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## New Appalachian Books: Write-Ups

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## Write-Ups

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**Sandra L. Ballard and Patricia L. Hudson.** *Listen Here: Women Writing in Appalachia.* Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2003. 673 pages with an index. Hardback in dust jacket. \$45.00.

What a wonderful encyclopedia of Appalachia's women writers! Too bad we don't have such a work for our writers of *both* genders! Nevertheless, this *is* nice to have. Because this volume covers more than one hundred writers and mentions over one hundred more, most authors have only about four or five pages, but these pages include sketches of the writers' lives plus bibliographies and then prose excerpts and/or poems giving the reader a good feel for each writer. The sketches, excerpts and bibliographies are quite apt and well executed and very interesting. The selection of primary authors included is basically authoritative, but authors of children's books should have been completely left out instead of being included on a hit-and-miss basis. Sandra Ballard is the editor of *The Appalachian Journal* for Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. Pat Hudson is a free-lance writer who has worked for Alex Haley, John Rice Irwin, and other notables from Knoxville, Tennessee.

**Leatha Kendrick.** *Science in Your Own Back Yard.* Monterey, Kentucky: Larkspur Press, 2003. 35 pages. Handsewn paperback. \$18.00.

This book, limited to 600 copies hand-set and hand-fed and hand-sewn with a cover drawing by Carolyn Whitesel, is a stunning work of art. The title comes from the first poem and refers to the name of a book that Kendrick relished as a young girl growing up on a farm in Simpson County, Kentucky, the daughter of a veterinarian. The poems center around the author's struggle with breast cancer. They are a moving testament to an indomitable spirit. Kendrick currently divides her time between homes in Floyd County and Lexington, Kentucky.

**Edwina Pendarvis.** *Like the Mountains of China.* Ashland, Kentucky: Blair Mountain Press, 2003. 78 pages. Trade paperback. \$11.95.

Wow, the range of these poems is terrific! From Harlan coal miners to Chinese Communists fighting the Kuomintang, to an Ohio prison to Einstein's brain to Pikeville, Kentucky, to a meteor shower. "I trust this poetic voice and this vision which sees deeply into the life of the Appalachian world, human and animal, and sometimes, the divine."—Irene McKinney, West Virginia Poet Laureate. "Pendarvis—a 'pure product' of Appalachia—employs regional sensibilities as a lens through which she views other places, other times. And she does so with an eye for the memorable image, an ear that is careful and subtle, and an excellent instinct for pacing and crafting a line." – Phillip St. Clair. Pendarvis teaches at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia.

**Billy Edd Wheeler. *Star of Appalachia*. Haverford, Pennsylvania: Infinity Publishing, 2003. 269 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.95.**

Billy Edd Wheeler grew up in Boone County, West Virginia, and attended Warren Wilson and Berea Colleges before studying drama at Yale and then returning to live in the Swannanoa Valley of North Carolina and in Nashville. Songs that Wheeler has written have been recorded by artists ranging from Elvis to Peter, Paul and Mary, and have sold over sixty million copies. His fourth outdoor drama, based on the life of Johnny Appleseed, will debut next summer. He is the author or co-author of six humor books and two poetry books, but this is his first novel. It is the story of Gabriel Leatherwood, a North Carolina mountaineer who travels to Nashville to investigate who stole his songs and ends up learning a whole lot more than he bargained for and falling in love in the process. "This novel combines the magic of the music industry, the purity and freedom of mountain culture, plenty of action, and triumph over evil in lyrical prose from a born storyteller."—Ralph Roberts.

## **Newly Reprinted Books**

**Garry Barker. *Mountain Passage*. Ashland, Kentucky: The Jesse Stuart Foundation, a 2003 reprint of a 1986 release. 250 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.**

Garry Barker is one of Eastern Kentucky's better storytellers, and it is great to have his first collection back in print again. The Jesse Stuart Foundation has done a world of good re-printing books and publishing new books, but they didn't give credit to Oscar Rucker and Kentuckee Imprints as the original publishers of this book nor did they credit the magazines that originally printed these stories.

**Richard Chase, selector and editor. *Grandfather Tales: American-English Folk Tales*. New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, a 2003 reprint of a 1948 release. 222 pages. Trade paperback. \$7.95.**

Richard Chase (1904-1988) established himself as Appalachia's premier folk-tale collector with *Jack Tales* (1943) and this book. As *Saturday Review* noted, "This is an important book. First, because it is filled from cover to cover with good, rousing, exciting stories. Second, because it is an authentic record of our own American folklore." These stories were primarily collected around Beech Mountain in North Carolina. This edition, celebrating the fantastic feat of fifty-five years in print, features new jacket art by Brad Sneed, but retains the beautiful line drawings by Berkeley Williams, Jr.

**Richard Chase, collector and re-teller. *Jack Tales: Folk Tales from the Southern Appalachians*. New York, New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, a 2003 reprint of a 1943 release. 216 pages. Trade paperback. \$7.95.**

This reprint celebrates sixty years of *Jack Tales* remaining continuously in print! This fabulous collection continues to prove itself to be timeless in its appeal to young and old alike. "Jack and the Beanstalk" is just one of eighteen tales included here. What Mooney is to Cherokee tales, Chase is to traditional Appalachian stories.

**Billy C. Clark. *The Champion of Sourwood Mountain*. Ashland, Kentucky: The Jesse Stuart Foundation, a 2003 reprint of a 1966 release. 251 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.**

Billy C. Clark is one of the elder statesmen of Appalachian letters. A native of Catlettsburg, Kentucky, he taught for years at Somerset Community College in Kentucky and has recently been writer-in-residence at Longwood College in Farmville, Virginia. He founded both *Kentucky Writing* and *Virginia Writing* to encourage young people to publish their work. This book, originally published by G. P. Putnam's Sons from New York City, is written in the voice of Aram Tate, a thirteen-year-old boy whose family is returning to subsistence farming after a coal-mine accident. The story centers around Aram's developing relationship with Ed Ringtom, an old man who tends a nearby cemetery.

**Ann Cobb. *Kinfolks and Other Selected Poems*. Edited with an Introduction by Jeff Daniel Marion. Hindman, Kentucky: The Hindman Settlement School, a 2003 reprint of a 1922 release. 113 pages. Trade paperback. \$15.00.**

Ann Cobb came to Hindman Settlement School in 1905 straight from Wellesley College. She stayed more than fifty years. In 1922 Houghton Mifflin of New York City published a little book of her poems entitled *Kinfolks, Kentucky Mountain Rhymes*. Jeff Daniel Marion has for this first paperback edition added an introduction and some additional poems by Ann Cobb. Many will find these dialect poems delightful, and they certainly are an important part of Hindman's fabulous literary heritage.

**Silas House. *A Parchment of Leaves*. New York, New York: Ballantine Books, a 2003 reprint of a 2002 release. 278 pages with a Reader's Guide. Trade paperback. \$13.95.**

Like *Clay's Quilt*, Silas House's first novel, this, his second, was published in hardcover by Algonquin, the South's leading literary publisher, and in paperback by Ballantine, one of New York's top paperback outlets. What a great start for the ascending career of a writer who has clearly established himself in his early thirties at the top of his generation of authors. "A fine piece of fiction, replete with all the elements of classic literature. His characters are tenacious women and men, intertwined in the pursuit of acceptance from each other, the land, and their fellow man. ... his eloquent prose turns each chapter into a lovely smorgasbord for the senses. Allusions to nature appear in the way his characters look, move, and feel. ... House rounds out his fine storytelling with his passion for music. ... Silas House is an exceptional storyteller with a style all his own. *A Parchment of Leaves* will keep readers turning its pages."—*The Birmingham News*.

## **Books for Young Readers**

**Shutta Crum. *Spitting Image*. New York, New York: Clarion Books, 2003. 218 pages. Hardback in dust jacket. \$15.00.**

This is the first novel by a native of Paintsville, Kentucky, who serves as a "story lady" at the Ann Arbor, Michigan, public library. It is the story of twelve-year-old Jessie Bovey who lives in Eastern Kentucky when the War on Poverty first brings VISTA workers into her community in the 1960s. "Truly memorable characters abound, and moonshining, snake handling, a rape thirteen years earlier, and racial discord are knitted together in an absorbing plot with an uplifting ending. A remarkable first novel."—*School Library Journal*.