

# Virginia Reviews



Rohrer, S. Scott. *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630–1865*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010. 312 pp. ISBN 978-0-8078-3372-8 (cloth: alk. paper).

In *Wandering Souls: Protestant Migrations in America, 1630–1865*, independent scholar and social historian S. Scott Rohrer examines eight religious groups that migrated between 1630 and 1865 within America. His purpose is to illustrate that religious beliefs influenced the social and economic development of the United States, not just initial journeys to the New World.

Rohrer proposes that there were two basic patterns for religious migrations in Early America, the most common being that of religiously minded people moving for spiritual and economic fulfillment. The second common pattern was a religious group being led by a minister to establish a religious utopia, to mitigate internal conflict, or to escape persecution by outsiders. Rohrer says that he focused *Wandering Souls* “exclusively on Protestant groups” because other religious populations were small or nonexistent in early America. He writes in the introduction that “Protestantism fostered a robust evangelical culture that resulted in two Great Awakenings, and it provided the prism through which ordinary people viewed their world” (13).

Unfortunately, the author made a major error. One of the groups he chose to include is not Protestant. In chapter eight, Rohrer describes the migration of the Mormon Church, which was founded in the United States by Joseph Smith

in 1820. While some have debated the classification of Mormonism, the man who served as the fifteenth president of the church says that Mormons are neither Catholic nor Protestant. On page five of *What of the Mormons? A Brief Study of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints*, Gordon B. Hinckley says, “They [Mormons] are generally classified as Protestants, since they are not Catholics. Actually,

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#### ROHRER REVIEW

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they are no closer to Protestantism than they are to Catholicism. Neither historically, nor on the basis of modern association, theology, or practice can they be grouped with either.” Yet throughout *Wandering Souls*, which focuses on Protestant faiths, Rohrer discusses the Mormons.

*Wandering Souls* is divided into three parts based on Rohrer’s two migration patterns. Part I, “Migration in America,” presents an introductory overview of the book followed by a chapter on Thomas Hooker and the New England Puritans. This group illustrates traits of both migration prototypes.

In 1635–36, a Puritan congregation known as Thomas Hooker’s

Company followed their minister from Massachusetts Bay to the Connecticut Valley. Rohrer writes (37) that although there was no one incident or reason that explains the move, the same forces of religion and land that had spurred the group’s 1632–33 transatlantic voyage from England were again in force. Rohrer’s presentation is straightforward, but lacking in important details. For example, he mentions the conflict of Hooker’s views with those of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams without ever explaining who these people were and how the differences affected Hooker, his followers, and the political and religious conflicts of the day.

Other sources confirm that both Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams are considered leading voices of religious dissent in early New England. Hutchinson espoused the belief that faith alone is the key to salvation and that God reveals Himself to individuals without the aid of clergy. This was in direct opposition to the Puritan emphasis on good works leading to salvation. Williams believed that an individual could know when he or she was saved, but could not know about the salvation of others. Puritan churches gave voting rights to church members based on the group’s determination of a person’s salvation; thus, Williams’s views undercut the authority of the church. Williams and Hutchinson both ended up in Rhode Island, which became a haven for those suffering religious persecution in the New World, including Baptists, Jews, and Quakers. Rohrer does not mention any of this in his book, instead assuming by the

mention of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams that readers will understand. By thus limiting his treatise, he misses the opportunity to examine how differing religious groups influenced each other's movements.

In Part II of *Wandering Souls*, "The Protestant Sojourner," Rohrer illustrates what he considers the most common migration type, that of religiously minded people in early America moving for spiritual and economic reasons. In this section, he examines Devereux Jarratt and the Anglicans of Virginia, the eighteenth-century Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, the Pietist migration to North Carolina in the late Colonial period, and the Methodists in Ohio Country.

In Part III, "Journeys of the Pure," Rohrer explores the second migration type, Protestants moving as cohesive groups to achieve an important religious end. The groups he includes are Baptists; Congregationalists; the Inspirationalists of Amana, Iowa; and the Mormons.

Rohrer says he selected the groups for each section "based on how well they could illuminate a larger theme within the book's religious migration model" (13). While Rohrer accomplishes his intention to show that religion impacted America's early development, the more interesting part of his presentation is how certain religious expressions first came to be represented within the United States, and how certain parts of the country became known for one or more of these practices. The book would be improved by expanding the number of Protestant groups examined and including other religions such as Catholicism, Judaism, and Mormonism. At the least, Rohrer must eliminate his review of the Mormon Church if he retains his focus on Protestantism.

S. Scott Rohrer is also the author of *Hope's Promise: Religion and Accul-*

*turation in the Southern Backcountry*, published in 2005 by the University of Alabama Press. He lives in Arlington, Virginia.

—Susan Ujka Larson, librarian and writer in Fairfax, Virginia



Lang, John. *Six Poets from the Mountain South*. Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2010. 209 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0807135600. \$24.95 (softcover).

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LANG REVIEW

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and the mysticism of the physical world. With the advent of the agricultural revolution and the domestication of fertility (crops and livestock), religion turned itself skyward. Icons moved from feminine to masculine. Religion became focused on the immaterial and transcendence from the physical world. Scholars trace these religious motifs through the ages down to the present day.

John Lang's book, *Six Poets from the Mountain South*, speaks directly to this theme as he discusses the works of a half-dozen twentieth-century Appalachian poets. While these poets are distinctly regional, they are not mere local colorists. Lang examines them in a comparative light, showing inspirations and influences as varied as sixth-century China and ancient Rome. He demonstrates the universal themes

and applications of their works in a deep, analytical study.

These are poets, having grown up immersed in the land (farmers and agrarians mostly), for whom the physical world itself is a spiritual place. They are, like the American Transcendentalists and English Romantics before them, concerned with finding beauty in this world, this life. Indeed, several of them specifically cite Emerson and Wordsworth, among others. And, in tandem, they have a virulent reaction against the fire and brimstone the Calvinist and Puritan traditions passed down to them.

Lang does not group them together so easily, though. Each of these poets has his or her own distinct concern. Jim Wayne Miller's writing is largely secular. He is concerned with the loss of and search for identity. Ironically, he almost wants to label Appalachia as isolated from the rest of the world. Fred Chappell has distaste for organized religion and concerns himself with theology. Robert Morgan speaks of the almost magical nature of the physical world. Jeff Daniel Marion speaks of the connection between Chinese philosophy and Appalachian life. And Charles Wright concerns himself with the specter of mortality in the life of the "God-fearing agnostic."

Lang's most intriguing chapter focuses on Kathryn Stripling Byer, the sole female poet in his analysis. Her poetry is feminist in concern, but it moves beyond gender into a sort of dichotomy between the tribulations of feminine and masculine, the physical and spiritual, and the relationship between heaven and earth. Something fundamental and universal exists in her work (and in Lang's view of her work), something common to all people, and she knows how to communicate in a clear, direct way that is the hallmark of good writing.

These are six distinct voices

reacting against the religious tradition in which they were raised, discovering the vast world around them across oceans and through time, and rediscovering beauty (and fear) in the physical, natural world around them. Lang very methodically and clearly shows these relationships.

Lang has a sophisticated command of the language and knows exactly what he wants to say. And his points are sound. The book itself is a slim volume of two hundred pages broken into six chapters, one for each author. It's a very dense read for two hundred pages, but offers some amazingly deep insights for those looking to see just how universal are the musings of the isolated Mountain South.

—Joseph Yamine, adjunct instructor of English, Ferrum College



Entsminger, Gary Lee, and Susan Elizabeth Elliott. *Ophelia's Ghost*. Montrose, CO: Pinyon Publishing, 2008. 281 pp. ISBN-13: 9780982156100. \$15.00 (softcover).

Virginia native Gary Entsminger and Susan Elliott have joined forces to write a promising first novel set in the American Southwest in the 1950s. *Ophelia's Ghost* begins with the disappearance of Eva Hail, an anthropologist doing solo fieldwork. From there the narrative takes readers into the rich family life of Joe Hill, a Hispanic tracker, horseman, and subsistence farmer who is steeped in the old ways passed down to him by the herbal healer Esperanza, his mother.

The story follows Joe as he is asked by Eva's parents to help locate her. After he gathers clues at Eva's last campsite, we meet Joe's daughter, Nina, and her boyfriend, whose time at Joe's trailer gives readers a loving look at the lifestyle of the indigenous people of the Four Corners country. Here it is

also revealed that Nina is playing the role of Ophelia in her college's production of *Hamlet*, and we are led to speculate about the spiritual concerns Shakespeare packed into his most widely staged work. Later, readers meet Eva Hail's parents and get a view of a couple who have come to the Southwest and adapted to its rhythms, weather, and culture. We are also introduced to Nina's director and professor as well as to a wealthy rancher and his headstrong daughter. Working through this complex mixture,

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ENTSMINGER REVIEW

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The book's best quality is the striking depth of the portrayal of the characters and their interaction. Readers will easily identify with and develop concern for all the characters, particularly Joe and Nina Hill, but the novel has other aspects that will appeal to a variety of readers. The Southwestern setting, the focus on archaeology and Native American culture, the loving detail of life in the 1950s with special attention to the popular music of the era, the Shakespearian theme, and even the quiet emphasis on vegetarianism reach out to different groups of readers. While the unconventional ending may puzzle readers who are most comfortable with the rhythm and flow of bestsell-

ing whodunits, this is a rewarding read and a good beginning to a writing partnership.

—Cy Dillon, Hampden-Sydney College



Campbell, Julie A. *The Horse in Virginia: An Illustrated History*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010. 296 pp. ISBN-13: 978-0-8139-2816-6.

Julie Campbell of Lexington, former editor of this book review column, has recently published the single most comprehensive study of the role of the horse in Virginia's history. The volume is illustrated with a striking collection of maps, photographs, and reproduced artwork carefully selected to support the meticulously researched text. The reproduction of nineteenth-century photography is especially crisp and detailed, as are the reproduced paintings such as *The Surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown* by John Trumbull. The variety and quality of the illustrations are both remarkable.

Beginning with the Jamestown colony, Campbell traces the development of breeds such as the thoroughbred and quarter horse and chronologically describes the role of horses in agriculture, commerce, sport, and war. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the scope and ambition of Campbell's effort, and it is especially impressive that the book holds together as a narrative. One of the features that the author uses to maintain her progress through the years is her creation of sections separated from the main narrative to cover, in a specialty encyclopedia format, such subjects as "Horse-Drawn Vehicles" and "Historical Veterinary Care."

With over twenty pages of notes and a twelve-page bibliography, *The Horse in Virginia* will be a book that fosters historical scholarship, sending serious readers to primary

and secondary sources for subjects they wish to pursue. The index is also detailed and inclusive. This is important because a writer researching a particular topic—for example, the role of Arabian horses in the development of the American thoroughbred—can easily find both what Campbell has to say and the sources on which her writing is based. The only quibble I have with the otherwise commendable documentation is that newspaper citations do not list the page on which articles cited appear. This is no problem for papers available in databases, but it can make for long stretches squinting at microfilm readers.

This book will be quite popular in public libraries in a state so well stocked with citizens who ride, raise, and love horses. It also has value for academic libraries as well, and is reading I would recommend to anyone interested in the history of the Old Dominion.

—*Cy Dillon, Hampden-Sydney College*



Glose, Bill. *The Human Touch: Poems*. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Bay Press, 2007. 52 pp. ISBN 978-1-60461-000-0. \$14.99 (trade paperback).

This accomplished collection by a Hampton Roads poet touches both the horrors and wonders of human life, providing philosophical reflections about life and relationships and taking the time to understand and empathize with both strangers and family. Starting from his own encounters but reaching far beyond them, Bill Glose succeeds admirably at the difficult task of making the poet's specific, personal experience universal.

Dividing the book into sections titled "Prelude," "Drowning in Sub-

urbia," "Taste of Saturday Night," and "The Weight of Winter," Glose chronicles subjects as diverse as hurricanes and fatherhood. Tying in several recurring themes, the first poem, "Vision of the Future," pictures Glose's daughter dancing amid Easter flowers and presenting a ladybug to an old man—subjects that might sound sentimental but which Glose probes delicately, considering the differences between

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**GLOSE REVIEW**

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youth and age and the changes time will bring to his relationship with his daughter. Glose returns to fatherhood several times, reflecting on his own lost father in the three-part "Into the Earth," which calls upon the vivid memory of family road trips to release a grief long unexpressed. The poem moves closer to the heart of things with each section, hovering for a bird's eye view in the first part and then dipping into the past for a family scene in the second with a motion as deft and deliberate as the swooping gulls of the poem's first metaphor. In the second section, Glose tells us, "My father's hand—giant, firm, / not yet affected by tremors or / blotched with spots—reaches / from the front, shakes us awake, / points to the approaching tunnel, / tells us it's a giant's mouth / stretched wide to swallow us whole" (15). We pass through the

tunnel ourselves as its mythological overtones bring added significance in the final section.

Modern life, with all its rules, restrictions, and technology that hinders as much as it helps, also earns wry commentary from Glose, who examines the constraints and freedoms of the Internet and champions the ability of poets to find meaning in lives filled with distractions. Glose is clearly conscious of his medium; he examines a writer's power in several poems, while "Love Is Not Haiku" is itself written as a series of haikus. The thematic arrangement of poems lends them extra weight, as when "Love Is Not Haiku" is followed by "An Empty Bed," allowing the emotions stirred by the first poem to add gravity and impact to the second. Glose frequently provides a turn at the end of a poem—even in shorter works such as the eight-line "Learning to Cry"—offering a revelation built from the mounting collection of sensory evidence. Glose's powers of observation are great, his images sharp and clear, his metaphors apt—and the resulting messages vivid and poignant without ever feeling forced or overdone.

While many poems such as "Plugged In" and "Casting Stones" show the disconnection and dehumanization possible in our modern, technology-filled lives, others such as "When I Think about the Hurricane" show the possibility for human understanding and connectedness when life brings unexpected struggles. Glose's subject matter may seem as simple and ordinary as everyday life; yet his profound observations on these familiar subjects invite the reader to participate in the complexity and wonder of our own "mundane" lives.

—*Lyn C. A. Gardner, Hampton Public Library* 