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Frog Pond Philosophy: Essays on the Relationship Between Humans and Nature

Carol Walker Jordan
Library Research Consultant

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Anne Royall was a travel writer, investigative journalist, and newspaper editor and publisher. She also had the dubious distinction of being the first and only woman put on trial in a federal court and convicted of being a “common scold.” Buried in a pauper’s grave in 1854, Anne Royall finally received her recognition in May 1990 when the Society of Professional Journalists dedicated a plaque to her in the Hart Senate Office Building hailing her as a “fearless champion of freedom of the press” and “the first woman to cover the U.S. Congress.”

Perhaps proving that it takes one journalist to do justice to another, American historian, journalist and prize-winning author, Jeff Biggers, pens a revelatory biography of this singular woman who set a high standard for the fourth estate by refusing to be silenced. Including copious quotes from the writer herself, as well as observations from her contemporaries, Biggers gives us an extensively researched, in-depth portrait of a pioneering woman of the press, who, in her own words, sought to “expose all and every species of political evil, and religious fraud, without fear or affection.”

Anne was born in Maryland, in 1769, and eventually moved to Pennsylvania with her parents. Left destitute after a second marriage and widowhood, Anne’s mother traveled to Virginia and found employment with Major William Royall, a member of the colonial elite who fought in the Revolutionary War. Well educated and liberal for his time, he found Anne receptive to his views and eager to learn. After living together for several years, they eventually married. However, his relatives never accepted her as his true wife and, along with other accusations against her, contested his will, leaving her in poverty.

Biggers notes how, in her early fifties, broke and alone, “Anne reinvented herself again as an American author on the road to great adventure.” Gaining confidence from writing *Letters from Alabama* and a novel, *The Tennessean*, she dove into a writing career. Peddling travel books which included critical, and often unkind sketches of the prominent citizens of the towns she visited, she was able to raise funds for subsequent publications. Later, her three volume travelogue, *The Black Book*, helped hone her craft by providing political and social commentary on issues she deemed important, including separation of church and state and freedom of speech.

It was her battle with evangelicals in Washington which led to her trial on the archaic charge of being a common scold. Now sixty, and still living hand to mouth, Anne provoked the Presbyterian clergy by holding them up to ridicule and satire. Having to endure the threat of a ducking stool should she be convicted of the charge, she nevertheless conducted herself with wit and verve, recognizing the courtroom as theatre. Fined ten dollars, it was paid by two reporters at the behest of editor Joseph Gales, who viewed the trial, as did many journalists, as an attack on press freedom.

Gaining a national audience after her ordeal, Biggers writes “she became her own pen portrait” transforming from

author to performer in her travels, though not necessarily by choice. Re-establishing herself in Washington, she set up a press and started her own weekly newspaper, *Paul Pry*. Serving as both editor, publisher and investigative reporter, the paper exposed corruption by government officials, while also advocating for labor, the poor, and the powerless. After *Paul Pry* folded due to financial constraints, she published *The Huntress* which included lighter fare along with political news. In 1854, the last issue was printed. Anne Royall died the same year and was consigned to an unmarked grave in the now Historic Congressional Cemetery.

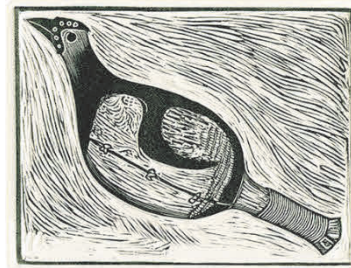
Jeff Biggers reveals for us a witty, humorous, often irascible woman, who excelled in satirizing the power brokers of her day. Though the archetype of a muckraking journalist, she had immense respect for the nation and its constitution and it was love of country which often provided the fuel for her print assaults on challenges to its integrity. Partially due to her age and willingness to challenge expectations for her gender, she was effectively denied recognition after her death. With this incisive and generous biography, which includes extensive notes, as well as a bibliography of primary and secondary sources, Jeff Biggers gives her the belated credit she deserves.

Recommended for academic libraries, particularly those with programs in journalism and women’s studies.

Melanie Dunn
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Frog Pond Philosophy: Essays on the Relationship Between Humans and Nature. Strachan Donnelley. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2018. ISBN 978-0-8131-6727-5 (cloth); 978-0-8131-6729-9 (epub); all \$80. 266 p.

FROG POND PHILOSOPHY



*Essays on the
Relationship
Between Humans
and Nature*

STRACHAN DONNELLEY
Edited by Coara Donnelley and Bruce Jennings
Foreword by Frederick L. Kirschenmann

Frog Pond Philosophy attracted my attention as I recently wrote and published a children’s book featuring a wise old

Koi fish who regularly gave philosophical advice to animals and creatures that lived in the forest by his pond. I thought of him as a philosopher! Not a frog but a fish.

In Chapter 3, “Frog Pond Philosophy”, I learned Donnelley’s inspiration for the title of this book. He said: “I sat by a Northern Wisconsin pond, Brook Pond, sipping Old Grand Dad whiskey, smoking a cigarette, croaking along with the frogs—all good subversive behavior according to civilized, urban standards. “Suddenly a philosophic lightning bolt shuddered through my body. The universe burst forth into sound with the croak of a frog. Before there had been a vast, meaningless silence of whirling forces. Now there was sound, a sounder, and an audience appreciative of the character and quality of the sound, which was laced with subtle meaning and significance. Before a soundless universe; now a sound filled universe, a cosmological frog leap forward.” (p. 33) Donnelley seemed empowered to be “the sounder”.

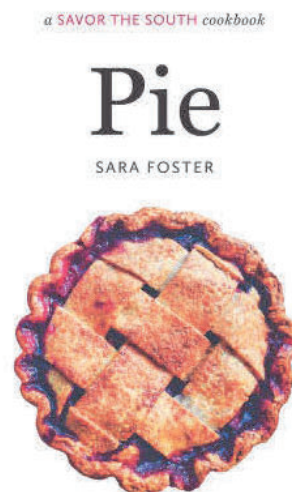
Spanning Donnelley’s chapters, the vision I held of him through his writings was that of a wise Frog who could see and understand the past, could see today’s world and its challenges, and could imagine the future of humans, animals, and the environment, within the cosmology of the universe. Described as “one who excelled at weaving together the two genres of personal observational story telling as an outdoorsman and the deeply effective essay writer of a professional philosopher with a lifelong engagement in the adventure of ideas.” (p. 214) . This combination he accomplished by drawing on the writings and theories of Darwin, Spinoza, Whitehead, Kline, Leopold, Plato, Mayr, Kant, Descartes and Tolstoy.

What might I say of Strachan Donnelley’s writing in this book? I am more attuned to the critical significance of our long term responsibilities to our human communities, natural landscapes and ecological systems. I hope I will become as he did always alert to the relationship between humans and nature. Particularly alert will I be when I hear the frogs in my pond calling at the end of day.

Recommend this book for academic, public and science libraries.

Carol Walker Jordan
Library Research Consultant

Pie: A Savor the South Cookbook. Sara Foster. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-4696-4712-8 (cloth: alk.paper); 978-1-4696-4713-5 (ebook) \$21.00. 155 p.



This work of culinary genius imparting delicious pie recipes is one of twenty-three Savor the South Cookbooks.

The My Tips and Methods discusses Basics, Tips for Making Custards, Tips for Making Meringue, Tips for Making Piecrust, and Troubleshooting. The six enchanting sections Fruit and Nut Pies, Custard and Cream Pies, Icebox Pies, Tarts, Hand Pies, and Others, Savory Pies, and Piecrusts include a page or two about interesting facts relating to the sections’ topics. An example is icebox pies are popular with cooks during warm temperatures especially when refrigerators did not exist due to usage of a cool refrigerator to make a pie rather than a hot oven. The author reveals the comment “easy as pie” denotes the easiness is like the simplicity of combining pie filling into a piecrust. Twenty one outstanding references compose the Suggested Reading. The writing style is articulate and the recipes are easy to follow. Each recipe states how many the recipe will serve.

Foster’s Market established in 1990 is Sara Foster’s prize-winning paradisiacal restaurant in Durham, North Carolina. North Carolina Restaurant and Lodging Association honored Sara Foster as the 2010 Restaurateur of the Year. Additional books authored by Sara Foster are *Foster’s Market Favorites*, *The Foster’s Market Cookbook*, *Sara Foster’s Southern Kitchen*, *Sara Foster’s Casual Cookbook*, and *Fresh Every Day*.

The crowning chef-d’oeuvre discloses helpful cooking ideas and intriguing information like as follows. Pies derived in Egypt and Greece. Using fresh peaches creates a sweeter taste. Macoun and Empire apples are more sweetened apples and are combined with tangy Arkansas Black apples in an Apple Sour Cream Slab Pie recipe furnished. This cookbook lets readers in on a recipe from