

innovative analytical approaches to honor and emotions within individual lives produces a deeper understanding of the mindset and behavior of the generation of slaveholders who brought on the Civil War.

Paul Quigley
Virginia Tech

Of Time and Knoxville: Fragment of an Autobiography.

By Anne W. Armstrong. Edited by Linda Behrend. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2022. Pp. 502. Paper, \$34.95.)

Anne Wetzell Armstrong is not widely known in literary circles today, but her work deserves greater attention, particularly in East Tennessee. Born in Michigan as the second child of a northern industrialist, Armstrong came to Knoxville in her youth, attended its schools, developed friendships and love interests, and endured great loss—all while navigating her way between the literate, free-thinking culture of her family and the traditional mores of this mid-southern city. She came to writing somewhat late and was forty before she published her first work—a full decade after leaving Knoxville. Nevertheless, her work reveals a bold and independent spirit and a concern for women’s issues. For a time in the 1920s, she held managerial positions in New York, and from those experiences she wrote several articles about women in business for magazines like *Atlantic* and *Harper’s*. But her fiction drew inspiration primarily from the Southern Appalachian region where Armstrong had lived for decades. She wrote two novels with East Tennessee settings: *The Seas of God* (1915), partly set in a veiled Knoxville, and *This Day and Time* (1930), set in Sullivan County. While the latter novel is generally considered Armstrong’s best-known work, the memoir she penned in her seventies may be her most significant one; however, she died in 1958, with the manuscript still unpublished and doomed to dormancy for several more decades.

Thanks to the efforts of editor Linda Behrend, *Of Time and Knoxville: Fragment of an Autobiography* is finally available. Armstrong stated in her own preface that in writing the memoir she sought to accurately depict the city of her youth, which bore little resemblance to the Knoxville that John Gunther infamously maligned in the

1940s “as the ugliest city he had ever seen in the USA” (p. 3) nor to the sanitized history of Knox County that the East Tennessee Historical Society published as *The French Broad-Holston Country* in the same decade. She called her own memoir a “Profane History of Knoxville,” one that aimed to portray the city as more interesting and culturally significant than was acknowledged at the time. Her memoir covers almost three decades of Knoxville history and is divided into two parts. Part One (chapters 1-11) begins with her family’s arrival in Knoxville in September 1885 and ends in the summer of 1889 with the Flat Creek train disaster, which seriously injured her father and initiated the family’s financial decline. Part Two (chapters 12-24) stretches from Armstrong’s return home from college in 1891 to her last days as a Knoxville resident in June 1902 and ends with her 1930 final visit to a city she scarcely recognized.

Of Time and Knoxville is a well-written autobiography that adds rich context to Armstrong’s fictional work, particularly *Seas of God*. More importantly, it details daily life during a period of significant growth in the city and includes first-hand recollections of numerous Knoxvilleans. In addition to notables such as Perez Dickinson, Lizzie Crozier French, Mary McAdoo, and Charles McGhee, Armstrong describes many others whose names left little impression on the city as a whole or whose reputations disqualified them from inclusion in the official histories. Considering the length of time (more than sixty years in some cases) that had elapsed between the events and the writing, it is hardly surprising that not all of Armstrong’s memories are reliable, and it is possible that she invented certain details and conversations to serve the narrative. After fact-checking the work, though, the editor concluded “that, for the most part, [Armstrong] is accurate in her reporting” (p. xxvi), and Behrend annotates any known errors. In addition to her generous contextual annotations for each chapter, Behrend’s contributions include a preface, critical introduction, editorial note, chronology, epilogue, works cited, index, and thirty-eight illustrations.

Behrend states that space considerations necessitated the omission of multiple sections of Armstrong’s original source text and that in most of those cases Behrend chose to make these edits silent, so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative. Identifying those cuts would have let readers know when Armstrong had more to say and where to find the original material in the source text. In addition, the book would have been even more valuable with the inclusion of two



previously published works that Armstrong mentions in the narrative (“The Branner House” and “Half-Wit Mary’s Lover”). Still, *Of Time and Knoxville*—as a historical, first-hand description of the city by a literary figure—is a treasure. It is one of the most important books about Victorian-era Knoxville ever published.

Paul F. Brown
Knoxville, Tennessee

Fishing for Chickens: A Smokies Food Memoir.

By Jim Casada. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2022. Pp. 329. Paper, \$28.95.)

An explanation of the clever title of the book is in order here. When it came time to catch a barnyard chicken for the family dinner (the midday meal) or supper (the evening meal), author Jim Casada’s grandfather used his fishing pole. He added black nylon line to his cane pole, “baited” the hook with bread, and dropped the baited hook on the ground to catch the desired hen. He then killed the captured chicken by wringing her neck. Casada also recalls that his mother canned two hundred quarts of apples and one hundred quarts of green beans every year, all grown on the family farm in Swain County, North Carolina. “Making do” and “putting up” food are dominant themes in the book, as Casada chronicles life in what he calls the “lost world” of his youth. The book, centered in and near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, is a collection of remembrances and stories interspersed with recipes the author has inherited from his grandmother, aunts, and mother. He traces those recipes from days of open-fire cooking and wood stoves to the modern era, making them usable and accessible in the present day.

Food memoirs set in the Appalachian region are increasingly common. What sets Casada’s work apart is his vast knowledge of the outdoors and his ability to read the land and the waters of his homeland, skills honed over the years through his work as a hunting and fishing writer. He also possesses the insight of a professional historian, having taught for twenty-five years in the history department at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Casada has brought all of these skills to bear in the current work.

As anyone familiar with the cooking of the Appalachian region can attest, documenting these kinds of recipes is not an easy task. Oftentimes cooking methods were carried out for generations before anyone attempted to write them down in the form of recipes with exact lists of ingredients and specific procedures. As Casada correctly points out, “Real mountain cooking involves instinct.” (p. 6) Making cornbread dressing (known in other parts of the country as stuffing) is a case in point. Adding just the right amount of broth to the dressing is always a delicate balance, and exact measurements do not always work. But Casada’s instruction does.

Fishing for Chickens is divided into four major sections: Staples of Life, Foods from Nature and Seasonal Fare, Preparing and Preserving, and Holidays and Special Events. Fittingly, the first two chapters cover corn and pork, the foundations of mountain cookery. And, refreshingly, within the corn chapter, Casada devotes little space to corn liquor, or “moonshine,” accurately pointing out that this source of so many mountain stereotypes was “less prevalent than many would have you believe.” (p. 17) The book includes a glossary, but in several cases, explanations of terms would have been more effective within the text and on first reference. An example is the term “streaked meat,” a synonym for side meat or bacon. The author also fails to mention the fact that the word is pronounced in two syllables: streak-ed. This beautiful feature of the mountain dialect should have been acknowledged. However, the author’s overuse of colloquial phrasing can, at times, be “sho nuff” bothersome.

Casada’s book gives readers some sense of the diversity of the region’s people and their cooking innovations. Throughout the book, Casada pays homage to both Black and white family matriarchs. Among the book’s recipes are ones for persimmon pudding and black walnut cake, both legacies of African American neighbors in Western North Carolina. Although the author grew up near the Qualla Boundary, the book is short on Cherokee recipes and foodlore, the Cherokee chapter being a mere six pages. Ramps, or wild mountain leeks, are mentioned throughout the book but never in connection to the Cherokees, who valued them highly, not only as a symbol of renewal in the springtime but also as an antidote to blood that was believed to thicken during a person’s more dormant days in the wintertime.

