

Chapter 5 analyzes the text and images on MFT markers, which the authors note as more prone to holding individual perpetrators accountable than “the systemic racialized violence in Mississippi” (150). The MFT similarly overlooks the Black Power Movement in Mississippi. The authors critique the trail’s specific focus on the mainstream Civil Rights Movement and its failure to leave room for social movements as continuous and ongoing, without, however, acknowledging that their critique aligns with the well-known Long Civil Rights Movement framework, associated with Jacquelyn Dowd Hall’s essay of that title.¹ It is likely the reason that Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s state marker is on the Mississippi Writers Trail, and not the MFT, as Wells’s activist work predated the classical civil rights period by decades. Institutions such as the MCRM, discussed in Chapter 6, do a much better job of contextualizing the Civil Rights Movement as part of an ongoing struggle, from slavery to the present-day, with social justice as a civil rights tourism goal. The book argues that social justice is innately tied to contemporary conversations around memorialization (that is, whose lives are remembered, how, and why) and K–12 education in states that are politically antagonistic to facing difficult histories. The authors conclude the book by covering the latter, an extraordinary accomplishment against the backdrop of fast-paced political developments, happening as the authors did their research.

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Gruesome Looking Objects: A New History of Lynching and Everyday Things by Elijah Gaddis. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. xvi + 240 pp.; index; eBook, \$29.99; hardback, \$29.99.

In *Gruesome Looking Objects: A New History of Lynching and Everyday Things*, historian Elijah Gaddis reconceptualizes the 1898 lynching of Tom Johnson and Joe Kizer near Concord, North Carolina, by considering the materiality of white supremacist violence. At the onset, Gaddis notes, this “is not a story of lynching victims” or the circumstances surrounding their lynching (xi). Instead, each chapter unravels the fragmented meaning of an individual thing related to the 1898 lynching as a means of broadly analyzing late-nineteenth-century southern culture, politics, technologies, and the normalization of racial violence.

The first section examines two “circulating objects”: a newspaper article and a public letter (13). Tracing the evolution of print journalism within the United States, Gaddis pinpoints the apex of local journalism as the years between 1899 and 1904 when North Carolina had the highest number of local newspapers of any state. Within this communication network, coverage of the lynching was both

¹ Jacqueline Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233–63.

highly localized yet wide-reaching as newspapers, like railroads and the telegraph, “obliterated time and especially space” (28). Acting within this cultural climate, local and regional leaders published public letters affirming their commitment to the politics of white supremacy.

In his section devoted to the “making of souvenirs and mementos,” Gaddis explores “The Clothes” and “The Tree” (13). Clothing, Gaddis argues, signified guilty and condemned bodies and later functioned as a symbol and archive of the event. Clothing functioned as a “stand in for what we are and who we are,” and thus served to exemplify and reinforce the South’s racial hierarchy (84). Even after emancipation, Black workers oftentimes wore items marketed as “plantation clothing,” while performing manual labor that tore, stained, and damaged the cloth (99). In this way, southern society emasculated and subjugated Black bodies using the materiality of cloth. Expanding on this line of analysis, Gaddis then considers the meaning of the intimate act of taking clothing from lynching victims. The clothing of lynching victims became relics in the hands of white collectors, and in this way, the “clothes of Black people were stand-ins for their bodies in both life and death” (93). Collectors also preserved pieces of the dogwood tree as relics, and Gaddis examines the mythical role that dogwood trees have played in southern travel literature, religion, folklore, and white supremacist discourse.

The book’s most compelling section, Chapter 5, “Hammer and Chisel,” analyzes the everyday objects at the center of the lynching. He elaborates on the various ties between tools and ideas of race, masculinity, labor, and progress. Used by the mob to pry Johnson and Kizer from their jail cells, the hammer and chisel reveals these men’s familiarity with commonplace tools while also exposing the community’s changing labor market. “Public work,” according to Gaddis, transformed the southern labor market, while also eliciting anxieties and exposing racial tension (149). In Concord, North Carolina—the site of the lynching—the first Black-owned mill had recently opened, which presented opportunities for Black families within the largely agrarian community, as white-owned mills typically hired only white laborers. For white families, however, textile mills, with their hierarchical management system, represented a loss of autonomy for white men. Traditional tools, Gaddis argues, increasingly became “a central piece of these imagined shifts in the world of labor” (155).

Departing from the work’s previous focus on material objects linked to the lynching, Chapter 6 leaps forward to the late twentieth-century and analyzes the development and popularity of J. E. Mainer’s 1966 recording of the folk ballad “The Death of Emma Hartsell.” By claiming an authentic southern sound and image, white old-time fiddler Mainer evoked an emotional invocation and offered “lessons about whiteness, blackness, guilt, and the South” to white listeners (181). Commemorative lynching ballads, Gaddis argues, found a ready and receptive audience among white Americans, who employed music “to imagine themselves as part of a collective that was once more tragic, and heroic, more courageous, and more deeply embattled than they actually were” (188).

At times, Gaddis's novel methodological approach and sweeping analysis obscures events surrounding the 1898 lynching and its aftermath, making the work inaccessible to some general readers. Scholars and museum professionals, however, will learn much from the book's conceptual framework, and could undertake similar studies of everyday objects linked to horrific or violent events. The brief concluding chapter, in particular, explores the archival legacies of lynching and racial violence. Adopting a case study approach, Gaddis examines the creation of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Library of Congress's collection of lynching photographs. He ruminates on the creation and preservation of graphic images as family heirlooms and commercially valuable objects held in institutional collections across America. Reflecting on his own archival research experience, Gaddis explores the meaning of a set of stereoscope images depicting the lynching of Henry Hillard in Texas. He notes the uneven wear and tear on each of the images, and ponders his role in reproducing historical violence. "Objects are not inert and their meaning changes over time," he concludes, "Objects go through life cycles" (229). By focusing on the process of historicizing objects, Gaddis does not reproduce the violence of lynching for prurient purposes but, at the same time, readers are left yearning to learn more about the individual Black victims.

In short, *Gruesome Looking Objects: A New History of Lynching and Everyday Things* is an ambitious and expansive project that reframes the 1898 lynching of Tom Johnson and Joe Kizer. While at times verbose, Elijah Gaddis has prudently reconsidered the materiality of white supremacist violence and has successfully demonstrated the widespread normalization of racial violence in late-nineteenth century southern culture.

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In the Shadow of the Big House: Twenty-First-Century Antebellum Slave Cabins and Heritage Tourism in Louisiana by Stephen Small. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2023. xiii + 254 pp; notes, bibliography, index; clothbound \$99.00; paperbound, \$30.00.

In the Shadow of the Big House: Twenty-First-Century Antebellum Slave Cabins and Heritage Tourism in Louisiana is a fine contribution to the literature on plantation museums and tourism, pushing forward questions about more wholly representing Black stories and experiences in the pre- and post-Civil War US South. Stephen Small's research spans a few years (primarily 2007–11) with site visits, studies of official and unofficial records, and interviews with site management, interpreters, and docents, informing a robust discussion of the interpretation of enslavement in Louisiana.

Expanding the geographical understanding of slavery, Small selected sites in Natchitoches, Louisiana, drawing attention to the differences of enslavement and