

Origins of the New South Fifty Years Later: The Continuing Influence of a Historical Classic. Edited by John B. Boles and Bethany L. Johnson. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003. Pp. ix, 308. \$62.95.)

This collection of eight previously published essays, three comments, three afterwords, a book review, and a short excerpt from a book explicates and challenges the most

influential monograph ever written about post-Reconstruction Southern history. More uneven than most collections, it reveals as much about trends in the profession as about C. Vann Woodward's masterpiece.

The most solid critical analysis is Carl Harris's careful, heavily documented, and scrupulously fair 1976 study of regional patterns of roll call voting in Congress. Woodward claimed that Southern Democrats in the 1880s and early 1890s allied with industry-oriented Easterners, rather than agrarian Westerners. Harris's tables on crucial roll calls showed that Woodward was wrong, at least about Congressional behavior, and Woodward later acknowledged Harris's corrections.

Contrast Harris's view with an essay from the 2001 symposium that forms the core of the book under review. Rejecting the commonsensical notion that Woodward included few women in *Origins* because, reflecting his generation's cultural blinders, there was so little scholarship on the subject at the time he wrote, Glenda Gilmore suggests that Woodward "deliberately excluded women" from *Origins* (224). Although *Origins* was planned and largely drafted by the mid-1940s, the prescient Woodward, according to Gilmore, must have feared that mentioning women in that book would doom his later appeal to miscegenation-obsessed Southern whites to dismantle segregation in his 1955 *Strange Career of Jim Crow*. As she crisply puts it, "No women, no sex. No sex, presto, no race 'problem'" (226). But Gilmore's reduction of women to sex objects and all race relations to sexual phobias is simplistic, and she presents no evidence whatsoever for her speculation about Woodward's motives and actions, a speculation that implicitly brands Woodward as intellectually dishonest.

Of the other essays, three stand out. Sheldon Hackney's brilliantly written, closely observed rumination on *Origins*'s twentieth anniversary is part celebration, part historiography, part future research agenda, part reflection on the human and disciplinary condition, and wholly interesting. James Cobb's chronicle of the writing of *Tom Watson* and *Origins*, based on a wide range of unpublished letters and interviews, is dramatic, often surprising, and consistently insightful about the emergence of the field of Southern history from the 1930s through the 1950s. Finally, Barbara Fields reminds us how unusual Woodward's treatment of African Americans in *Origins* was, integrating them throughout his text—refusing, in her words, "to jim-crow Jim Crow" (276). Unlike recent adherents to the cultural turn in history, Woodward focused squarely on power, Fields emphasizes, considering blacks as one group in a struggle for power that also involved bitterly competing classes of whites, and never confusing voluntarily chosen group separation with the much more significant politically imposed racial segregation.

However courtly in manner, Woodward was a relentless rebel, agitating against racism in the 1930s, spotlighting clashing economic interests at a time when most other historians were transfixed by cultural-intellectual consensus, highlighting change where others saw continuity and (as many in this book fail to note) continuity where others perceived change, and refusing either to romanticize his heroes or pardon his villains. Never merely trendy, he was clear-eyed and true to the evidence, which accounts better for the longevity of *Origins* than its linkage with currents in

public affairs or the history profession, the preferred explanation of many of the essayists. He would have almost certainly been more vexed than amused to be termed "postmodern," as one of the essays approvingly denominates him (235).

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