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State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love

Abstract

Nancy Shore, MLIS student at the University of South Carolina reviews *State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love*, edited by Aida Rogers.

Keywords

book review, State of the Heart

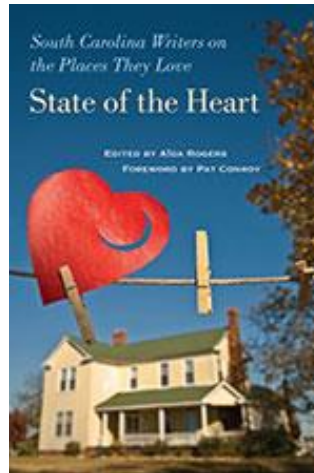
State of the Heart: South Carolina Writers on the Places They Love

Edited by Aida Rogers

University of South Carolina Press, 2013,
\$39.95

“This is the area I understand and these are the people I love.” This quote by Robert Marvin about Walterboro echoes my sentiment about many of the places found in *State of the Heart*, a 2013 compilation edited by Aida Rogers. With a forward by Pat Conroy, and 36 stories and reflections from a diverse group of South Carolina writers, this book provides a virtual vacation to the Palmetto State. From Sullivan’s Island and Cape Romain to Spartanburg and the Pee Dee, *State of the Heart* takes the reader on a tour of South Carolina through writers’ eyes, recollecting treasured childhood memories and reconciling the past with the present. Letting the contributors write about their favorite (or not so favorite) place in their own style keeps the book fresh and challenging at the same time. Some stories were easier to read than others, but the book as a whole was entertaining. If you love South Carolina, chances are good you’ll recognize at least one place in this book, and while the author’s expression of place may not be exactly the same as yours, it will be familiar.

Many sections start with a photo of a notable South Carolinian, and a quote from or about them. The section titled “Becoming and Overcoming” begins with a quote from Mary McLeod Bethune and a photo from her girls’ school in Florida. The stories in this section reflect and address how the authors coped with different family situations and relationships. Other sections embrace our relationships with food, the natural environment, and the past.



They are stories by poets, sportswriters, and novelists, and because they are told honestly and from the heart, even the bittersweet ones are comforting.

This will make a thoughtful and

welcomed gift to anyone who calls or has called South Carolina home. I have read other anthologies, and found the transition between authors with very different styles can be jarring; that is not the case with this collection. The groupings found in this edition, while obviously written by different people, were equally matched in terms of reading level and approach to the subject. Being a collection of essays, it was easy to read this book throughout the course of several days, digesting some stories more slowly than others to appreciate their weight and let the words transport me into the author’s memory.

Having spent a good portion of my life in or near South Carolina, and especially the years I spent studying the coastal environment of the south, the stories from Lee Gordon Brockington, Ken Burger, John Cely, Claire DeLune, and Marjory Wentworth were especially familiar to me. Other stories spoke of places I have not yet been, but am looking forward to seeing with fresh eyes and appreciation.

Nancy Shore is a MLIS student at the University of South Carolina, and hopes for a library job on a beach somewhere. She is one of a few Gamecocks in Wyoming.