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The Cherokee Rose: A Novel of Gardens & Ghosts

Tiya Miles
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With both modern-day and historical characters equally believable in their desires and life journeys, this novel tells a little-known story that is complex and captivating.

With *The Cherokee Rose*, Tiya Miles has written a complex and suspenseful tale of the Old South, the modern world, and how history is always with us. More specifically, this is the story of three strong women, each working separately to understand herself, the world, and her place in it. Their lives are conjoined at the intersection of the legacy of slavery, the unfinished business of the Cherokee Nation, and its removal from Georgia and North Carolina in the early 19th century.

Miles is a distinguished professor of American culture, history, Afro-American and African studies, Native American studies, and Women's studies. Yet, in *The Cherokee Rose*, she has adroitly managed to avoid the dryness often associated with academic writing. Introducing Ruth, stuck in her work cubicle and her job, Miles writes, "Reaching for her travel mug, she took a sip of bad office coffee, then pulled off her tortoise-shell glasses and tugged a corkscrew of thick, dark hair."

The Cherokee Rose is filled with characters both modern and historical: the contemporary characters are warmly portrayed as actual persons with talents, virtues, and flaws; the historical characters are based on years of detailed research done by the author and are equally believable.

The novel has a significant historical section, a recounting of slave life on and around a plantation in Georgia. It relates the interaction between Native Americans who owned slaves, the slaves, and white missionaries who operated in the vicinity. The story is often graphically brutal and realistic, but it plays an essential part in the novel and can in no way be characterized as gratuitous or exploitive.

The nearly ten-page author's note is nearly as captivating as the novel. Here, Miles explains the historical research she conducted at the Vann plantation in Georgia, a real-life plantation much like the fictional one depicted in the novel.

In addition to *The Cherokee Rose*, Miles has written two histories: *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* and *Ties That Bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee Family in Slavery and Freedom*.

JOHN SENGER (Spring 2015)

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