Middle Passage By Charles Johnson

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a fearless experimenter and one of the most important contemporary american writers charles johnson challenges separatist politics and tries to get beyond race as a literary category in charles johnson s fiction william r nash emphasizes and explores the tensions in johnson s work between his ideal of race as illusion and his methods of articulating racial grievance nash examines johnson s short stories novels faith and the good thing oxherding tale middle passage and dreamer and the nonfiction work being and race tracing the themes of johnson's political and artistic concerns as they evolved in his work nash locates his fascination with the aesthetics of the black arts movement and his dismissal of separatist black politics and racialist thought he also considers johnson s adoption of western and eastern philosophies and belief that race is a blinding limiting category that impedes the exploration of individual and collective identity in formulating a mode of expression that balances the conflicting demands of race and aesthetics johnson crafts a new vision of history and african american identity that signifies on a range of black and white literary predecessors including zora neale hurston theodore dreiser ralph waldo emerson ralph ellison james baldwin and herman melville nash argues that johnson s hybrid philosophy of buddhism and phenomenology defies the basic premises of identity formation and leads to the perception of a different self juxtaposed with jarring storylines of racial injustice johnson's notion that race is an illusion informs his aesthetic promotes his strategies for battling oppression and reminds readers what african americans have already overcome in the quest to cultivate new visions of identity charles johnson s fiction also includes eight of johnson's cartoons published in black humor and half past nation time in the early 1970s

this is truly a major contribution to african american literary criticism and it promises to elevate johnson to the place in the literary firmament he so richly deserves henry louis gates jr harvard university charles johnson came of age during the black arts movement of the 1960s and 1970s his fiction bears the imprint of his formal training as a philosopher and his work as a journalist and cartoonist with a well honed interest in political satire mentored by the american writer john gardner johnson is preoccupied with questions of morality which are informed by his knowledge of continental and asian philosophical traditions in this book

rudolph byrd examines johnson s four novels faith and the good thing oxherding tale middle passage national book award winner and dreamer under the rubric of philosophical black fiction as art that interrogates experience byrd contends that johnson suspends shelves and brackets all presuppositions regarding african american life this bracketing accomplished the african american experience becomes a pure field of appearances within two poles consciousness and the people or phenomena to which it is related johnson s principal themes are identity and liberation intent upon the liberation of perception for the reader and the writer johnson s fiction aims at whole sight encompassing a plurality of meanings across a symbolic geography of forms texts and traditions from within the matrix of african american life and culture and like a palimpsest johnson s texts contain multiple layers of meaning of disparate origins imprinted over time with varying degrees of visibility and significance charles johnson s novels will appeal to fans of the writer s work but it also will serve as a helpful guide for readers newly introduced to this brilliant contemporary american writer

understanding charles johnson offers a critical introduction to the fiction of one of the most highly acclaimed contemporary writers and the first african american male since ralph ellison to win the national book award which johnson received in 1990 for middle passage in addition to providing a biographical sketch gary storhoff analyzes johnson s four novels and two volumes of short stories describing his body of work as unique in american fiction storhoff explains how philosophical and religious orientations differentiate johnson s writings and challenge his readers storhoff explores the merging of johnson's philosophical and spiritual interests with his concern for african american culture in identifying the literary principles of johnson s texts storhoff emphasizes the writer s commitment to buddhism and demonstrates its impact on his themes characters narratives and rhetoric suggesting that buddhism is the linchpin of johnson s work storhoff acknowledges that scholars and critics are aware of johnson's close association with the tradition but provides readers with what they need to appreciate fully its importance in his work which includes a ph d in the subject storhoff explicates the influence of the british empiricists including bishop george berkeley on the novelist his rejection of relativism and utilitarianism his adaptation of aristotelian ethics and his ambivalent treatment of american pragmatism as recently propounded by cornel west johnson emerges from storhoff s discussion as a profoundly eclectic sophisticated interdisciplinary writer with complex views on race relations in the twenty

first century

a collection of thoughts and insights from one of america's keenest observers

known for his blending of philosophy spirituality humor and a rollicking good story charles johnson is one of the most important novelists writing today from his magical first novel faith and the good thing to his decidedly philosophical oxherding tale from his swashbuckling indictment of the slave trade in the national book award winning middle passage to his more recent imaginative treatment of martin luther king jr in dreamer johnson has continually surprised instructed and entertained his many avid readers as this collection of interviews suggests the novelist is as multifaceted and complex as his novels trained in cartooning and philosophy martial arts and meditation and producing teleplays photobiographies and literary criticism in addition to fiction charles johnson represents a model of what he calls life as art alluding to the three gates of buddhist right speech the title of this volume aptly captures the generous spirit that characterizes charles johnson s work an indispensable resource for all of johnson s many readers passing the three gates represents both the transformation of the artist over time and the continuity and endurance of his aesthetic and spiritual vision a v ethel willis white book

reminiscences of edward charles johnson about his childhood in the watervale district world war i experiences and life at loxton

one mans thoughts and life in good time and bad is a compilation of charles johnson life and situations that he saw and lived that gave him a thought to write about he takes a situation and coverts into a story poem with a moral ending every poem has a description following the poem that explains why it was written and the spiritual lesson that he got from that situation the book is not totally about him but describes how all things can have a message that can show each of us how we can view our life and learn how we all can grow spiritually in our own life

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