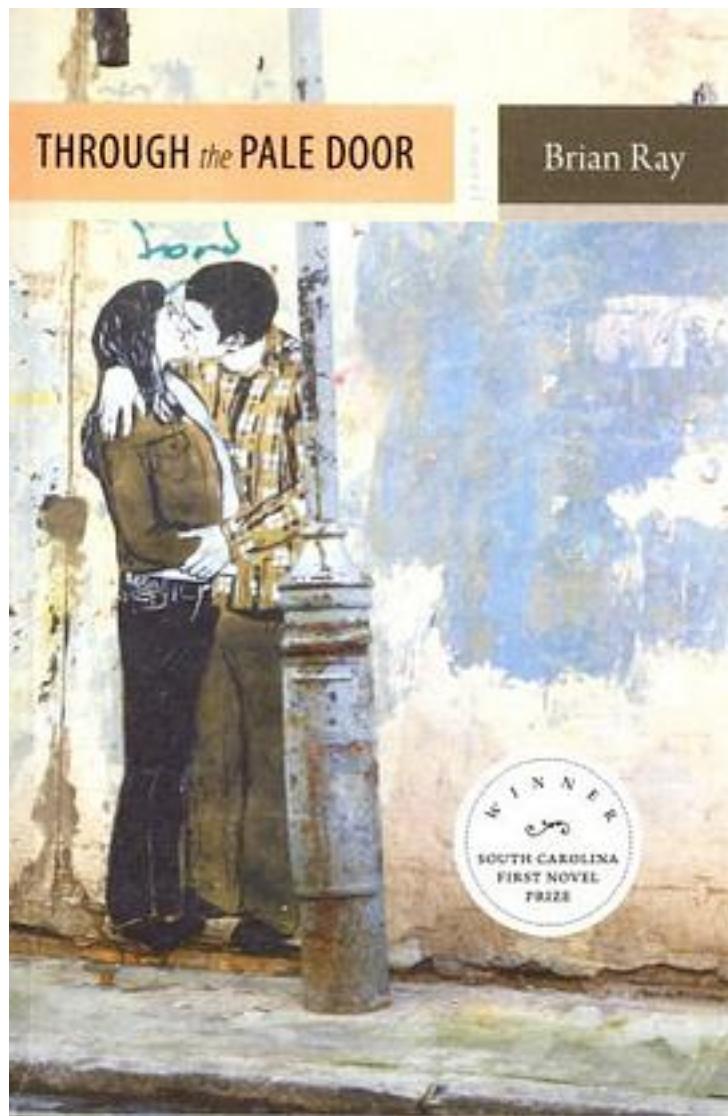


Through the Pale Door



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Winner of the inaugural South Carolina First Novel Prize, sponsored by the South Carolina Arts Commission Sarah West takes a temporary job at her father's South Carolina steel mill the summer before college, hoping for relief from the chaos of her psychotic and often institutionalized mother. But from the first day of June to the waning days of August, relief is the last thing Sarah finds. Soon after she moves into her separated father's house, tragic news about her mother arrives. The haunting funeral coincides with Sarah's first love affair. Her lover is a fellow mill worker, a teenage vigilante muralist named Edgewood who lives in an abandoned jail on the outskirts of town. Sarah and Edgewood share artistic gifts but hesitate at the door between adolescence and adulthood. While Edgewood struggles to develop confidence in his work, Sarah finds her own artistic endeavors haunted by grim yet compelling memories of growing up under the rule of an inexplicably deranged artist on one side and an oddly aloof, workaholic entrepreneur on the other. Confronted with danger and death at the mill, Sarah and Edgewood bury themselves deep in their artwork. As their relationship grows, Edgewood helps Sarah overcome the loss of her mother. In the end, however, Sarah faces a greater challenge: domesticating her own inner demons while tending to her first lover's uncertainty in himself.

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