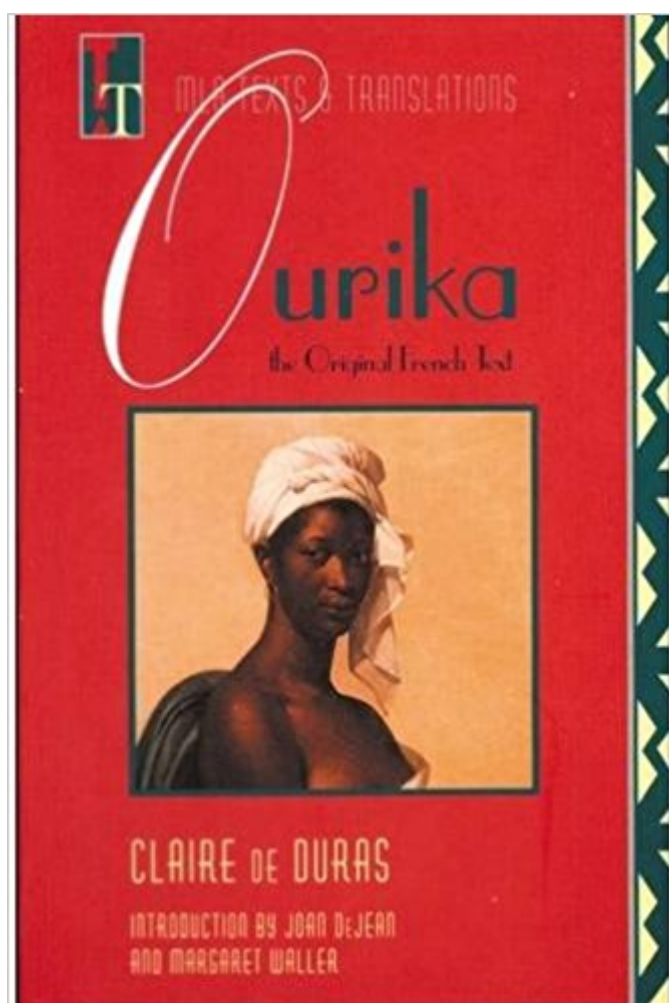


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Ourika: The Original French Text (Texts And Translations) (French Edition)



Synopsis

Based on a true story, Claire de Duras's *Ourika* relates the experiences of a Senegalese girl who is rescued from slavery and raised by an aristocratic French family during the time of the French Revolution. Brought up in a household of learning and privilege, she is unaware of her difference until she overhears a conversation that suddenly makes her conscious of her race--and of the prejudice it arouses. From this point on, *Ourika* lives her life not as a French woman but as a black woman who feels "cut off from the entire human race." As the Reign of Terror threatens her and her adoptive family, *Ourika* struggles with her unusual position as an educated African woman in eighteenth-century Europe. A best-seller in the 1820s, *Ourika* captured the attention of Duras's peers, including Stendhal, and became the subject of four contemporary plays. The work represents a number of firsts: the first novel set in Europe to have a black heroine; the first French literary work narrated by a black female protagonist; and, as John Fowles points out, "the first serious attempt by a white novelist to enter a black mind."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Joan DeJean's books reflect her areas of research: the history of women's writing in France (*Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France*); the history of sexuality (*Fictions of Sappho, 1546-1937*); the development of the novel (*Literary Fortifications; Libertine Strategies*); and the cultural history and the material culture of late

17th- and early 18th-century France (Ancients against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle; The Essence of Style, 2005; The Age of Comfort). Margaret Waller is Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at Pomona College. Her publications include *The Male Malady: Fictions of Impotence in the French Romantic Novel* (Rutgers UP, 1993) and a translation of Julia Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (Columbia UP, 1984).

Je l'ai acheté pour une classe de la littérature classique, et, quand cet livre est bien écrit et un exemple parfait de la mouvement romanticisme, je ne l'aime pas, mais c'est à moi.

Excellent edition

Ourika is one of the first Western narratives ever to be told primarily from the perspective of an African, recently rediscovered from its relative obscurity. While Duras herself and her narrator are both white, the story is of the powerful tragedy of the life of a young black woman taken in by a rich French family in exile, and is mostly told by Ourika herself. While this synopsis sounded boring to me when I first picked the book up, I was instantly drawn in by the engaging language and highly emotional episodes of the heroine's unusual experience. At times I was actually moved to tears, despite my conscious resistance. The character of Ourika is a three-dimensional gem of psychological strength, and her story is at once heartbreaking and hope-giving. This edition is also physically beautiful and printed on nice paper; a steal for what is sure to become a more popular classic in the years to come.

ok

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