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## Shadowselves

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## REVIEWS

### Shadowelves



Jason Ockert  
Ann Arbor: Dzanc  
Books, 2022  
ISBN: 9781950539390  
192 p. \$16.95 (Pbk)

*Shadowelves*, Jason Ockert's third short story collection, includes ten stories previously published in prestigious, well respected literary journals, as well as one which appeared in an edited volume (*We Can't Help it if We're From Florida: New Stories from a Sinking Peninsula*). While not all of the stories are set in the Southeast, many are, including one with a hilarious (yet, for locals, I think for the most part accurate) depiction of the many different aspects of daily life in a South Carolina tourist beach town. Throughout the collection, the prose is artful and often surprising, with almost unnoticeable transitions between the real and the unreal and back again. The stories frequently work to upend readers' expectations and make them question what is happening. Although the stories are often dark, readers are not left with a sense of hopelessness but rather a sense of wonder, challenged to appreciate the beauty in even the unbeautiful aspects of life.

Fiction writer Jason Ockert knows the Southeast well. Although he is originally from Indiana, his family moved to Florida during his childhood and he currently teaches creative writing in South Carolina, at Coastal Carolina University (where, in the interest of full disclosure, the author of this review also works as a librarian, but where paths do not cross often). Ockert is the author of three collections of short stories, the first of which, *Rabbit Punches* (2006), was just re-issued in a new edition by Dzanc books in the fall of 2021. He has also written a novel, *Wasp Box*. His work has won many awards, including the Atlantic Monthly fiction contest and the Mary Roberts Rinehart award, and has been praised by

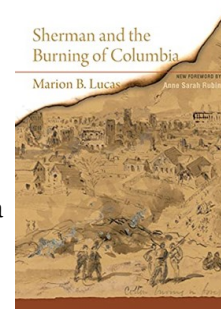
many other contemporary writers, including George Saunders, Karen Russell, and Padget Powell.

Libraries that collect contemporary fiction by Southeastern writers will not want to miss adding this volume to their collections. Critics have noted that Ockert "...is a natural heir to the grotesquery of Flannery O'Connor with his interest in misfits and his dark, powerful language" (Publisher's Weekly, October 4, 2021). Stories in the collection should be of interest to readers who value that tradition, and the modern twist that Jason Ockert brings to it.

Allison Faix, Coastal Carolina University

### Sherman and the Burning of Columbia

Marion B. Lucas  
Columbia: University of South  
Carolina Press, 2021  
ISBN: 9781643362458  
200 p. \$21.99 (Pbk)



Ann Sarah Rubin gave a presentation at a symposium sponsored by the University of South Carolina, in February 2021, where she introduced her talk, "Who Burned Columbia? Not I." According to her, she was setting the stage to promote a healthy discussion of the various opinions of the burning of the city and promoting the book *Sherman and the Burning of Columbia* by Marion Lucas. Drawing upon historians' opinions at the time, Rubin shared she "ultimately drew the same conclusions that many other historians have drawn - that the city burned through a combination of Confederate mismanagement and lax Union discipline" (Foreword). She explained that her audience "became aroused, shouting quotations, holding up books and sheaves of documents to prove her wrong" (Foreword). While she wondered why in 2021 so many voices were stridently opposing her sharing of historical research that supported a combination of factors leading to the burning of Columbia, she eventually surmised that "Columbians in particular clung to a sense of righteous indignation and victimization about