

# Reviews

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*Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory.* By Karlos K. Hill. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016. Pp. x + 145, acknowledgements, references, index. \$24.99 paperback)

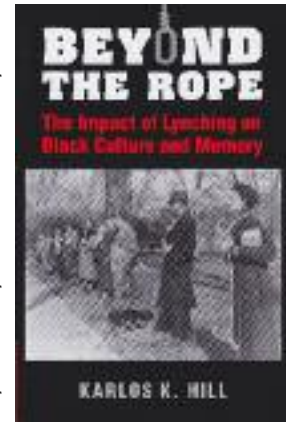
Though the scholarly literature on lynching in America continues to grow at a steady pace, there still exist a number of noteworthy gaps, understudied facets of the broader phenomenon. For one, the lynching of slaves has not yet received the scholarly attention it warrants. For another, while the victims of mob violence have been the subject of critical analysis, the actual mobs themselves still remain relatively anonymous. Granted, these oversights exist for a variety of reasons; the identity of mob participants, for example, has often been obscured in whatever records exist of lynching events. However, it is remarkable that the broader black community affected by these lynchings has only begun to be studied within the last decade or so. How did they understand and interpret what had happened? What meaning did they find in the violence we so often want to describe as meaningless?

Karlos K. Hill's *Beyond the Rope* is a short but rich volume that constitutes a major effort at addressing questions like these. While the individual lynched has typically been framed in relation to his/her status as a victim, Hill sees the lynched black body as what cultural theorist Stuart Hall termed a "floating signifier," devoid of fixed meaning but always open to redefinition and appropriation. As he writes, "Although black Americans have framed lynched black bodies as symbols of black death and white terror—and continue to do so—they

have also framed lynched black bodies as affirmations of black subjectivity and humanity" (p. 14). Hill looks at the varied black reactions to lynching, everything from the support of vigilantism (when exercised by black mobs) to the creation of heroic narratives

around murdered African Americans. The result is a book that ably illustrates the broader cultural impact of lynching, beyond the murdered black body and beyond the immediate time in which this murder occurred.

In a survey of material centered upon the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta region, Hill begins by examining the phenomenon of African American mobs lynching members of their own communities. Knowing that such a phenomenon could be reduced to the "black-on-black violence" that dominates right-wing discourse, weakening the recognition of lynching as a tool of white supremacy ("they did it, too, after all"), the author patiently contextualizes such violence, noting that the black community's recourse to lynching mirrored, in many respects, that of white-on-white lynching (the most manifest form prior to the 1890s); namely, black vigilantes were driven by a belief that the authorities could not, or would not, seriously address crime in their communities. However, there were important differences. For one, black mobs "typically eschewed rituals of violence associated with spectacle lynching such as mutilation, castration, and burning" (p. 26). Secondly, while white vigilantes expressed worry primarily regarding the pace of judicial proceedings, "evidence suggests that black vig-



ilantes circumvented the criminal justice system because it rarely punished crimes against blacks” at all (p. 28).

Such black vigilantism declined with the increasing racialization of lynching and the rise of the “black beast rapist” narrative, but if African Americans were willing in the past to defy white authorities and take up arms against one of their own, so, too, were they willing to protect members of their communities from white authorities and vigilantes: “Within the Mississippi and Arkansas Deltas specifically, black armed self-defense as a response to an anticipated lynching was more often than not precipitated by violent confrontations between blacks and white plantation owners, white merchants, and white police” (p. 42). Such was the 1910 case of Steve Green, who was given aid after he shot and killed a local landowner in Jericho, Arkansas, and was eventually able to flee to Chicago, where the local black community prevented his extradition back to Arkansas. Likewise, the local black community, especially members of a fraternal lodge, helped Henry Lowery escape Arkansas after he killed a white landowner in late 1920.

However, Lowery was eventually captured and returned to Arkansas, and while his lynching featured such brutality that it became a centerpiece for the growing anti-lynching movement, it also fostered what Hill calls a “consoling narrative,” one which highlights how African Americans “violently fought back despite the inevitability of lynching” or faced death stoically, thus imbuing victims with heroic qualities (p. 69). Hill examines how such consoling narratives manifested themselves in black literary output, specifically in Ida B. Wells’s pamphlet “Mob Rule in New Orleans,” Sutton Grigg’s *The Hindered Hand*, and Richard Wright’s *Uncle Tom’s Children*. A subsequent chapter looks at how black Southerners represented and remembered lynching in oral history interviews, especially those from the “Behind the Veil” oral history project at Duke University. Here, Hill finds that, in contrast to

the “black beast rapist” narrative, African Americans often told stories of black men fleeing the advances of rapacious white women—women who could threaten to spread stories of rape should their desires not be met.

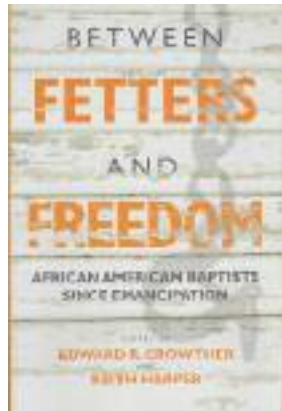
If there is a problem with *Beyond the Rope*, it is that each chapter seems a potential book of its own, that the reader gets but a brief taste of the rich possibilities and insights before moving on to the next chapter. What this means, of course, is that Hill has opened up some new avenues of exploration, rather than debating the overall body count, for example. Moreover, as he touches upon in his conclusion, widespread video technology has called into question long-standing law enforcement narratives about “dangerous” black bodies, and so if the black community’s perspective about police violence can now be vindicated, then why not black collective memory about lynching? *Beyond the Rope* demands that we tell the story of lynching from a far broader perspective, for we cannot approach any semblance of truth otherwise.

--Guy Lancaster



***Between Fetters and Freedom: African American Baptists Since Emancipation.* Edited by Edward R. Crowther and Keith Harper. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2015. Pp. 252, afterword, index. \$35.00, cloth)**

In their introduction, Edward R. Crowther and Keith Harper note that despite the commonality of evangelical sentiment and purpose, continuing racial divides separate white and black Baptists. For the latter, the Baptist church has provided a religious and cultural identity that has stretched into every sociopolitical



sphere. An enlightening collection of essays, *Between Fetters and Freedom* explores the distinct Baptist identity that emerged after 1865 and continued to define black Baptists throughout the civil rights movement. Among other points of interest, these articles center on the foundation of black Baptist traditions and the authenticity of black Baptist beliefs after Emancipation and throughout Reconstruction, as well as the tensions between and splintering (or not) of interracial congregations, ways by which black and white Baptist women manipulated church structures (or each other) for black advancement, and the profound role of the black Baptist church in social dissent and fight for equality in the mid-twentieth century.

Discussing one of the book's foundational themes, Sandy Dwayne Martin compellingly paints a portrait of jubilant black Southerners in the aftermath of Emancipation and an immediate postwar environment who interpreted the outcomes of the Civil War through a decidedly different lens than either their white Northern, and especially Southern, Baptist counterparts. Martin roots his examination of the emerging black Baptist church in black Americans' historical rejection of the idea that God sanctioned enslavement. Further, he argues that white Baptist Southerners contributed to their own confusion regarding the veracity of black Baptist faith by demanding black prayers for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Upon Confederate defeat, white Southerners had to consider how belief in the same God and denominational ties yielded black freedom wherein an entire social order disappeared (p. 15). Spiritual vindication not only affirmed black Baptists' faith, but also served as the wellspring for the creation of scores of

black-controlled institutions that included schools, banks, and presses, among other markers of individual and collective uplift. Martin affirms that far removed from the myth of the Lost Cause, the nascent black Baptist church reveled in what they recognized as God's justification and used that as the platform for racial elevation.

Still, it is a mistake for historians to consider black Baptist as though any denomination or congregation operated, or operates, as part of a monolith. On the contrary, Charles F. Irons and April C. Armstrong ably highlight the questions that arose between black Baptists when it came to matters of separating from pre-war-established interracial churches or deciding to what extent women should influence the shape of the church. "North Carolina's Black Baptists and the Predicament of Emancipation" challenges earlier scholarship's assumptions that black Baptists immediately broke away from white-organized churches in the aftermath of Union victory and in attempts to definitively underline their autonomy. Rather, Irons's investigation points to scores of factors ranging from advanced age, individual or community patronage to black communities from white congregants, to political trepidation that either prevented black Baptists from ever severing ties with white-dominated churches or establishing their own black-controlled churches at a much slower pace than historians have previously considered (p. 42). These conversations happened exclusively between black Baptist men and women as they alone determined the most advantageous course of spiritual and social action for their communities; individual groups reached individual conclusions. It is a weakness of a fascinating study that Irons does not underline more strongly that this dissent is also evidence of black autonomy and self-determination even when black congregants decided ultimately to remain within white Baptist bodies or gingerly extract themselves from those churches. Similarly, Armstrong offers a unique glimpse into rare cooperation between

white and black Baptist women. In the relationship between Annie Walker Armstrong and Nannie Helen Burroughs, Armstrong explores the complicated story of friendship and spiritual (though not social) equality that emerged between the white Southern Baptist woman and the black National Baptist woman. Annie Armstrong's evangelism led her to believe that sanctification and conversion to the Baptist faith posed the best form of uplift for black Southerners—a core belief shared by Burroughs who fundamentally deviated from Armstrong in her own contention that the Baptist faith must be used as a cornerstone of social justice advancement for black people (pp. 92, 107). Despite their marked disagreements over the root causes of and treatments for racism, April C. Armstrong persuasively argues that Annie Walker Armstrong and Nannie Helen Burroughs formed a lasting friendship that did center on and work toward the uplift of black Southerners, and of which Burroughs wrote, “We are not performing miracles, but we are making headway . . .” (p. 112).

That headway is personified in Courtney Pace Lyons's admirable treatment of Reverend Prathia Hall, who braved the dangers of working with SNCC in southwest Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi's Freedom Summer. Hall's stalwart Baptist belief served as a beacon of hope for other young activists (Representative John Lewis remembered her dedication and her “stick-to-it-ness”), she and suffered physical trauma and incarceration for her activities, noting that her faith buttressed her devotion to social justice that “may cost my life, but I want to be free. . . . I'm going to trust God to take me there . . . that's freedom faith” (p. 201). Continuing controversy within the National Baptist Convention over whether to recognize women ministers, as well as long-standing sexism that is pervasive throughout Protestant denominations, has marginalized Reverend Hall and other significant women religious leaders of the civil rights movement. Lyons's study places Hall alongside Martin Luther King Jr. and Baptist

men of the civil rights struggle and is an excellent springboard for deeper investigation of black Baptist women in spiritual and social justice movements.

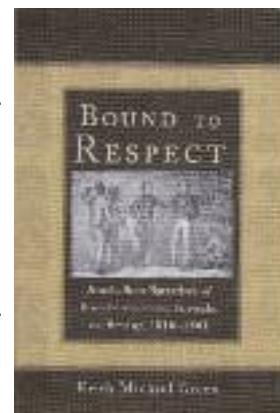
Taken together, the compilation offers any student of the black Baptist church a wellspring of ideas and arguments that will surely intrigue. Crowther and Harper have succeed in showcasing the myriad of causes from which black Baptists have “often found themselves . . . between fetters and freedom” (p. 8).

--Misti Nicole Harper



*Bound to Respect: Antebellum Narratives of Black Imprisonment, Servitude, and Bondage, 1816–1861.* By Keith Michael Green. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2015. Pp. xxi–xiii + 174, acknowledgements, notes, works cited, index. \$49.95, hardcover)

Prisons were often used to confine slaves, as well as places to mete out corporal punishments for which slave owners themselves had not the stomach. Such was the case of William Wells Brown. A slave waiter, Brown solicited the ire of his owner one evening after he accidentally spilled wine on one of his master's guests. As punishment for his insolence, Mr. Walker sent him to the local jail with instructions that



Brown receive twenty lashes. However, the Kentucky-born slave had different plans. The next morning Brown managed to dupe “a free black man into receiving his punishment” (p. 38). Brown’s story is but one of several that Keith Michael Green enumerates in his *Bound to Respect*, a monograph that explores imprisonment, servitude, and bondage in nineteenth-century America.

In his effort to rescue from obscurity various methods of bondage that existed between 1816 and 1861, Green turns to slave narratives. He starts with Briton Hammon’s *Narrative of the Uncommon Sufferings*, a fascinating story of slavery. Hammon would serve several masters before he gained his freedom. At one time, he was a captive of Indians of the east coast of Florida. On another occasion, he endured detention in Cuba, albeit briefly, before eventually finding his old master on board a ship where he worked as the cook. Reunited with his old master, Briton would finally make his way back to Massachusetts after twelve years, where he would write of his journey (pp. 2-5). From Hammon’s travails, Green turns his attention to Harriet Jacobs’s autobiography. Instead of Jacobs’s struggle to escape sexual exploitation, the associate professor of English at Rutgers University focuses on the slave woman’s descriptions of how local prisons were used by slave owners as methods of punishing slaves. In Henry Bibb’s *Life and Adventures*, he finds an example of black imprisonment by Cherokee Indians (pp. 93-94). In his discussion of Bibb’s experience Green describes the differences in how slavery under the Cherokee is remembered. In *Our Nig*, Green analyzes black servitude in the North. Although born free, Harriet Wilson’s narrative relays a tragic tale in which she was abandoned by her parents and sold as a ward to a wealthy white family (p. 102). The epilogue of the book makes use of *The Color Purple*, a fictional novel about African American women in the 1930s, as a capstone.

While insightful in its reading of slave narratives, *Bound to Respect* falls short in several

respects. In a monograph focused on the antebellum period, Green interjects a discussion of twentieth- and twenty-first century subjects. For example, the book jumps ahead to the 1960s and ’70s as the prison sentence of George Jackson is used in an attempt to draw a parallel between Harriet Jacobs’s brother, William, and Jackson (pp. 51-52). Additionally, another jump is made to the early 1990s with Green’s examination of the life and imprisonment of deceased rapper Tupac Shakur. This attempt at yet another parallel, from William to Jackson to Tupac, not only falls outside the scope of the book, but it is also forced (p. 53). Likewise his discussion of Alice Walker’s twentieth-century novel overreaches (p. 171). In addition, Green’s analysis of Robert Adams does not fit with the focus of the monograph. Robert Adams was a mulatto American sailor who had been enslaved during the early part of the antebellum era by the Barbary people (pp. 137-138). While his sojourn into African slavery is interesting, it does not appear apropos. Adams’s narrative appears to have been included because he was an American instead of being included because it took place on American soil. Given that the book studies how various forms of imprisonment, servitude, and bondage existed alongside, and in support of, antebellum American slavery, jumping outside of the United States is odd.

Ultimately, though, *Bound to Respect* is a fine text that could fit into any collection about antebellum slave narratives. It speaks to a passed over history that has been largely pushed aside in favor of the more popular plantation slavery scholarship and more popular slavery myths. Green makes a strong case that these forms of African-American bondage that existed alongside and in support of slavery are just as important and integral to history as plantation slavery. While there are some formatting aspects of the book that may create confusion, the story told, as a whole, is well written and commands attention. *Bound to Respect* focuses on slave narratives that have been often neglected and shows a more nuanced side to ante-

bellum slavery.

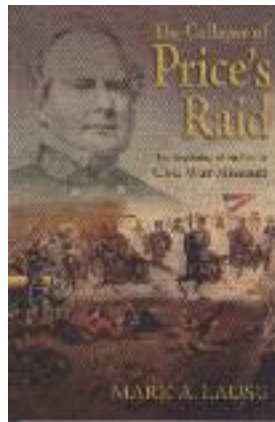
--Samuel Austin Nicholls



***The Collapse of Price's Raid: The Beginning of the End in Civil War Missouri.* By Mark A. Lause. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2016. Pp. 183 + prologue, epilogue, notes, index. \$32.95, hardcover)**

Military officers are often taught during their training that even the best laid plans in combat never survive contact with the enemy. One of the best examples of this axiom is the Confederate invasion of Missouri in late 1864.

Led by former Missouri Governor Sterling Price, then serving as a major general in the Confederate army, the invasion was the last major offensive gasp in the Trans-Mississippi. Mark Lause ably covers the second half of this campaign in his new work *The Collapse of Price's Raid:*



*The Beginning of the End in Civil War Missouri.* The ultimate goal of the campaign was to gather men and supplies in Missouri to support the Confederate cause and ultimately bring the state into the Confederacy. This would be done by capturing either St. Louis or the capital at Jefferson City. In the end, the campaign turned out to be an utter failure for the Confederates.

This is the second work by Lause to be published on the raid in the last five years. The first work, *Price's Lost Campaign: The 1864 Inva-*

*sion of Missouri*, covers the planning and early stages of the raid. *The Collapse of Price's Raid* completes the story of the entire campaign.

The second work opens in early October 1864 as Price's army moves westward across the state. Price led his initial force from Camden, Arkansas on August 28 and picked up more troops in Princeton and Pocahontas. The grandly named "Army of Missouri" saw action first at the Battle of Fort Davidson on September 27. Suffering heavy casualties for no military advantage, Price instead allowed Federal forces to begin to organize to oppose his thrust into the state although confusion and a lack of preparation continued to hamper Union military units for weeks to come.

Fearing that St. Louis was too heavily fortified to attack, Price turned his army to the west in an effort to take Jefferson City. Failing to attack the capital in the face of a large enemy force, Price abandoned that objective as well. Lause's work begins at this point and follows the Confederate campaign through battles at Boonville and Glasgow, both of which were Union defeats. Price's army was too large to operate as one unit and was instead divided into smaller units that moved across the countryside, leading to multiple engagements by different units. While the engagement at Glasgow saw a vast amount of military equipment captured by the Confederates, including weapons and horses, the army continued to march westward across the state and did not make any effort to hold a particular location for more than a few days.

Additional Confederate victories came at Sedalia and Lexington, but a lack of direction from Price led the troops to continue towards the border with Kansas. Meanwhile, Federal troops organized to oppose the force. A combination of Union volunteer units as well as militia from both Missouri and Kansas organized to meet the threat. The climactic battle of the campaign was fought at Westport on October 23, leading to a Federal victory.

With his army crumbling around him and

pursued by thousands of Federals, Price retreated into Kansas where he was defeated at the battles of Mine Creek and Marmiton. The Confederates continued their flight and reentered Missouri where they were defeated at the Battle of Newtonia. Prisoners held by the Confederates were executed during the retreat while the pursuing Federals likewise killed captured enemy soldiers. Reentering Arkansas, the Confederates continued to retreat to the south and spent some time in the Indian Territory before entering Texas and finally ending the campaign in extreme southwestern Arkansas. The raid into Missouri led to the estimated loss of more than 10,000 men killed, wounded, or missing out of approximately 12,000 who began the campaign. While these losses are somewhat lessened by the fact that at least some men joined or were conscripted during the campaign, raising the total number of Confederates participating in the raid, the losses decimated much of the Confederate army in the Trans-Mississippi for the remainder of the war.

Lause does an admirable job chronicling the movements and actions of multiple units during the raid. Using a combination of primary and secondary sources, detailed endnotes help guide readers wishing to learn more about the raid. A few additions would make the work easier to use, including maps and a separate bibliography. An index is included but is incomplete. The biggest shortcoming for the book is the need for the reader to have Lause's earlier work, *Price's Lost Campaign: The 1864 Invasion of Missouri* to better understand the background of the raid. While a casual reader would not find this an easy read, for serious students of the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi, this volume would prove to be useful.

--David Sesser

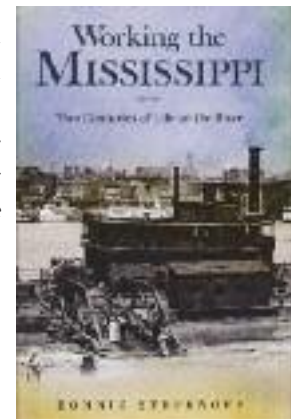


***Working the Mississippi: Two Cen-***

***turies of Life on the River.* By Bonnie Stepenoff. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2015. Pp. ix–xxii + 136, list of illustrations, acknowledgements, author's note, introduction, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$36.00, hardcover)**

For many, working aboard ships making runs up and down the Mississippi River or living in communities reliant upon the great flowing body was a life equated to adventure, a chance to earn a living, and a connection to other parts of the country. Yet, at any given moment, those

same trips and the river itself could turn into peril or financial ruin. Historian Bonnie Stepenoff's *Working the Mississippi: Two Centuries of Life on the River* seeks to bring to life the realities of those who worked on vessels between St. Louis and Memphis, which the



author identifies as the Middle Mississippi. Although less nuanced than Thomas Buchanan's *Black Life on the Mississippi*, Stepenoff's work offers a popular look at those who relied upon the great river for economic and social connections as she overlays how the presence of the river inspired an adventurous spirit in the people as well as an underlying fear of its power and unpredictability in a brief text.

Relying on diaries, directories, autobiographies, interviews, photographs, newspapers, and Army Corp of Engineering records from archives throughout the region, Stepenoff craftily takes readers along the same journeys as the captains, pilots, deckhands, stewards, maids, gamblers, and passengers. Readers find that the

men, women, and children of various socio-ethnic groups—such as immigrants from Ireland and Germany, free and enslaved African Americans, and native-born white Americans—who navigated the region from the late-eighteenth through the twentieth centuries contributed to a world more diverse and dynamic than previously imagined. The author details an assorted life on the river that offered a sense of liberation for young Irish or German Americans serving as cabin boys or deckhands; native whites rising to the ranks of captain, pilot, or engineer; African Americans working as stewards, cooks, or porters; and women, a substantial minority, working as cooks and maids. However, what truly brings the narrative to life is the intimate and complex connection between life on the river and the communities along the banks, which included boatyards and docks in St. Louis; a prison in Chester, Illinois; grocers in Cape Girardeau; farming communities in the New Madrid Floodway; hospitals in Memphis; and the people working on the river. For all who lived and worked on the Mississippi, there was a deep intangible characteristic that connected the communities to the river and it was a connection that transcended occupations and time. Furthermore, the author does an excellent job in never allowing readers to forget that the river itself is a major character in the narrative.

Divided into fourteen short chapters with odd chapters covering specific towns along the river and even chapters detailing specific occupations held by those onboard ships, Professor Stepenoff's work is organized in such a way as "to give a reader a trip down the river," starting with St. Louis and ending in Memphis (p.xix). Along the way, there are also stops in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri; Chester, Illinois; Cape Girardeau, Missouri; Cairo, Illinois and New Madrid, Missouri. At each stop the reader gains a measure of how reliant upon or how destructive the river could be. Examples include how nineteenth-century citizens of the old French enclave of Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, which consisted of a residential cultural blend, enjoyed

their commercial links to the river as they savored goods like rum, parasols, and Cuban cigars brought from New Orleans. However, flooding in Chester that occurred in 1844, 1881, and 1993 completely decimated the town's neighboring community of Kaskaskia, Illinois to the point that the community was separated from the rest of the state by the river.

The chapters relating to occupations and life aboard ships tell of adventure and excitement juxtaposed with hardship and constant danger. With Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, serving as an adventurous backdrop, the text highlights how the public and passengers revered captains and pilots who even during the darkest nights navigated their steamships through the twists and turns of the river. Not to be overlooked are the stories of hardship, including tales of boiler explosions, which killed workers and passengers alike. It is the personal stories of those connected to the river that make this work a delight to read.

The book narrates the personal connections between the river and nearby communities with individual anecdotes, yet there appears to be an omission of depth regarding political wrangling between neighboring polities, such as Missouri and Illinois, over how to manage the potential emergencies posed by the river's presence. Prior to the 1850s, for many enslaved Missourians, even though not a secure stop, crossing the river to Illinois was an opportunity to become free, but readers may be left uncertain as to how the two states sought to manage this dilemma. Also, during the most recent flooding in 2011, the text does not address if there was uncertainty expressed by civic leaders over the flooding of Missouri farm lands in Southeastern Missouri, though it is expressed that politicians in the state fought for decades to prevent levee breaches in the region.

These points aside, *Working the Mississippi*, which offers a wonderful look at life on and along the river, offers a marvelous take on the Middle-Mississippi Valley where readers become passengers witnessing the triumphs and



failures of gamblers, seeing the “swagger” of a pilot navigating dangerous bends and breaks, enjoying the music of a young Louis Armstrong, or experiencing the devastating consequences of living near the river. It is a text that should be valued and read by anyone seeking to know more about life along the Mississippi.

--Marlin Barber



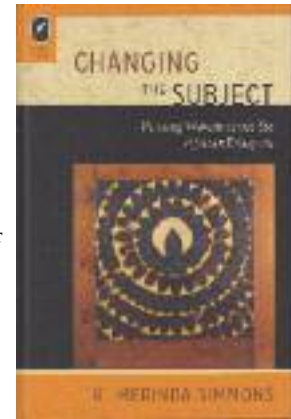
***Changing the Subject: Writing Women Across the African Diaspora.* By K. Merinda Simmons. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2014. Pp. ix–xi + 144, Notes, Works Cited, Index. \$54.95, hardcover)**

K. Merinda Simmons’s *Changing the Subject: Writing Women Across the African Diaspora* begins with a striking meditation on her location, the campus of the University of Alabama. The university belatedly (in 2004) attempted, according to Simmons, to commemorate the slaves who helped to build the university’s buildings by putting up a plaque. Only a few of their names are now known and none of their graves are locatable, she notes, in sharp distinction to the elaborately marked graves of notable white figures in the University’s history.

Clearly Simmons understands that landscape, far from being natural, is powerfully shaped by social relations and conflicts, and expresses human values in a given time and place. It’s an appropriate beginning for a study that explores first person narratives by black women and particularly how diasporic women’s subjectivities change as the women migrate from one place to another.

She organizes the study around how several

twentieth century novels reprise the concerns of the nineteenth-century slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince, As Related by Herself* (1831). Mary Prince was a West Indian slave moved around the Caribbean by successive owners who later told her life story to Susannah Strickland, an amanuensis from the Anti-Slavery Society in England. *Changing the Subject* thus joins the ranks of many studies over the last few decades that strive to reimagine the literary history of the US South with the voices of women and people of color at its center. Simmons’s is a rigorous project undertaken under the influence of historian Joan Wallach Scott and her successors. Like them, Simmons asks whether such historical counter narratives are actually as accessible as some scholars seem to believe. In the case of Mary Prince’s narrative, Simmons calls attention to the diverse claims various “readers” make, both



inside and outside the text, as to the kind of woman Prince is: her editor sees her as an exemplary servant; her owners see her as untrustworthy and promiscuous; scholars believe her to speak for West Indian slaves in general. In all cases, it is her “authenticity” that is stressed. Simmons instead attempts, by focusing on the “migratory and laboring course of the narrative[s,] . . . to arrive at critical and theoretical protocols” (p. 22) that register the instability of the figure “Mary Prince.”

Similarly, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, rather than being the triumphant story of a self-actualized feminist heroine, begins with the motiveless displacement of Janie’s story from an intimate, first person telling to a more distant third person narration, and it ends ambiguously, when a solitary Janie returns to a wary and unwelcoming Eatonville.

In Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, set in the liminal Southern space of a coastal island between Georgia and South Carolina, the narrative both makes confident claims to the "real" and subverts those claims, as well as alternately establishing and destabilizing notions of "women's work." Finally, in *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, Maryse Conde attempts to recuperate a voice never directly heard. Both scholars studying the historical figure of Tituba, the third person accused of witchcraft during the Salem witch trials of 1692-93, and Conde's novel itself, Simmons observes, make dubious claims regarding Tituba's sociohistorical and literary "authenticity." In each of the narratives Simmons writes about, a woman of the African diaspora has to navigate changing gender and labor expectations as she moves from one community to another, and each narrative turns out to be anything but univocal.

Simmons is quite successful in the main thrust of her project, contesting our tendency to read these narratives too simply as singular trajectories from oppression to triumph by feminist heroines, noting how in every case these women change profoundly as they move from one place to another. But I have two criticisms of this otherwise excellent study, one editorial and the other substantive. One brief quote will serve to illustrate both. In this instance Simmons is comparing Janie's reactions to being hit by Joe Starks, her second husband, and by Tea Cake, her third. Simmons remarks, as many scholars have, on Janie's shocking collapse into feminine submissiveness when struck by Tea Cake: "Strangely, this pivotal moment [of quiet, internal rebellion against Joe Starks] is not repeated when Tea Cake hits Janie on the muck 'to show he was boss'" (p. 66). First of all, consider the phrase "hits Janie on the muck." Each time I've read it I've had to stop and reread, thinking that it must say "on the mouth" or "on the nose." This is one of fifteen or so examples of unfortunate wording in this study; in another instance, we are told that Cocoa's youngest son (in *Mama Day*) "bears his namesake." Unless

the child is himself pregnant, this makes no sense at all. Too often, unclear wording catastrophically obscures Simmons's best ideas. This manuscript desperately needed a more attentive copy editor.

But more importantly, to note that Tea Cake strikes her "on the muck" is an instance, and not the only one, of a lost opportunity to discuss what difference it makes that this happens on what has been a paradisiac, egalitarian Everglades landscape rather than in Eatonville, where she was a landowner and he a drifter. Similarly, when George in *Mama Day* is momentarily distracted from his "overarching functionalism"—his engineer's habit of mind regarding what use this land might be put to—by the island's lush sights, sounds, and scents, it is not enough to say that "place takes precedence over his system of thought" (p. 108) and then return to an abstract discussion of social roles. At such moments the tangible, material place vaporizes, and with it an opportunity to explore the real connections between place, labor conditions and gender roles. Why is it that the place where women work alongside men instead of under them—the muck—is also the place where a man chooses to assert his physical dominance over her?

Simmons's conception of "place," that is, which so promisingly opens the book, needs to grapple more directly with materiality, and especially with the brute physicality of labor. As Simmons imagines it, place veers toward abstraction; it is primarily the locus of a shifting intersection of gender, race and class ideologies. But landscape is not an abstraction; it is, as her opening vignette illustrates, as much a product of human shaping as are the narratives themselves. Working on the muck, as Janie and Tea Cake do, or in the salt ponds of Turk Islands, where Prince is enslaved, is an achingly material circumstance. So, too, is working in Joe Stark's store, and bathing or sleeping with one's master, and engineering water systems. A more consistent accounting of the difference that fact of physical labor makes in the reconfiguration

of these diasporic women's subjectivities would have further strengthened this insightful study.

--Susan M. Marren

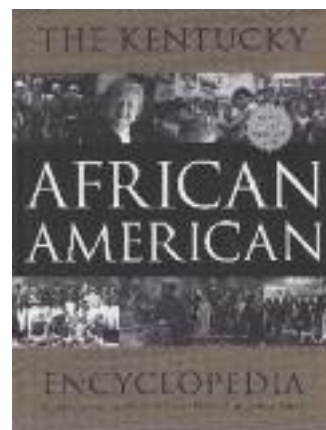


***The Kentucky African American Encyclopedia.* Edited by Gerald L. Smith, Karen Cotton McDaniel, and John A. Hardin. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015. Pp. vii–xxvi + 551, acknowledgements, introduction, guide for readers, selected bibliography, illustration credits, index. \$49.95, cloth)**

Much that is written about United States history overlooks the significant contributions of Blacks in the making of America. The first of its kind to explore black life relative to the making of a state's history, *The Kentucky African American Encyclopedia* explores the importance of African Americans and their significant roles in the making of Kentucky history. Gerald L. Smith, Karen Cotton McDaniel, and John A. Hardin have edited an empowering reference book, which features notable African Americans with Kentucky roots and validates their central role, not only in Kentucky history, but also in American history as well.

The encyclopedia is an accessible reference for students, teachers, and researchers. The comprehensive research is an extension of an earlier work in the 1930s by Alice Dunnigan, who began writing about the contributions of African American Kentuckians to inspire young , students at the rural segregated school in Kentucky in which she taught. It illuminates the influence of African Americans in Ken-

tucky from the frontier years to today. Both living and deceased persons are included in the publication comprising native-born Kentuckians, migrants who later became Kentuckians, and non-African American individuals whose imprint was instrumental in the black Kentucky experience. To capture the contributions of black Kentuckians, the seven-year research highlights writers, health care practitioners, civil rights reformers, sports icons and entertainers; includes biographical sketches of individuals; and features court cases, events, movements, and institutions significant to the history of Kentucky. There are over a thousand entries written by graduate students, college professors, and local historians.



The hidden gems in this encyclopedia are the untold stories of the “everyday” persons whose little known deeds are seldom recorded but made a mark on Kentucky history in their own way. In 1835, Samuel Oldham, a former slave who purchased his freedom and later the freedom of his wife and children, would become the first African American to own land and a home in Lexington. Cato Watts, considered the first slave in Louisville, is mostly known for saving Louisville's first Christmas and being hung for murdering his owner. Dennis and Diademia Doram, former slaves, were wealthy business and landowners, believed to be some of the few African Americans who bought slaves to set them free.

The encyclopedia features more than three hundred entries on women and covers the versatility of African American women in Kentucky. The book features businesswoman Elizabeth Slaughter of Kentucky, former slave,

landowner, and one of the first African Americans to own slaves; educator Mary Smith of Mississippi, the first African American female president of a state university in Kentucky; nurse Mary Eliza Merritt, Kentucky's first registered nurse, black or white; and politician Georgia Powers, the first African American and first female elected to Kentucky's senate.

Also included are the abolitionist efforts of brave Kentuckians who were slaves, free people of color, and whites. Among those was Arnold Gragston, a slave and conductor on the Underground Railroad who carried over a hundred slaves to freedom by boat over the Ohio River before escaping slavery himself. Former slave "Free Frank" McWhorter was a land and business owner who purchased his freedom and the freedom of sixteen family members including his wife and children. Strategically, his home was built to hide runaway slaves for the Underground Railroad. Also included in the encyclopedia are white abolitionist brothers Alexander and Duncan Fuller, both of whom also helped runaway slaves escape to safety in southern Indiana.

Although the book features many biographical sketches, there are essays on institutions, events, and prominent African American settlements important to Kentucky and US history. For example, Louisville became the first US city to have two libraries that offered services to African Americans with the establishment of the Western Colored Branch Library, the first public library to provide services exclusively for and staffed entirely by African Americans, and its counterpart, the Eastern Colored Branch Library. Also important to Kentucky history was the Will Lockett Riot of 1920, which exalted the state as a model for preventing the potential lynching of an African American World War II veteran who confessed to murder without counsel. It was the first time that local police officers were used to suppress a lynch mob. Furthermore, the encyclopedia features essays on all-black communities like Mountain Island, Pralltown, and Little Africa

in Kentucky and Nicodemus in Kansas, all established by former Kentucky slaves.

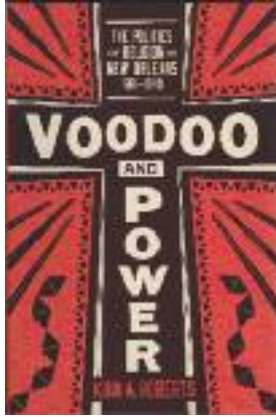
The work is not without its flaws. Though there is an index provided to assist in grouping entries under certain topics, an excellent addition would have been a Reader's Guide at the beginning of the work in which the encyclopedia's entries were divided into sections based on topics like women, case laws, settlements, churches, and non-African American individuals. Additionally, there are fewer than 150 photographs and illustrations to accompany the biographical sketches and essays, which would better connect the reader with the person, place, or event and bring it to life. Nevertheless, *The Kentucky African American Encyclopedia* is an important work that captures forgotten and oftentimes overlooked experiences of African Americans critical to the diverse history of Kentucky and the United States.

--Sheren G. Sanders



***Voodoo and Power: The Politics of Religion in New Orleans 1881–1940.* By Kodi Roberts. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2015. Pp. 256. \$39.95, hardcover)**

Although a part of the contiguous United States, New Orleans remains an enigma for many American travelers. Tourists that walk the cobblestoned streets of the Vieux Carré, the city's oldest neighborhood, are reminded of its rich diversity and complexity. While dining in open-air courtyards, they are surrounded by Spanish architecture, listen to brass bands whose rhythms have a distinctive African beat, and dine on cuisine that has French overtones and sauces. Scholars credit the city's unique cul-



ture to a process called creolization, wherein African, European and Native American cultures were amalgamated to create a new and distinctively different one. Kodi Roberts' *Voodoo and Power: The Politics of Religion in New Orleans* is an important contribution to exist-

ing research on both New Orleans Voodoo and the creolization of religion. In the text, Roberts explores Voodoo and its connection to the development of Spiritualist Churches in the city. He also argues against the popular sentiment that New Orleans Voodoo is a "decidedly African American cultural production" (p. 5), and instead maintains that the discussion of the religion be directed "away from one of African origins to examine the influence of local creole culture, Jim Crow segregation in the South, and racial ideology" (p. 196).

*Voodoo and Power* is divided into two sections. The first, "Laveau and Anderson," deals with the two most iconic leaders in New Orleans Voodoo and the city's Spiritualist churches. In this section, Roberts contends that Marie Laveau's Voodoo gatherings and the services held by Leafy Anderson in her churches, served the same purpose in the lives of practitioners, to provide agency, justice, and economic empowerment to the marginalized and socially disenfranchised of the city. At the gatherings and in the churches, believers were able to plead with gods and spirits to intercede on their behalf in matters of injustice, unrequited love, financial distress, or a host of other hardships that may have befallen them. In late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Orleans, social hierarchical and gender constraints, economic realities, and white supremacy placed power, social, economic, or otherwise, in the hands of a select few. Those

most often holding the reins of this power were wealthy white men. Roberts demonstrates that some whites, similarly suppressed by class, gender, economics, and heartache, turned to Voodoo and Spiritualist Churches to care for these needs.

For Roberts, Laveau and Anderson were not only powerful religious leaders, but also shrewd businesswomen similarly confronted with the obstacles of race, sex, and politics. The religious leaders' responses to these hardships established two distinct business models described in the text as the Laveau and Anderson models. Each of these models addressed the social, racial, and political realities of its time. In the Laveau model, the earlier of the two, the practice of voodoo was criminalized, as a consequence, its followers met under the cover of night or in the backrooms of homes to participate in worship. Laveau's power as a Voodoo priestess was legitimized by the wealth she accumulated, which followers believed to be directly linked to her powers and her influence in the supernatural realm. Patrons, black and white, rich and poor, were rumored to wait in lines to purchase her potions and charms. Her popularity and her participation in an illicit trade, made the priestess and her followers, easy targets for arrest and extortion.

Conversely, the Anderson model centered its spiritual work "within the context of a church" (p. 46) which was chartered by local authorities. For Anderson, the acquisition of property bolstered her claims of legitimacy, which in turn helped her attract new members. The expansion of Anderson's churches often came at the expense of New Orleans's Voodoo practitioners, as new members were regularly drawn from their ranks. To maximize their membership and to aid with the recruitment of Voodoo workers, the Spiritual churches adopted a "malleable structure to incorporate aspects of Voodoo on their own terms" (p. 47).

Anderson similarly expanded her spiritual powers to surpass those of Voodoo priests and priestesses by "finding" a Native American

Saint named Black Hawk. Unlike the Orishas and spirits of Voodoo, who possessed and controlled believers and acted on their own accord, Black Hawk was controlled by Anderson and would act on her command. Roberts argues that this evolution in the power of the religious leader was coupled with Anderson's ability to teach her craft to others. Anderson's churches empowered and trained acolytes, who in turn opened churches of their own, thereby spreading Anderson's brand of spiritualism and her economic model throughout the city. In comparison, Laveau's model concentrated power in the hands of a single leader, whose claim to authority and legitimacy in the eyes of her followers was linked to her ability to amass wealth and the trappings of success.

Roberts, in the second section of the text, "The Work," examines the rituals that were central to the trade of Voodoo practitioners and spiritualists. Using interviews from the Louisiana's Writers Project, he presents a narrative that is humorous, while still enlightening readers in regard to the inner workings of spiritualist churches and the Voodoo trade. He pays particular interest to the wide array of services provided to patrons, the cost of these services, and discussions of how Voodoo and Spiritual leaders navigated issues of race.

*Voodoo and Power* is a short but important compendium on spiritualism within the city of New Orleans. It challenges popular images of New Orleans Voodoo and spiritualism as purely African products and argues that like New Orleans's food, music, and culture, the practices of Voodoo and spiritualism were altered by various cultural influences within the city. The book also illuminates the role that spiritualism and Voodoo played in socially and economically empowering women. Roberts presents Marie Laveau and Leafy Anderson as business leaders who exercised considerable power and authority, defying the constricting social conventions assigned to black women of their day. Their rise to power and respectability, was contingent upon their perceived abilities to meet the needs

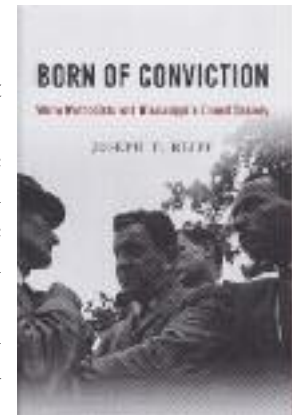
of the sick, broken-hearted, and socially and economically marginalized masses, black and white, of the City of New Orleans. Although a debut publication, *Voodoo and Power* is assured to become essential reading for historians, folklorists, and New Orleans devotees alike.

--Brian K. Mitchell



***Born of Conviction: White Methodists and Mississippi's Closed Society.* By Joseph T. Reiff. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. ix–xxi + 284, cast of characters, abbreviations, introduction, acknowledgements, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$35, hardback)**

James W. Silver, a historian at the University of Mississippi, first used the phrase "a closed society" in 1963 to refer to the state's posture toward race relations. 'Closed' meant that all white residents of the state would be committed to segregation as the official way of life, and any who dared challenge that way would be silenced or driven out of the community. Alabama Governor George Wallace stated this attitude more succinctly in his inaugural address that same year: "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever!"



The months-long effort of Air Force vet-

eran James Meredith to enroll at the University of Mississippi as its first black student culminated in a violent confrontation in Oxford on the night of September 30, 1962. In the days that followed, a number of young Methodist preachers in the state awaited comment from conference leaders or bishop, but none came.

This book tells the story of some of them who acted on their own. On October 15, Jerry Furr, Maxie Dunnam, Jim Waits, and Gerald Trigg, met at Dunnam's isolated fishing camp in rural Perry County. All had been born and raised in Mississippi, all were ordained Methodist ministers in the Mississippi Conference, and all were seminary graduates. They brought with them only their Bibles and a copy of the 1960 *Church Discipline*. During their overnight retreat they composed a statement in response to the growing violence and hatred associated with the racial situation in Mississippi. They worked through the night, sleeping in turns for an hour or two, and struggling over words and phrases.

Their finished statement, called *Born of Conviction*, was published on January 2, 1963, in the *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, the official newspaper serving both Methodist conferences in the state at the time. During those few weeks, twenty-four more preachers added their signatures to it.

After the statement appeared, the signers all continued to work at their appointments, while dealing with threatening phone calls, public scolding, and ostracism, but things got worse for them at the 1963 Annual Conference session in May. Civil rights demonstrations and sit-ins had been taking place in Jackson that spring, and on June 11 black leader Medgar Evers would be assassinated.

One veteran pastor described the 1963 conference as "a combination of the Charge of the Light Brigade, the Battle of Manila Bay, and the Elegy in the Country Churchyard" (p. 159). Its longtime leader, Rev. J. Willard Leggett, Jr., was a traditional segregationist, who, with the help of his well-organized assistants, ran the appoint-

ment system with an iron hand. By the time the conference adjourned, seven of the signers had already transferred to other conferences, mostly out of the South. In the end, only eight of the twenty-eight stayed in Mississippi—one, Rev. John Ed Thomas, vowing, "I'm just going to outlove these people" (p. 224).

Through the years there has been some friction between those who left and those who stayed. One of the latter wrote in 1965: "I understood this to be the original intention of the statement—to speak from within, and to stay in the area to work out the related difficulties" (p. 228). Rev. James M. Conner's widow put it differently. The main reason he didn't go, she recalled later, was that "[he] couldn't ever get the feeling that God wanted him to leave Mississippi" (p. 211).

Fifty years later, on June 9, 2013, the Mississippi Annual Conference honored the signers for the first time. Eight of them were present (fourteen were deceased by that time), and nearly eighty family members were in the audience when Bishop James E. Swanson Jr. presented them the Emma Elzy Prize. Swanson was notably the first black bishop to serve in the state, and the prize is given to persons who have contributed significantly to the improvement of race relations.

Some critics feel that the author has given too much importance to the *Born of Conviction* experience, and it did go largely unnoticed outside of Mississippi. Yet few outsiders realize the courage it took to sign such a manifesto so boldly in 1963. With its careful attention to building the back-stories and describing in detail the results for the twenty-eight signers, this book has earned its place among the growing body of works about the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s.

--Nancy Britton



***In Search of the Movement.* By Benjamin Hedin. (San Francisco, CA: City Light Books, 2015. Pp. 196, preface, introduction, coda, acknowledgements, notes, works cited. \$11.17, paperback)**

In *In Search of the Movement* (subtitled *The Struggle for Civil Rights Then and Now*) journalist Benjamin Hedin reflects on the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and goes in search of a similar movement today. His quest is driven by a series of interviews with civil rights luminaries (and a few lesser known figures) active in civil rights struggles past and present. He sets as his goal “answering the critical question of what happened to it [the movement] after the 1960s” (p. 18).

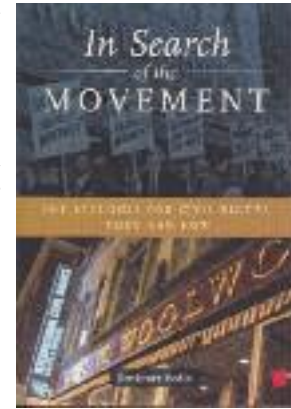
What is the “civil rights movement?” Hedin asks at the outset, answering, “any effort that strives to close the distance between America’s rhetoric and its reality” (p. 18). He further refines this as today being, “the efforts of undocumented immigrants, gays, and others to earn equal rights and treatment under the law” (pp. 18-19). In the context of this book, Hedin more narrowly defines the movement as “the black freedom struggle . . . [a] history of African American activity—of civil disobedience and community organizing—that is at least as old as our nation itself” (p. 19). The intended focus of the book is “three intersecting issues: the push for fair and equal access to the vote, education and health care” (p. 19). “How do you know when you’ve found it [the movement]?” (p. 21) asks Hedin. The author doesn’t answer this question directly, preferring to note that, “The question is in some ways more interesting than the answer” (p. 21).

The book is divided into three parts, “Starting Points,” “Filling in the Gaps” and “Forward Together,” with a short “Coda: The Promised Land” at the end. Each part is divided into a number of untitled chapters. “Starting Points”

revolves loosely around two axes. The first is the contemporary “Moral Mondays” movement in North Carolina protesting the nascent Republican Tea Party politics in the state. The second is the *Shelby v. Holder* (2013) US Supreme Court decision that undermined the section 5 preclearance clause of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which had previously required certain states and counties to have any changes in voting practices or procedures precleared by the federal government before being put into effect. Hedin weaves the stories of movement activists Julian Bond, Bob Zellner, Rev. William Barber II and Howard Kirshenbaum, among others, around their past and current involvement in these civil rights struggles.

In “Filling in the Gaps,” the shortest of the three parts, Hedin focuses on the civil rights stories of Septima Clark and Bernice Robinson and their involvement with education, particularly the development of Citizenship Schools that focused on teaching adult literacy and citizenship. Hedin bemoans the absence of such important organizing efforts, often conducted by women, from popular narratives of the movement—he cites especially Taylor Branch’s *Parting the Waters* movement trilogy as being guilty of this.

The final part, “Forward Together,” swirls around the events of Mississippi’s 1964 Freedom Summer. Chapter one examines present day struggles to provide minority healthcare in the state. Chapter two focuses on Robert Moses and David Dennis, two Mississippi movement veterans who now work together on the Algebra Project, which uses math teaching as an organizing tool for better public education. Chapter three investigates the political outcomes of Freedom Summer through the formation of the





Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and its challenge to the Democratic Party at its national convention in 1964 to become more inclusive. Chapter four skips to Florida, the shooting of Trayvon Martin, and the creation of the Dream Defenders organization to protest his killing. A “Coda: The Promised Land” seeks to pull the book’s stories together and to find common threads and narratives in them all.

As a thoughtful and engaging primer for civil rights struggles past and present directed at a general audience with little to no previous experience in the field, Hedin’s book works well enough. Anyone with more than a basic knowledge of civil rights history may find the book superfluous. A scholarly audience will find the book frustrating at a number of levels, although one gets the sense that Hedin is not too concerned with what he somewhat disdainfully describes as the “academic cottage industry” (p. 32) of civil rights scholarship. This is something of a shame, since a more thorough reading of that literature would have revealed that academics have covered a number of the pet themes that Hedin looks to take on here—such as the existence of a “long civil rights movement” continually interacting between past and present, the privileging in movement narratives of hierarchical male-dominated organizations over grassroots organizing often dominated by women, and the relationship between nonviolence and armed-self defense in past and present civil rights struggles, to name but a few—have already been pretty thoroughly, thoughtfully and deeply mined by scholars. If Hedin had read more of this literature from the outset, he may have found a more robust framework for his research. As it is, it feels like he is discovering and engaging with already well-developed scholarly debates for the first time, and only glancingly at that.

But perhaps Hedin’s journalistic presentism with a desire for answers driven by firsthand accounts is just part of his stock-in-trade. Hedin admits that “I have tried to combine history with reportage and create a text that is Janus-

faced, so to speak, looking simultaneously forward and back” (p. 19). Part of the problem with this, however, is that we too often see past and present in the book as being simply juxtaposed against one another rather than being profoundly connected together. What is missing is any sense of the dynamic process by which past struggles evolved into the present. Indeed, Hedin’s book flits from theme to theme, time to time, place to place, and person to person, without ever really nailing down their full relevance and significance. Because of this, and the generally imprecise framing of his work and the definitions it employs, it is never really clear that Hedin actually answers the questions he sets out to address. Instead, Hedin provides an impressionistic broad-brush portrait of movements past and present, but it is left largely to readers to reflect on the finer details and to connect the dots to complete the picture.

--John A. Kirk



*Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America’s Deep South, 1944–1972.* By Robert Mickey. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015. Pp. vii-xviii + 353, notes, index. \$35.00, paperback)

For historians and non-historians alike, the “gold standard” of Southern political development remains *Southern Politics in State and Nation* by V. O. Key (New York: Knopf, 1949; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984). Key wrote his book nearly seventy years ago, a time when the South had yet to go through the main stages of the social upheaval known as the Civil Rights Movement. In *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Author-*

*itarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944–1972*, political scientist Robert Mickey deals admirably with subsequent changes.

According to Mickey, Southern states were “pockets of authoritarian rule” bounded by “federal democracy” from the 1890s through much of the twentieth century (p. xi). Beginning with the abolition of the White Primary system by the US Supreme Court in 1944 and ending with the national political party reforms in the early 1970s, these “enclaves” followed a protracted course of “democratization,” a process in which the general population of an “entire territory” gains greater access to political participation

(p. xi). Mickey focuses on the Deep South, where this “regime change” resulted in different “Paths out of Dixie” (pp. 6, 335). In Mississippi, opposition to democratization proved to be the most protracted. South Carolina’s transition was the “least turbulent” (p. 12). Democratization in Georgia was “bifurcated” (p. 6): differing responses to federal intervention in civil-rights matters emerged in the Peach State.

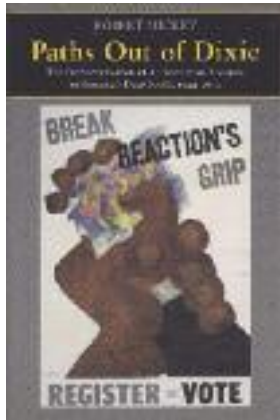
In Part One (chapters 1–3), Mickey presents his theoretical framework and summarizes regional political developments before World War II. It was during this era that authoritarian regimes held sway in Mississippi, South Carolina, and Georgia. In Part Two (chapters 4 and 5), Mickey covers the mid- to late-1940s when the transition to democratization became pronounced. In addition to the Supreme Court’s important *Smith vs. Allwright* decision, which facilitated African-American political participation, the period was marked by rising conflict between state Democratic parties and the national organization, as evidenced by the Dixiecrat challenge during the presidential election

of 1948. Part Three (chapters 6–8) covers the rise of the White Citizens Council and confrontation in Mississippi, the decline of black protest in South Carolina, and Massive Resistance in Georgia. In Part Four (chapters 9–11), Mickey confronts the 1960s. This is when Southern elites softened claims to autonomy from national political organizations that were supporting the Voting Rights Act. The incorporation of black protest trends and reforms of Democratic Party rules at the national level were instrumental in ushering an end to one-party states.

Mickey’s well-documented contention that democratization assumed different forms in the Deep South is his way of saying that it was limited in scope. He points out that the region’s political democratization has not translated into its economic democratization.

Although it was in the “Outer South,” Mickey makes important observations about Arkansas (p. 186). The fallout from the Little Rock crisis served enclave ruling elites with notice that opposition to the federal government would not be successful under the circumstances of the late 1950s. The popularity of segregationists nevertheless slowed the momentum of Republican Party organizing efforts in Arkansas. Mickey does not focus specifically on the Civil Rights Movement, except in regard to the political influence of the National Association of Colored People and “black protest organizations” in Southern politics (p. 274). He is also conscious of a range of non-governmental organizations across the South, including the Southern Regional Council and the Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union. Mickey yet holds that it is also necessary to study elite political institutions.

An article of conventional wisdom is that the people of the South are inherently conservative. It cannot be denied that the South is a trend-setter in recent disputes over LGBT rights, gun-ownership, immigration, and privatization of social services—but a shift to the Right has been a decades-long trend across the



entire United States. While it is true that conservative forces have always been dominant in the South, there have always been home-grown progressive challenges to them. The work of the late Glenn Feldman was dedicated to this proposition (*The Irony of the Solid South: Democrats, Republicans, and Race, 1865–1944*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2013; *The Great Melding: War, the Dixiecrat Rebellion, and the Southern Model for America’s New Conservatism*, Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015). Moreover, while the Civil Rights Movement was not unique to the South, the region’s people played defining roles in its history. Greta De Jonge studies this phenomenon (*Invisible Enemy: The African American Freedom Struggle after 1965*, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

There are extensive endnotes, 180 pages-worth. Attached to a separate website, the bibliography runs to 110 pages. Mickey shows an awareness of developments in labor, civil rights, and even Arkansas historiography. Works cited include those by Eric Arnesen, Tony Badger, Sarah Hart Brown, Adam Fairclough, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Elizabeth Jacoway, and Ira Katznelson. Primary resources consulted are drawn from the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, state and federal government records, official papers of black protest groups, newspapers, and oral histories.

At times, Mickey’s institutional perspective is dry. While he acknowledges that the South experienced radical changes during the mid-twentieth century, Mickey embraces a species of modernization theory that tends to over-simplify. However, Mickey makes it clear that he does not consider the process of democratization to be finished. Indeed, any reader in our uncertain times can see that social change does not necessarily have to be democratic (take, for example, the creation of “voter ID” laws over the last two decades, the 2013 weakening of the Voting Rights Act by the Supreme Court, and the questionable—albeit largely unquestioned—conduct of the 2016 Democratic pres-

idential primaries).

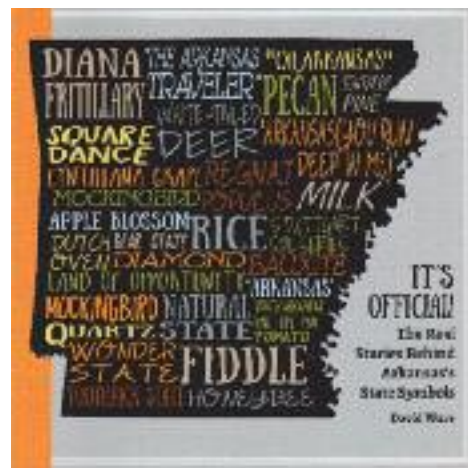
Mickey’s work should be valued by students of the modern American South. Like recent historians who are arguably the new gold standards for studying this subject, he reveals fresh ways of understanding political change in the Deep South. It would have been useful if he had given more attention to the Republican Southern Strategy, but perhaps Mickey is preparing a study on that subject.

--Anthony B. Newkirk



***It’s Official: The Real Stories Behind Arkansas’s State Symbols.* By David Ware. (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2015. Pp. 198, image credits. \$22.95, paper)**

Most Arkansans of a certain age remember taking numerous field trips to the Arkansas State Capitol during their school days. After a tour of the building and a very basic civics lesson, a staff member from the Secretary of State’s office distributed a paper version of the state flag, a pencil, and a coloring book featuring the state’s symbols. For most students, these items never were used for their educational purposes



and instead were used as fodder for paper airplanes. Even for studious students, though, the coloring book (or activity book, as it was also called) provided scant history or background of the symbols, so most Arkansans are not familiar with the symbols themselves or the fascinating background behind their official adoptions. Luckily, today's generations of students, as well as others interested in Arkansas history, have David Ware's book *It's Official: The Real Stories Behind Arkansas's State Symbols* as a resource.

Through the years, the Arkansas Legislature has adopted twenty-four symbols that celebrate various aspects of the state's cultural, zoological, and agricultural heritage. In addition to symbols for the state insect, gem, grain, and historic cooking vessel, among others, Arkansas has also has a nickname, motto, and creed. Clearly, there is no shortage of symbols touting Arkansas's abundance. Many of the symbols are fairly recent additions to the Arkansas iconography, but a few have a genealogy stretching back to the creation of Arkansas Territory in 1819. The State Seal, for example, can trace its roots (in theory at least) back to an 1820 drawing by Samuel Calhoun Roane, clerk of the Territorial General Assembly. The Dutch Oven, in contrast, is one of the more recently adopted symbols and was designated as the state's "Historic Cooking Vessel" in 2001. Ware addresses the nickname, motto, and each of the twenty-four symbols in his highly readable book.

Ware is highly qualified to compile a book such as *It's Official*. While not a native of the state, he has worked as the Arkansas State Capitol Historian since 2001, and has provided answers to innumerable reference questions addressed to the Secretary of State's office asking for information on the state's symbols. One would imagine that a book on such a topic would be brief, formulaic, and somewhat dry and boring. That is certainly not the case with this title. Ware has written fresh and engaging histories of these symbols. Within this eighteen-chapter book, Ware takes the reader through

the genesis and evolution of each symbol and emblem in a chronological manner. The first chapter addresses the state seal; a logical place to begin since an emblem is one of the first things adopted by a government and is used in various applications and representations throughout state government.

Another chapter tells the convoluted story of the state's official song, a story filled with broken promises and unfulfilled dreams. Many Arkansans might think "The Arkansas Traveler" is the state song, and, at one time, it served as the unofficial one. Eva Ware Barnett's "Arkansas" was officially recognized in 1917, a year after its composition, and it held that title—more or less—until the sesquicentennial in 1986. "Oh, Arkansas" and "Arkansas (You Run Deep in Me)" currently share the title of state song. Because of the familiarity of these works, I imagine that you, like me, will sing the selected lyrics highlighted when reading the song chapter. Ware then walks us through other more recently adopted—and lesser known—symbols, such as the South Arkansas Vine-Ripe Pink Tomato, the official state fruit AND vegetable. As Ware points out (p. 127), the Legislature knew that the tomato is classified a fruit, but is usually considered a vegetable so it should represent both categories. In this particular chapter, Ware provides excellent scientific and historical background on the tomato. The type of comprehensive information found in the tomato chapter is representative of the entire book. The information provided goes beyond Arkansas. Ware places the symbols in historical or comparable context, often using other states to highlight the uniqueness or commonality of Arkansas's symbols. Ware does a particularly good job in comparing Arkansas to other states in the state song chapter.

Each chapter of *It's Official* is filled with useful historical information, fun facts, and tidbits of humor. Another useful aspect of the book is the "For Further Reading" sections, which follow each chapter. The slightly oversized book, itself, is designed in an appealing manner, and

the abundance of illustrations and photographs complements the narrative and adds to the work's attractiveness. The cover art is particularly eye-catching.

*It's Official: The Real Stories Behind Arkansas's State Symbols* is a fact-filled, concise, yet remarkably inclusive almanac of the state's symbols. It is a handy guide, brimming with information and full of bravado. David Ware and the Butler Center Books have done Arkansans a true service with this work, which is highly recommended for everyone—from the general public to academic historians—for its comprehensiveness, readability, and all-around interesting topic.

--Timothy G. Nutt



***Mourner's Bench.* By Sanderia Faye. (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2015. Pp. vii–ix + 372, acknowledgements. \$19.95, paperback)**

Reader, I'm somewhat dubious of my authority to review this book, and perhaps you should be as well. *Mourner's Bench* presents a fictional but nonetheless emotional perspective of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement. This historic (and ongoing) struggle is retold through the eyes of a young, impoverished, black girl named Sarah whose family is central to and divided by the fight for equality. At the heart of this story is a desperation and strength few people, myself included, will ever have to suffer.

To contrast, I am a white, middle-class stranger to struggle. I live in the same state as this book's protagonists, and though I can picture the kind of between-cities nook that fictional Maeby, Arkansas is meant to represent, I can't say I've ever stopped for a visit. Even my

grasp on the details of the Civil Rights Movement is lacking, as the majority of my public school history education came from bored coaches killing time between seasons.

I just want to be sure, dear reader, that you understand my trepidation as I sit down to write this review. At this point in my life, of course, I have no one to blame but myself for the gap between my interests and this extremely important part of our history, but herein lies the magic of Faye's work. *Mourner's Bench* isn't simply about history. This book exists as a kind of bridge between the Civil Rights Movement I know—that is, newspaper photos of protests, marches, and violent reactions—and the actual humanity of it. *Mourner's Bench* isn't simply historical fiction, it's an historical experience.

In Maeby, Faye presents a picture of complacent oppression that I don't regularly associate with the struggle for equal rights. The community doesn't seem to so much suffer the age's degrading racism as they merely contend with it as one may contend with bad weather. If you don't want to get wet, don't go out in the rain, and if you don't want the white folk up in your business, just know your place. In fact the people of Maeby are so committed to peace-through-avoidance (or perhaps more accurately are so conditioned to it) that when the equal rights movement comes knocking, they try to run it out of town just as hard as their white oppressors.

Ultimately, however, this is not a book about color, nor is it entirely about equality. Against those backdrops, against protests and integrations and the changing heart of a nation, is the story of a family trying to hold itself together as they're torn apart from the inside. Sarah's on-again, off-again mother, Esther Mae,



is the family's black sheep (no pun intended). They live together with Sarah's grandmother, Muhdea, and great-grandmother, simply Granny.

It's Esther who, after returning home from college, introduces all of Maeby to the movement. She is accompanied by two activists from SNCC, and together they begin to erode the tense complacency her community—and her family—has maintained for generations. Muhdea and Granny, who had always been more of mothers to Sarah than Esther ever was, urge both of the girls to keep their heads down, to stay in church (or in Esther's case, to start attending again), and to quit all the rabble rousing. Sarah, for her part, is intensely focused on the church's annual Revival, and she resents the distraction her mother's antics pose to her soul's salvation. This familial contention, four generations of mother-versus-daughter, is the real conflict at the core of *Mourner's Bench*. The characters' agendas push and pull against each other, until the tension of inequality is revealed just as much an internal oppression as external.

Sarah's arc is one of the clearest and most satisfying progressions of character this reviewer has read. Her journey as the pragmatic daughter of a pariah and the unique voice her narration lends to the story are, without question, some of the book's greatest strengths. *Mourner's Bench* struggles at times, however, to carry the weight of those strengths. That same childlike voice is occasionally too spot-on. Especially in the book's early chapters, Sarah's narration seems to wander aimlessly, clumsily exploring tangential exposition exactly as one would expect a loquacious child to do in person.

This heaviness of exposition is endemic, though possibly understandably so. Faye has endeavored with this title to produce an enthralling and emotional account of early Civil Rights struggle, presumably so that readers unsaturated with the subject, such as myself, will leave not only moved but educated as well. The effort to do so, to include so much history, so many people and events, so much importance

into a single plot line does leave it feeling a little stressed at the seams and occasionally burdens the pacing.

That isn't, of course, meant to discount the book altogether. Whatever *Mourner's Bench* may lack in pace or brevity, it more than compensates for in depth and emotion. There are incredible islands of intensity throughout the book, especially in later chapters when Sarah inevitably discovers herself in the eye of the storm.

*Mourner's Bench* is many things. It is a coming of age tale, and it is a family drama. It's an historical document, it's a chronicle of outrage, and it's a testament to a people's struggle. For some readers there will be revelation on these pages, but for all there is a warning. Not only the obvious—racism is bad, don't be a bigot—but a warning about complacency, about holding so steadfast to tradition, familiarity, or comfort that you impede your own freedom. In the final chapters of this book, Sarah explains to us what it's all about:

Living in the country, timing was everything, a time to plant, a time to uproot, a time to break down, a time to build up, a time to ask questions and a time to shut up and get moving. (p. 353)

*Mourner's Bench* is, above all, a story about the right time to shut up and get moving.

--John Abernathy



***Hard Toward Home.* By C.D. Albin. (Winston-Salem, NC: Press 53, 2016. Pp. 139. \$14.95, paper)**

In his debut story collection, *Hard Toward Home*, C.D. Albin explores the lives of men and women living in the fictional Ozark town of Lotten, Arkansas. It is a place of great natural beauty that engenders strong feelings of affec-

tion and loyalty among its residents, but it is also one that suffers from persistent economic depression and the often troubling personal consequences that accompany such poverty—a place that inspires both dreams of escape and an almost instinctive desire to return home.

Albin's stories have inevitably been compared to Daniel Woodrell, who wrote for the book, calling it a "reverent" and "clear-eyed" look at the people and the circumstances of the Ozarks. However, Albin has a lighter, subtler touch than what is often seen in Woodrell's fiction. The landscape is the same—the poverty, the undercurrent of violence, the drug use and desperation, all set against a stunning natural landscape—but Albin's stories are quieter, and there's something about their careful composition that leaves room for the reader to find their way into the lives of the characters in a truly remarkable way.

In the title story, "Hard Toward Home," Euclid (Lid) McKee is having a rough time. He's been laid off from the shoe factory where he'd worked for years and is now doing part-time manual labor he's too old for. His ex-wife, who left him to escape both their marriage and the Ozarks, has died in a house fire. And their son,



Reed, has returned to Lotten a grown man with anger management issues and a strong addiction to meth. Truly, Lid doesn't know what to do with his son who at an early moment in the story breaks into his house to steal money for his drug habit. Very quickly father and son have a

physical altercation in the kitchen:

He swung as hard as he could, but Reed hit him in the throat. Then he was on the floor gagging, his forehead pressed against the hardwood. Reed's knee ground between

his shoulder blades and Lid felt a quick, hard jerk as his wallet came free . . . Reed leaned in close and said, "You're as weak as that old woman." (p. 4)

This altercation represents a new low in their relationship, but it gets worse. Reed leaves his father lying on the kitchen floor and immediately sets off down the road to rob the "old woman," Lid's former school teacher, Jessie Carrico—a woman the McKees have known all their lives and who has consistently worked to help the family, including renting a small house to Reed when no one else would. The attack Reed makes on Jessie is devastating, leaving her hospitalized with broken bones and covered in bruises. Beside himself with guilt and grief, Lid visits Jessie in the hospital. He has reached a point where he wants to turn away from his son, give him up as a lost cause, but Jessie in her forthright way pushes against this easy solution. In a moment of some intimacy, Jessie asks Lid, "What put this inside him?" (p. 6). The rest of the story works hard to answer this question by making sense of Reed's life and the role his father may have played in its current circumstances.

There are only a few ways to escape the despair that many residents of Lotten feel. Some manage to drive away and never return, but most simply cannot take this step, and so they turn to other methods of departure. For Reed in "Hard Toward Home" it's meth. For James Gann in "The End of Easy Breathing" the method of escape had been alcohol, but in more recent times, it's infidelity. James's wife, Lila, is suffering from what he calls "spells"—most likely some form of dementia or Alzheimer's. She moves in and out of mental clarity and must be attended constantly in case she should wander away and into danger. It's something that's happened before. Once, she went out the front door, down the drive, across the road, and into a creek from which she had to be rescued. Now as the story opens, Lila wanders into traffic outside the local bank. There is a minor accident, but soon the whole of Lotten knows about

it. James thinks, “Too often some deep current of restlessness was at work in her, and she would wait for the moment when he became weary or inattentive. Then she would flee” (p. 46). It is against the prospect of this never ending responsibility that James had conducted his affair.

The situation is complicated by the attitude of their daughter, Jodi, who believes—with some cause—that taking care of Lila is more than James can handle. Not only is such care difficult and exhausting in and of itself, but also James is particularly unfit. He has a long history of poor decision-making and, having recently discovered her father’s affair, Jodi doubts his commitment to their family. It is a moment of great tension in the story, one in which James is faced with a set of possible choices. It is no surprise that he makes the wrong one.

What makes the stories in *Hard Toward Home* so special is the way that Albin reveals his characters’ ambivalence. In every one of the ten stories in this collection, not only do the characters suffer from a kind of double-mind, a state of tension about how to handle the forces acting upon their lives, but so too does the reader feel pulled in two directions: simultaneously repulsed by the often vulgar dramas playing out on the page and rooting for the characters to find some kind of equanimity, a state of grace. Writing that makes us feel with such complexity deserves all the praise we might bestow.

--Jeffrey Condran



**ARK. By Ed Madden. (Little Rock, AR: Sibling Rivalry Press, 2016. Pp. 71, notes, acknowledgements. \$14.95, paperback)**

Madden’s collection opens with, “Ark,” a brief poem which describes a Christmas deco-

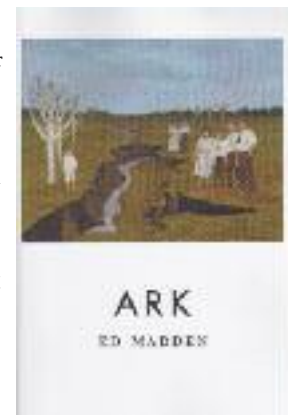
ration from the author’s childhood, “The small box is filled with little beasts,” (p. 9) the narrator states. It’s a living room tableau, with a tree and a family. The description of the scene is clean, from the boat with its “zoo of twos” (p. 9) to the narrator’s father sleeping in a recliner. The idyllic scene belies the struggles of Madden’s later life and also serves as a place from which to draw solace. This childhood memory is a kind of “ark” for Madden, a safe place to go to escape the travails of the world.

Water is a recurring theme in the book, as would be expected. Madden grew up on a rice farm in the Arkansas Delta, so water looms large in his psyche. “Flood” describes the devastation of a natural disaster in beautiful language:

To the south, the ditch is out, the field  
awash with brown water, white in morning  
light, the horizon

a furred ridge of dark green trees  
that traces the turn of drowned banks . . .  
(p. 14)

In addition to the immediate danger of flooding, the narrator explains that they “have to drive out // to pick up the hospice nurse . . .” (p. 14). He doesn’t explain who the nurse is for, but in other poems, he mentions his father’s illness, so we can assume the nurse is for Madden’s father. Madden subtly makes the tension of the poems real without lapsing into melodrama. His descriptions of the landscape, a neighboring house with “its dooryard garden now // clumps of damp jonquils bloomed out / and brown, a sodden lot of weeds and grass, tick-stitched with vetch” (p. 14) And, “. . . a flourish/of blackbirds swerving along the road’s washed-out shoulder (p. 14). It’s overwhelming. Finally the narrator re-





turns and parks, “. . . in the backyard, we can hear / the dove that lives there, above us in the pines, asking, // who—of who who who?” (p. 15). The confusion and fear projected onto the bird is the narrator’s own.

Many of these poems deal with Madden’s father’s illness. “My Father as Fantastic Voyage (1966)” is an inventive take on healing: He lies in the hospital bed like Jan Benes, and we know the crew / has to get in and fix him. So much depends on this.” (p. 30). “How to Life Him” is a meditation on the work of caring for the dying. In straightforward language, the narrator describes the dos and don’ts of helping his father—dying of cancer—go outside for a cigarette:

Don’t pick him up by the pits,  
which seems easiest. You risk

broken bones, bruised skin.  
Instead, once he’s eased up, sits,

shoulders hunched, feet slung  
over the edge lean down for the hug (p. 33)

The scene is intimate, simple. Seemingly minor details resonate as the narrator rolls his father’s wheelchair out onto the porch: “Make sure he’s in the sun. / Stand silent by, he won’t talk much, // though the lonely cat will, / rubbing its back against the wheels” (34). In “Spinoza Was Wrong about Sadness,” Madden describes the unsettling realization that our understanding of the past can change when he learns that his father had invented a mechanical fruit harvester. “I don’t know what he lost, // just that it was stolen from him,” (71) the narrator states. And later, he laments the limitations of memory:

Rather than language enriching us,  
it rebuilds the gravel road,

the ditch, the empty fields,  
a chest filled with correspondences,

sometimes the anthropological gaze.  
I imagine the machine’s fingers

grooming the trees. (p. 71)

Madden’s collection ends with a handful of poems about love—for his husband and for the beauty of nature. They are also poems of grieving. One of the most powerful of these is “Light.” It begins with a description of dogs eating something in a field. It’s a scene the narrator sees as he passes, mostly in his rearview. It seems like a little thing, maybe even an unappealing thing, but at the same time, he sees something profound:

The field is not empty: it is full

of light. The dogs eat what they find.  
I can barely see them in the rearview mirror.

The sun spreads its cold and careless light  
across the sky, the fields, the lonely road.  
(p. 77)

It’s a bleak scene but a beautiful one. This is the power of Madden’s poetry, to capture a landscape others might well overlook—the landscape of the Delta—and to reveal its beauty and grace.

--CL Bledsoe



*The Wheel of Light.* By Hope Coulter. (Baltimore, MD: Brickhouse Books, 2015. Pp. 84, acknowledgments, notes. \$10, paper)

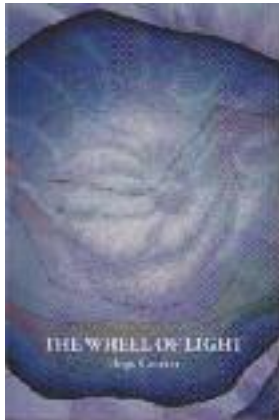
About ten years ago, when I was editing the now-defunct Arkansas Literary Forum, I received a pleasant surprise by way of a submission from Hope Coulter. The surprise was that she submitted poems. I had only known of her as a fiction writer, so it caught me a bit off guard. Fortunately, they were good poems, and now that her first collection of poems has come out after all these years, I am able to witness her

growth as a poet, and it is considerable.

*The Wheel of Light* opens with one of the longest poems, “Artist, Morning,” a meditation on the state of mind of a painter both distracted and inspired by the immediate world around her.

Under the artist’s hand, her fingers  
bunched around the brush,  
extends the first tendril of a line. (p. 19)

But there is the smell of coffee wafting through the air, a dog with needs, stories about an ancient Anglo-Saxon poet-monk jangling



within the brain, and the sunny hills of Sonoma beckoning. Ultimately, they feed the art: “. . . admitting them, one by one, into my consciousness might heighten mine . . .” (p. 23). Coulter attempts to clarify the messy path all artists take to produce any given work, while es-

tablishing a meditative pace for the rest of the collection.

Clearly, Coulter grasps the lyrical nuances of poetry (evident in her prose). Although the collection is primarily free verse, she occasionally indulges in the joy of prosody, as in “Beach Song”:

The thing you fear is not what does you in;  
we worried over sharks, not hurricanes.  
The unexpected gets you in the end.

The monsters of the deep loomed large  
back then,  
and we missed other dangers, signs less  
plain.

The thing you fear is not what does you in.  
(p. 39)

It is a fine approximation of form, something between sestina and pantoum in the overall effect. Coulter’s greatest strength, however, might arrive from her novelist instincts: she

knows how to tell a story, and so even within her most lyrical poems, the narrative qualities are evident. Any Arkansawyer will appreciate her story of the days when Travelers Field was dismantled, a tree-planting grandfather, or her parents bird-watching while a large cotton-mouth slithers by. Just another day in Arkansas. “Restless at Innisfree” is another fine prosodic-driven poem, and a decent tribute to the long shadow of Yeats.

Coulter also has her experimental side: “Breath” works within the tradition of William Carlos Williams, as the poem fractures the page in an attempt to replicate the staccato rhythms of a loved one dying in the same hospital of the poet’s birth. In a number of ways, it is among the finest poems in the entire book. The form brings the reader into the moment, the narrative quietly delivers an emotional gut-punch, and much of the language is positively beautiful: “Your trees ate light . . . Dreading some awful symmetry” (p. 44).

The best side of Coulter is displayed through her personas. “The Astronomer Leads a Field Trip” is a perfect case in point. It is a four-act poem leading the reader through a dark and beautiful night. And this is where the poet’s sense of narration truly forms the lyric. An astronomy professor takes his students out into the night, trying to understand them as any scientific observer might:

For the young it’s romantic. They like  
the cover of night; it masks the shy, invites  
talk;  
they believe in the beauty you have to go

out of your way for. Having seen  
so many Disney star showers  
they crave the real, cold thing. (p. 53)

It is an appreciation of youth in an era when so many academics fall back into nostalgia to condemn the current state of academia. The speaker comprehends the growth in motion that occurs in early adulthood without judgment. The university is as real as any other world. In the end, however, the professor re-

turns from the infinite stars to the insular world of his wife's cancer, to the gloss of a morphine drip.

In our bedroom my wife  
moans when I kiss her, but oh,  
not for the reason she once did!  
So I sit and smooth her sparse hair

and hold her dead-lizard hand  
and try not to think . . . . (p. 55)

*The Wheel of Light* is a deep, well-wrought collection of poems over a decade in the making. Arkansas poets (Terry Wright, Angie Macri, Sandy Longhorn, etc.) have put out a number of fine volumes in the past couple of years, and Hope Coulter belongs on that shelf.

--Marck L. Beggs

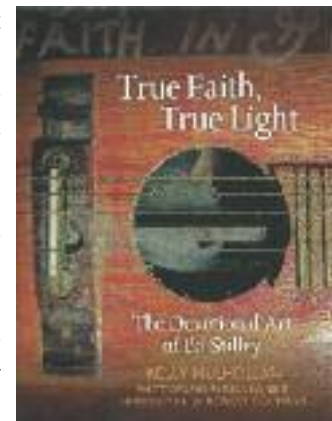


***True Faith, True Light: The Devotional Art of Ed Stilley.* By Kelly Mulholland. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2015. Pp. xxiii + 189, introduction, photographs, diagrams, \$37.95, cloth)**

Kelly Mulholland's study of the art of Ed Stilley, a musical instrument maker from the northwest Arkansas Ozarks, is an important contribution to the body of knowledge treating vernacular expressive culture not only in the United States but more generally. Historians as well as ethnographers will benefit from the clear, thorough presentation of the techniques used by Stilley in the creation of the guitars, fiddles, mandolins, and banjos he has produced in his workshop at Hogscald Holler near Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Mulholland has also shown how Stilley's creations have emerged from his spiritually based world view and how they have contributed to a sense of community among

both those to whom he has given his creations and people who have examined the instruments he has produced at museum exhibitions.

Mulholland carefully takes the reader of *True Faith, True Light: The Devotional Art of Ed Stilley* through the manufacturing process. He describes the tools and equipment which the artist uses to transform raw materials, which often consist of wood not especially suited to the production of musical instruments, into the guitars which comprise the majority of this work. (Stilley has also produced a few fiddles, mandolins, and banjos.) He shows how Stilley has compensated for the wood he has used by incorporating household items such as door springs into his creations to increase resonance, reverberation, and other musical qualities in what might otherwise be musically unpromising products. Stilley has often allowed the nature of the wood pieces he uses to suggest the distinctive forms taken by his creations, and Mulholland presents many examples of how this has occurred. The presentation is easily accessible to readers unfamiliar with the technicalities of instrument-making and woodworking in general.



When technical matters must be addressed, Mulholland ensures that they are clearly explained. His presentation of Stilley's process finds reinforcement in the excellent photographs that appear in the volume, most of them taken by Kirk Lanier. These show completed instruments and detail that illustrates how Stilley has solved some of the issues generated by his raw material. An especially innovative feature of the presentation is a set of x-ray photographs of several of Stilley's creations. These allow the reader to view how springs, pot lids, saw blades,

and other household castoffs figure into the construction through their placement in the bodies of the guitars and suggest a technique that other ethnographers and historians of vernacular arts might employ.

Mulholland also shows that Stilley's art has not been static. He divides his artistic *oeuvre* into three periods, each of which suggests an evolving appreciation of how to create works of art and solve the problems that arise when manufacturing objects of physical beauty which must also produce music.

Stilley's art responds to his sense of spiritual purpose. A longtime adherent of the fundamentals of Christianity characteristic of many residents of the Arkansas Ozarks, Stilley had been known for his preaching long before he began to manufacture guitars. As the result of a visionary experience, he believed that he had been "called" to create musical instruments which he would distribute without cost to children. During the twenty-five years after receiving his divine vocation, he made some two hundred instruments, and many people in his community—not only children—were recipients of his artistic efforts. In addition to their unusual shapes and to some distinctive features of his production techniques, Stilley-made guitars are identifiable from the inscription that he has written on most of them: "True faith, true light: Have faith in God." An in-depth examination of the theology underlying Stilley's vocation lies beyond Mulholland's purpose, but he stresses its centrality for what Stilley has focused his attentions on following his vision.

The bulk of Mulholland's book is documentary, and his thorough treatment of Stilley's art and its context in his spirituality ensures that this volume will have lasting significance. In fact, the volume offers a model for how other historians and ethnographers should record and present vernacular artists and their work. The book helps to establish Stilley in the gallery of vernacular artists whose work exhibits the fundamentals of creativity and who will provide data for students of folk art in the future. Par-

tially through this volume Stilley is taking his place alongside other regional experts in the expressive culture of the Upland South: singers Almeda Riddle and Emma Dusenberry, storyteller Ray Hicks, and potter Cheever Meadors, for example.

The book's introduction by Robert Cochran suggests Stilley's place in this community of artists as well as in the larger contexts of expressive culture, even internationally. Using the ideas of philosophers, poets, anthropologists, historians, and folklorists, Cochran indicates that Stilley is working from the same principles that have informed creativity, especially that associated with religious faith, in many cultural situations.

In addition to its documentary value, *True Faith, True Light* affords an esthetic pleasure of its own. Its general design and the use of photographs, whose value as records of Stilley's work is enhanced by their own beauty, make this an appealing volume. Moreover, although Stilley's work has been exhibited in museums, one need not have seen those exhibits to appreciate what he has accomplished. This book serves its purpose of presenting thoroughly the work of an important artist whose work has historical, ethnographic, and esthetic value. I recommend it to the attention of readers interested in vernacular expressive culture, the power of religious faith to generate artistic expression, and creativity in general. It is important not only for its record of the work of one artist but for the way in which it develops that record, providing a template for how similar treatments of other creators of vernacular expressive culture should be developed.

--William M. Clements

