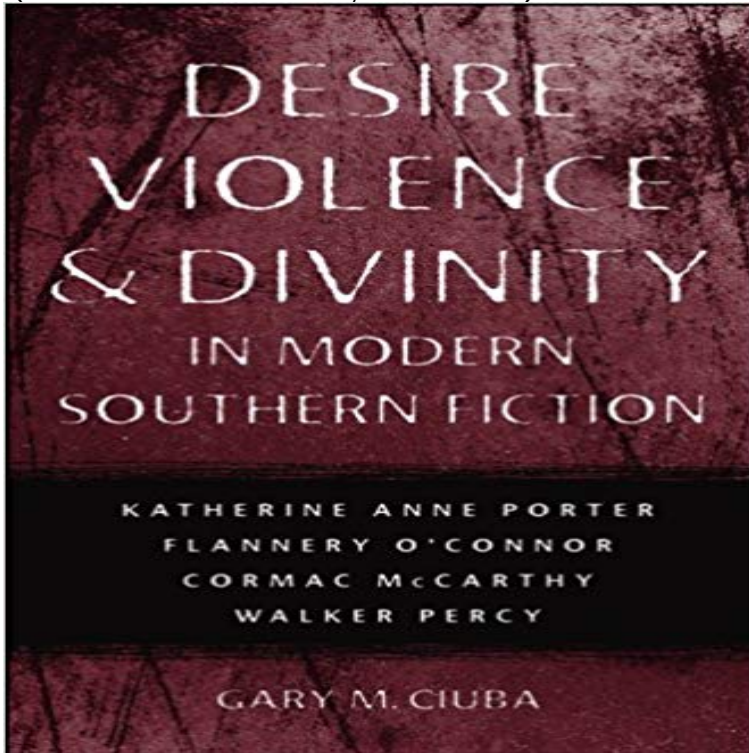


Desire, Violence & Divinity in Modern Southern Fiction: Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy, Walker Percy (Southern Literary Studies)



In this groundbreaking study, Gary M. Ciuba examines how four of the Souths most probing writers of twentieth-century fiction—Katherine Anne Porter, Flannery O'Connor, Cormac McCarthy, and Walker Percy—expose the roots of violence in southern culture. Ciuba draws on the paradigm of mimetic violence developed by cultural and literary critic Rene Girard, who maintains that individual human nature is shaped by the desire to imitate a model. Mimetic desire may lead in turn to rivalry, cruelty, and ultimately community-sanctioned and sometimes ritually sanctified victimization of those deemed outcasts. Ciuba offers an impressively broad intellectual discussion that gives universal cultural meaning to the southern experience of desire, violence, and divinity with which these four authors wrestled and out of which they wrote. In a comprehensive analysis of Porters semiautobiographical Miranda stories, Ciuba focuses on the prescribed role of women that Miranda imitates and ultimately escapes. OConnors *The Violent Bear It Away* reveals three characters whose scandalous animosity caused by religious rivalry leads to the unbearable stumbling block of violence. McCarthys protagonist in *Child of God*, Lester Ballard, appears as the culmination of a long tradition of the sacred violence of southern religion, twisted into his own bloody faith. And Percys *The Thanatos Syndrome* brings Ciubas discussion back to the victim, in Tom Moores renunciation of a society in which scapegoating threatens to become the foundation of a new social regime. From nostalgia for the old order to visions of a utopian tomorrow, these authors have imagined the interrelationship of desire, antagonism, and religion throughout southern history. Ciubas insights offer new ways of reading Porter, O'Connor, McCarthy, and Percy as well as their contemporaries who inhabited the same

culture of violence violence desired, dreaded, denied, and deified. AUTHOR BIO: Gary M. Ciuba is the author of Walker Percy: Books of Revelations and numerous articles on modern southern fiction. He is a professor of English at Kent State University.

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