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Faulkner, Mississippi



Synopsis

In 1989, the Caribbean writer Edouard Glissant visited Rowan Oak, William Faulkner's home in Oxford, Mississippi. His visit spurred him to write a revelatory book about the work of one of our greatest but still least-understood American writers. "A fascinating way to read Faulkner. . . . [Glissant's] case is nothing less than that, no matter how Faulkner's personal Furies twisted his public speech, Faulkner was a great, world-beating multiculturalist." —Jonathan Levi, Los Angeles Times Book Review "A sharp, challenging, and wholly unique tour of Yoknapatawpha County." —Kirkus Reviews "Passionate. . . . Glissant's prose sometimes vies with Faulkner's for intricacy and evocative nuance." —Scott McLemee, Newsday "Glissant tries to engage Faulkner on many fronts simultaneously, positioning himself as a critic, a fellow artist and as a descendant of slaves. . . . He makes a convincing case that Faulkner is not just another 'dead white male author.'" —Scott Yarbrough, Raleigh News & Observer "[An] ambitious and, at times, rambunctious expedition into Yoknapatawpha County." —Christine Schwartz Hartley, New York Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

Setting out to perform a "fresh reading" of Faulkner, Glissant, a Martinican novelist and poet (Black Salt), admirably avoids the verbal thickets of academic prose. His nonlinear, impressionistic critique, nevertheless, seems ready-made for the academy. Glissant's vantage as a Caribbean francophone lends him a perspective on Faulkner, race and region that is especially enlightening. The book

opens with Glissant's account of traveling in Louisiana and Mississippi, gracefully sketching the landscape while evoking how alien he feels in the American South. After a brief overview of Faulkner's life and work (including all the novels, but concentrating on the Yoknapatawpha saga), the author plunges into the question of Faulkner and race, and here the book grows wildly diffuse. He exposes an ambivalence in Faulkner's workAa disturbing tendency to portray black people as irrational and bestial coupled with a conviction that the South's poverty and despair spring from its mistreatment of African-Americans. Also intriguing are the links he finds between Faulkner and French colonial writers such as Camus and Saint-John Perse. Glissant's careful detective work never leads to a significant larger point, however. As his focus widens, his reflections on contemporary life and theoretical mattersAtime and space, written vs. spoken language, the epic and the nature of communityAform a sometimes bewildering collage. This may be the point, however. "The unbound openness of the work is such that anyone can find a suitable path among those Faulkner proposes without betraying or losing oneself," he writes of Faulkner's oeuvre. The same may be said of Glissant's book, though that doesn't make it any easier to follow. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this brief, densely written, but unfortunately somewhat turgid volume, Glissant surveys the entirety of Faulkner's fiction to explore not only the relatively familiar themes of violence, the fall of the Old South (Compsons) and rise of the New (Snopeses), territorial conquest and ownership, community, and ancestry but also the manifestations of the Nobel prize winner's seldom-noted equivocations over racism in the South. Glissant does not organize his discussion around the various works but rather around the main themes he finds in Faulkner's fiction. A well-known black writer from Martinique for whom English is a second language, he demonstrates both an astonishing familiarity with the most minute particulars of the whole range of Faulkner's work on the American South and a remarkable ear for the different styles Faulkner usedAdifferences that may be more noticeable to a nonnative speaker. Touted by its publisher as a "highly original new book," Faulkner, Mississippi is just that. Highly recommended for academic libraries with extensive Faulkner collections.ACharles Crawford Nash, Cottey Coll., Nevada, MO Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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