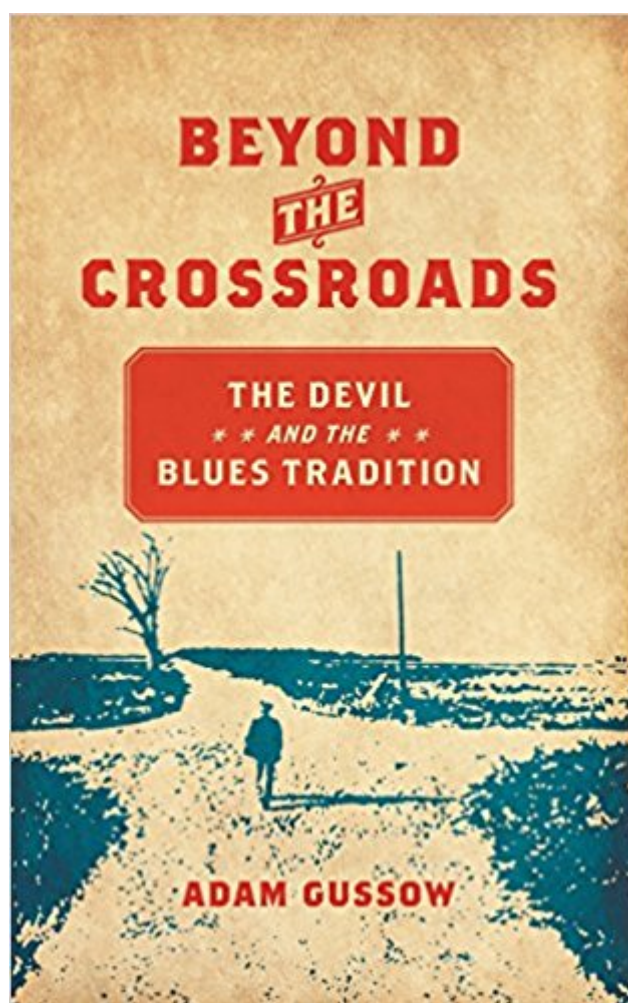


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Beyond The Crossroads: The Devil And The Blues Tradition (New Directions In Southern Studies)



Synopsis

The devil is the most charismatic and important figure in the blues tradition. He's not just the music's namesake ("the devil's music"), but a shadowy presence who haunts an imagined Mississippi crossroads where, it is claimed, Delta bluesman Robert Johnson traded away his soul in exchange for extraordinary prowess on the guitar. Yet, as scholar and musician Adam Gussow argues, there is much more to the story of the devil and the blues than these clichéd understandings. In this groundbreaking study, Gussow takes the full measure of the devil's presence. Working from original transcriptions of more than 125 recordings released during the past ninety years, Gussow explores the varied uses to which black southern blues people have put this trouble-sowing, love-wrecking, but also empowering figure. The book culminates with a bold reinterpretation of Johnson's music and a provocative investigation of the way in which the citizens of Clarksdale, Mississippi, managed to rebrand a commercial hub as "the crossroads" in 1999, claiming Johnson and the devil as their own.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

By looking at over 125 blues songs, Gussow illustrates that the devil stands at the center of the black Southern blues tradition as a figure that sows trouble, wrecks love, but also gives power.--No Depression

Beyond the Crossroads is brilliant, a game-changer in blues history. A breathtaking and highly engaging book on a most American of sounds.--Patricia Schroeder, author of Robert Johnson, Mythmaking, and Contemporary American Culture Adam Gussow is an excellent interpreter of the blues. "He has earned the right to speak." We should listen to him and be informed about one of the most important musical expressions in American history. I strongly recommend Beyond the Crossroads: The Devil and the Blues Tradition.--James H. Cone, author of The Spirituals and the Blues At once affable and frightening, the devil is forever partnered with the blues. Beyond the Crossroads is a beautifully written exploration of what Adam Gussow calls 'the blues' most malleable, dynamic, and important personage.' This is a work of exquisite detail.--William Ferris, author of Give My Poor Heart Ease: Voices of the Mississippi Blues

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