

Dorothy Hodder, Compiler

Jim Grimsley's world is poor and violent. Winter winds blow through rattling sharecropper cabins; pinto beans and cornbread stave off starvation but not hunger; alcohol-stoked fathers beat their wives, children cower; and sex drifts about the edges of it all like a rib-thin yard dog. Grimsley's world also has its talismans. There are slow rivers to lie down beside and trestles that cross them. A doll's foot appears in the dirt of a temporary sanctuary during the height of danger. Fragments of hymns rise above kitchen sinks, near frosty morning wood-piles, and in abandoned cemeteries. There are dreams and ghosts and, most importantly, the murky places where they commingle.

Jim Grimsley.

My Drowning.

Chapel Hill: Algonquin
Books of Chapel Hill, 1997.
258 pp. \$18.95. ISBN 1-56512-141-4.

If books are frigates that carry us to lands away, then Grimsley's is a destination best visited through the safety of a spyglass.

My Drowning is Jim Grimsley's fourth novel, a prequel to his first, *Winter Birds*, which won the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction and was a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award. His second work, *Comfort and Joy*, has yet to be published in the United States, and his third, *Dream Boy*, won the American Library Association's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Book Award.

In *My Drowning*, Ellen Tote, old and comfortable with food enough in her refrigerator, freezer, and pantry to last weeks, and camellias, roses, and azaleas blooming in her back yard, remembers her childhood, a place where few things bloomed except cotton and where an extra biscuit was as rare as a kind word. Her memories are driven by a recurring dream that has been with her since childhood. Its central image is her lumbering mother, leaning back and sliding quietly into a pond, her slip pulling free to float upon the water.

My Drowning surpasses *Winter Birds*. It is multilayered, well-paced, and is written in an unselfconscious, graceful style. At its foundation is a multitude of gritty details: a chipped enamel slop jar; the pooled drool of a crippled brother; the sixties' sunglasses and scarf Ellen wore as a young mother, a dress pulled tight across a fleshy backside, the veiny limp breasts of a dying grandmother. This is powerful stuff. One must quake alongside young Ellen as she nervously pans off before dressing each morning to fully know the triumph shown by old Ellen's sweeping the dead blossoms from her yard.

I cannot imagine a North Carolina library doing without this — or any — of Jim Grimsley's works.

— Kevin Cherry
Rowan Public Library

If, as Kaye Gibbons recently said, Eudora Welty has been "mother" to many young North Carolina writers, including Reynolds Price at the beginning of his career, Price has been "father" to a number of writers whom he either taught at Duke, including Anne Tyler, or mentored, including Fred Chappell.

In the first full-length study of Price's work in ten years, James A. Schiff, a professor of literature at the University of Cincinnati and author of numerous essays on American literature, notes that the long overdue critical attention Price is currently receiving is the result of his recent prodigious output — fourteen volumes in the nine years between 1986 and 1995 — and of the more accessible style of his recent novels, especially those in which Price has used a first-person point of view, *Kate Vaiden* (1986) and *Blue Calhoun* (1995).

James A. Schiff.

Understanding Reynolds Price.

Columbia: University of South Carolina Press,
1996. 217 pp. \$24.95. ISBN 1-57003-126-6.

Schiff begins his immensely readable text with a brief biographical sketch and a critical overview of Price's literary career, which he divides into three phases, the last beginning in 1984 when Price learned that he had cancer of the spine. In this section Schiff is particularly apt when he notes that "cultural matters and literary fashion," together with Price's rather difficult prose, as well as his

relentless interests in family, redemption, and mystery, had a great deal to do with the critical neglect of Price's work before the publication of *Kate Vaiden* in 1986.

After his fine introduction, Schiff divides his analyses of the novels and two volumes of memoirs into four sections: "The Mustian Novels" (*A Long and Happy Life*, *A Generous Man*, and *Good Hearts*); "The Mayfield Trilogy" (*The Surface of Earth*, *The Source of Light*, and *The Promise of Rest*); "Artists and Outlaws" (*Kate Vaiden*, *Blue Calhoun*, *Love and Work*, and *The Tongues of Angels*); and "Man of Letters" (*Clear Pictures* and *A Whole New Life*). The text concludes with a complete bibliography of Price's work, a bibliography of critical articles, and a selected bibliography of reviews, followed by an index.

Schiff's analyses are clear and reasonable, and his summaries and selection of quotations from critical reviews and articles are well-chosen. There is little to quarrel with, beyond his puzzling interpretation of the reason for Blue Calhoun's betrayal of his wife Myra, whom Schiff says is "sexually repressed." Blue, on the contrary, several times states that there is nothing wrong with his sexual life with Myra, and that his infidelity was the result of mystery and the workings of Fate in his life. Price, a believer in fate and mystery, stresses this idea throughout the novel. It would have weakened the novel considerably had Price relied on the rather simplistic and hackneyed reason usually given for men's infidelities: their wives' frigidity.

Other than this divergent interpretation of this aspect of *Blue Calhoun*, and the author's qualified estimate that "[f]or those who admire and value his work, [Price] has indeed become a major American literary figure," Schiff is due nothing but praise for his text. Belying its portable size and easy weight, the matter within has considerable heft, well worth the study of scholar, critic, and interested reader. Suitable for academic, public, and school libraries.

— Sally Sullivan

The University of North Carolina at Wilmington

G

George Moses Horton is a unique individual, the first black American slave to protest his confinement in poetry. He is also the first black to publish a book in the South and the only slave to earn substantial income by selling poems. *The Black Bard of North Carolina: George Moses Horton and His Poetry* borrows its title from Horton's *The Poetical Works of George M. Horton, the Colored Bard of North-Carolina*, published in 1845. The book provides biographical information and selected poems.

Horton lived sixty-eight years as a slave and died at the age of eighty-six. Existing laws prohibited slaves from learning to read and write, but Horton learned to do both. Noted as an ambitious person, he started to learn the alphabet from old spelling books and progressed to reading the Bible, hymnals, poetry, and novels. Putting that training to practice, Horton began to write poems. He also discovered that his writings could turn a profit as he found an audience of students at the University of North Carolina. During the free time that slaves had to themselves on the weekend, he walked eight miles to Chapel Hill to sell fruit and poems. Horton benefited from the opportunities to conduct these transactions within the tolerant environment of a "liberal" slave state.

Rutgers University professor emerita Joan R. Sherman deftly weaves together Horton's life story and the history of slavery in North Carolina. This work serves as an appropriate follow-up to her most recent book, *African-American Poetry of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology*, which includes Horton as a featured poet. Sherman's newest book offers a near-comprehensive picture of the fabled poet, including a bibliography of Horton's writings, reference works, and critical and biographical sources. Included are photocopy samples of Horton's actual writings.

The book consists of two major sections. The introduction is a narrative of Horton's life, with critical analysis about his body of work. The second part is a selected collection of his writings, drawn from three books and his uncollected poems. A notable aspect of Horton's work is that his writing style—and perhaps even his topics—mirrored those of his white contemporaries. Horton did not ignore slavery as a topic, writing about it in a strong voice, but he used it sparingly. Academic and public libraries should buy this book.

— Lawrence D. Turner
Queens College

Joan R. Sherman

The Black Bard of North Carolina: George Moses Horton and his Poetry.

Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press,
1997. 158 pp. \$29.95. ISBN 0-8078-2341-4.

W

alt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes have written a study of the well-known dialect, or brogue, spoken on the barrier island of Ocracoke. Located off the Outer Banks of North Carolina, Ocracoke (whose natives refer to themselves as O'Cokers) has been exposed to such a variety of linguistic influences, yet at the same time has been so isolated, that its dialect is a linguist's gold mine. The authors' intensive study of Ocracoke dialect, involving as much on-site acquaintance with everyday conversation as academic analysis, offers something of interest for a range of readers, from the inquisitive traveler to the specialist in regional language differences.

For those interested in the technicalities of usage and the evolution of word forms, *Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks* is replete with tables, comparative information, and historical background. One need not be a linguist, however, to enjoy the wealth of stories about the engaging individuals who were interviewed and quoted at length. Indeed, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes have integrated themselves effectively into the culture of Ocracoke and thus are able to offer a window into highly informal and natural dialogues. Perhaps the most delightful feature of the book, and one which will make it a worthwhile addition to public as well as academic libraries, is the compilation of an O'Coker vocabulary and a test of competence for the off-islander, locally known as a dingbatter.

After reading this truly informative and enjoyable book, this reviewer concluded that not only is it all right to say "might could," it is also more fun; recoiled in horror from a videotape which purported to cleanse the viewer of all speech contaminants such as accents and regional phrases; and nicknamed our portly and none-too-bright cat as Wampus Cat. A series of family members picked up and devoured the book while visiting, stimulating a new enthusiasm for the social aspects of dialects in areas where we have lived: the Shenandoah Mountains and the Tidewater region of Virginia. Both of these dialects are discussed in *Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks*, and, according to the authors, each shares some characteristics with the Ocracoke brogue.

— Meredith Merritt

University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Walt Wolfram and Natalie Schilling-Estes.

Hoi Toide on the Outer Banks.

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 192 pp.
Cloth, \$29.95. ISBN 0-8078-2318-X.
Paper, \$14.95. ISBN 0-8078-4626-0.

S

ince childhood, Walker Fann has been a man of few words and few visible emotions, reluctantly but predictably fulfilling the expectations of his domineering father, the chairman of the board and owner of the town newspaper. When Walker's temper flares after he single-handedly causes his softball team to lose the playoffs one summer night in St. Andrews, North Carolina, it sets off a chain of events that no one in the town could have predicted would have had its origin with Walker.

Somehow this night things are different. His wife has recently died, and Walker and his two children have moved in with his parents. Perhaps this is why Walker allows his emotions to drive him. In any case, the anger that caused his public outburst on the softball field eventually targets a young black boy who steals Walker's softball glove. The boy is caught and Walker presses charges, putting into motion the events that will disrupt his comfortable, white, middle class life and alter the face of his small southern town forever.

The boy is the son of one of Walker's former schoolmates, Raymond Justus, a man who helped integrate the town's schools in his younger days and who supports the construction of a slavery museum in St. Andrews, an idea to which most of the white business people in town, including Walker's father, are vehemently opposed. As Walker and Raymond renew their friendship, it becomes apparent to Walker that he must act on his convictions that St. Andrews needs the slavery museum in order to mend old rifts between the races and to create dialogue where none has been. Acting on these convictions is more than simply defying his father, however, and soon the reality of what he is up against—nearly 70 years of deliberate suppression of the truth—almost manages to silence him once again.

With *The Measured Man*, Howard Owen reexamines many of the themes he previously explored in his earlier novels, *Little John*, *Fat Lightning*, and *Answers to Lucky*. He is honest about the damage caused by bigotry and hypocrisy, and in the character of Walker Fann, Owen bravely illustrates why the personal must become political in order for our society to move forward.

Recommended for public libraries, high school libraries, and academic libraries.

— Adrienne Ehler

East Garner Middle School

Howard Owen.

The Measured Man.

New York: HarperCollins Publishers,
1997. 259 pp. \$23.00.
ISBN 0-06-018654-2.

7

From 1943 to 1958, the employees at the Harriet and Henderson Mills in Henderson, North Carolina, had the unique experience of being represented by a union. *Like Night & Day* focuses primarily on those fifteen years when the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) held onto a small segment of the state's textile industry workforce.

Contrary to the supposedly southern anti-union sentiment of the time, the mill workers actively welcomed the union's arrival and felt that they benefited from their union membership. Not only did unionization bring better wages and benefits, it also offered workers a way to present their grievances with mill owners and supervisors and have them arbitrated. Author Daniel J. Carter contends that it was those grievances and arbitration rights that the workers found most appealing, as they offered a practical recourse to the perceived arbitrary and whimsical management practices prevalent in the mills. Carter goes into great detail to give examples of how grievances and arbitration affected the worklife of the mill's employees.

In 1958, union and management contract negotiations broke down over the central issues of workers' grievance and arbitration rights. The mill owners brought in a strike-breaking workforce. Governor Luther Hodges had to station state troopers and, ultimately, National Guard troops in Henderson to keep order. In the end, mill management broke the strike and ended the TWUA's fifteen-year presence at Harriet and Henderson.

Daniel J. Clark's outstanding research and lucid writing provide yet another interesting and important chapter of North Carolina's labor history. Using oral history tapes he made with some of the TWUA mill workers and having direct access to Harriet and Henderson management's actual working files, Clark allows the reader to see both sides of the action simultaneously. In particular, transcriptions from the oral history tapes give this volume a "You Are There" flavor that heightens the narrative action. Clark also examines the background and the development of the Harriet and Henderson mills and the impact that the mills had on the community prior to the arrival of the TWUA.

This volume is highly recommended for all North Carolina history collections, for collections dealing with labor relations and unionization in the South, and for collections concerned with the textile industry. This volume contains source notes, bibliography, and is indexed.

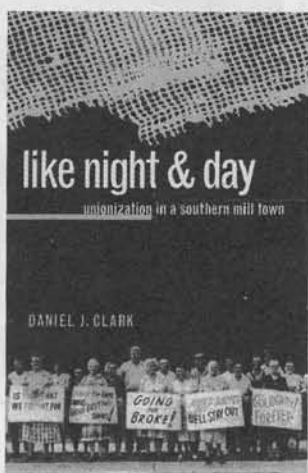
— John Welch

State Library of North Carolina

Daniel J. Clark.

Like Night & Day: Unionization in a Southern Mill Town.

Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 260 pp. Paper, \$16.95. ISBN 0-8078-4617-1.



8

Early twentieth-century America saw a nationwide boom in the creation of large country dwellings. One of the most spectacular was Reynolda, the country estate of Katharine Reynolds and her husband, R.J., the famous tobacco entrepreneur. Located three miles outside of downtown Winston (now Winston-Salem), North Carolina, Reynolda included a post office, two churches, and two schools, making it more a self-sufficient village than just a country home. Barbara Mayer's *Reynolda, a History of an American Country House* describes this elaborate estate by examining the historical, social, and personal aspects of Reynolda and its creators.

Mayer accurately documents Reynolda's creation in the early twentieth century, its restoration in the mid-1930s, and, finally, its transformation into a modern Museum of American Art. Taking her information from original correspondence, countless interviews, and thorough study of the Reynolds family papers, the author engages the reader in the lives of this prestigious family. By studying the estate through its creators, she exposes the personal influence that the family, especially Katharine Reynolds, had on Reynolda and on the community.

Mayer continues her comprehensive history by examining the personalities of the original architects and inhabitants of all parts of Reynolda. The story of Reynolda then is traced through the eccentric lives of the Reynolds children and the restoration efforts of Mary

Reynolds Babcock and Barbara Babcock Millhouse. The many photos which illustrate the work, although not printed as well as one would wish, do establish a concrete image of the Reynolds family, their employees, and Reynolda in all stages of its history.

Barbara Mayer.

Reynolda: A History of an American County House.

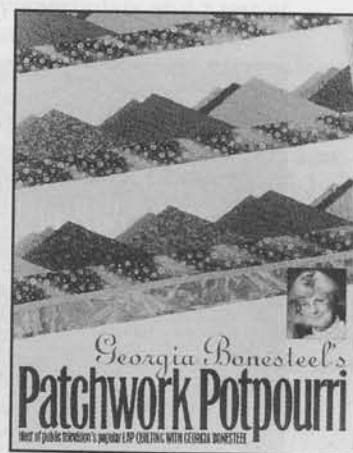
Winston-Salem; John F. Blair, 1997. 143 pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0-89587-155-6.

Though she is experienced in writing about design, decoration, and crafts, this book is Mayer's first attempt at an historical work. Beyond achieving her basic goal of presenting Reynolda's history in a thorough and well-organized manner, she weaves the lives of the people and the history of the country home together to produce a rich documentary. Though very informative and factual, Mayer avoids being dry; her journalistic experience and talent are evident in her engaging style. The author's study in the history of decorative art informs her discussion of Reynolda as the showplace it was in its early years, as well as the modern museum it is today. Because of its accuracy, thoroughness, and comprehensive index, this work is appropriate for research, public, and junior high and high school libraries as an important and interesting history as well as a valuable research tool.

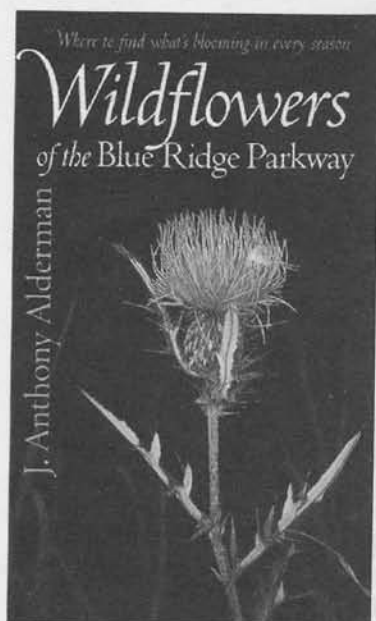
— Laura Baxley
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

OTHER PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST ...

North Carolina's favorite quilter has patched together an assortment of projects of varying levels of difficulty in *Georgia Bonesteel's Patchwork Potpourri*. The workbook-size book features color photographs, detailed instructions with diagrams, and templates for some 20 projects. Bonesteel is the author of six other quilting books, but is best known for the series "Lap Quilting with Georgia Bonesteel," produced by the UNC Center for Public Television (1997; University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288, 124 pp. paper, \$21.95; ISBN 0-8078-4660-0.)



Allen de Hart, author of *North Carolina Hiking Trails* and many other hiking guides, has added two new titles to his list. *Trails of the Triangle* describes over 200 hikes in the Raleigh/Durham/Chapel Hill area, and *Trails of the Triad* covers over 140 hikes in the Winston/Salem/Greensboro/High Point area. The small paperback volumes would fit easily in a backpack for a daytrip, and include basic descriptions of the trail areas with addresses and telephone numbers for more information. Trail maps are marked for hikers, bikers, horseback riders, and handicapped persons, and include locations of telephones, restrooms, picnic areas, campsites, and parking areas. The author recommends also investing in county maps for the more rural walks. Both books include indexes to the trails, a list of addresses for useful resources, and a list identifying handicapped accessible and interpretive trails. (1997; John F. Blair, Publisher, 1406 Plaza Drive, Winston-Salem, NC 27103; *Trails of the Triangle*: 163 pp.; paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-89587-160-2; *Trails of the Triad*: 130 pp.; paper, \$11.95; ISBN 0-89587-161-0.)



Another handy guidebook is *Wildflowers of the Blue Ridge Parkway* by J. Anthony Alderman. The first section is a field guide to the flowers, sensibly arranged by color. There follows a list of the 75 best wildflower sites on the Parkway and the flowers that may be expected to be blooming at each one during the spring, summer, and fall, keyed to the Parkway's mileposts. Color photographs of each flower are printed all together at the end of the volume, after the brief glossary, bibliography, and indexes to flowers and sites. (1997; University of North Carolina Press, P.O. Box 2288, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2288; 222 pp.; paper, \$12.95; ISBN 0-8078-4651-1.)

Two useful sources of state history have been reprinted by the Division of Archives and History after being long out of print. They are *Indian Wars in North Carolina, 1663-1763*, by E. Lawrence Lee, first published in 1963; and *A Chronicle of North Carolina during the American Revolution, 1763-1789*, by Jeffrey J. Crow, first published in 1975. (1997; Historical Publications Section, Division of Archives and History, 109 E. Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601-2807; *Indian Wars*: 94 pp.; paper, \$6.00; ISBN 0-86526-084-2; *A Chronicle*: 61 pp.; paper, \$6.00, ISBN 0-86526-110-5.)

Allen Paul Speer has delved into his own family history in *Voices from Cemetery Hill*, editing the Civil War diary, reports, and letters of Colonel William Henry Asbury Speer, written between 1861 and 1864. Colonel Speer was from Yadkin County, and although opposed to slavery and secession, he served in the 28th Regiment, North Carolina troops. He fought in 16 major battles of the Civil War, was wounded twice in battle and served time in Northern prison camps, and was elected to the North Carolina Senate a few weeks before his death from wounds received at the Battle of Reams' Station (1997; Overmountain Press, P.O. Box 1261, Johnson City, TN 37605; xiv, 221 pp.; paper, \$19.95; ISBN 1-57072-050-9.)