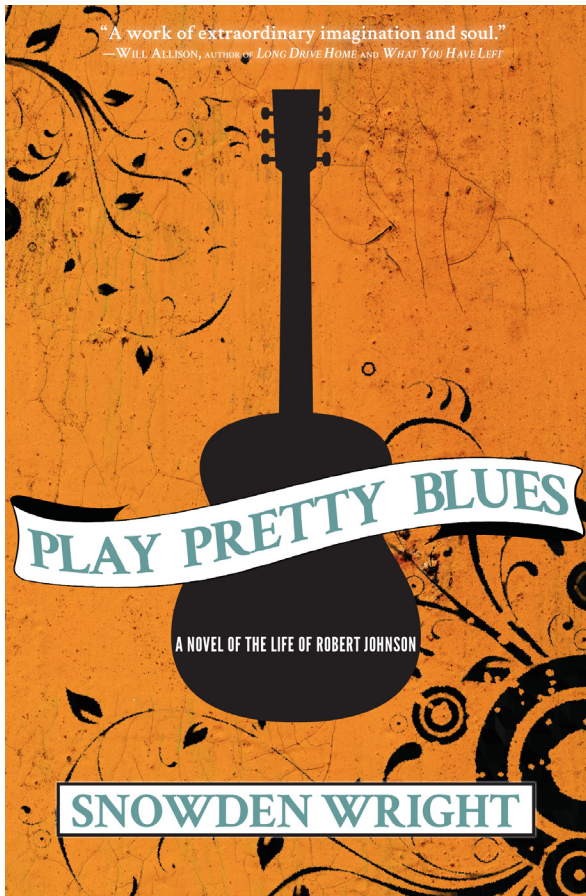


PLAY PRETTY BLUES

A NOVEL OF THE LIFE OF ROBERT JOHNSON
BY SNOWDEN WRIGHT

in paperback original and ebook from Engine Books



The first time Robert Johnson died he wasn't Robert Johnson. On a dog day in the summer of 1928, as then heard by two of us and as later verified in newsprint by all six of us, a man fitting his description walked into the Sparks Farm Cotton Gin five minutes before it was demolished by dynamite. The man who walked in the front door was called Robert Spencer. The man who snuck out the back door named himself Robert Johnson.

We have spent the past seventy years searching for him. Time and again, he has evaded our pursuit. Time and again, he has given us but sight of his ghost.

In this remarkable debut novel, Snowden Wright brings to life the man behind the legend of blues great Robert Johnson through the voices of Johnson's six wives. Part researched reconstruction, part vivid imagination, *Play Pretty Blues* reveals the husband, son, brother, and friend inside the myth, illuminating the vacuum his mysterious death left in the lives of those who loved him and those he would never meet.

Drawing on his Mississippi upbringing, where he was surrounded by the places Johnson lived and wandered and by the legends and tales that shaped our understanding of his music, Wright relays to readers the dense, dangerous beauty of Mississippi in the early twentieth century through the voices of six remarkable women whose love for a man so many thought they knew transcends their loss and reshapes their lives.

"WRIGHT'S FERVENT, MUSICAL PROSE ACCOMPLISHES THE UNLIKELY AND IMPRESSIVE FEAT OF CAPTURING IN FICTION THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE BLUES. *PLAY PRETTY BLUES* IS A WORK OF EXTRAORDINARY IMAGINATION AND SOUL." —WILL ALLISON, AUTHOR OF *LONG DRIVE HOME* AND *WHAT YOU HAVE LEFT*

"IF YOU'RE GOING TO BASE A NOVEL ON THE LIFE OF ROBERT JOHNSON, YOU'D BETTER BE ABLE TO MAKE YOUR PROSE SING, AND SNOWDEN WRIGHT CAN. HE CAN ALSO MAKE IT HOWL. IN THESE STUNNING PAGES, HE'S CRAFTED A DARK AND DISSONANT TALE, TOLD BY SIX OF THE MANY WOMEN THE SHADOWY BLUESMAN BOASTED OF STASHING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY. IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE NEXT MAJOR WRITER TO EMERGE FROM MISSISSIPPI, SEARCH NO FURTHER. HERE HE IS." —STEVE YARBOROUGH, AUTHOR OF *THE END OF CALIFORNIA* AND *THE OXYGEN MAN*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

SNOWDEN WRIGHT was born and raised in Mississippi. He has written for *The Atlantic*, *Salon*, *Esquire*, and the *New York Daily News*. A graduate of Dartmouth College and Columbia University, Wright lives in New York. *Play Pretty Blues* is his first novel.

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