Southern Mountain Speech (review)

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> understand that not a one of us lives alone, outside of our family or our time, and that who we are depends on who we were, and who our people were.

Smith's lyrical evocation of the time, place, and people of the Bailey family pays a fine tribute not only to the country music artists to whom she dedicates the book but to her own talent as well. The candid voices of her Appalachian characters are as fortifying as a good country song.

—Rebecca Smith

Cratis D. Williams. *Southern Mountain Speech.* Berea, Kentucky: Berea College Press, 1992. Edited, with an introduction and glossary, by Jim Wayne Miller and Loyal Jones. 133 pp. $14.95.

Cratis Williams's observations on language and speech communication were first published in *Mountain Life & Work* (1961-1967) and in *The North Carolina Historical Review* (1978). Here they have been collected and edited by Jim Wayne Miller and Loyal Jones, with appendixes, a bibliography, and a useful introduction.

As Miller says, Williams was not a linguist. Moreover, his was a popular audience rather than a group of specialists. Nonetheless, "his work on Appalachian folk speech is remarkably free of misconceptions." It is also eclectic, touching upon phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, and dialect history. Williams's ten essays are good starting points for the study of Appalachian speech as well as for readers more casually interested in the people of the Southern Appalachian region.

Miller's scholarly introduction to this volume offers keen perspective on the work of Cratis Williams and discusses it within the larger contexts of regional studies and linguistic theory.

Since Williams was writing for general readers, Miller reminds us, his transcriptions and descriptions of mountain speech do not typically employ the terminology and symbology of linguistic specialists. Still, "his descriptions of various aspects of Appalachian speech are not at variance with those of linguists. They are simply a different kind of description determined by his purpose and intended audience."

Williams's emphasis on the Scotch-Irish contribution to Appalachian speech has, Miller comments, been "adduced by other students of language, history, and culture." His tendency to emphasize archaic "survivals" in Appalachian folk

speech is moderated by sophisticated understandings of the protean nature of language, the complicated history of settlement in the region, and linguistic science. Perhaps most importantly, because Williams's was an audience whose mutual interest was the Southern Appalachian region, he brought to that otherwise general group important understanding about who they were and how they related to other groups through language. (In that regard, Miller notes that Williams was present at the establishment of the Appalachian Regional Commission.)

When voices outside the region were subscribing to the romantic notion of Appalachian speech as a homogenous, swashbuckling anachronism, Cratis Williams was analyzing it as complicated and dynamic: "The qualities which distinguish the speech of the southern mountaineers from the speech of groups of other Americans of pre-Revolutionary ancestry are not as easily identified as many commentators on mountain speech have thought" ("The R in Mountain Speech").

Jim Wayne Miller says of Cratis Williams that "his study of Southern Appalachia lent continuity and coherence to his scholarly life, and afforded him deep personal satisfaction." The same might easily be said of Miller and his fellow editor, Loyal Jones, who brought this project to publication. These essays, the scholarly introduction, appended glossaries, list of traditional sayings, and generous bibliography are the work of three individuals whose scholarly contributions to Appalachian studies are touchstones for students of the Southern Appalachian region.

—Jim Gage

No single individual contributed more than the late Cratis Williams (1911-1985) to the systematic study of the Southern Appalachian region. A native of Lawrence County, Kentucky, Williams alternately provided education for others and received it for himself, until, at the age of fifty, he had a Doctorate from New York University and one of the top administrative jobs at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. Williams was an engaging, indeed charismatic, figure who looked like an elf, talked like an orator, drank like a fish, pranked like a good old boy, and thought like a scholar. His Ph.D thesis, ***The Southern Mountaineer in Fact and Fiction,*** has never been remotely approached in either scope or depth. Despite Williams's over-arching knowledge and wisdom concerning all aspects of Appalachian studies, there was no dimension which he treated in a more thorough, more profound, more whimsical or more enjoyable way than mountain speech. We are all deeply indebted