

which occurs when the white woman is unable to accept her black "other," unable to reach across racial barriers. Gwin does not examine the irony that it was a white male, bedeviled by his own racial demons, who was most successful at illuminating the tensions of the "peculiar sisterhood." It might have also been valuable to examine the reasons why most of the great modern black female authors have chosen not to deal with this relationship.

As the author states, her aim was "to open new avenues of inquiry." In this lively and provocative study, she has succeeded admirably in her goal.

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**John H. Haley. *Charles N. Hunter and Race Relations in North Carolina*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987) xii, 352 pp., \$17.95 paper.**

Haley wanted to write a biography of C. N. Hunter, noted black educator/newspaperman/businessman/community leader, but instead he wrote a multilayered work which also included a study of race relations and black history in North Carolina from post-Civil War up to the Great Depression. Hunter was born a slave in 1851 and died a freeman in 1931. His mother died when he was approximately four years old and he was raised by "enlightened" slave masters. Haley's account of Hunter's life leads the reader through a series of disconcerting struggles which are almost storybook in nature. C. N. Hunter comes across as a constantly aspiring, but never quite succeeding, opportunist.

For example, at a rather young age he tries unsuccessfully for public office in antebellum North Carolina and is so demoralized by the experience that he decides never to run for public office again. He instead turns to the use of "Uncle Tom" tactics on certain influential whites to gain leverage or status or employment. In the process of catering to conservative constituencies (both black and white), however, Hunter loses touch with the black movement.

By the end of his life, his personal dreams are only partially fulfilled. For example, he publishes a thirty-four page pamphlet, *Review of Negro Life in North Carolina with My Recollections*, but never the voluminous work he stated was needed and which no one ever funded. In addition, Hunter can be viewed as being a convenient "tool" of separatist thinking whites, a die-hard accommodationist, and in general, a rather unscrupulous, unethical "character" whose first thoughts were of his own survival and status, and only secondly, a concern for the welfare of the

black masses.

Interspersed throughout this account, Haley's description of the strained race relations between blacks and whites in North Carolina is highly revealing. The reader is led through the effects of Reconstruction in the state and the subsequent white "backlash." The propaganda by many pre-Reconstruction thinking whites and accommodationist blacks (like Hunter) gave the false impression that North Carolina was the "perfect" place to live for industrious thinking blacks exiting the state for less racially restrictive environs. The reader comes away with a better understanding of the forces shaping a southern state, especially in terms of race relations and the black civil rights movement.

In addition, this reviewer is left asking how such a privileged black as Hunter who was fortunate enough to be exposed and to mingle with some of the great black minds of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century (e.g., Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Frederick Douglass) could not develop a more consistent philosophical orientation. Haley's answer is that Hunter was a "semiemancipated" black. Hunter's stance on race relations oftentimes wavered, and ". . . gave him the appearance of inconsistency." Like most black leaders of the era, he was neither completely an accommodationist or "radical." As Haley states,

They generally followed the most opportune course for the moment that offered the greater chance for success. Yet it also seems that Hunter was somewhat inconsistent and devious by nature. Part of this may be explained by the necessity of frequently having to alter a position on racial issues in the interest of economic security or self-protection. After making speeches or publishing articles, he was often pressured into recanting his viewpoints and explaining his motives in ways that were acceptable to whites.

A more central question is why recount this man's life at all? He was a quasi-leader whose life work was negligible and highly questionable at best. The only answers this reviewer has come up with is that Haley found C. N. Hunter an interesting "character" on whom to anchor an interpretation of southern race relations. In addition, Hunter kept a substantial number of documents, something into which an historian could apparently "sink-his-teeth." It worked, but was the effort really worth it? The answer: for social historians, yes; for depicting the frailties of human nature, yes; for inspiration, a resounding *NO!*

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