

Reviews

Country Soul: Making Music and Making Race. Charles L. Hughes. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. 264, introduction, b/w photographs, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95, hardcover, paperback, \$22.00)

This history of American music in the twentieth century revolves largely around the confluence of black and white musical traditions. Examples are almost endless—a young Bix Beiderbecke’s obsession with Louis Armstrong, Elvis Presley’s upbringing in southern gospel and rhythm and blues, Jimi Hendrix’s ingesting of Bob Dylan in the mid-1960s, and so on. Perhaps there are few real specimens of purely “black” or “white” music, and this is one of the points to Hughes’s book, which is centered on three of these major confluence points mostly in the 1960s and early 1970s: recording studios in Memphis, Nashville, and Muscle Shoals. Hughes reminds us, against the assumption that country music is “white” music and soul is “black,” that a number of black singers, including Arthur Alexander, Joe Tex, Jerry Williams (AKA Swamp Dogg), and, of course, Charley Pride, grew up listening to country and made significant contributions to the genre. In turn, white musicians (including The Swampers and members of The Mar-Keys) were central in the creation of great records by such beloved soul artists as Aretha Franklin, Otis Redding, and the Staple Singers.

The book’s central purpose, though, is a cold-water reassessment of the race relations in these studios. Hughes seeks to demystify the view that the country-soul studio triangle in fact served, as is often heralded, as an against-

the-grain civil rights era exemplar of integration. Although situations differed, the studios were controlled largely by whites and employed mostly white musicians, while black artists were marginalized and held minimal control over their music. Hughes writes

that “the rhetoric of togetherness masked a more insidious trend in U.S. politics in the post-civil rights years” (p. 192). He supports his thesis by providing many specific examples. The heated conflict between Aretha Franklin’s then-husband Ted White and a white FAME studio musician Ken Laxton in 1967, Hughes writes, is a surfacing of the pervasive, underlying racial conflict in the studio triangle. He states that the comradery between white musicians and black singers in the era was thin and did not often extend outside the studio: “Interracial friendships outside of work were rare among the musicians of the country-soul triangle” (p. 73).

On occasion Hughes appears to suggest that no one has ever acknowledged the ill treatment of black musicians by whites in the music business, though this idea is never all that far away in the writings of, say, Robert Gordon and Robert Palmer. While reading, the word “strawperson” sometimes came to mind. In some ways, Stax, Sun, and FAME, among others, were oases of integration, in forms that were at least progressive for the time, though maybe not by current, more enlightened standards. It would be foolish to conclude that race was not a factor in the White-Laxton incident, but elsewhere Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records, with which



Franklin had recently signed a contract, states that the conflict centered around a clash of strong personalities and the consumption of alcohol. The instance of Franklin cancelling of subsequent Muscle Shoals sessions and leaving town the next day may serve as a tangible instance of studio racial tensions coming to a head, though Franklin herself complicates the notion by stating that her ex-husband had proceeded to the nearby airport without her, intent on flying back home alone (they would divorce a few years later).

Hughes provides much documented evidence for his argument, but he works so hard to disprove any real fraternity between whites and blacks in the studios that he sometimes overlooks the complexities of these important black/white confluences. The claim that black and white musicians were merely coworkers and not “friends” is difficult to verify fifty years after the fact, yet there is evidence that this is not exactly true. Insofar as racism may be quantified, I suspect that the white treatment of black musicians in the '60s and '70s was deeper and crueler than Hughes suggests, but the genuine relationships between black artists and white studio crew members were stronger than he states, as numerous accounts by black and white musicians and producers of the era have stated. For example, Wilson Pickett called white FAME producer Rick Hall his “soul brother,” and native Alabaman Percy Sledge says that the Muscle Shoals crew were like his “family.” The good feeling of blacks and whites working together against the grain in the South during the '60s and '70s may be built on half-truths, but Hughes is mostly concerned with showing the glass as half empty; the good feelings are, in his view, wishful thinking in much need of revision.

Whereas racial discrimination was a complex matter in Memphis and Muscle Shoals, it was often more blatantly conservative in Nashville, as white record executives sought to align their products with President Nixon’s “silent majority” and draw more distinct color

lines. The presence of black singers such as Ray Charles and Charley Pride (central in Chapter 5) were anomalies, not substantial signs of racial progress. One of Hughes’s sharpest points is his discussion of the seeming contradiction of how the more “progressive” FAME studio cashed in to conservative country with the likes of the reactionary response to the My Lai massacre “The Ballad Hymn of Lt. Calley” and the appropriated “soul” sound of the Osmonds (“One Bad Apple”). Sam Phillips of Sun initially recorded mostly black performers, but with the invention of Elvis Presley, he turned to recording mostly whites. Was this motivated more by racism or the rush for profit? Hughes suggests the former, though he points out that, contrary to statements by Peter Guralnick that the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968 put a halt to the Memphis Sound, the subsequent rise of Black Power actually accelerated the recording of soul in Memphis. By the late 1960s, he writes, “black meant green” (p. 82).

In all, this is a worthy, well-written book for readers interested in race in the music industry of the civil rights era and just after. It makes the reader think, and this is, for me at least, a good bottom line for any scholarly work. Yet readers should be prepared for the cold water Hughes throws on race relations at FAME, Stax, and other southern studios. It is arguably a needed corrective to the assumption that racial relations in these studios were free of discord. Although it did cause me to dig out my old Swamp Dogg record, this is an academic work about race and business, and not a celebration of the often-great music that came out of these studios.

--Bryan L. Moore



The Price for Their Pound of Flesh. By Daina Ramey Berry. (Boston, Beacon Press, 2017. Pp.

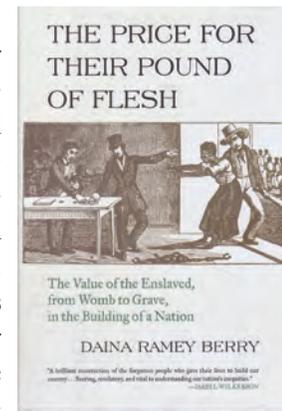
xvi + 197, acknowledgments, appendix, notes on sources, notes, index. \$36.95, hardcover)

In the past fifty or so years the historiography of slavery has experienced a renaissance, with studies focused seemingly on all possible perspectives or characteristics. As a result, the history of slavery is as broad and deep as any single subject area of American history. Most of these studies, however, focus on the experience of enslavement (with particular attention paid to such topics as workload, punishment, and other abuses, religion and other aspects of culture, the intricate dynamics of the slave-master relationship, and passive and active expressions of resistance). The monetary value of enslavement, however, has usually received only brief attention as a reference to market value at the peak of a slave's life stage and productivity (i.e. the average value of a young, healthy, adult male laborer or a healthy female of child-bearing age). Such statements about value are accurate as far as they go, but general and, therefore, reflective of only the slave-owners' perspective about the financial side of the peculiar institution. Furthermore, such general references do not account for the tremendous potential for fluctuation in value during other stages of the slave's life.

With the publication of *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh*, Daina Ramey Berry, Associate Professor of African History and Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, seeks to create a new and more multi-dimensional approach to our understanding of the economics of enslavement: one that offers a more in-depth exploration of the "valuation and devaluation of blackness" as well as "white valuation of the black body" (p. ix). Berry's study, therefore, is not merely an examination of slave value as defined by the slave-owning class. It is, rather, also an exploration of the enslaved population's self-awareness and understanding of the values placed upon their lives, skills, or productivity,

the factors that influenced changes in that value, as well as the potential consequences related to such reappraisals.

Through chapters organized around each stage of a slave's life, illuminated by poignant narratives of particular slaves, Berry examines the ongoing process of commodification of human property. Berry's analysis of the evaluation of a slave's monetary appraisal highlights the fact that, although the experiences of enslavement stripped slaves of their individuality as humans, their value as property remained a defining and consistent characteristic to the slave-owning society in which they lived and died, even as the values changed. When their existence and value was a matter of financial speculation on par



with projections for an upcoming agricultural crop, Berry demonstrates how valuations affect both the mother and child, even prior to conception. Berry then moves through the remaining stages of life, discussing the issues or circumstances that affect assessments from infancy and childhood, to adolescence and young adulthood, through midlife and older adulthood. This discussion provides a nuanced appreciation of how and why slave values peaked in early adulthood.

The Price for Their Pound of Flesh concludes with chapters on the elderly years of enslavement and the values associated with death. In this section Berry makes a thorough examination of the previously underappreciated practice of life insurance policies paid to slave owners upon the death of their human property, as well as a critical examination of the role played by medical doctors, and the secretive but flourishing underground trade in slave cadavers for medical schools. Of all the topics under ex-

amination, the postmortem practice of slave cadaver sales stands as the most haunting and revelatory and adds a new level to our understanding of that previously known but nonetheless unseemly and gruesome business.

In a sad irony, the first generation of freed persons saw their monetary value actually decrease with freedom in a not yet fully equal society. Berry points out, however, that such a revelation does not equate to a preference for slavery over freedom, but an awareness of the economic manipulations by those in positions of power.

In this thoroughly researched work, Daina Ramey Berry offers a lively and in-depth analysis of the patterns of valuation attached to enslaved individuals at each stage of life and death and establishes a more complex and complete perspective by which to assess the relationship between slavery's economic and human aspects. *The Price for Their Pound of Flesh*, thereby, stands as an invaluable contribution to our understanding of this previously under-analyzed aspect of this peculiar institution.

--Robert Patrick Bender



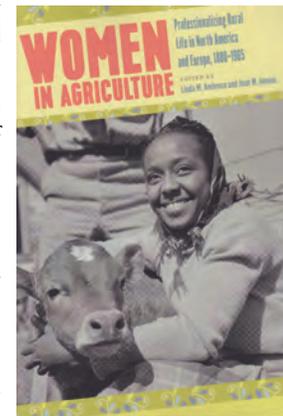
Women in Agriculture: Professionalizing Rural Life in North America and Europe, 1880–1965. Edited by Linda M. Ambrose and Joan M. Jensen. (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2017. Pp. xii + 203, notes, contributors, index. \$65, paperback)

In examining an edited volume, the reviewer's central question is, "What threads and themes connect the essays, and do they create a unified whole?" The chapters in *Women in Agriculture: Professionalizing Rural Life in North America and Europe, 1880–1965*, edited

by Linda M. Ambrose and Joan M. Jensen, successfully fill a common historical niche through "stories about women whose professional lives were closely tied to food because of their work as educators, experts, and extension workers" (p. ix). The contributors' work combines food studies with women's history, and highlights little-known stories of female agricultural professionals in the U.S., Canada, the U.K, and the Netherlands.

The volume is intuitively organized into three sections. "Part I: Education" brings together three essays related to rural professional women and their influence in teaching and disseminating information. Karen Sayer and Nicola Verdon, in "The Professionalization of Farming for Women in Late Victorian Britain: the Role and Legacy of the Langham Place Feminists," trace the literary career of the *Englishwomen's Review*, which promoted a new and controversial vision of the middle-class professionalized woman as agricultural and food producers. "Good Farms, Markets, and Communities: Emily Hoag and Rural Women as Producers," by Joan M. Jensen, highlights Hoag's work at the USDA in the 1910s and 1920s. Hoag pioneered work

in rural sociology and produced one of the earliest professional government studies of farm women. In the Netherlands from the turn of the century through the postwar period, women educators staffed government courses aimed at creating the "new farm woman" who could participate fully in modernizing agriculture and in the changing social and cultural life of rural areas. Thus Margreet Van Der Burg's "Professionalizing Farm Women, Recognizing Their Integrated Food Roles: The Netherlands, 1880–1950," provides a European angle that situates itself in the



broader progressive reform period of North American history.

The first chapter of “Part II: Experts,” centers on Harriette Cushman, Montana’s first state poultry specialist, and her efforts to regulate and standardize eggs and egg marketing. In “Montana Extra Selects’: Harriette Cushman’s Quest to Market Montana Eggs for Montana People,” Amy L. McKinney follows Cushman’s career with eggs, which spanned the 1920s into the 1950s. Part II then moves from eggs to apples, which are the centerpiece of Anne L. Moore’s essay, “The Chain of Interdependency: Apples from the Orchard to the Consumer.” Moore shows how, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, Massachusetts Agricultural College economist Lorian Jefferson produced a myriad of studies on the production and sale of apples—and the role of consumers in that chain—as well as the ways in which she promoted agricultural studies to the public. Finally, “Women’s Institutes in Canada and the United Kingdom: The Weighty Matters of Domestic Science, Home Economics, and Food Security,” by Linda M. Ambrose, elucidates the work of Madge Robertson Watt, an expert on issues concerning rural women, including home economics and public health. Watt’s leadership in the Women’s Institute in British Columbia gave her a platform to reach rural women, first in Canada, and in the United Kingdom, where she introduced the Women’s Institute in 1915. Ambrose also paints vivid portraits of additional Women’s Institute leaders, and provides a brief history of the organization from its founding in Ontario in the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth.

“Part III: Extension,” begins with the BBC radio career of Mabel Elizabeth Edwards. Known to listeners as Mrs. Arthur Webb, she emphasized through various radio programs the important role of food in wartime during the two World Wars, but also popularized British rural food through her shows and recipe books. Maggie Andrews, in “The Indefatigable Mrs. Webb: Food, Radio, and Rural Women—A

Legacy of World War I,” ably places Webb’s career in the broader context of the rise of radio in the interwar period and the persistence of the rural ideal in British history. In “African American Home Demonstration Agents in the Field and Rural Reform in Arkansas, 1914–1965,” Cherrisse Jones-Branch takes readers through the fascinating history of black home demonstration agents in a Southern state, and looks at their efforts to address poverty and promote food security, while at the same time traversing the racial landscape of Jim Crow. Jones-Branch ends her essay with an assessment of the integration of the all-white Arkansas Council of Home Demonstration Clubs and the African American State Home Demonstration Council in the 1960s, and in doing so lays out an interesting path for further research on this topic. Linda Ambrose takes the reader back to the Women Institutes in Canada, in “Forever Lunching’: Food, Power, and Politics in Rural Ontario Women’s Organizations.” Ambrose’s chapter highlights how the WI used food as power—to, for instance, gain a greater voice in the public sphere, or to control community meeting spaces. Finally, “Frances Densmore and Mary Warren English: Indigenous Knowledge, Cross-Cultural Collaboration, and the Politics of Food,” by Joan M. Jensen, tells the story of how these two remarkable women studied and preserved Native American foodways in the 1910s and 1920s, ultimately publishing the definitive collection, *Uses of Plants by the Chippewa Indians* (1928).

This collection is heavy on US topics (five of the ten chapters), though the Canadian and European material offers encouragement for future comparative work on the subject of rural women professionals and foodways. Most of the individuals studied in *Women in Agriculture* are white and middle- or upper class, though Jones-Branch’s chapter stands out for its focus on a marginalized group. Here again is an avenue for further research. In sum, this is an impressively unified edited volume, tied together with common themes, top-notch scholarship,

and historiographic relevance.

--Jason McCollom



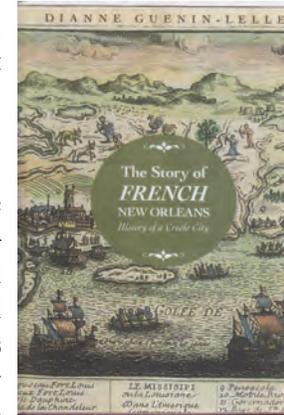
The Story of French New Orleans: History of a Creole City. By Dianne Guenin-Lelle. (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2016, Pp. vii-xv + 171, acknowledgments, preface, introduction, conclusion, afterword, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00, hardback)

Dianne Guenin-Lelle's work assesses the authenticity of New Orleans' French character. Beginning with the deceptively simple question "Why is New Orleans considered a French city?", the author proceeds to selectively review three hundred years of Louisiana and New Orleans history (1682–post 2005), its place in the changing geopolitical world matrix, its demographic/racial/ethnic composition, and its intellectual and linguistic underpinnings. Concluding that for various reasons at various times the citizens of New Orleans elected to emphasize their French characteristics, the author examines the motivations for this choice. This compact, but extensive study presents insights into the collective mind of New Orleans residents regarding their self-identity.

The conceptualization of the work begins with New Orleans's geography as both a traditionally accepted east to west city envisioned in American history and equally important, perhaps more important for the city's identity, a north to south city in the Caribbean world: "The founding generation of Louisiana lived on intimate terms with Native Americans who were oriented toward a quite different Mississippi-Caribbean world . . . the site of New Or-

leans . . . had the advantage of being a major crossroads of the New World" (p. 24). Its initial citizens—Native Americans, French officials, and settlers of various ethnic origins—were joined by almost continual waves of immigrants from different Caribbean islands, Africa, French Canada, Spain, and America. Therefore, New Orleans was not a typical French city. Its food, architecture, language, economy, and worship—while French to a degree—reflected the cultural fingerprints from all its inhabitants. This was the origin of New Orleans as the Creole city: "The Creole of Louisiana was part of a vast global network linked by a 'horizontal' axis to France and by a 'vertical' axis to the Caribbean and Mexico" (p. 135).

As a French colonial city, New Orleans was originally created according to traditional European patterns. The French Quarter, the original area of the city, was therefore designed in a logical, orderly manner reflective of European architectural and/or urban design values: "The French Quarter was . . . colonial officials' . . . attempt to imprint French order onto what they considered to be savage land" (p. 47). Over time, as New Orleans became a more culturally diverse Creole city and expanded, these concepts were challenged. The Faubourg Ste. Marie area located west of the French Quarter reflected a more American style of design. The Faubourg Marigny and Treme areas, east and north respectively of the French Quarter, were originally working-class neighborhoods of mixed racial/ethnic composition. These neighborhoods reflected a French influence but definite Creole character. The same dynamic—the fusion of European and non-European—can be seen in New Orleans's cuisine, including its method of preparation and its traditional food



selections, which reflected African and Caribbean cultures. New Orleans was a place “in between” the European world and the Western Hemisphere and was subjected to cultural influences from many sources. The Creole culture emerged.

Given its crossroads location at the intersection of European and Caribbean interests, race in the Creole world of New Orleans was not a simple binary composition (black and white). Race was a tripartite composition (black, white, mestizo) and contained various disparate European, Caribbean, and Native American elements. The Creole world of New Orleans contained many free Africans who were a respected, vital part of its Creole cultural/economic fabric. From its earliest colonial days, during which tensions were common between New Orleans citizens and French colonial officials, the citizens bonded with one another. This only furthered the development of a diverse Creole identity. Institutional loyalty to the Catholic Church and to their French heritage bound the Creole city together.

In 1762, when France ceded Louisiana to Spain, the Creole citizens of New Orleans re-emphasized their French lineage to differentiate themselves from Spanish influences, although the Spanish simultaneously executed infrastructure improvements to advance city life. After 1803, when the United States became the owner of Louisiana, the Creoles of New Orleans again stressed their French cultural connection, an identity enhanced by the influx of large numbers of Haitians fleeing the Haitian Revolution. From the early 1800s to the Civil War, New Orleans reveled in French high culture prominent in its numerous French language newspapers and literary works, which were celebrated by the city’s Creole population. Creole French language slowly disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, English language use had become the norm. Contemporary New Orleans “remains today part of immigration pathways for French-speaking Europeans, Africans, and others from

the Americas and the Caribbean” (p. 168). Creole French New Orleans heritage lives and is lionized in the city’s tourism, arts, and education.

Guenin-Lelle’s work offers a historiographic study, given its review of major historical events and literary works. It presents a review of Creole and Francophone literature, which emanated from New Orleans and offers analysis of French colonial methods. Thus, her work may be a useful element in Early American and sixteenth/seventeenth century European history. The analysis of nineteenth century Creole literary works offers a particularly revealing view into the mindset of writers influenced by their New Orleans experiences.

This work presents a detailed, sophisticated, and effective study of the character of New Orleans. While not the easiest read, its significance as an insightful study overshadows its frequent overuse of long quotations and repetitious ideas. The author was seeking to find the voice of New Orleans and ascertain its degree of French or Creole character. The conclusion that New Orleans was primarily a Creole city which both embraced its French character while generally disagreeing with French colonial policies, and then used its French identity as a shield against Spanish and American intrusions, presents a plausible answer to the question, “Why is New Orleans considered a French city?” This work, offering a literary and historical study of the Crescent City, is a highly demanding read but equally useful work.

--Diane Gleason



Can Everybody Swim? A Survival Story from Katrina’s Superdome.
By Bruce S. Snow. (Little Rock, AR: Et Alia Press, 2016. Pp. 227, acknowledgments. \$16.95,

paperback)

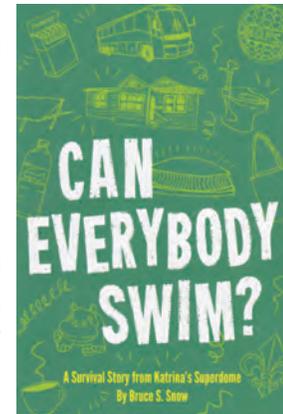
Legendary sociologist Kai T. Erickson predicted that Hurricane Katrina would be the most studied disaster in U.S. history. It may also be one of the most storied. Voluminous archives of Katrina survivor stories are now tucked away in university libraries, oral history projects, social media sites, and in films, books, newspapers, journals, and magazines worldwide for historians to peruse.

Standing tall above these documented accounts is Bruce Snow's *Can Everybody Swim?* which could someday gain fame as the most richly detailed and complete account of the human misery at the Louisiana Superdome in late August and early September 2005.

Having survived Katrina's fury with his family in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans, the author took a walk with his uncle after the winds died down, and for about one hour, was convinced that the Big Easy had dodged a bullet. Then, brown water started to bubble up from manhole covers, filling his street. No problem, Bruce thought, the pumps will be turned on soon, and this crisis will be over. He did not know at the time that a levee less than one mile from his home had been breached. Before the end of the day, his family retreated to the second floor of their home, hoping for the waters to recede.

People who wonder why New Orleanians don't just leave before devastating storms will get an education by reading Snow's book. With Katrina bearing down, the family could only scrape together \$55 in cash. Their vehicles were not roadworthy. Friends and relatives offered accommodations outside the hurricane zone but did not have room for all four members of the household—a non-starter for Bruce Snow. Plus, the family had a powerful attachment to 4899 Mandeville Street. For Snow, the 25-year-old American born descendant of Ecuadorian immigrants, this place in Gentilly was the only home he had ever known. His grandparents bought the place in 1972 after arriving in

America virtually penniless and worked hard to make a living. In their honor, the family garage was converted into a party room where Papi (grandfather) and Abuelita could watch novellas on the big screen TV and reminisce about the life they'd proudly built in



America. The family cars were demoted to spots on the front lawn, Louisiana-style. Leaving this place, which was the fount of so many fond memories, was the hardest decision of Snow's life; yet he had no choice on August 30, 2005, as floodwaters inched higher.

Camping out on the New Orleans Saints' artificial turf, Snow discovered that conditions in the Dome were worse than media reports indicated. Gunfire erupted in the far end zone on the evening of August 31, sending a human tsunami fleeing the carnage that nearly crushed his family's camp some 75 yards away. On the upper floors, law, order and familiar guideposts of civil society suffered a complete meltdown. In this no man's land where no US Army boots trod, luxury suites were gutted and transformed into Party Central, as Snow found out on an expedition through the chaos. Pimps were negotiating a price of \$40 per transaction; crackheads nonchalantly smoked rock in glass pipes. Some upper concourses degenerated into yellowish-brown slicks of urine and feces. In what Snow called the "worm-ways," carpeted Seventies-style walkways between floors, hundreds packed into the small, dimly lit spaces, preferring darkness to light. Sick and frail elderly huddled on mats, or on the carpet, struggling to breathe the fetid air. A large man defecated in the hallway while not far away, a couple was having sex covered by a single white sheet. Surviving this post-apocalypse without incident, Snow made it back down to the rela-

tive sanity of the playing field and plotted the family's next move. His people wanted out of this hellhole, and fast. Snow's greatest pain in the whole ordeal was the two-day wait outside the Dome in the unrelenting sub-tropical heat and sun for the buses to transport him safely away from New Orleans. Snow's family traveled by bus to New Orleans International Airport, and then after a tedious wait got on a C-117 to Little Rock. More frustrating delays had ensued before he was finally able to land in the Natural State. Then, there was one more trip via bus to Pine Bluff. The author's post-Katrina life began in a steamy locker room of the Pine Bluff Convention Center after his first glorious hot shower in over a week. While combing his hair and relishing the thought of putting on clean clothes, Bruce Snow contemplated what might come next, not knowing what the future would bring but realizing that whatever it might be, it would be in relative comfort compared to the hell he'd just experienced.

Bruce Snow could have blamed the decades of race, class, and gender oppression in New Orleans for the plight of his family after the storm. He absolutely had every right to do so. The fact that he did not is one of the boldly refreshing aspects of his narrative. Instead, he took personal responsibility for the successes as well as the failures that his family endured. Readers will identify Mr. Snow as the person we would all like to be in a crisis. He was a leader, handling contentious situations democratically and with humor. He kept his family together. Most important, he put family needs above his own personal comfort. And Snow profusely thanked those who had protected him along the way—the Cajun Navy, the Louisiana National Guard, the US Army, and the gracious volunteers in Pine Bluff.

Mr. Snow lived in Little Rock for eight years before returning to New Orleans in 2016. Arkansans will wonder what happened to Snow's family after the floodwaters receded. What tales can he tell us about his time in Arkansas, and what about the backstory of the

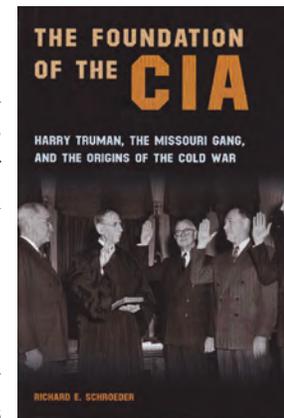
making of *Can Everybody Swim?* Perhaps in yet another Bruce Snow book, we will find the answers.

--Stan Weeber



The Foundation of the CIA: Harry Truman, The Missouri Gang, and the Origins of the Cold War. By Richard E. Schroeder. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2017. Pp. x + 175, foreword, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95, paper)

To the old adage “don’t judge a book by its cover,” readers of Richard E. Schroeder’s *The Foundation of the CIA: Harry Truman, the Missouri Gang, and the Origins of the Cold War* might add “or by its whole title.” Indeed, while an interesting and often fascinating study, it is not always clear which of his titled subjects: the CIA, Harry Truman’s Missouri Gang or the origins of the cold war, Schroeder really wants to address. It is that lack of focus which detracts most significantly both from his treatment of the individual subjects as well as from the whole, a work of intrinsically great interest, especially for those who, although familiar with the period, will nevertheless be intrigued by the book’s many details and biographical portraits of individuals who have long been consigned to the lower levels of historical study. In the end, it is those often fascinating



tidbits with which the reader must be most satisfied, for frustratingly, Schroder fails to offer a full treatment of the founding and development of the CIA, the Missouri Gang, or the origins of the Cold War.

Schroeder's idea of the foundation of the CIA appears to be all the intelligence-gathering efforts that went before it, especially in the first half of the twentieth century; however, he does not ignore Washington's well-developed Revolutionary spy network, or the efforts in the Civil War and the pre-Spanish American War era. Ultimately, this treatment of the nation's varied efforts to develop an intelligence capability and organization serves two important functions. First, it makes clear the need that the CIA was intended to fill. Second, it lays out a string of mistakes, all of which offer lessons from which the new agency's earliest leaders would hopefully profit. These are no small points, although Schroeder gets there in the most meandering of ways.

Thus, we are not introduced to any of the titled subjects until over halfway through the book. The two central figures of Schroeder's "Missouri Gang," future directors of intelligence Roscoe Hillenkoetter and Sidney Souers, neither of whom knew Truman until he was President, are introduced in wholly different connections earlier, then appear and reappear in little biographical snippets until finally they become a more central part of the narrative as the post-war effort to create the CIA takes shape—and the Missouri Gang's involvement with it becomes important. At the same time, that effort itself is given a disconcertingly cursory treatment, with little discussion of the politics that were no small part of the radical reorganization that the creation of the CIA, the National Security Council, and the new Defense Department, a bureaucracy that swallowed up the previously independent Army and Navy as well as their Air Forces, in fact represented. Notwithstanding the promise of a look at the founding of the CIA, we do not see much process. Rather, it is presented almost as a fait

accompli, although the telling of even that tale, of the effort to create an organization that can respond to the many lessons Schroeder has offered, still proceeds in a rather scattered way, including a great deal of chronological back and forth—almost like flashbacks in a movie—with more than a few episodic and biographical detours.

Given equally short shrift is the start of the Cold War. There are lots of references to what we have learned through VENONA, but little of what people were thinking then or of the debates and concerns of the time. There was a very real human dimension to the development of the Cold War and the important relationships between FDR, Stalin, Churchill, and later Truman, are glossed over, given comparatively little attention. This is too bad, for it is a dramatic story—and the drama is often rooted in people—but we do not get much of that in Schroeder's telling. Instead, we are treated to a chess game where the pieces are moved around the board, but with no understanding of what the players are thinking or what their moves are intended to achieve. All the major players are included: Secretaries of State George Marshall and Dean Acheson, and containment originator George Kennan, among others; but there is a lack of connection, a failure to make clear how it all relates. The relationship between the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift, for instance, are left floating in the air, and if the Missouri Gang, however mislabeled, is not involved, then the event gets even less attention.

Indeed, the whole issue of the Missouri Gang is problematic. As generally used by journalists during Truman's presidency and by historians ever since, the term, not unlike Warren Harding's Ohio Gang, was a pejorative, an unflattering reference to a group of the president's friends whose influence was both questioned and derided. In contrast, the relationship of Schroeder's Missouri Gang—Souers, Hillenkoetter, and White House counsel Clark Clifford—to Truman was a wholly professional one, with

the geographic tie being more accident than design. Consequently, it seems more than a bit disingenuous to try and have the efforts of those three policy-oriented associates assuage or even erase the reputation of a very different group of the president's cronies.

In the end, *The Foundation of the CIA* is an interesting book, one from which readers can take away an enhanced understanding of America's intelligence efforts and its historic purposes and goals, no small matter at this point in our history. Too, it does serve to shine a light on two worthy and dedicated public servants, Sidney Souers and Roscoe Hillenkoetter, who have previously been only historical footnotes. Yet the book could have been more and that reality is disappointing. But with the process of distilling and writing history being an ongoing one, we can take solace in the fact that it can still serve as a valuable resource upon which future historians can build.

--William H. Pruden III



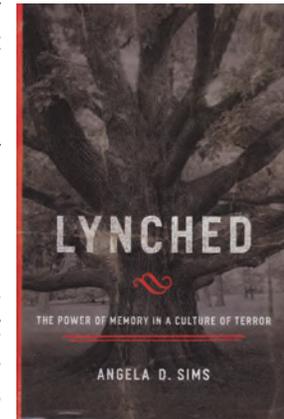
***Lynched: The Power of Memory in a Culture of Terror.* By Angela D. Sims. (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016. Pp. ix-xvi + 197, acknowledgments, preface, notes, index. \$29.95, hardback)**

Angela D. Sims, an ordained Baptist minister and professor of ethics and black church studies, began interviewing older African Americans about their memories of lynching in 2009, traveling the country and even being featured in the February 25, 2011, issue of the *New York Times* for her work. The dozens of interviews she gathered are now archived at Baylor University's Institute for Oral History, while that university's press produced Dr. Sims's *Lynched*, a slender volume that, as the second

part of the author's "Remembering Lynching" project, constitutes something of an extended theological meditation upon racial violence, its role in American law-and-order politics, and the ways in which memories of such atrocities have impacted the lives of African Americans through generations.

This is not a history book—though it quotes regularly from oral histories, it does not try to correlate interviewees' memories to documented events or present its material with an eye toward chronology or geography. Neither is *Lynched* a work of sociology that aims to explain the behavior of people living under a regime of constant terror. Instead, the author describes hers as an "introspective work . . . often contingent on a personal decision to position myself to receive and value narratives that are not recognized typically as sources for Christian moral discernment" (p. 124). These oral histories, she insists, "offer ethical-theological insights into and a potential response to counter the deadly effects of a neo-lynching culture that is a current reality in the United States of America" (p. 139).

This secular reviewer is honestly not qualified to judge whether Sims makes a cogent argument for employing lynching narratives as a source for Christian moral discernment. However, *Lynched* does illustrate how shared memories of lynching have shaped people's lives—even the lives of those who never witnessed such an event, noting in the introduction, "Persons who came of age during this reign of terror had to, as a matter of survival, know where they were supposed to be and, at the same time, not be driven by internalized fear to an extent that they were paralyzed into inactivity" (p. xv). In fact, many of Sims's in-



formants essentially describe lynching not as a discrete event but as an atmosphere of fairly constant terror, and the quotations from her oral histories are harrowing. However, just as moving are the statements of resilience, the “strategies of resistance and visions of justice that emerged from a culture designed to thwart a sense of human dignity that is of immense significance in a global capitalist society” (p. 43). Both of these components of the legacy of lynching—the fear and the resistance—must, Sims asserts, be incorporated into the country’s heritage: “[I]t is imperative that black people not defer to someone else to determine whose worldview will influence subsequent generations’ sense of self” (p. 91). Multigenerational alliances are needed because only armed with the memories of the previous generation can we remember together (the literal definition of “commemorate”) what has come before and thereby conquer the evils of the past that remain in the present.

Given the wealth of academic and popular literature on the subject, Sims may be overstating things to insist that, “[u]nlike the Jewish Holocaust, which has international recognition, lynching continues to be associated with shame and denial” (p. 32). However, it is true that little work has been done to incorporate knowledge of lynching into a broader ethical framework—or even just to make it a particular subject of philosophical concern, along the lines of what philosophers like Arne Johan Vetlesen, Claudia Card, and Larry May have done with genocide and other mass atrocities. The idea of “American Exceptionalism” has likely hindered this development, its adherents loathe even to compare so-called “isolated cases” of collective violence in the United States with more systematic atrocity elsewhere (not to mention comparing the past with the present), but there is real potential in such a project, and Sims gives some initial insight into how such a project might proceed.

Like all first forays into the darkness, *Lynched* is a rather uneven work, its ambition

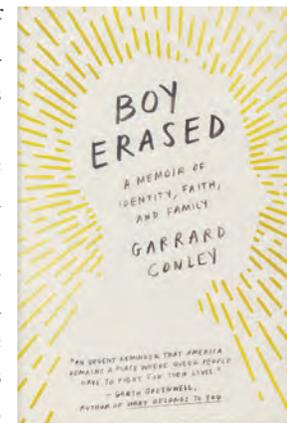
often too much for its brevity, its interpretation of the oral histories that constitute its foundation occasionally rushed and undeveloped, and its theological insights perhaps empty of meaning for those outside such traditions. But it is nonetheless a work of prophetic import that will likely inspire others who seek to draw parallels between the evils of yesterday and those of today—and who, equally importantly, aim to preserve the possibility of resistance.

--Guy Lancaster



***Boy Erased: A Memoir of Identity, Faith, and Family.* By Gerrard Conley. (New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2016. Pp. 340. \$16.00, paper)**

On the day that Garrard Conley’s mother discovers he’s gay, she disappears behind the closed bathroom door of their house in north-west Arkansas and vomits. A family of Missionary Baptists—a group who adheres to a literal interpretation of the Bible—the only thing to do with such news, the naming of her son as gay, is to expel it. It’s a poignant image, one that reflects Conley’s own struggle with his sexual identity, and the potential consequences of being gay within such a community. His decision to search for a “cure” for his homosexuality by taking part in ex-gay therapy is the troubling heart of Conley’s new book, *Boy Erased: A Memoir of Identity, Faith, and Family*.



The Memphis-based organization that Conley and his family turn to for help is the now discredited Love In Action. It is a therapy designed in imitation of 12-Step programs. LIA's Step One lays out a clear set of principles "equating the sins of infidelity, bestiality, pedophilia, and homosexuality to addictive behavior such as alcoholism and gambling: a kind of Alcoholics Anonymous for . . . 'sexual deviance'" (p. 4). LIA attempts to cut off its participants from the secular world and its influences by confiscating participants' cell phones and anything else on their person—or in their hearts—that might be considered False Images (FI). This was anything, really, that might connect them to their "inappropriate past." The list of belongings, clothing, and actions is exhaustive. The secular world was always lurking, it seems, ready to undermine a participant's self control and "best" impulses.

One of the main therapies associated with Step One of LIA's program is the taking of a Moral Inventory (MI). It is an exercise where participants recall, record in writing, and then present to a group sins related to their sexuality. Conley quickly picked up on the dynamic of these group sessions. The narratives should be detailed but not graphic and the speaker should seem ashamed of his actions and determined to see them within the context of sin. One of the many problems with this concept was the youth and inexperience of the participants, many of whom had only enough sin to last for a few sessions, after which they were left with no choice but to do what so many have in similar situations—make up sins or embellish small ones to satisfy the institutional need for their performance.

Another important idea for LIA is that the impulse to homosexuality could be traced through a kind of genealogy of sin, and so participants were asked to create "genograms." These documents were family trees in which the participant was to think about sin that could be traced along family lines, especially through the father. Alcoholism, infidelity,

sloth—anything might be relevant, might reveal the kinds of deviance that were inherited or unwittingly passed down, and so lead to a gay lifestyle.

Not long into Conley's time at Love In Action, he realizes what the counselors think is needed to affect a "cure" for his homosexuality. It is an "erasing" of the secular self: "Perhaps this was the entry fee for the Kingdom of Heaven: cleanse yourself of all idiosyncrasies, sharp opinions, creeds—put no false gods before Him—become an easily moldable shell, a vessel for God" (p. 85). Ultimately, this level of self-abnegation is too much at odds with Conley's sense of himself. And the question that many readers will ask is why he felt compelled to engage in the therapy in the first place.

The best answer is to try to understand that identity and our values are constructed from a multiplicity of often contradictory factors. For Conley the pull was between his attraction to men and his father's religion. He was part of a deeply religious family, one that proudly identified itself as Southern and Baptist, and at the time of his enrollment in Love In Action, Conley's father was being ordained as a pastor and hoped to have his own church some day. Regardless of any tension it might create for his sexuality, Conley was truly involved in this world:

Sometimes it was simply the act of looking at the open Bible that gave me a sense of belonging. Sometimes opening the Bible and pressing the pages flat with my palm, adding an extra crack in the spine, brought me closer to my father. I ran my thumb down the indented tabs, pressed into the sides of the book until the words took on a heft I might carry and lift up as proof of my devotion. (p. 52)

Nevertheless, Conley's homosexuality put him at odds with the life of his family and community. It was common for neighbors to discuss homosexuals in derogatory terms: "They need to get their heads checked. Putting things in places where they don't belong. Plumbing the

wrong pipes, if you know what I mean” (p. 147). There was also more than a passing familiarity with Bible passages that deal specifically with homosexuality. Apparently, there are eight, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind: it is an abomination” striking a note of greatest clarity.

The memoir invites the reader to imagine the emotional pressure an adolescent felt in trying to come of age under these circumstances, especially when those we might turn to for advice—friends and family—are the very people who must be most carefully excluded. “[Be]ing gay in the South gave you an embarrassment of sins for which you constantly felt the need to apologize, repent, beg forgiveness” (p. 86).

Perhaps more than anything, *Boy Erased* demonstrates Conley’s frustrated desire for intimacy, the perpetual sense of dislocation, the fear of sexual violence, and the deep desire to search out a place that might relieve him of these feelings—a place in which the principles of organizations such as Love In Action hold no sway. Has he succeeded? This beautifully written and affecting memoir may be an important first step.

--Jeffrey Condran

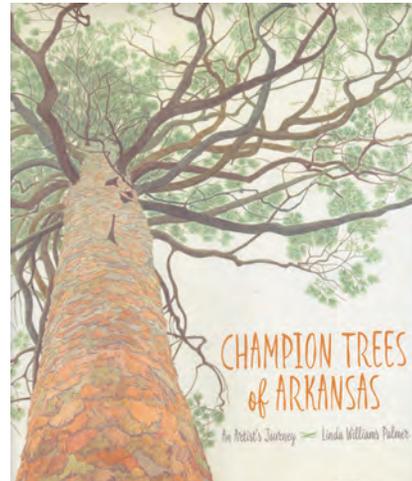


***Champion Trees of Arkansas: An Artist’s Journey.* By Linda Palmer. (Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 2016. Pp. xiv + 85, curatorial essay, acknowledgments, introduction, resources, index of drawings. \$ 34.95, cloth)**

Portraits of the pastoral have a long history in visual art. Though another study in this subject could seem overwrought, Linda Williams Palmer breathes a bit of new life into these tired old leaves in her art study *Champion Trees of*

Arkansas: An Artist’s Journey. Personally, I can see the appeal of the marvels of nature; however, I do not tend to dwell on them. It requires more for me to take interest in the subject than its beauty alone. Palmer, however, does a fine job in associating these champion trees with the local lore surrounding them. She understands that the cursory reader might not burst into tears at the sight of trees (as mentioned in her introduction), but they connect with the small town stories that are woven throughout this collection of essays.

Champion Trees of Arkansas: An Artist’s Journey recounts the stories of Palmer’s pilgrimage to visit all the “champion” trees in Arkansas, each of which, she notes, is “the largest (not necessarily the oldest) tree of its species that has been officially measured and recorded by the Arkansas Forestry Commission” (p. xiv). On this expedition into the



wilderness, Palmer visits various champion trees all over the state of Arkansas and illustrates her encounter with them—both with words and intricate colored pencil drawings.

For Palmer, this hunt is almost a religious experience. She describes nature as “a sanctuary more still and green than a church” (p. xiii). This metaphor plays out throughout the course of the book, which becomes a sort of bible of champion trees. Indeed, there are plenty of

Numbers and Deuteronomys within the text—stories filled with facts and figures that only really appeal to the avid tree enthusiast. Also similar to a religious text, many sentiments are repeated throughout: Woman seeks out tree. Woman gawks at tree. Woman draws tree. Because of Palmer’s expertise, it can be difficult for the casual reader of the subject to discern the differences between the various expeditions.

That being said, *Champion Trees of Arkansas* contains psalms and beatitudes in its remarkably detailed drawings of the trees and the sentiments Palmer shares regarding them. Her illustrations bring out the beauty in the ordinary—magnifying a singular acorn or leaf to be viewed in its best light. The artist pairs her ethereal drawings with little quips from notable public figures—such as Winston Churchill, Henry David Thoreau, and Dr. Seuss—who share her sentiment regarding these marvels of nature. Regarding the Cherrybark Oak, Palmer writes a short poem entitled “Trees” that sings the praises of these mammoth plants and the comfort one might find in them. Coupling these serene sentiments with the images that gave impetus to them makes *Champion Trees of Arkansas* accessible to anyone looking for a bit of peace or inspiration.

The most compelling element of Palmer’s book is her desire to share her foliage gospel with others. One tends to think of encountering nature as a solitary experience—reflecting upon one’s own personal relationship with the earth. However, Palmer chooses to embark on most of her arboreal expeditions with communion in mind. Whether she takes a companion along with her for the ride or meets locals along the way, Palmer shows the importance of shared experiences. In her stories, we see how much depth another person can add to one’s own story.

Palmer’s drawings emphasize the specificity of the trees. She focuses her eye less on the magnitude of the tree, but instead, she brings it down to a smaller scale to be enjoyed in full by its viewer. The artist emphasizes what makes

these champion trees unique other than the obvious. She goes to great lengths to make sure her own intimate encounters with the trees are translated in her artwork. In her image *Arkansas Champion White Oak*, Palmer depicts a gorgeous oak as its leaves begin to yellow with the change of the season, but what makes this image really stand out is the plaque placed in front of the tree on which Palmer transcribes the entire dedication. Her attention to detail gives these images an intense intimacy that perfectly complements the stories with which they are paired.

In *The Champion Trees of Arkansas*, Palmer illustrates nature in such a way that even a committed homebody could be swayed to appreciate its beauty. While I would not expect this book to inspire its readers to hunt down all the champion trees in their own area, I do believe it might persuade them to take a few steps outside and find their own leafy friend to peruse this book under.

--Laura Coby



A Horse with Holes in It: Poems.
By Greg Alan Brownderville.
(Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, Southern Messenger Poets Series, 2016. Pp. xi + 65, acknowledgments. \$17.95, paperback)

Appearing on a panel at the Arkansas Literary Festival in Little Rock this past April, Greg Brownderville did not read his poems so much as incant them. Standing quietly at the lectern, the Pumpkin Bend native opened with a tribute to Arkansas’s late Frank Stanford by yet another Arkansas-connected poet, Jack Butler. Then Brownderville began to recite, from memory, selections from his newest book,

A Horse with Holes in It. His delivery was free of stagey inflections and gestures, and its lack of affectation made it even more spellbinding. The room fell still as there emerged from his lips a swirl of sounds and images, a colorful mix of the vernacular and the surreal: think John Prine meets Gaudí.

In many ways this latest collection is vintage Brownderville. The tone is conversational, the craft meticulous, and the subject matter eclectic, touching on everything from the Parthenon frieze to the Beebe blackbird deaths, Sweet Willie Wine to Walter Pater. A variety of forms, from rime royale to ballade variations to prosimetrum, is impeccably managed.



Brownderville still tosses off such delicious lines as “a sudden madness of gray, shushing rain / as though the world had gone to static” (“Walkin’ in Memphis,” p. 23) or

I like to imagine the morning train
from an aerial view: a magical unzipping
across the land, and when the darkness
slips off like a purple gown,
the nakedness.
“Some Weird Other O’Clock,” pp. 17–18

His sly sense of humor abides:

. . . she looked up at the speakers
and said, “O Sting, where is thy death?”
I loved her low voice and worshipped the
golden calf
above each of her roller skates.
“Welcome to the Old Cathedral,” p. 54

Yet *Horse*, darker and more restless than Brownderville’s first two books, marks a departure in his work. For the first time, urban set-

tings prevail—possibly reflecting the poet’s new life on the faculty of Southern Methodist University in Dallas. This cityscape is a far cry from the swampy beauty of the poet’s old stomping-ground. It’s a place of weedy sidewalks, trashy alleys, and “filthy nights” (p. 20) whose light pollution hides the moon and stars. The old forms have been usurped and commodified:

Wandered into a boutique bar-and-gallery.
They had some metal bottle-trees
for sale.

“Walkin’ in Memphis,” p. 21

Shall you compare me to a McDonald’s
drive-thru?

“Prosimetrum 1: Assorted Heads,” p. 14

Although urbanization has made possible an “obscenely easy life” (p. 65), there is a pervasive sense of falling-off:

Where did the shamans go,
the strange men with their drums and
dreams?

“Welcome to the Old Cathedral,” p. 54

In poem after poem the speaker reels, unable to get his bearings:

when I walked into my dark boyhood bed-
room,
I was slapping blind: my hand
didn’t know where the light switch was
anymore.

“Honest Gospel Singing,” p. 1

Like the hero of Dante’s *Inferno*, he stumbles through the wasteland of mid-life, combing through relics, searching for something authentic to be his guide: “It’s easy to confuse / Longhorn and crucifix, and hard to feel my life.” (“For Tess, from the Blue Door Tavern, 2010,” p. 31)

Nor does direction come by way of love. For man is born to trouble as the sparks—and the

fireworks and the red-winged blackbird flocks—fly upward, and relationships do not fare well in this book, at least not in any conventional sense. The present-day sweethearts in various poems can't hold a candle to the speaker's old flame, the bewitching Easy Lee, "my spirit / wife" ("Easy," p. 28), an amalgam of boyhood memories to whom he has been secretly married for many years. In the Brownerville mythology Easy complements the poet's own effigy, Yeah-Boy, fashioned years before out of odds and ends by his Pentecostal mentor, Sister Law.

Another new element here is the contemporary literary scene. Brownerville's work still bears the influence of past figures such as Yeats and Frost, but now the poet is clearly part of an energetic conversation about present-day literature—a give-and-take by no means wholly positive: in poems such as "Folly" and "Prayer to Isis," the representation of current voices gets testy and critical. At the Midtown Lounge, a "poets' pub" whose frequenters wax on about their art, the speaker alternately chimes in and checks out, all the while getting thoroughly wasted. By 4:00 a.m., sick on the street, he cries out for the old certainties, the old connections: "Are you there, / sister? Sister, are you / there?" (p. 47).

In different hands all of this might add up to the familiar postmodern artist myth: an artist-hero ill at ease with the old paradigms, unable to navigate territory where he used to feel at home. Standing in front of his boyhood church but unable to sing—something he used to do quite easily—he manifests the existential dilemma of our age: "I muttered / melodically. Nonsense syllables" (p. 1). In the expected formula, he would now be cast out by his erstwhile community, released into the wilderness to embrace his freedom, forge his own transcendence, and so forth. But Brownerville gives this formula a twist. Instead of rejecting the stumbling speaker, the community affirms him by responding "in tongues." Glossolalia and poetry, whatever their mysterious origins, may sound like "gibberish," but both are means of ecstatic tran-

scendence.

So maybe another myth pertains. Could be the country boy has just been off in the city too long. This is a guy still in love with his roots, sunniest when in nostalgic mode. However far he wanders, Brownerville keeps finding his way back to the totems of his childhood: seductive Easy, his hardscrabble forebears, aquariums and bobbers and clothesline-poles as rugged as a cross.

--Hope Coulter

