

for other principles, in this case nationalism, to explain what they find. Closer attention to recent developments in legal history might help clarify our constitutional history as well.

Given current constitutional debate, Neely buried his lead. Though elements of legal liberalism were beginning to emerge, with few exceptions Lincoln's generation did not believe in "limited government." They believed in government. They even believed in a paternalist government. They believed in the rule of law and in republican government, and this meant a very powerful government, even for Southerners and Copperheads. The Civil War was not fought between the advocates of limited government and its opponents. The chief question raised by copperheadism did not concern the power of government in general, but only whether sweeping police powers existed at the federal as well as the state level. This generation believed not in "free" markets but in a moral and legal community that included a market economy. And note well: it was always a well-regulated market economy, one in which the public welfare trumped individual rights, including individual property rights. Seeing this resolves most of the paradoxes of the legal history of the Civil War era.

Space does not permit careful treatment of the many possibilities raised in Neely's provocative set of reflections. Neely brings new perspectives and new evidence to discussions of the Prize Cases, legal tender issues, and conscription. The judicial opinions he has uncovered and parsed for us were primarily in the state courts, a source too long neglected; and he devotes about a third of the book to constitutional developments in the Confederacy. This is especially welcome because lingering neoconfederate apologies as well as one of our anti-Lincoln traditions take root in the express or implied superiority of Confederate constitutional adherence. In sum, students of constitutional history will find *Lincoln and the Triumph of the Nation* continuously provocative if not always entirely convincing. In calling attention to the pamphlet literature and state-level developments, Neely has laid bare a new foundation for all future scholarship of Civil War constitutionalism.

—Stewart Winger
Illinois State University

MACHO MEN

Erica R. Edwards: *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. Pp. xxii, 249.)

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Professor Edwards has given us an engaging book accompanied by vigorous scholarship. A too cryptic statement of her thesis is that *charisma* has

functioned to draft a supermasculine, violently exclusive, and inexhaustibly repeating pageant of black leadership. Charisma thus signals an immemorably dangerous scenario. “Scenario” denotes for Edwards the Italian dramatic mode that comprises an unscripted script, an outline available for improvisational performance by players and audiences alike. This seems democratic enough. But only at first blush.

For it is precisely in Edwards’s account the improvisational portability of *scenario*—Black Masculine Leadership—that drives its violent iterations. It would consume inordinate space to rehearse the intricacies of Max Weber’s articulations of charisma: their *sui generis* cast as a response to industrializing modernism; their implicit structure of godly afflatus descending on the human subject; the subsequent investment of the subject and his (or her) audience in messianic discourses and performances of leadership. Edwards astutely notes the terrifying Western rationalist blind spots that are the invisible architecture of Weber’s enunciations.

Western “modernity” and the myth of charisma as a surrogate for divine law and authority in the everyday lives of the modern alienated subject are for Edwards coextensive with the racial terror and black abjection that underlie all of Western modernism. The best response in the face of such erasure is to “deform” the myth and scenario of a suppressive charisma. Deformation consists in a counterdiscourse of the irrational. If slave masters considered themselves rational in their desire for the enslaved to remain shackled to the plantation, then slave runaways were, *mutatis mutandis*, “irrational.” Self-liberated Maroons were assumed by a viciously enslaving Western Modernism to have gone completely mad. Western medicine, in turn, invented a name for the self-liberated’s “mental illness”: *draptomania*—pathological impulse to freedom.

Edwards’s critiques are not confined to paradigms and enunciators that might be considered “Western.” She is an equal opportunity slayer of charisma dragons. Much of her exposition is dedicated to refutations of analyses by a veritable cast of black writers, critics, scholars, social scientists, and of course, public-sphere charismatic “so-called leaders” and spokespersons. The list is monumental: W. E. B. Du Bois, George Schuyler, Marcus Garvey, Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Adolph Reed, Houston Baker, Eddie Glaude, Theophus Smith, Ron Walters, etc. Ironically, there are virtually no women scholars (whether women “of color” or not) who seem to have fallen under the sway of the “charisma scenario.” Defiant of all male, charismatic hokum, Edwards valorizes black women for their self-abjuring gifts and talent for acting out in radically democratic ways. They are inspired facilitators of black communal liberation.

Spot-on histories of Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Height, and many another who might be named, complicate Edwards’s exonerative silences with respect to the actual sway and play of precisely the “charisma scenario” in the lives of brilliant black women. Really, black women in church and state, politics and poetics by the score have been apt

to spin tales of hoodoo afflatus, spirits descending and transforming their speech to “tongues,” and a bellicose ability to turn their backs on the enemy and stop his bullets in quite gymnastic ways. Such workings of the spirit seem difficult—especially in women’s political, organizational, and leadership roles—to disaggregate from a more or less generalized definition of a charisma scenario akin to Edwards’s model. Edwards’s reservation of her “charisma castigation” for black males seems problematic. There is even further confusion of aims in *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership* when one observes its structure.

The intriguing bookends for Edwards’s work are Erykah Badu at the beginning and Oprah Winfrey at its conclusion. Edwards explicitly or implicitly redeems both actors, despite the dangers of their undeniable charismatic fame and signal leadership in their respective black domains. Badu’s halting, awkward, spoken petulance at the Millions More March is deemed a scintillating moment of countercharisma. Edwards then decks out Oprah’s South Carolina oratorical coronation of a Mosaic “King Barack Obama” in reportorial, softly nonjudgmental, romantic prose. Women would seem to be allowed by Edwards to say and do anything, and still be absolved of perpetuating the “violence” and exclusions of a charisma scenario. Women draw a bye. Analytically, one thinks brilliant black women might have been analytically allowed the occasion in Edwards’s monograph to provide a gender-troubling expansion of her thesis. As matters stand, however, they are imperturbably righteous crusaders and workers for radical democracy, or Marxist valorization of “the masses.”

To suggest that Edwards’s analysis presents a blunt dichotomy between so-called male and so-called women protagonists of politics and poetics is to do her more nuanced literary-critical readings an injustice. However, to suggest that her grounding thesis is premised on a somewhat eclectic array of primary cultural texts seems correct. Here is the list: “The Star of Ethiopia,” *Dark Princess*, *Black Empire*, *Moses Man of the Mountain*, *The White Boy Shuffle*, *Paradise*, the film *Barber Shop*, and Chris Rock’s comedy. One wonders why there is, for example, no engagement with the anti-black-common-sense, doubling, and entangled “counteraesthetics” of David Walker’s *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* and Maria Stewart’s riveting lectures in critique of White Western Tyranny and chattel slavery and racism’s abjection. Maria Stewart clearly did not take *her* political stock-in-trade from Moses, but rather from David Walker. And Walker was indeed prophetic in vision, but not after the mode of Moses. This Walker/Stewart excursus is simply a brief gesture to signal what might be considered the “narrowness” of Edwards’s analytical field. In one of his most famous essays, Du Bois stated of Booker T. Washington: “It is as though Nature must needs make men narrow in order to give them force.” Edwards’s enterprise is anchored in a dense citational field, but it is also idiosyncratic in its narrow choice of primary texts and seeming refusal to complicate the gender-force of charisma. Her subjection of primary texts to indubitably rational,

academic, and formalist explications scarcely provides a compelling model of counteraesthetics or liberating “irrationality.” Hers, one thinks, is not a work of Maroonage.

Two concluding observations are in order. First, Professor Edwards seems, by implication, to deem global or international contexts—ones always extant at any given conjuncture of African American leadership and nation formation—irrelevant. She clings tenaciously to her thesis that the seemingly indigenous *norm* of Mosaic Black Masculine Charismatic Leadership is an autochthonous exclusive. Now, it is perhaps true that constituent groups receive the leaders they deserve. But what if the group is disfranchised and subjected to global economics and imaging over which they have no control? In its fiscal, Christian, philanthropic, and cultural capital, English abolitionism surely had a large say in the *type* of black leader that would be considered most efficacious and effective in the public sphere of US abolitionism. Frederick Douglass made furiously heroic oratorical-abolitionist (and schmoozing) tours of the United Kingdom. He was virtually a nineteenth-century abolitionist Facebook. Similarly Booker T. Washington was “called” and sustained far more by global White Supremacy than by any autochthonous, black-majority-generated “charisma scenario.” Edwards oddly attributes an enduring Mosaic “charisma scenario” almost exclusively to what she implies are black eyes that cannot see and black ears that refuse to hear.

However, one might well argue—especially in a post-postmodern era like our own where capital, authority, media, and international interests weave in nanoseconds across the universe—that all “groups” are in overdetermined ways “handed” their myths of origin and leadership by what the male-and-authority-resistant rap ensemble *Public Enemy* designated the “powers that be.” Fight them we well might, but ignoring them, as Edwards does, imperils verifiable and effective analyses of both leadership and charisma. Booker T. Washington was patently aware that if he possessed it, his “charisma” was but a fragile compromise with what the canny Walter White described as “rope and faggot.”

Second and finally, Edwards’s analyses have about them an air of datedness. Her polemics seem at times to forestall sound historical judgments based on a cornucopia of recent scholarly assessments of Diaspora liberation movements. The fact that the Nation of Islam (NOI) and the Garvey Movement (UNIA) represent two of the most extraordinary mass movements of the twentieth century—replete with irrationality, counter public spheres, regalia, acting out, global analysis and appeal—is *backgrounded* by Edwards.

How can this happen? Edwards deems such movements flukes of charisma, naive and treacherous in their capitulations. One might ask: “Capitulation to what?” In Edwards’s analysis, such Diaspora freedom movements—and presumably their scores of thousands of participants—capitulated to a violent black myth of charismatic black male leadership. There is scant generosity and virtually no historical perspicacity here. Edwards’s

only concession to the NOI, UNIA, and, indeed, the civil rights movement tout court is that they were—in her judgment—“somewhat productive.”

Fortunately, there are two recent books by black authors that analyze black counteraesthetics, the black underground, African American deviancy, Diaspora liberation movements, and the black fantastic in more astute and generous terms than Edwards. They are Richard Iton’s *In Search of the Black Fantastic* and Kevin Young’s *The Grey Album*. Together, Iton and Young provide fuller and more engaging analyses than those discovered in *Charisma and the Fictions of Black Leadership*.

–Houston A. Baker Jr.
Vanderbilt University

A SORT OF SECULAR RELIGION

Robert C. Pirro: *The Politics of Tragedy and Democratic Citizenship*. (New York: Continuum, 2011. Pp. 256.)

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As Robert Pirro points out more than a few times in this big, sprawling, and captivating book, tragedy in ancient Athens came into existence at almost the same time as democracy. Was this mere coincidence or were the two new institutions coimplicated? Did tragic theater help constitute the community needed by the new democratic order? Did it help citizens negotiate their transition from aristocracy to democracy, mysticism to rationality? Did it help them resituate their identification from the heroes of the mythic world to the more ordinary people of the new legal order? Did tragedy perhaps enhance Athenians’ sense of agency even as it taught the limits of human capacities in a finite world? Did it give new emotional form to democratic citizens by way of catharsis and the sorts of fellow-feeling that exposure to suffering and mortality brings or did such exposure perhaps make them resigned to their finitude and undo any sense of possibility?

These are some of the important questions in circulation as Pirro examines in detail the recourse to the language of tragedy by various political actors, artists, and authors in a wide variety of contexts. The book’s sense of sprawl comes not from its length—it is not overly long—but rather from its division into three parts covering tragedy’s relationship to agency, solidarity, identity—and also from the rather far flung topics of the ten chapters, which focus on Bobby Kennedy, Vaclav Havel, Italian neorealist film (in which the tragic chorus is variously reinvented and restaged), Cornel West, Nelson Mandela, and September 11, and three chapters on German authors and filmmakers in the context of German reunification. What all the figures studied share is their use of the terms “tragedy” or “tragic” in a context of transition.