

## PLATFORM

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*From Booklist* The controversial French author of *The Elementary Particles* (2000) turns in another unremittingly bleak novel. In addition to amplifying his views on the decadence of Western civilization, Houellebecq displays an absolutely chilling prescience in his depiction of a violent Muslim sect. Misanthropic, sexually frustrated bureaucrat Michel embarks on a "Thai Tropic" package tour, amusing himself with snide commentary on his fellow vacationers and frequent visits to sex clubs. Although he is attracted to business executive Valerie, he has trouble engaging her in small talk. However, when they return to Paris, their relationship quickly turns passionate as they explore sadomasochism and public sex. Michel talks Valerie and her business partner into marketing sex tours to the Third World, selling them on his theory that Westerners have lost touch with their own sexuality. But when they decide to sample one of their own tours, their resort becomes a flashpoint for Islamic hatred. Houellebecq is unrelenting as he meticulously constructs a world that mirrors his own cold vision and that cuts uncomfortably close to the bone. Joanne Wilkinson Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Review A terrific writer, funny and prophetic . . . feverishly alive to the world around him. \*\* *The New York Times Book Review* Calculated to poke, prod, engorge, enrage and amuse. . . . Its dangerous in the way that literature is meant to be dangerous"that is, it awakens neglected sensibilities." *The New York Observer*\* Houellebecqs writing has a raw, disquieting brilliance. . . . Its genius."\* *The Washington Post* Brilliant, charming, puzzling, annoying and sometimes downright repulsive. *"The Denver Post* Full, acidic, self-flagellating . . . [Platform has] earned Mr. Houellebecq the status of conversation piece, agent provocateur and savage messiah. *"The New York Times* \* Remarkable . . . hilarious. . . . [Houellebecq] writes from the soul of a despairing, acutely lucid bureaucrat on Viagra. *"Los Angeles Times Book Review* Scaldingly honest . . . [Platform] takes no prisoners as to prevailing terms of politically correct or any-other-way-correct discourse. . . . It frequently uses jarring juxtaposition to dislocate us from complacencies, received wisdoms or even moderate comfort. . . . The analysis is broad and extremely knowledgeable . . . [with] quirky and sometimes horrific observations on everything from ecology to airport gift shops to incest. . . . Bracing. *"St. Louis Post-Dispatch* The most potentially weighty French novelist to emerge since Tournier. . . . The trajectory of Houellebecqs world view will be worth

following. "The New Yorker An outstandingly powerful and relevant novel about sex, death, and Islam. "Hanif Kureishi Astute, graceful, sexually preoccupied, occasionally alarming. . . . Eviscerat[es] the cultural moment. "The Baltimore Sun The characters in Platform are detestable. . . . And the hatred [Michel] expresses . . . is loathsome. . . . But what is wrong with this? Why should literature not be as cruel as life itself? . . . This book offers us an I we can relate to" hate, love, fear" without being pointedly obstructed by the authors tormented cosmology. . . . Moving. "San Francisco Chronicle Brilliant. . . . Reads like a shot. . . . The excitement of Platform is the force with which Houellebecq says the unsayable, his determination to cut through moral equivocation. "Salon [A] dirty novel of ideas. . . . Houellebecq's sex scenes are hot and bountiful. "Entertainment Weekly An extraordinary blend of pornography, satire and diatribe . . . Houellebecq is an undeniably gifted writer" I found myself reading on, even when the impulse to throw the book across the room grew strong. "Charles Matthews, San Jose Mercury News Odd, subversive entertainment. "The Boston Globe What's at stake is the desacralizing of sex, its final leap into the realm of pure commodity, the role of implacable consumption in cultural imperialism. . . . Its not the kind of book you only read once. "The Village Voice Cynical and anomic . . . literary and complex. "The Atlantic Monthly Shockingly vile and shockingly banal, written with an ear toward pissing off just about everyone. . . . Houellebecq's novel is tough to put down no matter how much you'd like to. . . . Like good porn its increasingly difficult to draw your eyes away as it oozes toward climax. "Austin Chronicle A work of considerable imagination and wit. Even when the reader is most repelled, he may want to view the writer with grudging admiration. . . . [Michel Renault's rants] are very funny, and . . . very true. "The Sunday Star-Ledger\* (Newark, NJ) Platform cuts precisely to the core of every imaginable big-picture problem facing the world. . . . Houellebecq knows how to get a rise out of his readers. . . . His prejudices are serious, and current. "American Book Review Houellebecq writes with an honesty and an anomic conviction that raises his novels, beyond any single troubling moment, toward genius. "Toronto Globe and Mail The most important book of the year" and perhaps of the century thus far. . . . Dazzling and prescient. . . Houellebecq [is] one of the finest novelists of ideas alive. "Evening Standard (London) Brilliant. . . A thrilling read, close to Swift's *Modest Proposal* in its impact. "Daily Telegraph (London) Extraordinarily good. . . Houellebecq is one of the few novelists working in any language who properly understands the tensions of the present age. He is also utterly fearless in articulating this. "New Statesman Houellebecq writes with humor as sharp as a razors edge. There is bravery and even bravado in [his] prose. He alone among contemporary writers is prepared to do what the likes of Orwell and Huxley did and put up a mirror to our past and project its reflection on the future. "Financial Times (London)

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