



Race Mixing: Southern Fiction since the Sixties

Suzanne W. Jones

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In the southern United States, there remains a deep need among both black and white writers to examine the topic of race relations, whether they grew up during segregation or belong to the younger generation that graduated from integrated schools. In *Race Mixing*, Suzanne Jones offers insightful and provocative readings of contemporary novels, the work of a wide range of writers—black and white, established and emerging. Their stories explore the possibilities of cross-racial friendships, examine the repressed history of interracial love, reimagine the Civil Rights era through children's eyes, herald the reemergence of the racially mixed character, investigate acts of racial violence, and interrogate both rural and urban racial dynamics.

Employing a dynamic model of the relationship between text and context, Jones shows how more than thirty relevant writers—including Madison Smartt Bell, Larry Brown, Bebe Moore Campbell, Thulani Davis, Ellen Douglas, Ernest Gaines, Josephine Humphreys, Randall Kenan, Reynolds Price, Alice Walker, and Tom Wolfe—illuminate the complexities of the color line and the problems in defining racial identity today. While an earlier generation of black and white southern writers challenged the mythic unity of southern communities in order to lay bare racial divisions, Jones finds in the novels of contemporary writers a challenge to the mythic sameness within racial communities—and a broader definition of community and identity.

Closely reading these stories about race in America, *Race Mixing* ultimately points to new ways of thinking about race relations. "We need these fictions," Jones writes, "to help us imagine our way out of the social structures and mind-sets that mythologize the past, fragment individuals, prejudge people, and divide communities."

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