New North Carolina Books

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EDGAR T. THOMPSON. *Plantation Societies, Race Relations, and the South: The Regimentation of Populations.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1975.)

Edgar T. Thompson, Professor Emeritus of Sociology at Duke University, is a highly regarded expert in the field of race relations and plantation cultures in the American South and around the world. A son of the plantation country himself, and a student of Robert E. Park at the University of Chicago, Thompson has devoted his entire scholarly career to the study of the plantation as an *enacted* and *crescive* institution, an institution that was originally enacted or planted by man but continued to grow and change thus generating races and cultures.

This volume is a study of the American South, a scholarly effort to identify those forces that make the South peculiar, unique, and baffling. It is a collection of articles written over a long period of years, however, the "Introduction" and the article entitled "The Little Races and Racial Theory" appear here in print for the first time. It is Thompson's thesis that the plantation as an institution is the pivotal factor in understanding what he calls "the essential South"; it is the generating force around which the culture and the races of the South developed. Though the book is a collection of separate articles, it reads as a coherent and integrated whole. The articles fall into three distinct categories: "(1) the plantation institution and its system, (2) race as an ideology functioning to bring people of diverse backgrounds and complexions in plantation situations into orderly caste-like relations with each other, and (3) the South as a more or less representative plantation society where men in the course of trying to control nature for private economic ends seek also to control other men as means to these ends."

This is an important book. It should be read by everyone who is interested in understanding the nature and people of the American South. No library collection is complete without it.

RUBY J. LANIER. *Blanford Barnard Dougherty, Mountain Educator.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1974.)

This is an interesting and carefully written biography of a man whose name, in many minds, is almost synonymous with Appalachian State Teachers College in Boone. It is the story of a mountain lad who literally "pulled himself up by his own boot straps" and reached a high position in the world of public education in North Carolina. Beginning as a teacher in a frontier school, he rose to become a college president and a prominent member of various state educational agencies, boards, and commissions. It is also an account of the tortuous process of improving public education in the so-called "pauper counties" in the northwestern part of the state. As such, it is an important contribution to the still neglected history of public education in North Carolina.

Blanford Barnard Dougherty was associated with public education in Watauga County and Appalachian State Teachers College all his life. In a manner of speaking, he gave his life to these institutions and to the people of his home area. Such devotion, dedication, and sacrifice are rare today. The learned professors of our time cannot comprehend the character traits that led to such commitment and service. Dougherty, of course, was not alone. In reflecting on the course of higher education in North Carolina during the first half of the century, name after name comes to mind; men who served as Dougherty did and who built the foundations for those who were to come after them. Higher education today is a different world from that existing before 1945. The administrators of those early days probably could not cope with the realities of today. And present day leaders would flee in a body from the tasks that burdened such men as Dougherty.

Biographies of this nature, however, do suffer from what appears to be an unavoidable weakness; they do not, perhaps because they cannot, tell the full story. The real man becomes lost in the record of his public service. And the adulations heaped upon him during celebrations, retirement ceremonies, or funerals do not provide an accurate measure of the man. In praising the man's commitment and long service, biographers of educational leaders frequently ignore the severe institutional problems that stem directly from commitment and long service. Such leaders so devote themselves to their institutions that they become blind to the distinction between themselves as persons and the institution itself. This creates immense problems for administrative associates and faculty, and the resulting stresses and strains rarely become part of any written record.

In short, there is a sad and unpleasant side in the history of every educational institution that has been shaped predominantly by one man. Biographies that do not reveal this must be judged as incomplete.

OVID PIERCE. *Old Man's Gold and Other Stories.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976.)

Few Southern writers resist the temptation to romanticize life in the plantation culture of the Old South. Men who are merely good become heroic, evil men appear tragic, and those who are oppressed become quaint and strangely charming. Those of us who have only dim memories of these times feel a tug of nostalgia when we read about the master and mistress in the big house, the barefoot darkies standing in the yard, and the soft brilliance of a Southern moon in the dark pine forest. We chuckle with complete understanding at the gossip of an old Southern lady who says, "I declare child, you look just like your daddy." The plantations, the big houses, and the shuffling darkies are gone now (no regrets), but something of that epoch remains —

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especially among Southerners who have vivid memories of the 1930's when the South was still very much the Old South. Perhaps a feel for the past is best retained by language, the sounds of the human tongue that resist the incursions of the more dynamic national culture. A subtle but deep-seated commonality, revealed by the nuances of language, reminds us, after all these years, of what we were and who we are.

These stories by Ovid Pierce are "time pieces" that take us back to a South long since gone. All were published some thirty years ago in the *SOUTHWEST REVIEW*. Pierce offers them again in this little volume with no claim for their importance or literary value. They are, in his mind, a definition of "the innocence of an age." That they are, but certainly more. The book is a short journey into a time past, a finely tuned glimpse into a peculiar dimension of American history. Contrary to the author's disclaimer, the stories are significant and important. Pierce suggests that such stories could not have been written in an earlier period and cannot be written again. He is right. And no writer who does not have the rural South of the pre-war period in his blood can match them.

MANLY WADE WELLMAN. *Worst Things Waiting*. (Chapel Hill: Carcosa, 1975.)

"Do you know that tonight, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world hold sway?" This invitation to the world of the occult that lies outside the bounds of rationality should be warmly accepted by those who fancy stories of ghosts and devils. Manly Wade Wellman, a man of many pens, offers this collection of his mystery stories written over a thirty-year period. Wellman is a well known North Carolina writer. In recent years he has concentrated on regional histories, civil war accounts, and fiction. This volume is a reminder of his earlier talent as a writer of mysteries and should serve as a new introduction to one of the state's most prolific authors. The stories are concise, well honed adventures into the world of horror and suspense. Take your pick from "The Undead Soldier," "The Devil is Not Mocked," "The Hairy Thunderer," or many others.

JOYCE PROCTOR BEAMAN. *Bloom Where You Are Planted*. (Durham: Moore Publishing Company, 1975.)

The message of this slender volume seems to be "love conquers all." It is essentially a devotional book, a testament by one person about how she overcomes the trials and tribulations of the world. There is a strong tinge of piety here, but, in a world rift with mystical nostrums, a simple appeal for trust and faith in one's self and God should not give offense to even the most skeptical. One may reject simplistic curatives without denying their usefulness to others. Mrs. Beamon invites her readers to use any and all of the lessons here for their own benefit. If it works for her, it may work for others.

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