

Anthony Grooms

Author, Speaker, Professor of Writing

www.AnthonyGrooms.com



Writing in *MELUS*, a critical journal of multi-ethnic literature, Professor Diptiranjan Pattanaik said that Anthony Grooms's collection of short stories, *Trouble No More*, demonstrates "the insider's profound knowledge of the history and struggles of African Americans, while consistently managing to circumscribe a breadth of understanding with a tender story-telling art."

Tender story telling art has been a prevailing characteristic of Grooms's stories and poems as he focuses on African American social struggles of Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Movement.

Anthony Grooms grew up in rural Virginia. His education at the College of William and Mary and George Mason University led him to a teaching career in Georgia, where since 1995, he has taught creative writing and literature at Kennesaw State University, and directs its M. A. in Professional Writing Program. He is the author of *Ice Poems*, *Trouble No More: Stories* and *Bombingham*, a novel.

His stories and poems have been published in *Callaloo*, *African American Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and other literary journals and anthologies both in the US and abroad.

Reviewing *Bombingham* for the *Washington Post*, critic Jabari Asim wrote, "In its insistence that 'the world is a tumultuous place and every soul in it suffers,' this powerful, resonant novel offers no consolations. Grooms offers consolation, however, in allowing us to be present at the emergence of a brave and promising talent."

Grooms is a Fulbright Fellow, a Yaddo Fellow, a Hurston-Wright Foundation Legacy Award finalist, an Arts Administration Fellow from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the recipient of two Lillian Smith Awards for Fiction. Both *Trouble No More* and *Bombingham* were selected as All Georgia Reads books. Adopted for study in colleges, *Bombingham* was the 2013 common book selection for Washington, D. C.

The Vain Conversation, a novel, is scheduled to be published by Story River Books (USC Press) in February 2018. Author Ron Rash said of the novel, that it "vividly evokes the horrors of American racism, but Anthony Grooms never denies the humanity of his characters, whether black or white, young or old. His novel achieves what only the best literature can give us: it refuses too-easy consolations or too-easy condemnations. When we finish the last page, the book is not finished with us. It will haunt us."

Currently, Grooms is finishing novels about Black Americans in Sweden and school desegregation in Birmingham, Alabama. He lives in Atlanta with his wife and son.

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Praise for *The Vain Conversation*

“The Vain Conversation,” is reflective of the Moore’s Ford lynching in Georgia, 1946, and follows Lonnie Henson, a ten year-old white boy, who stumbles upon the lynching, from the end of World War II until the 1970s. One of the victims is a man Lonnie has befriended and he struggles into adulthood trying to find meaning in what he has witnessed as the novel recounts by turns, the crime from the perspectives of the victims and the perpetrators. Though its subject is serious, the novel has moments of satire and comedy as it raises questions about responsibility and redemption for American race violence; and, importantly, it offers a counter to the facile race redemption stories that are so common in popular media at present.

“Grooms has always had a precise and sure and precious way with words, and he does not disappoint those who have come to love his work, his way of seeing and hearing the world. He takes the boy Lonnie from the segregated South into adulthood and across the country to 1960s San Francisco and back to the Georgia of the first years of America with a black president. It is a journey of self-discovery for the ever-vulnerable Lonnie, and – from the first horrendous chapter -- for the reader it is a large American canvas full of recognizable people we know far, far better because Grooms paints their portraits with colors and words that are so often a grand marvel.”

--Edward P. Jones, Pulitzer Prize winning author, *Lost In The City, The Known World, All Aunt Hagar’s Children*

“*The Vain Conversation* chronicles the shared places of the American South, where the beauty of the landscape can often mask the entanglements of an unresolved past. With historical sharpness and striking prose, Tony Grooms again introduces us to characters who navigate the questions and dangers on the road toward progress. The vividly conjured memories turn histories into ghosts. They beckon as well as warn in this exquisitely textured novel.”

--Ravi Howard, Gaines Award-winning author, *Like Trees Walking, Driving The King*

The Vain Conversation vividly evokes the horrors of American racism, but Anthony Grooms never denies the humanity of his characters, whether black or white, young or old. His novel achieves what only the best literature can give us: it refuses too-easy consolations or too-easy condemnations. When we finish the last page, the book is not finished with us. It will haunt us.

--Ron Rash, author, *Serena, The World Made Straight, One Foot in Eden*

Story River Books of the University of South Carolina Press, 2018

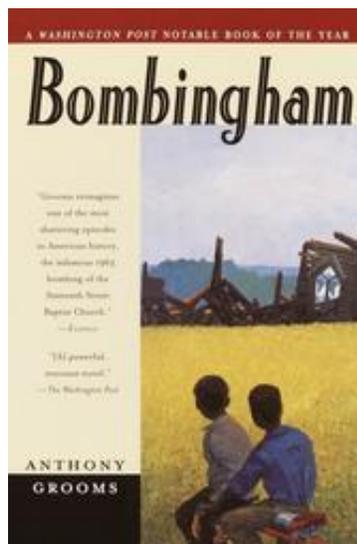
ISBN 1611178827, 9781611178821

Release: February 15, 2018

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Praise for *Bombingham*



In his barracks, Walter Burke is trying to write a letter to the parents of a fallen soldier, an Alabama man who died in a muddy rice paddy. But all he can think of is his childhood friend Lamar, the friend with whom he first experienced the fury of violence, on the streets of Birmingham, at the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The juxtaposition is so powerful—between war-torn Vietnam and terror-filled “Bombingham”—that he is drawn back to the summer that would see his transition from childish wonder at the world to his certain knowledge of his place in it.

Bombingham is the recipient of a Lillian Smith and a Finalist for the Hurston Wright awards for fiction. It has been selected for common book reads for the state of Wisconsin and Washington, D. C., and for several universities.

“Whether describing the daily indignities of life under Jim Crow laws of the ignorance and brutality of the men who enforce them, Grooms writes with grace and clarity, never resorting to sentimentality or gratuitous button-pushing. Though Walter contends that ‘the world is a tumultuous place and every soul in it suffers,’ Grooms confronts this suffering head-on, showing that hope and dignity sometimes can be reclaimed in the process. This is a powerful, important debut.” --*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review

“Grooms provides a vivid picture of the heady and confusing days of the fight for civil rights in Birmingham, the historical conditions of racism accompanied by arbitrary death and violence, and a young boy spiritually wounded by social injustice, violence, and the disintegration of his family. Highly recommended for all libraries.” --*Library Journal*

“*Bombingham* is a considerable achievement . . . [that marks] the emergence of a brave and promising talent.”--*The Washington Post*

“Too many of our younger generation know nothing about the struggle, the sacrifices, the dying of our people during those demonstrations of the fifties and the sixties. And older people too should be reminded, so that they’ll never forget. . . . [*Bombingham*] is about a subject and a time we should never forget.”--Ernest Gaines, McArthur Award winning author, *A Lesson Before Dying, The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*

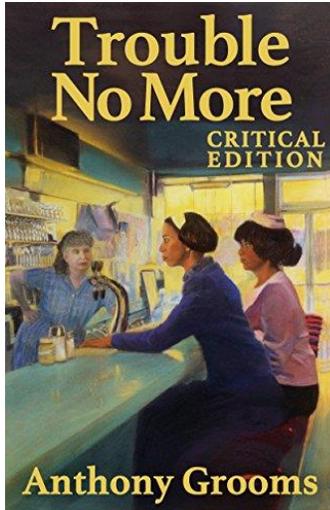
One World/Random House, 2002
ISBN 0345452933, 978-0345452931

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Praise for *Trouble No More*



The critical edition of Anthony Grooms' award-winning collection of short stories, *TROUBLE NO MORE*, set throughout the American South, portrays middle class African Americans who reflect on the Civil Rights Movement, class, race, personal struggles and triumphs. Whether they are of a boy discovering betrayal, a man wrestling with his commitment to social activism, or a young woman's discovery of the complexity of social protest, these stories—comic or poignant—are about families, intact and estranged, about ordinary lives in extraordinary times. A perfect edition for the classroom, the stories are contextualized with critical essays, an interview, and a reader's guide. *Trouble No More* is the recipient of the Lillian Smith Award for Fiction and The Georgia Top 25 List. It has been a common reader at many universities and high schools.

“The talk that animates these vignettes—from lunch counters to juke joints to family dinner tables—is an affecting reminder of the quiet courage, ingrained wariness, and rueful humor with which such individual decisions reshaped an uncertain community.” --*New York Times Book Review*

“These are stories that stay in the reader's heart and consciousness. They are rich in the truth of human experience, as Anthony Grooms blends the solemn and the comic modes of life to create deeply affecting poignancy.” --John Holman, author, *Squabble and Other Stories*, *Luminous Mysteries*, *Triangle Ray*

“It is to Grooms's credit that he has demonstrated in this collection the insider's profound knowledge of the history and the struggles of African Americans, while consistently managing to circumscribe his breadth of understanding with a tender story-telling art.” --*MELUS Review*

“Mr. Grooms has given us a rich and well-wrought collection of fiction.” --John A. Williams, author, *The Man Who Cried I Am*, *Captain Blackman*, *The Angry Ones*

“These stories are drenched with understanding of human nature and a poet's searching eye for the illusory, the baffling and the haunting.” --Marita Golden, author, *Migrations of the Heart*, *Long Distance Life*, *Gumbo*

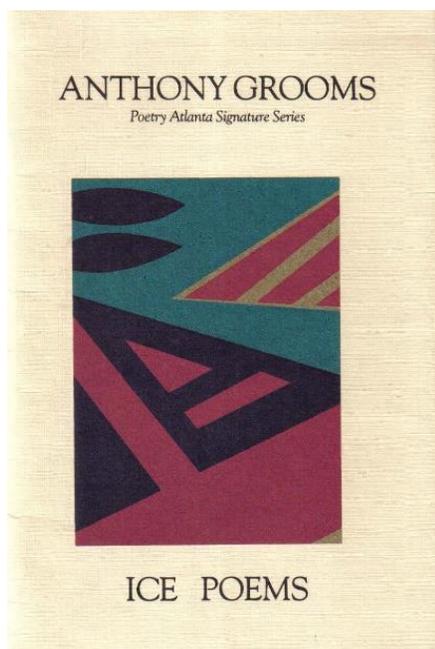
Critical Edition, Octopoda/WOC Press, e-book, ASIN B01FI4F5A2, 2016

Second Edition, available on line from <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/facpubs/14/>

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Ice Poems



Homespace

My mother did not know me when I knocked.
She said her son was killed in the war.
It was only when I blurted my tears
That she opened the screen and fell

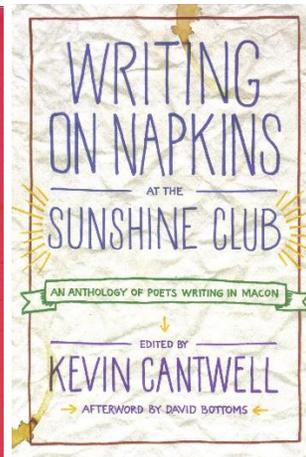
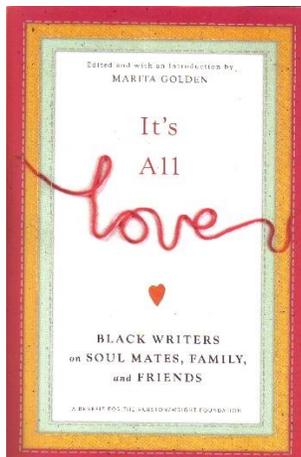
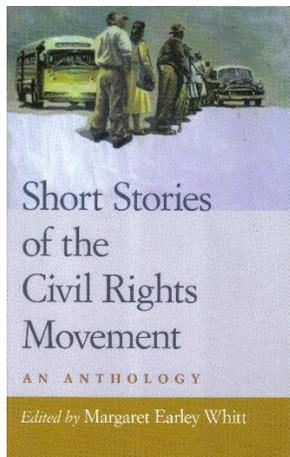
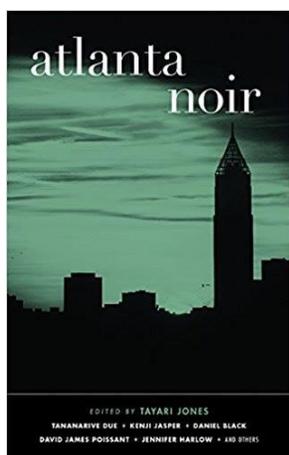
Into my arms. My father welcomed me as a hero.
They gave a cookout. No one my age came.
I made myself busy with the fire
So I wouldn't have to talk. When the fuel

Exploded on the coals, I heard screams.
In the evening the orange sun dropped
Into the haze of the blue ridges. August seemed cool.
Women and children laughed from the porch.

Men sat under the elms.
I watched the sky for the enemy.

Poetry Atlanta Press, 1988
ASIN B00J771CHW

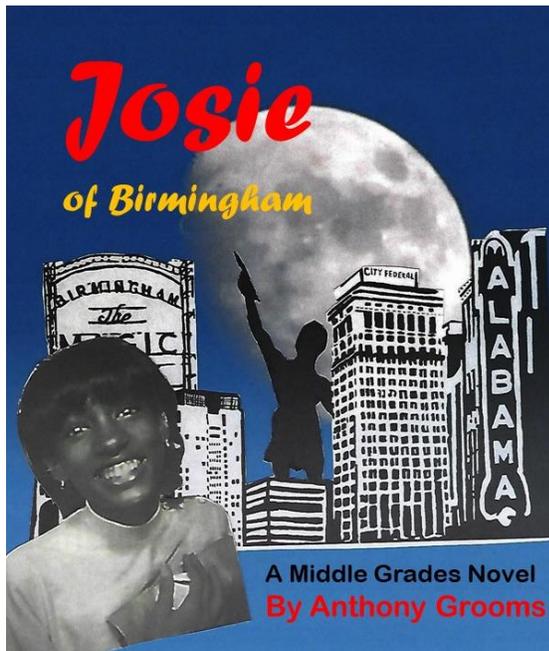
Selected Anthologies



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Works under Consideration



Josie of Birmingham A Middle Grades Novel

She dreams of flying to the moon, but a city stands between her and her dream.

If you think marching in a civil rights demonstration is hard, try integrating a school! In 1960s Birmingham, Alabama, ten-year old Josie Williams dreams of being an astronaut and seeing the world. But to fulfill her dreams, she must first stand up to the laws that would keep her confined to her segregated life. With wonder, jubilation and more than a little chutzpah, Josie and her family rise to the occasion.

For a sample, go to www.anthonygrooms.com.

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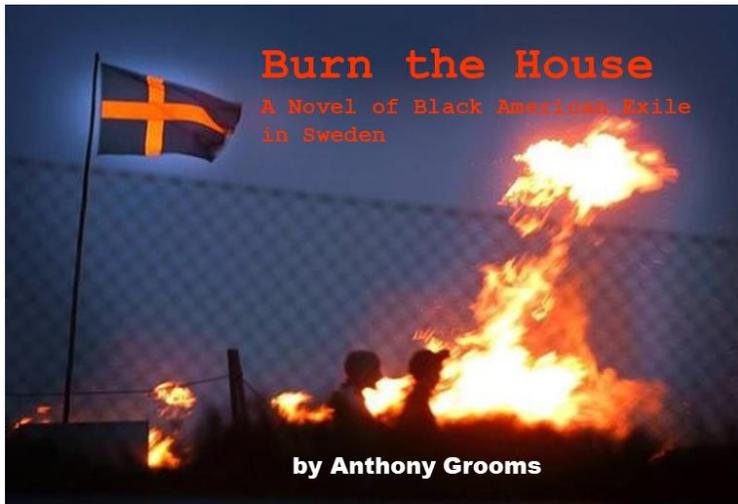
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Illustration inspired by Sarah Miller's "This is Birmingham" series.

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Works under Consideration



Burn the House A Novel of Black American Exile in Sweden

"You get a job. You find a pretty Swedish girl. Fall in love. Forget about America. You will be happy."

A thought provoking novel of international intrigue that explores the adjustment of a black Vietnam War deserter, late from the Jim Crow South, to a life of exile in

Sweden. Love, politics, and a dark view of the world drives Billy Phillips to an unconscionable, but ultimately, revelatory act.

For a sample, go to www.anthonygrooms.com.

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