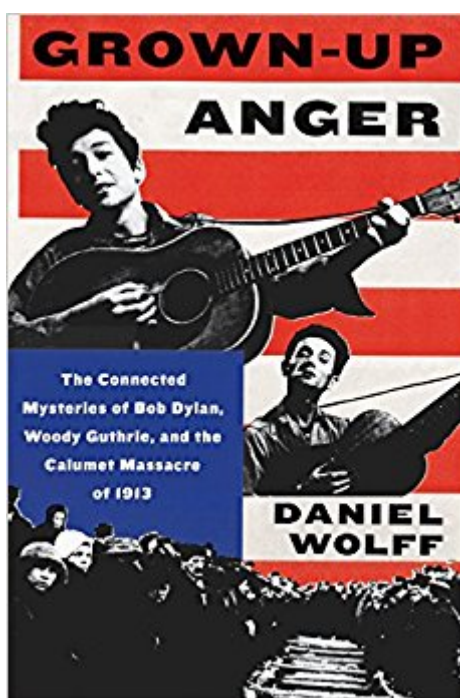


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# Grown-Up Anger: The Connected Mysteries Of Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, And The Calumet Massacre Of 1913



## Synopsis

A tour de force of storytelling years in the making: a dual biography of two of the greatest songwriters, Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, that is also a murder mystery and a history of labor relations and socialism, big business and greed in twentieth-century America—woven together in one epic saga that holds meaning for all working Americans today. When thirteen-year-old Daniel Wolff first heard Bob Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," it ignited a life-long interest in understanding the rock poet's anger. When he later discovered "Song to Woody," Dylan's tribute to his hero, Woody Guthrie, Wolff believed he'd uncovered one source of Dylan's rage. Sifting through Guthrie's recordings, Wolff found "1913 Massacre"—a song which told the story of a union Christmas party during a strike in Calumet, Michigan, in 1913 that ended in horrific tragedy. Following the trail from Dylan to Guthrie to an event that claimed the lives of seventy-four men, women, and children a century ago, Wolff found himself tracing the history of an anger that has been passed down for decades. From America's early industrialized days, an epic battle to determine the country's direction has been waged, pitting bosses against workers and big business against the labor movement. In Guthrie's eyes, the owners ultimately won; the 1913 Michigan tragedy was just one example of a larger lost history purposely distorted and buried in time. In this magnificent cultural study, Wolff braids three disparate strands—Calumet, Guthrie, and Dylan—together to create a devastating revisionist history of twentieth-century America. *Grown-Up Anger* chronicles the struggles between the haves and have-nots, the impact changing labor relations had on industrial America, and the way two musicians used their fury to illuminate economic injustice and inspire change.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“In this book so soberly inflamed that the pages seem to turn of their own accord the history of the American twentieth century is made of lodestars that don’t figure in conventional accounts. It is at precisely this moment that its story will be most fully heard. (Greil Marcus) “No matter how much you think you know about Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie, you’re wrong. This is the best sense anyone has ever made about the connection between them, and the best reappraisal either has had in a couple of decades. (Dave Marsh) “In *Grown-Up Anger*, Daniel Wolff assembles an American triad to raise the ghosts of greed and misery. Through memory, music, and a clear insight into the emotional process of protest, Wolff reminds us of how it did, and how it does, ultimately feel. (Patti Smith) “A masterful tale of music, social, and economic history. Wolff’s elegantly intertwined historical drama is consistently revelatory. A dazzling, richly researched story impeccably told. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) “Wolff provides a primer on the complicated history of anger, political and personal, in American music, one that’s never been more needed than it is today. There aren’t many cultural histories that read like they’ve been written for activists and fans. *Grown-Up Anger* moves to the head of that list. (Craig Werner, Evjue-Bascom Professor of Afro-American Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison, author of *A Change Is Gonna Come*) “The path leading from Woody Guthrie to Bob Dylan has been well traveled, but Daniel Wolff has gone off-road and forged bold new connections between the two cultural titans. The result is an imaginative tour de force that sheds new light on the heartbreaking history that created them both. (Anthony DeCurtis, contributing editor, *Rolling Stone*) “an exciting romp across labor union history through the lens of American music. Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie’s protest and solidarity songs represent the disaffection of those marginalized by industrialization, war, and later globalization. If you’re not sure why we need unions consider Daniel Wolff’s *Grown-Up Anger* a must read. (Karen Lewis, president of the Chicago Teachers Union, local 1 of the American Federation of Teachers) “*Grown-Up Anger* starts with popular music, but by the time Daniel Wolff has finished, it’s evolved into a fierce, lyrical excavation of buried history. Using anger

as a pickax, Wolff provides the details to the stories that make sense of where we are today—and where we need to be. (Timothy B. Tyson, author of *The Blood of Emmett Till*)

In this tour de force of storytelling, Daniel Wolff braids together three disparate strands—Bob Dylan, Woody Guthrie, and a labor strike in northern Michigan—to create a devastating revisionist history of twentieth-century America. At thirteen, when he first heard Dylan’s “Like a Rolling Stone,” Wolff recognized the sound of grown-up anger. When he later discovered Dylan’s tribute to Guthrie, Wolff fixed on it as a clue to a distinctive mix of rage and compassion. That clue led back to Guthrie’s 1913 Massacre—a memorial song about the horrific conclusion to a union Christmas party in Calumet, Michigan. Following the trail from Dylan to Guthrie to a tragedy that claimed seventy-four lives, Wolff found himself tracing a century-long history of anger. From America’s early industrialized days up to the present, the battle over economic justice keeps resurfacing: on a freight car in California, on a joyride through New Orleans, in a snowy field in Michigan. At the stunning conclusion—as the mysteries of Dylan, Guthrie, and the 1913 tragedy connect—the reader discovers a larger story, purposely distorted and buried in time. Daniel Wolff’s *Grown-Up Anger* chronicles the struggles between the haves and the have-nots, the battle to organize American workers, and the way two musicians used their fury to illuminate injustice and spark hope.

Wolff has written a fascinating exploration of the lives of Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and the copper country of Michigan. Many surprises for every and all reader. Very highly recommended!!

I’ve read many books on Dylan, quite a bit by and about Guthrie, and studied—years ago—the history of labor and socialism in the US in the 19th and 20th centuries. That’s the background of my appreciation of Wolff’s book, which I consider brilliant. He set himself a daunting task, and achieved its goals with fine success, intertwining labor history, Guthrie’s story (and songwriting development), and Dylan’s early story (and songwriting development up to “Like A Rolling Stone”) with elegance and great storytelling drive. Griel Marcus’s blurb on the book is accurate—the pages seem to turn themselves, the narrative is so well-written and exciting—all presuming the topics are of interest to one. There is a chapter on the development of Dylan’s songs and recordings from his third LP (“The Times They Are A-Changin’”) through his fifth (“Bringing It All Back Home”) that tells of that

trajectory more concisely, accurately, and illuminatingly than, in my fairly well-read-on-Dylan experience, has ever been done. As Dylan listeners know, that is THE period of development in his songwriting that counts most of all. And overall, while I wouldn't call the book "revisionist history" as some have done, it lives up to the promise in its subtitle: it explains elements of the "mysteries" of Guthrie and Dylan, as well as delving into the "mystery" of what happened in the Calumet tragedy of 1913, and ties these all together, in a surprisingly insightful and convincing way.

They say: "Where there's smoke, there's fire." Meaning there is a good foundation to the suspicion of a situation. Woody Guthrie sang about the atrocity of the 1913 Massacre, also known the Italian Hall Disaster, a festive occasion with town miners of Calumet Michigan and their families which turned to tragedy. 73 people died senselessly - 59 innocent children perished on Christmas Eve, a time that should have been joyous and magical -- awaiting Santa to bring them gifts -- instead they were trampled under foot and stampeded. All over some practical joke. Someone falsely yelling "Fire!" This book "Grown-up Anger" produces a lot of smoke to back up the "fire" and the greed of the bosses that ran the mining company. Other books have been written on the subject, but I suspect Grown-Up Anger will be a classic over time. What's disturbing about this story is, like many times in our society, we have a swift and sloppy investigation and no resolve, just more questions and ultimately the big burning question: Why did this happen? It has been 104 years since this tragedy and author Daniel Wolff weaves an engaging triangle of anger. The chain of inspiration, or connection, is simple. Daniel Wolff was inspired by Bob Dylan. Dylan inspired by Woody Guthrie. Anger links the three and results in a fantastic and engaging new book "Grown-Up Anger." Wolff's book is rightly named "Grown-Up Anger" and you will be incensed too after you learn more about the 1913 Massacre. This book is informative and weaves politics, socialism, communism, rich, poor, haves and have-nots, power and class struggles and the culmination of one tragic night in America's dark history. Great anecdotes on Guthrie and Dylan. Woody Guthrie believed the doors were held shut on the outside by "the copper boss' thug men." He sings: "The copper boss' thugs stuck their heads in the door, One of them yelled and he screamed, "there's a fire!" Grown Up-Anger opens doors that were perhaps closed a long time ago by thugs and cost hardworking honest people, just trying to enjoy their families on that Christmas Eve night back in 1913. My first introduction to Woody Guthrie came via the Hal Ashby film "Bound for Glory" with David Carradine portraying Guthrie. Who does not know his famous song "This Land is Your Land"? He was a Dust Bowl Troubadour in a Steinbeck era of Grapes of Wrath. Riding box cars, hitching rides, rolling up his sleeves and struggling with the working-class pitted against big bosses. His songwriting and

poems reflected the inequality of labor unions and their "greedy" bosses. Dylan would later channel Guthrie and become one of the most influential songwriters of all time. I enjoyed Daniel Wolff's writing style, passion, lucidity and ability to tell us, like Guthrie and Dylan, something we need to know and why it still matters. Always remember: "This land belongs to you and me."

I have to admit a certain fascination with artists of yore, and that is not only because of where they came from and what they did, but because of what they stood for. Sadly, a lot of what that was is lost to so many, and the concept of activist artists seems mired in a climate of celebrity for celebrity's sake, PC culture, and forgetting what a cause worth standing up for actually is. To me, that is where a book like this comes in. Before reading this, I did not know a lot about the Calumet Massacre or the tragedy left in its wake, and I think that is why a book like this actually has something valuable to add not only on the artists here, but on the things that empowered them. With parts history, parts social commentary (without coming across with some implicit bias), parts activism, and more, it does a solid job crafting a narrative that it is interesting to read and that works as a reminder of why we sometimes speak out and how. The read is engaging, too, and that is equally important, because you have to not only have a message but deliver it as well.

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