Abstract: The Charles Johnson papers consist of the letters and manuscripts written by American novelist and teacher Charles Johnson and sent to his former professor John Gardner. The seven manuscripts are drafts and outlines towards Johnson's publications, *The Devil and Jubilee Tuthill*, *Oxherding Tale*, and *Faith and the Good Thing*. 
Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 143
Creator: Johnson, Charles Richard, 1948-
Title: Charles Johnson papers
Extent: .3 linear feet (1 box)
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 143, Charles Johnson papers, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Box 1: Shelved in SPEC MSS manuscript boxes
Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/

Source: Purchase, September 1986.

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Biographical Note

Charles Johnson is an American novelist and fiction writer, winner of the 1990 National Book Award in fiction for his work, *Middle Passage*, and a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship in 1998. He served as a director of the creative writing program at the University of Washington and went on to hold the S. Wilson and Grace M. Pollock Professorship for Excellence in English.

Charles Richard Johnson was born in 1948 in Evanston, Illinois. He attended Southern Illinois University at Carbondale where he received a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1971 and a master's degree in philosophy in 1973. He received his PhD from SUNY Stoneybrook in New York, in 1988, delving into the issues of phenomenology and literary aesthetics. Before committing himself to a writing career, Johnson worked as a political cartoonist and photojournalist. Prior to holding S. Wilson and Grace M. Pollock Professorship for Excellence in English at the University of Washington, he was the chair of the university's Creative Writing Department.

He has published an array of radio dramas, articles, and novels, such as Faith and the Good Thing (1974), Oxherding Tale (1982), Middle Passage (1990), and Dreamer (1998). Johnson also wrote and produced a series for PBS and is fiction editor for the Seattle Review.

The letters and manuscripts contained in the collection comprise material sent to Johnson's friend and former professor John Gardner (1933–1982). Gardner taught creative writing at Southern Illinois University and was an author as well, publishing books, poems, and collections of essays.

Sources:


Some biographical information is derived from material in the collection.
Scope and Content Note

The Charles Johnson papers consist of letters and manuscripts written by American novelist and teacher Charles Johnson and sent to his former professor John Gardner. The seven manuscripts are drafts and outlines towards Johnson's publications, *The Devil and Jubilee Tuthill*, *Oxherding Tale*, and *Faith and the Good Thing*.

Written during the mid 1970s, Johnson's letters, some decorated with sketches and caricatures, detail Johnson's nascent ideas for several unwritten novels and stories. Other letters share personal anecdotes and describe Johnson's university classes, experiences with publishers, and employment opportunities. The letters also contain dense philosophical meditations on literature, the nature of the artist and writer, and on Black experience. With many of his letters, Johnson included manuscripts of articles and novels for Gardner to peruse and critique. The collection thus provides an intimate and revealing glance into Johnson's publications, his methodology, and beliefs.

Series I of the Charles Johnson papers contain letters sent to John Gardner from 1974 to 1976. Included in this series are the manuscripts, reviews, and articles accompanying Johnson's letters.

Series II consists of the author's manuscripts, outlines, and early versions of *Oxherding Tale* and *Faith and the Good Thing*, as well as the radio drama *The Devil and Jubilee Tuthill*. Several of the manuscripts in this series are accompanied by brief notes from Johnson to Gardner.
Selected Search Terms

**Personal Names**

Johnson, Charles Richard, 1948--Correspondence.

Gardner, John, 1933–1982--Correspondence.

**Topical Terms**

Authors, American—Correspondence.

Authors, American—History--20th century.

American drama—History--20th century.

African American authors—History--20th century.

**Form/Genre Terms**

Correspondence.

Manuscripts (document genre)

**Occupation**

Novelists.

College teachers.

**Personal Contributors**

Arrangement

II. Manuscripts, 1973–1975
Detailed Description of the Collection


Letters with enclosures.

1974 October–1975 April [Box 1 F1]
15 items
Includes nine typed and signed letters plus five photocopied reviews of Johnson's *Faith and the Good Thing* and a typescript of Johnson's *Lyricism in the Language of Zen Buddhism* with the author's corrections.

1975 July–1975 September [Box 1 F2]
5 items
Includes four typed and signed letters, plus a photocopy of Johnson's essay *The Primevil Mitosis: A Phenomenology of the Black Mind*.

1975 October–1976 September [Box 1 F3]
8 items
Includes eight typed and signed letters.

Series II. Manuscripts, 1973–1975 11 items

Drafts and outlines of writing by Charles Johnson.

*The Devil and Jubilee Tuthill*, 1975 [Box 1 F4]
2 items (1 p. and 5 p.)
Includes a reproduced typescript of the outline for Johnson's radio drama, accompanied by a brief typed and signed note from Johnson to Gardner.

*The Devil and Jubilee Tuthill*, 1975 [Box 1 F5]
1 item (45 p.)
Reproduced typescript.

*Oxherding Tale*, 1973 [Box 1 F6]
4 items
Includes a brief handwritten note from Johnson to Gardner enclosing an outline for the novel Oxherding Tale, plus a photocopied excerpt of The Three Pillars of Zen, a source for Johnson's novel, and a reproduced typescript of Hoaxes.

Oxherding Tale, 1973–1974 [Box 1 F7]

1 item (66 p.)

A reproduced typescript of portions of the Oxherding Tale with the author's notes and corrections and some text on the verso of pages.

Oxherding Tale, 1973–1974 [Box 1 F8]

1 item (30 p.)

Reproduced typescript of a chapter from Oxherding Tale titled "Clump."

Oxherding Tale, 1973–1974 [Box 1 F9]

1 item (2 p.)

Pages 99 and 100 from Chapter 4 of Oxherding Tale.

Faith and the Good Thing, 1974 [Box 1 F10]

1 item (25 p.)

Pages 1-25 of a carbon typescript of Chapter 3 from Faith and the Good Thing.