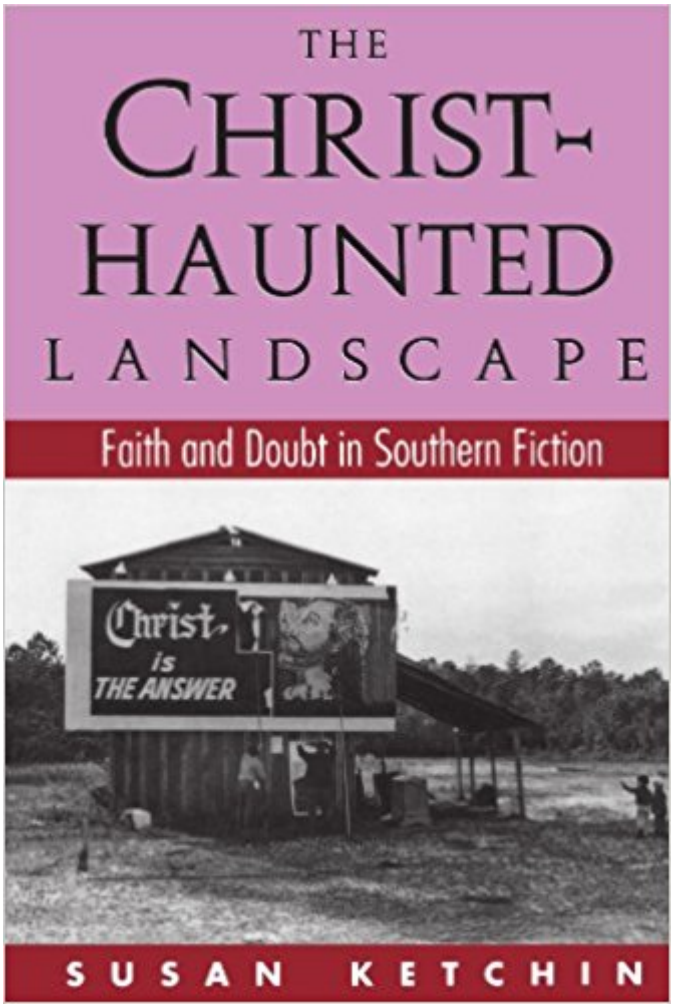
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The Christ-Haunted Landscape: Faith And Doubt In Southern Fiction



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Synopsis

Here are Susan Ketchin’s discerning interviews with twelve southerners living and writing in the South, and along with a piece of fiction by each are her penetrating commentaries about the impact of southern religious experience on their work.A little more than a generation ago Flannery O’Connor made a startling observation about herself and her fellow southerners: "By and large," she said, "people in the South still conceive of humanity in theological terms. While the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is most certainly Christ-haunted. The Southerner who isn’t convinced of it is very much afraid that he may have been formed in the image and likeness of God."Guided by O’Connor’s perceptive commentary about southerners in general, Susan Ketchin has created a deeply revealing collection that mirrors the pervasive role of religion in the literature by the recent generation of notable southern writers. Ketchin confirms that "old-time religion" remains a potent force in the literature of the contemporary South.Susan Ketchin, a writer, editor, and musician, lives in Orange County, North Carolina.

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Customer Reviews

Stories, interviews, and discussions showing the imprint of "old-time religion" on the artistic vision of twelve writers of the American South: Larry Brown, Reynolds Price, Allan Gurganus, Lee Smith, Clyde Edgerton, Harry Crews, Will Campbell, Doris Betts, Sheila Bosworth, Mary Ward Brown, Randall Kenan, Sandra Hollin Flowers

I loved this anthology for the stories it holds and the interviews between them. I am so envious of the experiences she had! This anthology holds some really powerful, thought-provoking stories and interviews. There were lines in the interviews that I felt spoke directly to my soul and expressed things that I never had the words to say. You do not have this experience often, needless to say.My only complaint is that many of the interviews revolve around other stories not chosen in this anthology, and if they are stories I have not read, I had no idea what they were talking about. At the end of a story you may really want the author's feedback and you get his/her feedback on a different story entirely. That said, it does encourage you to read all the other stories, which is great!

Okay, it is true--I'm the author of The Christ-haunted Landscape. I do love it, though, because of the authors in it. Each and every one of them was open, honest, sincere, and deeply generous in their giving of time, thought, and genuine experiences in their interviews and their making it possible for me to include the best of their stories in the book. The process of interviewing them, writing about them, and reading and engaging with the stories they chose of their own works to include changed me for the good.

Really nice to read Southern authors who speak honestly without being worried about being politically correct. Very uplifting work.

Were we so Christ haunted ? Flannery certainly thought so. Also, Paul Theroux.

Excellent stories - helps understand the influence of religion on the south. Enjoyed it

Outstanding

Flannery O'Connor died of lupus at age 39 in 1964, leaving us hard, clear and corrosive writing.Susan Ketchin's book examines the influence of religion on 12 living authors who shuffle down some of the same paths Miss O'Connor traveled. Miss O'Connor is the region's reigning recalcitrant Catholic. With discipline, spite and relentless rewriting, she created ornery, twisted and largely unrepentant Protestant characters. O'Connor looms large over this book (the title is her words). But that doesn't mean everyone here likes her. More than one finds her mean-spirited. Sheila Bosworth, another Catholic and friend of the late Walker Percy, asks why, if we are to thank

God for every good thing, why we can't indict him for the bad ones. Sitting across a plate of catfish with Larry Brown on his 40th birthday is an experience none of us are going to have, but Ms. Ketchin did. We get to listen to the former firefighter tell about a long effort to cut a boy out of a mangled car, with his former partner, now dead. His reflection on how one detail could have ended the boy1s life shows why Mr. Brown is a thoughtful writer. The value of this book is that the authors tend to be more direct in interviews than they allow themselves in their fiction. Ms. Ketchin's clear-eyed observation tells us what's important; what shaped the writer. It1s reassuring to see these authors are also decent men and women, who struggle with the same burdens their readers do. But they think about it longer and harder than most of us care to. "You spend most of your time thinking about, meditating upon, trying to dissect and understand just those aspects of the human animal that other human beings try their damndest never to thing about," Harry Crews says. Ms. Ketchin mentions the occasional patronizing tone of critics who read Southern women1s fiction. "Pull up a rocker on the front porch and pour a glass of ice tea," one writes in a favorable review of a Lee Smith novel. While Ms. Smith may have a different style than Joan Didion, she is just as sharp an observer of detail, and perhaps even better at genuine inner dialogue of her characters. No one would suggest pulling up a rocker for a Didion novel, nor should they for Ms. Smith, who is a serious writer blessed with a sharp sense of humor. To note Ms. Ketchin is the wife of author Clyde Edgerton would seem to be almost as condescending. But near the end of the book, she sets up the tape recorder for her spouse of more than 20 years, and gives him the same even-handed, thoughtful treatment she used for the other 11. I was glad to know she was married to an author; I believe it gives her an insight to their methods and frustrations others would not possess. For writers, it's heartening to see their heroes make mistakes and retell their shortcomings and doubt. I don't know for sure, but I bet Mr. Brown would take out a reference to Tom Selleck in "A Roadside Resurrection," if he had it to do over again. A man who wears a Flannery O'Connor T-shirt to book signings surely knows the value of making a story timeless. Will readers 30 years from now know who Tom Selleck was? Probably not. But then to hear him say "Whatever good is in this world has to have teeth in it if evil is to be dealt with," is worth the price of the book. Almost all of the dozen writers here say for fiction to last, it has to address things that matter -- life and death; good vs. evil; salvation or perdition. Lisa Ashmore johelton@earthlink.net

This compilation is an essential read for those who love the South, Southern writers and Southern fiction; or for those who may be curious to see how the mood of a region in which one lives can so fully encompass one that it demands to be put down on paper. Ms. Ketchin does an admirable job of

serving up a full-course Southern meal through the eyes of the diverse writers she interviews and excerpts. Some stories are serious, some funny, and some a little twisted; all are good. Coupled with the relaxed interviews with the authors, the reader feels connected.

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