

PRAISE FOR THE UPPER ROOM—

“I don’t know how she did it, but Oakland writer Mary Monroe has pulled off a beaut with this magnificent, coarse, funny and terrifying first novel, The Upper Room...stands very much on its own as a serious work of literature. Read it for the plot alone and I guarantee you’ll never forget the character of Mama Ruby....Monroe’s gift is to entrust these characters with heavy symbolism and terrifying violence at the same time that she pulls off comic scenes and witty dialogue that will keep you chuckling out loud. This is a superb first novel from a former Choctaw County, Ala., cotton picker who, one hopes, is hard at work on the next one.”

Patricia Holt, San Francisco Chronicle

“From her first luxuriant sentence, Mary Monroe puts readers in a land both mythical and down to earth....There are times when this first novel is so delicious, so spirited and enjoyable, that you want to swallow it whole....Mary Monroe...has made an impressive debut. She has terrific gifts for description, swift characterization, and launching a story that is larger than life. The Upper Room is warm, energetic, charming and clearly the work of real talent.”

Laura Furman, The Houston Post

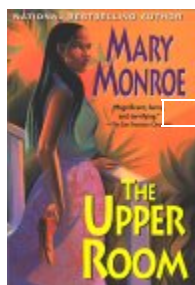
“There are novels that, from their first pages, enter your consciousness irrevocably. These are the novels one goes back to again and again, either rereading them or reliving them while doing something else. Mary Monroe’s The Upper Room is just such a novel. I have read it four times and would like to go on reading it forever....There is an indescribable electricity, an excitement, a vitality in this novel that makes it unique in my reading experience....Mamma Ruby is not only a wonderful character, but also a marvelous symbol for the potential of good and evil....This is a visionary book and the visions it permits us are wonderful and unique. The Upper Room reminds me both of William Faulkner and Ralph Ellison. It marks the debut of a remarkable talent...possibly a great one. If you can read only one or two novels this year, read this one. I feel honored to have read it.”

Susan Fromberg Schaeffer, Chicago Sun-Times

“Monroe’s literary canvas is painted with broad strokes, with verve and humor and passion.”

Ruth Dean McDougall, The Christian Science Monitor

“...a powerful and outlandish first novel that, by all rights, should establish Mary Monroe as a fresh new voice in a period when so much fiction has become bland and predictable....the



author's greatest strength is in her dialog, always spoken in dialect, and she is capable of summoning a character and locking it in memory by just a few passages. Her characters are funny, pathetic, violent, sad, bombastic—victors in futility.... The Upper Room is the most impressive debut novel I've read since The Confederacy of Dunces, a bold adventure that shows that style and risk are still alive and well, the heartbeat of contemporary fiction."

Wisconsin State Journal

"Clearly the work of a real talent."

The Mercury News (San Jose)

"Engaging...the dialogue and setting are reminiscent of Zora Neale Hurston, but the story has a bizarre violent edge a la Stephen King...a candid portrayal of the cold-blooded yet fascinating Mama Ruby."

Publishers Weekly

"A chilling story that is bound to astound..."

Booklist

