



The Broken Bridge

Books Reviewed:

[The Broken Bridge](#) [1]

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Reviewer:

[Errol Lloyd](#) [3]

Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This novel falls into that category of white author/black central character which generated such a head of steam in the letters column of this magazine recently (**BfK 105-107**). Whilst acknowledging the masterly architecture of the novel and the expert interweaving of interesting characters and sub-themes, it appears to me that this is a novel which is more likely to appeal to a white readership than a black one, and perhaps explains its critical acclaim by white critics who have glossed over, or been blissfully unaware of, those matters in the book which are likely to agitate the black reader. Ginny at sixteen is living in Wales with her white Welsh father (having been abandoned by her Haitian mother at two weeks old) and has grown up without any contact with other black people - apart from Andy who left school the previous year and is now back for the summer. Ginny seeks to explore her black identity through her art and more directly through a romantic liaison with Andy - until she discovers that he is gay. This is one of a number of revelations which throw her world into chaos - she discovers, for example, that her father had not been married to her mother but to a white woman with whom he had a son (who on her recent death is coming to live with them), that her mother is not dead as she thought but very much alive and about to hold an exhibition of her paintings in Liverpool. More significantly, Ginny discovers, after the briefest of introductions concerning the pantheon of voodoo gods and rituals by a white acquaintance who had visited Haiti, that she has the sorcerer's power to summon these deities at her command - a genetic inheritance no doubt from her Haitian mother. Though Ginny as a character is accorded a rich inner life and is drawn with basic humanity, her prospects appear to be that of an honorary white. Even her determination to emulate the Haitian art produced by her mother (presumably British art is not sufficiently diverse to offer any models) seems a concession to exotica rather than a potentially viable source of genuine art. Thus at the end of the novel she is accorded a deep sense of identification with the Welsh landscape, she is reconciled to her new white brother, enjoys an enhanced relationship with her father and her paternal grandparents and she finds a new boyfriend - white and heterosexual this time - and no one, it appears, need ever know about her dark, sinister voodoo side.

Running Order:

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Links:

[1] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/the-broken-bridge>

[2] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/113>

[3] <http://savfkn.booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/errol-lloyd>