becoming a house servant, who in mid-life took up painting, and whose work became known well beyond her Louisiana region. "From the Cotton Fields to the Big House" tells what is known of the artist's early life. Her baptismal date in 1887 is known, but her birth date is not. Her name was Clémence originally. In 1902,

her family moved to work for the Henry family at their plantation Melrose, near Cloutierville, Louisiana, and this was the center of the artist's world for the rest of her life. The history and nature of that world is described in the following chapter, "Memory and a Sense of Place."

The fascinating story of "the remarkable and enigmatic" (p. 33) François Mignon, the man who presented himself as a French-born lawyer and trader, who left New York City to live at Melrose as a permanent guest, is the subject of chapter 4. Though the biography Mignon created for himself was false, his true origins did not come to light till after his death. He had an appreciation for art and it was he who first encouraged Hunter with her art. There are embellishments to the facts about Hunter's first interest and attempts, and Shiver and Whitehead do a good job of separating fact from fiction. They also show how important Mignon's role as publicist for Hunter was in having her work seen beyond the bounds of Melrose plantation. Another individual whose interest helped to spread the artist's fame was James Pipes Register, the subject of chapter 5.

Hunter was in her fifties before her painting career began, described in chapter 6. As a young woman, she worked in the cotton fields; later she worked as a cook at Melrose. It is likely her interest in attempting to make paintings was inspired by frequent visits to Melrose of an artist named Alberta Kinsey. But there is no evidence she was "taught"; it seems she had a natural tal-



ent, and was interested in making things with the few supplies she could locate. The grandest endeavor was the African House murals of 1955, discussed in chapter 7 (all are illustrated). These works were placed in a plantation out-building Mignon claimed was based on African architecture, though architectural historians now believe it reflected French design of the 1820s. Mignon suggested the subjects, including river baptisms, pecan harvesting, relaxing at a honky-tonk, doing laundry, and other activities associated with a Southern plantation in the early 20th century.

Hunter continued to produce smaller scale work in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, and selected works are described in chapter 8. Some of the individuals who collected and encouraged the artists are the subject of chapter 9. Among these were the nationally known photographer Clarence John Laughlin, from Louisiana, who convinced his friend Armand Winfield, owner of the Sunday Gallery in St. Louis to show twenty of Hunter's works in 1952. This, and a second showing at the People's Art Center in the same city, brought the first exposure to Hunter's work outside of the circle of friends who lived near or visited Melrose. Thanks also to the interest of celebrities in other fields, the interest in Hunter and her art blossomed through her later years, culminating in the recognition in 1985 described in the first chapter. The artist's death at the age of 101 and funeral are the subjects of the short chapter 10.

"Fakes, Forgeries, and the FBI," chapter 11, is a separate story, but a reminder that by its very nature, art produced by self-taught artists, especially if it has received monetary value from the art marketplace, is subject to forgery. The appendix on Hunter's signature is also helpful in showing how she changed, sometimes at the suggestion of patrons.

This is a clearly written and informative publication, well documented. There are a few distracting aspects. Quotations are placed under the heading of each chapter, and many of these contribute very little to understanding the con-

tents that follow. In places the text is repetitive, in part because some chapters have a chronological organization and some focus on a personality or theme. A significant difficulty in writing about a self-taught artist such as Hunter is how best to discuss the works themselves. The strongest discussion of placing the works in some sort of art historical context is in the introduction by Kogan, who documents first the interest in American folk art starting in the 1920s, and then the attention in Hunter's work starting in the 1950s. Kogan places Hunter among a group of artists "in post-technological America who depicted idealized memories of a fast-disappearing earlier time" (p. xiii). Shiver and Whitehead mostly focus on the subjects of Hunter's work and how they reflect the many changes that occurred in the rural South in the first three quarters of the 20th century. Providing as clear as possible an account of the artist's life, and examining the various individuals that influenced her life and art is the strength of this book, which will be of interest not only to those fond of the art of Clementine Hunter, but also to those interested in the history and culture of Louisiana and some of its intriguing personalities.

--Floyd W. Martin



***Creole Trombone: Kid Ory and the Early Years of Jazz.* By John McCusker. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2012. Pp. xii + 220, acknowledgments, notes, index. \$30.00, hardback)**

The history of jazz has relied on recordings to document the development of the music and the emergence of the musicians who shaped the art form. The earliest recordings, however, date from 1916, leaving a significant period of musi-

cal growth undocumented. Jazz trombonist and composer of “Muskrat Ramble,” Edward “Kid” Ory straddles this era. He begins his career as a professional musician in rural Louisiana prior to the first recordings of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, yet plays an important role in some of the most pivotal recordings in jazz history—the Okeh sessions of Louis Armstrong and the Hot Five in 1925-27. Pulitzer-Prize winning photojournalist John McCusker has written a well-researched account of Ory’s life, which also serves as a noteworthy contribution to the overall history of the region and the beginnings of jazz as a popular medium.

The book utilizes an unpublished manuscript that Ory dictated to his second wife, Barbara GaNung, in the 1950s. GaNung transcribed her notes and reworked the timeline in an attempt to create a comprehensible narrative. Even though he ultimately finds the timeline to be erroneous, McCusker extracts marvelous anecdotal evidence detailing Ory’s life on the plantation, his early development as a musician and musical entrepreneur, and his move to New Orleans around 1910. Two of the more interesting tales concern Ory’s experience with the legendary Buddy Bolden and the “audition” of the teenage Louis Armstrong. Although the manuscript/memoir served to establish a framework for Ory’s life, McCusker’s research relied on other oral history interviews, baptismal records, tax records, and a variety of accounts in African-American newspapers of the time such as the *Chicago Defender*.



Ory was a Creole. His father was of French and German descent, his mother was part African-American, and both were Catholic. Like many biographies, the listing of the subject’s genealogy in the early chapters of the

book can become somewhat tedious, but among the plethora of relationships an image of life emerges revealing the complexity of race, tradition, and culture in the south Louisiana parishes. McCusker conveys the harsh reality of life on the sugarcane plantations. The interracial connections and the origins of the creole culture are explored as is the importance of brass band music to the everyday lives of the workers. For instance, some of Ory’s earliest remembrances are of the bands that played at the sugar mill on Friday afternoons as the workers received their weekly wages. The sounds of brass bands mixed with creole folk songs and the music of the “holy roller” churches serve as Ory’s early music education.

Ory, known as Dutt to his family, organizes a string band with his childhood friends from the rural parish—some of whom will follow him in his musical career to New Orleans and California. The boys make their own instruments and exercise an entrepreneurial spirit to create opportunities to play music for money. Eventually their financial success allows them to purchase real instruments. On his first visit to New Orleans in 1905, he buys a trombone for \$67 and encounters Buddy Bolden, the legendary cornetist, credited with the invention of jazz. Bolden played the blues for dancing, and the resulting improvisatory style fast became the popular standard of the day. Unfortunately, Bolden never recorded thus his legend derives from comments by those such as Ory who heard the band and stated in his manuscript that Bolden’s band “was a great band in those days. It was the onliest (sic) band that was playing that stuff and people was crazy about it” (p. 61). The stuff he referred to was hot jazz.

For readers interested in the history of jazz, McCusker provides a rich narrative of the cultural milieu that resulted in the development of this truly American art form. Bolden and others established the form and musicians such as Ory gravitated toward the style of “hot” playing, relying on collective improvisations around popular songs, the blues, or original compositions.

Ory was not a schooled musician and did not read music in his early years. His manner of playing became known as “tailgate” trombone, which functions as both a rhythmic element and a countermelody in the traditional New Orleans jazz band. Because of the slide, the trombonist had to sit on the back of the wagon as it moved through the streets with the band playing their music to attract a crowd to advertise an upcoming event.

After Ory moves to New Orleans in 1910, he quickly establishes himself as a leader and businessman, taking advantage of the opportunities for playing music at dances, ballparks, bars, brothels, and even mixed race clubs. The vibrant musical environment of the city is well documented as is the abrupt halt to the good times with the closing of the entertainment establishments following America’s entry into World War I. However, just prior to the end, Ory encounters the young Louis Armstrong and invites him to replace the departing King Oliver in the trombonist’s band. The following account by Ory is one of the true gems in McCusker’s book. The first time Ory allowed the young Armstrong to sit-in with his band, he stated that “Louis came up and played Ole Miss’ and the blues, and everyone in the park went wild over this boy in knee trousers who could play so great” (p. 103). Just as Ory had trailed the Bolden band around New Orleans, Armstrong listened and learned from the Ory band.

Eventually Ory and his wife leave New Orleans and settle in California, moving between Los Angeles and Oakland. He sends for his musicians to join him, and he achieves initial success as a leader, including his first recordings in 1922. These recordings are the first to be made by an African-American ensemble on the west coast. Although his life in California appears to have been comfortable, he is drawn to the more vibrant musical scene happening in Chicago during the prohibition era. In Chicago, Ory joins with the now mature Louis Armstrong to record some of the most influential jazz recordings under the name Hot Five for the Okeh

label. Even though he was a sideman on these sessions, they represent the pinnacle of Ory’s career, which fades with the onset of the great depression and Ory’s return to California (he works as a janitor through most of the 1930s).

McCusker’s book is a fitting tribute to Ory as a significant musician in the development of jazz and the definitive model for tailgate trombone. He concludes the narrative with an epilogue that seems to gloss over Ory’s role in the revival of traditional jazz in the 1940s, especially since this period resulted in the majority of Ory’s recorded work as a leader rather than as a sideman. However it is one of the few criticisms of the book.

--Henry Q. Rinne



***From Missouri: An American Farmer Looks Back.* By Thad Snow. Ed. Bonnie Stepenoff. (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2012. Pp. xi+ 283, editor’s introduction, editor’s acknowledgments, index. \$25.00, paper)**

In 1954, two months before Thad Snow’s death at age 74, Houghton Mifflin, a once well-respected publishing firm, issued *Thad Snow’s From Missouri*. Books of regional or state history were not unknown to the nation’s reading public, and farther down the Delta William Alexander Percy’s *Lanterns on the Levee* (1941) became the classic



planters' account of social disease in Mississippi. But Snow's book and Snow's own area of the Delta, "Swampeast," a term he invented and is now in general use, bore little in common with conditions below Memphis.

Thad Snow was born in Indiana. By the time he arrived in the Bootheel in 1910 he had a not completely misspent youth devoted to drinking and fishing under the tutelage of James Whitcomb Riley. A philosophy major, he failed to complete his senior year at the University of Michigan and then began farming. At that time he began writing for the newspapers, notably the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Hence, the book title "From Missouri" reflected news reports from his years as both a participant and an observer during the closing of one of the last frontiers that witnessed first massive timber cutting and then the subsequent ditching and draining of the land. Promoters, engineers, government reports and later historians would label the process "reclamation," but Snow himself came to see these radical changes as extirpation. A friend of his later years commented that had Snow lived he would have joined the Sierra Club.

The destruction of nature's environment prepared the land for largely Midwest farmers like Snow, and prior to the 1920s corn was the principal crop. But the ravages of the boll weevil farther south induced Southern planters along with their dependent black sharecroppers to transform the region for cotton in the mid 1920s. Snow supported twenty black sharecroppers at "Snow's Corner" in Mississippi County.

Overproduction of cotton, compounded by the damages done by the Flood of 1927 and the never-ending burden of real estate and drainage district taxes, made the region receptive to the sharecropper revolt. Southern Tenant Farmers' Union poet John Handcock even had a poem about Snow, and Owen Whitfield, organizer of the Sharecroppers' Roadside Demonstration of 1939, conferred with Snow frequently. One important element to the strike was that in Missouri there were other influential sympathetic

observers, notably novelist and activist Fannie Cook, and a hospitable press, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, an environment quite unlike the almost universal hostility to social justice found further south.

What makes Snow stand out is that his practical farming experiences combined with his philosophical education made him see the bigger picture. His gregarious personality and wide interests allowed him to pursue with equal vigor hunting and fishing and social activism. As an intelligent commentator on the changing world around him he resembled the pioneering newspaper writers of the previous century. And as one who had got his start almost on the ground floor he had the standing to express himself freely. Snow's book reminds us that the Delta did not start in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel; for him it started on his own farm. And while his style lacks the highly refined verbal acuity of a Percy, it does reflect the plain English and good storytelling found in the newspapers of that day.

Why is it timely to republish Snow's memoir after nearly fifty years? The instability of the world Snow inhabited—major floods in 1912, 1913, 1916, 1922 and 1929 as well as the better known ones of 1927 and 1937 and the Drought of 1930-31—parallel the problems of our own time. Indeed, the Bootheel's single greatest disaster was the Flood of 1937 in which, to protect Cairo, Illinois, the Army of Corps of Engineers dynamited the front-line levee in Missouri. Little warning was given, and some 3,000 persons were rendered homeless refugees. The same response occurred in 2011, but by that time sharecroppers were gone and the event received little attention. However, the environmental issues remain.

Editor Bonnie Stepenoff, Professor Emeritus of History at Southeast Missouri State University, uncovered Snow during her earlier researches. *Thad Snow: A Life of Social Reform in the Missouri Bootheel* (2003) was published as part of the Missouri Biography Series and is essential reading for those wishing further en-

lightenment on the wide-ranging of a man who wrote lovingly about mules and was investigated by the House Un-American Activities Committee. One of his friends observed of Snow that his mind worked faster than that of most people and that being ahead of his time made for trouble. "I am a farmer," Snow said in the first sentence (p. 1) of his memoir, but he was much more, and to one who never met him but has lived with his book for decades, he is still a great friend. Others are invited to make his acquaintance.

--Michael B. Dougan,



***Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina.* By Vincanne Adams. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013. Pp. 228, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index, \$22.95, paper)**

Medical Anthropologist, Vincanne Adams, delivers a powerful analysis and critique of how the second-order disaster of failed relief to the victims of Katrina is symptomatic of federal monies used by for-profit businesses to fill their coffers off "affect surplus" (p. 149) and the "value-added" (p. 151) free labor of volunteers with bigger hearts than wallets. Through four years of ethnographic research, Adams and her research colleagues formally interviewed over 160 individuals as they personally experi-



enced the ongoing disaster. Not only was the physical damage created by the hurricane largely the result of human interference and neglect in the waterways around New Orleans, the aftermath, too, of suffering, hopelessness, and depression was, Adams argues, systematically prolonged as a result of shifting federal aid away from non-profit agencies toward for-profit corporations such as IFC International, Blackwater, and Halliburton. In the logic of what Naomi Klein has labeled "disaster capitalism," extending need and suffering improves the bottom line for so-called relief providers creating what Adams dubs "recovery capitalism" (p. 112). Consequently, monies were used to secure greater shares for stock holders than for needy individuals.

Adams details the structural manner in which assistance was provided to victims of Katrina, and how it exacerbated pre-existing social inequalities by class and race. The impact was disproportionately felt by those already on the margins of society; the poor and African Americans were assisted less often than were the middle and upper class whites. City managers of New Orleans elected to demolish public housing and replace it with mixed units. In a manner reminiscent of "red-lining" real estate practices, poor African Americans found their old homes too expensive to live in. "In fact, poor African Americans were about one-third as likely as wealthier residents and white residents to be able to return to live in New Orleans" (p. 41).

At eight years removed from the event, it is worth recalling that it was not the hurricane itself that caused the bulk of the devastation, but the flooding caused by the long-predicted breaks in the levee system along the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet. Adams recounts how the tragedy that is called Katrina was made by human choices more than natural forces in virtually every way. The same noncompetitive contracts that led to so many foibles in the privatization of military actions in Iraq were repeated in New Orleans in much the same manner and with nearly the same results.

Adams contends that, “it is abundantly clear that the merger of Homeland Security with FEMA led to government subcontracting processes that undermined the humanitarian capacities of the organization and enabled FEMA itself to become an instrument of profiteering” (p. 31). Privatization led to profits with very little quality control. Organizations that were miserable failures at helping people in need continued to secure large government contracts despite their poor performance.

The much vaunted business acumen of neoliberal capitalism deployed here resulted in profits for the corporations out of taxpayers monies. For example, the now infamous FEMA trailers which cost \$14-20,000 to produce, ultimately cost tax payers an exorbitant \$229,000 each (p. 32). Adams’s analysis critiques the widely held popular and political assumption that tossing relief efforts to the market place will result in better outcomes, and she challenges us, both as citizens of the United States and in the name of humanity, to demand an accounting of the flow of money upward as well as downward to those in need.

While the shift to what is marketed as “philanthrocapitalism” and “venture philanthropy” creates the illusion of charitable work, the bottom-line remains of greater importance than restoring someone to their home. The application of business measurements led to a full “credit” being awarded to companies for doing only one small part, e.g. landscaping a yard, but leaving the home uninhabitable. Money and efforts applied in such a fashion kept the money rolling into the for-profit companies while failing to restore people to their homes.

The rush of faith-based charities to fill the void left by privatized relief efforts made it appear that religious organizations were more effective in delivering assistance. In fact, the outpouring of help functioned to mask the scale of ineptitude and profiteering within the for-profit sector while mistakenly projecting an image of success. The money and resources of faith-based organizations paled in comparison

to what the government monies could have accomplished if it had not been for market forces that “leverage[d] profits from the recovery process” (p. 161).

The personal stories documented by Adams are moving and poignant. The loss of health services coupled with depression and grief contributed to the doubling of the death rate in the first two years after the hurricane, and the tripling of the suicide rate. Many of her interviewees internalized the blame for their predicament despite the legion of structural and organizational forces which caused them. Poor black men and women, mostly aged, many veterans, along with white men and women of wealth and privilege alike, found themselves waging a bureaucratic war against their insurance companies, and agencies such as Road Home. Whether it was for replacing windows in million dollar skyscrapers, stables for expensive horses, or basic sheet-rock for the walls of a home, New Orleanians were forced to develop “Katrina savvy” (p. 76), or risk losing virtually everything.

Research for this book was funded by the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute on Aging, which explains one of the book’s shortcomings. Only individuals forty years or older were interviewed. While the result is a stirring and disturbing account of adults knocked off their moorings and struggling to make sense of it all, one is left wondering how those in younger age brackets navigated the ordeal.

Those suffering from what Vincanne Adams calls “Katrina fatigue” (p.176) may not be lured by the subject of this book. However, students of New Orleans, taxpayers, fans of non-profits, and those unaware of how neoliberal capitalism is dismantling the non-profit sector of the economy with virtually no accountability to “investors,” i.e. taxpayers, may find it enlightening.

--Daniel Maher



***Natural State Notables: 21 Famous People from Arkansas.* By Steven Teske. (Little Rock, AR: Butler Center Books, 2013. Pp. 7 + 53, acknowledgments, preface, index. \$9.95, paperback)**

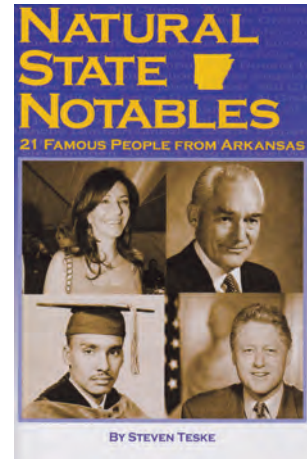
Add *Natural State Notables: 21 Famous People from Arkansas* to your list of books about Arkansas to purchase—especially if you have children. Order a copy for all of your young relatives and your neighbor’s children—really. Not only is Teske’s book a model for a quality informational book for children with its engaging preface, consistent page layout, and categorized index, but it also surfaces famous Arkansas well-known in specific fields.

As a teacher educator, informational books for young adolescents routinely attract my attention. *Natural State Notables* offers engagement to educators and young readers because of its structure and its content. Teske’s Preface asks readers, “What does it mean to be famous?” (p. 9). Then he introduces the journeys of the Arkansas Notables in his book, encouraging young readers to open themselves to “be another famous person from Arkansas!” (p. 9). In classrooms throughout Arkansas and the country, educators consistently guide young learners to study the noteworthy and famous—the contributors to societal good, to science, to politics. Any educator, especially social studies teachers, may use this informational book as a mentor text both for its design and for the concise, yet descriptive and sequential text. Students can mirror the double page spreads using digital media and create their own representations of biographical texts. The two-background-color dynamic with each famous person’s name and birth/death dates draws readers’ eyes to the left side of the page. With two photos (many in color) per notable that seem to represent the

early and then mid-to-later age, readers can view hard-to-find historical photographs worthy of examination. The right top of each page features a memorable quotation from each notable, while a timeline anchors a sequence of four major events in each notable’s life. From J.B. Hunt who lived in Lowell and Stuttgart to Maya Angelou who was from Stamps, readers can see a blue image of Arkansas with the notable’s town of origin and livelihood marked. Even lifelong Arkansans often do not know where some of the smaller towns lie in the context of where we live; these places (some ghost towns) are important to our history, our character, and our legacy.

Nationally famous Arkansans like Maya Angelou, Johnny Cash, Bill Clinton, John Grisham, and Sam Walton have their spaces in the book, and Teske smartly writes details fans may not know. One example is that Maya is a nickname for Marguerite; another is that Johnny Cash grew up in Dyess, which was “a colony in Arkansas for people who wanted to farm but had lost all their money in the Great Depression” (p. 16).

In my elementary school days, I always selected biographical texts about unfamiliar famous people, people I should know about but did not. Reading about the lives of Ruth Beall, John H. Johnson, Samuel Kountz, Rodney Slater, and Hazel Walker brought a remembrance of that desire. I most enjoyed reading about Ruth Beall, a humanitarian who saved Arkansas Children’s Hospital in Little Rock during the Great Depression. Ruth’s devotion toward feeding and saving children over her twenty-seven years of service may inspire any young person toward a path of consciousness



and similar work. Known as the “Terrible-Tempered Angel of Arkansas,” her personality is largely represented by a photo of her and three children petting an elephant friend (pp. 14-15). Born about 25 years after Beall, another famous Arkansan (yet unknown to me) was Hazel Walker. Reminiscent of the women baseball players in the movie *A League of their Own*, Hazel and her basketball team, the Arkansas Travelers, traveled from town to town taking on a variety of teams and winning most games. Prior to the Travelers, she belonged to a professional team called the All American Red Heads whose history paralleled the Harlem Globetrotters. Any basketball aficionado will love the photographs of Hazel’s team in red and white striped socks and satin uniforms. They will also deeply appreciate the value of entertainment offered by women athletes in a time when male sports dominated the radio waves.

The history of Rodney Slater’s life reminds us just how recently schools in Arkansas have been desegregated, and how racism affected black Arkansans who live to tell the stories. In high school, which would have been about 1972, Rodney was arrested for demonstrating in Marianna on Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday (p. 42). After attaining higher education, he became a lawyer and assistant attorney general in Arkansas. Eventually, he was appointed as director of the Federal Highway Administration by President Clinton. Rodney’s work on roadway systems and rebuilding projects after natural disasters speak volumes about how he cares for his state and for those across the country. He is one of the notables who are still living, along with former Senator Blanche Lincoln, singer Al Green, author Bette Greene, athlete Scottie Pippen, actress Mary Steenburgen and a few others.

Most remarkable to me from the notables in the book who have passed on yet whose contributions were most longlasting were John H. Johnson and Samuel Kountz. Johnson sought the spirit of togetherness during the floodings he experienced in Arkansas City in his child-

hood. He saw and remembered how Arkansans “could work together if they wanted to” (p. 32). After editing a paper, he decided he would start magazines for African Americans across the country. He began with the *Negro Digest*, then *Ebony* three years later. Several years after that, he created *Jet*. These long-lasting magazines are read by twenty million people today and embody Johnson’s dream “to bring people together” (p. 33). Samuel Kountz only lived 51 years, yet his life left profound impact on people who have never heard of him. He entered college in Pine Bluff with deficits in his academic life, yet he made up for it by graduating with the third-best grades in his class and then earning his MD from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in Little Rock. He was the first surgeon to transplant a kidney from another person who was not an identical twin; he was the one who then discovered how to properly manage the transplant process to maintain healthy kidneys. Because of Kountz’s discovery and advocacy of transplants to save lives, donations increased by the thousands.

Author Stephen Teske chose my favorite quotation in the book for Samuel Kountz’s pages, one that will live on in the memory of any young Arkansan:

When I convinced myself in my teens that the same process that had created me had created everyone else . . . I suddenly realized that I had a certain control over my destiny. It was a great revelation. . . . I cannot think of a single instance since 1952, when I have been denied anything because of being black. (p. 35)

This book offers the opportunity to read about these remarkable lives and to make the connection that being famous is about doing notable things that help others.

--Dixie K. Keyes



Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans. By Emily Epstein Landau. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Pp. xv + 310, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index, illustrations. \$39.95, cloth)

Nearly a hundred years after its closing, there is little physical evidence left of Storyville, New Orleans's lurid and tawdry red light district. All that remains are a dilapidated building dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and the contours of the old district preserved in the street names which constituted its legal, though hardly effective, boundary. Over the years, the ramshackle cribs and high-priced bordellos gave way to a low-income public housing development, it too now an eyesore and embarrassment to city officials and promoters of New Orleans's civic development and cultural economy. Storyville may have disappeared from sight, but pioneering jazz musicians, folklorists, journalists, and amateur historians kept its public memory alive, creating a narrative about the district which, like Storyville's famous Blue Book advertisements, is at odds with the historical record and the social realities clearly evident in it. These earliest students of Storyville ignored the district's malignant realities of venereal disease, violent crime, drug abuse, and the sexual exploitation of women, men, and children and romanticized its inhabitants as precursors of sexually liberated modern Americans. Later students, educated in the academy and experienced in the critical use of historical material, placed Storyville in the broader context of post-Reconstruction New Orleans, urbanizing, progressive America, and an evolving and contested Victorian morality. At the same time and in response to the new social history, these scholars investigated the daily lives of the ordi-

nary women who lived and "worked" in Storyville and beyond its limits. Their stories were not romantic; their lives were not liberated by commercialized sex, as is so starkly seen in the countless criminal arrest records, court proceedings, and Charity Hospital admissions records involving the city's "sporting classes."

The latest generation of historians, schooled in the post-modernist tradition, has incorporated the perspectives of other disciplines, most notably anthropology and gender studies, in reconstructing and re-accessing the lives of the women of Storyville. The most recent and felicitous study concerning the city's restricted district is Alecia P. Long's *The Great Southern Babylon: Sex, Race, and Respectability in New Orleans, 1865-1920* (2004), which argues that the restricting of vice in the name of middle-class respectability paralleled the white South's demand for racial segregation in all facets of modern urban life including long-accepted patterns of interracial sex—even with prostitutes. Emily Epstein Landau's *Spectacular Wickedness: Sex, Race, and Memory in Storyville, New Orleans* is the latest foray into New Orleans's *demi monde*. Professor Landau's work is ambitious and her research is wide-ranging, so much so that at times it is difficult to see its relevance to the history of Storyville. The thesis of her book is also difficult to express clearly and succinctly, except to say that it parallels and owes much to Alecia Long's *The Great Southern Babylon*. In her opening chapter, entitled "Land of Dreams," Professor Landau argues, among other things,

that the same historical actors and cultural forces that desired racial segregation



also brought Storyville into existence and, ironically, the octoroon prostitute [more on her later] into prominence within it. While white residents of New Orleans sought to clarify the borders of their own respectability and police their immediate environs, government officials and business men similarly desired to clear public spaces for legitimate, and profitable, endeavors. They sought to remove vice and prostitution from main thoroughfares and developing shopping districts . . . [and] for many white New Orleanians, the very notion of a 'respectable' city required not only the removal of vice and disorder from public view, but also the creation of an exclusively 'white' public sphere. (p.13)

In Professor Landau's view, though, Storyville represented more than a search for order and domestic and municipal respectability. Storyville "offered a stage for acting out cultural fantasies of white supremacy, patriarchal power, and a renewed version of American manhood for the twentieth century" (p.1). As Professor Landau elaborated further in the introductory chapter, white southern men, humiliated and emasculated by defeat in the Civil War and threatened by the assertiveness of white women into the public sphere and the lingering political and civic presence of black men, sought to reassert their antebellum dominance by having interracial sex, away from their domestic sphere, with women who represented their former "patriarchal power," the so-called tragic octoroon.

It is difficult to imagine that the city's political and business leaders like Martin Behrman and Sidney Story, who were born during the Civil War and were never part of the planter class (Behrman was born in New York City), viewed the creation and preservation of the restricted district as a projection of the southern white male's desire for re-establishing its patriarchal power. From their vantage points as proponents of the New South, the defeat of the southern Confederacy and the abolition of slav-

ery were blessings signaling the end of planter domination and the rise of a more representative and progressive urban south. Behrman and his brand of urban progressives saw disfranchisement as the means of breaking the grip of rural Democrats on Louisiana and New Orleans politics. Segregation was a response to migration of rural blacks, like Lulu White, Willie Piazza, and the majority of women who lived in their brothels, into New South cities like Atlanta, Memphis, and especially New Orleans. My point is there were more direct and powerful ways of asserting white male power than visiting Lulu White's so-called Octoroon Hall, which leads me to my final remarks.

Every publication has its minor flaws and errors and *Spectacular Wickedness* is no exception. The maps outlining Storyville's boundary are inaccurate. Canal Street was never part of Storyville and North Franklin was not renamed Crozat Street until 1924, seven years after Storyville closed. The term *faubourg*, as city surveyors and real estate developers employed it, meant subdivision, not "working class," as Professor Landau suggests. These are minor oversights which better editing would have corrected. The major flaw in this work is its uncritical use of census material and the infamous Blue Books. The 1900 and 1910 United States Censuses clearly record that the majority of prostitutes living in Storyville were white and many of them from states other than Louisiana. The same records reveal that Lulu White, Willie Piazza, and the women living with them as "boarders" were listed either as black or mulatto. None is recorded as octoroon. The Blue Book advertisements identifying women as octoroon simply are not believable and are not substantiated by other more reliable evidence like the census reports, police records, and photographs. Lulu White and her self-image as a tragic octoroon were not, as Professor Landau's writes, "as much a myth as a reality" (p.197). Even in the "Land of Dreams," reality should take precedence over myth.

--Terrence W. Fitzmorris

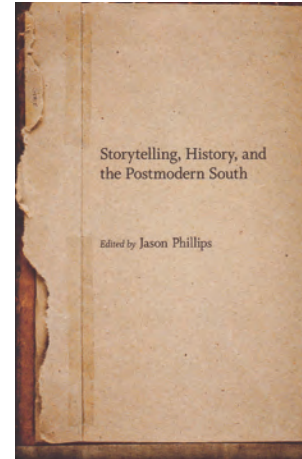


Storytelling, History, and the Postmodern South. Ed. Jason Phillips. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013. Pp. xiv + 226, acknowledgments, contributors, \$48.00, hardcover)

Historians often point out that history is an incomplete story told by dominant cultures, and literary scholars often take pride in the many voices in literature that challenge such history. Although constructing a complete past is an impossible ideal, incorporating literature into the study of history can provide a more detailed and honest version. This anthology of nine essays explores the intersect of history and southern storytelling and demonstrates that storytelling can challenge standard accounts of the past and present.

Phillips introduces this collection by analyzing Ralph Ellison's comment that historians are "respectable liars" (p. 1). Phillips explains that Ellison was criticizing historians for perpetuating a series of what Phillips refers to as "master narratives"; that is, "stories masquerading as knowledge or truth that promote the interests of white patriarchy past and present" (p. 2). He then notes that historical inquiry based upon critiques of master narratives is trapped in a continuum determined by hegemonic versions of history, and he observes that historians should engage the South's tradition of storytelling to move beyond these narratives' influence. He adds that such an approach would enhance southern studies by allowing historians to employ multiple postmodern theories to provide a deeper version of history and would prompt literary scholars to engage more history and broaden the study of southern literature (pp. 7-8).

The first four essays in this collection focus upon the nexus of history and literature. In his study of Will Percy's autobiography, Bertram Wyatt-Brown argues that Percy, in his life and writing, "had to negotiate between the anti-intellectual proclivities and



conventions of a rural, hierarchical, southern world and his own far more generous and accepting spirit and cosmopolitanism" (pp. 13-14) and that Percy used a blend of myth and reality to embrace and reject elements of southern culture. Farrell O'Gorman offers close readings of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Faulkner, Percy, and McCarthy to argue that southern gothic has been read too narrowly and that the probing of anti-Catholicism by these writers "deconstruct[s] myths of Anglo-American exceptionalism which feature the South and the larger United States as somehow purifying or righteously escaping the tainted past" (p. 45). Anne Marshall examines the writings of Robert Penn Warren and C. Vann Woodard to explore how fiction often subverts the master narrative, preserves truth of social realities, and confronts the realities and burdens of a past cursed by slavery. K. Stephen Prince examines Thomas Page's redefinitions of southern master narratives and his re-creation of the South as a mythical place to be admired and as an institution that might provide the nation "with the romance and heroism it so desperately needed" to assert itself as a world leader in the twentieth century.

The five remaining essays focus upon storytelling's power to deconstruct and reconstruct southern identities. Jewel L. Spangler analyzes race relations and a case of attempted murder in the autobiography of the Baptist minister

James Ireland to qualify the common view of Baptists as outsiders in southern society. Orville Vernon Burton and Ian Binnington reveal how southern novelists wedded local and regional identities to create a nationalism that outlived its confederacy. In his study of color as a racial marker in the post-Civil War era, Jim Downs demonstrates that color was used to categorize African-Americans, regardless of class or status, as members of a dying and degenerate race. David A. Davis suggests that although authors of white trash autobiography challenge the stereotypes of poor lower-class people, they fail to overturn these caricatures because they refuse to apologize for their social status. In the final essay, Robert Jackson delivers an overview of “the strange career of the professional southerner,” provides various definitions of this character, and offers numerous examples of this southerner, ranging from Jubal Early to Bill Clinton.

This collection models the interdisciplinary approach it advocates, challenging master narratives in each essay. Such interdisciplinary study is not a new concept, yet this collection is a stimulating and ground-breaking demonstration of the potential of storytelling to revitalize history. In her essay Anne Marshall notes that one of the central themes in Woodward’s and Warren’s writing is “the ability of southern literature to reveal the pain of southern history” (71). We should allow literature to reveal this pain, and the approaches advocated in this volume can enrich all histories, for all histories are incomplete and contain unjust silences.

--Phillip Howerton

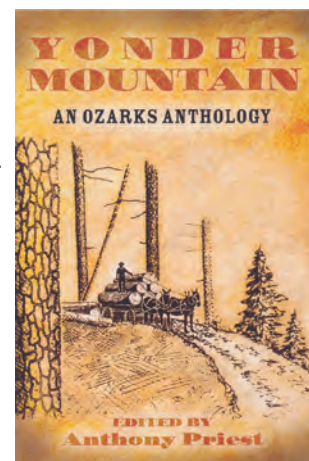


Yonder Mountain: An Ozarks Anthology. Ed. by Anthony Priest. (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2013. Pp. xii +

214, introduction, acknowledgments. \$19.95, paper)

This collection of stories (both fiction and nonfiction) and poetry edited by Anthony Priest, a poet and English professor at Missouri State University-West Plains, showcases a variety of work by a virtual Who’s Who of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century Ozarks writers. Inspired by the publication more than thirty years ago of prize-winning poet Miller Williams’s compilation, *Ozark, Ozark: A Hillside Reader*, the thirty contributors to this new Ozarks anthology aim to perpetuate and build upon the small but talented “literary legacy born out of the hills we call home” (p. xii). In contrast to the highly romanticized and idealized character of previous Ozarks writings, however, *Yonder Mountain* invites readers to “contemplate the contrast between river and rock—between ephemeral and eternal” (p. xi).

Historian Brooks Blevins’s nonfiction piece, “Jethro and Abner: An Arkansas Counterculture,” reminds us that simple stereotypes and sensationalized imagery—whether viewed negatively or positively—have long defined the region and its people in the popular imagination and clouded efforts to understand the real Ozarks. The Ozarks writers featured in this compilation, much like those writing in recent decades about the Appalachian Mountains back east, represent an important paradigm shift, one that generally emphasizes change and diversity. While the authors point to distinctive traits of Ozarks life and culture, their stories transcend localism and regionalism and, for better or worse, speak to the broader human ex-



perience.

A few of the authors, such as journalist and performer Merideth Sisco, demonstrate the powerful and inspiring potential of nostalgia and romanticism, themes that have deep roots in Ozarks literature. Others such as the late conservationist and outdoor columnist Charles J. Farmer and prize-winning writers Pattiann Rogers and Andrea Hollander soothe readers with serene and spiritual portrayals of the region's natural beauty, another feature with long traditions among Ozarks writers. Most of the anthology's works, however, embody a newer and more sober depiction of the region and its people, one that engages real change, confusion, complexities, and contradictions. Poets Phillip Howerton and Anthony Priest and historian Bonnie Stepenoff, for instance, remind us that the supposedly "unspoiled" landscape and society, in fact, have not escaped the imprints of American "progress" and "modernization." Writer Jan Peterson Roddy, furthermore, vividly hints at the ironic and grittier sides of the region that go unnoticed in overly-romanticized depictions and selective imaginations when she writes, for example, that Ozarks "reenactors rehearse history perennially on old battlefields and town parks at the edge of swollen creeks, conjuring a selective remembrance of heroes and sacrifice as spring floods wash up remnants of back-woods meth labs tangled in a mud-stained rebel flag, a child's once-yellow dress and worn wooden-handled hoe" (p. 141). These writers offer a significant contrast to the typical Ozarks depicted on postcards and tourism billboards.

Themes of diversity, change, tragedy, and perseverance pervade *Yonder Mountain*. Novelist Katie Estill illuminates the anthology's general character in her story about Lana, a girl from the Philippines who was sold into sex slavery to a man in Wyoming and escaped into the Ozarks where she befriended an elderly native and struggled to scrape by as an undocumented worker washing dishes at the local Barbeque Shack. Likewise, Estill's husband and author

Daniel Woodrell—who is best known for his novel *Winter's Bone*, which was made into an award-winning motion picture in 2010—also exemplifies the new directions and themes among Ozarks writers in his short story, "Black Step." Writing from the perspective of a fictional and yet all-too-real casualty of U.S. military "conflict" in the Middle East and the curses of American poverty, Woodrell's tragic Ozarks character captures the mood: "Before I went into the desert I'd had a decent job at Spangler Feeds, hefting sacks, stacking salt blocks, sweeping grain dust and such, and they would've held it for me, but the whole feed mill burned down to a knee-high mess of ash and nails while I was away, and the Spanglers decided not to rebuild, just not worth it, so they moved to Florida instead and fish for big ones at sea a lot. They sent a postcard. Where Ma worked didn't help with insurance, so now I watch cows for her while I can and we'll contribute the dough to cancer treatment" (pp. 190-191).

Yonder Mountain is a must-read for anyone interested in the Ozarks. It also stands as a model for how regional literature can tell local stories that appeal to and say more to us about the broader human condition—beyond place and regionalism. This new anthology is the product of the increased interests and labors in recent years of a growing number of scholars, artists, and cultural enthusiasts in the region, many of whom now meet annually at the Ozarks Studies Symposium in West Plains, Missouri, to discuss their work. Hopefully, this new volume will help inspire much more to come.

-- J. Blake Perkins

