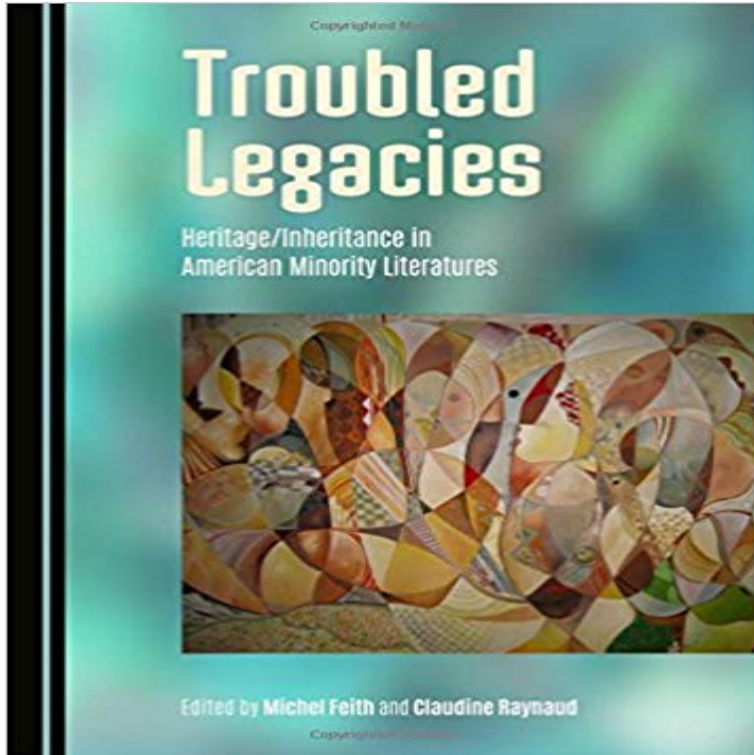


Troubled Legacies: Heritage/Inheritance in American Minority Literatures



What is being passed on? The questions of heritage and inheritance are crucial to American minority literatures. Some inheritances are claimed; some are imposed and become stifling; others still are impossible, like the memories of oppression or alienation. Heritage is not only patrimony, however; it is also a process in a state of constant reconfiguration. The body its semiotics, its genealogy, its pressure points figures prominently as inevitable referent for the minority racial/ethnic subject, the performance, and the writing of difference. This collection of essays analyzes contemporary novels from major African American writers, such as Gayl Jones, Phyllis Alesia Perry, Percival Everett, John Edgar Wideman, and Colson Whitehead, and ethnic American novelists like Jeffrey Eugenides, Philip Roth, Gish Jen, and Sergio Troncoso. It also includes the study of a painting by African American artist Robert Colescott. The first section of the book examines the inscription of African American writers relation to the nations past: the trauma of slavery, the burden of foundational discourses, or the legacy of the classical philosophical canon. The second part of the text is an assessment of the postmodern aesthetics of contemporary black fiction in the construction of history, unveiling the modalities of the palimpsest, fragmentation, intermediality, mises en abyme, in a complex grammar of haunting and denial. Gathering essays on Greek-American, Jewish-American, Chinese-American and Mexican-American fiction, the final section delineates new conceptions of ethnicity based on fluidity, hybridity, and performativity. Cross-ethnic experimentations in super-diversity, according to which identities become optional, an array of choices rather than forced belonging, seem to be pointing the way to the next stage, that of a post-racial, post-ethnic society. Yet the conjugated

strictures of race and class still limit these choices to a significant degree, and the works discussed in this volume often playfully or sarcastically question the validity of the post. They ultimately ask: who shall inherit America?

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