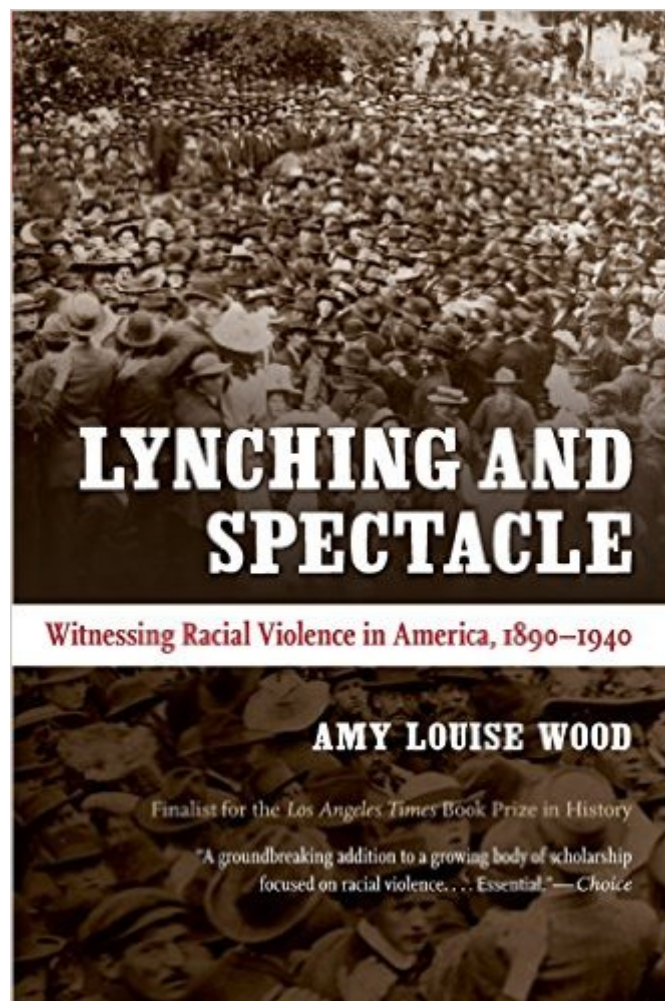


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# Lynching And Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence In America, 1890-1940 (New Directions In Southern Studies)



## Synopsis

Lynch mobs in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America exacted horrifying public torture and mutilation on their victims. In *Lynching and Spectacle*, Amy Wood explains what it meant for white Americans to perform and witness these sadistic spectacles and how lynching played a role in establishing and affirming white supremacy. Lynching, Wood argues, overlapped with a variety of cultural practices and performances, both traditional and modern, including public executions, religious rituals, photography, and cinema, all which encouraged the horrific violence and gave it social acceptability. However, she also shows how the national dissemination of lynching images ultimately fueled the momentum of the antilynching movement and the decline of the practice. Using a wide range of sources, including photos, newspaper reports, pro- and antilynching pamphlets, early films, and local city and church records, Wood reconfigures our understanding of lynching's relationship to modern life. Wood expounds on the critical role lynching spectacles played in establishing and affirming white supremacy at the turn of the century, particularly in towns and cities experiencing great social instability and change. She also shows how the national dissemination of lynching images fueled the momentum of the antilynching movement and ultimately led to the decline of lynching. By examining lynching spectacles alongside both traditional and modern practices and within both local and national contexts, Wood reconfigures our understanding of lynching's relationship to modern life.

## Book Information

Series: New Directions in Southern Studies

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; 1 edition (February 1, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807871974

ISBN-13: 978-0807871973

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.9 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (10 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #74,856 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in [Books > Science & Math > Physics > Acoustics & Sound](#) #121 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Violence in Society](#) #437 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > African-American Studies](#)

## Customer Reviews

More black men were hanged in America in the twentieth century than were hanged during slavery, the author of this book Miss Amy Louise Wood does an excellent job of revealing who and what group of Americans did this whole scale hanging of black men. Many white people who participated and witnessed these hangings were your everyday run of the mill American citizens as stated on page 80-81 "As visual extensions of the lynching itself, photographs could at times assuage crowds that had missed the opportunity to witness and participate in the violence. In 1934, the posse that captured Claude Neal, accused of raping and killing a young white woman named Lola Cannidy, chose to lynch him in the woods outside Marianna, Florida, rather than bringing him to the Cannidy home, where a large crowd had gathered in anticipation of the lynching. When the waiting crowd had discovered that the mob had lynched Neal privately, they were reportedly outraged. The mob finally arrived with Neal's body in tow, and the crowd, which included Cannidy's family, took out their vengeance on the corpse, kicking and shooting it, tearing it apart, and even driving their cars over it. Neal's mutilated, nude body was then hanged on the courthouse lawn in the center of the town, and hundreds of photographs were taken. he next day, as people congregated in the square to see the body, the photographs were sold to those purportedly still incensed that the posse who lynched Neal had denied them the satisfaction and pleasure of witnessing Neal's lynching. The images acted as visual replications of the actual spectacle, offering them vicarious access to the missed thrill of the lynching. The gratification local viewers derived from the images of Neal's lynched body was directly attached to their outrage over Cannidy's rape and murder, their fears of black criminality, and their desires to assert their racial power and superiority in the face of these threats."Another interesting aspect of these mobs is the role religion played in their actions as stated on pages 67 "The performance of a lynching thus created a symbolic representation of white supremacy-a spectacle of demonic and wicked black men against a united and pure white community. That those images coincided with evangelicals' impassioned exhortations against sin gave lynching sacred force and justification. Indeed, the imprint of Protestant language and tropes on lynching rituals and defenses imbued the violence with divine sanction and made it appear familiar and recognizable to a people immersed in Christian beliefs and values. Mobs could thus conspicuously flout the law and perpetrate what otherwise would be considered aberrant and grotesque acts of sadism while considering themselves to be righteous and moral citizens."In the twentieth century the hanging of black men was a major festive event for many on looking white people as can be seen in the pictures on page 32 and also on pages 78 and 79, on page 79 you can see a young white man smiling, on pages 95 and 102 there are more pictures of gleeful white

spectators, on page 192 there is crowd participation in this picture of a hanging and burning black man I thank this author for writing this very much needed book.

I was assigned Lynching and Spectacle in a History class about 20th century America. It was a very shocking sort of book--not a pleasant read, but a very informative one. The author wove first hand narrative in with her writing very deftly, using newspapers, pamphlets, letters, and the like. The pictures were well placed to emphasize the points she wanted to make.

An informative read that will make you sick as the hanging death of people becomes a spectator sport. I knew going in I was going to be really angry about this and I was so right. It has been more than a month since I finished it and the horrific cruelty and lawlessness still makes my blood boil. And many times the "supposed law" were guilty of opening the jail or were complicit in letting this happen. It will make you think.

Best book I have yet read on the subject, and I have read many in research for the writing of my second novel. It relentlessly examines specific cases of lynching over time, but it is not a mere narrative of specific lynchings. It is an excellent analysis of the social, historical and cultural forces behind this horrendous practice. The book's discussion of the movie, Birth of a Nation, would by itself make this a valuable book, but the book's central theme is even more important. Its central theme, the public's desire for spectacle as fuel for lynchings, particularly after the abolition of legal public executions, is even more revealing. Also a good look at the social and cultural forces that over time led to the gradual demise of lynching as a phenomenon. A page turner for history readers. Warning -- man's inhumanity to man will make you simultaneously angry and sad.

Interesting approach to the study of lynching. Thought- provoking and well reasoned thesis. The author adds a new dimension to the lynching literature

"It was not that long ago that people in the United States were hanging each other based purely on the color of their skin. Lynching and Spectacle is a well researched, well written account of the horrors we inflicted upon each other and a worthy read."

This book was insightful yet the stories was shocking but its a dose of reality. I like the product and its great for my library.

I Cried looking at this book. I try to teach prejudice people by using this book that hate isnt right

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