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Robert Cassanello. *To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013. 192 pp. $74.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8130-4419-4.

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In *To Render Invisible* Robert Cassanello describes black life and labor in Jacksonville from the Civil War to the Great Migration, and he illustrates how racial tensions changed in New South Jacksonville as blacks made themselves more visible in public spaces. The title is an homage to Ralph Ellison, and the crisscrossing lines in the cover design refer to the color line and to Jürgen Habermas, whose concepts of spaces and spheres are the framework for Cassanello's analysis. In eight chapters, the author documents events that open discussion of distinct spaces and spheres to examine the new "geography of freedom" created by blacks as they exercised their citizenship rights during the Jim Crow and New South era. The examples that Cassanello uses are complicated by class divisions within the black community because more well-to-do blacks could operate in white spheres such as politics, churches, and education, to some extent, but the poor could not. White reaction to black public life also differed by class. These are key tensions in the book.

One of his first examples is the Jacksonville Mutiny of 1865. Shortly after the end of the war, while black occupation troops were still numerous, black soldiers were disciplined in public by being hanged from their thumbs, a punishment not often used on white soldiers. In October, black soldiers mutinied to come to the aid of a comrade who was being punished. The resulting court-martials condemned six soldiers to execution. Cassanello uses this as an example of continued humiliation of blacks in public, even after the war and even applied to those who wore the uniform of the United States.

However, over the next few decades enfranchised blacks in Jacksonville began to assert public influence. Interracial experiments in schools and churches brought the races together in new settings, creating new questions and new divides among whites and blacks. Cassanello offers particularly excellent treatment of black visibility in politics, streetcars and public transportation, resistance to lynchings, and organized labor. In all of these cases the actions of black citizens and

workers were critical to the outcomes. The last full chapter about the leadership role of black women is particularly astute, including black women confronting the Klan.

Jacksonville's black influence was considerable since Duval County was majority black until 1910. ***To Render Invisible*** takes the reader through these instances of black visibility and white cooperation and resistance in the time before the legal framework of disfranchisement virtually removed blacks from the political sphere and attempted to render them invisible. This book is a good case study of Jacksonville during an era of experiment in cross-racial cooperation identified by C. Vann Woodward in ***The Strange Career of Jim Crow*** (1955).

This same era in Jacksonville was well observed by James Weldon Johnson in his powerful autobiography ***Along This Way***. Johnson was born in this city in 1871 and grew up observing robust black visibility in the life of the city. As a boy, Johnson saw blacks in all levels of professions, including justices of the peace and policemen. Before segregation intensified Johnson wrote of his home city, "Long after the close of the Reconstruction period Jacksonville was known far and wide as a good town for Negroes."[1] But by the early 1900s, Johnson observed that class divides were hardening the color line in Jacksonville in ways that Cassanello describes so well.

Both Johnson and Cassanello give solid evidence and explanations about how black visibility both divided and united whites. Upper-class whites were not as threatened by black visibility as were plainer whites who had little else other than their color to mark their place in society. However, Johnson's autobiography and his novella ***The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*** (1912) differ from Cassanello in that they attribute growing white harshness about the color line to a wider mix of visibility and class as strongly mediated by white fears about what occurs in private spaces between the races: sex.

In his autobiography, Johnson wrote, "[I]n the core of the heart of the American race problem the sex factor is rooted.... Taken alone, it furnishes a sufficient mainspring for the rationalization of all the complexes of white racial superiority."[2] Johnson's view and Cassanello's thesis about public geography are not mutually exclusive, and Cassanello does reference sex and the preservation of whiteness in several places. Reading ***To Render Invisible*** as a companion with ***Along This Way*** would be an excellent way to enlarge the theme of black visibility in Jacksonville and to understand how much was lost when that visibility was suppressed.

To Render Invisible also identifies Lost Cause ideology and Redeemer nostalgia for slavery as factors in the white desire to return blacks to public invisibility. Cassanello also takes a step forward and links white attempts to limit black visibility as an influence on more radical civil rights voices that would arise in future decades. Among those voices would be A. Philip Randolph, who grew up in Jacksonville from 1891 to 1910. Randolph and his family would have observed many of the incidents, struggles, and backlashes described by Cassanello, and we can imagine how they influenced him.[3]

Professor Cassanello reinforces the fact that we cannot accurately understand Florida history without a fuller understanding of its black population. As with all significant books, this one both satisfies and opens up more questions. For instance, was the visibility of blacks in New South Jacksonville different from black visibility in other southern cities? Or, did Spanish Florida leave a mark? Did the Spanish legacy of recognition of levels of black freedom, visibility, and white memory of those times persist into New South Florida? Perhaps the assertive behaviors of Jacksonville blacks and the occasional cooperative tone of whites was a legacy of colonial times.

Florida historians, smarter now than we used to be thanks to Jane Landers, Daniel Schafer,

James Cusick, Frank Marotti, and others, know that black visibility in Spanish Florida was significant, was appreciated by influential numbers of whites, and that it persisted.[4] In Jacksonville and those parts of Florida with a Spanish legacy, the visibility of blacks and their role in the spheres and spaces of public life was always a bit different than other places in the American South.

Notes

[1]. James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way* (New York: The Viking Press, 1933), 45.

[2]. Ibid, 170.

[3]. Cynthia Taylor, *A. Philip Randolph: The Religious Journey of an African American Labor Leader*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006). The first chapter covers his childhood and young adult years in Jacksonville.

[4]. Jane Landers, *Black Society in Spanish Florida* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Daniel L. Schafer, *Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley: African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Slaveowner* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); James G. Cusick, *The Other War of 1812: The Patriot War and the American Invasion of Spanish East Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Frank Marotti, *The Cana Sanctuary: History, Diplomacy, and Black Catholic Marriage in Antebellum St. Augustine, Florida* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2012), and *Heaven's Soldiers: Free People of Color and the Spanish Legacy in Antebellum Florida* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013).