

ANCHOR BOOKS



eBooks

The Intuitionist

Colson Whitehead

Acclaim for Colson Whitehead's *The Intuitionist*

Winner of the Quality Paperback
Book Club New Voices Award

Esquire's Best First Novel of the Year

A *USA Today* Best First Novel of the Year

A *GQ* Best Book of the Millennium

A *Village Voice Literary Supplement*
Favorite Book of the Year

“Literary reputations may not always rise and fall as predictably as elevators, but if there’s any justice in the world of fiction, Colson Whitehead’s should be heading toward the upper floors.”

—*The New York Times Book Review*

“The most engaging literary sleuthing you’ll read this year... What makes the novel so extraordinary is the ways in which Whitehead plays with notions of race.”

—*Newsweek*

“Whether the subject is love or alienation, the invention of rich, new literary metaphors is difficult enough. When the subject is race in America, however, it’s almost impossible. In his first novel, *The Intuitionist*, Colson Whitehead has solved the problem, coming up with the freshest racial allegory since Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*...”

—Walter Kirn, *Time*

“A quirky and multilayered debut novel... *The Intuitionist* reads like a pure feat of imagination, elevated by ... stylistic sorcery and a gnawing sense of the narrative’s urban dislocation.”

—*The Village Voice Literary Supplement*

“Unusual... Whitehead’s prose is graceful and often lyrical, and his elevator underworld is a complex, lovingly realized creation.”

—*The New Yorker*

“Brilliant, funny, poetic.... Equally intricate and rich—a supple, jazzy instrument that can swing from deadpan satirical fantasy to a straight-ahead portrayal of the pain and stoicism of black people living in a ham-fisted white world, looking for the ultimate elevator that will take them up and out.”

—*The Utne Reader*

“Highly imaginative and stylish.”

—*Vanity Fair*

“One of the unlikeliest books in recent memory ... like any screaming across the sky, *The Intuitionist* comes out of the blue.”

—*GQ*

“A bizarre and funny mystery.”

—*Vibe*

“Colson Whitehead masterfully evokes a grey mid-century city that could have been torn from a Ben Katchor comic strip.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

“Dark, smart, [and] funny.”

—*Details*

“A beguiling, utterly original first novel.... Nuggets of social commentary are interwoven with scenic set pieces, beautiful flashbacks to Lila Mae’s childhood and episodes of good old-fashioned knuckle-breaking ... a sheer delight to read and rich enough for college lit classes.”

—*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

“Gritty, brainy.... Whitehead doesn’t just travel back and forth between irony and sincerity, between the naturalistic novel of race and the imaginative novel of ideas—he simply occupies all territories at the same time. The boundaries separating those categories, which usually seem insuperable, fall away.”

—*Salon*

“*The Intuitionist* is the story of a love affair with the steel and stone, machinery and architecture of the city. It’s not a pretty love, but a working-class passion for

the stench of humanity that its heroine, Lila Mae Watson, has made her own. But as always with love there is betrayal. This extraordinary novel is first voice in a powerful chorus to come.”

—Walter Mosley

“*The Intuitionist* is a fascinating novel, full of quirky insights and beautifully imagined characters.”

—Gary Indiana

“An enormously accomplished first novel, a meditation on race and technology and imagination that is absolutely dazzling.”

—Susan Isaacs in *Brave Dames and Wimpettes*

“Colson Whitehead’s debut novel is part urban thriller, part meditation on race—and all vigorous language and supple imagination.”

—*The Oregonian*

“This splendid novel reads as though a stray line in Pynchon or Millhauser had been meticulously unfolded to reveal an entire world, one of spooky, stylish alternate-Americana, as rich and haunted as our own. The care and confidence of the prose, the visionary metaphor beating like a heart at the center—these do not outweigh the poignance and humor, the human presence here. *The Intuitionist* rises someplace new, and very special.”

—Jonathan Lethem

“The world of *The Intuitionist* is an unforgettable universe.”

—*The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

“Brilliant.... Whitehead carves out an exclusive space for himself in America’s literary canon ... his imagination and writing skills always keep the story fresh and will undoubtedly keep you guessing.”

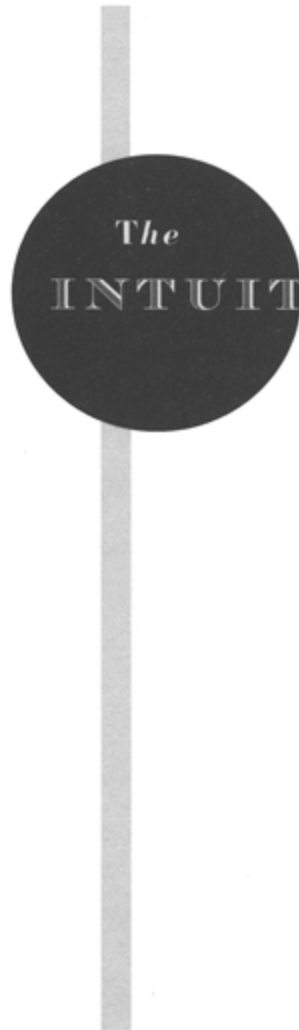
—*The Washington Post Book World*



COLSON WHITEHEAD

The Intuitionist

Colson Whitehead was born in New York City in 1969 and graduated from Harvard College in 1991. His journalism has appeared in numerous publications. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.



The
INTUITIONIST

Colson Whitehead

 **ANCHOR BOOKS**
A Division of Random House, Inc.
New York

FIRST ANCHOR BOOKS EDITION, JANUARY 2000

Copyright © 1999 by Colson Whitehead

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions.
Published in the United States by Anchor Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.
Originally published in hardcover in the United States by Anchor Books in 1999.

Anchor Books and colophon are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Anchor hardcover edition as follows:

Whitehead, Colson, 1969–

The intuitionist : a novel / Colson Whitehead.

p. cm.

I. Title.

PS3573.H4768I58 1999

813'.54—dc21 98-6756

eISBN: 978-0-307-81996-3

www.anchorbooks.com

v3.1

for my parents

Contents

Cover

About the Author

Title Page

Copyright

Dedication

Acknowledgments

Down

Part One

Part Two

Up

Part One

Part Two

Acknowledgments

A boy should never leave home without a copy of *American Standard Practice for the Inspection of Elevators*, not unless he wants to get into trouble. Shout outs: Gary Dauphin, Wesley Jones, Valerie Burgher, Dan Schrecker, Darren Aronofsky, Sue Johnson, Ari Handel, Hugh Garvey, Jed Weintrob, Bill Parsons, Jim Macintosh, Jeannette Draper. Thanks to Kevin Young for encouragement and the title. Nicole Aragi, my agent, is awesome. Tina Pohlman, my editor, is a woman of wealth and taste. I couldn't have done this without the love and support of my family and Natasha Stovall, the best partner a boy could have.