ForeWord Reviews

GENERAL

Behold, This Dreamer
Charlotte Miller
New South Books
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Miller's debut Southern epic chronicles the formative years of a man consumed by the best kind of hubris-the pride to withstand any adversity. Janson Sanders, half American Indian, half-white, comes of marrying age in the depression era of the old South. His saga is, in essence, the story of any minority member-how both prejudice and resilience are passed on through generations. Sanders inherits his pride from his father, who raised enough money picking cotton to grow his own crop. The young Sanders suffers indignity at the hands of his father's contemporaries as well as their sons and daughters. His trials include beatings, threats, robbery, attempted rape of loved ones, and murder.

Amidst these actions, Miller uses long stretches of text to repeat how the characters feel about their lot. When Sanders is beaten, his mother reflects, "It seemed an eternity later when Henry had returned to the house with his mother, an eternity in which Nell had thought she would see her son bleed to death there on that old bed, an eternity in which she watched blood soak into the clean petticoat she pressed to the wound, and into the sheet and linens on the bed, an eternity in which she prayed for sight of her husband and her mother-in-law." Miller will not let readers forget that the characters love each other, or that they are proud, or that they have suffered much. Perhaps the book could have been accomplished in fewer than 500 pages.

Sanders is forced by circumstances to leave his native Eason County, Alabama, to seek a new life in Georgia only to encounter more hardship and find that in the end he must return to Eason County to confront his future. In the forthcoming two sequels, Miller intends to reveal what Sander's pride can ultimately accomplish.

Jo-Ann Graziano