

### **From Publishers Weekly**

A time of book banning, red baiting and the denial of a woman's right to an abortion, Smith's 1950s are a dismal era redeemed only by their proximity to the 1960s. The two decades clash in the persons of lovers, husbands and wives in this uneven, heavy-handed Southwestern coming-of-age story. In 1956, 16-year-old Texan Jimbo Proctor is invited by his redneck Uncle Waylan and Waylan's second wife, left-leaning schoolteacher Vicky, to spend the summer working in a New Mexico oil patch. The boy leaps at the opportunity but soon learns that all is not well with his relatives' marriage. Waylan has in fact moved into his machine shop, where he is having an affair with his secretary, Sharon. While the specific reasons for the separation are foggy, the reasons that Waylan and Vicky got married are a complete mystery (Vicky, who reads Nabokov, defends the Rosenbergs and campaigns for Adlai Stevenson, complains with evident justice that Waylan would like to keep her "barefoot and in the kitchen"). To his credit, Jimbo falls for what appears to be a younger version of Vicky, 20-year-old college student Trudy, Sharon's cousin, who has come to New Mexico to wait tables at the local restaurant but reads Kerouac and dreams of becoming a novelist. In the meantime, she teaches Jimbo about bebop and the terrors of abortions. All of which would hold greater interest if Smith (Hunter's Trap) had created men a little worthier of these progressive women. Instead, the mismatch overwhelms a novel that views the grim side of the Eisenhower years from an intriguing perspective.

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