



Morality, Identity and Narrative in the Fiction of Richard Ford. (Costerus NS, 176)

Brian Duffy

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Morality, Identity and Narrative in the Fiction of Richard Ford is only the second monograph on the work of Richard Ford and the only one to deal with all three Frank Bascombe novels. The book offers comprehensive readings of the trilogy and the stories of *Women with Men* and *A Multitude of Sins*, thus bringing critical work on Ford up to date. Richard Ford insists that fiction contain a "moral vision", and this study takes up that challenge by investigating Ford's characters through the interconnections of morality, identity and narrative. It draws on the moral theories of Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, and on the work on narrative and identity of French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. But it also explores in detail the portrait of contemporary American society and culture offered in the trilogy, analysing the individualism, exclusionary independence and laissez-faire principles of *Independence Day*, and the consumerism, sectionalism, self-absorption, enervation and violence of *The Lay of the Land*. This study traces the emerging vision in the trilogy of America as an atomized society in a state of disharmony and fear, and as a culture casting around for meaning, identity and spiritual peace. The book also contains an extensive recent interview with Richard Ford.

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