

Shout, Sister, Shout!: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe

By Gayle Wald

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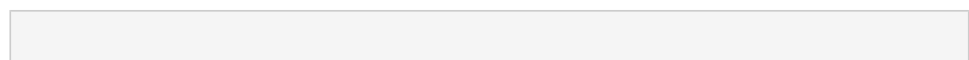
Shout, Sister, Shout!: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe By Gayle Wald

A *New York Times* Book Review Editor's Pick

Long before "women in rock" became a media catchphrase, African American guitar virtuoso Rosetta Tharpe proved in spectacular fashion that women could rock. Born in Cotton Plant, Arkansas, in 1915, Tharpe was gospel's first superstar and the preeminent crossover figure of its golden age (1945–1965).

Shout, Sister, Shout! is the first biography of this trailblazing performer who influenced scores of popular musicians, from Elvis Presley and Little Richard to Eric Clapton and Etta James. Tharpe was raised in the Pentecostal Church, steeped in the gospel tradition, but she produced music that crossed boundaries, defied classification, and disregarded the social and cultural norms of the age; incorporating elements of gospel, blues, jazz, popular ballads, folk, country, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll. Tharpe went electric early on, captivating both white and black audiences in the North and South, in the U.S. and internationally, with her charisma and skill. People who saw her perform claimed she made that guitar talk. Ambitious, flamboyant, and relentlessly public, Tharpe even staged her own wedding as a gospel concert-in a stadium holding 20,000 people!

Wald's eye-opening biography, which draws on the memories of more than a hundred people who knew or worked with Tharpe, introduces us to this vibrant, essential, yet nearly forgotten musical heavyweight whose long career helped define gospel, r&b, and rock music. A performer who resisted categorization at many levels-as a gospel musician, a woman, and an African American-Tharpe demands that we rethink our most basic notions of music history and American culture. Her story forever alters our understanding of both women in rock and U.S. popular music.



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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Though Elvis, Ginger Baker, Keith Richards and Jerry Lee Lewis paid her tribute, Sister Rosetta Tharpe's vast contribution to American musical history has nearly faded away. With the publication of this entertaining and enlightening biography, Tharpe—who reputedly played her electric guitar "like a man," withstood failed marriages, racial and sexual discrimination plus economic hardships—should receive the recognition she deserves. George Washington University professor Wald (*Crossing the Line*) has knit together memories of 150 people familiar with Tharpe and her work. Wald's competent research provides readers with the larger historical framework within which Tharpe's contributions can be appreciated. Born in Arkansas in 1915, Rosetta Tharpe became a well-known child performer, honing her gospel guitar style in Pentecostal churches and tent revivals throughout the South. By the late 1930s Tharpe relocated to Chicago, made the life-altering choice of forsaking Pentecostal church performances and embarked on a secular career, eventually signing with Decca Records. During the 1950s Tharpe's career sagged due to changing musical tastes, but a well-timed European tour in 1957 reignited her career. Tharpe courageously cut across racial, musical and sexual boundaries, defying easy categorization, which may have contributed to her obscurity. Wald's biography of this unique performer will hopefully reawaken interest in her life and music. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Most people today probably have never heard of Rosetta Tharpe or even seen pictures of her during her heyday at the Cotton Club, the Apollo Theater, Carnegie Hall, and even the Grand Ole Opry, spectacularly picking an electric guitar while decked out in a spangled evening dress. Wald's illuminating biography brings the deliciously flamboyant singer to life as gospel's first superstar and a seminal figure defying musical categorization. Tharpe influenced such stars as Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Etta James, Little Richard, Bonnie Raitt, Ruth Brown, and Isaac Hayes by incorporating blues, jazz, country, R & B, and pop ballads into a fundamentally gospel style, and without her precedent, Wald asserts, there would have been no Elvis (Wald suggests that Tharpe's 1945 crossover hit, "Strange Things Happening Every Day," may be the first rock 'n' roll record). What truly sets her apart is her extraordinary guitar playing. Now buried in an unmarked grave in Philadelphia, Tharpe was a larger-than-life figure in American pop music. May Wald's shimmering book revive her for new listeners. *June Sawyers*

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Review

A book like this is long overdue. Rosetta Tharpe was a major star and a huge influence on the musicians of her day. Listen to her recordings and you can hear all the building blocks of rock and roll. —Joan Osborne, singer-songwriter

"Rosetta was one of the most beloved and influential artists ever in gospel music . . . and she blazed a trail for the rest of us women guitarists with her indomitable spirit and accomplished, engaging style. She has long been deserving of wider recognition and a place of honor in the field of music history." —Bonnie Raitt

"Rosetta Tharpe's life is a classic American tall tale, except that it happened, and, in these pages, you are there." —Greil Marcus, cultural critic

"Rosetta Tharpe was one of my first influences, one of the first people I heard sing. I'm glad Gayle Wald has done a book on her because people need to know." —Isaac Hayes

"Absorbing . . . Very much a woman's story, refreshingly free of Svengalis and impresarios."—Laura Sinagra, *New York Times*

"Wald makes a good case that Tharpe's R&B spirituals played a key role in inventing rock."—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Rosetta Tharpe's life is a classic American tall tale, except that it happened, and, in these pages, you are there."—Greil Marcus, cultural critic and author of *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock'n'Roll Music*

"Wald's illuminating biography brings the deliciously flamboyant singer to life as gospel's first superstar and a seminal figure . . . Tharpe was a larger-than-life figure in American pop music. May Wald's shimmering book revive her for new listeners." —*Booklist*

"With the publication of this entertaining and enlightening biography, Tharpe—who reputedly played her electric guitar 'like a man,' withstood failed marriages, racial and sexual discrimination plus economic hardships—should receive the recognition she deserves."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Mixing tireless reporting with nuanced and cultural insights, Wald's *Shout, Sister, Shout!* is about as good as musical reparations get." —Tony Green, *Vibe*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Vanesa Thomas:

Book is usually written, printed, or outlined for everything. You can understand everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As it is known to us that book is important thing to bring us around the world. Adjacent to that you can your reading ability was fluently. A e-book *Shout, Sister, Shout!: The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe* will make you to be smarter. You can feel much more confidence if you can know about almost everything. But some of you think this open or reading the book make you bored. It is not necessarily make you fun. Why they may be thought like that? Have you trying to find best book or suitable book with you?

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Jennifer Valdovinos:

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