



The Stories of John Edgar Wideman

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John Edgar Wideman is an African-American novelist and short story writer of remarkable range and power, as this work fully demonstrates. THE STORIES OF JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN reprints two earlier collections—DAMBALLAH (1981) and FEVER (1989)—and adds ten stories written especially for this volume and collected in it as ALL STORIES ARE TRUE (1992). The three collections are published here in reverse order, so that the reader begins with Wideman’s most recent stories, and moves back through the two earlier collections. THE STORIES OF JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN in some ways resembles a novel, for many of the stories have the same setting (the black Homewood section of Pittsburgh) and characters (relatives and other residents of Homewood, both now and in the past). Wideman’s best stories render twentieth century urban black life in vivid detail and history.

Wideman, as this volume attests, is not always an easy writer. In any one story, he may mix several points of view, and several different narrative voices. Like Toni Morrison and William Faulkner, Wideman focuses on interior life—the thoughts and feelings of characters struggling to get through life. Action and incident are here incidental to the interior experiences of characters caught up in them. Similarly, there are often jumps between incidents and ideas that are not easy to follow, a narrative stream-of-consciousness that readers may find rather difficult. But, as is true of the best short story writers working today—Richard Ford, Joy Williams, Joyce Carol Oates—the difficulties are their own reward, for John Edgar Wideman renders American life in all its fullness and tragedy.

Sources for Further Study

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