

Fall 2011

**Review of Tana French's Faithful Place. New York: Penguin, 2010.
416 pages. (Hardback \$25.95). ISBN-13: 9780670021871.**

Journal of South Texas English Studies

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/jostes>

Recommended Citation

(2011). Review of Tana French's Faithful Place. New York: Penguin, 2010. 416 pages. (Hardback \$25.95). ISBN-13: 9780670021871. Jostes: The Journal of South Texas English Studies, 3(1).

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of South Texas English Studies by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact justin.white@utrgv.edu, william.flores01@utrgv.edu.

Book Review

Tana French's *Faithful Place*. New York: Penguin, 2010. 416 pages. (Hardback \$25.95). ISBN-13: 9780670021871.

In Tana French's third novel, *Faithful Place*, Francis "Frank" Mackey calls himself "a prodigal son who [is] walking the fine line between in and out" (223) of *Faithful Place*, the lower-class neighborhood in Dublin where he grew up in the midst of a dysfunctional family. Twenty-two years before, at nineteen, he had waited all through a cold night for Rosie Daly, who had promised to meet him at the head of the street as soon as her family was asleep. They planned to flee to England together to make a life for themselves away from the alcohol, abuse, and feuding of their two families. When Rosie did not appear, Frank left anyway, but he made it only into the city as she had their tickets. He created a new life for himself, became a policeman in the Undercover Squad which infiltrated criminal organizations, married a lawyer, fathered a daughter that he adores, found himself divorced from the child's mother, and refuses to look back to the squalid misery he escaped. He is called back into the violent maelstrom when first Rosie's suitcase is discovered, with the tickets inside, and then her decayed body. Returning, he finds himself an outsider and a suspect, a distrusted alien in the community in which he grew up, a cop who must call in old debts and wheedle favors undercover to obtain information, an unwanted visitor as his ex-wife tries to keep him out of her home, her refrigerator, and her life.

In his professional life, his personal present, and his past, he walks a fine line, not unknown but not belonging. Forced to return to *Faithful Place*, which he had determined never to set eyes on again, finding it necessary to delve into his family's past and discover what went so terribly wrong, he becomes emotionally involved all over again and begins to understand his abusive parents, realizing that he and Rosie had unknowingly replayed the tragic drama of their parents. Frank and Rosie's tragedy has within it hints of the powerful stories of the classical myths, where families pass on their scarred emotions from generation to generation, where heroes strive with gods, where children perish due to the unresolved conflicts of their parents.

French won the Edgar Award for first novel with *In the Woods* (2007) and continued with another bestseller in *The Likeness* (2008). The three novels all have to do with partial aliens on the borderline investigating in places where they no longer belong but which they have not managed to leave behind. The cover of each of French's books proclaims that French "grew up in Ireland, Italy, Malawi, and the United States," and her novels choose as theme the protagonist's struggle as he/she resides in the liminal space between belonging and not belonging. In each case the pseudo-outsider pries into the meaning of events and relationships that insiders dare not touch. Though the cost is high in alienation, the reward in understanding the past and the present is also great.