

an implicit view of black vs. white culture are far overshadowed by Pearson's other findings. He sensitively explores what are often stereotypical notions about the bluesman, questioning some common misconceptions. "Sounds So Good to Me" is an engaging, original work, valuable for its eloquent discussion of the bluesman's story.

**Letters from a Young Shaker: William S. Byrd at Pleasant Hill.** Edited by Stephen J. Stein. Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1985. Pp. x + 165. Illustrations, index. \$15.00 cloth.

Reviewed by L. C. Rudolph.

In summer of 1826 a member of a very prominent American family joined the Shakers. William S. Byrd was educated and was above average in wealth. He was twenty years old when he entered the Shaker community of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. The backbone of this book is a collection of nineteen letters which William S. Byrd wrote from this Shaker village to his father, who was a federal judge in Ohio. Nine other closely related documents are added, making this a small but highly select body of primary material.

William S. Byrd was a true convert. As a Believer, he chose to live the life separated from worldly ways, and to "bear the cross" of abstention from the sensual world. His father was also a Shaker in principle, but was never quite able or willing to put his religious principles into practice. The correspondence between this articulate father and son, reflecting their concurrent dialogues with both adherents and opponents of the Shakers, offers a religious study in a very lively form.

William S. Byrd was an affectionate member of his natural family. The correspondence is heavy

with concern for individual family members. It is nearly oppressive with its concern about bodily functions and physical health, relaying the most unlikely remedies and regimens to combat illness. As William's devotion to his new Shaker family became more intense, he kept suggesting ways in which his father could arrange the transfer of his share of the family assets to the Shakers. His father had wider obligations in mind, and seemed uneasy about turning over Byrd family resources to the Shaker officers at Pleasant Hill. There is much good grist here for the social historian.

Stephen Stein says in the preface, "It is my intention to let a voice from the Shaker past speak in this volume" (ix). One of the most impressive things about the book is the job Stein does of "letting" this correspondence speak. To understand the documents fruitfully, the reader must have many bits of information and interpretation at just the right time. Who are these Byrds in general, and who are the individual friends and family members referred to on nearly every page? Who are these Shakers, and what teaching or practices of theirs would appeal to such a person as William S. Byrd? What was life like in the Shaker community at Pleasant Hill, and what was the particular turmoil there in the 1820's? With his arrangement of the material, his tightly written introduction, and his network of notes, Stein supports the reader exactly enough, without getting in the way. Reading the correspondence of this father and son in such an excellent context means reading nineteenth century Byrd and Shaker history at its best.

**The Folklore of Spain in the American Southwest:  
Traditional Spanish Folk Literature in  
Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado.**  
By Aurelio M. Espinosa. Edited by J. Manuel