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8 Ball Community  
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**GRIT**

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My Personal MUST READ "Grit Lit" List: \*\*

- Feast of Snakes -- Harry Crews
- Blood and Grits -- Harry Crews
- The Gospel Singer -- Harry Crews
- Dirty Work -- Larry Brown
- The Devil is Here in These Hills -- James Green
- Satan is Real: the ballad of the Louvin Brothers -- Charlie Louvin
- Child of God -- Cormac McCarthy
- The Last Picture Show -- Larry McMurtry
- Twilight -- William Gay

\*\* To me, "grit lit" is something to do with writing about man and God and war and violence and whatever, whatever, whatever. I'm sure tons of people would disagree with me on this list and whether or not these books fit into the genre. I do not care. Grit is in, so you should catch up. Feeling bad is out, so you should read about the lives of people doing much, much worse than you to understand you're doing fine.

I also strongly believe no good author has lived or died in California. Especially Richard Brautigan.

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Recommendations?

Write me at:

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What is "Grit Lit"?

The past three decades have seen a steady rise in the popularity of "Grit Lit"--a genre largely shaped by white male authors who are from, or at the very least write convincingly about, working-class communities, usually within the context of the U.S. South. In *The Companion to Southern Literature*, Robert Gingher explains that "Grit Lit" is the "facetious shorthand for fiction devoted to the rough edges ('grit') of life." If in 2002, when Gingher articulated this definition, the moniker Grit Lit was used facetiously, that is certainly not the case today. Now, contemporary writers flash the label proudly; and literary presses, book purveyors, and fan websites rely on it to promote books published by writers of the South who inhabit or once inhabited the region's poorest or most culturally marginalized spaces.

The rise in Grit Lit's popularity needs to be investigated further in order to determine why exactly the reading class seems to relish the second-hand experience of the Rough South. *Grit Lit: A Rough South Reader* (2012), the first and, to date, only collection of Rough South prose, contains the following subject matter: dog fights in Tim McLaurin's *Keeper of the Moon*; late-night shoot-outs in Rick Bragg's *Ava's Man*; a motorcycle-riding madman in Barry Hannah's "Ride, Fly, Penetrate, Loiter"; a drunken negligent mother in Larry Brown's "Samaritans"; serial rapists in Dorothy Allison's "River of Names"; a gun-wielding father and his "waterhead" son in Lewis Nordan's *The Sharpshooter Blues*; flea market vendors and con artists in George Singleton's "Jacksonville"; snake-handling Pentecostals in Lee Smith's *Saving Grace*; boisterous moonshine-drinking prisoners in Robert Morgan's "Sleepy Gap"; meth dealers in Daniel Woodrell's *Winter's Bone*; marijuana growers in Ron Rash's "Speckled Trout"; and a car-stealing Lynyrd Skynyrd fan in Ann Pancake's "Redneck Boys." While these working-class narratives expand the literary canon, they also seem to codify a particular working-class identity in the name of southern authenticity. (2)

Vernon, Z. (2016). Romanticizing the Rough South: Contemporary Cultural Nakedness and the Rise of Grit Lit. *Southern Cultures*, 22(3), 77-94. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26221682>

This zine is a collage of book, magazine, song sheet, and personal diary entry scans all from the author's personal collection. All images are digitally manipulated and all fonts are scanned and stolen. The list of works included in this zine are:

- Country Song Roundup: The Jimmie Rodgers Story, 1953
- Country Song Roundup: Roy Acuff Enters Country Music's Hall of Fame, May 1963
- Feast of Snakes by Harry Crews, 1976
- The Stories of Breece D'J Pancake by Breece D'J Pancake, 1983
- The Grouse Creek Cultural Survey by Thomas Carter and Carl Fleischhauer, 1988
- Child of God by Cormac McCarthy, 1993
- Eddy Arnold: from Tennessee Plowboy to Country Star by Michael Streissguth, 1997
- Satan is Real: the ballad of the Louvin Brothers by Charlie Louvin, 2012
- The Devil is Here in These Hills by James Green, 2015

And probably more...

YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION



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★

## “WITH GOD All Things Are Possible!”

Are you facing difficult problems? Poor Health? Money or Job Troubles? Unhappiness? Drink? Love or Family Troubles? Would you like more Happiness, Success and “Good Fortune” in Life? If you have any of these Problems or others like them, dear friend, then here is wonderful NEWS of a remarkable NEW WAY OF PRAYER that is helping thousands to glorious new happiness and joy. Just clip this message now and mail with your name, address and 25c to cover postage and handling. We will rush this wonderful NEW MESSAGE OF PRAYER and Faith to you by AIR MAIL, absolutely FREE! We will also send you this FREE GOLDEN CROSS for you to keep and treasure!

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“On we marched to our meeting place under the trees,” she remembered. “Over a thousand people came and the two lap dogs came sniveling along too.” Jones began to speak under the crimson cedars, but then stopped suddenly and pointed at the two men who followed the parade. She put her back up against a big tree and called

out to them in a stage voice: “You said that you would like to hang this old woman to a tree! Well, here’s the old woman and here’s the tree. Bring along your rope and hang her!” Jones excelled at this kind of theatrical performance, and her antics thrilled and amused the crowd. By the time the meeting ended, she had gathered even more colliers into her flock.<sup>30</sup>

Mother Jones, excerpt from *The Devil is Here in These Hills*

☀  
TIME AND AGAIN

I think I am getting too old to do this anymore. I wish I could rest and watch my hogs get old and die. When the last one is close to dying, I will feed him his best meal and leave the gate open. But that will most likely not happen, because I know this stretch of Route 60 from Ansted to Gauley, and I do a good job. Mr. Weeks always brags on what a good job I do, and when I meet the other truck plowing the uphill side of this road, I will honk. That will be Mr. Weeks coming up from Gauley. I think how I never met Mr. Weeks in my life but in a snowplow. Sometimes I look out to Sewel Mountain and see snow coming, then I call Mr. Weeks. But we are not friends. We don't come around each other at all. I don't even know if he's got family.

Excerpt from *The Stories of Breece D'J Pancake*

PEACE LIKE A RIVER  
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PEACE LIKE A RIVER



Oren Kimber as a young barharoo, ca. 1920. (Courtesy Oren Kimber, GCCS HCB25638/12)



View across three typical Goose Creek ranches toward the west. The property lines of many of the community's ranches form elongated rectangles that traverse the valley floor, and the ranchers' dwellings, outbuildings, and corrals lie along the road that follows the western edge of the valley. (Gal Fleischhauer, GCCS GH231196-18-4)

PEACE LIKE A RIVER

Price 50 Cents

# TENDERLY HE WATCHES

(Every Step, Every Mile of the Way)

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

We believe you will agree with us that country music has earned for itself, through its great artists and its millions of music lovers, the right to have one day set aside each year to be known as "National Hillbilly Music Day." One can think of no more appropriate day for its celebration than May 26, the day of Jimmie Rodgers' passing.

Representative Arthur Winstead of Mississippi has introduced a resolution in the United States House Of Representatives which reads as follows:

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the 26th day of May of each year, beginning with the year 1953, is hereby designated as National Hill Billy Music Day, in recognition of the contribution made to American music lore by the writers, singers, and players of hill billy music.

In order to ensure passage of this resolution by the Congress, it is important that every member of the United States House of Representatives and the Senate be made aware of our feelings about it.

We therefore urge all our readers to write their Representatives and Senators in Washington and ask them to vote in favor of Congressman Winstead's resolution. Also, get your friends and their friends to write. If you don't know the name of your congressman or senator, your local radio station or newspaper can tell you who they are. Besides writing your own congressman and any others you can think of, whether they're from your state or not, please drop a note to Congressman Arthur Winstead, so he'll know we all appreciate having so faithful a friend in Washington. Address your letters and post cards as follows:

Honorable Arthur Winstead (or your Congressman)  
House of Representatives (or U S. Senate for Senator)  
Washington, D. C.

I don't need no rest, said Ballard. He fired five times, lowering the rifle between rounds. When he was done he pointed aloft. Let me have that there big bear, he said.

The pitchman trolleyed the little card down a wire and unpinned it and handed it to Ballard. All of the red must be removed from the card to win, he said. He was looking elsewhere and didn't even seem to be talking to Ballard.

Ballard took the card in his hand and looked at it. You mean this here? he said.

All of the red must be removed.

Ballard's card had a single hole in the middle of it. Along one edge of the hole was the faintest piece of red lint.

Why hell fire, said Ballard. He slapped three more dimes on the counter. Step right up, said the pitchman, loading the rifle.

When the card came back you could'nt have found any red on it with a microscope. The pitchman handed down a ponderous mohair teddybear and Ballard slapped down three dimes again.

When he had won two bears and a tiger and a small audience the pitchman took the rifle away from him. That's it for you, buddy, he hissed.

You never said nothin about how many times you could win.

Step right up, sang the barker. Who's next now. Three big grand prizes per person is the house limit. Who's our next big winner.

The problem with Ira, even at that age, was that he was never very patient. He didn't like to wait for his dreams to come true. He didn't like to wait to get anything he wanted.

For example, Papa had this persimmon tree down in the pasture. It was a pretty good-size one, maybe six inches in diameter, and Ira'd been watching it that summer for the persimmons to get ripe. It was loaded down with fruit, but the thing about persimmons is that if they ain't just about ready to fall off the tree when you pick 'em, they'll make you sicker'n a dog.

And then he told me, "Go get me the ax out of the house."

It didn't take a genius to figure out what that meant. "Papa ain't gonna like it if you chop down that tree just to get a persimmon," I said.

"You want a persimmon or don't you?" he said. "Get on up there to the house and get the ax."

I knew better, of course. Hell, I knew better the whole quarter mile up to the house. Papa counted on those persimmons for eating when they got ripe, and I knew exactly what would happen when he caught us. Which he would. There was no way we could chop down a tree and have it escape his notice. He knew every inch of his land.

Papa never whipped any of the girls, but neither of us boys were strangers to getting beaten. Especially Ira.

He was furious. Almost possessed. He came roaring up into the house, all bleeding and banged up from the tree, and carrying the pole that Ira'd propped the tree up with. It was the most terrifying thing I'd ever seen.

Poor Ira tried to get away, running backward straight into a wall. "Charlie was there, too," he hollered, trying to put some of it off on me. "He's the one who got the ax."

But Papa didn't buy it. He got ahold of Ira and beat him with that post until Ira was just curled up on the floor protecting himself. And then he kept beating him until Ira couldn't move at all, until he was unconscious and bleeding. Mama finally got him to stop, holding on to his arm and begging until he threw the post down on the floor and stormed out the door.

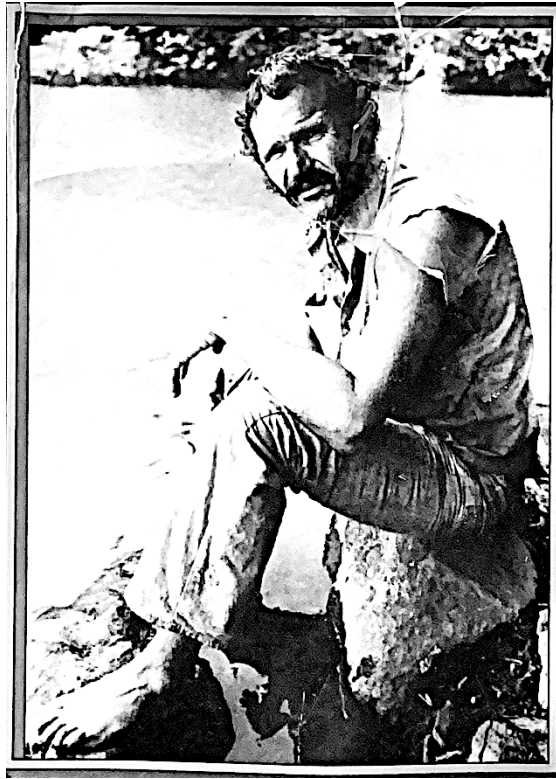
"Ira," Mama said, holding his head and trying to wake him up. "Oh, Charlsey," she said to my sister. "Run and get the doctor. I can't get him to wake up."

*Every single one of my friends is out of town this weekend for memorial day and I just didn't get the memo. I saw J last night and he invited me to New Orleans, but I'd have nothing to do and no one to see. I think I'm using cribbage and card games to fuel my co-dependence. Anyways, I brought up Rusty Kershaw and the lining notes he wrote for Neil's record. I brought up Charlie Louvin and how he could've just walked into the Opry instead of making some long odyssey of it all. I think the way illiterate people write about the world is wildly poetic.*

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Finally, a record deal



**GIVE ME JUST ONE EVENING  
and I'LL TEACH YOU TO  
HYPNOTIZE EASILY!**



*Oren Kimber as a young buckaroo, ca. 1920. (Courtesy Oren Kimber, GCCS HCB-25638/12)*

It was just a small caliber rifle. But you know it was on the outside of my leg, down here in this thick muscle. It didn't hit a bone or nothing, it just went on out. Left a little hole about as big as your little finger. Didn't even bleed that bad really. This other, though. Man I like to bleed to death. Like to died from shock. Lose that much blood, it shocks your whole system. Like you said while ago. If they hadn't had blood on the chopper that come for me, that'd been the end of me. And which it would have been a whole lot easier on everybody if it had. My mama took it hard. See, they didn't tell her I'd lost my arms and legs. They just said I had numerous injuries. And which they had done amputated everything as quick as they got my blood pressure back up. Hell, they couldn't do nothing else with me. I had two arteries wide open. And everything else, you know, they wasn't no saving it. They couldn't even tell exactly how many times I was shot. They estimated twenty rounds hit me. Might not have been that many. Might have been more. That's what my wounds was like. But them guys was used to dealing with that kind of stuff. Some of them doctors was doctors in World War II. I had one of them tell me, he used to talk to me all the time, come in there and set with me, he said he did surgery on several men who was shot with fifty-caliber bullets, and hell, they lived, some of em. You know it just depends on where you get hit.

But they had decided together that calling off the hunt would probably drive the crowd over the final brink to madness. They'd torn down most of the bleachers around the pit while Big Joe was still kicking Tuffy, and they might have torn down the house too if Joe Lon hadn't suddenly come out the back door with his daddy's shotgun and let off four rounds in the air. The shotgun calmed them down enough to get them off the place. But they were still dangerous and there was nothing to do but go on with the hunt.

A man suddenly came running out of the woods, screaming, the fog swirling at his pumping knees. He was running and screaming and Coach Tump recognized him as the one who was tainted from keeping over five hundred snakes on his personal property.

"They killing him. *Killing!* Butchering . . . My friend. Oh, Jesus God, my *only* friend."

Coach Tump got him calmed down, but never enough to find out exactly what was happening, only that somebody was getting killed. Since Buddy was dead and since Luther Peacock was nowhere about and since he, Coach Tump, was Honorary Chairman of the Roundup, he ran across the campground with Tommy Hugh and found five men, a woman, and two small children attacking a snake, a constrictor, eighteen feet long and more than two hundred pounds. The snake did not move; it didn't even look alive.

Tommy Hugh was screaming that it was hurt already from the cold, that it had no place to hide last night and its body temperature was down in the forties, and that besides it was harmless. Harmless! But the men and women were screaming about skin and food and steaks and danger. Danger! And they were hitting the snake with hatchets. They all had hatchets. Even the children.