Emerge. Slowly. Look Both Ways.

Is there anybody out there?

It has been a solid two years in near total isolation for us. A year of lymphoma treatment and quarantine ended just in time for the Trump virus to shut everything down for another year.

Finally, Stanwyck and I are fully vaxxed and ready to take those first tentative steps back into polite society. As luck would have it, our resurrection coincides with Tallahassee's annual Word of South Festival of music and literature. It's one of my favorite events on the local calendar, and it was sorely missed last year under the COVID pall. As difficult as it is to contemplate crawling out of my hidey hole, Word of South offers a fine motivation to poke my head up and see if I remember how to be social and such.

As always, the lineup has prime talents, with music from Dom Flemons, Allison Moorer, Randall Bramblett, Royce Lovett, and the great New Orleans trumpeter Wendell Brunious. Writers talking to writers. Writers talking to musicians. People who love books and music hob nobbing in the beautiful Tallahassee springtime weather.

Yeah, the weather has gone to hell in a hockey bag. But the rain has plagued WoS before, and I figure they will come up with alternate venues and such, although a fair number of the

alternate venues from festivals past have shuttered due to the pandemic. As of this afternoon, I have not seen any official announcements. Here's hoping they pull another miracle.

It is an amazement that the festival is still with us. Chalk it up to a committed team of mostly volunteers throwing their shoulders to the wheel. It was a towering act of faith to program and schedule this event without knowing what the COVID drama would bring. Even with limiting the daily attendance by issuing tickets in advance, if the vaccine rollout had been any less effective we would not even think of attending.

And with events moving indoors, perhaps, we may have to think twice anyway.

Word of South 2019 was my last public appearance, aside from the occasional trip for groceries. Two weeks after first chemo and it was clear that I was too compromised to be there. So the idea of WoS serving as my post-transplant debutante party was pretty slick, symmetry-wise.My original dream had been a triumphant return to Big Ears, but they have deferred for another year.

But here's the thing after two years of hibernation: The idea of crowds and small talk and conversation and trying so hard to hide that I have lost all recall of the name of whatever person I am talking to that I have known foreverName recall never having been my strong suit, the random access memory is even worse post-treatment. My apology in advance. – all that stuff has been giving me a real case of the yips.

I figure I'm not the only one. So, assuming we get to go at all, I've settled on some strategies to cope.

- Breathe (even in situations where it is optional).
- Smile.
- Be kind.
- Embrace awkward silences.
- Smile some more.

- Resist asking “So how’s it been going?”
- Do not stare at my shoes for more than ten seconds at a time.

Speaking of shoes, I notice that several of the bands on tap at the young people’s stage (young meaning anything under say 50) describe their genre as shoegaze, which seems to indicate an amalgam of jam band and emo, though there is probably some sort of “something-core” involved, too. I don’t know. I am, as my kids remind me, an Old. But it sounds like something I would like.

So maybe you’ll see me grooving at the shoegaze stage where my inordinate interest in my laces will not seem so out of place. Or maybe you’ll run into me somewhere else. If I forget and stare at my fancy kicks for more than a count of ten, please tell me to look up and smile. I’m really out of practice and could use a little help.

John Brown’s Body: Your Electric Picture Radio Box Matters #4

One of my long-standing hobby horses is the story of Osawatomie John Brown. In 1986, through happy accident, I found myself at the Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, National

Historic Park. I dutifully read the plaques and displays and wondered how I had never heard of this guy and his adventures. Aside from owning the album by Kansas that featured John Steuart Curry's iconic painting of Brown on the cover, my exposure to Brown's story was nil.

It had never occurred to me that this guy was an actual real person.

I carried around my meagre crumbs of knowledge (abolitionist, seditionist, likely crazy as a shithouse rat) for a dozen years or so. In 1998, Russell Banks published his novel *Cloudsplitter*, a historic fiction tale told from the POV of one of Brown's surviving children that recounts Brown's life in great detail, much of it, perhaps, true. Or at least truthy. That led me into yet another obsession, lots of reading and trying to tease a coherent picture out of multiple-and-often-conflicting renditions.This was likely the germ seed of my not-yet established Civil War mania.

All that I was "sure of" was that the cat was deeply committed to the abolitionist cause (undeniable) and he was a bugfuck crazy fundamentalist loon (not so fast there).

The latest novelization of Brown arrived in 2013 in James McBride's National Book award winner *The Good Lord Bird*. This tale, seen through the eyes of Onion, a fictional slave boy Brown freed and took under his wing, is as much a re-imagining of *Huckleberry Finn* as it is a reliable historic document. But damn the facts and up with truthiness: This tale is a romp and a decent meditation on Brown's last act on history's mortal stage and the kind of impact his actions had on a nation teetering on the edge of dissolution. And as told by McBride, it has the added benefit of being pure dee high-larious, largely stemming from Brown's misapprehension of our narrator's gender. Onion was wearing a burlap sack when Brown freed him, leading the Old Man to assume he was a she and to mishear his name Henry as Henrietta. Onion, shrewd enough to recognize an opportunity and meal ticket, went along with the notion. Hijinx ensue.

Now this thrilling tale of mistaken identity and derring do is available via your Electric Picture Radio Box in a seven episode series on Showtime. And that gives me an excuse to ruminate anew on one of my favorite historical figures.

I typically approach askance any filmification of great books, but my skepticism here was well-misplaced. *The Good Lord Bird*, starring Ethan Hawke as Osawatomie Brown and newcomer Joshua Caleb Johnson as Onion, is a knockout. The graphic design and music is pitch perfect. All the performances are outstanding, especially Daveed DiggsAnother product of the *Hamilton* juggernaut. as a fairly buffoonish Frederick Douglass, the only Negro in the series who does not recognize that Onion is a he passing as a she; in this he stands in lockstep with all the white folks who see him as a saint.

From the moment Henry is mistaken for a girl, the parallel with Huck is set. His adventures with Old Man Brown as his Jim feature the same kinds of mishaps and sudden violences that Clemens bestowed upon his character. And like Huck in drag, Onion has more confidence in his costume than he should. Just

as the women in Twain spotted Huck's fakery in an instant, so did every Black character – save for Douglass – see through Onion's flimsy imitation. Most people see what they want to see, or what they are told to see. Once Brown pronounced Henry as Henrietta, the question was settled for everyone who did not have to keep their antennae sharp to survive. People like the comfortably ensconced Douglass. For those steeped in the life and death necessity of seeing things as they really are, Onion's subterfuge holds no water.

I have to admit that amping up the clown makeup for an African-American icon – one depicted more than a little hagiographically 99.9% of the time – struck me as more than a little bold, and generally to McBride's credit that he took the character there. It presents a stark comparison between Douglass, the man of words, versus Brown, the man of action. Douglass here is a vainglorious toff, all puffery and pretense. Upon meeting the man Brown calls King of the Negroes, Onion calls him Fred, demonstrating all the manners and refinement of a Huck Finn. Douglass bristles:

> *Do you know you are not speaking to a pork chop but rather a fairly considerable and incorrigible piece of the American Negro diaspora?*

Later we find Douglass and Onion drinking bourbon, with Fred chasing the not-a-girl around the parlor like a dog after a pork chop.

So why spoof up the icons this way?

> *I think heroes who are not flawed are not believable. John Brown was clearly flawed in real life. John Brown was clearly flawed in real life. He did some terrible things, but he did some things none of us would have had the heart to do. His moral leanings were unquestionably admirable.*
>
> *James McBride in Publisher's Weekly, July, 2013*

But. He was on the right side of history, on the side of the future. Like James Baldwin 100 years later, he knew that white people were doomed until we dealt with the reality and responsibility of slavery. He was not just out to save Negroes from bondage; he wanted to save the whites who were being consumed by the evil, too.

Okay, all that aside for a second: This is Ethan Hawke's party, a chance to create an epic character, and he makes the most of it. In the first screen portrayal of Brown since Raymond Massey in *Seven Angry Men* (1955) and *Santa Fe Trail* (1940)Twice in the same historical role!, Hawke adds more depth to Brown's character than popular culture typically acknowledges: more compassion and generosity, a dash of doubt and despair. But it still leans hard on the one thing *most* people seem to agree upon: That Old Man Brown was crazy as a loon.

"My name is John Brown."

I italicize *most* because there is a growing pushback among Brown scholars (and some of his descendants) regarding this tricky notion, one that I have held as self-evident since I

first heard of Brown. I mean, and come on here, isn't violence spurred by religious zealotry the very picture of insanity? Can't we reasonably agree that Guy Fawkes or Timothy McVeigh or Osama bin Laden – not to mention our current crop of Christo-Fascist nutters marauding the Capitol and beyond – are wacko, bonkers, round the bend, cornery, all the way fruit loops?

Brown intended the Harpers Ferry raid to spark a slave revolt, an uprising of the Negro race against their oppressors. (So, for that matter, did Charles Manson when he unleashed his bloodletters on Los Angeles.) He understood the Nation to be at an unavoidable crossroads over the Peculiar Institution of slavery, and that it was an issue that would only be settled through bloodshed. This idea was not only *not* crazy, but with benefit of hindsight, almost blindingly obvious. But very few people were willing to see this reality, much less act upon it.

Brown's letters reflect a man of intelligence, sobriety, and firmness of will. They do not betray a closet lunatic, and his popular image in his time was of a good and decent man committed to a righteous and just cause. Unless you were on the wrong end of his sword, in which case you were a slaver or supported slavery. And it is worth noting that Brown considered violence a last resort of self defense against an implacably cruel and savage oppressor. (In this, he is not unlike Malcolm X.)He writes, foreshadowing future musings.

Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry is widely considered the first battle of the Civil War. Coincidentally, the Federal force that defeated Brown's crew was led by Robert E. Lee and J.E.B. Stuart. If this were not true, it would be a preposterously overdetermined plot gambit, but indeed, it was Brown against the future military brain trust of the Confederacy. The plan was wildly overambitious, almost certainly a suicide mission, but despite the fact that the local slaves did not rise up in response, the skirmish set in stark relief the fracture that

was to engulf the nation, and foreshadowed the carnage inevitable.

The elevation of John Brown, Crazy Person™, was as necessary a part of Lost Cause revisionism as was Lee the Noble the Slaver. It would never do to have such a character seen as *compos mentis* if the aim was to rewrite the history of slavery to fit the gauzy focus of *Birth of a Nation* or Tara. The Lost Cause demands that we see the Peculiar Institution as largely benevolent, despite the few bad actors that gave slavery a "bad name."

Thus, John Brown *must* be seen as extremist, unstable.

The great pitfall of any kind of hero worship is that every hero has clay feet. This makes it easy for determined debunkers to undermine the actions that make heroes heroic in the first place. Brown has always been one of my favorite characters in history, but not because I find him the most admirable role model. It is his complexity – whether crazy or not – that makes him so fascinating, just as Nixon's bizarre juxtaposition of conflicting facets make him the most fascinating of our ex-presidents.

I have always been troubled by one idea regarding Osawatomie Brown: Who Would John Brown Scourge in our time? His fundamentalist bent is all too familiar to anyone observing the madness being wrought by the extremist right actors of pro-life terrorism, *molon labe* fantasies, and imaginary Constitutional justifications for, oh I dunno, things like storming the U.S. Capitol or opening fire on/gunning a car through a crowd of 'godless' protestors. Would John Brown fill a truck with fertilizer and park it in front of a government building if he believed his cause righteous?

Would Old Man Brown be on the side of the angels these days? Depends on which angels you got in mind, I guess.

Whatever. *The Good Lord Bird* is a great electric picture radio program and an even better novel. It's worth the coin to enjoy both. (And you can probably get a trial subscription to Showtime and watch the series in a binge for nothing.)

PS – I'll be back with another YEPRBM essay real soon. It's a big season for reclaiming the cardboard flat depictions of our heroes.

The Big Band Golden Age is Now

The Swing Era of the 30s and 40s is commonly remembered as the golden age of the jazz big band. Ellington. Basie. Miller. Shaw. Goodman. Calloway. Eckstine. Dizzy. And dozens more, busloads of troupers riding town to town to play at venues ranging from high school gyms to roller skating rinks to any venue that could accommodate a few hundred people dancing their asses off.

The economics and logistics of keeping a dozen or more musicians on the road were never sustainable. Add in the fact that dance music – and the big bands were first and foremost dance bands – was drifting towards the burgeoning rock'n'roll sound, and the demise of the big band was inevitable. Ellington and Basie kept going well into the 1970s, but big

bands became less important as the small ensemble ethos of be- and post-bop became the prominent vehicles for jazz.

The idea of the large ensemble never really went away, with artists as varied as Miles (with Gil Evans), Coltrane (*Africa Brass* and *Ascension*), and Charles Mingus flirted with expanded instrumentation through the 50s and 60s. But these cats and a few others (e.g., Buddy RichFun fact: Buddy Rich Big Band is the first concert I ever attended alone., Maynard Ferguson) aside, the big band became something of a relic.

A few NYC-based big bands kept the flame alive. The Thad Jones/ Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra kept up a pretty good run, thanks to a weekly gig at the Village Vanguard. Now known as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, only the COVID era has shut down their 50 year-plus Monday night run. Here's hoping they – and the Vanguard – will pick up and keep. fucking. going. once the vaccine does its work.

Gil Evans kept his vision alive with a similar Monday night regular gig in New York, Mondays being the night that the best pro musicians were "off" and thereby available to play for very little money. People so wanted to play with Gil Evans that there would be as many cats in the audience with horns (or harmonicas: Toots Thielemans sat in one night I was there and played for three hours) at the ready as there were on stage.

Sam Rivers enjoyed a similar situation after he retired to Orlando, where the various theme park gigsters were hungry for some real music to play. He kept up a weekly gig with that gang almost until his death in 2011. A limited edition 3-cd set of the Rivbea All Star Orchestra from this period will run you around $950 if you can find a copy.

Carla Bley kept the large ensemble vibe running across a variety of orchestras, most notably the Liberation Music Orchestra led by Charlie Haden. Quietly and consistently,

Carla Bley remade the jazz orchestra in her own image and likeness: beautiful, lithe, forward, kind, ferocious, and gently idiosyncratic. Along with Evans, every composer/arranger working today owes a deep debt to Bley, most especially the several women who have followed in her path that we'll look at today.

A few others took up the challenge of standing up a big band along the way. Joe Henderson launched a one-off big band recording in '95 that was superb and un-tourable. In the 80s-90s, a smattering of razor sharp European big bands – the Vienna Art Orchestra and Willem Breuker Kollektief chief among them – leveraged the government arts funding on tap in Europe (long since eliminated by the bastards of the Reagan raj in the U.S.) to withstand the immense challenges of taking a large ensemble on the road.

In the U.S., institutional support made possible the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra (for a while) under Jon Faddis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra under Wynton Marsalis (still rolling strong). With the cachet and endowment heft of Lincoln Center behind them – along with Wynton's massive media profile and considerable talents – the Lincoln Center crew has toured extensively, alternating between their mission as a repertory ensemble and their function as a vehicle for Wynton's more ambitious projects.

One notable exception to this pendulum arc between feast (via institutional support) or famine (due to the nature of economic reality) was the Sun Ra Omniverse Solar Myth Science Heliocentric Arkestra (among so many recombinant naming possibilities – let's just call it The Arkestra), formed in the mid-50s and, remarkably, still alive today. How Sun Ra managed to keep this group together for so long is a mystery and a marvel, especially when one considers the fact that he kept A-plus blazers like John Gilmore, Marshall Allen, and many others on board when they could have gained more money and fame striking out in their own small ensembles. And those

who did move on to greater fame often made their way back to the Arkestra. Such was The Sun's gravitational pull.

Even after Ra's death in 1993 – and the subsequent passing of the great Gilmore and June Tyson – the Arkestra continues to thrive under the direction of Marshall Allen, who last year celebrated his 96th birthday by launching the first new Arkestra recording in 20 years. *Swirling* is a complete delight, mixing old Ra favorites like *Angels and Demons at Play, Rocket #9,* and *Sea of Darkness* with previously unrecorded Ra material and one Allen original. (Allen claims there are hundreds of unrecorded Ra compositions, some of them Ra felt too dangerous to ever be played outside of rehearsal.) Add in a boodle of archival Arkestra recordings spanning 40 years of angels and demons traveling the spaceways, and Our Year of Quarantine was a very good year for diving into one of the greatest big bands of all time. Keep traveling; Sun will wait for you.

Rob Mazurek's Exploding Star Orchestra derives a great deal of its ethos and energy from Sun Ra's Afro-Futurist vibe. Their 2020 release, *Dimensional Stardust*, boasts a who's who lineup of the best of Chicago's current crop of musicians, many of them associated with the legendary Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. Among this number, flautist Nicole Mitchell and cellist Tomeka Reid stand out, as does the seems-to-be-on-every-great-album-this year guitarist Jeff Parker. It is funky and spiky, with spoken word elements weaving into the mix of composition and improvisation like the best of Ra's futuristic fantasies, yet unmistakably an entity like no other.

Norwegian drummer/composer Gard Nilssen's 16-piece Supersonic Orchestra hearkens back to the heyday of the Willem Breuker Kollektief and Vienna Art Orchestra. Bravura ensemble passages and smashing feats of derring-do from the soloists, this is the kind of big band you wish you could see live just for the thrill of leaping out of your chair every couple of minutes.

If You Listen Carefully The Music is Yours slings its three bass/ten horns onslaught with humor, drama, and the occasional whiff of high wire dancing and trapeze heroics. Get it. (Bandcamp takes payment for this one in Norwegian Kroner. No worries. The 70 NOK digital download is eight bucks and a quarter U.S., a bargain at twice the price.)

If you crave the supersonic skronk blast of saxophones in overdrive, this is your jam.

Moving on to Those Who Owe Much to Bley/Evans.

The Vanessa Perica Orchestra's self-released *Love Is a Temporary Madness* – her first recording – is a bold and ambitious blast from Australia. Perica cites Ennio Morricone and Joe Henderson's big band as primary influences and acknowledges her debt to Gil Evans, too. Coming this Spring, her orchestra is set to present *Love is...* in partnership with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Despite my ingrained skepticism about the ability of classical orchestras to swing, I'm really curious to hear how this expanded sonic palette changes her already sumptuous harmonic layering.

Kathrine Windfeld is another comer in the Scandinavian big band sweepstakes. This Danish composer/pianist has a quartet and sextet project, but her primary avenue is her big band work. *Orca* is her third release, and it derives heavily from the Bley/Evans vocabulary and palette. Deeply textured with rich melodies. Highly recommended.

Back to New York. The Webber/Morris Big Band released *Both Are True* to widespread critical acclaim. Anna Webber and Angela Morris act as each other's mirror in a sense. Each is a superb tenor/flute player and composer. On Webber's tunes, Morris plays while Webber conducts. And vice versa. Like the best arrangers as far back as Ellington – and everybody else mentioned on this page – they know their players and write to fit their strengths.

This Webber piece, *Rebonds*, is a terrific example of the deft mixing of composition and improvisation the band offers. And it has a wonderful skank guitar bit that makes me all tingly..

One of the most anticipated releases of 2020 came from Maria Schneider, who has been turning out magnificent large ensemble works for 27 years with a big band notable for the consistency of its membership. Let's just say she lived up to very high expectations with *Data Lords*. Landing at or near the top of most of the Best of 2020 lists, it is something of a career culmination (so far) for this one-time protégé of Gil Evans. Since her first release in 1994, *Evanescence*, Schneider has consistently been at the top of the composer/arranger heap. She was named an NEA Jazz Master in 2019 and has collaborated with, among many, Sting, Dawn Upshaw, and this guy.

Data Lords, a double album in the OG sense of the phrase, is a musical examination of the dichotomy in our society between our digitized sensibilities and the rhythms of the analog world. With one disc of material devoted to each realm, one can apprehend a difference in mood and tone, but the difference is not dogmatic or heavy handed. Following along with liner notes fills in the picture, but it is easy enough to just let the music wash over and let the thematic considerations be.

One exception is the last track on the album – *The Sun Waited for Me*. This piece brings that combination of achingly gorgeous melody and rising action arrangement that typifies the best of the Evans/Bley canon. Donny McCaslin's tenor sax solo is deeply moving, and Frank Kimbrough's piano demonstrates the magnitude of loss his death in late December laid upon the music scene.

Based on a poem by Ted Kooser, the words behind the music are just the right tonic for this morning when we await the disposal of our recent and benighted president and hope, collectively, for a new and better day.

How important it must be
to someone
that I am alive, and walking,
and that I have written
these poems.
This morning the sun stood
right at the end of the road
and waited for me.

– Ted Kooser

Originally written for soprano Dawn Upshaw, this instrumental arrangement is one of my favorite pieces of music in a year that was crammed full with great work. Not to mention a year that brought more than its share of challenge, grief, and terror.

Here's to the Sun, Ra and otherwise, still waiting for us all.

I Had No Reason To Be Over Optimistic

Well, now, then. A couple days back I tossed up my first post in months, brimming with ideas for the i2b joint in the coming year.

I’m still on for the commitments to the blog and to you, my fearless readers. But let’s go ahead and say that title, the opening line from The Who’s song *1921*, and my uncharacteristic stab at the putative power of positive thinking, may have been less than apropos. We likely would have been better served by a different line from that ditty. Like the one I copped for today’s missive.

Yesterday’s attempted rebellion against the United States government accomplished something that the legendary traitor Robert E. Lee failed to do 160 years ago: The flag of the Confederacy flew in the United States Capitol. This is no small thing. The spirit of the Confederacy suffuses the MAGA movement, leavened with a soupcon of undiluted Nazism. (Granted, Hitler’s world view was directly inspired by the dictates of Old South White Supremacy, so maybe it’s just a case of over-egging the pudding.)

6MWE = Six Million Wasn't Enough

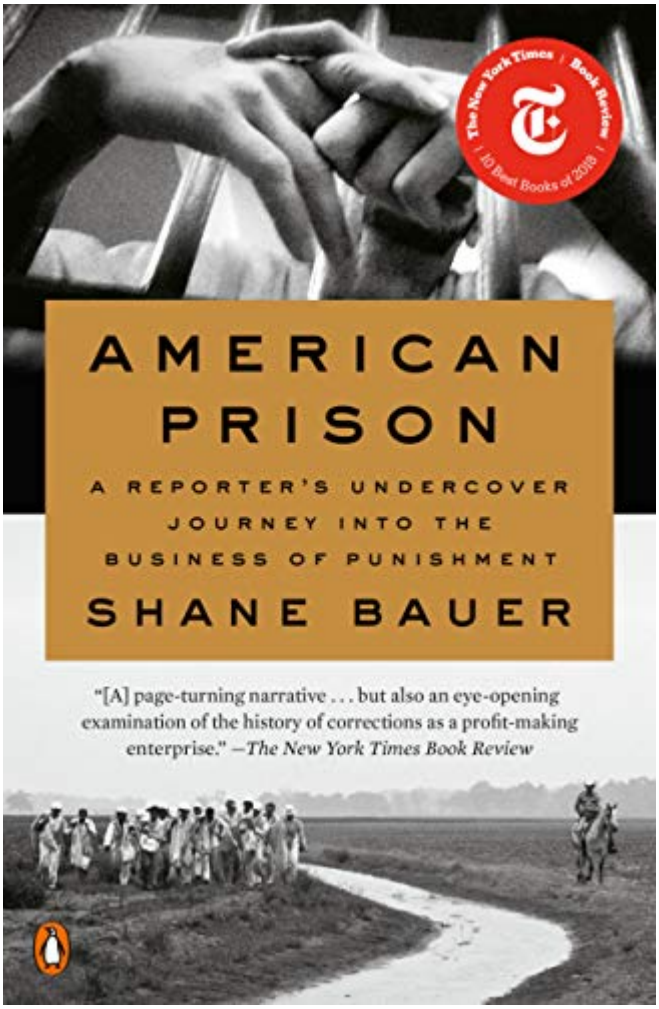
Seven months ago I forecast something along these lines. As expected, the attack on the seat of American government was abetted via complicity within the military and law enforcement community. I'm not sure I agree that the viral video that "proves" the cops threw the gates open is necessarily what the legions of re-tweeters suggest, but there is no question the overall resistance to incursion was awfully damned casual.

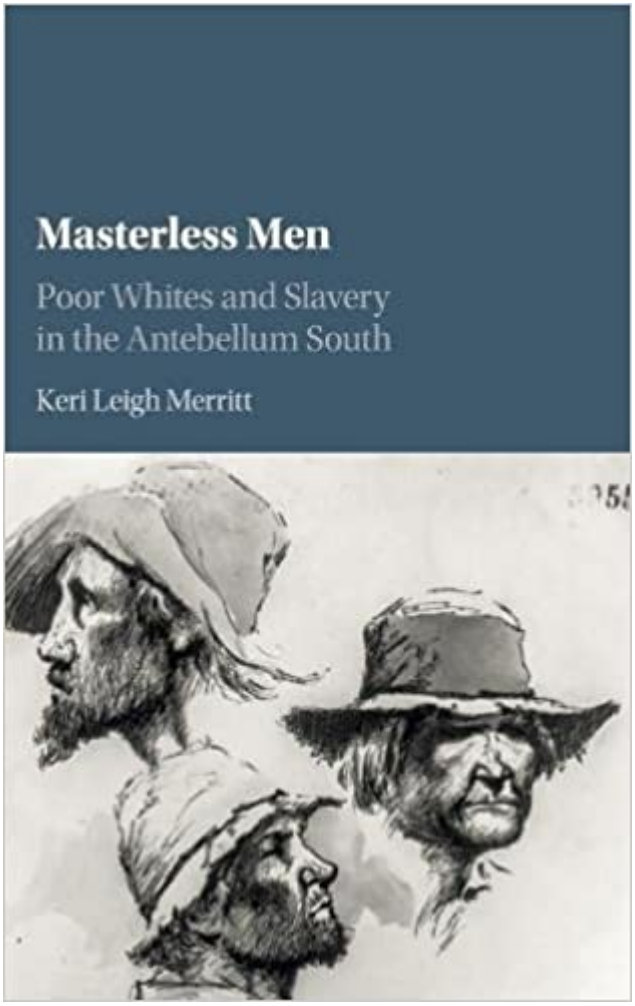
Either way, the photos of cops taking selfies with the rioters, the pitifully low number of arrests, and the video of the cops leading protesters gently out by the hand demonstrates a hard and disturbing truth: We need to be extremely wary of the idea that LEO and military personnel are

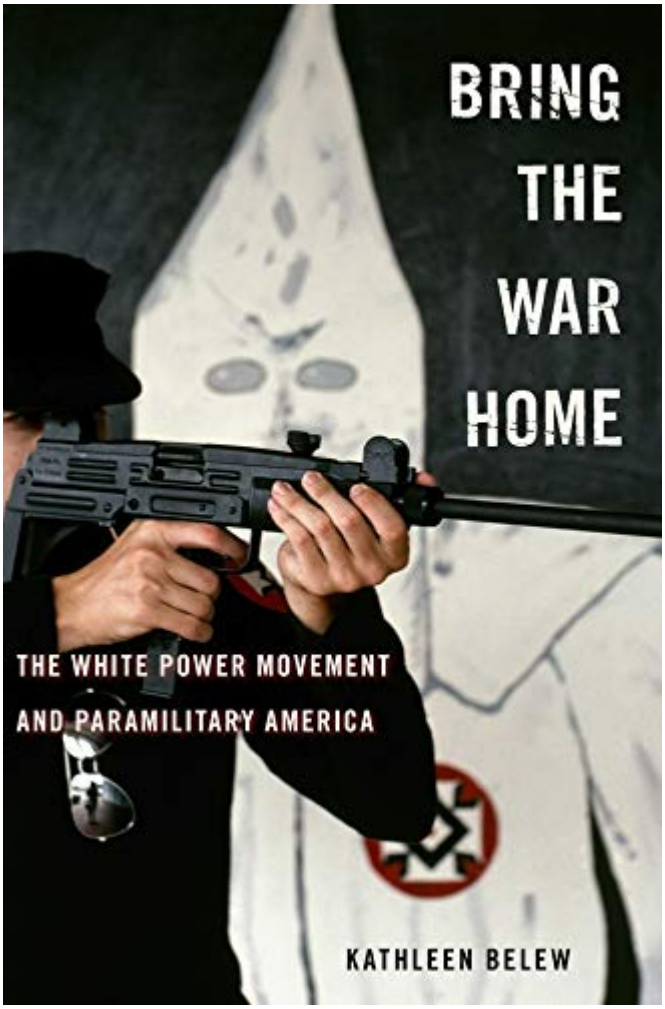
defenders of a broad swath of the American public. The demonstrations of excessive force at the BLM and related protests over the past year provide a stark contrast with the gentle treatment the 99.99% white mob enjoyed yesterday. If it had been a bunch of Dirty Hippies and Those People™ storming the Capitol steps, the place would have been hip deep in blood.

I've never been comfortable with the All Cops Are Bastards formulation (hashtag #ACAB). It is a tad too easy, too facile. The poverty of nuance is on par with some of the worst shorthand about liberals, feminists, and so on. But I'm damned if every day does not deliver some piece of news that gives the meme more heft and veracity.

None of this should come as any surprise. Policing in the U.S. has long been a fundamental extension of White Supremacy, a tool for keeping Black folk in their place and exploitable as a bloc of cheap labor. (Two excellent treatments of the origins of policing and imprisonment in the U.S. are Shane Bauer's *American Prison* and Keri Leigh Merritt's *Masterless Men*.)


The New York Times Book Review
10 Best Books of 2018
AMERICAN PRISON
A REPORTER'S UNDERCOVER JOURNEY INTO THE BUSINESS OF PUNISHMENT
SHANE BAUER
"[A] page-turning narrative . . . but also an eye-opening examination of the history of corrections as a profit-making enterprise." —The New York Times Book Review


Masterless Men
Poor Whites and Slavery
in the Antebellum South
Keri Leigh Merritt

- 

Further, a revanchist/falangist presence has been long evident in U.S. military organization. Kathleen Belew's deeply researched *Bringing the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* describes in particular detail the modern roots of extremist fascism embedded in the armed services, from the foot soldiers to the upper brass. Guys like Timothy McVeigh and Mike Flynn.

-

-

We keep hearing lots of “This is not who we are” nonsense about this insurrection. Tis a fine hope, indeed, but this is exactly who and what America is, and the people who think that’s just fine will go to extraordinary lengths to keep it that way. It beggars the imagination for most people not inside the fever swamp itself just how deep their belief in their entitlement runs, and the degree to which any deviation from that imagined social order fuels a misguided and destructive sense of victimhood.

It is time to work the imagination just a little harder.

In less than two weeks, Joe Biden and Kamala Harris will take their oaths of office. At that point, the legitimately elected government of the United States will be controlled by a slim majority of the Democratic Party (though in the Senate, the votes needed for the Dems to take a bare one seat advantage was 40 million more than those cast for Republicans). Sadly, along with their "this is not who we are" wishful thinking, there is a tendency for Democrats to urge a look-forward-not-back attitude toward Republican malfeasance.

Beginning with the Nixon pardon, through the Reagan/Bush Raj, and on through the depredations of Bush/Cheney, Democrats have been reluctant to push for accountability, never mind actual justice. Many of the malefactors of the Trump crime syndicate cut their teeth in the scandals of the Reagan-Bush-Bush administrations. The failure to prosecute their misdeeds are fundamental to understanding the Trumpian impulse to bluff their way through the most obvious corruptions. There has never been a price to pay. In the absence of any shame, our vaunted institutional norms are not worth the paper they were never printed on. When dealing with people whose definition of right action is nothing more than "whatever the fuck we wanna do", better that we not rely on these folks to do the right thing of their own accord.

There can be little debate that the members of the mob are fundamentally deranged and delusional about the basic facts of the world at hand. Nothing about their sense of grievance justifies their actions. No evidence in the real world supports their beliefs – stolen election, Soros illuminati, secret pedo cabals, antifa conspiracies – any more than the birth certificate thumpers had a legitimate claim on the nativity of Obama. What they all have in common is deep gullibility and a sense of a victimhood that leaves them at the mercy of hucksters like Trump, Limbaugh, Hannity, and so on. But even though the rabble here is largely composed of

semi-sentient fantasts – and there is a good case to be made that they are pitiable victims of an especially greedy long con – there is no reason to let them evade the consequences of their stupidity. Less than a day after the dirty deed, we are hearing calls to allow enflamed passions to subside, turn the other cheek, let bygones go unprosecuted. These people have grievances, we hear, and we should respect their need to have time to heal &c.

Fuck that noise.

Despite the almost comical bravado on display, despite their blatant publicization of their felonious deeds…

“May it please the jury to consider this photograph, helpfully provided by the defendant himself…”

…be prepared for the howls about government overreach when even the slightest law enforcement tends their way. Already, several people have been sacked from their jobs for their participation, and rightly so. Yet there are cries of First Amendment violations from wannabe constitooshunal scholarz with all the sophistication of the grade school bully who steals your lunch money and snarls “It’s a free country, man” when you protest. A movement is underway to make a martyr of

the dim bulb who went and got herself shot breaking through a Capitol window, her only claim to merit arising from demonstrating that reflexively yammering “thank you for your service” to every rando who ever wore a uniform is the height of unthinking patriot posturing.

These Karens and Kevins are unaccustomed to having their actions scrutinized, and will certainly demand to speak to the manager about this outrage. I mean, it’s not like they did something awful, like smashing a window at a Target store, or god forbid, something even worse.

Like these hooligans.

Savages. How dare they?