

## **Blue Land**

### **Collins, CD (author)**

The people in Collins' exceptionally well-wrought stories are Kentuckians, many but not all of whom moved away. ... All the characters come from hardscrabble folks. Collins writes differently according to a story's length. The shortest pieces are the most impressionistic, taking on the economy of poetry; thus, "Hands" distills "The History of Kentucky Tobacco Farming in Five Voices." Those voices are all in the same family; Wendell Berry might envy Collins' achievement. The longest stories are polished character studies. "Blue Land" illuminates the Massachusetts-based narrator's Kentucky-bound beloved, 20 years after their college fling, sadly sunk in her heritage and the bottle. "Instructions from Men," a uniquely discomfiting memory piece, presents a girl's first molestation by an uncle. The star of this altogether brilliant collection, however, is "Sin Vergüenza," which begins irresistibly: "A coke head and a junkie are two different things."

— **Ray Olson, *Booklist***