

American South, Patterson insists that "Hurston's genius lay in her ability to chronicle unobtrusively this story of the triumph of the human spirit over adversity."

In Patterson's analysis the racial hierarchies commonly found in "top-down" histories of the South are not ignored, but they are juxtaposed with the reality of black communal life and cultural development. Hurston based her fiction on real people and events, frequently using their actual names in her accounts of black life in Florida. In so doing Hurston created a body of literature that reflected the history of what some described as "the Negro farthest down," using language that clearly demonstrated her expertise at listening to their voices while absorbing their folk wisdom.

Zora Neale Hurston and a History of Southern Life is an important addition to an already rich collection of books on Hurston's life and the place of her work in the American literary canon and the history of the American South. With its focus on the agency of African Americans, especially those who chose to establish and live in all-black towns, this study is at once a narrative of black self-determination, self-help, and independent thinking not often associated with the history of African Americans in the Jim Crow South.

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Christopher Buck, *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2005. Pp. 302. Cloth \$29.95.

Christopher Buck, who teaches philosophy at Michigan State University, has written an engaging book entitled *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy*, which sets out to chronicle the depth of Dr. Alain LeRoy Locke's explorations of the Baha'i faith from 1918 to 1954, the year of his death. Buck suggests that Locke was "arguably the most profound and important western Baha'i philosopher to date," and that his identity as a "Baha'i philosopher" can be "justified on ideological as well as historical grounds." Locke joined the Baha'i faith in 1918, the same year that he defended his Ph.D. dissertation on the "Problems of Classification in a Theory of Value." Beginning with this information, Buck seeks to document the "Baha'i dimension" in Alain Locke's life and thought over a thirty-six year period, while demonstrating that there was a "synergy between Locke's Baha'i essays and his philosophical essays" that created "an inchoate Baha'i philosophy" in Locke's life and thought.

To do this, Buck has burrowed deep into the biographical thicket of Locke's life where only a few scholars before him have dared to venture. The lengthy volume begins with the core principles of Baha'i that invoke "the oneness of

mankind" and "the elimination of prejudice," utopian ideas that Locke knew would not be easily conceded by a majority of the whites in the U.S. or in the Baha'i Faith at that time. So it is not surprising when Buck describes Locke as having a "synthetic" personality that was "multifaceted and could be . . . all things to all people." He even suggests "a formulaic correlation" between Locke's sporadic participation in Baha'i activities, carried out only at the "specific requests made of him by Baha'i officials," and limited to a small number of public lectures such as the invitation to conduct a lecture tour in the mid-1920s. Having been fired from Howard University in June 1925, and temporarily out of a job and in need of money to support his intellectual and other activities, Locke accepted the Baha'is' invitation and agreed to "speak before a number of the Universities" to "present the Baha'i message to educators." This was, according to Buck, Locke's "lengthiest sustained service to the Baha'i faith."

Buck sidesteps Locke's greatest gift to the world of letters, and perhaps also to philosophy, namely his habit of appropriating intellectual formations such as Baha'i to serve as the models upon which he and others would build an epistemological foundation for an egalitarian world devoid of racial hierarchies. For this reason it must have been important to Locke that the Baha'i principles did more than pay liturgical lip service to a "Christian" canon that frowned upon racial discrimination. This would have elevated "race amity" and "race unity" to the level of ecclesiastical doctrine at a time when the real world in which he lived—Washington, DC—was still awash in Jim Crow laws and practices. According to Buck, the white Baha'i devotees in the District had initially "refused to draw the color line" at their meetings, integrating informal gatherings that were frequently held at their fashionable mansions. Initially, these meetings were open to African Americans on terms of "absolute equality," a circumstance that would have perfectly suited Locke's heightened sense of social intelligence and cultural pluralism. Predictably, when the white members' interest in "race amity" waned, and the integrated meetings met with resistance, there were corresponding "periods of inactivity in which Locke distanced himself from the Baha'is."

The great value of Buck's thoroughly researched book may be the unearthing of Locke's innate genius in reshaping his own personal "Negro reality" and using it as a sort of master code available to all African Americans. In this regard, Buck does not make a strong case that Locke's graduation from Harvard in 1918, and his acceptance of Baha'i in that same year, were significant in Locke's intellectual work. This could have been mere coincidence. Buck admits that "much of the documentary information we have on Locke is fragmentary," and "how much time and energy Locke devoted to Baha'i . . . is difficult to assess [and] this probably fluctuated greatly . . ." These concessions weaken Buck's original thesis. Add to these candid admissions that Locke was clearly "not a full-

time worker for the Baha'i faith" and that "there is a problem with the documentation" regarding his continuous affiliation with the faith, it becomes even more difficult to meet the burden of proof. Finally, Buck admits that there is "no contemporary Baha'i archival record of the exact date of Locke's conversion," and that "the nature of his [Locke's] relationship to the Baha'i faith . . . is also unclear." Toward the end of the book, Buck informs us that "there is no record of [his] contact with the Baha'i community" after he moved to New York City in July 1953.

But the jewels in this book are unmistakable; for example, Buck's stunning revelation that Locke's parents willfully registered him—their newborn brown baby boy—as "white" on his birth certificate in 1895, and that Locke unsuccessfully tried to cover this blatant deception by claiming that he was actually born in 1886. Clearly, Buck has given voice to the men and women who not only put the Baha'i faith first in their lives, but also left key documents, personal letters, notes, and memoranda related to the life of philosopher Alain LeRoy Locke for future researchers to ponder and use for years to come.

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Paul D. Moreno, *Black Americans and Organized Labor: A New History*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. Pp. 360. Cloth \$49.95.

Few scholars would deny that unions have played a central role in creating and defending racial barriers to employment and advancement in the American workplace. Among labor historians, debate has emerged primarily over emphasis with some focusing on white working-class racism, and others examining the few cases where workers cooperated across racial boundaries. That exchange reached its most polemical in the writings of historian Herbert Hill, a former NAACP labor secretary, who charged those interested in interracial cooperation with overstating the significance of anti-racist unionism and therefore drawing attention away from the mainstream of working-class racism. But neither side contended that moments of cooperation were anything more than "significant exceptions," as Hill put it, to that mainstream.

So it is not clear why several leading scholars, including David Levering Lewis and Henry McKiven, recommend Paul D. Moreno's latest book as an "exciting work of major importance" and a "refreshing departure in the study of labor and race." Moreno's primary claim is that racial discrimination has been integral to the labor movement's effort to control labor markets in the United States since the 19th century. He supports that claim through a synthesis of published literature, repeating a position already well established by Hill, David