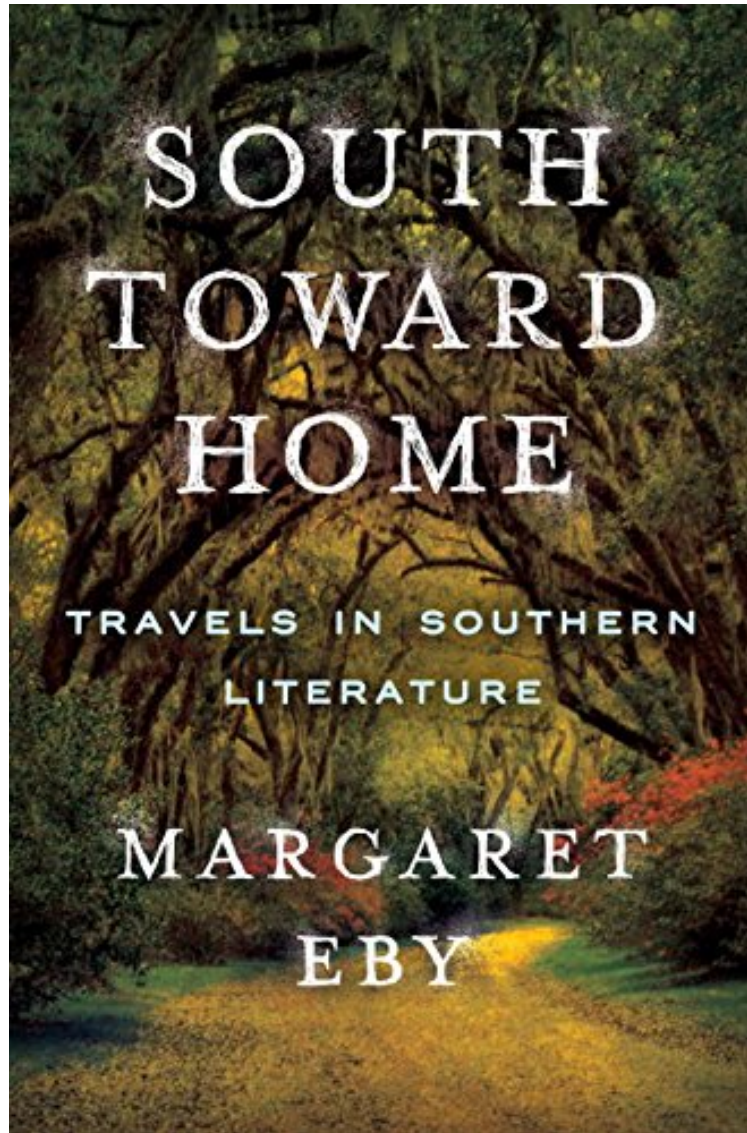


[Ebook pdf] South Toward Home: Travels in Southern Literature

## South Toward Home: Travels in Southern Literature

*Margaret Eby*

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**Margaret Eby : South Toward Home: Travels in Southern Literature** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised South Toward Home: Travels in Southern Literature:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. What defines a Southern writer? -- approached through ten Southern authors and visits to their hometownsBy R. M. PetersonMargaret Eby addresses a matter that has occupied many other literary critics: what defines a Southern writer? Eby's thesis is that "what makes a Southern writer a Southern writer is not just the circumstances of his or her birth but a fierce attachment to a particular place, and a commitment to

exploring its limits in his or her work." She illustrates that thesis through traveling to the hometowns of ten famous writers from the Deep South. *SOUTH TOWARD HOME* adopts a singular and useful approach to the question of what defines a Southern writer, and in Eby's hands it turns out to be an engaging and informative book on the literature of the South. The ten writers around whom Eby organizes her book are Eudora Welty, Richard Wright, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, Harry Crews, Harper Lee and Truman Capote, John Kennedy Toole, and Barry Hannah and Larry Brown. Visiting their homes takes her to Jackson and Oxford in Mississippi, Milledgeville and Bacon County in Georgia, Monroeville in Alabama, and New Orleans. The reader learns a lot about Eby's authors, in a relaxed, non-pedantic fashion. I already knew a fair amount about Faulkner and O'Connor, but even with them I gained a richer understanding. I found Eby's discussions of Welty and Toole especially informative. (I finished the book with a resolve to read more of Welty's novels soon, and perhaps re-read "Confederacy of the Dunces", about which I was less than enthusiastic the first time around.) Eby's prose is ideal for a book of this sort. It is smooth and flowing, never calling attention to itself. Ultimately, I doubt that *SOUTH TOWARD HOME* will end the musings about what it is that defines a Southern writer -- though I am certain that Eby, who comes across as even-keeled, is not so presumptuous or arrogant to pretend that her book is the be-all and end-all. (I tend to think that the matter is related to the overwhelming influence of Faulkner on matters literary, and he just happened to hail from the South.) In the course of the book, Eby does offer reflections from other writers on the subject, two of which from Eudora Welty are worth repeating: " 'Regional,' I think, is a careless term, as well as a condescending one, because what it does is fail to differentiate between the localized raw material of life and its outcome as art. 'Regional' is an outsider's term; it has no meaning for the insider who is doing the writing, because as far as he knows he is simply writing about life." "[Southern writers] do not need reminding of what our subject is. It is humankind, and we are all part of it. When we write about people, black or white, in the South or anywhere, if our stories are worth the reading, we are writing about everybody." 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Southern Lit, from a Refreshing Viewpoint By T. Barksdale As a Southerner and avid reader, I had eager anticipations when I started this book. It exceeded my expectations. Ms. Eby has done a superb job of not only summarizing the works of the South's foremost authors, but of placing their work in a context of time and place that gives fresh insight into the link between their personal and literary lives. The result is an absolute gem. The bare facts of the author's lives are well known, but no one had pulled it altogether in such a refreshing way. If you like American literature, you want to read this one. If you are a Southerner or a fan of modern Southern literature, it's an absolute must. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Dixie Delights By James E. Haynes For readers who like literary journeys and Southern writers, this is a do-not-miss book. Chunk full of tidbits about John Kennedy Toole (and why, by the way, has a great movie never been made of *Confederacy of Dunces*?), Flannery O'Connor and, of course William Faulkner, among others, the writer has a sharp eye and keen wit. She leaves out some biggies like Carson McCullers, Shelby Foote and, woefully, Margaret Mitchell. But perhaps, the author, who hails from Alabama, means to think about Mitchell tomorrow and will include her and others in a future similar volume.

A literary travelogue into the heart of classic Southern literature. What is it about the South that has inspired so much of America's greatest literature? And why, when we think of Flannery O'Connor or William Faulkner or Harper Lee, do we think of them not just as writers, but as Southern writers? In *South Toward Home*, Margaret Eby herself a Southerner travels through the South in search of answers to these questions, visiting the hometowns and stomping grounds of some of our most beloved authors. From Mississippi (William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Richard Wright) to Alabama (Harper Lee, Truman Capote) to Georgia (Flannery O'Connor, Harry Crews) and beyond, Eby looks deeply at the places that these authors lived in and wrote about. *South Toward Home* reveals how these authors took the people and places they knew best and transmuted them into lasting literature. Side by side with Eby, we meet the man who feeds the peacocks at Andalusia, the Georgia farm where Flannery O'Connor wrote her most powerful stories; we peek into William Faulkner's liquor cabinet to better understand the man who claimed civilization began with distillation and the "postage stamp of native soil" that inspired him; and we go in search of one of New Orleans's iconic hot dog vendors, a job held by Ignatius J. Reilly in John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. From the library that showed Richard Wright that there was a way out to the courtroom at the heart of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Eby grapples with a land fraught with history and mythology, for, as Eudora Welty wrote, "One place understood helps us understand all places better." Combining biographical detail with expert criticism, Eby delivers a rich and evocative tribute to the literary South. map

Well-informed and lively. This young author is unafraid to hunt big game. [Eby] demonstrates apt critical insights and offers biographical tidbits from a thorough reading of the authors life stories. This reviewer would happily read a sequel. - Howell Raines, *New York Times Book [A]* fascinating paean to the people and places that inspired some of the most revered chroniclers of life below the Mason-Dixon line. Eby lyrically uncovers a bit of the magic that makes a southern writer southern. - Josh Steele, *Entertainment Weekly [An]* engaging journey. Eby offers something you cant get on tours. - Anushah Jiwani, *Oxford American* As Elif Batuman did for Russian literature in *The Possessed* and

Olivia Laing did for alcoholic writers in *The Trip to Echo Spring*, so Margaret Eby does for Southern writers in *South Toward Home*. - Michael Bourne, *The Millions* A delightful love letter to the South and an apt reminder that the South is no literary backwater but a world of letters all its own. - Publishers Weekly An illuminating journey to the homes, towns, and landscapes that nurtured ten Southern writers. Eby brings a fine sensibility to her readings and, in polished prose, offers a fresh look at their lives and literary legacies. - Kirkus s A sweetly personal yet embracingly informative book. Eby entices us to enjoy their work either for the first time or once again. - Booklist, Starred review Margaret Eby brings an enviable ease and intelligence to this exploration of ten essential Southern writers and the landscapes from which their books were formed. Her travels should offer you either an excellent introduction to these authors or a bracing reminder of their worth, and indeed, turning these pages, I recalled why I first fell in love with those whose books I know well and was persuaded to reinvestigate those whose books I don't. - Kevin Brockmeier About the Author Margaret Eby has written for the *New York Times*, *The New Yorker*, the *Paris Daily*, *Bookforum*, *Salon*, *Slate*, and the *Los Angeles Times*. Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, she now lives in New York City.