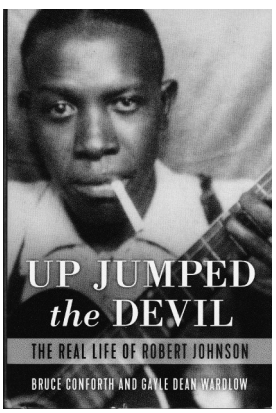
Reviews

Up Jumped the Devil: The Real Life of Robert Johnson. By Bruce Conforth and Gayle Dean Wardlow. (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2019. Pp. v-ix + 326, acknowledgments, appendices, bibliography, notes, index. $30, cloth)

A full length biography of Delta blues guitarist, singer, and recording artist Robert Johnson (1911-1938), he of the "legendary" crossroads soul-sale to the devil, is the Moby-Dick of blues scholarship: oft-rumored, deadly, seemingly impossible to land. Mack McCormick and Stephen Calt, heavyweight researchers, spent years working on *Biography of a Phantom* and *Hellhound on My Trail: The Life and Legend of Robert Johnson*, respectively; both men died before either book materialized. Now, at last and astonishingly, the white whale has been hooked and beached, ready for our inspection, thanks to the heroic efforts of a scholarly duo, Bruce Conforth (first director of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) and Gayle Dean Wardlow (a celebrated prewar blues historian and author of *Chasin' That Devil Music: Searching for the Blues*), who aren't shy about pointing out just how heroic their efforts have been.



> We meticulously researched every article, book, video, or film by any author or producer, from academic scholar to lay blues fan; we transcribed every quote by anyone who ever knew Robert; and we grounded this all with quotations from our own research and every other resource we could find. Every census record, city directory, marriage license, funeral notice, and newspaper article was studied and referenced. . . . What we produced is a book based not on conjecture about Robert Johnson, but on first-person accounts of who he actually was. . . . Although this will almost certainly not be the last book about him, the possibility of any new revelations surfacing seems extremely remote. (p. 8)

"It ain't braggin' if you can do it," pitcher Dizzy Dean was reported to have said about his own prowess, but the question is, Have they done it?

The answer, for the most part, is yes. But there are problems, too, both large and small. The small problems are trivial but concerning, bespeaking both scholarly carelessness and a failure of due diligence: the wrong release-year for Johnson's *Complete Recordings* (1991 rather than 1990) (p. 5); a road map of Mississippi entitled "Robert Johnson's Mississippi 1936" that any scholar willing to search out and download a 1928 Mississippi state highway map from MDOT can easily place as pre-1928 (pp. 12-13); and a wildly inflated claim attributed to *Complete Recordings* producer Lawrence Cohn that that album "has sold more than fifty million copies in the United State alone" (p. 6). (That figure would make it the all-time best-selling album in the world, in any genre, vaulting it above Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, but neither the album nor Johnson's name appear anywhere in *Wikipedia*'s "List of best-selling albums" or "List of best-selling albums in the United States.") The larger problem is substantial enough, however, that it critically impacts my ability, as a blues scholar who has written about Johnson, to view this study, in its entirety, as a legitimate work of scholarship. What Con-

forth and Wardlow have given us in several of the book's most gripping moments is precisely what they claim to have abjured: not merely conjecture, but outright fabrications of the sort that subsequent scholars can't possibly invoke as trusted source material.

There is no question that *Up Jumped the Devil* adds significantly to our bankable knowledge about, and understanding of, the twenty-seven-year arc of Johnson's life. To serious blues aficionados and more casual readers alike, this volume will come as a revelation—as though decades of encrusted myth, lingering questions, and papered-over absences in the record have finally been stripped away, allowing Robert Johnson and the intimate particulars of his lived world to stand for the first time in full view.

The authors do a particularly good job of documenting Johnson's family background in, and before, Hazlehurst, Mississippi—both the Dodds and Majors families had been free people of color prior to the Civil War—and they evoke the future bluesman as a surprisingly literate, well-educated boy and tween in Memphis and the Delta, someone who wore glasses, read books, and developed a life-long habit of carrying around a notebook and pen. As revisionists, they make a compelling case that Johnson, dismissed as a talentless "boy" by Son House in 1930, was already a working pro by that point, gigging around the Delta with Will Moore on second guitar, if not the stand-alone prodigy he would soon become with the help of his mentor, Isaiah "Ike" Zimmerman.

I was cheered by *Up Jumped the Devil*'s focus on Zimmerman, since I'd used (and praised) Conforth's 2007 interview with Zimmerman's daughter in my own extended treatment of Johnson in *Beyond the Crossroads: The Devil and the Blues Tradition* (2017)—an academic study that goes unmentioned, curiously, in Conforth's and Wardlow's otherwise "meticulously researched" book. Highlighting the pivotal role Zimmerman played in helping Johnson become a stunningly accomplished guitarist, including the period of time Johnson lived with the Zimmerman family, is a great way of deconstructing the deal-at-the-crossroads mythology that has long cramped popular understandings of Johnson. When it comes time to narrate what is arguably the key moment of arrival in Johnson's career, his return to a primal juke joint scene in which he triumphantly upstages his dismissive elders, Son House and Willie Brown, *Up Jumped the Devil* regales us with a vivid tableau. "The shack was lit up like a holiday, with candles in all the windows and a drum full of flaming kerosene-soaked wood providing heat for the men standing outside smoking, drinking, and swearing up a storm" (p. 115). More significant than this scenic embroidery, which seems—since it is unsourced—to have been extrapolated from the authors' general knowledge of typical jukes of the period, is their assertion that Zimmerman was actually present that night, on location with his head-hunting protégé. But wait, as the infomercials say: there's more:

> With his guitar strapped to his back he [Johnson] made his way through the outside crowd and stood for a second in the doorway, wanting to get a good view of the competition. . . . He had returned to display the superior skills he learned since he left the Delta almost a year earlier, and he paused for a moment wondering if he was really that good. But Ike Zimmerman, still with him, pushed him through the door and spoke only three words: "I taught you." (p. 116)

How do we know that this extraordinary moment of on-the-spot mentorship actually occurred? A footnote directs us towards Conforth's interview with Loretha Zimmerman, Ike's daughter. The interview is variously dated May 15, 2007 in the footnotes and May 2, 2007 in the bibliography; it certainly appears to be the same interview dated July 16, 2007 as rendered by Conforth in his 2008 article, "Ike Zimmerman: The X in Robert Johnson's Crossroads," available at academia.edu. Here is

what Zimmerman's daughter says in that interview:

> . . . daddy always, I think he wanted to push him (Johnson). I don't think daddy really wanted, or cared about, I don't think he really wanted to record. . . . I think he just pushed Robert. I think he did push him. I think that's the reason he went all up through there (the Delta region). . . . With daddy . . . and daddy was determined to teach him and then go back, and I guess he . . . just stayed in the background is what I figured. . . . They tell me he (Johnson) went back to play that guitar he just tore it up but . . . but like I said my daddy taught him well. Because my daddy was a real blues player.

Loretha Zimmerman's justified belief that her father "pushed" Robert, challenged him to excel, and her equally valid claim that her father "taught him well" has been transubstantiated, in the hands of Conforth and Wardlow, into an unevidenced and ludicrous claim that Zimmerman *literally* pushed Johnson through the door of the juke and proclaimed "I taught you" as he did so!

This won't do—at least not if what we're talking about is legitimate scholarship designed to shut down decades of mythology. It works just fine as Young Adult fiction; there's more latitude for creative invention there.

Nor is this the only such moment where an interview with a third party non-witness has been freely elaborated into seemingly verbatim recollections by a second-party witness. It happens early in Chapter 1 when Rosa Redman's girlhood memories, a sixty-five word quote describing how "when Robert was in town . . . [t]hey'd keep us inside and locked up!" (10) are attributed in a footnote not to Redman herself, but to "Hugh Jenkins (owner of Robert Johnson's birthplace and longtime friend of Rosa Redman)" in a 2017 interview with Conforth (292).

Only Conforth knows how Jenkins actually reported Redman's words, but given the fanciful reification of Loretha Zimmerman's thoughts about Robert and Ike later on, I have zero confidence in the scholarly integrity of her statement as printed.

And that's a shame. For all its flaws—squirrely sourcing, careless mistakes, and outright inventions—this deeply researched, compellingly readable biography is essential reading for any fan or scholar of Robert Johnson. Just beware, and remain vigilant. The terrain is still haunted.

--Adam Gussow

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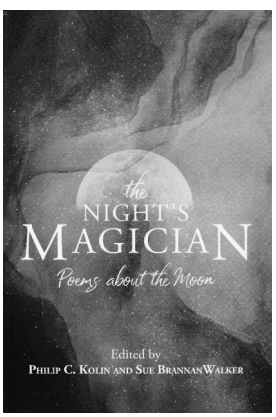
The Night's Magician: Poems about the Moon. Edited by Philip C. Kolin and Sue Brannan Walker. (Mobile: Negative Capability Press, 2018. Pp. 116, preface, $25.95, paperback)

The year 2019, the fiftieth anniversary of the first moonlanding, has been an important marker in the relationship of humankind with our nearest large heavenly neighbor. Whether intended or not as a tribute to that historic event, Philip C. Kolin, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Southern Mississippi, and Sue Brannan Walker, a professor emerita of English at the University of South Alabama, have gathered a delightful collection of new poems by American writers about the moon.



The book's epigrams, some heady and others much lighter, ranging from well-known

poets (Shakespeare and Ginsberg) to songs (made famous by Sinatra and Elvis—both central in two of the poems), suggest something of the breadth of these poems. Arranged alphabetically by poets' last names, this volume comprises, as the preface states, a "variety of responses to the moon" (p. ii). The range of poets is impressive and includes some well-known contemporary figures (e.g., Ted Kooser and Marge Piercy) and many past and present state poet laureates. Overall, the poems are both accessible and of high quality. Most are in contemporary free verse, but a handful employ rhymes and traditional forms, including two villanelles, a pantoum, and poems comprised of multiple haiku.

It is difficult to account for the large scope of these poems. All (by my count) seventy-seven of them take the core subject and run all at once in seventy-seven opposite directions. Virtually all of the poems show a solid (or solid enough) understanding of science to provide the undergirding important if not crucial to good poetry. Many play with traditional moon legends and commonplaces. One of these is Jacqueline Allen Trimble's contribution, which packs a variety of old moon expressions into twenty-one lines: the moon itself "moons the ladies and local preacher," "feasts on green cheese," and so on. Like Trimble's poem, others play with such conventions with full awareness of the temporality and artifice of these expressions.

Other poems nip these commonplace expressions in the bud from the get-go. One example is Sydney Lea's "October Moon on the Lake," which opens, "Not another poem about a stunning moon! / It won't be me who writes it" (p. 57). Some of the poems, conscious of rejecting all traditional, including teleological, links between humans and the moon, are about the lack of contact between people and a beautiful, ever-present, but silent moon. Brian Jerrold Koester writes, "the moon refuses to hear me" (p. 52), and to Jill Peláez Baumgaertner, the moon is a "silent coin" and a "blank wafer" (p. 14). For Karen McPherson, the blood moon is "indifferent" (p. 64); Robert Morgan is aware of humanity's relationship with the moon while in "our period on the planet's surface" (p. 67); and Shanti Weiland writes, "The moon / hears our prayers / but does nothing" (p. 98). Most, perhaps all, of the poems are overtly conscious of the human standpoint and the dangers of ascribing human characteristics to a natural satellite comprised of oxygen, silicon, and other substances. The title of John J. Brugaletta's "The Moon, That Seeming Disk" is possibly a play on John Donne's "At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners" (the title of which is a clarification of Rev. 7:1: "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth").

For some poets, the moon is a deeply personalized symbol and means for expression. Vicki Graham likens the "moon's waning crescent" to a (presumed) partner/spouse who is stricken with Alzheimer's (p. 38). Reflecting a recent fall off a porch and hour-long wait for assistance, Maria Mazziotti Gillan wishes for the weightlessness of a Neil Armstrong moonwalk as she employs the immemorial poetic wish to transcend the limits of a steadily aging, increasingly frail body. Communication between the speaker and the moon is ambiguous, but, affirming the power of the natural world and art to provide meaning in a largely silent universe, it is the moon's form itself "that lifts me up" (p. 37).

Other poems employ the moon as a backdrop for addressing social issues. (Though more comical than social, Diane Raptosh's contribution is, as its subtitle states, "composed entirely of headlines from various news sources" [p. 77].) In Martin Espada's poem, a boy playing right field in a baseball game questions the moon—actually a fly ball on its way to hitting him in the eye—about why a blonde girl in his classroom would reject him for being a "spic" (p. 30). Joseph Ross's "A Waning Crescent" apostrophizes a 6% visible moon over Birmingham, Alabama, where six black children were murdered on September 15, 1963 (pp. 78-79). And

Angelica Jackson-Brown's "Brown Bodies Swaying" evokes the tragic heritage of lynching (p. 47) and echoes the Abel Meeropol song "Strange Fruit," made famous by Billie Holiday. A few of the poems address the human encroachment on and despoliation of the planet. One of these is Frederick W. Bassett's "The Moon as Witness," which bemoans the last remaining stretch of Hilton Head Island's "wild oceanfront that, all too soon, / will be consumed by condos" (p. 8).

The variety of the subject matter is impressive for a volume so brief, yet the page length, just over 100, feels right. The tone of the poems ranges widely from serious to comic to somewhere in between. The moon is a motif in Mary Swander's "Last Day on Inishark Island," a poignant poem based in the historical evacuation of the small island off the west coast of Ireland in 1960. Peter Meinke's "Moonmen Land in the Okefenokee" functions as an abbreviated and humorous science fiction narrative—from the perspective of the visiting aliens. Many of the volume's poems reflect Eastern religions and philosophies, while others are more or less orthodox Christian in standpoint (two of the poems were written by Catholic clergy) but provide a strong sense of play. On occasion the volume feels a little slipshod, as in the single-spaced ellipsis marks at various points (e.g., pp. 2, 5, 47) and, perhaps, in the silliness of some of the book's epigrams. But these very minor reservations are outweighed easily by the inventiveness of these poems, each of which is, at the least, uniquely interesting.

--Bryan L. Moore

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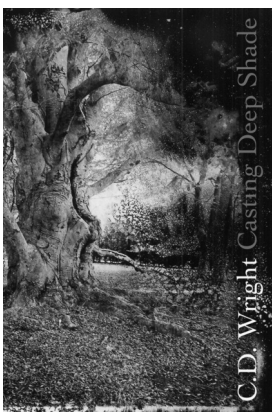
Casting Deep Shade: An Amble Inscribed to Beech Trees & Co. By C. D. Wright. (Port Townsend, Washington: Copper Canyon Press, 2019. Pp. xi + 246, Acknowledgments. $32.00, hardcover)

During a tsunami of environmental woes, American readers and writers have been turning to trees with fresh appreciation. Books such as Richard Powers's *The Overstory*, Peter Wohlleben's *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Hope Jahrens's *Lab Girl*, and David George Haskell's *The Songs of Trees* have focused attention on these marvels of nature, reminding us of their intricate workings, their importance to humans, and their environmental vulnerability. In her second posthumous collection, *Casting Deep Shade: An Amble Inscribed to Beech Trees & Co.*, poet C.D. Wright joins the crowd, choosing as her subject the beech tree, a magnificent form in both its American and European specimens. The book is a thing of beauty in its own right, with monoprint photographs by Denny Moers, paper almost as "watersmoothsilversatin" (p. 203) as the beech bark described on those very pages, and a distinctive three-panel jacket design.



Copper Canyon Press brought out the book in 2019, three years after Wright's sudden death. Posthumous publications usually include an editorial note that says how much of the manuscript was complete when the author died, how clear their intentions were for what remained to be done, and what level of editing was done to make the work press-ready. This book does not contain such an explanation, but Michael Wiegers, editor-in-chief at Copper Canyon, readily supplied it in an email: "Although I had given her some early editorial feedback on *Casting Deep Shade* we had not gone to copyediting and proofing at the time of

her passing. After her death I spotted a couple of passages wherein she had repeated herself, so we stripped those moments from the book. Beyond that intervention, and the subsequent copyediting/proofing, plus the final choice of images, the text was published as CD had delivered it." Wright's husband, the poet Forrest Gander, in separate email correspondence, concurred that after C.D.'s death he worked on the manuscript with Wiegers, research assistant and fact-checker Rowan Sharp, and many others. According to Wiegers, "several other sets of readers, proofers, and copyeditors" took part, thus "employing several filters to our process, as is our standard practice."

In this book, as in her other documentary collage projects such as *One with Others* and *One Big Self*, Wright collects a wide range of material about her subject. Excerpts from botanical and horticultural texts, literature, etymology, interviews, local history, correspondence, anecdotes, and folklore are interspersed with personal commentary and loose, winding passages of free verse. Part compendium, part encomium, it's a peppering of facts, salted with Wright's sly humor; a mashup, slapdash, assembled in no apparent order. Sometimes an organizational method seems to develop—"Aha," the reader thinks, "now we're learning about the parts of the beech tree," or "This is a catalog of literary mentions of beech trees"—but at every juncture there are divagations, returns, repetitions. We're not in Rhode Island anymore, we're in San Francisco; just kidding, make that Ireland. We're no longer talking about leaf structure, we're on predatory fungi—wait, no, it's the argument about pruning methods again. Nor is the book about only beech trees: there are digressions into other tree species.

To some extent this is maddening. After all, anyone with an internet connection can pull down a stream of random facts about a subject. That's the barrage of information that assaults our consciousness every day, which arguably we look to literature to escape. Shouldn't poetry do something more?

Traditionally in Western literature, a poem was expected to order our chaotic experience—to mean something. Even if that something was inscrutable, elusive, or bleak, the reader at least had faith that meaning was present. Yes, it was a construct, but that was the very artifice that made it art. Lyricism prevailed: *these* chosen words, set down in *this* arrangement, might change our perception or move us emotionally. If they did, we could keep them close, commit them to memory, summon them for courage and consolation in moments when mere ordinary language does not suffice.

In the landscape of postmodern literature, lyric poetry has become the old-growth forest: near-mythic and studded with giants, existing now only in vestiges. Meanwhile documentary collage, like an opportunistic successional species that thrives on disturbance, has sprung up everywhere. The form is nothing new—found poetry and pastiche forms that have been around for centuries in different literary traditions—but in recent decades, under the influence of film techniques and in response to political and social concerns, documentary collage has come into its own. It's hip. It's teachable. It upcycles found material, a sort of verbal reclamation project, and mimics our atomized attention stream. Ultimately it ducks the risks of closure and earnestness, leaving the task of assembling meaning to others. This approach forces readers to engage more actively with the text, or so the argument goes. Yet with the fading of lyricism and coherence, something vital is lost. Who memorizes passages from a collage poem and holds them in their heart, recites them at funerals?

One troubling aspect of documentary poetry is the question of appropriation, which arises whenever voices are borrowed and recontextualized. A further issue is attribution. In a 2014 article in the *Chicago Review*, Jill Magi writes that in *One Big Self* "Wright chooses, compositionally, to treat language collected as a large collage, removing quotation marks, so

that instead of relaying singular portraits and scenes, she creates a large fabric of being and experience. . . ." The removal of quotation marks, like the relaxation of other conventional standards of citation, has somehow become the accepted practice for documentary poetry. In lieu of full citation, documentary poets typically include a notes section stating the source material for each poem in a general way. The specificity of exactly which words come from that source, a standard expectation in academic writing, is absent. Admittedly, citations within the text of a poem would look awfully fussy. Besides, there is the aesthetic rationale that Magi mentions: by omitting quotation marks, the poet may be trying to posit some singular collective expression about a topic. Thus, documentary poetry gets a pass.

The problematic nature of this exemption was driven home to me when I recognized myself in one of the prosey anecdotes in *Casting Deep Shade*. I was bemused to read, on page 11, Wright's version of my conversation with her at the Arkansas Literary Festival in April 2013, in which I figure as "a woman in Little Rock." Turning the page, I came upon the full text of an email I sent to Wright later that night. I wrote the email as a private message, casually describing a botanist friend with encyclopedic knowledge of Arkansas plants, including beech trees. I tossed in a few facts about his life, several of which were hearsay—items I would definitely have verified or omitted had I known the message was going to be published. In retrospect I see that I was eager to offer something useful to this famous writer, puffed up with having cause to hold her attention for a moment (a bubble that would take a few years to be popped: "a woman in Little Rock"). My email appears without attribution, yet is easily identifiable as mine by anyone who takes the trouble to link it to the Acknowledgments, where the poet's thanks are extended to a list that includes "Hope Coulter, a teacher at Hendrix College."

The lame credit was a lesser issue; more disturbing was the fact that I had not agreed to have my email in the book at all. Yes, I knew generally that C.D. was working on a project about beech trees, and that was why I was steering her to a resource that might prove helpful. But that did not mean I was consenting to have my personal message to her reprinted in the pages of a book without my knowledge or permission.

All of this might be a tempest in the poetry teapot. Still, as my mother, a journalist, and my father, a scientist, taught me, when something goes into print it ought to be right. The airy lack of correct attributions makes me consider others on that Acknowledgments list, others quoted without quotation marks in the book, and indeed, the many people whose utterances make up *One Big Self* and *One with Others*. Were any of these sources aware that their words were being used verbatim in Wright's books? Did they give permission or have a chance to review their quotations for accuracy? Why does the standard practice for journalism not apply?

Despite the vexing issues, *Casting Deep Shade* remains a deeply enjoyable work, one that, after all, does not oversell itself. All it promises to be is "an amble"—a meandering walk through a wood. "In the end, it is a welter of associations," as Wright said of *One with Others* (p. 3). In the beech book's litter of information there are striking facts you want to pocket, stories that make you chortle, acerbic asides that make you snort. For those who loved and admire C.D., it is one last example of her singular sensibility: rich with her observations, her deadpan wit, her fierce love of the threatened natural world in all its beauty and transience. Although the book may not be as exalted among tree books as *Fagus grandifolia* and *Fagus sylvatica* are among hardwoods, I have to admit it has made me look differently at the trees I pass every day. I now eye their crown, their bark, the shape of their leaves with fresh attention. By that measure, at least, *Casting Deep Shade* accomplishes the most vener-

ated poetic mission of all: making readers see the world anew.

--Hope Coulter

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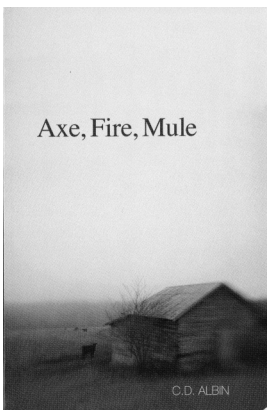
Axe, Fire, Mule. C. D. Albin. (Kirksville, Missouri: Golden Antelope Press, 2018. Pp. iii+75, acknowledgments, the author. $15.95, paper)

Those who appreciate vignettes of everyday life in the Ozarks written in a spare and symmetrical verse that proves engaging at every turn will find C. D. Albin's latest in a series of distinguished volumes extremely gratifying. The native of West Plains, Missouri, often trusts the mystery to arise from the commonplace, as he hearkens in "Ozark Dark" to the yip of nocturnal predators such as coyotes in "the near pasture" or the baying of a chained "Bluetick / ranging in caged torment," the musk of ripe bitches crawling its raw nostrils (p. 2).



This poet possesses an uncanny knack for capturing the creatural existence of those obliged to eke out a bare subsistence from the land. In "Here and Now," for example, a rural householder subjects fallen timber to the unbridled furor of a chainsaw: "Sawdust scrim settles as he / sinks the chainsaw deep within // a fallen trunk, makes quick work / of an oak even lightning // took a year to kill" (p. 3). Albin's searing lyric acumen is implicit in the repetition of *k* sounds in "trunk," "quick," "work," and "oak," a succession of glottal stops juxtaposed against the chainsaw's adenoidal whine as it eats out the heartwood of a tree felled by a bolt from heaven. His protagonist lives according to a hardscrabble and pragmatic "creed": "let pretend farmers ponder / past as prologue. He serves here // and now, does what needs doing / to keep lights on, his house warm" (p. 3). Albin's poems appear laconic, but are quite sophisticated with regard to phonetics and wordplay. Note the dark pun in the locution "prologue," as the speaker's hearth streams sad light, and he warms his hands in the afterglow of fuel conferred by Divine Providence.

In other poems Albin adopts a first-person perspective, devising dramatic monologues that relate the life-circumstances of those compelled by poverty to improvise their integrity from day to day. His speaker in "Speck of Shine" owns a hock shop dubbed the "Pair-a-Dice," where he traffics in shotguns that fire red-jacketed shells and also buys 24-caret baubles of any variety. He opens with a brief preamble: "Run a gun-and-pawn like the / Pair-o-Dice and you'll see most / anything" (p. 8). If the proprietor's spare lexicon smacks of chawbacon vulgarity, the ensuing scenario suggests otherwise. The gaunt matriarch of a flinty Ozark half-section blows in with her reluctant blonde teenager in tow: "hair her mother swept / behind one ear, revealing / a speck of shine in the lobe" (p. 8). The woman minces few words as she begins to haggle: "*Pure gold*, she swore. *What'll / you give?* / The girl cupped her ear, / hissed about a boy, a gift" (p. 8). Albin's subtext implies that the girl's mother deems her anything but "*Pure*." Indeed, the harridan seems intent on bartering away her daughter's chaste treasure: "but the mother slapped away / the protecting hand. *Your sign* / *says cash for gold. How much this?*" (p. 8). The nubile blonde capitulates to the tawdry transaction with an oath: "the girl cursed, set the stud / on the counter and banged out // the door" (p. 8). Could "stud" be a metonym for the boy in question? Albin's narrator is circumspect about the matter, but complies with the older woman's demands: "Her mother stepped near. /

You've got a slick price in mind." (p.8). He reaches into his greasy till for the payoff: "I slid five ones near her reach, / stared at the place where she snatched / the bills" (p. 8). The speaker then effaces all guilt with a single glib gesture: "Then I worked a cloth / back and forth across that spot" (p. 8). "Speck of Shine" has the metrical precision and synoptic clarity of John Crowe Ransom's more genteel "Piazza Piece," an analogy that does credit to both poets when Albin is at his best.

In "Marooned," the poet vividly depicts the idylls of summer nights familiar to anyone raised in the Mississippi Delta during the previous century. The opening stanza amounts to a simple statement of fact: "Only men made ice cream those / summer nights when uncles, aunts, / cousins came together at // the home place on Cherry Street" (p. 28). Albin conjures the firefly's electric stroke among switchboards of honeysuckle vine, as the speaker's informal soiree centers on the arduous task of cranking out the frozen confection from a wooden tub:

> Men hunched over buckets that
> rattled with rock salt and ice
>
> cubes, took turns churning in their
> Sunday shirts till starched cotton
> melted flat against broad backs. (p. 28)

Ironically, this brief respite from the daily grind requires that the menfolk strain muscle and sinew until their "starched cotton" shirts wilt in the heat and humidity of mid-July. Meanwhile, women take their ease on lamplit patios, and children cavort in eager anticipation of spooning up the fruit-flavored sherbet from porcelain bowls. The persona relates how the smooth curd "renewed our strength," sending he and his cousins "laughing, calling in // the shadowed night" (p. 28). None of the concupiscence of Wallace Stevens's "The Emperor of Ice-Cream" occurs in "Marooned," but the weary patriarchs derive satisfaction from being able to recognize their own: "work-worn / men leaned marooned on porch steps, / sifting fragrant voice from voice" (p. 28).

Albin brings his considerable prosodic skills to bear on a more sobering topic in "Re-vision," a poem that rehearses the onerous burdens of those devoted to a life of pedagogy, especially when the student aspires to the upward social mobility that education does not always ensure. Here he employs a decasyllabic line that metes out the plight of a man whose past is marked by stains more indelible than any that flow through a pen nib: "He was a broad man, thick / through the chest and torso, prison tattoos / encircling each arm" (p. 54). To the poet's intense relief, the private conference initially focuses on the rudiments of standard edited English: "he asked about misspellings, // run-ons, best ways to end a paragraph" (p. 54). But things come to an inevitable turn as the pupil asks a question that the professor initially believes to be figurative: "*How can somebody / like me find work that's clean?* I thought he meant / employment that would keep him out of jail" (p. 54). The gesture that follows is plaintive and fraught with despair: "but he pointed to my right hand, held up / his own to show even the cracks stained by // grease. *I'm sick to my soul of dirt*, he said" (p. 54). Indeed, Albin's poem echoes Philip Levine's "You Can Have It": "then let the hand drop like a useless limb" (p. 54). His closure, however, refuses to relinquish the hope of a better tomorrow:

> Searching for words, I fell back
>
> on the night's lesson, professed faith that first
> drafts are always flawed, beauty only brought
> into view through relentless revision. (p. 54)

The final locution brings us back to the poem's title, the assertion that the future can be a re-envisioning of the past. C. D. Albin's *Axe, Fire, Mule* is a veritable treasure trove of verse tracing the lineaments of a Delta that lives on in the memories of a remarkable poet.

--Floyd Collins

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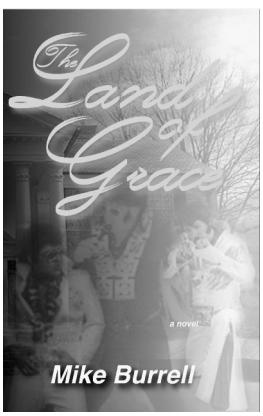
The Land of Grace by Mike Burrell. (Alabama: Livingston Press, 2018. Pp. 253, $23.95, hardcover)

Mike Burrell's *The Land of Grace* begins as a light-hearted drama but ends with a bang. "The Children would be the thunder. And He would be the lightening"—the closing sentences of the novel read. What happens when an Elvis impersonator is elevated to the status of Jesus?

Doyle Brisendine would have been fully content with decent compensation after his performance at a senior night at the AMVETS in Alabama. At the most, he would have expected a woman to toss a hotel key to him at the end of the show on top of what he'd get as promised from the organizers. He is, however, approached by a beautiful girl who invites him to dinner, and he's led to a place which is no less than Elvis Presley's Graceland itself. In the Big House, there's Presley's life-sized figure for worship and there's Tupelo House where lives Mama, the originator and protector of the new religion founded on the singer's name and fame. Doyle, invited to live in the Village for money, quickly gets bored by their ritual at the church that has been organized by their holy scripture, the "Book of Gladys," named after Presley's mother imagined comfortably as Virgin Mary. He misses his concerts, the women he could bed after the concerts, and so plans to leave the Land of Grace. Then begins the trial of the future "Jesus" of the cult.



Our Lady of Taking Care of Business is no less than any established religion built around Presley as Jesus who dies "consumed by the sins of the world" but "rises again and again" as the "Book of Gladys" prophesizes, and Burrell masterfully crafts the making of Presley in the hands of the cult leaders. The vigilantes, called apostles, physically abuse and incapacitate him. Unable to function as an adult, Doyle begins as a child—wetting his trousers, needing to be fed like a baby, and restricted from speaking anything other than "Yes ma'am" or "No Ma'am." Mama feeds him a glass of milk every night before tucking him into bed and every morning he's given a miracle pill that brings him back to life. When his initiation ritual makes him almost "Elvis" ready to replace the old King, who is sick and expected to die soon, the old and the future Elvis find out that the old Elvis will be in fact killed on a specific day and be buried in the Garden of Meditation. They manage to escape in a car, but Doyle, who's passing time in a motel after leaving the sick Elvis in a hospital, is approached by apostles and lured back by the prospect of more than the worldly luxuries he could have at the Land of Grace, including bedding girls of his choice. In a bizarre ceremony called River of Lights, Doyle is prepared to be anointed, and the old Elvis, who'd been kidnapped from the hospital and brought back, is apparently killed, making Doyle's reincarnation as the new King possible.

As the title suggests, the novel places Elvis Presley squarely at the center of the story—it is an Elvis Presley impersonator's story—but this story is only a conduit for a bigger story that Burrell tells in the novel. *The Land of Grace* is a story of a cult run by Our Lady of Taking Care of Business with a matriarch, Mama, who seems to truly believe that the religion she has founded is "authentic" and works the way she has envisioned it, as its head. This story very much reminds one of the cult Rajanishpuram once founded in Oregon in the 1980s.

When does a cult become a religion? All religions can be called "cults" but with bigger followings. In *The Land of Grace* Burrell shows

the dark reality of how the human desire for a bigger force, a god, can blind one, and how faith trumps rationality. At the heart of any religion is a human desire for mere worldly fulfillment. Mama is unmarried and childless, and is left with a vast amount of land that her father owned. What does she want now? A family, children. So, she creates a world where the followers of the cult become her children. To maintain this order, she's ready to go to any extreme, to the extent that she erases her own rationality and seems to truly believe the illusion to be her reality.

Elvis Presley, the singer, has less to do in the novel than readers might expect. The King of Rock and Roll is depicted as a hyper-sexual but at the same time near-effeminate, mama's boy, who exists in his performance, in art. Elvis's life provides the novel a world to build on and people to populate it with. Beyond it and the fandom that provides the basis for the cult's emergence, this novel doesn't have anything to do with him, his life, his singing. Hence, Presley, his Graceland, and all the people and places connected to him only provide Burrell a conduit to tell a story of a cult coming into existence, or a religion in the making, and to explore the dark secrets of human desire and the need for an unknown force to cling to.

To weave a story that is both entertaining in a light-hearted way and thought-provoking at the same time, Burrell beautifully combines the literary with the genre novel—that is, if the distinction still holds at all. When the novel opens, Doyle, the Elvis impersonator, appears to be hardly anything more than the type. He performs as he is expected to perform, receives an insane amount of money, and gets a dinner invitation from a beautiful girl. Going further, she invites him to "her" home and, quite melodramatically, he gets to sleep with the girl. But quickly the reader realizes that the real story lies elsewhere. There are many instances of such melodramatic happenings, twists and turns as well as predictable moves, but at the same time the gravity of the underlying story makes the reader want to hold for a second and think, wait, you're telling me much more than what you seem to be telling!

The Land of Grace is a highly entertaining and deeply thought-provoking novel. It doesn't necessarily establish or bring to light a new truth either about religion or a cult, or the singer for that matter, but it beautifully challenges the grand narratives of religion through a witty utilization of Elvis fandom.

--Khem Aryal

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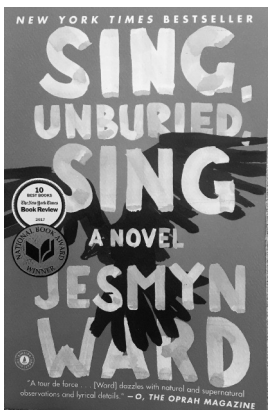
Sing, Unburied, Sing. By Jesmyn Ward. (New York: Scribner, 2017. Pp. 285, acknowledgments, group reading guide, interview. $9.19, paperback)

In recent years, certain extreme-right political voices have modeled a sort of permission for like-minded racism and xenophobia to be expressed and acted upon, even in judicial forms. While she sidesteps political tenor, Jesmyn Ward makes visible the rendering effects of hatred and violence against humanity and nature in her novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by depicting the resulting trauma as hauntings. She does this by showing the ways that all is interconnected: people, animals, the earth and elements, life energy, and even death. Reflective of this, the events of the story revolve around a small, rural Mississippi family and the way they experience pain of the past and present in ways that both literally and metaphorically haunt them. Jesmyn Ward



gives form and music-like voice to those hauntings so that the ways the past interacts with the present are made more visible, more legible. *Sing, Unburied, Sing* conjures the voices of Toni Morrison, William Faulkner, and Homer to harmonize the narrative of a present-day Mississippi family with the insistent and painful truth of the past, which, for this family, consists of death, drug abuse, child imprisonment, and the dangers and cruelties of racism.

In an interview by Louis Elliot (included with the book), Ward reveals that she was shocked to learn during her research "about Parchman Prison, where twelve- and thirteen-year-old black boys were taken for petty crimes, vagrancy and stealing—very small things. At Parchman, they were tortured and beaten like slaves. They died like slaves." Ward's novel gives voice to those young Parchman inmates through her characters River (most commonly referred to throughout the novel as Pop by his grandson and main character, Jojo) and Richie. Pop tells Jojo about his time in Parchman with Richie, and these memory-stories become the canvas on which the palimpsest of a contemporary storyline is painted, which is reflective of the way America's dark history of slavery can be seen beneath race relations and our culture today.

In the current day storyline, Jojo and his sister Kayla share a close bond. Jojo cares for his sister in an intensely protective way, as though he were her parent, but perhaps they both experience the healthiest, most loving and nurturing parenting from their grandparents, with whom they live. Although she lives with them, their mother, Leonie, lacks a nurturing, mother bond. Ward's character-building of Leonie shows the complexity of a life affected by trauma, a life in arrested development. She falls in love with a white boy, Michael, but that relationship is a complicated one, not just because she is black and he is white and they live in a town still mired in racism and a hatred for miscegenation, but also because Michael is the cousin of the boy that murdered Leonie's brother, Given. Michael's cousin murders Given for besting him in a hunting contest, unwilling to accept defeat by a black boy, and Michael's father, the sheriff who knows the details of the killing, calls it a hunting accident. Michael and Leonie fall into drug use and a deeply co-dependent relationship, and they have Jojo and Kayla together. It's not too long until Michael is imprisoned due to drugs and Leonie's drug use deepens because she begins to be visited by the ghost of Given when she's high. Her mind stays young as a child's, becoming jealous of her parents' affections for her children, yet simultaneously guilty because she knows she forgets to give them good things. She resents them needing her, yet she craves their devotion, and she is attracted to the idea of a loving family unit: Michael, Leonie, Jojo, and Kayla.

A large portion of the work is as a road novel: Leonie and her friend Misty take Jojo and Kayla on a road trip to pick up Michael who is being released from prison. It is during these scenes that much of the past converges on the present, bringing to full light the ways in which all living things and elements are affected by resistance and tearing of the interconnected woven cloth of existence. Richie's presence becomes more insistent, and Jojo learns more of the horrifying truth of Parchman Prison.

In literature, trauma is often manifested in bodily illness, an element that can be seen when Kayla, who is only three years old, begins running a fever and vomiting during the trip. Her illness is also used to highlight the inversion of the nurturing/parenting instinct of Leonie and Jojo in addition to heightening the tension surrounding each and every action and decision made by Leonie while on the road. Because the stakes are higher, Leonie's choice to leave the children and get high serves not only to reveal to Leonie her own values, but also to indicate to the audience the ways Leonie repeatedly tries and fails.

The final scenes serve both as a reason for

hope and as a call to action. Little Kayla sees the ghosts that linger and long for home. Ward writes, "Kayla sings, and the multitude of ghosts lean forward, nodding. They smile with something like relief, something like remembrance, something like ease" (p. 284). Giving a perfectly resolved ending would be like saying that a song makes all things right, but the ghosts don't leave. They don't go home. Just as a wounded body may heal, but it leaves scars, and the wound cannot be unmade.

Sing, Unburied, Sing has won several awards, and rightfully so. Ward's writing is musical and conversational, yet the content is so complex and important. Can America's trauma be healed? Ward suggests there is a hope, a song that connects us all.

-- Rae Summers-Thompson

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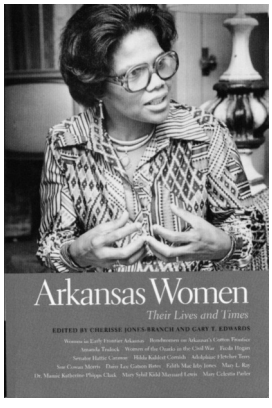
Arkansas Women: Their Lives and Times. Edited by Cherisse Jones-Branch and Gary T. Edwards. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018. Pp. ix + 303, acknowledgments, introduction, contributors, index. ($34.95 paper)

This work contains fifteen biographical essays about the lives and times of selected Arkansas women from the pre-statehood era into the late twentieth century. African American women and their experiences are predominantly but not exclusively included. Gender and race pose the primary themes of these essays as these were the major dynamics that both propelled and limited the subjects' lives. While certain subjects are well-known such as Hattie Caraway, Adolphine Fletcher Terry, and Daisy Bates, others are generally lesser known figures. All encountered struggles and challenges which they each successfully addressed in their own individualized manner. The biographical sketches are complimentary of their subjects which is to be expected given the nature of the study.

This work offers the reader an excellent vantage point from which to study the effect of different women's experiences within the great historical labyrinth. As such it is a useful companion to any formal study of Arkansas history and certainly of Arkansas women's history. Beyond this, several of the essays relate the events of their subject's life to larger national themes and events providing a boarder historical perspective. Particularly interesting were the essays on Amanda Trulock, Edith Mae Irby Jones, Freda Hogan, and Daisy Bates. Likewise, the Mary Parler and Hattie Caraway studies offer the reader a greater in-depth view of these women's motivations and their methods of operating. The Amanda Trulock essay describes the misconceptions commonly associated with Arkansas women from slave owning families by showing Trulock as an exception to that norm. The essay on Freda Hogan highlights the major role played by Arkansans in early twentieth century socialist efforts and the key roles performed by women within the socialist movement. From chronicling the beginnings of the birth control movement in Arkansas to the integration of the University of Arkansas Medical Center to the Central High Crisis and its aftermath to the far-flung life of a Broadway star, this work includes well written and documented biographical studies of great variety. In doing so this work illustrates the diversity of women's history in Arkansas as it underscores and articulates the experiences of individual women engaged in various aspects of state and national issues and challenges.



The work apparently took pains to study

women from the various geographical regions of Arkansas, a fact that affected the subject's individual experiences. In addition, women from various historical eras are included which increases the work's viability as a historical reference. If there is a shortcoming, it is that several notable women were not included such as Betty Bumpers, Jeannette Rockefeller, Dr. Joycelyn Elders, and other notable women who made significant contributions to the culture of Arkansas and the lives of its residents. However, as the editors note in the introduction, this work is not intended to be a thorough and final compendium of notable Arkansas women's lives, but rather an initial foray into the field. Another potential shortcoming involves the reader's sense that African American women are predominantly the focus of the work, although of the fifteen entries racial balance of the selected subjects is present with eight white subjects and seven African American entries. However, several of the white women's experiences and efforts centered on racial issues thus giving the work a strong African American bias in its selected subject matter and focus. This point may simply underscore the significance of race as a recurring historical theme in both Arkansas and American history as evidenced in the lives of all people whether African American or white. Nonetheless, the focus of the work seems slanted toward the experiences of women of color.

Arkansas Women: Their Lives and Times is a positive addition to the body of literature on Arkansas history. It should be well received in Arkansas schools and universities and among scholars and others who enjoy learning about women's contributions to both the state and national experience. It is a worthwhile read and leaves the reader wanting additional writings about influential Arkansas women, their lives, and their contributions to the fabric that is Arkansas history.

--Mildred Diane Gleason

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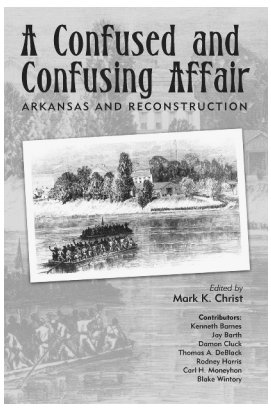
A Confused and Confusing Affair: Arkansas and Reconstruction. Edited by Mark K. Christ. (Little Rock, Arkansas: Butler Center Books, 2018. Pp. 7-284, contributors, introduction and acknowledgments, notes, for further reading, index. $22.95 paper)

In his introduction to this collection of essays, Mark K. Christ notes that Reconstruction "has received relatively little attention," and he states that the goals of this volume are to "offer valuable insights into Reconstruction in Arkansas and show how its effects still resonate today" (pp. 11, 12). This era is often eclipsed by the gore and glory of the civil war that preceded it and by the gilded age of national transformation that followed, and biased and incomplete histories have made this confused era in Arkansas history even more confusing. In this accessible and engaging collection, six leading scholars of Arkansas history deliver a multi-layered examination of Reconstruction and demonstrate that this oft-ignored era was a watershed moment in the history of Arkansas.



This collection grew out of a panel conference coordinated by the Old State House Museum, and several advantages of this panel format are made evident. Each panelist focuses upon a different aspect of Reconstruction, which provides a broad and deep understanding of the era. In addition, each author reiterates key points made by other panelists, creating an air of conversation while qualifying or develop-

ing these points. In the opening essay, "The Complex Character of Post-Civil War Reconstruction, 1863-1877," Carl H. Moneyhon provides a detailed overview of Arkansas Reconstruction within the larger context of Southern Reconstruction. Each essay that follows complements Moneyhon's overview and provides a close study of key aspects of Arkansas Reconstruction. Jay Barth explains political parties and factions of the era; Blake Wintory provides statistics and biographical details about African-American legislators and debunks the common depictions of them as illiterate and ineffective; Thomas A. DeBlack delivers a narrative and analysis of the Brooks-Baxter War; Kenneth C. Barnes details how violence was used to undermine reconstruction; and Rodney Harris analyzes the creation and consequences of the Constitution of 1874.

These six authors dispel confusion about Reconstruction and demonstrate its significance in Arkansas history. Several elements of this history, such as the obscure political factions, shifting political alliances, and the Brooks-Baxter War, often appear nonsensical to modern readers, but the authors provide the context needed to understand these aspects. Moneyhon explains the personalities and politics that influenced the evolution of Arkansas Reconstruction. Barth reviews the numerous elections, changing electorate, and unreliable election data that have hindered historians, and he argues that "the personality-based factionalism . . . in Arkansas politics" during Reconstruction was "quite normal . . . in the context of Arkansas's electoral patterns across time" (p. 85). While correcting several misconceptions about the performance of African American legislators during Reconstruction, Wintory provides numerous statistics and biographical details about their occupations, education, and political experience. DeBlack offers a thorough account of the Brooks-Baxter War, including biographies and actions of key participants, the military actions taken, and long-term effects of the outcome. Barnes casts light on the era's political violence, concluding that Reconstruction did not end until this violence resulted in the disenfranchisement of African Americans in the 1890s. Harris shows that although Arkansas's Reconstruction was a confusing age, the outcome is clear: an extremely conservative constitution that led to the disenfranchisement, "limited government, . . . and economic suffering for the average Arkansan" (237).

The authors demonstrate the value of understanding Reconstruction and the value and duty of historical research. As the complex, misguided, and often immoral behaviors of some participants are recounted, this volume serves as a reminder that it is extremely difficult for masses of people to think and act beyond their culture. Socialization should not be a default defense for immoral behavior, but students of history must be aware of such cultural blindness in order to understand the motivations of past generations. This collection also demonstrates the duty of historians to put aside biases and opinions to offer studies that are as balanced and objective as possible. Using the examples of William A. Dunning, Thomas Starling Staples, and John Hugh Reynolds, Barth points out that historians have often delivered a biased and prejudiced version of Arkansas Reconstruction. The authors in this volume expose this fraudulent history and provide a responsible and informed record of the past.

A Confused and Confusing Affair brings clarity and order to one of the most chaotic and consequential periods in Arkansas history. It will appeal to general readers as well as students of history; indeed, it is essential reading for anyone wanting a better understanding of how the failure of Reconstruction has undermined the social and economic progress of Arkansas since the Civil War. It is also a reminder of the consequences that result when those with privilege and power do not heed the better angels of their nature.

--Phillip Howerton

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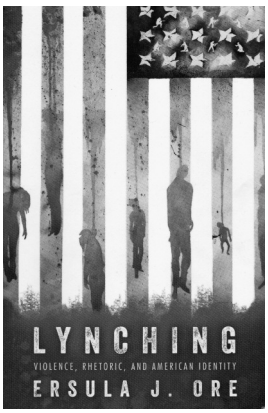
Lynching: Violence, Rhetoric, and American Identity. By Ersula J. Ore. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019. Pp. ix–xx + 175, acknowledgments, author's note, preface, notes, index. $30, paper)

Words have meaning—or, at least, they should. These meanings may be contested, but in order for successful communication to take place between human beings, our shared vocabulary should not deviate too far beyond boundaries of uncertainty. However, reactionary political projects have a tendency to appropriate powerful words and distort their meaning. Thus have white supremacists taken the term "genocide," which has a very specific (if debated) definition within international law, and invented the concept of "white genocide" to describe, with trembling horror, what is truthfully little more than a growing acceptance of multiculturalism in certain countries. The word "lynching" has similarly been abused, most recently by Donald Trump, who employed the term to describe an impeachment investigation against him. If a legal, constitutional corrective directed against a rich, elite white man who occupies the most politically powerful position in the United States can be compared to the carefree murder and mutilation of thousands of people across this country, then the word has no meaning whatsoever.

This is not to say that "lynching" must necessarily describe a discrete and quantifiable phenomenon, for scholars have long been aware of how the term functions metaphorically. In his 2002 book, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch*, historian Christopher Waldrep argued that there was no one singular behavior that could be called a lynching, that lynching was as much a discourse designed to justify violence as it was the violence itself. Likewise, sociologist Jonathan Markowitz in *Legacies of Lynching* (2004) regarded lynching as a metaphor for race relations, a prevalent reminder of the costs inherent in violating the boundaries of the racial order. However, although these two books examined the evolution of lynching as rhetoric, they did not explicitly track how that rhetoric paired with the evolution of lynching as violence. And lynching has evolved. In fact, it was the changing nature of racist violence that motivated anti-racist organizations such as the NAACP to adapt their terminology to keep up with facts on the ground, namely the replacement of public, spectacle violence with quiet and anonymous assassinations, as well as a preference of "legal" police violence over the extralegal.



For Ersula J. Ore, what links historical cases of lynching, modern cases of vigilantism (such as George Zimmerman's murder of Trayvon Martin), and even Halloween displays hanging Barack Obama in effigy is a rhetorical continuity that frames these acts as "a performance of exceptional citizenship . . . in which the logic and spirit of American democracy are enacted" (p. 15). These performances are, of course, racialized: "By denying black victims the right to due process, lynchers were in fact arguing that the protections and privileges of American citizenship were the exclusive rights of the white men and women who lynched them" (p. 19). Despite common conceptions of lynching as a challenge to state structures or as prevalent only where the formal institutions of law and order were lacking, Ore reframes lynching as violence granted the explicit and implicit approval of the state, and lynchers not as vigilantes but as the veritable representatives of American institutions.

Ore begins her survey of this rhetorical continuity with the American Revolution, illustrating how, at the point where the word "lynch" originated, violence and citizenship were already heavily imbricated, with lynching then fashioning the new republic through the expulsion of the Tory enemy. From there, she moves forward, highlighting how provisions like the Three-Fifths Compromise and the Fugitive Slave Act defined national belonging in opposition to the black "other," with the latter, for example, making "the profiling, surveilling, policing, and seizure of blacks by whites a mandated practice of white citizenship" (p. 38). The formal expansion of citizenship during Reconstruction necessitated, for continued white control, a rhetorical shift that justified the continued expulsion of black Americans from the body politic, and thus did the "black beast rapist" myth emerge: "Such discourse rhetorically situating lynchings as a consequence of black debauchery worked to combat accusations of white barbarity by casting blacks as morally unfit for civil society" (p. 50). Lynching photography worked to reinforce these claims by contrasting calm, refined representatives of the white community with degraded and destroyed black bodies.

Ore ends her book by examining the continued vitality of lynching rhetoric, focusing specifically upon the symbolic lynching of President Barack Obama, carried out by the hanging of both effigies and chairs (the latter recalling Clint Eastwood's addressing an empty chair representing Obama at the 2012 Republican National Convention). As Ore writes, these "contemporary reproductions of the lynching scene collapsed tropes of the black threat/enemy with those of the foreign invader to enthymematically demarcate the White House as a space for 'whites only' and Barack Obama as a threat to the sanctity and integrity of the nation" (102). Likewise did the trial of George Zimmerman draw parallels to the lynching of Emmett Till by revealing that Zimmerman "had a greater right to self-defense and life than the young man he profiled, hunted, and killed" (p. 135).

In other words, the rhetoric that underpinned lynching during the days of the American Revolution remains a cornerstone in how citizenship and belonging are constituted in the United States. Many conservatives have argued that one cannot draw a line from mob violence of yore to certain well-publicized murders of black men and women today, and they are right in that the specific praxes of violence are different—the mob has been replaced by the individual, alleged lawlessness by formal or informal representatives of the law. However, following Ersula J. Ore and examining the rhetoric of racial exclusion underpinning these various acts reveals continuities rather than discontinuities and demonstrates that lynching survives even in this present day, serving the same purpose for which it was originally employed. *Lynching* thus constitutes a brief but elegant lesson that allows us to make better sense of the world we inhabit and to develop better strategies for combatting racialized exclusion in all its forms.

--Guy Lancaster

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