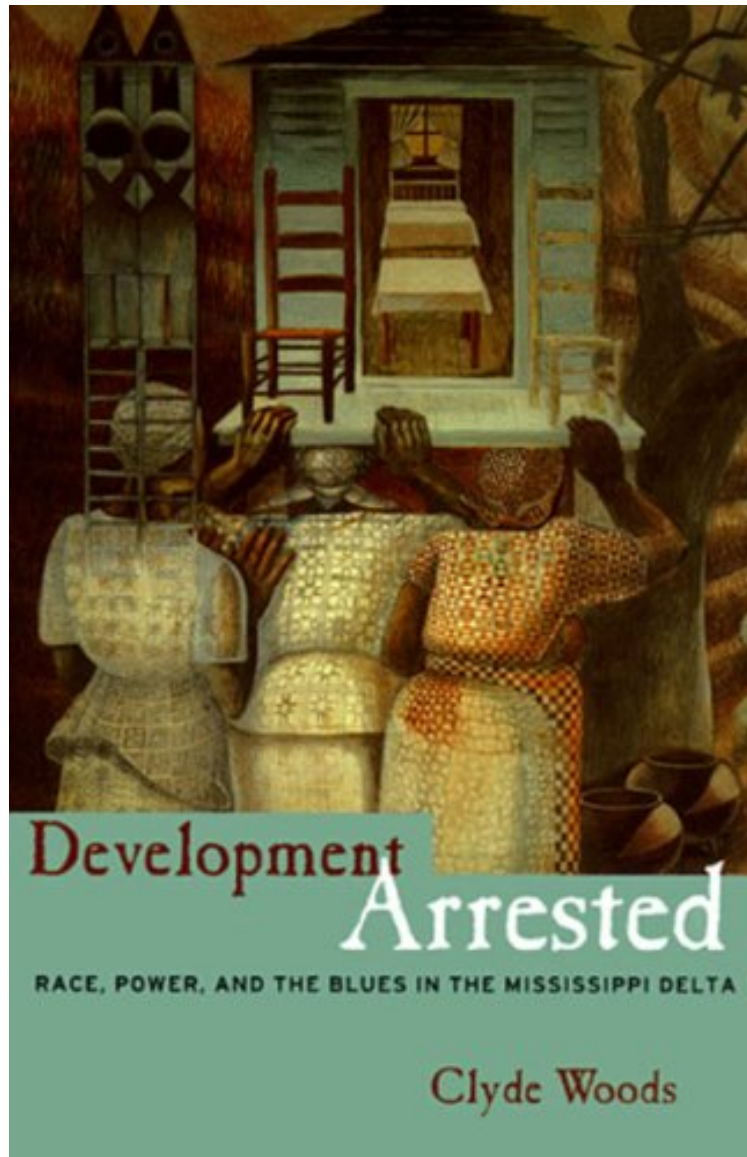


[Free and download] Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta (Haymarket)

Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta (Haymarket)

Clyde Woods

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Clyde Woods : Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta (Haymarket)
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Development Arrested:
The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta (Haymarket):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Unique, powerful story of Mississippi

By Susan Klopfer

When I moved to the Mississippi Delta, where I lived for two years, I had no understanding of the rich history that confronted me from the start. The Delta is a magical place and because of Clyde Woods, I have perspective on the beauty and horror of this region. I lived near the small town of Drew (actually I lived on the grounds of Parchman) where evidence of early bluesmen and the modern civil rights movement still abound. The infamous Dockery Plantation (once home to some of the greatest blues musicians) is nearby and people who were part of the Movement are still alive and willing to talk about their experiences. Woods obviously spent much time in the Delta to craft his timely book. It is truly the best book I've read about Mississippi Delta history and it certainly gave me a much stronger understanding of where I had come to live.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. "Blues Epistemology" is worth the book alone

By Christopher W. Chase

Music is a slippery thing to define. Many associate it with a sound object of some kind, but as many have pointed out, the perceptual filters and hermeneutic webs wound into the reception of sound objects have brought many, especially in the cultural studies tradition, to conclude that no separation between the two is possible, necessary, or even desirable. The most straightforward example of this conception of music among these authors can be found within "Development Arrested." While the word "blues" is often used to describe a genre of music historically originating in African-American communities, or a label applied to the collective identity of African-Americans ("Blues People") Woods instead contends that Blues is best understood as a way of understand the collective and accumulated historical consciousness and responses to continuing economic and political exploitation. Incorporating the optimistic aesthetic arguments of Albert Murray (Stomping the Blues), Woods finds a dialectic of both critique and affirmation in the blues. In doing so, Woods wishes to bridge the gap separating the blues as an aesthetic form and the blues as a theory of socio-economic development. Primarily Woods seeks this bridge in drawing new types of boundaries around blues discourse.

This 'Blues Epistemology' (B.E.) is a lens of viewing and understanding the world that can take the form of a deliberately constructed sound object, or a book on the legacy of plantation power in the Delta. This epistemology has, according to Woods, several major distinguishing features. It is oppositional, concerned with social relations, socially realistic in its analysis, and demystifying. In addition, cultural productions of this epistemology are affirmative, and confessional, class-based, and enact/maintain an imagined community among African-Americans. In Woods' specific case, he uses B.E. to write a history of power relations in the Delta from the Plantation Revolution from inception to present-day.

'Sound objects' are powerful product and exemplars of this epistemology, but only one of its many modes of expression. For as ephemeral and marginalized groups come into and out of daily life, their ideas, once embedded in their lives, are now embedded in their cultural production, live on. For example, Woods specifically links the Delta Blues to a working-class consciousness that seeks genuine participatory democracy. This African-American working class then becomes a major factor in the creation of African-American studies, which should be seen as reproducing this structure of understanding. Overall, what is central to understanding Woods' conception of the "Blues" is that it seeks to uncover (or recover) the organic connection between the lived experience of African-Americans and their intellectual production. At the same time, it challenges and defies a Euro-American understanding of 'history' and 'hermeneutic' as separate entities, and argues forcefully for 're-membering' each as part of the other.

This then becomes the basis for re-reading the history of slavery and underdevelopment. Using Marx's critique of chattel slavery and Eric Williams "Capitalism and Slavery," Woods finds that the blues (understood widely) develop their staunch oppositionality out of the need to resist the totalizing structures of white plantation owners after slave trade ended in the early 1800's. As local economic structures during reconstruction first failed to develop along different social patterns (the gang system was still used on some sharecropping areas) than before, this contributed to the ongoing concern with social realism. African-Americans took the situation into their own hands, with strikes, rights demanded, and attempts to reintroduce the Black Codes failed. For Woods, the Delta was the post-war center of African-American political thought, it became necessary for white institutions to, ove the next 100 years, portray its Black residents as "passive, criminal, and ignorant." When of course, nothing could be further from the truth.

Still, massive violence and its symbolic equivalents, such as the Lost Cause, were deployed to disenfranchise black Americans, such as in the election of 1875, and during the subsequent years of Mississippi as a one-party Democratic state. At the same time, the blues (the name of which Woods traces to the Southern fear of black men in Union military garb--"The Black and Blues") gains its ascension. Even through planter-dominated Roosevelt's Agricultural Adjustment Act of the 1930's and the Enclosure movement, Big Bill Broonzy, Federal eugenics and sterilization, and Gunnar Myrdal's liberal racism of the 1940's. Woods includes excellent pictures and captions linking Blues epistemology with Black survival and resistance in the South. In addition, his analysis includes the role of the Blues music and Blues ideology in the 1950's and 1960's civil rights movement, with emphasis on Junior Wells and Muddy Waters, but noting the growth of such artists as Junior Kimbrough, and R.L. Burnside. Woods finishes by focusing on other moments of resistance and autonomy in the Delta, including the Tunica incident in 1985 and the Delta Pride strike of 1990, with a scathing point by point condemnation of the Lower Mississippi Delta Development Commission, and the work done under its then-chairman Bill Clinton.

Woods' book is an ambitious work of regional history in American Studies--told through the interpretive framework of Blues epistemology. It is a detailed blow by blow account of the local history in terms of race and

economic underdevelopment, valorizing indigenous wisdom from a left populist perspective, and making the case that racism is a *structure*--not a failure to dispel lower-class fear (as the liberals would have it) or a failure to adhere to individualist ethics (as conservatives would have it. Instead racism is exposed as the deep structure of a slavery that existed originally to make class (as in Eric William's "Capitalism and Slavery"), but ended up making race in the process (Berlin's "Many Thousands Gone"), and continues to this day through the systematic and planned reproduction of oppression and inequality, secured in part, "by ethnic warfare."

Development Arrested is a major reinterpretation of the two-centuries-old conflict between the African Americans and planters in the Mississippi Delta. In a definitive study of the history and social structures of the plantation system, Clyde Woods examines both planter domination of politics and economy in the region and the continuing resistance of the African American working class to the system's depredations. "Development Arrested" traces the decline and resurrection of plantation ideology in national public policy discourse from Thopmas Jefferson to Bill Clinton. Woods documents the unceasing attacks on the gains of the Civil Rights Movement and how, despite having suffered countless defeats at the hands of the planet regime, African Americans in the Delta have continued to push forward their agenda for social, economic, and cultural justice. He ecamines the role of the Blues in sustaining their efforts, surveying a musical tradition-including Jazz, Rock and Rolll, Soul and Rap-that has embraced a radical vision of social change. This is an important contribution to the current political debates involving Mississippi politics, the presidency and Congress, and to our understanding of Black, US, and Southern history.

"[A] stunning and fresh analysis of the political economy of white supremacy and the redemptive power of the blues. All Americans, especially students, scholars, general readers and policy makers, who care about the extension of democracy and the future of black freedom, should read and discuss Clyde Wood's intriguing book."—Darlene Clark Hine, co-author of *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*"Development Arrested has no peer, for Clyde Woods is a rare scholar who takes the blues seriously as theory and social critique. Arguing that this folk discourse emerged in response to economic and political restructuring in the Delta during the 20th century, he goes on to show how it constitutes a critique of the plantation South, New South modernization, and the transformation of capitalist agriculture during the so-called Green Revolution. To paraphrase something Marx said a long time ago, Development Arrested reveals the connection between the arm of criticism (i.e. the blues/social science) and the criticism of arms: struggle for power in the Delta."—Robin D.G. Kelley, author of *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*"Woods should be applauded for pointing out the absurdity of a situation in which, for instance, whole families—made obsolete my machinery, genetic research, and high yield fertilizers—are allowed to starve within eyeshot of fields that government pay affluent farmers to leave fallow."—Oxford American

About the Author
Clyde Woods is Assistant Professor of African and African American Studies at Pennsylvania State University.