"migration." Nevertheless, Painter pointedly demonstrates how the westward movement of peoples from Asia across Europe and across the Atlantic with Africans pushed self and social definitions of white people.

Painter's narrative complicates the too-often accepted simple dichotomy pairing white freedom and black slavery. She lays out a complex history of slavery in Europe – slavery of those who would be called whites by others who also would be called whites and by others who would be called non-whites. White slavery has persisted with a distinct ring, Painter notes. The domestic and international sex trade especially has continued to display slavery's economic hold and its aesthetic grip, as it has endured to grope white women embraced as ideals of beauty. Painter bares slavery itself as inescapably a relation of power universally dimensioned in terms of dominance-and-subordination not simply cast in black-and-white.

Painter says much and leaves much unsaid. Readers and reviewers may well quibble about what she has elided or excluded. Many topics get at most a light touch in her chapters that average fifteen pages. Law hardly gets a whisper. Yet the richness of what she includes and explains in accessible prose offers insight and instruction to a range of readers from the general public to scholars. She transposes whites' position in traditional historiography, treating them not only as subjects but also as objects. Her shifted perspective brilliantly re-images much of the history of the Atlantic world and more. Not simply recasting images of white people, Painter molds fresh impressions of the meaning of race. She exposes the frameworks used to construct not only white people but people denominated in any "race."

Thomas J. Davis
Arizona State University, Tempe

Crystal N. Feimster, *Southern Horrors: Women and the Politics of Rape and Lynching*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009. Pp. 314. $35.00 (ISBN 978-0-674-03562-1).
doi:10.1017/S0738248011000447

To students of southern history, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Rebecca Latimer Felton are familiar figures. Both women lent their voices to public debates about the racial implications of sexual violence. Crystal Feimster, in *Southern Horrors*, places these two women; their ideological understandings of race, sex, and politics; and the culture of violence in the post-Civil War South, side by side. She argues that these two women crafted a political dialogue in which the problem of rape became the catalyst by which women, both black and white, came to demand a political role for themselves in the modern

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248011000447 Published online by Cambridge University Press

South. Indeed, Feimster explores "why southern black and white women asserted their presence in a sexually charged and violent public sphere and how they marshaled narratives of rape and lynching for their own political empowerment" (5). Of course, these two women defined the "problem" of rape in entirely different ways. Comparing how Wells-Barnett, a black woman, and Felton, a white woman, articulated the relationship among sexual violence, protection, and public power offers insight into what Feimster calls "the racial and sexual politics of the American South."

Feimster alternates chapters on Felton and Wells-Barnett, but because there has already been a considerable flow of excellent scholarship on Ida B. Wells-Barnett in recent years, Feimster's discussion of her seems more familiar than new. She covers Wells-Barnett's growing understanding of the importance of respectability for black women, and its role in demanding respect from white men. She explores her anti-lynching campaign, and her occasionally rocky relationships with her contemporary advocates of racial equality. The primary focus, however, is on how Wells-Barnett used the trope of rape, both of white women by black men and of black women by white men, as the foundation of a campaign to demand political rights for black women. In her view, recognizing African-American women's respectability and rights would ultimately protect them from sexual violence.

The consideration of Wells-Barnett's ideas alongside those of Rebecca Latimer Felton, however, yields new insights, showing surprising ideological commonalities. In Feimster's hands, Felton emerges as a far more complex figure than her well-known (and out of context) phrase, "lynch a thousand times a week if necessary," would suggest. Rather than being a stalwart supporter of white supremacy and patriarchy, Felton was instead a vigorous critic of white men. She denounced their failures to protect white women, not merely from the so-called black beast rapist, but from poverty, powerlessness, and even white men as well. Her call to lynch was not a clarion call to encourage extralegal violence, but a statement about white men's willingness to compromise white women's interests in favor of profit, political corruption, and violence. Her disgust, dating back to the devastation of Civil War, when white men abandoned white women to fight to preserve their profit in slavery, only grew. By the time of her famous, if famously mischaracterized, speech in Georgia in 1897, she openly derided women's dependence on men. Because white men were such utter failures in protecting and supporting white women, women, black and white, rich and poor, needed their own political rights and the ability to act in public in their own interest.

Yet lynching, Feimster maintains, allowed white women a new, if barbaric, public role. White women's presence, and their willingness to participate in the torture and death of black men represented one way in which racial terror offered women new public power. Using familiar newspaper reports of lynchings, Feimster argues that as the objects of white men's protection, white

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248011000447 Published online by Cambridge University Press

women could act as powerful symbols, a role that at least some white women eagerly embraced. That white women consciously connected their role as symbol, their capacity for brutality, and a newfound political power, however, is less clear. By the time many of Feimster's examples appeared in Southern newspapers in the 1920s and 1930s, Southerners had already accepted, if grudgingly, an increased public role for white women. The connection between racial terror and political power for white women remains ambiguous.

Feimster's pairing of these two seemingly opposite women illuminates the ways in which sexual violence played a role in the construction of political power in the South. But as with all cultural and intellectual history, in which the historian attributes meaning to rhetoric and language, there were times when I did not agree with her reading of the sources, believing that more fruitful analysis lay in another direction. Also, Feimster argues that rape was a constituent element of "the racial and sexual politics of the New South," a phrase that she repeats frequently, as though it were self-evident exactly what she meant by it. I found myself wishing she would unpack the phrase itself, especially as it looms so large in her analysis. These complaints aside, *Southern Horrors* brings the politics of rape and race to center stage. It shows how two women who seemingly had nothing in common, nonetheless created a political dialogue demanding that women have both protection from sexual violence, and political rights as well.

Lisa Lindquist Dorr
University of Alabama

---

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0738248011000447 Published online by Cambridge University Press