



Passing in the Works of Charles W. Chesnutt (Margaret Walker Alexander Series in African American Studies)

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Passing in the Works of Charles W. Chesnutt is a collection that reevaluates Chesnutt's deft manipulation of the "passing" theme to expand understanding of the author's fiction and nonfiction. Nine contributors apply a variety of theories---including intertextual, signifying/discourse analysis, narratological, formal, psychoanalytical, new historical, reader response, and performative frameworks---to add richness to readings of Chesnutt's works. Together the essays provide convincing evidence that "passing" is an intricate, essential part of Chesnutt's writing, and that it appears in all the genres he wielded: journal entries, speeches, essays, and short and long fiction.

The essays engage with each other to display the continuum in Chesnutt's thinking as he began his writing career and established his sense of social activism, as evidenced in his early journal entries. Collectively, the essays follow Chesnutt's works as he proceeded through the Jim Crow era, honing his ability to manipulate his mostly white audience through the astute, though apparently self-effacing, narrator, Uncle Julius, of his popular conjure tales. Chesnutt's ability to subvert audience expectations is equally noticeable in the subtle irony of his short stories. Several of the collection's essays address Chesnutt's novels, including *Paul Marchand*, *F.M.C.*, *Mandy Oxendine*, *The House Behind the Cedars*, and *Evelyn's Husband*. The volume opens up new paths of inquiry into a major African American writer's oeuvre.



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