
OFF THE SHELF

Book Reviews

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FICTION

We Are All Welcome Here by Elizabeth Berg (Random House, 2006: ISBN 1-4000-6161-X, \$22.95). In 1964, children in Mississippi lived in segregated communities, with little idea about life on the other side of town. Parents often tried to protect their children from racial struggles that were happening "somewhere else." Also living separately from the larger community were many people with disabilities. In this novel, Paige Dunn avoids institutionalization for polio to raise her daughter. This could have been a tearjerker, but Berg instead insists that the reader view Paige Dunn and daughter Diana as they see themselves: tough, intelligent survivors. Like many teenagers, Diana daydreams of being an actress, spends time reading fashion magazines and running around with a "wild" neighborhood friend. Always there to rain on Diana's parade, it seems, is Peacie. Peacie, Paige's African-American friend and caregiver, has helped to bring Diana up since she was a baby, and allows no self-pity from the girl. Peacie and Paige's friendship, and Peacie and Diana's love-hate relationship form the heart of the story. In this passage, Peacie asks Diana to go to the grocery store, and Diana at first refuses:

"You can't spank me anymore, Peacie," I said. "I'm too old."

"You too old, you say."

"Yes, I am."

"Well, I'll tell you what. If you so old, you don't need no one beg you to get groceries that is mostly ate by you."

"I said I'd go!"

"That's what I said, too. We in agreement, ain't that something. Now see if your mother done with that bedpan."

Together, Peacie and Paige are formidable. Diana *will* accept life as it is, and not as she wishes it might be. Also in the story are Peacie's courageous boyfriend, LaRue, who decides to join freedom marchers in his Mississippi hometown; Brooks, a local hardware store owner who has always seen Paige as the beauty that she is; Dell, a handsome drifter who appears in town

much like a movie star; and Suralee, Diana's on-again off-again best friend. *We Are All Welcome Here* is a terrific story showing how racism, disabilities, and daily humiliations are overcome by bravery and sincere compassion for one's neighbor. Recommended for all public library adult fiction collections.—Reviewed by Teresa Pacheco, Chestatee Regional Library System.

When Light Breaks by Patti Callahan Henry (Penguin, 2006; ISBN 0-451-21834-5, \$12.95). Set in the South Carolina Low Country, Patti Callahan Henry's novel focuses on a few months in the life of Kara Larson, a young socialite in the small town of Palmetto Pointe. As the novel opens, Kara is rushing around, simultaneously organizing a tournament for the PGA golf tour (her employer) and planning her extravagant wedding to pro golfer Peyton Ellers. Kara is haunted by the loss of her mother to cancer when Kara was nine, as well as by the abrupt and dramatic departure of her childhood sweetheart Jack when she was 14. Then Kara meets Maeve Mahoney, a nursing home resident she is visiting to fulfill a service requirement for membership in the local ladies' society. Maeve's tales of long-ago love and loss in her Irish homeland resonate with Kara and lead her to reexamine her life and her plans. Romance fans may enjoy this lightweight offering, although the characterizations are so thin that it is difficult for the reader to fully engage in the conflict and invest in the story's outcome. Even moments that are intended to be soaked in sentiment and drama come across as somewhat flat and detached. The device of overlaying Maeve's reminiscence onto Kara's life is awkward and does little to enrich the story. The happy ending arrives as

expected but lacks the warmth and depth to truly satisfy. An optional purchase for medium to larger public libraries.—Reviewed by Sarah Trowbridge, Fayette County Public Library.

Hitched by Carol Higgins Clark (Scribner, 2006; ISBN 0-7432-8942-0, \$24.00). Detective Regan Reilly is days away from marriage to NYPD detective Jack “no relation” Reilly when the studio burglary of New York wedding-dress designers Alfred and Charisse sends Regan’s plans (and those of four other brides) into a tailspin. When not aiding Regan in pursuit of the dress thieves, Jack tracks “The Drip,” a serial bank robber so named because of his penchant for rainy-day heists. *Hitched* is the tenth novel in Clark’s Regan Reilly mystery series. (The fifth installment, *Deck the Halls* (2000), was co-written by Carol Higgins Clark’s mother, mystery novelist Mary Higgins Clark.) Though “The Drip” remains masked until near novel’s end, the dress thieves (and their motives) are revealed in the fourth chapter; thereafter, the story alternates between the casework of detectives Regan and Jack and the misadventures of dress thieves Marco and Francis (who flee first to Atlantic City, then Las Vegas). Various side plots include a secretive romance, a conning couple’s ruse, and the strange, abruptly-resolved abduction of one of the brides. While the story is at times entertaining, readers expecting depth (or real suspense) will be disappointed. Characters are drawn from familiar stereotypes—the tireless detective, the bumbling thief, the histrionic bridezilla, the eccentric recluse. The plotting weaves together through a number of coincidences, and it seems that everyone in the story’s world listens to the same radio station, watches the same television show, visits the same nightclub, and follows every detail of the press’s apparent round-the-clock coverage of the April Brides and their stolen dresses. Aside from anxious brides-to-be, *Hitched* might best suit readers in search of fast-paced, comedic, PG-rated, potato-chip fare: none of the characters use foul language, violence is limited to a few bumps and bruises, and all evil-doers get their comeuppance in the end. Recommended for public libraries seeking beach reads or light mystery for their adult collections.—Reviewed by Christina Hodgens, Conyers-Rockdale Library System.

NON-FICTION

Reading Faulkner: Introductions to the First Thirteen Novels content by Richard Marius, compiled and edited by Nancy Grisham Anderson (The University of Tennessee Press, 2006; ISBN 1-57233-449-5, \$15.95). The deep affection that he held for the works of William Faulkner is evident on every page of this book collecting the undergraduate lectures of the late Dr. Richard Marius. Transcribed by Nancy Grisham Anderson, *Reading Faulkner* is casual and conversational in tone and geared as it is towards first or second year non-English major college students, it is much more accessible to the average library patron than most other works of literary criticism. Dr. Marius covers Faulkner in depth, but not so deeply as to scare away anyone who might want to know more about William Faulkner but doesn’t want to go to graduate school to do so. The subtitle, *Introductions to the First Thirteen Novels*, is somewhat misleading as the lectures do not cover just the early works of the Mississippi Noble Laureate. The first thirteen novels include *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom! Absalom!*, generally considered Faulkner’s best works and the apex of his career. Throughout, Dr. Marius touches upon the common threads that the books share, notably those that distinguish these works as Southern literature. Frequently, Dr. Marius discusses the importance of the oral storytelling tradition in the American South and the effect that this has on the style of Faulkner: long, flowing sentences nearly free of punctuation, alliterative passages with a use of unusual words (“the curbedge’s channelbrim”), and the reader can almost hear the stories being recited aloud rather than written. Marius also makes the point that Faulkner, before international recognition brought about by his receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature, was not just a Southern writer, indeed “merely a regional writer of some interest,” as Dr. Marius describes the view of Faulkner held at the time, but was also very much a member of the Lost Generation of American writers, with all their hallmarks: a deep spiritual wounding brought on by the horrors of World War I, a recognition of the worthlessness of the values held by previous generations, i.e., chivalry. While Dr. Marius never quite comes out clearly with the word “Existentialism” he does mention the effect that T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* had on Faulkner, and that Faulkner thought Hemingway’s style lacked “courage,” although he did admire his fellow American’s work. A serious reader of Faulkner will find much to like about *Reading Faulkner: the First Thirteen Novels*, and the book would be put to good use in most academic libraries, but public libraries, especially those outside of the South, might find that they already have something on the shelf by Harold Bloom that can do what this book does, and possibly do it better.—Reviewed by John McConnell, Hall County Library System.

Birds of Georgia by Dr. John W. Parrish, Jr., Giff Beaton, and Gregory Kennedy, with contributions from Chris Fisher and Andy Bezener (Lone Pine Publishing, 2006; ISBN 10-976-8200-05-7; \$21.95). The striking cover of this 383-page trade paperback encourages the curious amateur or experienced professional birdwatcher to investigate further. Once inside, the contents offer the reader many more surprises. The beautifully detailed color illustrations on glossy pages often show the bird species at rest or in flight, as well as visual differences (such as color and size) between the male and female birds. The color coding on many levels and the cross-references within the Reference Guide, the Top Birding Sites, and the Species Accounts are a definite help to the novice birdwatcher like myself. The Introduction, interesting and quite readable, provides key information for effectively using the information within, and provides an overview of birding as a hobby. The Introduction also highlights the Top 50 Birding Sites in Georgia, with a state map and an expanded write-up for 15 of the sites. A typical Species Account includes the common and scientific name of each bird, large bold illustrations, an overview of the species, identification characteristics, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, voice, similar species and best sites for viewing. I have found the voice information to be particularly helpful to me during my backyard adventures. The authors have impressive credentials and share their extensive knowledge with obvious enthusiasm. They encourage the reader to participate in Birding activities such as joining organizations and clubs, landscaping for conservation and to attract wildlife, and setting up bird feeders and nesting houses to invite birds to visit and stay. Helpful websites are listed. This comprehensive publication engages the reader on many levels and is a worthwhile addition to the two other popular birding books in our public library's collection (*Georgia Bird Watching*, Thompson, 2004 and *Birds of Georgia Field Guide*, Tekiela, 2002). Easy to follow and a delightful reference, this book is a terrific mid-priced gift for a nature lover, and a "must have" for any academic or public library collection.—Reviewed by Ruth Hayden, Smyrna Public Library.

The Untold Story of Shiloh: The Battle and the Battlefield by Timothy B. Smith (University of Tennessee Press, 2006; ISBN 1-57233-466-5, \$34.00). On April 6-7, 1862, Shiloh, Tennessee, was the site of the largest and bloodiest Civil War battle up to then. More than 65,000 Union troops under Generals Ulysses S. Grant fought it out against 45,000 Confederate soldiers under General Albert Sidney Johnston and P.G.T. Beauregard. At the battle's end, 24,000 were dead, wounded, captured or missing. Smith is a staff member at the Shiloh National Military Park; this is his second book on Shiloh and it is not about the battle. In an introduction and 10 short chapters, Smith views aspects and issues that emerged from the two-day clash. It is about memory, the force of personality, reconciliation and changing views of historians. Chapter 1 sets the stage with a concise overview of changing historiography of the battle. The second chapter attempts to demolish the 10 "greatest myths of Shiloh," starting with the one that the Union forces were surprised by the Confederate army (they weren't). One of the myths—that the Union Navy played only a minor role in the battle—is also dealt with in a separate chapter. Smith shows how Navy gunboats on the Tennessee River protected the arrival of Union troops in a hundred transports and brought fire to bear on Rebel positions at critical moments. Chapter 7 reviews the period of reconciliation in the late 19th-early 20th centuries when a forest of commemorative statuary rose on the restored battlefield, and contrasts it with the rekindled "Lost Cause" mentality of our time. The book reads well, helped by appropriate historic photos, but badly needs a good map or two. I have walked the Shiloh battlefield, remembering an ancestor who was wounded while serving there with the 72nd Ohio. My understanding of the hardship and valor of those days is broader, deeper, and less settled after reading this book. It is a volume that deserves a place on the shelves of a serious Civil War collection seeking to challenge our understanding of that terrible conflict.—Reviewed by Wallace B. Eberhard, University of Georgia (Emeritus).

Villa Clare: The Purposeful Life and Timeless Art Collection of J.J. Haverty by William Rawson Smith (Mercer University Press, 2006; ISBN 13-978-0-86554-922-0, \$35.00). The life of J.J. Haverty, who died as a millionaire father of ten children, is almost a classic tale of "rags to riches" during the industrial age and its aftermath. Haverty was able to see trends ahead of time and move on them; this ability served him well in his art collection. His main interest in collecting was American artists, and he collected many that were not well known at the time but are important now. Unfortunately the High Museum did not have the same vision he did, and many of the pieces were either returned to his family or have disappeared. After the Civil War, the middle class began to appear all over the United States. In Atlanta, J.J. Haverty, the son of an Irish laborer, was perfectly suited to his time and place. He began working as a clerk in a department store and founded a chain of furniture stores with A.G. Rhodes. The stores were known as Rhodes-Haverty

until they split in 1908 and became two separate chains of furniture stores; Haverty's Furniture stores are still in business. This slim volume, written by Haverty's great-grandson, tells how he became a millionaire businessman who developed an interest in art, especially American art. J.J. Haverty began collecting art after he built Villa Clare (named for his wife, Clara, and County Clare in Ireland). Widowed in 1918, he turned his energy and money to serious art collecting in the 1920s and 1930s. Haverty was instrumental in building Christ the King Cathedral and the Stone Mountain Monument and in beginning the High Museum of Art. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, he opened his home to art lovers on Sunday afternoons. Upon his death and the death of his daughter, nearly all of his collection was donated to the High Museum of Art. It was the first major collection to be given to the museum. J.J. Haverty also gave the High his collection of art books, the funds for a library, and an endowment to help purchase other art. His collection helped the High Museum transition from a nearly moribund museum to the vibrant home of art it is today. This book tells how he became an art collector and relates his life to the life of Atlanta. He was a small boy when Sherman's soldiers burned his home, and his family had to start over with nothing. His life makes a very interesting story and is well told in this volume, which is also illustrated with more than thirty plates of paintings from his collection and short biographies of his favorite artists. A worthwhile book on art in Georgia that should be interesting to many readers.—Reviewed by Judith Gollihar, South Georgia Regional Library.

Benjamin Elijah Mays: A Pictorial Life and Times by Carrie M. Dumas; Julie Hunter, contributing editor (Mercer University Press, 2006; ISBN 0-88146-016-8, \$45.00). Benjamin Elijah Mays' impressive life, positive and far-reaching influence, integrity, strength, and intelligence are a beacon of promise to all who encounter his legacy. Anyone acquainted with Mays and his work, either through study of his most famed students or discovery of the man himself, cannot help admiring his effectively nuanced instructional sermonizing and leadership-by-example lifestyle. During his 27-year presidency of Morehouse College, from 1940 to 1967, Mays touched the lives of thousands of men, including Martin Luther King Jr.; this volume adds to a burgeoning scholarship on Mays that will hopefully touch and motivate thousands more. Author Carrie Dumas and editor Julie Hunter recount Mays' life and work through imagery and compiled reminiscence. Despite fascinating characters and thorough research methodology, evidenced in the variety of archival institutions and personal collections referenced, the execution of the work detracts from its cohesion. The subject-based arrangement does comprise an organizational scheme, but this reviewer would have significantly preferred a straight chronological narrative. For example, seeing a circa 1981 image in a chapter titled "Early Years" is illogical. Further, many notable figures (JFK, Hank Aaron, and Jimmy Carter, to name a few) languish in the "Additional Photographs" section when a chronological arrangement would have effectively juxtaposed Mays' celebrity encounters with his academic honors. To some degree this volume bolsters examination of larger issues, 20th century African-American education and community leadership. However, captions are inconsistent and the volume lacks an index. The book is nonetheless a valuable and enjoyable addition to any library collection as it offers a fresh and visual perspective on Benjamin Mays and his important work.—Reviewed by Jewell Anderson, Armstrong Atlantic State University, Lane Library.

Women in Atlanta by Staci Catron-Sullivan and Susan Neill (Arcadia, 2005; ISBN 0-7385-1745-3, \$26.99). Photographs selected from the Atlanta History Center's Kenan Research Center trace changes in Atlanta women's clothing, education, roles in the workplace, civil rights, social activities and political involvement from the mid-19th century through the early 1970s. Seven chapters organize the material according to varying time periods and themes; brief introductions place the photographs in context, outlining Atlanta's demographic, economic and social conditions and their impact on women during each era. Most Atlanta women in the 19th and early 20th centuries were working- or lower-class and therefore rarely photographed; noting this, the authors balance early portraits of well-to-do women with later photographs of students, social clubs, and laborers. Moving through time, mothers and daughters in fashionably trimmed hoop skirts give way to groups of college girls, store clerks, suffragettes, WAVES, and factory workers in Rosie-the-Riveter overalls. Notable women are briefly profiled, including PTA co-founder Selena Sloan Butler, prohibitionist Mary Harris Armour (the "Georgia Cyclone"), champion golfer Alexa Stirling, and Grace Towns Hamilton, the first African American woman elected to the Georgia General Assembly. The emphasis is on women's expanding roles outside the home as educators and philanthropists, and on advances in civil rights for women and African Americans. The book's appealing, well-produced graphics and clear text provide a concise overview of Southern women's history.

Recommended for both academic and public libraries.—Reviewed by Maureen Puffer-Rothenberg, Valdosta State University.

Pembroke, 1905-2005 by the Pembroke Centennial Committee (Arcadia, 2005; ISBN 0-7385-1798-4, \$19.99). *Pembroke* is located in rural South Georgia between Savannah and Statesboro (Bryan County). In 1889, this small town was flourishing with pride and growth. Mr. M.E Carter, its first resident and mayor, worked for the railroad and lived in a box car. To depict this rich history and to celebrate its centennial in 2004, the Pembroke Committee worked tirelessly to capture the memories of the town. The railroad was the heartbeat of the community, and the “little red caboosie was used for many social functions. At the “Welcome Center” they used the fire station at noon to signify to everyone it was lunch time. People would gather and could actually set their watches by the blowing of the siren... At the Bryan County High School lunches were served and cost 5cent a day.” Scattered throughout the book are many pictures of churches, schools, and businesses. A fascinating business was logging. As the demand for housing boomed, the demand for lumber became a necessity. Turpentine farms and distillers attracted a great number of settlers to the area. Pembroke residents consider themselves lucky to live there. Readers will enjoy a peek at the many activities as well as the people. *Pembroke* is a pleasant read with many pictures depicting the atmosphere then and now. *Pembroke* can easily fit into the web of Georgia’s history in any public library or academic institution with a southern culture collection.—Reviewed by Regina W. Cannon, University of Georgia-Griffin.

MUSIC

Best of the South: New Songs from the South: Musical Stories by Sugar Hill Songwriters (Sugar Hill Records, 2005; SUG-CD-0030, \$15.00). *Best of the South* is a compilation of 17 songs by various musical artists in the stable of Sugar Hill Records. This CD is billed as a musical companion to the book *Best of the South: Volume II*, published by Algonquin Books. The tracks are from previously released material dating from 2001-2005. Each song represents a different aspect of Southern musical style or theme, from Dolly Parton's sweet ballad "Little Sparrow" to the Louisiana blues "All About You" by Sonny Landreth. Singer/songwriter Greg Trooper, who contributes two tracks, works from Nashville. Tim O'Brien of West Virginia melds Southern classical country, old time, and cowboy swing with Irish for a unique bluegrass sound. "Dear Sarah" by Scott Miller is based on Civil War era letters from his great-great-grandfather to his great-great-grandmother Sarah. Miller's "Ciderville Saturday Night" has an unusual tempo change and instrumental break. Tim Allen's "The Great Joe Bob (A Regional Tragedy)" just has to be heard to be appreciated. The Duhks, a group that hail from Canada, contribute "Death Came A Knockin'," a song that illustrates a fusion of influences including Celtic, old time, blues, and folk with lyrics that might remind you of a tent revival preacher’s sermon. Other artists include Allison Moorner, Guy Clark, the Gibson Brothers, and Grey DeLisle. The quality of the selections and musical artists on this CD would probably encourage the listener to seek out the albums these songs were taken from. The liner notes are minimal and there are no lyrics. The CD has excellent sound quality on a high-end component system, car stereo, and boom box. Recommended for public or academic libraries that collect Southern music and literature.—Reviewed by Jack Fisher, Valdosta State University.

