



Nowhere Else on Earth

By Josephine Humphreys

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In the summer of 1864, sixteen-year-old Rhoda Strong lives in the Lumbee Indian settlement of Robeson County, North Carolina, which has become a pawn in the bloody struggle between the Union and Confederate armies. The community is besieged by the marauding Union Army as well as the desperate Home Guard who are hell-bent on conscripting the young men into deadly forced labor. Daughter of a Scotsman and his formidable Lumbee wife, Rhoda is fiercely loyal to her family and desperately fears for their safety, but her love for the outlaw hero Henry Berry Lowrie forces her to cast her lot with danger. Her struggle becomes part of the community's in a powerful story of love and survival. **Nowhere Else on Earth** is a moving saga that magnificently captures a little-known piece of American history.

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Nowhere Else on Earth By Josephine Humphreys Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Although not a single cannon is fired in Josephine Humphreys's quietly ambitious *Nowhere Else on Earth*, the lives of the inhabitants of Scuffletown, a poor Indian settlement on the Lumbee River in North Carolina, are in every way affected by the Civil War. The demand for turpentine, their principal industry, has dwindled to nothing. When they are not fending off or involuntarily "supplying" Union soldiers and marauding gangs, they are hiding their sons from the macks, their hostile Confederate neighbors (pink-faced Scottish farmers with names like McTeer and McLean), who are rounding up Scuffletown boys for forced labor in forts and salt works, from which few have returned.

Sixteen-year-old Rhoda Strong has seen both her brothers disappear into the woods to join this gang, headed by the handsome, charismatic Henry Berry Lowrie, the hope of Scuffletown--who keeps the young men alive through a series of crimes that inevitably escalate to match the cruelties of the macks. To her mother's distress, and to her own, Rhoda finds herself falling in love with Henry Lowrie, so obviously a marked man. When he notices her, and returns her love, she too becomes marked, dubbed the Queen of Scuffletown by her enemies and drawn into a larger history of suffering and revenge.

Writing from the vantage point of middle age, Rhoda resurrects the past, "hot as coals," in an obsessive act of remembrance, having studied and pondered her story for over 20 years.

One dog tooth is gone, and my monthly flow has dwindled to a spatter. I'm not as full as I used to be, my wrists are skinny, my knuckles are knobs. I'm starting to wear thin. This is the price of the years of thinking, the casting and recording of events and the frantic pen scratching past midnight, the hoarding of paper, the loneliness, the pages accumulating while I myself shrink down.

Rhoda's richly detailed and beautifully sustained fourth novel will recall, in the best ways, Charles Frazier's *Cold Mountain* (also set in North Carolina, the most "Union" of the Confederate states), although Humphreys has given her heroine a fresh, strong voice, and in turn given a voice to Scuffletown. --*Regina Marler*

From Publishers Weekly

While Humphreys has been justly praised as a writer with her fingers on the pulse of Southern culture, she surpasses even her previous novels (*Dreams of Sleep*; *The Fireman's Fair*; etc.) in this spellbinding story of a largely forgotten remnant of Indians caught between opposing sides during the Civil War. Scuffletown, on the banks of North Carolina's Lumbee River, is home to the mixed-blood descendants of the original Indians in the area, desperately poor but hardworking families who eke out a living in the arduous turpentine trade. Other nearby residents are "the macks" ASCots planters who hold the money and power, and own black slaves. During the last months of the Civil War, the lawless Home Guard, led by sadistic Brant Harris, conscripts boys from Scuffletown into forced labor building Confederate fortifications. Teenage narrator Rhoda Strong, daughter of a Scots father and a Lumbee Indian mother, relates the circumstances that lead her brothers to join renegade Henry Berry Lowrie, charismatic scion of Scuffletown's most respected family, in hiding out and defying Harris and his henchmen. In a narrative layered with indelibly memorable scenes, Humphreys depicts the moral ambiguities that beset Scuffletown's residents and the ironies of their precarious position; the sympathies of many are with the Yankees, yet they endure the depredations of Union troops as well as of marauding Confederates. The major irony, however, lies in Henry Lowrie's fate. Pursued

by the profiteering hoodlums he has thwarted, Henry eventually becomes a thief in order to survive, and in time, an outlaw hunted for murder. He is arrested in the midst of his wedding to Rhoda, whose coming-of-age is the frame on which the novel rests. Humphreys constructs her intricately wrought plot with understated eloquence, and she breathes life into the landscape of this piney, swampy rural area. Each of a large cast of splendidly realized characters is informed by her understanding of the subtleties of human relationships when race is a factor. Most impressively, she illuminates a largely unknown facet of the Civil War, finding universal resonances in the suffering and quiet heroism of a beleaguered remnant of marginalized Americans. In its historically accurate delineations of the violence, greed and betrayal engendered by internecine conflict, and of corresponding bravery, sacrifice and heartbreak, this novel makes a powerful statement. (Sept.)

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From Library Journal

Humphreys (Rich in Love) sets her new novel in the swamps of North Carolina at the end of the Civil War and pervades it with mystery. The location, Scuffletown, is itself uncertain: both large and vague (even the postmaster can't locate it precisely, and lost would-be visitors simply give up), Scuffletown is home to people who don't want to be found (outlaws, escaped slaves, Rebel stragglers, Union prison-camp escapees) and people others don't choose to find (the Lumbee Indians, about whom this book has much to say and about whom the reader will probably know little if anything). The narrator, Rhoda, is Lumbee, the action is episodic, and quaint local color is less the order of the day than violence and turmoil—the by-product of an uncertain terrain where neither Union marauders nor Confederate conscriptors are trustworthy. There's also a love story involving the narrator and one of the local heroes, and, as one might guess, it's not a simple one. The writing is superb. Highly recommended for mid-sized and large collections. DRobert E. Brown, Onondaga Cty. P.L., Syracuse, NY

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Dorothy Wright:

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Amy Parr:

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