Rise Gonna Rise: life in a textile town

Rise Gonna Rise, text by Mini Conway, photographs by Earl Dotter, 228 pp., with 40 pages of plates; published by Anchor Press/Doubleday.

By Joel West

Textile workers in a small southern mill town are the subject of this timely release. Rise Gonna Rise does not have a central character, but the "struggle for social and economic rise" and the "Gonna Rise" theme are the subject of this timely release. Though it lacks a central character, Rise Gonna Rise delivers a moving account of life in the southern mill town.

The book defies classification, slipping between the established niches of the literary world. On one level, the in-depth story telling and masterful use of the language resemble a novel in texture. Though it lacks a central character, Rise Gonna Rise does have a kinship and implicit debt to the novels of Upton Sinclair early in this century.

The work in some ways resembles that of a social scientist and historian. From her sources, Conway traces the situation in Roanoke Rapids, N.C. from 1935 to the present day. Her portrayal of this microcosm of American society is comprehensive, and the inclusion of an index makes the book useful as a primary source document.

In limiting the scope of her inquiry, however, Conway has made it clear that her primary function is not as a historian. Rather, the work has a journalistic immediacy to it, appropriately polished and expanded for use in a book rather than a newspaper. Conway's background as a correspondent and freelance journalist shows through, but it is clear that it is the most effective approach for the subject matter.

Everywhere, in fact, about this book is effective. The J.P. Stevens mills in Roanoke Rapids were the first in that company to unionize in 1935. Though the workers won the union election by just one vote, workers' photographs are much more than just an illustration of someone else's text. In and of themselves they deliver a moving picture of life in the southern mill town. Some seem to make reference to an avenue of investigation dropped by Conway, and as such have no connection with the text; they tantalize the reader for more information beyond a caption and identification. Other pictures are of main characters in Conway's drama, allowing one to see the individuals verifying the accuracy of Conway's descriptive prose. Dotter's experience with the coal miners shows in his sensitive treatment of the workers of Roanoke Rapids.

The text and photographs stand on their own, as in fact Dotter's forthcoming exhibition of textile workers' photographs will do. Each is the work of a creative and talented individual, viewing the subject from a slightly different perspective. Together, they form an even stronger whole, one that offers the reader a thought-provoking compendium of the subject.

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Breakfast in America is a virtuoso pop feast

(Continued from page 8)

both are mundane subjects that Supertramp handles deftly.

"Take the Long Way Home," which opens the flip side, is easily the most memorable song on the album. The books are timeless; days after listening to the cut from being a song that sounds like a mutation of Dire Straits, Steve Miller and outtakes from a forties music hall. "Casual Conversations" is a peculiar song that sounds like a mutation of Dire Straits, Steve Miller and outtakes from a forties music hall. "Casual Conversations" is a peculiar song that sounds like a mutation of Dire Straits, Steve Miller and outtakes from a forties music hall.

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"Child of Vision" closes Breakfast in America on an upbeat note. The buzzing keyboards, chippy synthesizers, and heavy syncopation that have made Supertramp the band's retrospective is easily the most memorable song on the album. The books are timeless; days after listening to the cut from being a song that sounds like a mutation of Dire Straits, Steve Miller and outtakes from a forties music hall.

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