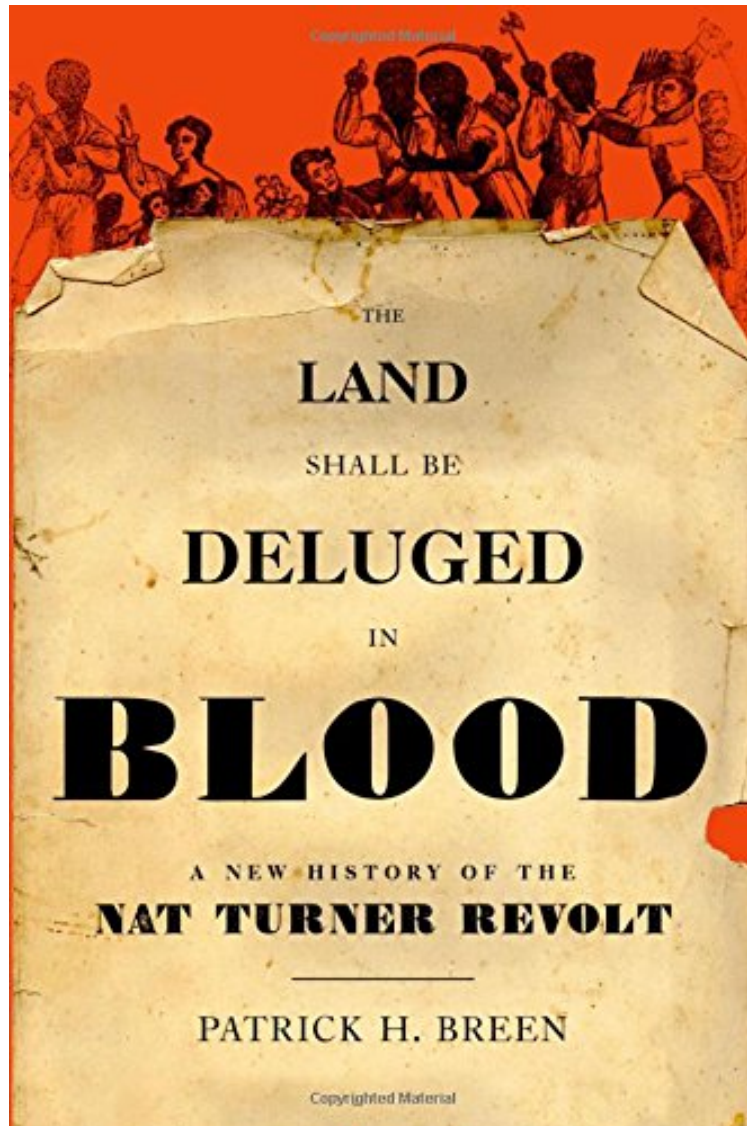


The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt

Patrick H. Breen

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Patrick H. Breen : The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood: A New History of the Nat Turner Revolt:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. But with great patience Breen takes the reader through the sequence of ...By Brian BarbourBreen does a number of difficult things and he does them well. For example, the narrative has

three sections: the revolt itself, the trials, and then the capture and confession of Nat Turner two months later. The first of these is enshrouded in "the fog of war." Who knew what, when? This is almost impossible to answer as are the related questions, Who was involved at any particular moment, and How willing was his involvement? But with great patience Breen takes the reader through the sequence of actions as it unfolded over the three days of the revolt, carefully setting out the evidence at each step, and showing the obstacles the rebels faced and the constantly changing circumstances they had to understand and cope with. He keeps his attention on these now-barely-knowable individuals, and with great intellectual integrity he rejects the temptation to subsume Nat and Moses and Jack and Sam and Will and the fifty or so others involved at one moment or another into the anonymous categories of sentimental soft-marxist "analysis" – gender, race, class. These were men who acted and in Breen's telling they remain men with all the moral and existential complications that involves. A key problem for the rebels was that of recruiting as they went along. As Breen reminds us, every young man the rebels encountered had to face the terrible question, Do I join the rebels and do murder (even infants were not spared in the killing)? Or do I remain a slave and continue to live out my life in this deep injustice? And if I stay do I warn the white folks and bring the wrath of both sides down on me? And this had to be answered in the cauldron of the moment not at the end of a two-hour seminar with a glass of sherry in hand and the bell tolling across the quad. Breen uses language from W.E.B. DuBois to sort through this terrifying moral dilemma – "double consciousness" – but the dilemma speaks for itself. Huck Finn would have recognized it. The book began as a dissertation and it bears some marks of that dubious origin and some of the clunky language it demands. But from the time Nat Turner is captured the prose moves crisply and with a new freedom, and the balanced and sympathetic judgments Breen reaches are those of a mature scholar and thinker. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. History well-told By CustomerPart murder mystery, part courtroom drama, and throughout, a story well-told. Great historical detection, solidly researched. This is history as it should be practiced. The real-life uncertainty that surrounds these events from so long ago is captured by this historian. I particularly liked his statement, "Certainty is a quantity in short supply when studying history...." This is serious scholarship on an important subject. This book causes you to think. Highly recommended. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Breen's understanding of the inner conflict of slaves and the ...By JourneysBreen's understanding of the inner conflict of slaves and the "dualism" created by competing loyalties underscores the humanity of each individual slave and the common threads shared by all humankind. A necessary read for anyone interested in how antebellum tensions led to emancipation and the subsequent history that has shaped our nation.

On the evening of August 21, 1831, Nat Turner and six men launched their infamous rebellion against slaveholders. The rebels swept through Southampton County, Virginia, recruiting slaves to their ranks and killing nearly five dozen whites—more than had ever been killed in any slave revolt in American history. Although a hastily assembled group of whites soon suppressed the violence, its repercussions had far-reaching consequences. In *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood*, Patrick H. Breen uses the dramatic events in Southampton to explore the terrible choices faced by members of the local black community as they considered joining the rebels, a choice that would likely cost them their lives, supporting their masters, or somehow avoiding taking sides. Combining fast-paced narrative with rigorous analysis, Breen shows how, as whites regained control, slaveholders created an account of the revolt that saved their slaves from white retribution, the most dangerous threat facing the slaveholders' human property. By probing the stories slaveholders told that allowed them to get non-slaveholders to protect slave property, *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood* reveals something surprising about both the fragility and power of slavery.

The 16 Best Nonfiction Books of 2016 (So Far) Patrick H. Breen's *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood* goes further than any book to date to set the record straight, revealing just how fascinating the story of the Southampton slave rebellion is when stripped of suspect agendas. His book is most enlightening in the Afterword, in which he meticulously deconstructs Turner's prison interview with attorney Thomas R. Gray—published in November 1831 as "The Confessions of Nat Turner"—which the historian calls "the most important work on slavery written and published in the slaveholding South." Did Turner really spill his story to Gray? Did Gray transcribe and compile it accurately? Breen's brilliant breakdown alone makes *The Land Shall Be Deluged in Blood* an essential work. --Steve Nathans-Kelly About the Author Patrick H. Breen is Associate Professor of History at Providence College.