

New North Carolina Books

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PAUL GREEN. *Land of Nod & Other Stories.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976).

Because of the unusual success of the play "The Lost Colony" in Manteo, Paul Green's name is most closely associated in the mind of the general public with out-door dramas. The informed public knows, of course, that he won a Pulitzer Prize for his play, *In Abraham's Bosom*, and is the author of many other successful plays, novels, and short stories. *The Land of Nod* is a worthy addition to his long list of accomplishments. It is a series of thirteen stories, written over a fifty year period, dealing in the main with the life of poor blacks in the rural South. Many of the stories are set in a black community near a Southern university and concern the relationships between black characters and professors. Chapel Hill is, quite obviously, the model setting.

Green, with his Harnett County background and his long tenure as a professor at Chapel Hill, is especially

well equipped to bring these two social worlds together. His construction of the character and language of struggling black people is almost perfect. And his description of their plight, sorrow, courage, and determination is so poignant that it hurts just to read the stories. Green's feel for the language of rural Southerners and his use of such terms as "mulligrubs", "ruction and trouble", "jook of a sheep's tail", and "booger bears" gives these stories a flavor and authenticity that makes them real. Bobo and his family, to mention only one set of characters, are unforgettable. Teachers and students looking for excellence in creative writing will find it in the *Land of Nod*. All libraries should have a copy.

WILLIAM S. POWELL. *The North Carolina Gazetteer.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1976). 559 pp. \$5.50.

This book is a revised edition of the original volume that appeared in 1968.

In one sense it is a book in progress: a continuous alphabetical listing of geographical information about North Carolina. The focus is on names — towns, townships, streams, counties, communities — almost everything that has been called anything in the state.

At first glance, one is tempted to say, "Who cares about all these names and places, old and new?" But a more careful examination of Professor Powell's book leads one to the opposite conclusion. It represents an important record of the tendency of human beings to stick a name on everything they touch and see. The book should be of considerable value to local historians and a "delight" to geography buffs — especially that breed of traveler who wants to know the name of every stream and hamlet he encounters as he drives across North Carolina. It's almost all here, from Aaron to Zoar. Powell invites corrections and new entries; send them to the North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

DONALD L. MCCOURRY. *Us Poor Folks And The Things Of Dog Flat Hollow*. (Winston-Salem: John F. Blair, Publishers, 1975). 165 pp. pictures, portraits, poems, songs. \$7.95.

How can a semi-literate mountain boy write a book and get it published by a respectable publishing house? This was the question that ran through my mind as I read the first few pages of this volume. After I had finished the book, other questions came to mind: Why do professors of literature often write such lifeless prose, erudite poets

such sterile verse, psychologists so many behavioral tracts that have so little to do with living? I am left with the more fundamental question, "Where are the well-springs of creative writing in human beings?" This book, badly flawed as it is by any accepted standard of writing, suggests a partial answer to that question. Effective writing must be rooted in life; the writer must write about what he has experienced. Command of the language helps, but it alone is not enough. And if the experiences are genuinely felt, the sensitive writer can share them with the reader even though he murders the Queen's English in the process.

This book must be read with the frank admission that the author is not an educated man ... at least not in the sense that the word "educated" is understood in the academy. But the book is full of life, the life of a self-taught man in the coves and hollows of the North Carolina mountains. His language illuminates that life; the absence of scholarly prose can thus serve a creative purpose. In some respects McCourry's sketches depict life as it was lived two centuries ago by many North Carolina people. All libraries with North Carolina collections should add this volume to their list.

DONALD MCADOO and CAROL MCADOO. *Reflections Of The Outer Banks*. (Manteo: Island Publishing House, 1976). 103 pp. paintings, sketches, commentaries. \$14.95.

This handsome volume is much more than a "coffee table" book about the Outer Banks. It is a collection of

prints of original paintings of the Outer Banks by Donald McAdoo set in historical and descriptive commentary by his wife, Carol McAdoo. The prints are beautifully reproduced, and the commentaries capture well the history and spirit of this unique part of America.

Both authors are adopted "Bankers," and their work reveals their deep affection (and sense of impending loss) of this beautiful nature-land of ours. The shrill cries of anger about what "progress" is doing to the Banks are not here; but they linger in the background. The reader senses an urgency to preserve a heritage in pictures, while there is still time. School libraries should have this volume available for their students. The foreword is by Andy Griffith.

MARION CANNON. *Another Light*. (Charlotte: Red Clay Books, 1974). \$3.00.

How do you test a poem? When is it successful? Rarely do professors or critics agree on standards. There is no problem with the "greats" whose work has long since been declared "immortal." But given the neglected and abused state of the art of reading poetry, what do we do with the work of newly published poets in a world committed to obscure subjectivism, graphics, and the argument that "anything a poet writes is poetry?" I have no answer, except to fall back on that lame cliché, "I know what I like." But certainly there is more to it than that. A successful poem must rest upon some idea that rings true; it must possess a certain tonal quality, consistent structure, and beauty of

line. Beyond these things it seems to me that the true quality of a poem is best measured by the extent to which the informed reader returns to it again and again.

Marion Cannon is a woman of mature years, and this is her first publication in poetry. She writes from her life-experiences, and she writes with feeling. Some of the poems in *Another Light* are more successful than others; however, the six poems included under the title "Three Score And Five" are impressive indeed. They contain what Fred Chappell in his excellent "Introduction" calls, "truthfulness, observation, lyricism." More specifically, they express the true feelings of the heart. And is this not the germ from which successful poetry must grow? *Another Light* is the kind of book you read more than once. Every collector of North Carolina poetry will want a copy.

NOTATIONS

The following short volumes contain commentaries on people, places and things which will be of interest to North Carolina folks.

JACK CLAIBORNE. *Jack Claiborne's Charlotte*. (Charlotte: Charlotte Publishing, 1974). 80 pp.

RUTH CAMBLOS and VIRGINIA WINGER (eds.). *Round The Mountains*. (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1975). 133 pp. \$3.50.

RUTH SMALLEY (ed). *The Good Life Almanac*. (Boone: Appalachian Consortium Press, 1975) \$1.95.