*Seekers of Scenery: Travel Writing From Southern Appalachia, 1840-1900*ed. by Kevin E. O'Donnell and Helen Hollingsworth, and: *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts* ed. by Ellen Eslinger (review)

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Bly's influence on Wright's early verse that started with *The Branch Will Not Break* (1963); his own undisciplined theories on translating such foreign-language poets as Pablo Neruda, Georg Trakl, and César Vallejo; and his early volatile letters to James Dickey; the second half offers few revelations other than Wright's participation in Alcoholics Anonymous, his dissatisfaction with the Nixon Administration and the Vietnam War, and his continued congeniality toward fellow poets, to whom he rarely, if ever, offers a negative criticism. In fact, the good-natured, complacent tone of the letters collected here makes one wonder how influential Anne Wright was in suppressing certain correspondence. None of the letters in *A Wild Perfection* directly address Wright's short love affair with Anne Sexton, the reasons for the poet's divorce from his first wife, or his strained friendship with Bly during the 1970s. While a few letters written to Franz and Marshall Wright illustrate the poet's affection for his sons, their relationship remains hazy throughout as well. Huge gaps in their correspondence occur, which raises more questions than the letters included ever answer.

Although Jonathan Blunk's forthcoming biography of Wright may shed more light on all of the poet's relationships, its status as an "authorized" biography, controlled by the poet's widow, may continue to keep such needed revelations under wraps. Only after another twenty-five years may readers be allowed to see the real James Arlington Wright in a volume of collected letters or a full-length unauthorized biography. For now, *A Wild Perfection* offers only a superficial snapshot of a man who is never allowed to come into focus, a poet who never came to terms with his identity as an Appalachian.

—Shawn Holliday

O'Donnell, Kevin E. and Helen Hollingsworth, eds. *Seekers of Scenery: Travel Writing From Southern Appalachia, 1840-1900.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004. Hardback. $42.00.

Eslinger, Ellen, ed. *Running Mad for Kentucky: Frontier Travel Accounts.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004. Hardback. $35.00.

The pleasure of reading travel writing is in the combination of voyeurism and fantasies of participation the text provokes. We observe the traveler and gain knowledge of intimate details (sounds, sights, smells, and tastes) without the trauma of actual participation in the journey, but with the certain knowledge that, had we been there, things would

Scenery offer this appealing combination of fantasies while providing a concrete, documentary reference for considering the historical scope of exploration and tourism in central and southern Appalachia—a lovely and edifying reading experience on the level of topic alone. What makes these collections even more valuable is their compilers' masterful situating of these narratives in their historical contexts. Read together, these collections outline major trends in economic and cultural engagement with central and southern Appalachia, challenging the reader to think beyond the individual narrative and consider how large numbers of colonial/United States citizens and emigrant peoples first came to the trans-Appalachian West and, later, how tourism impacted the region.

Running Mad for Kentucky reprints selections from thirteen travel accounts of exploration and settlement of present-day Kentucky. All of them were written between 1775 and 1796, and all were written by men, save one. The writers are a mix of colonial/US citizens, emigrants, and foreign visitors. Each narrative selection is headed by biographical information about the writer and an explanation of the excerpt's place in the larger narrative. Historian Ellen Eslinger divides the narratives into three sections—"The Revolutionary Era;" "Postwar Expansion;" and "A New Era of Peace," providing helpful signposts for considering the significant changes that occurred in the region during this tumultuous twenty-year period. Her sixty-nine page introduction to the collection situates the narratives historically, draws attention to common experiences among them, and deftly accomplishes the perennial balancing act between readability and scholarly rigor.

For the general reader, Eslinger's introduction operates as a smooth, engaging summary of the major historical, economic, and sociological concerns one needs to be familiar with to contextualize these narratives. Indeed, her discussion of land speculation, geographic terrain, migration patterns, Indian/emigrant struggles, and the specific situations faced by slaves, women, and children "makes" the book. Without this knowledge, general readers would have a more difficult time drawing connections between narratives and situating them in relation to one another. But, however readable this collection is, it is also a valuable resource for those readers who want to engage with these texts on a deeper level. To accommodate a range of readers, Eslinger wisely relegates most of her references to secondary materials to notes, freeing her own narrative of introduction to move along at a brisk pace. Yet, if one is so inclined, delving into her extensive notes offers hidden treasure. For example, we learn through her notes a great

deal more about the environmental uniqueness of the bluegrass region of Kentucky, about the region's similarities and differences vis-à-vis the other trans-Appalachian regions of Tennessee and Georgia, and about individual and governmental manipulations of legal systems for land acquisition, details that further situate the narratives in larger contexts. One body of critical work that Eslinger fails to substantially utilize in her otherwise well-rounded introduction is scholarship on the literary form of the exploration narrative and travel narrative. Given that Eslinger is a historian, this oversight of a seemingly "literary" matter may be understandable, but inclusion of the latest research into the narrative structures of exploration and travel accounts—their conventions, limitations, and predilections—coupled with an awareness of literary patterns in first-person narratives such as diaries, would have provided readers, both general and scholarly, with a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between textual representation and lived experience.

Two of the most compelling issues that emerge from this collection are the violent struggles between Indians intent on maintaining control over the trans-Appalachian region and whites moving onto those lands—often in defiance of and without support from their own government—and the experiences of slaves, women, and children as participants in this mass migration, but participants who haven't necessarily participated in the final decision to undertake such an arduous and dangerous journey. Appalling violence on the two main migration routes into Kentucky—the Wilderness Road from Western North Carolina, through East Tennessee and Cumberland Gap, and then over the mountains of Eastern Kentucky into the bluegrass and the water route down the Ohio River from Wheeling (West) Virginia to Louisville—is either a constant presence or a significant threat during the journeys of many of these narrators. Eslinger does an excellent job interpreting the motivations of both the Indians engaged in desperate guerilla warfare and plunder and the economic and other situations that influenced explorers, emigrants, and travelers to risk such a sickening undertaking. While only one narrative in the collection is written by a woman, it is clear in these texts that women—along with children and enslaved people, who, likewise, have neither a narrative voice nor a say in the decision to run madly for Kentucky—played an important, if often shadowy, role in migration. Such important work has been done, by Annette Kolodny and others, analyzing narratives by women written during expansion into the far western American territories and states during the early and mid nineteenth-century that one wishes for a

similar alternate vision of this time period from Kentucky, a gap in the historical narrative that Eslinger, herself, bemoans. Eslinger's central claim—that the story of trans-Appalachian migration in the late eighteenth century is as important and compelling as the well-known (and well-mythologized) overland migration westward to California and Oregon in the nineteenth century—is convincingly supported in this engaging collection.

Seekers of Scenery carries the story of travelers' engagement with Southern Appalachia farther, reprinting commentaries from people more intent on enjoying and representing the mountain scenery before them than in madly running across it for the chance at economic prosperity on the other side. Whereas the Appalachian Mountains were an obstacle to overcome for Eslinger's travelers in the late eighteenth century, by the mid-nineteenth century, travelers sought the mountains for a variety of reasons—pleasure, adventure, scientific evidence, and, increasingly, for money. With the emergence of the mass-produced, illustrated literary magazine in the era after the Civil War, writers could sell accounts of their travel adventures and observations. Editors Kevin E. O'Donnell and Helen Hollingsworth have collected an array of documents about Southern Appalachia, mainly Tennessee and North Carolina, that showcase the variety of ways the region and its inhabitants were categorized, defined, and represented between 1840 and 1900.

Working from a collection of narratives initially compiled by Hollingsworth in the late 1980s and early 1990s and graciously made available to him, O'Donnell chose some representative texts, located others, organized the narratives into four groupings, and wrote a succinct introduction synthesizing the issues the narratives raise. Readers will encounter well-known writers, such as Constance Fenimore Woolson, Rebecca Harding Davis, Charles Dudley Warner, and W. E. B. Du Bois, along with writers known more marginally or not at all, an interesting mix of documents from the "literary" to the popular and the scientific. The narratives, themselves, are intriguing little time capsules representing Appalachia and its inhabitants in the nineteenth century, with all the problems of inclusion and exclusion that analogy implies. Nevertheless, the most valuable aspect of this collection is O'Donnell's introduction, a detailed summary of the development of travel writing about Southern Appalachia. As with *Running Mad for Kentucky*, a capable scholarly hand was needed to hold these narratives together, to make some sense of them as a unit, to reveal the common threads that run through them, and to plot the trajectory of changing attitudes

toward Appalachia they represent. O'Donnell proves to be just such a capable guide.

Whereas Eslinger relegated her scholarly references and "back story" to notes (over a hundred of them for her introduction), O'Donnell weaves this type of scholarly material into the body of his introduction, eschewing lengthy notes (just six of them for his thirty-six page introduction). Happily, O'Donnell's introduction is just as approachable for a non-specialist reader as Eslinger's is, encouraging general readers to think critically about issues of representation while inspiring scholarly-oriented readers to dig a bit deeper into the subjects he summarizes. A highlight of *Seekers of Scenery* is its focus on the pictoral representation of Appalachia that accompanied the literary representation of the region for the first time in nineteenth-century magazines. O'Donnell traces the invention of techniques for mass producing illustrations to accompany travel narratives and analyzes the impact this new technology had on the sale, distribution, and reception of the texts and on the representation of the mountains and mountain people in them. *Seekers of Scenery* includes fifty-five reprints of significant illustrations originally accompanying the narratives, a lovely way to make the point that these narratives were *viewed* as well as read. Another tip of the hat to the reader is the inclusion of six maps that orient the reader to the region at large and to specific routes taken by certain travelers. The best part is that modern boundaries, towns, and highways are represented on these maps, enabling readers to connect the topography of today with the topography the travelers describe. *Seekers of Scenery* is a valuable addition to our understanding of how Southern Appalachia and its residents were introduced to the nation on a popular, mass scale in the middle to late nineteenth century.

Together, *Running Mad for Kentucky* and *Seekers of Scenery* provide a wide understanding of personal and national encounters with Southern Appalachia. Far from being a backwater, the region was of vital importance in influencing patterns of migration from the eastern seaboard to the interior of the continent during the last decades of the eighteenth century. Likewise, as the subject of some of the most engaging and lavishly illustrated travel writing in the nineteenth century, Southern Appalachia continued to play a part in the shaping of, if not the physical landscape of the nation, at least the mental terrain of mountain, river, and sky that nineteenth-century readers (and viewers) built in their collective conscious.

—Katherine Ledford