

Book Brief

an excerpt of

NOTES FROM NO MAN'S LAND. By Eula Biss. Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2009. 230 pp. \$15.00, paper.

"Between me and the other world," W. E. B. DuBois wrote in 1903, "there is an ever unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it." The landscape of race in America has changed dramatically since DuBois wrote these words a century ago in the introduction to his seminal book *The Souls of Black Folk*. But even with a new set of twenty-first-century questions, "feelings of delicacy" and "difficulty of rightly framing" remain. Discussions of race in this country certainly still flutter around unasked questions and unexamined assumptions.

In *Notes from No Man's Land*, winner of the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize, Eula Biss asks her questions loudly and clearly. Although she might not have all the answers, the courage and candor of her questioning are revelatory. With surgical-grade prose and an earnest, unrelenting pursuit of uncomfortable truths, Biss explores what it means to live in America, fitting herself into a long tradition of incisive observers from Alexis de Tocqueville to DuBois to Joan Didion.