

Book Reviews

Texas Tears and Texas Sunshine: Voices of Frontier Women, edited by Jo Ella Powell Exley. The Centennial Series of the Association of Former Students, Texas A & M University 17. College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University Press, 1985. xiii, 275 pp. Illustrations, references, index. \$14.95 cloth.

Texas Tears and Texas Sunshine is a collection of first-person accounts by women of their roles in Texas history. The editor, Jo Ella Powell Exley, has crafted these narratives around a quilt motif. "Texas Tears" and "Texas Sunshine" are, respectively, early and late quilts designed by the same Texas woman. Exley's women did more than create quilts; their own lives formed discrete swatches in the sprawling patchwork of Texas life.

Exley carries out the theme in her chapter organizations. The first chapter, entitled "Log Cabin," includes the memoirs of three early Texas women. The second chapter, "Lone Star," consists of three reminiscences of the Republic years. "Texas Tears," chapter four of the collection, deals with the Civil War era and includes five memoirs, as does the final section, "Texas Sunshine," which chronicles the High Plains frontier years. All of the memoirs are lively, although hardship and suffering prevail. The reminiscences contained in the last chapter are more hopeful, hence the title "Texas Sunshine." The editor does not speculate on the reasons for the change in tone, but the decline of epidemic diseases, a lessened Indian threat, and the openness of the Plains seem to be contributing factors.

This book differs from an earlier set of "women in the states" books reviewed here previously (48: 87-90) because it contains memoirs and autobiographies exclusively, while the others consisted of analytical pieces written by scholars. Each type of work has its place. For those who enjoy first-person accounts of women's lives or who are interested in Texas history, this book will be useful. Exley has performed an important service in locating obscure and out-of-print material and making it available to the public.

CLARKE COLLEGE

PAULA M. NELSON

The Web of Southern Social Relations: Women, Family, and Education, edited by Water J. Fraser, Jr., R. Frank Saunders, Jr., and Jon L. Wakelyn. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985. xvii, 257 pp. Notes, index. \$25.00 cloth.

The Web of Southern Social Relations is a collection of essays presented at the "Symposium on the South: Education, Family, and Women," held

at Georgia Southern College in 1984. A product of the new social history, the book focuses on personal relations within subgroups of southern society. The essays treat subcultures of blacks, whites, native Americans, males, females, planters, poor whites, bureaucracies, and institutions within the South. They are arranged roughly in chronological order, the entire timespan ranging from 1750 to 1935. Contributors to the book use various historical sources, including census records, legal documents, institutional records, contemporary testimonies and accounts, and private letters. Several of the authors combine qualitative and quantitative data, although they have spared readers detailed mathematical discussions and tables of correlation coefficients. Notes following each essay give references for more complete details and for further exploration of the topics introduced.

Carol K. Bleser's essay on the marriage of Benjamin and Elizabeth Perry, an elite South Carolina urban couple, serves as an example of the issues raised in the book. Drawing primarily on letters exchanged between the couple during the period of Benjamin's political career before and after the Civil War, Bleser challenges the image of the nineteenth-century elite southern woman as being limited to the care and nurturing of family members and the management of the household. Although both Benjamin and Elizabeth paid lip service to the ideal of separate spheres, which placed men in public and women in private, their letters and actions make clear that Benjamin's heart was in the home while Elizabeth was eager for the prestige and excitement of political power. Elizabeth attempted to satisfy her political ambition by directing Benjamin's career. She had at least thirteen pregnancies and raised seven children, but her letters showed a continuing preoccupation with public politics. This pattern lends support to researchers who deny that separate male and female spheres are natural or essential. Perhaps the separate spheres model obscures as well as clarifies the lives of men and women. Further, Elizabeth's pushiness leads us to question whether the domestic position that society imposed on her might not have harmed rather than nurtured her family. Although Bleser wisely refrains from generalizing about southern elite marriages on the basis of her study of the Perrys, the essay leads us to look beyond the surface categories that people use to order and make intelligible their lives. By carefully considering one relationship, we begin to build a more richly textured understanding of the complexities of southern marriage and to generate hypotheses for testing on a broader range of cases.

The book as a whole illustrates how the new social history and the new scholarship on women intersect to the enrichment of both. Yet at times readers will be frustrated by the seeming inability of some histo-

rians to incorporate the scholarship on women into a revised understanding of the past. Jon L. Wakelyn's essay, "Antebellum College Life and the Relation between Fathers and Sons," is a case in point. Research on women is mimicked rather than understood and incorporated. Catherine Clinton, whose essay on black women appears in the book, estimated that rape of black women occurred on approximately one-fifth of the plantations. This is personal and painful social history. Did Wakelyn hear her and did he consider that perhaps one-fifth of the men he was discussing were rapists or future rapists? Did he consider that the others probably knew about this dirty southern secret and did not stop it? We have a population of rapists and their accomplices, but the description of their personal lives simply ignores this. How did the genteel overlay of southern manners and the apparent avoidance of direct discussion of sex relate to this sordid underside of southern life? Where and how did southern white males learn rape? Perhaps Wakelyn does not wish to deal with rape. Okay. But then he is not dealing with the personal life and socialization of southern planters. We see only the respectable facade of the old boy network of antebellum planters.

The inclusion of a variety of perspectives strengthens the book and helps us to move beyond the assumption that the generic historical subject is white, male, and propertied. A closer editing might have made this even clearer. Although Wakelyn views college life as a microcosm of southern life in its reflection of the relation of fathers and sons and the structure of the southern family, we quickly discover that the essay says nothing about black or native American fathers and sons. The reader is invited to assume that blacks and native Americans are naturally excluded unless specifically called forth. Furthermore, five pages into the essay we learn that college students were predominantly future planters, professionals, and politicians and that less than three percent of all antebellum males went to college (111). Thus the essay treats elite white men rather than "the southern family" in general. Oliver Vernon Burton's essay on southern males creates similar confusion by referring to black and white youth repeatedly without clarifying that he is apparently referring to young men.

Other essays stand out for the way that they lead the reader into further consideration of the issues raised or of parallel issues in other regions. Thomas G. Dyer's historiographical essay on southern institutions of higher learning is a model of a clear and direct writing style that urges us to move beyond the dominant congratulatory myths of local history and to examine critically hard issues such as desegregation, coeducation, and athletics. Joseph F. Kett's essay on women in the Progressive era provides rich material for those seeking historical

parallels with midwestern protest traditions. Not all of the essays escape the social history pitfall of relying on anecdotes rather than substantive analysis, but enough of them do to make this a good book.

The Web of Southern Social Relations leads into a myriad of topics that different readers will want to pursue in greater detail. Although I see unresolved sticking points in some of the essays, I recommend this book for careful and critical reading.

AMES, IOWA

DEBORAH FINK

The Breckinridges of Kentucky, 1760-1981, by James C. Klotter. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986. ix, 393 pp. Illustrations, notes, tables, genealogy chart, bibliographical note, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Few American families can boast of a relatively unbroken line of notable public figures, one that stretches from the late eighteenth century to the present era. Outside the East Coast states, particularly New England with its Adamses and Lowells, the phenomenon is especially rare. For this reason and others, James C. Klotter's history of the Breckinridges of Kentucky is an important contribution to our understanding of national elite lineages. Klotter, state historian and general editor of publications at the Kentucky Historical Society, has mined the voluminous records of the Breckinridges to reconstruct an exceptional and highly readable, even dramatic, account of public endurance and achievement. How this clan managed to produce a continuity of state and national leaders is the core concern of the book. In treating this primary question, Klotter avoids the extremes of uncritical antiquarianism and mere number crunching. He skillfully integrates traditional narrative description with modern social theory and methodology. With these tools he directs attention to political mindsets, to social and racial attitudes, and to intrafamily relationships, as those dimensions crucial to any explanation of the family's longevity in the limelight.

The book explores the lives of eight Breckinridge men and women chosen for special study because they carried the surname and concentrated their activity in Kentucky. Sixteen other family members are singled out for more than mention. A useful "Cast of Characters" in the book's front matter furnishes brief biographies of these two dozen individuals. The founder of the clan in America was Alexander Breckinridge, who migrated to America in the 1720s and eventually settled in Virginia. His son Robert substantially enlarged the family's landholdings and through an advantageous marriage and minor civil

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