

Rebel Rebel

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In the town square where the rebel flag once flew, I buy a faded green sweatshirt emblazoned with the words *Rebel Rebel*.

My poems brought me to Oxford, Mississippi, a.k.a. *the velvet ditch*: a place you can fall into, get comfortable among Confederate rebels.

A Confederate statue guarded the campus entrance for 114 years. A monument to grief. To the Lost Cause. Our pain matters less than dead white rebels.

Rebel Rags. Rebel Appliance. Rebel Bookstore. Rebel Wine and Spirits. Rebel Paintball. Rebel Fever. Rebel Fitness. Rebel Well. Rebel Radio. Rebel Rebel.

Until 2003, Ole Miss's mascot was plantation owner Colonel Reb—long red coat, white goatee, crooked cane. Home games played in the dust of rebels.

Catfish and grits. *Garden & Gun*. Emmett Till's memorial marker marked with bullet holes again and again and again and again. rebel:

adjective. 1: opposing or taking arms against a government or ruler; of or relating to rebels. 2: disobedient, rebellious. Noun: one who rebels.

David Bowie's *Rebel Rebel* is a reverse riff of the Stones's (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction*. Lightning bolt. Hot tramp. End-of-glam rebel.

Every inch of this place has been touched by trauma. I feel it in the hills. In the loam. In the wilt of wild daffodils. Who honors the enslaved rebels?

That Confederate statue? Relocated to a Civil War cemetery overlooking Ole Miss's football field. Athletes demanded a barrier. It looms over practicing young Rebels.

My boyfriend traces his lineage back to slaveholders. His guilt is my kink.
What holds us together is not exactly love. Our bodies rise like rebels.

Magnolia trees splay green and wide in January. So few Black folk downtown,
but the Blues are everywhere. My ancestors walk with me: ghosts and rebels.

