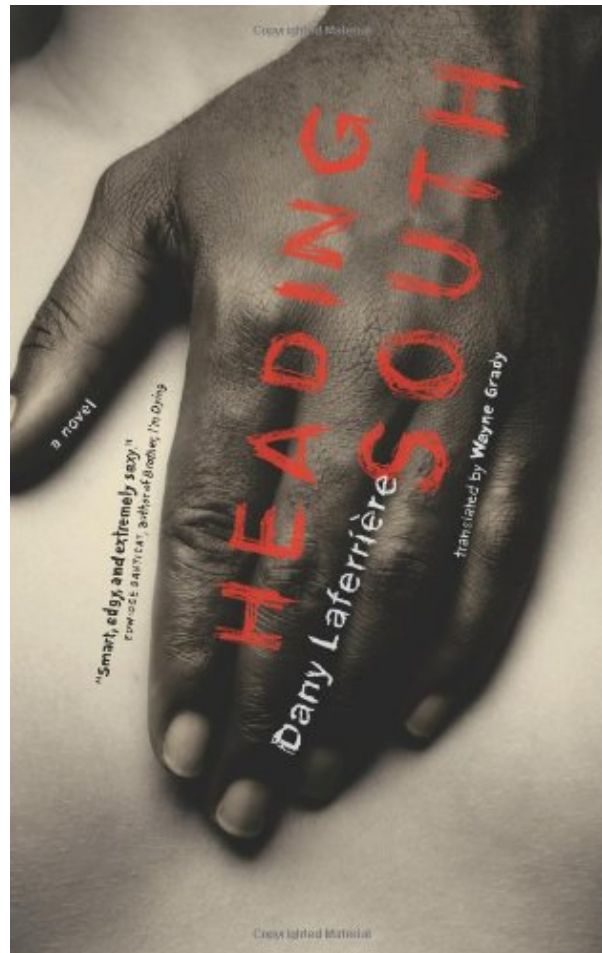
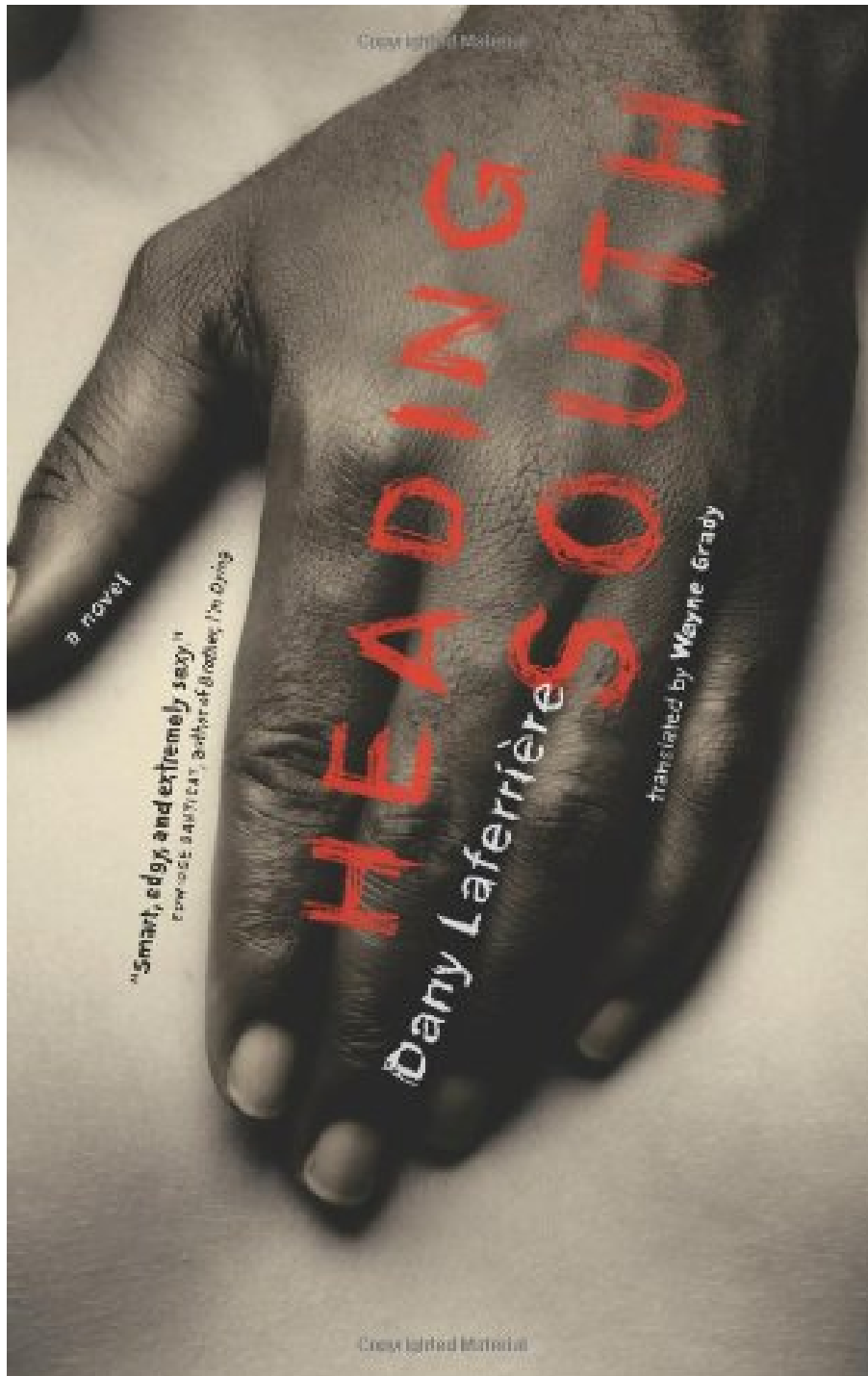


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Review

"Dany Laferriere is that very rare writer who can make you laugh out loud and also make your soul ache. His work is smart, edgy, and extremely sexy. *Heading South* is all of these things and more."—Edwidge Danticat, author of *Breath, Eyes, Memory*

"Deftly presented, this evocation of a sultry, seamy island paradise serves as the literary counterpart of the joyous, funky music of Haiti and the paintings of its "naive" school of artists, who present exaggerated figures in a rough and brightly colored world"—Library Journal

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About the Author

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On the sun-drenched island of Haiti in the 1970s, under the shadow of “Baby Doc” Duvalier’s notorious regime, locals eke out an existence as servants, bartenders and panderers to the white elite. Fanfan, Charlie, and Legba, aware of the draw of their adolescent, black bodies, seduce rich, middle-aged white tourists looking for respite from their colourless jobs and marriages.

These “relationships” mirror the power struggle inherent in all transactions in Port-au-Prince’s seedy back streets. Heading South takes us into the world of artists, rappers, Voodoo priests, hotel owners, uptight Parisian journalists and partner-swapping Haitian lovers, all desperately trying to balance happiness with survival.

Made into an award-winning film starring Charlotte Rampling, this provocative novel, translated for the first time into English, explores the lines between sexual liberation and exploitation, artistic freedom and appropriation, independence and colonialism.

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Lukewarm despite the literal and figurative heat it offers

By Daniel Gamboa

Perhaps, I am to blame for not being fully satisfied by reading this novel. It has been almost two years since I have taken an interest in Caribbean literature. I wanted to read a novel by a Haitian writer and Dany Laferrière was one of the few ones I found.

"Heading South" reminds me, in structure, to Mittelholzer's "A Morning at the Office", Naipaul's "Miguel Street", Selvon's "Lonely Londoners" and Condé's "Crossing the Mangrove". Laferrière's novel is made up several chapters that can be read, more or less, as single short stories, where new characters are introduced and come back in later chapters as the novel progresses.

While I like this structure, Mittelholzer's novel being my favorite so far, in "Heading South" I felt there was not enough character development or even physical descriptions. This led to being confused as to who was who, specially when a character came back into the novel several chapters later. If you ask me, all characters behaved pretty much the same way and had very similar personalities. I never had the opportunity to know a character really well, and the reason of this is that not one of them was the missing link that gave the novel unity.

I also had a problem with the sense of place in this novel. For me, a sense of place is not created by mentioning names of streets and areas in a country. This is where I am going to blame myself, because perhaps I was expecting Laferrière to be the typical Caribbean writer, where the sense of place is almost star in the Caribbean novels that I have read. In my opinion, this novel could have happened anywhere in the world. Except for brief descriptions here and there, I cannot really say I felt as if I was in Haiti, although there is brief historical context enough to let you know when the story happens

However, the novel is fluent and it keeps you writing without wanting to stop. Foreigners are all in the search of wanting to fill the void in their lives, specially now that they are in their silver years, while locals are more than willing to fill that void with their youth and their strong personalities. Of course, nothing in life is for free, but, and this is something I liked about "Heading South", not once locals behave as if deep inside they want to lead a different life. They are proud of who they are and what they can achieve with what God gave them. I liked how the characters embrace who they are without caring about morality. The characters actually give their feelings the priority they deserve, and while this "sometimes" makes them look as amoral and self-centered, this book shows us how also "sometimes" morality and selflessness contribute to our

unhappiness.

Had "Heading South" included more character development and offered a more thorough sense of place, it would have been, in my humble opinion, a five star novel.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

A different direction

By geography student

I was partway through Leferriere's 1993 novel "An Aroma of Coffee" when I found "Heading South" in a library. This is the third Leferriere novel I've read, and its tone is so different. The author captures the spirit of an entire town, with the big interweaving cast of a Latin American storytelling novel, but the language is modern and cinematic. "Heading South" is exciting and quick paced, and the characters have nerve. In a year that has been so difficult for Haiti, it feels right to see fiction that shows the beauty and complexity of the country.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Warm and bleak at the same time

By The Open Books

Not the only work by Dany laferriere I read, but one of my favorite ones.

Raises important questions about a certain kind of tourism in the "South", and the northern societies that produce it.

Highly recommended if you are interested into (re-)discover this great author.

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