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Writing Appalachia: An Anthology

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Writing Appalachia: An Anthology

Lloyd Ledford
Lexington: University Press
of Kentucky, 2020
ISBN: 9780813178790
776 p. \$50.00 (Hbk)

In their new anthology, editors Katherine Ledford (Professor of Appalachian studies at Appalachian State University) and Theresa Lloyd (Professor emerita, East Tennessee State University) present a well-curated collection of writings chosen to showcase the “historical depth and range of Appalachian literature, from Cherokee oral narratives to fiction and drama about mountaintop removal and prescription drug abuse, that contemporary readers and scholars seek” (introduction, p. xvii). While other well-regarded anthologies of Appalachian literature exist, none are as up to date or as broadly inclusive as this one. The editors have purposely sought out and included a diverse range of significant voices from every time period covered in the anthology to create a fuller, more accurate picture of Appalachian literature. This enables the anthology to celebrate a truly wide range of Appalachian life experiences, showcasing the complexity of the Appalachian experience from its earliest days to the present and avoiding any adherence to stereotyped expectations of what such a volume should or should not contain.

The anthology is arranged chronologically and thematically, starting with Cherokee narratives. It includes sections covering slavery, the civil war, and reconstruction, regionalism and local color, prose, poetry and labor, fiction, non-fiction, and drama, and 21st century fiction, non-fiction, and drama. The editors use a broad definition of the borders of Appalachia, noting that these borders are often disputed. They include authors from the north and the south, from both the rural and the urban areas within Appalachia, and from a wide variety of backgrounds. The volume includes many writers that readers may already be familiar with as well as others who readers may be introduced to for the first time. For libraries where there is an interest in Appalachian literature or in the Appalachian region, this book is an essential update.

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