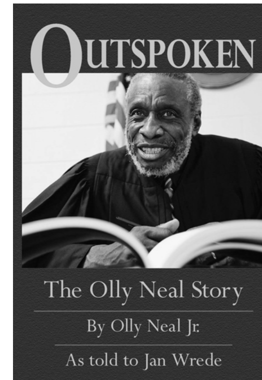
Reviews

OUTSPOKEN: The Olly Neal Story. By Olly Neal, Jr., as told to Jan Wrede. (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2020, Pp. 349, $29.95, paper)

When Olly Neal, Jr., community activist, civil rights leader, public health clinic director, lawyer, prosecutor, and jurist writes in his recent as-told-to memoir, *OUTSPOKEN: The Olly Neal Story*, that he was "just a good average son of a gun with a little more nerve than many," (p. 139) you can either take him at his word or try to talk back. I am going to have to talk back.

Nothing about Olly Neal's life, persona, or accomplishments can be called average. Born in 1941 and reared in the Arkansas Delta town of Marianna, one of thirteen children in an African American family that lacked luxuries and prized education, Neal followed a jagged path to his eventual appointment to the Arkansas Court of Appeals in 1996. That path took him to Le-Moyne College in Memphis in 1960, where his early civil rights activism earned him a reputation as "the loudmouth runoff always taking the chance to make a speech" (p.49). The draft sent him to Vietnam in the mid-60s. Returning eventually to the Delta as a seasoned and highly effective community organizer, Neal soon found himself drafted to head up a new, federally funded community health center, the Lee County Cooperative Clinic, in his hometown of Marianna, where the white supremacist power structure so feared black self-determination and "outside agitators" (white Volunteers in Service to America—VISTA-workers) that Neal and his staff found themselves blocked and threatened at every turn. These frustrations led a coalition of black activists to run for local political office in 1970, without success, and to ignite a people's campaign for civil rights in Marianna that successfully used economic and school boycott strategies. At every point, the local White Citizens Council, with its night riders and its stranglehold on local law enforcement, pushed back viciously and violently against the social justice activists. Later, when Neal became a lawyer at the age of thirty-eight, then the first black district prosecuting attorney in the state of Arkansas, a circuit court judge, and finally a judge on the Court of Appeals, he continued to face intransigence, if less direct violence, from local white power brokers up and down the line.



Amidst all of this, Olly Neal spoke his mind, often, openly, and loudly. When people threatened him, he threatened them back. When they attacked him with words, he out spoke them. When they threatened him with guns, he packed a pistol, with every intention of using it in self-defense if need be. It was not so much that he advocated the use of violence in the fight for racial justice, he says, as that he recognized the power of "insurgent defiance because the threat of violence was safer and might be useful" (p. 107). The simple threat by black people to use in-kind violence sent local whites scurrying away crying foul. Olly Neal would not back down or shut up or give up. He was simply unafraid, and that scared the hell out of the "good old boys," whom Neal deliberately called "boys" in another instance of in-kind irking.

If you detect a certain swagger in Neal's telling of these tales, you are on the mark. That Jan Wrede, the former VISTA worker who reconnected with Olly Neal fifty years later to record

and shape this as-told-to account, did not recoil from a verbatim retelling of Neal's adventures with whiskey and women, his barroom standoffs, or tales of male bonding (as in watching the female "scenery" at lawyerly events with his nemesis, the racist white prosecuting attorney Gene Raff, assessing "which woman was the most attractive, which man had more than he deserved" p. 201.), speaks to her dedication to unvarnished truth telling in this memoir. It is not polished up for today's feminist sensibilities, and I am glad that as a team, Neal and Wrede did not do that. We get Neal's voice, fearless, frank, at times profane, sometimes a bit sheepish about youthful indiscretion or vainglory, and often genuinely remorseful about life choices that may have harmed people he loved. One gets the sense that Olly Neal is as outspoken to his conscience as he is to everyone else in earshot. He is a teller of truths.

Everyone interested in the late twentieth-century fight for social justice in the Arkansas Delta should read this book. Judge Olly Neal has been inducted into the Arkansas Black Hall of Fame (2014). *OUTSPOKEN: The Olly Neal Story* tells you why.

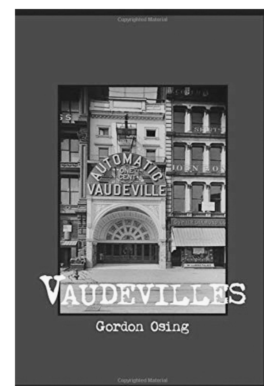
--Lauri Umansky

Vaudevilles. Gordon Osing. (New York: Spuyten Duyvil, 2020. Pp. 76. $13.22, paper)

Vaudevilles is Gordon Osing's latest and arguably finest volume by a poet with ties to a region that has produced many gifted lyricists, including Miller Williams, R. S. Gwynn, Frank Stanford, C. D. Wright, and Jo McDougall. He served for decades on the English and Creative Writing faculty at the University of Memphis, and established the River City Contemporary Writers Series that continues to feature prominent guest speakers such as W. S. Merwin, Carlos Fuentes, Seamus Heaney, and Carolyn Forche. Osing is a past master of the sonnet sequence that sustains a thematic continuity, but he proves equally adept with narrative meditations focusing on poets, painters, musicians, and the notorious Marquis de Sade.

He opens *Vaudevilles* with "Georg Trakl," about a German Expressionist poet whose sublime genius was compromised by his addiction to cocaine and an incestuous longing for his younger sister, Grete. But this entry is no mere recapitulation of the young *poet maudit*'s tragic life-circumstances; Osing literally places his auditor in the shoes of his dubious protagonist through evocative lines that conjure a snow-shrouded Salzburg nightscape almost a century after Trakl's birth: "The farthest star hints of things to come / when his feet, too, like mine tonight / grind softly into the fallen white" (p. 1). He proceeds to intone in deft cadences the myriad enticements that Salzburg embodies for a vulnerable young practitioner of the language arts: "these avenues where all afternoon / murderously handsome dames sipped / chocolate and pinced candied delicacies, / their arms on the table, death at rest" (1). The repetition of short *i* in the locutions "sipped," "pinced," "candied," and "delicacies" intimates with what exquisite relish these Austrian nymphets partake of confections beyond all but the listing imagination of a famished soul like Trakl's.

Osing's speaker knows that he need not rehearse the lurid particulars of Trakl's ultimate fate, how the young pharmacist turned wordsmith became addicted to the opiates he was licensed to dispense. When WWI broke out, he was put in charge of a makeshift infirmary in a barn where ninety wounded soldiers were confined. Even those who mercifully passed out from the unendurable agony of their wounds were doubtless



cruelly revived by the ammonia rising off liquid excrement in those stables. When one of the dying men put a pistol in his mouth and plastered his own brains all over the wall, Trakl suffered a mental breakdown and soon after died of a cocaine overdose.

Osing juxtaposes against this grim biographical sketch a tableau at once delicate but also steadfast in its refusal to succumb to sentimentality: "Waiters know everything. / Clever ornaments devoted to the Nativity / go cheap enough in the cathedral square" (p. 2). Indeed, he has yet another piquant barb in his arsenal: "Why not pay / the darkness its dues, wine and candles / and too glad music. Let evenings be / many, night one" (p. 2). But Osing then renders the ineffable loveliness of "Silent Night" in Teutonic accents: "*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht, Alles Schlaft* . . . ." (p. 2). One misses only Trakl's remarkable facility with color motifs in the Delta poet's gloss on this refrain: "He had it both ways, a world outside / time and languaged to heart-breaking / perfection, to pure longing, honoring / most of all the unsayable" (p. 3).

Osing pays his subject the supreme compliment by coupling Trakl's nuanced aesthetic with that of the composer who is to music what Michelangelo is to sculpture, Raphael to painting, and Shakespeare to dramatic verse: "In *Mozartplatz*, in a world silent and white, / I see music made of finesse beyond reason / and I hear hungry boots on the ground" (p. 4). In this hushed realm of psychic wonderment evoking a season when frost flowers on window panes, Osing's speaker proves capable of listening generously to the crunch of boot soles on virgin snow. His closure is a veritable tour de force, compounding Mozart's elusive genius with Trakl's stark lexical modesty: "His heart alone was his model" (p. 4).

"Seen on CNN on the Sealink," a poem originally appearing in the *New Yorker*, provides a vivid depiction of the RMS *Titanic* that still bears mute testimony to the overreaching pride of humankind. The British passenger vessel operated by the White Star Line was deemed unsinkable when it embarked on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York City, but after the ship struck an iceberg in the wee hours of April 15, 1912, more than 1,500 souls perished in waters estimated at a bone-numbing 28 degrees. Osing's opening stanza consists of eight decasyllabic lines, truncated or extended by perhaps a metrical foot and merits quoting entire:

> The waltz of the water at this depth, they say
> is both faint and unbelievably graceful,
> and the brass chandelier in the main ballroom
> of the *Titanic* swings even now a little
> from time to time, surround by the myriad
> living moats and swirling fins. There is
> precious crystal lying about in the sand
> and musical instruments lilting the night. (52)

The poet demonstrates his considerable prosodic skill through repeated bilabials in the metaphorical "waltz of the water," which amounts to a *danse macabre* afoot at depths almost unfathomable at the hour the maritime disaster transpired.

Moreover, the assonantal *a* sounds in the embedded subject-verb combination "they say" are reiterated in the idioms "faint" and "graceful" in line three. Osing insinuates that the patina of the "brass chandelier" suspended in this ice-water mansion's "main ballroom" betrays more decadence than opulence, insofar as it "swings even now a little." He even cleverly interposes a self-reflexive pun with the turn of phrase "from time to time." Indeed, to take the full measure of Osing's linguistic virtuosity requires considerable engagement with the text. But the narrative backdrop chills one to the marrow as the metonymic "swirl of fins" connotes the toothed gullet of a cruising hammerhead.

The *Titanic*'s wreckage lies almost 2 ½ miles below the surface, and so there is no light to strike prismatic tints from "precious crystal lying about in the sand." But the poet conjures scenarios—"musical instruments lilting the night"—that speak as much to courage and dignity as to pathos and whimsy. Even as the great ship slowly sank, bandmaster Wallace Hartley and his tiny orchestra played on into the night to maintain

decorum while women and children were loaded into the lifeboats. His rosewood violin, with its corroded engraved silver plate, was still strapped to his lifeless body when it was recovered two weeks after the palatial luxury-liner slid beneath the freezing Atlantic waters. Osing's second stanza offers a counterpoint to his first, although it seems to pick up where it left off: "Mahogany steps still lead down / to impenetrable staterooms" (p. 52). But the veneer of those boards, where the affluent went first-footing to their final rest, suddenly fades in the probing beams of *Alvin*, the manned deep-ocean submersible that discovered the *Titanic* in 1985: "The blinding / light of the mechanical sub shows them / not knowing how to flee" (p. 85).

Here Osing's poem must inevitably be compared to Thomas Hardy's "Convergence of the Twain." If the English poet meant to condemn the vulgar materialism of the Edwardian era, Osing seems to be similarly inclined, but here "the Spinner of the Years" in Hardy's verse diatribe is replaced by the gentle oscillation of the *Alvin*'s propellers. Indeed, Osing's concluding stanza subtly demystifies an event that Hardy lent apocalyptic dimensions:

> Here one finally knows the last moments
> of some victorious living blinded in green;
> the place of diamonds and grand dinners.
> One wishes to find nothing altered here,
> so what's to dread? All this destined
> to be raised shrinking to our lights. (p. 52)

Osing introduces into this sestet not one but two deliciously wicked puns. The adjective-noun combination "victorious living" alludes to Hardy, the Victorian novelist turned modernist poet who was often defined by his tendency to deplore Edwardian excess. Moreover, the locution "dread" suggests "dreadnought," the early 20th century battleships built along the dimensions of the *Titanic*. The term "dreadnought" means literally to fear nothing, as indeed those who booked passage on the ill-fated White Star vessel did not. But for Osing the *Titanic*'s cruelest destiny is to be hooked, then gaffed and raised like a proud marlin growing smaller and smaller as it is lifted clear of its natural element "to our lights."

Osing's knack for the dramatic monologue comes to the fore in "Sade's Hometown," a conflation of his narrator's voice and that of the profligate French nobleman notorious for his feckless escapades in both fashionable boudoirs and seedy bordellos. The poem opens with the persona's ruminations on the dissolute aristocrat with lace at his cuffs and ruffles at his throat, a pariah in his own domain: "Paris wouldn't have him, the ignoble Marquee, / where brothels and taverns and dice make / a decent evening" (p. 42). With his flushed, loose, handsome face and hatred of the Godly, de Sade eagerly awaits the onset of that hour between dog and wolf: "He smiles / for the light following the turning-on of lamps. / Their flesh is more ghostly than their souls. / Their angst? They deny the bodies of others" (p. 43). If the speaker considers the realms of the spirit and flesh as one, de Sade views the bodies of his familiars as being even less corporeal than their "souls." He intends to defile both whenever it becomes his gentle pleasure to do so: "'They come to act out their souls, as if / having learned the sexual leads to theatre, / thus also pain, that laughter and crying out / are mere claptraps'" (p. 43).

Osing's considerable gift for wordplay is once more in evidence. Etymologically, "claptrap" derives from early Eighteenthy-century English and refers to theatrical techniques designed to incite cheap applause. But the poet resorts to his speaker's reputation as a rakehell and whoremaster to devise a portmanteau word all his own. An infamous libertine, the Marquise would doubtless have had his share of experience with gonorrhea or the "clap". Therefore, when his de Sade employs the word "claptrap" he pokes more than mischief fun at a harlot's private parts. Elsewhere, Osing's interior speaker observes: "'I am simply for the carnival in others' worlds / What would anyone not do to be at home / in others' excitements'" (p. 43). One may be certain that de Sade knows the carnivalesque does not preclude

the carnal.

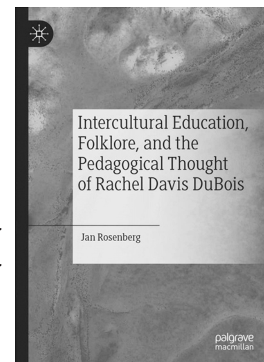
Osing concludes his own disquisition on the Frenchman, whose writings combined philosophical discourse with exquisitely depraved pornography, by describing a communion more poignant than fleshly: “Sade watches the sun fall egg-orange, / magenta then, to blood, at last to wine. / The servants will have lighted the lamps / in his chambers, set ample food and vessels” (p. 44). This simple repast will be the Marquise’s last. *Vaudevilles* is one of Osing’s finest collections in career marked by abundance, variety, and complete competence.

–Floyd Collins

Intercultural Education, Folklore, and the Pedagogical Thought of Rachel Davis DuBois. By Jan Rosenberg. (Chan, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. Pp. 146, index, illustrations, one black and white photograph, $57.19, hardcover)

With the contemporary focus on diversifying Pre-Kindergarten to graduate education, it is intriguing to consider earlier movements in educational reform. Established in the 1970s, multicultural education continues to influence diversity initiatives. Prior to this educational era, we can see influences from Civil Rights on education, including the establishment of minority, ethnic, and indigenous studies. Jan Rosenberg reaches back earlier to provide intellectual context for gaining wider perspectives on the history of education through a consideration of Rachel Davis DuBois’s contributions. As Rosenberg notes, DuBois, in turn, was strongly influenced by early twentieth century educationists, notably John Dewey and those who contributed to the progressive educational movement of the early twentieth century. Rosenberg avers that DuBois’s educational theory and practice provided a strong basis for contemporary educational initiatives, particularly those associated with integrating folklore in elementary and secondary school curricula. Her book provides historical sketches and theoretical models useful for a range of educational programs, including specialized projects for museums, historical societies, libraries, and other organizations with educational coordinators.

Rachel Davis DuBois (1892-1993) began teaching in Glassboro, New Jersey. As a classroom teacher, she incorporated her theater background in dramaturgical approaches to pedagogy. Descriptions of her classroom activities reveal she was taking experiential approaches to learning by including hands-on lessons that involved student role-playing of significant historical events, such as the signing of the Declaration of Independence. She developed a pedagogy that moved beyond the “great men doing important deeds” content of social studies curricula. A member of the Religious Society of Friends, DuBois reflected on how her Quaker faith could be a resource for expanding her work in education.



After five years of teaching, she left the classroom to work with the American Friends Service Committee in Philadelphia. In this new position, she traveled to South Carolina to assess a school organized by Martha Schofield, a fellow Quaker. During these travels, she gained an experience of life in the Jim Crow South, where she developed a strong commitment to anti-racism. This led to her interest in integrating prejudice-reduction into schooling. In the early 1920s, she took up this interest as the key focus of her life’s work, or what Quakers refer to as a Concern. Upon completing an EdD, she worked as an educator by crafting projects that fit within the intercultural education movement that blossomed in the 1940s and 50s.

Jan Rosenberg became interested in intercul-

tural education during her own career within Folklife in Education (FIE). FIE emerged in the United States during the 1970s, and it is modeled primarily on Artist in the Schools programs funded by local, state and national arts agencies. These projects continue to place artists and musicians in schools where they work with teachers to expand their school's instruction in the fine arts. Folklorists recognized that they could use this model to serve as folklorists-in-residence at various schools, where they could coordinate presentations by folk artists and musicians. Rosenberg has coordinated various residency programs, and she describes how she facilitated presentations by traditional artists through her work in Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Oklahoma, Texas, and Indiana. The FIE movement continues to include these kinds of residencies, but proponents of FIE have expanded their reach. Many now work as folk arts coordinators in the public sector, museum educators, diversity consultants, and in other forms of heritage education. There is a wide range of work, but much of it is unified by various common interests. Those in FIE integrate traditional culture and social history into curricula. They emphasize the need to make connections to local history and culture to a school's educational approaches. There is a strong emphasis on connecting schools to wider communities, and these educators emphasize the need to make their diverse programs inclusive. In the growing body of scholarship on FIE, writers have explored how these typical approaches can be connected to other elements of educational theory and practice. Furthermore, there is an open-ended quality to FIE that allows for a range of approaches, including the use of narrative theory and dramaturgy within pedagogy.

Rosenberg's book revolves around three poles. The first is an adumbration of DuBois's biography. The second element is a consideration of salient aspects of educational theory. The final axis point is Rosenberg's own experience in FIE. She links all three together by pulling together elements of educational theory that support DuBois's approaches to intercultural education that she coordinated through the Workshop for Cultural Democracy in the 1940s and 50s. DuBois oversaw an interesting range of projects in this era. They included in-school presentations by local resource people, fieldtrips to local sites of cultural significance, programs for teachers' own professional development, neighborhood festivals, and an intriguing project called the *Parranda*. This educational activity was inspired by a Puerto Rican woman who participated in Workshop for Cultural Democracy projects. Rosenberg identifies her as Mrs. Torres, who explained that a *parranda* was an evening party that included house-to-house visitation. Mrs. Torres gave DuBois the inspiration of adapting this activity into an educational project that involved a sharing of culture through direct exchanges in individuals' homes. Foodways traditions and other forms of expressive culture were often put on center stage during these *Parrandas*, and they serve as models for making direct connections between schools and communities.

Rosenberg considers these activities in relation to DuBois's wider ideas about intercultural education. The book succeeds in showing how DuBois was able to create activities drawn from her central concern with using education to challenge racism and other forms of prejudice. The discussion is most interesting when Rosenberg links DuBois's thinking to aspects of Quaker worldview. The emphasis on the power of the ineffable Inner Light incorporates spirituality into the history of education, and its inclusion also provides an excellent way to consider the importance of human agency within educational theory. Although the specifics of educational theory are too complex to summarize in a book review, it is important to recognize how DuBois's thinking includes a consideration of social and emotional aspects of experience that accompany the intellectual elements of learning. Factors that broaden the context of learning and teaching between the purely intellectual are particular relevant to the intercultural education of DuBois.

Rosenberg then places these aspects of DuBois's educational theory into the specific processes that emerge within specific educational activities. This process unfolds in what Rosenberg terms the 4-Is of intercultural education: invite, involve, influence, and inform. The specific unfolding of these processes are connected to different ways that teachers will engage intellectual and affective realms, and Rosenberg provides various pedagogical models that can be glossed onto instructional activities. Because she is looking at efforts to integrate and infuse new cultural content into education, Rosenberg's model is perhaps most useful for educators who are working outside of the conventional classroom and more orthodox curriculum. Museum educators who are developing special programs, for example, may find Rosenberg's writing useful for crafting their educational activities. The models could be artfully applied both as resources for developing instructional activities and in crafting research projects that test various educational hypotheses that can be derived from the nascent theory.

The book is less successful when Rosenberg posits Rachel Davis DuBois's work as a major underpinning to contemporary FIE. Early in the book, Rosenberg asserts that FIE would not exist if intercultural education were not on the educational landscape. She develops this claim by arguing that FIE would "stumble, fall, and collect even more dust" without intercultural education (121). There are numerous problems with this argument. For example, Rosenberg does mention that Franz Boas and Benjamin Botkin influenced DuBois, but their engagement with what was to become FIE is not evident. Did Boas and Botkin suggest that folklore can be a useful resource for anti-racist education? If so, we then have direct connections between the history of FIE and DuBois's work. The claim that DuBois's work is a foundation for various anthropological models for education needs to be demonstrated and not just asserted.

These critiques index a wider issue. Outside of Rosenberg's interest in the work of DuBois, the book provides no evidence that any other folklorists have known about intercultural education, let alone been influenced by DuBois. By her own admission, Rosenberg discovered DuBois's contributions to intercultural education only within the context of contemporary FIE work. This lack of direct connections between DuBois and contemporary practitioners of FIE is also evident within a wider consideration of intellectual history. Namely, FIE began in the 1970s, and its primary influence came from arts educators who worked within the public sector. FIE, heritage education, and the work of museum educators may be resonant with earlier movements—such as intercultural education—but the correlations between themes and approaches that are common to FIE and intercultural education is not the same as causality. Rachel Davis DuBois's work was innovative and remains inspiring, but her work needs to be understood within a much wider and longer context of educational theory. Her thinking needs to be understood as resonant with contemporary approaches. It also needs further contextualization in relation to earlier approaches that show up in the history of education that preceded her work in intercultural education.

--Gregory Hansen