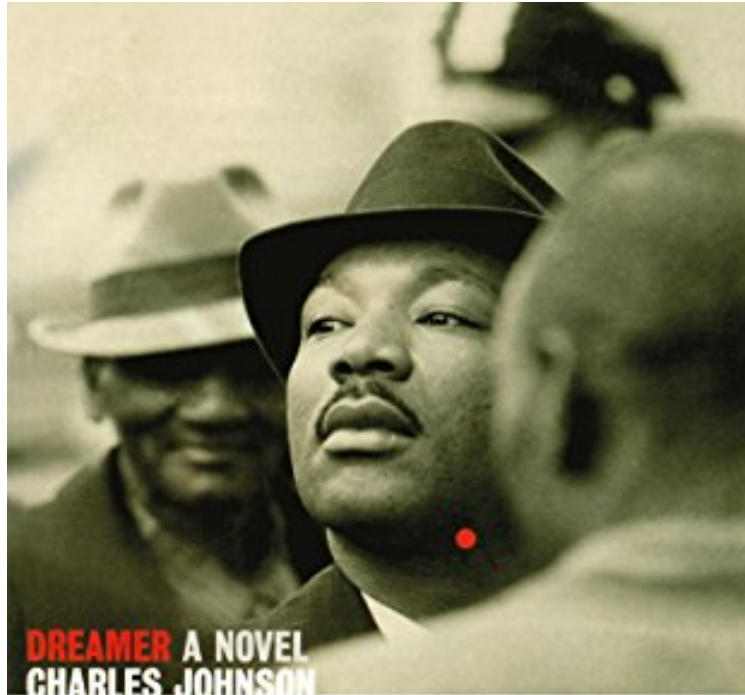


[Ebook pdf] Dreamer

Dreamer

Von Charles Johnson

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HIGHLY-ACCLAIMED
FICTIONALISED ACCOUNT
OF MARTIN LUTHER
KING'S FINAL YEARS.

'I am humbled by *Dreamer*
and grateful for it. It is a
transcendent, brilliant book.'

David Geterson

author of Snow Falling on Cedars

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Von Charles Johnson : Dreamer before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time,
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fiction at a high levelVon Ein KundeWhen you approach a new piece of fiction by Charles Johnson, you should be

ready with all your gifts of intellect and insight. You can be assured that Mr. Johnson will typically bring those gifts of his to the event. *Dreamer* is characteristic of much that readers have come to expect of Mr. Johnson. For example, all of the book's major characters are quite well versed both in the eastern and western philosophic and religious traditions. He characteristically manipulates reality that way, much as one might bend light with a prism--and with the same kind of pleasurable, revealing results. On the other hand, there is much in *Dreamer* that is new for Charles Johnson, and, thus, for his readers. In *Oxherding Tale* and *Middle Passage*, he demonstrated an ability to combine and to jump across genres. It is not surprising, then, that *Dreamer* tends to defy categorization. Although it is fiction set within a (relatively) recent historical context, and although the figure of Martin Luther King, Jr., is at its thematic center, the book is not merely fictionalized biography. Rather than a book "about" Dr. King, this is a novel suffused by his presence--despite the fact that other characters have more time "on stage." The image of such a well-known figure looming over the story presents both potential opportunities and pitfalls for the author. Johnson's use of interior monologue to take us into the mind of a monumental figure is absolutely deft. Without a living Dr. King to consult, it would seem nearly impossible for anyone else to report what it was like to be the individual at the center of that whirlwind--but Johnson has done just that for us, and done it brilliantly. Historical figures, particularly martyred ones, tend to become, at best, abstractions or, at worst, icons. Johnson rescues King from either of those types of benign neglect and shows him rather as a human whose accomplishments came at the great expense of personal sacrifice. Before his life is lost he has tragically lost almost all time, not only personal time with his family but also time alone to think, to feel, and to continue his own intellectual and spiritual development. The counterpoint to King is Chaym Smith, a look-alike who resents and admires King, and who trains to become the dreamer's double. As does Lucifer in *Paradise Lost*, he at times threatens to steal the entire show. Yet Johnson does not take the easy route of making Smith a polar opposite of King. Smith too has gifts, and insights, and aspirations. Instead of being a pole apart, Smith is more like a brother who, by virtue of differing gifts and circumstances, careens along a different path through the universe. Structurally, neither King nor Smith can be the sustained voice that both frames and carries the novel from beginning to end. That voice belongs to Mathew Bishop, a Nick Caraway style narrator and a worker within the Movement who is all too aware of the margin by which he falls short when he compares himself to Dr. King. Yet Bishop himself has gifts and insights. At the end of the story he is close to the realization that all men and women fall short of an idealized vision of themselves, while at the same time they move inexorably in that direction as long as they keep that selfsame dream alive. This is not a perfect book, but it is a fine one from a member of that small circle of writers potentially capable of delivering a 10+. At times Johnson uses the device of sections of exposition, set apart in italics, to provide background and to prepare the story for its next move forward. The device works well enough, although occasionally, perhaps because Johnson obviously enjoys research, it risks the peril of stopping too long to tell us too much. But there is such skill in Charles Johnson's craftsmanship, such daring in his willingness each time out to do work that is difficult and important, and such obvious sincerity and empathy in the homage that is *Dreamer*, it seems almost off-point to notice slight imperfections. Rather, we appreciate the gift we are given here--fiction that achieves the elusive goal of Greek tragedy, showing others to us in a way that enables us to better understand, and to improve, ourselves.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A surprisingly fresh look at a familiar icon
Von Kathleen T. Choi
You know a movie's a hit when the audience remains sitting while the credits roll. A great novel affects me the same way. I'm silently awed by the gift of a powerful story. Charles Johnson has written such a strong tale. His "hero," Chaym Smith, is an embittered, tattered, unemployed, former mental patient and drunk. He has one gift and one curse. He's brilliant, with a "photographic memory," and he looks exactly like Martin Luther King. Having thoroughly ruined his own life, he volunteers to serve as a double for King. If he dies substituting for the man he honors, at least his life will have meant something. King reluctantly agrees, and two young workers take Smith to the country to train him in King's body language and speech patterns. Smith is a quick learner, but a frightening debater. He insists equality is impossible. Even in the beginning, God preferred Abel to Cain (a variation of his first name) for unexplained reasons. Still, he'll risk his life for his Abel. Quoting extensively from King's speeches and colleagues' remembrances, Johnson shows how King's thought was moving beyond the narrow goal of racial equality to the basic Christian concept of self-sacrificing love for all. King wants to lead his people further than white suburbia, to the real Promised Land. Like Christ and Gandhi, his heroes, his prophetic message will generate violence. Especially in the passages written from King's point of view, Johnson, a National Book Award winner, shows the incredible pressures on a man whose words can provoke riots but not understanding. No matter how familiar the subject seems before you begin reading, this novel will haunt you.

Kathleen T. Choi, HAWAII CATHOLIC HERALD
0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Johnson continues tradition of "moral fiction."
Von Jeff Henderson (jeffh@mail.uca.edu)
Charles Johnson's *Dreamer* offers a riveting portrayal of the last stages of Dr. King's career. By alternating descriptions of "the minister's" personal ruminations with the first-person observations and experiences of the narrator (a somewhat Charles Johnson-like Matthew Bishop), Johnson creates the convincing illusion at least of Dr. King as a complete and real being at that particular time in his life. While the obvious subject matter of his plot is compelling--overwhelming, almost, in its rendition of perhaps the most significant and ramifying social movement in American history--it is worth observing that Johnson continues consciously (and ably) to work in the tradition of "moral fiction" he learned,

absorbed, and finally inherited from his own great teacher, John Gardner. That tradition holds as a central tenet Gardner's definition of a "good book" as "one that, for its time, is wise, sane, and magical, one that clarifies life and tends to improve it." While *Dreamer*, like Johnson's other fiction, obviously meets that criterion in general terms, Gardner's more concrete influence is subtly apparent throughout. For example, the scene in which Matthew ponders Dr. King's stitching his speeches and sermons together from various sources so skilfully that it is hard to tell where one voice ends and another begins recalls the strikingly similar techniques Gardner used in his fiction. Johnson doesn't make the explicit comparison, but it's obviously in his mind--as is the fact that both Gardner and Dr. King were accused, more or less, of plagiarism by some who did not understand their methods. Some readers have been puzzled at least by what they have seen as loose ends in *Dreamer*'s conclusion: we never learn what those klutzy FBI men were up to, or what finally "happens" to Chaym. Such complaints, I think, seriously misunderstand what Johnson the novelist is up to at the end of his book. The ending is deliberately and meaningfully ambiguous, intentionally uncertain--although clues enough exist. "What became of Chaym?" is a very important question that Johnson purposefully refuses to answer explicitly, and it is not the only such question.

KurzbeschreibungSet against the racial turbulence of the Civil Rights Era, *Dreamer* is the first work of fiction to explore the life of Martin Luther King Jr - political visionary, human rights activist, preacher, scholar and martyr. Johnson's brilliantly realised historical novel deftly handles its material, weaving together a subtle and beautiful novel of immense power and importance. *Dreamer* is a multi-layered masterpiece..deAt the center of National Book Award winner Charles Johnson's novel *Dreamer* are three remarkable men: Martin Luther King Jr.; his aide, Matthew Bishop, an African American philosophy student; and Chaym Smith, a man who is a dead ringer for the civil rights leader. Not only does Smith resemble King, but he also shares his intellectual voracity, widely read in both Eastern and Western philosophy, proficient in Sanskrit and martial arts, and a talented painter. But where King is deeply spiritual, Smith is a cynic; where King has the full force of his strong beliefs and his strong family heritage, Smith has nothing but a lifetime of misfortune to shape his attitudes. When he offers to become King's stand-in, Johnson creates an ideal situation in which to explore issues long at the heart of the "race issue" in America: the inequality between black and white, even between black and black. As the novel moves forward in time toward that fateful day in Memphis, Johnson concentrates on the relationship between Bishop--the narrator--and Smith, a man who, with better luck, might have been as great as King. Periodically, the author also lets us in on King's own meditations on his life and faith, and the movement to which he has given them. All in all, *Dreamer* is the kind of novel Charles Johnson does so well: a book about a big subject, chock full of ideas and populated by characters articulate enough to argue them.PressestimmenI am humbled by *Dreamer* and grateful for it. It is a transcendent, brilliant book -- David Guterson What unites *Dreamer*'s diverse concerns - biography, politics, sociology, ethics - is its passionate desire to celebrate black history and to vindicate King - it is powerful as a moral tribute * The Sunday Times * Like a skiff exploring history's more hidden currents, Johnson's poetic language drifts with care over the moiling currents of King's intellect, leaving in its wake a wonderful, prismatic novel, exhorting and testifying, but never preaching * The Guardian * His fiction transcends the immediate concerns of race and colour, and will find its place in the great body of literature produced by America's humanitarian tradition * Literary *