

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/3

Virginia Newby
New Ground

Mississippi" 1905" One of Many Unsolved Lynchings

It must have been August
when they hired for day labor
in that land too beautiful to burn.
Riding in the buckled wagon
dark skins shot back the sun,
reflecting days of chattel;
the neck of the driver turning red
under his lank brown hair.
Fleabane and hydrangea mingled,
death song a paeon to the
exiled southern earth.
Conversation sparse:
Juke joint Saturday night,
their own fine women glittered up
knowing to treat them right.
No prayer whispered,
no warning sound explodes,
just the knife and the lash of the rope,
the sign marking new ground,
falling to the earth.