

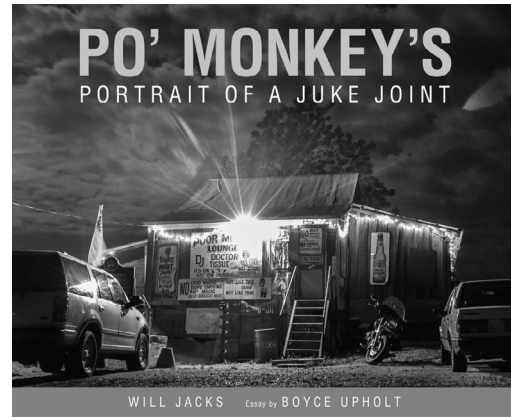
# Reviews

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*Po' Monkey's: Portrait of a Juke Joint.* By Will Jacks. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2019. Pp. 120, preface, 73 b&w photographs, photographer's statement, acknowledgments. \$35.00, hardcover)

In the introductory essay to Will Jacks's decade-long photographic chronicle of Po' Monkey's, a once popular juke joint in Merigold, Mississippi, Boyce Upholt details an isolated location set among swamps and cotton fields, the cinematic climate of a sultry summer night, and the tacky hodge podge of a drinking establishment, while metonymically alluding to its typical patrons as "sweat and bodies" (p. 9). A keyword used in Upholt's description of the book's motif is "release." Presuming the status and inclination of "the Mississippi Delta's black residents" (p. 9), he proposes the origin of area juke joints. Whereas the essay stays mostly on the straight and narrow, it sometimes swerves off into those broad ditches of generalization and victimhood. Consequently, the only "release" deduced for the region's black population is drinking and rollicking. That presumption, coupled with Jacks's at-testing images, associates *Po' Monkey's: Portrait of a Juke Joint* with a tradition of acclaimed books by Southern white photographers exhibiting a curious, seemingly disproportionate attraction to this stratum of black society.

However, diverging from similar books—Birney Imes's *Juke Joint*, for instance—Upholt does at least appear to recognize some irony in the clichéd depiction that often ensues from one's tangential representation of a fundamentally unfamiliar culture. Surmising the differing ideologies of what constitutes the blues itself, he says,



"If you're white, you're more than likely seeing some version of the same old scene: a grizzled black man, a tumbledown porch, a guitar in his hand. You're thinking of Robert Johnson, maybe, had he grown older" (p. 11). He continues, "If you're black and southern, you're liable to see something else entirely in those words: a more modern music, with contemporary soulful singers, telling their stories over R&B beats. Bobby Bland, maybe, or Denise LaSalle, or JR Blu. Artists all but unknown to the white, hipster blues crowd" (p. 11). This observation broaches root problems of perspective in niche depictions of black Delta culture. Notions of a universally hard, deprived life are conjured up with a predilection for escapism being implied.

In a blog titled "Q&A with Photographer Will Jacks" posted by Michael Limnios, Jacks suggests cultural similarities between Spain and the Delta, stating there is "a desire to live to the fullest" (p. 2). Yet representation of Mississippi's black population living "to the fullest"—particularly in its Delta communities—is usually strikingly reductive in such photography. Of course, the book's sottish aura is to be expected because Jacks's primary subjects are people at a juke joint. But some of his images expose animalistic tendencies in the predominantly black patronage

that were either never seen or simply not captured among the significant number of whites partying there over the years. Since Jacks's photographs are not indexed and pagination is incomplete, it is difficult to identify images other than by description. But for example, one picture shows a frontal view of a man dancing evocatively close behind a woman with paper currency pinned to her tee shirt so as to hang over her right breast while both dancers offer ecstatic facial expressions. The following photograph is focused on a heavyset woman's gaudy necklace which reads, "QUEENS GET THE MONEY," draped directly above her cleavage. And yet another picture shows tenant farmhand and juke proprietor Willie Seaberry raising a trick apron, as was said to be his practice, to reveal a huge toy phallus seemingly protruding through his fly. Though Seaberry did wield his own brand of morality, as evidenced by primitively illustrated signs nailed onto the siding near Po' Monkey's entrance, which disallow "drug products," sagging pants, and wearing caps sideways.

The book may well represent the paucity of diverseness among Po' Monkey's regulars, but that is not what is questionable. Neither is Jacks's skill suspect. His black and white images, in general, are appropriately sharp and relatively natural. His compositions present an accessible, linear narrative, and the book's theme appears sure. Thus the front cover and first two photographs present nighttime and daytime front views of the ramshackle club, while the final image is a stemless white lily placed just underneath a plaque, on which is inscribed Seaberry's name, including his Po' Monkey nickname, his presumed birth year, and the year of his death. Between this introduction and closure to a fifty-year enterprise and his seventy-six-year life are the crowded, clamorous times, as portrayed in the picture of Seaberry standing dapperly though datedly attired midst one of the lounge's late night throngs with a plethora of odd, bawdy trappings dangling from the ceiling and cluttering

every wall. Later, there is a meditative, silent portrait of him seated on the edge of a rickety bed and staring upward, some dry cleaning hanging on a makeshift rack close behind him in his dreary, cobbled quarters, presumably after the last revelers have left.

The popularity and perpetuity of such an exclusive focus on twenty-first-century African American life are hard to see as anything other than Old South fetishism. Still, several remarks that Jacks makes in his photographer's statement suggest personal development that occurred during the *Po' Monkey's* project, which hopefully will lead to a more balanced, expansive aesthetic regarding blacks' representation in future works. He notes his "point of view wasn't as universal as [he'd] thought" (p. 113). Referring to ethnic segregation, Jacks says, "It takes effort to cross those lines" (p. 114). His question, "What does it mean to preserve?" (p. 118), indeed becomes more poignant when one's purpose for preservation is weighed foremost. Finally, in his acknowledgments, although he commends progress made in the Mississippi Delta, presumably concerning socioeconomic issues, he confesses, "We still have a long way to go" (p. 119).

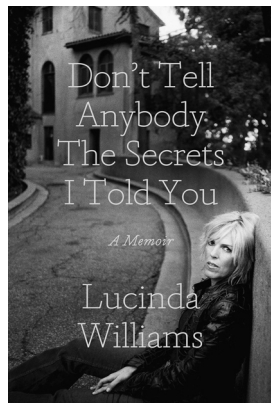
-Claude Wilkinson



*Don't Tell Anybody the Secrets I Told You: A Memoir.* Lucinda Williams. (New York: Crown, 2023. Pp. 272, b/w photos, \$28.99, hardback)

While recent years have not been a golden age of rock music, they have been something of a golden age of rock music memoirs. Books by major rock artists of a generation (or two) ago include Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Ronnie Specter, Brian Wilson, Robbie Robertson, Neil

Young, Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, and Elvis Costello. The memoir of Lucinda Williams, who is without qualification a member of this upper echelon of singer-songwriters, is slighter in page count but covers a lot of territory without hovering much



over extraneous details. Readers get a good sense of Williams's voice, her memories of and feelings about her life, and while some may wish for more, the length seems about right.

Like her best songs, Williams's memoir is unafraid to explore and ruminate on her life details, good, bad, and in between, and like her songs, her book is a testament to living courageously through the vicissitudes of a mostly indifferent universe. Seventy years old in the year of publication, she does not mention the stroke she experienced in 2020 from which she has rebounded: since then, she published this memoir, released an album, *Stories from a Rock n Roll Heart*, and is as I write conducting an extensive tour of the United States and Europe. She writes of a few dangerous encounters when she was young that could have gotten worse and of physical abuse by a boyfriend when she was older at the Peabody hotel. (This, she writes, became the subject of her 2020 song "Wakin'.") She writes that she has avoided hard drugs and has always mostly preferred alcohol. Against popular assumptions, musicians are among the most "clean living" of people compared to those she has known in Hollywood and literary circles. She does not sugarcoat her life or experiences with people she has known, but comparatively little of the book is devoted to personal venting, and she admits some mistakes. She regrets her broken relationship with Gurf Morlix, who played guitar in her band and produced her albums *Lucinda*

*Williams* and *Sweet Old World*. They split when, unsatisfied with the Morlix-produced vocals on *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*, she rerecorded them with Steve Earle and Ray Kennedy. The book does not discuss her fractured relationship with Earle.

Her parents are the linking agents of the memoir. Her mother, Lucille Fern Day, who suffered mental illness, passed along her musical talent to Lucinda. Her father, Miller Williams, was a well-established poet, University of Arkansas professor, and co-founder of the school's lauded Creative Writing MFA program. She writes that he passed his facility with language on to her, and the straightforward narrative style in this book underscores that notion. Miller is, after Lucinda herself, the memoir's central figure. He read and commented on the lyrics of her songs before she recorded them, but she says she was mostly looking for his approval.

Though Williams was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, Arkansas figures prominently in the book. Her father was born in Hoxie to a Methodist preacher who supported racial integration at a time when it was not only uncommon but could have cost him his job. She says she inherited this side of the family's progressiveness and sense of tolerance. Her mother's father was also a Methodist preacher, but of a much more conservative, fire and brimstone sort. After years of financial uncertainty, the Williams family at last settled down in Fayetteville in the early 1970s, when Lucinda was in her late teens. She would move back to Fayetteville on two other occasions in her life, but she mostly lived in other parts of the country, including New Orleans, Los Angeles, and for the past several years Nashville, with her husband Tom Overby. The front of the book contains a handy list of the many places she has lived; these include, before her Fayetteville years, Chile and Mexico. She writes of her close friendship with Frank Stanford, the Fayetteville-based poet who in 1978 shot himself at the age of twenty-nine, and she feels uneasy over the cir-

cumstances that apparently led to his death. Among many love affairs she writes about is a brief one with poet and former UALR professor Bruce Weigl (who was around that time the present reviewer's poetry teacher). She writes that she is naturally drawn to the poetic bad boy type, "a poet on a motorcycle," like Stanford and Weigl.

Williams examines the literary roots of growing up in a household with a poet-professor father and recalls parties at her father's house in which numerous writers, teachers, and others gathered and where alcohol flowed and sexual trysts commenced. She acknowledges the southernness of her own songwriting, including its Southern Gothic nature—"Pineola," partly inspired by Stanford, is one such example. She feels a strong link with Flannery O'Connor, who was a mentor to her father. When she was eight, she accompanied him to Milledgeville, Georgia, to visit O'Connor, and she treasures the memory of chasing the writer's peacocks around her yard. Few songwriters today are from so solid a writerly background as Williams, who in a postscript provides a brief reading and listening list.

Her thoughts and memories here are counterparts to the unique wisdom and courage residing in songs such as "Sweet Old World" and "Seeing Black," which address suicide seriously and compassionately but not weepily, while "Drunken Angel" is an ode to the edgy life and sad death of Blaze Foley. Her father recognized the title song of *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road* as a reflection on some of the family's hardships in its early years, an observation Lucinda acknowledges. Whereas many songwriters resist the idea that their songs are "about" a specific person, she rather freely discusses the inspirations for many of her songs—family, friends, and especially boyfriends. The opening song of her 1988 self-titled album, "I Just Wanted to See You So Bad," for example, was written about her attraction to Weigl, and her then-boyfriend (and Chris Isaak bassist) Roly Salley inspired much of *Car Wheels*. Like "Hot Blood" and "Right in Time," many of

her songs are "about lust, which is one of those things that women aren't supposed to do," though the history of rock and roll is comprised of songs by men about it (p. 156).

The memoir provides a guide to understanding how Williams blended so many musical traditions in her career. For years she worked odd jobs and performed in small venues as a folk artist, including as half of a duo with Clark Jones. She recorded many blues standards on her 1979 debut album, *Ramblin'*. Her characteristic drawl, use of slide guitars, and often rural themes place her well in the country or country-rock tradition—her "Passionate Kisses" was the No. 4 *Billboard* country single for Mary Chapin Carpenter in 1992. She cites her admiration for Chrissie Hynde and the Pretenders as over time her music evolved to more solidly (though never solely) electric rock. Regarding the freedom she earned to create her own sound following the success of *Car Wheels*, she writes, "Not many women are given that opportunity" (p. 192). Although the quality of Williams's discography has remained high into the 2020s, she devotes more space to the 1980s and 1990s, the period during which she was finding her unique voice and sound.

Readers will be satisfied with her occasional namedropping, from her idol Dylan to Bruce Springsteen. She toured with headliners Dylan and Van Morrison for months but never talked with either of them. She attended a dinner with Springsteen and his wife at which U2 guitarist the Edge was present, and she wondered what to call him. (David, perhaps?) Readers will also enjoy the many black and white photographs grouped throughout the book rather than in a central section. She discusses two of the photos, both taken when she was very young. In one she stands with her father in front of their house, both of them dressed in church clothes, and in the other she is held by George Haley, her godfather and brother of *Roots* author Alex Haley.

Like many, perhaps most, music artists, Williams has had negative experiences with the

recording industry. She was surprised and delighted by her first contract with Smithsonian/Folkways, but it would not endure. A late bloomer, she went many years without a label, but she kept working hard and can conclude, “your efforts of passion and determination always matter” (p. 143). Signed by Rough Trade, her 1988 self-titled breakthrough received rave reviews, but she came to regret signing with the much larger RCA, a move over which Rough Trade attempted without success to sue her. Discussing possible producers for *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road* with the assigned RCA A&R person, she mentioned the possibility of using Bob Johnston, who produced Dylan’s monumental 1966 double album *Blonde on Blonde*. The A&R man replied “What’s *Blonde on Blonde*? Is that a new band?” Williams writes, “His credibility was shot with me” (p. 151). *Car Wheels* (1998) is arguably her best album, and from that time her releases have been more frequent—she has been a prolific producer of music in the present century. She thinks of *Car Wheels* and the two albums following it, *Essence* and *World without Tears*, as a trilogy.

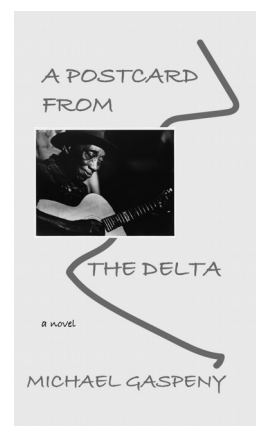
Readers will not discover any magical key—a “how to”—regarding songwriting; this is, of course, a natural talent Williams fostered slowly over years of poverty, playing small clubs, a modest beginning with Smithsonian/Folkways, the Rough Trade album that established her as a major singer-songwriter, and arrived at its high-point with *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*, which is often included in lists of greatest rock albums of all time. Fittingly, the chorus of a gem of a song on that album, “Metal Firecracker,” provides the book’s title. Her fans, the beneficiaries of a talented woman committed to her art, will want to read this quick, satisfying memoir by one of the great figures of American popular music.

—Bryan L. Moore



*A Postcard from the Delta* by Michael Gaspeny. (Alabama: Livingston Press, 2022. Pp. 227, \$13.95, paperback)

It is not easy to talk about race without complicating it further. Add inter-racial love to it, and it becomes even more complicated. When racial guilt and blues music enter the equation, it can get further complicated. However, amid these complexities, poet and novelist Michael Gaspeny, weaves an engrossing tale of a longing for racial empathy and understanding in the form of a beautiful novel, *A Postcard from the Delta*.



The novel follows a high school senior and football star Johnny Spink, who is now “exiled” in Florida with an “ugly and humiliating scar” on his face, which is of course very metaphorical, and which he may repair in the future “when I grasp my lessons.” He has been exiled because of his views on race that he made clear during a post-game interview but were “slanted” quickly by the media. He is living with the constant fear that his secret can be discovered and slurs like “wigger” and “bigot” might begin again.

Set primarily in the fictive town of Spinkville in the Ozarks of Arkansas, the story hinges on unrequited love, the uncompromising commitment, with a tinge of guilt, to correcting historical wrongs meted to black communities, and the healing powers of the blues. Johnny, as a white boy, is living a typical, privileged life not only as the son of an ex-mayor of the town whose family once owned a poultry-processing plant but also



as a football star. But his family has had its share of tragedy and he bears its brunt. Both his parents used to be drunkards when he was a kid, and his mother has disappeared. The father had to enter rehab to recover. When one day he listens to blues music, he realizes it “grabbed” him, and he becomes aware of the deep scars he lives with. This is the moment that is bound to take him to uncharted territories, psychologically and metaphorically, because he is profoundly moved by the blues, the music deeply rooted in the African American experience.

His football coach wants him to set a record of 1000 yards simply because “it’s a magic number.” Whenever Johnny feels pressure, he resorts to the blues, which becomes a form of resistance for him. Then one day a black gentleman, Mr. Futrelle, comes to a car wash where Johnny is joining his girlfriend. Johnny is struck by the fact that he fails to wave to the man, unlike he would do to all others, the whites. He questions his own behavior. He says, “Although Muddy Waters and Howlin’ Wolf had been dead for a long time, I had fantasized about the welcome I would have bestowed on my heroes if they had visited Spinkville. Now perhaps I knew. It is always easier to know what is wrong than to do what is right. I guess I had learned something about my role as a pioneer in race relations. There were heavy lessons to come.”

Along with Mr. Futrelle, who quickly turns into his mentor, his daughter plays a significant role in Johnny’s “awakening.” Johnny is in love with her, but he cannot confess. When one day his girlfriend confronts him over the brilliant black girl, amid all the pressure from his football coach, he gives up everything, including the impending game, and heads out to the Delta, where he wants to experience the blues firsthand and hopefully heal. He crosses the Mississippi and arrives at Clarksdale, Mississippi, and is guided to places where he can listen to the blues live. But then the white boy in the company of a black lady gets beaten at a bar. He is thrown on the street,

his car is stolen, and he has to be rescued by Mr. Futrelle. Back in Spinkville, he misses a game, gets suspended from school for a short while, while the expectation of the town that he will set the record mounts. Amid the pressure and all the frustration about his life, he gives an interview in which he ends up saying he knows what it’s like to be black, and that quickly becomes his liability in his white town, and he earns the name “wigger.” He fails to set the record of 1000 yards, and as a final blow he gets a bear claw in his mailbox as a treat and a threat. He has no other choice but to run away from his own people.

The novel highlights a few fundamental questions that border white guilt, the ever-existing chasm between races, and a sweet challenge to stereotyping of people. Johnny as a white boy is conscious, hyper-conscious at times, about his position and he wants to do good. He wants to correct historical wrongs by siding with the black people he comes across. It seems natural for a sensitive, eighteen-year-old boy to think the way he does. But it does not take long to expose his naivety. In his effort to correct the errors of history, he ends up being nowhere, he remains as nobody’s own people. He says that “down in the Delta my white skin made a black man hate me,” but in the meantime, in Spinkville he is mocked as a “Ni\*\*er-lover” and he loses his rightful position among his own people despite being a star footballer and an ex-mayor’s son.

Every sentence Gaspeny writes, every character he portrays, is steeped in the Southern clime, with a bold challenge to stereotyping. These people go fishing, they gather to celebrate football at the local high school, they listen to the blues, but all major characters brilliantly subvert stereotypical expectations. Despite this, Gaspeny reminds us gently—Look! This is where we still are even in the twenty-first century.

To some readers the thesis may sound a little heavy-handed, but in the first-person narrative voice of the eighteen-year-old protagonist with a sense of guilt and a longing for change, it reads

perfectly fine to me. *A Postcard from the Delta* is a lovely novel of a young boy's racial awakening as well as an honest, however unpleasant, mirror to American society's inability to conquer racial strife and prejudice.

-Khem Aryal



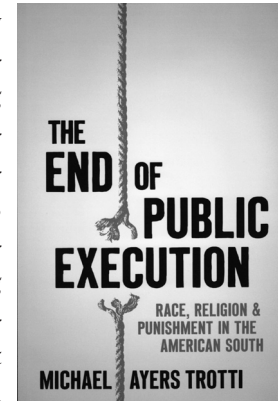
*The End of Public Execution: Race, Religion, and Punishment in the American South.* By Michael Ayers Trotti. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 251, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.95, paperback)

In February 2017, Governor Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas announced that eight men would be executed in a series of four double executions starting on April 17, the day after Easter. Four of the men were white, and four were black. Eventually, stays of execution were granted to half of the men, and of those finally killed by the state, three were black, and one was white. This was rather the reverse of state demographics (about fifteen percent of Arkansas's population is black), although it was also strikingly representative of the history of capital punishment in the South. For some opponents of the governor's push, the executions themselves aroused no indignation; instead, their placement so close to Easter, the moveable resurrection of Christ Jesus, seemed just a touch sacrilegious.

Fear of this symbolic connection, according to historian Michael Ayers Trotti, has a long history and is perhaps the primary reason executions were transformed from public spectacles into private, quiet affairs. Religious services were, after all, common at the gallows when executions

were public, especially when African Americans were being hanged, and this “undercut the official narrative of these moments being chastening or cautionary,” transforming them instead into “celebrations of the penitent saved, with African American voices leading the public celebration” (pp. 4–5). As Trotti argues, the move toward private, centralized, standardized state killings was not in any way a manifestation of Progressive Era humanitarianism but, instead, yet another incarnation of Jim Crow segregation, and one intended specifically to undercut any contestation of the meaning of a hanging.

In his first chapter, Trotti centers the commonality of religious celebrations at the scaffold, celebrations that went beyond mere prayers and the presence of a minister but extended to various ritualized tropes on the part of the doomed man: “If claiming innocence, the condemned would tend to blame no one, and declare his assurance that he was going to heaven. If admitting guilt, he would typically blame liquor, bad company, bad women, and/or the devil, would enjoin his brothers and sisters to steer clear of these, and would, again, be sure of his forgiveness and his home in heaven” (p. 14). Sometimes, belief among black audiences as to the innocence of the intended victim would lead to the execution being regarded a reenactment of that Calvary scene, with Roman soldiers being replaced by white sheriffs. And so, despite the state intending such displays of lethal power to serve an admonitory function, audiences possessed the ability to contest the meaning of these rituals, especially as “the religious element of an execution raised the event to a more exalted plane of faith, far above mere secular authorities” (p. 29).



Even when the execution was for the crime of rape (the death penalty for such being more common in the South), these events followed much the same pattern. The execution of whites might diverge, with the condemned eschewing religious elements with his silence or excoriations of the crowd, but these divergences were out of the ordinary even for white criminals. As Trotti notes, while newspapers gave the execution of black condemned less column space than whites, the assumption being that black criminality was the norm and so not worthy of comment, the media did comment about black religious practices, describing them sometimes “as eccentricities and at other times as a reflection on the low nature of Black social and emotional development” (p. 61). But an inversion comes to play with regard to lynching, about which much ink has been spilled vis-à-vis its relationship to capital punishment. If African Americans regarded lynching as emblematic of the low status of white moral development, many whites saw it as “a sacred obligation to purge society of sin . . . a more Godly practice than was public execution, one in keeping with white Christian ideas of the purification of the race and region” (p. 109). As executions became increasingly private in the late nineteenth century, occurring behind barricades or prison walls, lynching moved from discrete deeds of vigilantism into public spectacles of atrocity.

With the transformation in how executions were carried out, the condemned and his audience lost their public authority. In fact, this shift, Trotti asserts, was carried out precisely to undercut that authority, for “the failure of public execution to terrorize the [often black] underclass in regard to the crimes of murder and rape was one element of promoting the utility of the horror of lynching and . . . also promoting the utility of privacy in execution” (p. 129). The initial barriers around the hanging, and then later the limitation of witnesses to those certified by the state, should be, he argues, regarded as yet another

form of racial segregation, whitening the audience of executions. Far from being a move toward greater civility, the transformation of executions into private events was regarded by its proponents as constituting a “rougher” remedy for the condemned—one “well calculated to inspire terror in the heart of the superstitious African,” according to one newspaper (quoted on p. 155)—and a measure that removed the condemned from the public drama of redemption.

*The End of Public Execution* should be read alongside Molly Farneth’s *The Politics of Ritual* (2023), which illustrates how rituals can confer authority in ways not determined in advance, resulting in new loci of power. That is exactly what was happening at these Southern scaffolds, and that is why the white power structure put those scaffolds behind walls. The metanarrative of moral progress also holds that “civilized” executions replaced “barbaric” lynching, but neither can this be sustained upon further analysis, for Trotti breaks down the numbers to demonstrate how lynchings and executions complemented each other, especially given the near-identical proportion of black Southerners targeted in both. This is one of those rare books that has the potential—due to the quantitative data presented and the author’s close reading of available sources—to undo the easy assumptions that have been made regarding the nature of capital punishment in the South. *The End of Public Execution* is but the beginning of a new and vibrant debate about the intersection of race, law enforcement, and resistance in the South.

—Guy Lancaster



*Rugs, Guitars, and Fiddling: Intensification and the Rich Modern Lives of Traditional Arts.* By Chris

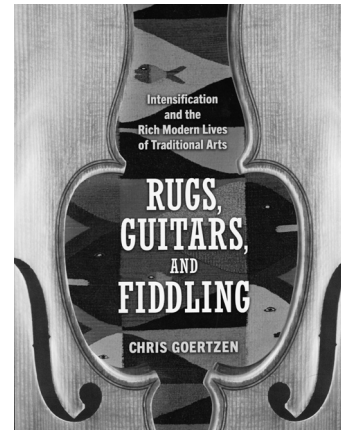


Goertzen. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2022. Pp. vii + 200, acknowledgments, 55 color illustrations, 17 musical examples, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$99.00, hardback and \$30, paperback.)

A long-established literary contrast involves juxtaposing tradition with modernity. There is an inherent tension between these terms in literary, historical, and cultural treatments of a range of topics. In what can become a scholarly trope, the dichotomy also can assert an implicit teleology that can bolster the ideological implications associated with a grand master narrative of progress. Fortunately, writers such as Chris Goertzen are continuing to challenge the idea that tradition is a static concept. His in-depth discussion of a range of creative expression not only shows how tradition is a dynamic process in contemporary life but his new book outlines useful ways to understand rich and nuanced elements of creative expression. Individual chapters on Norwegian fiddle contests, Mexican area rugs, steel-string guitar making, and old-time American fiddling offer appealing discussions that stand alone. When viewed in relation to each other, the chapters provide cohesive insight into deeper understandings of creativity through inquiries into traditional patterns that underlie expressive culture.

Goertzen is an ethnomusicologist who also contributes to folklore fieldwork and scholarship. *Rugs, Guitars, and Fiddling* draws from his previous work on fiddle contests, tunebooks, in-depth analysis of specific tunes, and Mexican traditional arts as well as new fieldwork that he has completed specifically for this project. He unifies his wide interests in a consideration of what folklorists have discussed as the intensification of tradition. This process can include an increase in the speed in which new elements of traditional

expression emerge from established forms. It can also encompass an enhanced awareness of ways that traditional aspects of an art become increasingly appealing to artists and consumers. Goertzen



has considered intensification over his years of in-depth fieldwork. In this new contribution, he delineates and develops three key elements of change that emerge through the process of intensification of tradition. They consist of virtuosity, addition, and selection. Through his comparative studies, Goertzen writes how virtuosity is achieved and expressed through music and visual arts. He provides insight into how virtuosity is integral to the creativity of the artist as well as the appreciation of the audience and consumer. Numerous examples that range from contests to markets and guitar showrooms demonstrate how virtuosity is both performed and negotiated in communal interaction. The writing on addition as an element of intensification also provides subtle yet meaningful insights into the dynamic qualities of tradition. Goertzen challenges assumptions that tradition is fixed or even a relic of antiquity. Rather he emphasizes its emergent qualities by complementing its conventions with the strong presence of innovation. The third element, selection, adds to well-established discussions of pastiche and bricolage within cultural expression. His discussion of creative choices in altering what a master guitar maker may use in crafting fine instruments, for example, provides a vibrant discussion of the creativity involved in making selective choices about materials and techniques that are clearly grounded in traditional knowledge. While he accepts that all three of these elements of intensification can overlap,

Goertzen's richly nuanced discussion also supports his overall framework for thinking about intensification within tradition.

Goertzen's writing blends a masterful use of library scholarship with in-depth fieldwork. He also is a highly engaging writer. He takes us on his initial forays into Norwegian fiddle contests and offers readers some interesting surprises. His "Eureka!" moments are especially captivating in this chapter when readers recognize that he is an authority on fiddling and has judged American fiddle contests—yet he acknowledges feeling like a novice when listening to Norwegian fiddling. Goertzen then uses the epiphanies that he gained to delineate aesthetic values that differ or at least complement what he has learned in his decades of scholarship. The result is an excellent illustration of virtuosity through tradition. Goertzen then invites his readers to join his family in Oaxaca, Mexico as we all go shopping for souvenir rugs. Colorful photographs illustrate the text to provide vibrant snapshots of a wide range of rugs woven for visitors to markets and showrooms in this state's artistic communities. He has spent extended time in this region, and he provides comparative studies that illustrate how traditional artists are continually adding to their selection of what they chose to represent in their rugs. Goertzen's own focus on how he and his family purchase and display this artwork adds to the discussion and follows recent scholarship on folk art that emphasizes the value of commercial exchange for understanding the appeal of traditional arts.

Arriving back in his homeland, Goertzen then announces to readers that he is planning to buy a guitar. He is a skilled guitarist, and he knows his instruments. Goertzen uses his desire to make a new purchase to introduce readers to master luthiers and eight guitars. This chapter yields a rich discussion of guitar making that exemplifies intricate reasons why selectivity is essential to his discussion of intensification within tradition. Beautiful photographs illustrate the

guitars that he discusses, which are often treasured instruments from his own collection. The chapter vividly illustrates important points within his wider discussion of intensification. It also will give guitar aficionados a strong sense of what to listen for in a well-crafted instrument. Goertzen gives listener and musician alike a wonderful discussion of the interplay between wood, formal patterns, strings, and other elements of design and how they are essential to deep listening.

The book ends with a comprehensive portrait of old-time fiddling in contemporary contexts. Goertzen focuses primarily on festivals and other gatherings that draw musicians together to learn and swap tunes. He provides sufficient historical context for those interested in a greater understanding of American fiddle traditions, but the main focus is on the flourishing of music as a contemporary art. This chapter includes excellent musical transcription and analysis that support and develop central ideas to the processes connected with intensification of tradition. A well written afterword brings his many and diverse examples of performance traditions and material culture together and sets the stage for further studies that explore why tradition remains integral to contemporary cultural expression.

-Gregory Hansen

