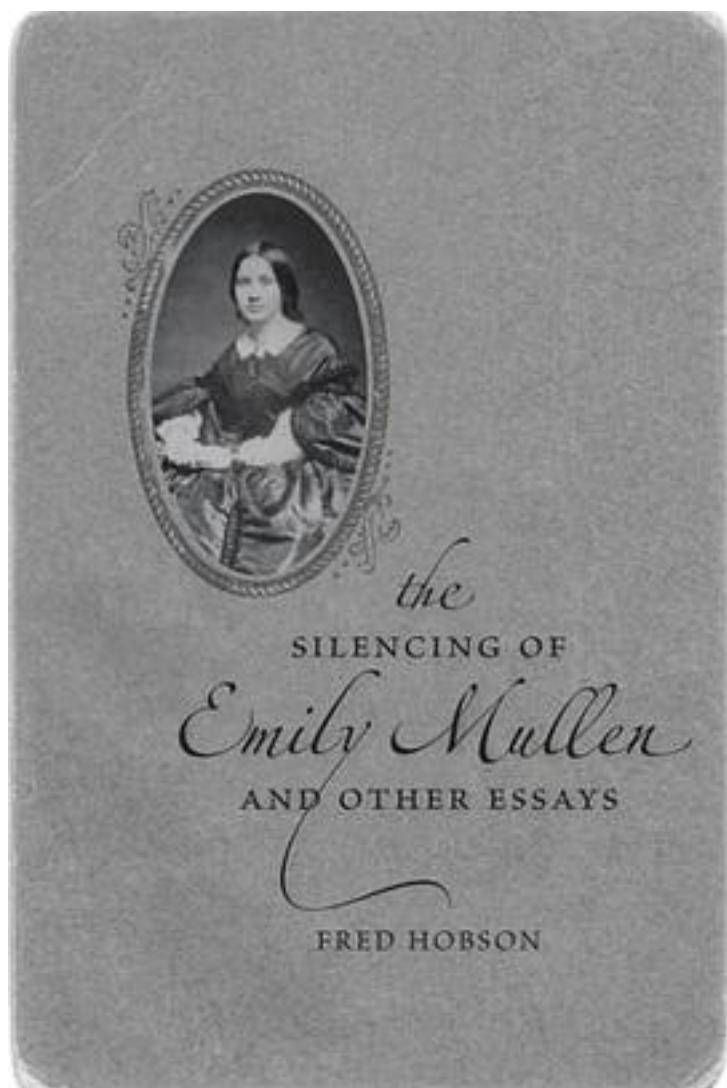


The Silencing of Emily Mullen and Other Essays



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Perhaps the preeminent contemporary scholar of southern culture, Fred Hobson is adept at cutting through the many myths and self-illusions spun about the South and exposing a far more intriguing reality. In his inaugural collection of essays, Hobson offers both an astute and deeply personal take on American and southern life. He touches on history, literature, religion, family, race, and sports as he ponders various famous and obscure biographical and autobiographical figures. Hobson's own great-grandmother inspires the title essay, in which he investigates the whispered family rumor that Emily Mullen Gregory committed suicide by jumping down a well in the late nineteenth century. A happier female relative animates another absorbing chapter: Hobson's great aunt who left the benighted South with the intent of bringing enlightenment to China as a missionary and teacher and who became both friend and critic of Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Ruminative appraisals of H. L. Mencken, W. J. Cash, progressive journalist Gerald W. Johnson, social critic James McBride Dabbs, man of letters Louis D. Rubin, Jr., African American author Mary Mebane, and novelist Richard Ford add incrementally to the collection's overall intellectual pleasures. Hobson's concluding pieces take a more intimate turn as he reflects on his native North Carolina and the love of college basketball he shared with his father. Capturing both the richness and deficiencies of the South within the American society at large, *The Silencing of Emily Mullen and Other Essays* makes for exceptionally rewarding and enjoyable reading.

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