

white settlers that erupted into a hopeless war which Little Crow reluctantly agreed to lead. When it was over, less than a year later, over four hundred white settlers, Little Crow, and a number of other Dakotas had been killed; thirty-nine Dakota warriors had been hung; and all remaining Dakotas and many other Native Americans had been driven from Minnesota.

Anderson illustrates and documents the dramatic events of Little Crow's life and death with maps and photographs, hundreds of notes, and an extensive bibliography and index. His well-balanced description of the complex interactions between whites and Indians leading up to the Dakota War of 1862 gives a reader some understanding of the Mdewakantons' human role in that tragic situation rather than portraying them as either as noble savages or bloodthirsty murderers.

Anderson's biography of Little Crow is also valuable on two other counts. It shows the sort of intricate kin relationships that formed the basis of traditional Dakota society, and it constitutes a good picture of the nature of the political power wielded by tribal headmen such as Little Crow. Not the authoritarian "chiefs" that many whites assumed them to be, these men were chosen to be spokesmen for their people because of their ability to elicit consensus agreements due to the influence of their extensive kinship networks and personal distinction.

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**William L. Andrews. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986) xiii, 353 pp., \$25.95.**

William L. Andrews' *To Tell a Free Story* is a fine study of the history and development of the Afro-American narrative in its first century. Andrews presents the narrative in the hands of its creators as a dynamic form which, when studied for its process of telling, expresses the movement of its writers from an absence of self to a celebration of both self and community. It follows in the footsteps of Andrews' other important contributions to the field of black studies, and promises to serve as a resource to which other studies of the genre can look.

*To Tell a Free Story* makes use of virtually all of the information in the field both within the chapters themselves and in its helpful and extensive notes. In addition, Andrews provides an "Annotated Bibliography of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865," and an "Annotated Bibliography of Afro-American Biography, 1760-1865," as well as an index and limited illustrations. Breaking his material into six chapters which

develop chronologically, Andrews moves from the examples of the earliest fugitive slave narratives to those of the three figures he seeks to reintroduce into the canons of Afro-American autobiographical narrative: J.D. Green, Frederick Douglass (*My Bondage and My Freedom*), and Harriet Jacobs.

Andrews explains the general purpose of his book in its preface: “. . . the import of the autobiographies of black people during the first century of the genre’s existence in the United States is that they ‘tell a free story’ as well as talk about freedom as a theme and goal of life . . . . The problems of writing such autobiographical declarations of freedom and the meaning of success for narrative works with priorities such as these are the twin preoccupations of the book.” What is fascinating about Andrews’ method of presentation is that he focuses throughout on the *process* of creation, on the telling itself.

The ex-slave narrator, until the 1850s, was preoccupied with finding a means of dialogue with his white reader, and this preoccupation, often exacerbated by the well-meaning white abolitionists who sponsored and printed his work, often limited the authenticity of the telling. In the forties the Afro-American narrator began to address his reader as “a negative foil, as someone who needed to be enlightened,” and by the fifties, he had moved toward accepting his own marginality within the American system, a marginality which would prove to be liberating if he were to focus rhetorically upon the true assertion of his self and his past and to strive not for paternal communion, which seemed untenable, but for fraternal communion with his black brothers.

Andrews’ study of the Afro-American autobiography in its first century, through the language of its telling, is a fascinating one. Although he seems to devote too much space to the works of the three writers, particularly Douglass, who take up the last 100 pages of his book, he has certainly presented his reader with a valuable insight into both the history and the dynamic of the Afro-American narrative from 1760-1865.

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