

Spring 2009

Book Review: The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism, 1930-1950

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Recommended Citation

Hux, Roger (2009) "Book Review: The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism, 1930-1950," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 57 : Iss. 1 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol57/iss1/11>

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good work for college professors to assign to students to read either selectively or as a coherent whole. *Toward the Meeting of the Waters* is that relatively rare book that will appeal to both the academic community and to members of the general public.

Tim Dodge
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Brinkmeyer, Robert H. *The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism, 1930-1950*. Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2009. ISBN 13: 978-0-8071-3383-5. 413 pp. \$49.95.

In this study, Brinkmeyer, professor of English and southern studies at the University of South Carolina, focuses on the ways white southern writers of the 1930s and 1940s were influenced by the rise of European fascism, and to a lesser extent, communism, in their depiction of the south. The title refers to the three ghosts which Lillian Smith, in *Killers of the Dream*, cited as major influences on southern culture: black women, whose liaisons with white men cast a shadow over southern life; the rejected children of such liaisons; and the black mammy, who was adored by white children and then rejected. Brinkmeyer argues that, during the 1930s and 1940s, southern white writers “turned outward” and emphasized European fascism to the extent that it became a fourth ghost.

The author discusses both non-fiction and fiction writers. Among non-fiction writers, he includes the Agrarians, a group of intellectuals centered in Nashville, Tennessee, including Allen Tate, John Crow Ransom, Donald Davidson, and Robert Penn Warren. Their most famous work was a book of essays entitled *I’ll Take My Stand*, whose title implies a defense of the traditional southern way of life. The Agrarians found much in the pre-modern feudal society of Europe which they admired, but they rejected comparisons of their ideas with those of the Nazis. William Alexander Percy, a Mississippi writer whose most famous work was his memoir *Lanterns on the Levee*, also favored traditional southern ways but felt that modern industrial society had killed those forever. As a first hand observer of events in Europe, Percy blamed modern, not traditional, society for the rise of fascism.

Two other non-fiction writers, W.J. Cash and Lillian Smith, equated southern culture with fascism. Cash, whose major work *The Mind of the South* emphasized continuity between the old south and new, saw a resemblance between the Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. Smith, a native of Clayton, Georgia, opposed segregation and warned parents not to raise their children like “little Nazis.”

The fiction writers also emphasized the connections between southern culture and fascism. Carson McCullers and Lillian Hellman agreed with Cash and Smith that southern culture resembled the authoritarian state of Nazi Germany. Hellman, a strong defender of the Soviet Union, saw an unbroken line of capitalist influence running throughout southern history, but Katherine Anne Porter changed from attacking traditional southern culture to defending it and connected fascism with modern society. William Faulkner, Thomas Wolfe, and Robert Penn Warren all became nationalists in the 1940s. Faulkner and Wolfe both supported World War II, but Wolfe kept his prejudices against blacks and Jews, while Faulkner called for a gradual move toward integration of the races. Warren, on the other hand, thought that writers should stay away from promoting the war effort, believing that there should be “many contending voices” rather than just one or two.

Brinkmeyer’s book is an interesting and clearly written review of some of the most important writers of southern literature. The author makes a convincing argument that European fascism strongly influenced these authors. He does not, however, show that fascism rose to the level of importance of the three ghosts (black women, rejected children, black mammy) presented by Lillian Smith. These ghosts, all tied to the concept of race, are deeply ingrained in southern history and culture over time. European fascism was a

short term event which has the value of clarifying race and other aspects of southern life. Nevertheless this is an important book which should be purchased by all academic and large public libraries.

Roger Hux

Francis Marion University Library

Ziegler, Eugene N. *When Conscience and Power Meet: A Memoir*. Columbia, SC, University of South Carolina Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-57003-744-3 384 p. \$39.95

Eugene Ziegler has been called a “true renaissance man” and that may be true. In this memoir we follow him from his growing up years in Florence, South Carolina through his studies at the University of the South and law school at Harvard, a stint in the Navy, his law practice and finally into public service in South Carolina. In between, we see his interests in acting, playwriting, teaching, and archeology among other things. And there is an underlying theme of race relations and his dedication to the idea that “all men are created equal.” He has some great stories about some of his black friends as well as others he meets along the way. At times he seems to go off track to tell someone else’s story but eventually comes back to his own. This makes it a slow read since the flow of the story is often interrupted by another, seemingly unrelated, idea.

The title, *When Conscience and Power Meet*, is definitely apropos in this case. Most of his adult life is a battle between what his conscience tells him is right and the powers that exist in politics and even in his own party. It starts in Florence with his fight to get a Fine Arts Council and the Florence Museum initiated. He organized the Big Brothers Association of the Pee Dee and was involved with juvenile offenders and the state prison system. As a reluctant politician, he served in the South Carolina House of Representatives for one year and then moved to the State Senate. This is where his struggle to do what his conscience said was right for his constituents and the power of the existing political system was mostly fought. Although he did not always win, as in his campaign to win the U.S. Senate seat against Strom Thurmond, there were still many victories to fuel his determination. Those interested in the politics of the South will find this memoir interesting since the politics and the thinking of the 1960’s in the south is revealed in Ziegler’s persistence in passing the legislation that is still working for the people of South Carolina today.

Sue Alexander

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