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Ken Gonzales-Day. *Lynching in the West: 1850-1935.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006. xii + 299 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8223-3794-2.

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Mobs, Photographers, and the Nature of Lynching in California

According to Ken Gonzales-Day's new book, *Lynching in the West*, mobs in California hanged or summarily executed at least 350 people between 1850 and 1935. Gonzales-Day joins a recent wave of scholarly writing on the history of mob violence in the United States. His study differs, however, significantly from much of the recent work on lynching conducted by historians. This is no doubt because Gonzales-Day is not a formally trained historian. Rather, he is a practicing artist who currently holds the position of Chair of the Department of Studio Art at Scripps College.

Throughout *Lynching in the West*, the author focuses on visual sources such as "lynching souvenir cards, view cards, postcards, sketches, published illustrations, and scrapbooks" (p. 5). While he does not neglect more traditional sources such as newspapers and court records, his expertise and energy are clearly centered on graphic representations of lynching. In fact, Gonzales-Day's visual analysis of lynching is not even confined to the surviving visual records. Gonzales-Day also includes his own contemporary photographs of the sites where lynchings once occurred. For Gonzales-Day, finding these sites and creating the images are related to the overall goal of his book, acknowledging the oft-forgotten victims of mob violence. "Once at the site," the author writes, "I gaze into the haunted shade and try to remember the names of those who died–if known," and then "I also try to remember the names of their victims" (p. 15). In the conclusion, Gonzales-Day defends "foregrounding the analysis of images" by suggesting that "images of terror may hold the potential for social change" (p. 204).

According to Gonzales-Day, race played a major role in the history of lynching in California. He writes that "one of the fundamental goals of this book is to allow the nation, and the many communities it represents, to finally acknowledge that when taken collectively, the lynchings of American Indians, blacks, Chinese, and Latinos constituted the majority of cases of lynchings and extrajudicial executions in California" (p. 14). This conclusion rests primarily upon an impressive inventory of lynching victims, an inventory in which racial and ethnic minorities outnumber Anglo Americans and Europeans. In addition to the inventory, Gonzales-Day strengthens his case by analyzing the role that physiognomy, as shaped in and through various historical images, played in perpetrating lynching.

The inventory alone makes this study a valuable addition to the history of lynching in the United States, but there are other aspects of the analysis that are well worth the attention of historians. Gonzales-Day's comparison of extralegal and legal executions is stimulating. His discussion of the legal hanging of Jose Forner is exceptional, noting how important the physical appearance of Forner was to the debate over his guilt. The author's contribution to the study of the oft-examined Joaquin Murrieta legend is also valuable. His training gives him insight into the power of the visual imagery associated with the traveling exhibits mounted after the alleged capture of Joaquin and his band, specifically the "Head of Joaquin" and the hand of his accomplice, "Three-Fingered Jack."

While historians will find much of value in this study, they will also be disappointed in certain areas. First and foremost, Gonzales-Day would have benefited from a wider reading in the existing historical literature on lynching and violence in the borderlands. Neither his notes nor his bibliography list key works by W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Benjamin Johnson, Michael Pfeifer, Arturo Rosales, and Christopher Waldrep. Waldrep's omission is particularly troubling as the author discusses the definition of lynching at a number of points, and his discussion would have been so much stronger if he had engaged Waldrep's valuable work on this subject. At times, Gonzales-Day's lack of familiarity with some of the existing historical literature leads him to overstate his own case: "No one has acknowledged the full impact of lynching on the many different racial and ethnic

communities in the American West or considered how nineteenth-century anti-Mexican and anti-Latin American sentiments may have contributed to this erasure" (p. 133). Maybe this is true, depending upon how you define "full," but I wonder if he would stand by the sentence after reading Michael Pfeifer's work. Although the work is cited in the bibliography, any discussion of the volume of lynching photographs edited by James Allen, entitled *Without Sanctuary*, is strangely absent from the text itself. I expected to see some comparison with this work, which like *Lynching in the West* , was focused on lynching images. I also think that Gonzales-Day would have benefited greatly from reading the work of Amy Wood, a young scholar who has written on the importance of analyzing lynching images.

The second limitation is that, while rich in visual sources, the volume ignores more traditional sources of historical research such as government records, particularly diplomatic correspondence between the U.S. and Mexican governments. A third, though less significant, area of concern is the title of the book. The author does not explain why a book whose research and analysis is almost strictly confined to California is pitched as a book about lynching in the West. There is also no attempt to define the West in the book. In any event, lynching in Montana, New Mexico, and Texas were very different from lynching in California. The title may have been something suggested by the publisher as a way to broaden the audience, believing rightly that historians throughout the United States would learn from this book. I wish, however, that a less misleading title might have been found for this purpose.

In conclusion, *Lynching in the West* is a valuable addition to our growing knowledge of mob violence in the United States. Its analysis of visual images is fresh and thought provoking. The inventory alone justifies the book's purchase by research libraries. If historians find themselves not completely satisfied with the volume, their knowledge of lynching in California is still improved and enriched by this book.

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