



Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930-1990

Patricia Yaeger

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The story of southern writing—the Dixie Limited, if you will—runs along an iron path: an official narrative of a literature about community, about place and the past, about miscegenation, white patriarchy, and the epic of race. Patricia Yaeger dynamites the rails, providing an entirely new set of categories through which to understand southern literature and culture.

For Yaeger, works by black and white southern women writers reveal a shared obsession with monstrosity and the grotesque and with the strange zones of contact between black and white, such as the daily trauma of underpaid labor and the workings of racial and gender politics in the unnoticed yet all too familiar everyday. Yaeger also excavates a southern fascination with dirt—who owns it, who cleans it, and whose bodies are buried in it.

Yaeger's brilliant, theoretically informed readings of Zora Neale Hurston, Harper Lee, Carson McCullers, Toni Morrison, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, and Eudora Welty (among many others) explode the mystifications of southern literary tradition and forge a new path for southern studies.

The book won the Barbara Perkins and George Perkins Award given by the Society for the Study of Narrative Literature.

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