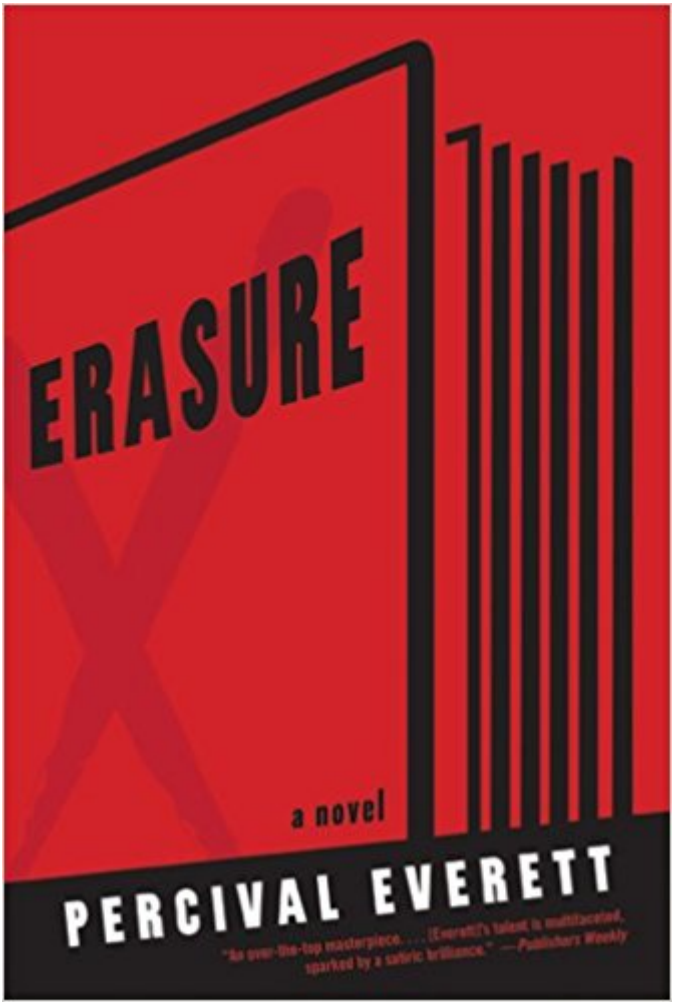
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Erasure: A Novel



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Synopsis

Percival Everett’s blistering satire about race and writing, available again in paperbackThelonious "Monk" Ellison’s writing career has bottomed out: his latest manuscript has been rejected by seventeen publishers, which stings all the more because his previous novels have been "critically acclaimed." He seethes on the sidelines of the literary establishment as he watches the meteoric success of We’s Lives in Da Ghetto, a first novel by a woman who once visited "some relatives in Harlem for a couple of days." Meanwhile, Monk struggles with real family tragediesÃ¢â ¬â ¢his aged mother is fast succumbing to Alzheimer’s, and he still grapples with the reverberations of his father’s suicide seven years before. In his rage and despair, Monk dashes off a novel meant to be an indictment of Juanita Mae Jenkins’s bestseller. He doesn’t intend for My Pafology to be published, let alone taken seriously, but it isÃ¢â ¬â ¢under the pseudonym Stagg R. LeighÃ¢â ¬â ¢and soon it becomes the Next Big Thing. How Monk deals with the personal and professional fallout galvanizes this audacious, hysterical, and quietly devastating novel.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Everett’s (Glyph; Frenzy; etc.) latest is an over-the-top masterpiece about an African-American writer who "overcomes" his intellectual tendency to "write white" and ends up penning a parody of ghetto fiction that becomes a huge commercial and literary success. Thelonius "Monk" Ellison is an erudite, accomplished but seldom-read author who insists on writing obscure literary papers rather than the so-called "ghetto prose" that would make him a commercial success. He finally succumbs to temptation after seeing the Oberlin-educated author of We’s Lives in da Ghetto during her

appearance on a talk show, firing back with a parody called My Pafology, which he submits to his startled agent under the gangsta pseudonym of Stagg R. Leigh. Ellison quickly finds himself with a six-figure advance from a major house, a multimillion-dollar offer for the movie rights and a monster bestseller on his hands. The money helps with a family crisis, allowing Ellison to care for his widowed mother as she drifts into the fog of Alzheimer's, but it doesn't ease the pain after his sister, a physician, is shot by right-wing fanatics for performing abortions. The dark side of wealth surfaces when both the movie mogul and talk-show host demand to meet the nonexistent Leigh, forcing Ellison to don a disguise and invent a sullen, enigmatic character to meet the demands of the market. The final indignity occurs when Ellison becomes a judge for a major book award and My Pafology (title changed to Fuck) gets nominated, forcing the author to come to terms with his perverse literary joke. Percival's talent is multifaceted, sparked by a satiric brilliance that could place him alongside Wright and Ellison as he skewers the conventions of racial and political correctness. (Sept. 21)Forecast: Everett has been well-reviewed before, but his latest far surpasses his previous efforts. Passionate word of mouth (of which there should be plenty), rave reviews (ditto) and the startling cover (a young, smiling black boy holding a toy gun to his head) could help turn this into a genuine publishing event.Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Thelonius "Monk" Ellison, author of experimental novels, is somewhat estranged from his family because he was favored by an emotionally distant, recently deceased father. When his sister is killed, Monk returns to Washington, D.C., to care for his mother, who is in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease. At the same time that he deals with family crises, Monk is also in the midst of a professional crisis after the seventh rejection of his most recent novel. In a fury over the success of We's Lives in Da Ghetto, a debut novel by a black woman exploiting racial stereotypes, Monk writes his own ultra ghetto novel. It is a parody, reminiscent of Native Son but with none of the pathos and perspective. Monk's main character is an Ebonics-spouting brute with no regard for his four children or their respective mothers. To his chagrin, the novel is a success, and Monk is left to struggle with artistic ethics versus the comforts of wealth. A scathingly funny look at racism and the book business: editors, publishers, readers, and writers alike. Vanessa BushCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

If I had to describe this book in one word it would be "intense".

Read alongside Ellison, Hurston, and Wright for a graduate course in the aesthetics of minority literature, this work provides a raucous take on its central question: what defines the work of the black (or brown, or yellow, or red) artist? Merit? Authenticity? Normativity? Innovation? Read it.

"Erasure" is a complex look at race,identity and publishing. The novel is narrated in first person by Thelonious "Monk" Ellison. Monk is the youngest of three children from a prominent east coast black family. He is a Harvard educated writer and holds most favorite son status within his family. Although Monk has published previous novels ranging from a rework of Aeschylus' "The Persians" to a novel featuring black characters, settings and experiences, none of them resulted in top seller status in the way "We's Lives in Da Ghetto" has. "We's Lives in Da Ghetto" was written by a first time novelist and is accepted by the publisher as the "truth" of the black experience. In fact, the success of "We's Lives in Da Ghetto" has caused Monk's publishers to encourage him to abandon his writings on any topic the publishers view as "not black enough". Of course as a black writer Monk can only write about black things. Frustrated by that erroneous notion Monk pens, under the pseudonym Stagg R. Leigh, a novel that highlights just about every black stereotype known to man. The novel was to be an affront to publishers and readers. The book is immediately picked up by a publisher and touted as the most authentic novel of the black experience ever written. The film rights are sold for a handsome amount and Stagg R. Leigh's work is positioned for early release and guaranteed best seller status.At times funny and always insightful, "Erasure" serves not only as an indictment of how racism influences publishing but also as a reminder that there is no such thing as "the" black experience. The writing is sharp, well paced and poignant. This is the first novel I've read by Everrett but it won't be the last. Highly Recommended.

You really have to pay attention because the narrative jumps from the character's reality to his thoughts constantly. It took me a minute to catch on.

Fuck. You forget Monk is even black. That's the way it should be, the point I believe Everett wanted us to discover.

The novel needs a translator near by, but the work is wonderful. It speaks volumes about the preconceived notions of society and the concept of art.

A contemporary that feels like a classic.

I almost gave up on this, but I am so glad I did not - worth the read; this book is thought provoking and will stay with me a long time.

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