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Introduction

When the Washington Metro System opened in the nation's capital in 1976, my grandmother and mother took my brother, sister, and me to experience this modern wonder in our city. I instinctively knew this was a special occasion because my mother dressed us in new matching outfits for our field trip. I was amazed to see the enormous concrete arched ceilings over us as we rode the steep escalators down to the terra-cotta-tiled platforms. I looked around in awe as these shiny trains that moved like a superhero in one of my brother's comic books carried thousands of passengers to their various destinations. Where were all of these people going? At age six, I did not wonder why my mother and grandmother wanted us to experience the newly constructed Metro—I was simply glad they did. These women gave me access to a world and showed me that even at six, I belonged in a world so vast, so complex, so filled with possibilities.

In the drama *Flyin' West* by contemporary African American playwright Pearl Cleage, black female migrants at the end of the nineteenth century attempt to find refuge on the western frontier. The play opens on Sophie

Washington, an ex-slave who has built a home for herself and her sisters in the all-black town of Nicodemus and is now a wheat farmer and rising leader in her Kansas community. Sophie proclaims to her neighbor Miss Leah, “I’ll have enough [land] when I can step outside my door and spin around with my eyes closed and wherever I stop, as far as I can see, there’ll be nothing but land that belongs to me and my sisters.”¹ Cleage’s play is rooted in the history of migration, including the fact that in the drama, nearly twenty years have passed since the actual Kansas Exodus of 1879, when thousands of blacks left Tennessee, Mississippi, and Kentucky. Reports from mass meetings, circulars, letters, and kinship networks inspired blacks to head to states like Kansas and Oklahoma, where the US government was giving out “free land” stolen from Native Americans. Historian Nell Irvin Painter claims that “some even regarded Kansas as the modern Canaan and the God appointed home of the Negro Race.”²

While working on my interdisciplinary PhD in theatre and drama at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, in 1996, I served as the dramaturg for the Onyx Theatre Ensemble’s Chicago production of *Flyin’ West*. To some extent, the piece fascinated me because Cleage is among a small selection of American dramatists who have carefully depicted black Americans, particularly black women on the western frontier.³ As I gathered research materials that I hoped would be helpful to the cast and crew members, I found only a limited number of archival materials featuring black women in the early American West. I also noticed that through the language of her characters, Cleage dramatizes the freedom the geographic western space offers. Cleage incorporates the migration process in the culture of her black female characters in a fascinating way. The Kansas landscape symbolizes a sanctuary where two generations of female migrants have sought refuge. Through their ownership of home on the western frontier, the characters literally and figuratively assert their place in society as free women of color.⁴

Taking its inspiration, in large part, from Cleage’s drama, this book examines how black women’s theatrical and everyday performances of migration toward the American West expose the complexities of their struggles for sociopolitical emancipation. I tell the story of their westward migrations through activist and journalist Ida B. Wells; Sissieretta “Black Patti” Jones, leader of the late nineteenth-century black musical comedy company Black Patti Troubadours; World War II black female defense industry workers;

and contemporary performance artist Rhodessa Jones's *The Medea Project: Theater for Incarcerated Women*. As these women have imagined and configured the American West as a space of possibilities, they have also helped to expand and complicate discussions about black women's navigation strategies throughout the United States.

At the core of this study is migration, which is often viewed as merely a physical process. Migration captivated me early in life. My passion originally stemmed from the stories of my great-grandmother Sallie Atkins. As a child, I often listened to my late grandmother, Martha Carter, tell stories about her mother's migration from Virginia to Ohio in the early 1900s. I wondered why Sallie would leave behind her life in Martinsville to move to another part of the country. Martha was told that her mother secured a position as a dietician in Ohio. This position brought pride to her family, who often saw black women, like my grandmother's own grandmother, laboring as domestics. According to Martha, tremendous opportunities existed outside of the American South for black women like Sallie. This did not mean that life was always perfect for individuals once they settled in their new homes. Martha recalled she rarely visited her mother in Ohio because of her stepfather's temper. She subsequently spent her early years in Virginia and was raised by her maternal grandmother, Mattie Flippin. I wondered if Sallie's movement motivated Martha to migrate with her own family to the nation's capital around 1950. I was curious to find out how Martha remained closely connected to her mother, even though they lived in different states. Later I learned that my grandmother saved letters exchanged between her mother and grandmother dating back to 1938. In the letters, Sallie, who suffered from severe headaches, reminds Mattie to purchase enough coal with the money Sallie has sent home. At first sight the correspondence seems quite simple, but the letters, cherished by my grandmother for nearly seventy years, ultimately reveal how three generations of black females sustained familial and cultural ties across state lines. As I grew older, my ancestors' narratives became more complicated for me. Their stories inspired me to study this act called migration.

In this project, *migration* is defined, in the broadest terms, as physical movement from one geographical locale to another. The subjects in this project, however, are not wanderers. According to Michel de Certeau, tactics are "victories of the weak over the strong."⁵ Even though their movement is

suspect at times and their ways of knowing “still remain outside the terms of dominant discourses,” the women in this book are strategic in their attempts to be mobilized.⁶ In this book I view migration not only as a physical process but as a series of symbolic, internal journeys within confined and unconfined spaces. One of my objectives in this book is to consider how black women from the late nineteenth century through the end of the twentieth century use migration to survive in the world and to ultimately experience socio-political freedom. I am not suggesting that every black woman who moves or travels is a migrant. Nor am I suggesting that all black women move and travel in the same way. The book dissects the varied ways my black female subjects search for a West of possibilities.

I have also written this book because of the tendency among scholars to trace African American migration from South to North. These studies are extremely significant. But research has largely explored how black Americans imagined and experienced the North through the Great Migration of the early to mid-twentieth century while the mass migrations of blacks to the West have remained under-researched.⁷ Although I recognize that the number of blacks who actually migrated west does not compare to the number of blacks who eventually settled in cities like New York City, Chicago, and Pittsburgh, greater documentation of these western histories is desperately needed.

Even though an American West, in part, is defined as that region within the United States that includes the Pacific Coast, the Dakotas, and the Rocky Mountains, this project is not intended as an expansive study of the West since the late nineteenth century. I instead consider how the physical and symbolic migrations imagined by black women have constructed this space over time. In their text *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Michael Keith and Steve Pile maintain, “space is not an innocent backdrop to position, it is filled with politics and ideology.”⁸ For example, in her attempt to help in the development of her Nicodemus community, the character Sophie declares in *Flyin’ West*, “We could own this whole prairie. Nothing but colored folks farms and colored folks wheat fields and colored folks cattle everywhere you look.”⁹ Sophie implies that ownership of Nicodemus land would make the black community free. In *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama*, Una Chaudhuri also supports my point when she argues, “who one is and who one can be are . . . a function of where one is and how one experiences that

place.”¹⁰ I consider in each chapter how the featured black women imagined and experienced the American West geographically and symbolically at different historical moments.

Historical studies suggest that those who migrated westward viewed it as a “Promised Land.” Historian and critic Gerald D. Nash argues, “America as well as people around the world have looked to the West of reality—whether frontier, region, or urban civilization . . . [T]hey have also contemplated another West—the West of imagination, the West of myth.”¹¹ I call this region “a West of possibilities” because the promise of free land, better jobs, and first-class citizenship were major reasons blacks initially embarked on an exodus. I consider the extent to which black women viewed it as a West of possibilities, whether fictive or real, where they could potentially gain greater freedom both privately and publicly.

According to Nash, “Before 1960 blacks were rarely mentioned by writers of textbooks about the West.”¹² Furthermore, the cheap dime novels, Wild West exhibitions featuring stars such as “Buffalo Bill” Cody in the late nineteenth century, and American motion pictures of the twentieth century popularized and canonized images of the white American male conquering both land and savage.¹³ As Linda Ben-Zvi points out in her essay “‘Home Sweet Home’: Deconstructing the Masculine Myth of the Frontier in Modern American Drama,” the frontier has been traditionally presented as: “1. A particular story, i.e., it’s always the man’s story; 2. The male of a particular type: hard, stoic and a killer who needs to conquer and settle; 3. Woman is other. She is the passive recipient of his action.”¹⁴ Although the white female sharpshooter Annie Oakley enjoyed star status when she toured with Cody and other Wild West shows, my text acknowledges that black women and other women of color are even less visible in American dramatic and literary narratives about an American West. Black women’s narratives have been forced to the background. When black women are excluded from the discourse of an American West, an abridged version of the western narrative is being offered. An inclusion of black women into a western narrative ultimately makes the narrative of the West more complex.

In 1892 educator and clubwoman Anna Julia Cooper pronounced the position of the colored woman in American society: “She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is as yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both.”¹⁵ Cooper’s remarks also resound in the late

twentieth and early twenty-first centuries because, as Glenda Riley indicates, “Western black women still suffer from an unfortunate case of near-invisibility in the historical record.”¹⁶ For over two decades, a limited number of historians such as Lynda F. Dickson and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore have placed black women’s western social histories at the center of their work. In *African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000*, Moore and Quintard Taylor point out, “Women of African ancestry have been present in western history since the period of the initial Spanish contact with the indigenous people of northern New Spain.”¹⁷ My project, which simultaneously examines race, gender, and class, is potentially valuable because it forces one to envision black women’s movement in America in a much broader scope. This text will further move black women’s narratives into western history.

Unlike historical or literary studies, my study interrogates the politics of black women’s performances. In my text, which takes a multidisciplinary approach, I employ a theater and performance paradigm in order to illustrate how black women make geographic, as well as symbolic, crosses. I also utilize definitions set forth by performance studies scholar Margaret Thompson Drewal and black theater scholar and dramaturg Paul Carter Harrison. In “The State of Research on Performance in Africa,” Drewal maintains that performance includes the actions that occur in traditionally bound theatrical events, yet it also includes how individuals negotiate everyday life in what might be defined as unbound spaces.¹⁸ Drewal argues, “[performance] is the practical application of embodied skill and knowledge to the task of taking action.”¹⁹ It is “the praxis of everyday social life . . . and is a fundamental dimension of culture as well as the production of knowledge about culture.”²⁰ In addition, Harrison contends, in *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*, “in the African Diaspora performance is not limited to an edifice.”²¹ Here, performance is not merely a form of artistic expression prevalent within a theatrical presentation by the Black Patti Troubadours or The Medea Project. Performance also includes those events that transpire beyond traditional theater, such as civil rights protests launched by Ida B. Wells or church building drives led by black female wartime migrants. Harrison adds that “in the African tradition, theatre . . . [is] orchestrated to bring spiritual enlightenment to a mundane experience.”²² Drewal and Harrison make it clear that theater and performance allow groups to rearticulate their identity within a society.²³ I assert that a study of theater and performance enables me

to gain a better understanding of the ways black female migrants, who make both physical and symbolic traverses, have built their identities and communities. In short, theater and performance are deployed for the purpose of carving out a place for the individual and the collective.

Scholars have been reluctant to consider how migrations have emerged through the use of complex theatrical and performance techniques and styles. A theater and performance paradigm motivates me to read the historical record as more than merely a historical record. A case in point: historical studies on Wells focus upon the content of her race-conscious texts but often fail to consider how she performed these texts in the nineteenth century. VèVè Clark contends, “the archaeology of theatre excavates materials ‘lost’ in layers.” And in his study of the semiotics of theater structures, Marvin A. Carlson examines the messages that might be conveyed through “the physical environment of the performance.”²⁴ These theater theories prompt me to consider the performative elements of Wells’s activism.

In my quest to understand how my subjects staged migration toward an American West, I navigated my way through various public and private arenas. These experiences led me to include three critical methodological approaches in this project. First, I have collected archival materials such as newspaper articles and editorials, theater programs and musical lyrics, and World War II film footage and oral histories. Second, I collected ethnographic research during various trips to the West Coast and other parts of the country. I conducted invaluable interviews for chapters 3 and 4 in homes, churches, a community center, a jail, and theaters. During one of these visits, I also led a workshop with inmates in The Medea Project. Third, theoretical analysis is a significant part of this project. Theater and performance theories, black feminist theories, black women’s and migration histories, and cultural criticism are included to analyze the complex ways in which black women have invoked theatrical and daily performances and produced knowledge for and about themselves. I maintain the various approaches used in this project have led me to more fully understand black women’s experiences in diverse western communities.

Ida B. Wells and the Black Patti Troubadours instigate analyses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries while World War II defense industry workers and The Medea Project inspire readings of the mid- and late twentieth centuries. These case studies are selective rather than comprehensive

representations of black women's performance. By bringing these diverse subjects together in four different chapters, I attempt to recover historical continuities and disruptions, as well as certainties and suspicions, surrounding black women's mobility. Through an exploration of their varied performances, I expose how, over time, black women have directly and indirectly participated in unveiling the complicated identity of this western space. This project challenges the assumption that settlement is the ultimate end of the migration process, when, in fact, for these black women it is an extension of migration. Likewise, there still remains a tendency, by virtue of black women's invisibility within the discourse, to view their performance as an insignificant part of the ways in which an American West is imagined. My interdisciplinary study is unique because it attempts to use an under-researched social history combined with theater and performance theories in order to reconceptualize black women's migration histories in America.

In "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," Elsa Barkley Brown describes the "process of public discourse" for black women, particularly in the 1880s and 1890s. Like men, women "creat[ed] their own pulpits from which to speak—to restore their voices to the community" as they struggled to redefine on their own terms the meaning of freedom.²⁵ It is critical to point out that the performances of Wells, the Black Patti Troubadours, World War II defense industry laborers, and the participants of The Medea Project all functioned and unfolded within diverse spaces. For example, although I examine Black Patti Troubadours' musical comedies on the proscenium stage, I also consider the importance of their experiences off this stage.

The term *staging* is most commonly used to describe the organizing of events and the happening of events within a bound theater space.²⁶ I consider staging a useful way of investigating how one performs migrations, which also includes one's instigation of migrations in both traditional theatrical spaces and everyday performance spaces. I examine the critical elements of staging, such as setting, language (e.g., verbal speech and gestures), and masking. Nonetheless, an examination of the politics of black women's performance also involves a careful reading of staging in both public (work) and more private (domestic) arenas.

This study will reveal that staging is complex. For instance, a setting is the space where the performance unfolds. I maintain the setting might function

as a protective shield. It might also help to redefine and rearticulate one's identity and thus move one out of a possibly restrictive environment. In addition, in the documentary film *Duke Ellington's Washington*, select historians discuss the ways in which America's greatest composer and musician, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, used stylish and elegant clothing to assert his identity in public. Edward C. Smith, in particular, claims that blacks in the nation's capital during the early twentieth-century viewed clothing as their "outer skin."²⁷ In this text, this type of gesture might also be viewed as a critical element of staging that contributes to one's mobilization.

Historian Darlene Clark Hine claims black women have outfitted themselves with a symbolic costume or mask. She calls this subversive masking a "culture of dissemblance." Hine declares that since slavery, black women through verbal speech and gestures have been strategic in their attempts to protect themselves and their families from threats of violence.²⁸ In addition, James C. Scott, in his study *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, and Paul Laurence Dunbar, in the poem "We Wear the Mask," similarly articulate how masking has been used by people engaged in class and/or race struggles. Scott explains that within this public transcript "analogous forms might be assumed, making use of disguise, deception, and indirection while maintaining an outward impression in power-laden situations, of willing, even enthusiastic consent."²⁹ Dunbar admits,

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
 This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
 And mouth with myriad subtleties.³⁰

I contend that staging, considered a vital element of black women's everyday strategic moves, will help to illustrate the complexities of their migration experiences toward an American West.

I even consider how black women, such as some of the participants in San Francisco's The Medea Project stage migration, although they are confined within a contemporary West that is fraught with newer sets of social, political, and economic issues. I examine the extent to which the staging of memory in the workshop process takes inmates on a symbolic journey. In *How Societies Remember*, Paul Connerton writes, "concerning memory as such, we

may note that our experience of the present very largely depends upon our knowledge of the past. [Moreover] the past factors tend to influence, or distort, our experiences of the present.”³¹ In part, I claim that inmates make these symbolic journeys—these returns to the past—because it is a critical component of their survival process.

Black feminist scholar Glenda Dickerson’s performative return to the past during her dramatic lecture at the Stanford University symposium *Making the Spirit of 20th and 21st Century Culture* serves as a site of analysis. Dickerson incorporated childhood memories of being punished in order to articulate the ways in which contemporary black female artists are chastised. Dickerson declared she thought being placed in the corner was simply a game she played with her “heroic father and elegant mother.” She shared in a calm voice, “If I asked permission to come out of the corner and admitted being bad, things would be fine.” A failure to acknowledge she was bad meant the game was over and that she was “hard-headed and stubborn.” Dickerson argued that standing in the corner as a little girl “can stand as a metaphor for black women artists who are not good girls [and] find themselves trying to negotiate. We insist on coming out of this corner while refusing to admit we are bad, we talk back and are accused of being defensive and confrontational, so we are popped back in the corner to break our spirits for our own good.”³²

Dickerson’s performance of her salient argument might be applied to this project in two ways. First, Dickerson acknowledges the value of lived experience. Similarly, Alice Walker and Elsa Barkley Brown both recognize how black women’s creativity, expressed in gardening and quilting, has helped black women articulate their experiences.³³ More specifically, Beverly Guy-Sheftall concludes that while diversity exists within black feminism, “certain premises are constant,” including but not limited to the fact that “Black women’s commitment to the liberation of blacks and women is profoundly rooted in their lived experience.”³⁴ Dickerson, Walker, Brown, and Guy-Sheftall’s social and cultural analyses compel me to conceive how Wells’s early and problematic lived experience with the American West enabled her to call for her people to go West or how Jones’s early lived experiences in a migrant community helps incarcerated women in California break out of their own corners. Second, when Dickerson performed her lived experience in the Stanford auditorium, the cadences in her voice and the rhythm in

which she spoke helped broaden the scope of the narrative. She prompted me to more carefully examine how Sissieretta “Black Patti” Jones’s appearances in Colorado a century earlier and defense industry workers’ presence in Bay Area shipyards in the forties etched a different picture of black women in the psyche of westerners. Dickerson’s black feminist discourse supports my attempt to speculate about and analyze both text and performance.

African American people have often articulated their desire for freedom through movement toward a home. The folk narrative “The People Could Fly” describes how enslaved people were no longer willing to bear the brutality inflicted upon them by their masters and overseers: “There was a great outcryin. The bent straightened up. Old and young who were called slaves and could fly joined hands . . . They rose in the air . . . Way above the plantation, way over the slavery land. Say they flew away to Free-dom.”³⁵ They resisted the system of slavery in the United States by escaping. Their consciousness about escape enabled “the people” to search for a “home” that would embrace them as full human beings. In Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lynn Nottage’s comedic play *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, the black female characters also depend upon movement to experience freedom. The main character, Vera, and her roommates, Lottie and Anna Mae, have all ventured to Hollywood to search for fame and fortune in the film industry. Before a white public, they often wear stereotypical masks as they search for opportunities in this western terrain during the early thirties. But within their apartment these three black women celebrate, chastise, and tease one another for the masks they have worn and plan to wear for the sake of mobility. They admit that they “wear the mask that grins and lies.” In the safety of their apartment, Vera, Lottie, and Anna Mae show their true selves and are able to remain whole.³⁶ bell hooks argues in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, “the task of creating a homeplace was about the construction of a safe place where black people could affirm one another and by doing so heal many of the wounds inflicted by racist domination.” Likewise, in *Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home*, Anita Hill states that home is “a place where one’s ideas, experiences, and work are seen as valuable and one’s body (physical being) and identity are welcome.”³⁷ hooks and Hill create images of communities, which become critical to black women’s mobilization regardless of the time period. Similarly, the subjects of this book show how a race of women searched for new beginnings in a

western space.³⁸ The performative strategies they employ to obtain sociopolitical emancipation may differ, but in large part, the women in my project are connected by their desires to find and navigate a safe and secure West of possibilities.

Chapter 1, “Tell my people to go West,” chronicles Ida B. Wells’s early activism and newspaper work in Memphis, Tennessee. It is claimed that before Thomas Moss’s lynching in 1892, the black man’s final words were, “Tell my people to go West—there is no justice for them here.” Outraged by the murder of her friend, Wells recorded Moss’s alleged phrase in her provocative newspaper the *Memphis Free Speech*. This chapter illustrates that, for Wells, the phrase represented more than simply moving geographically. This directive functioned symbolically and was posited as a challenge for blacks who left and for those who remained in Memphis.

Sissieretta “Black Patti” Jones was labeled the prima donna of her race. She captivated audiences as both a concert singer and leader of the Black Patti Troubadours. Chapter 2, “I’d Go [Wherever] They Said ‘Show,’” details a tour to Colorado by Jones’s group. By focusing on their actual journey in a private train car, as well as their daily and theatrical performances, particularly in Denver, I expose how, through the use of mimetic representations largely billed around Jones’s identity as a prima donna, they moved within and outside the confines white society prescribed for early black female performers during the genesis of Jim Crow.

Chapter 3, “Wherever the Opportunity Was Goin’ to Be I’d a Been Gone,” traces the migration process of six black female migrants who settled in the Bay Area so that they might take advantage of Northern California’s growing shipbuilding industry during World War II. I reveal that after being transplanted in California, these black women constructed daily performances around race, gender, and class issues that assisted them in navigating the space.

Given the fact that this project has been constructed on a historical continuum, it is appropriate to consider the status of black women’s access to mobility in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Chapter 4, “I Want to Go Home,” examines how Rhodessa Jones’s creative process seeks to enable San Francisco inmates and ex-offenders that participate in The Medea Project to make symbolic journeys in which they recall and reevaluate the best and worst parts of their lives. Jones’s lived cultural experiences

are a significant part of her performance process. The book concludes with *The Medea Project* because, while the women with whom Jones works live in an age when African American women in general have presumably made the most social, political, and economic progress, their movements in the West are the most closely policed and controlled. This final chapter disrupts contemporary notions of mobility and progress and shows that some young black women in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are ironically the most heavily reliant on the symbolic migration process.

I intend this book to be a source for researchers, educators, students, and a general audience interested in topics like American western and migration histories, theater, performance studies, African American history, and women's studies. In addition, those persons curious about reimagining the ways we view migration, particularly as it relates to black women's historical and cultural experiences in the United States, may find it distinctly useful.

This book has allowed me to participate in the process of flying West, and it has helped me to fulfill my fascination with migration. Its four chapters do not encompass the sum total of black women's navigation of the American West, but I do hope this book helps to give their narratives the stage.

NOTES

1. Pearl Cleage, *Flyin' West* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1995), 9.
2. Nell Irvin Painter, *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas after Reconstruction* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 188. See also Robert G. Athearn, *In Search of Canaan: Black Migration to Kansas, 1879–80* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1978).
3. Cleage, *Flyin' West* and Marta Effinger-Crichlow et al., "Black Theatre Canon: A Conversation" (panel, Black Theatre Network [BTN] 25th Annual Conference, Winston-Salem, NC, July 31, 2011). BTN scholars and artists overwhelmingly concurred at the conference that Cleage's plays, particularly *Flyin' West*, are significant for a black theater canon.
4. Una Chaudhuri, *Staging Place: The Geography of Modern Drama* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), explores the drama of space.
5. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix.
6. Carole Boyce Davies, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the subject* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 36. See also James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New

York: Routledge, 1992). Clifford suggests that, unlike the traveler, the migrant does not necessarily have access to privilege and security.

7. James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, *Living In, Living Out: African American Domesticity and the Great Migration* (New York: Kodansha International, 1996); Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); and Farah Jasmine Griffin, "Who set you flowin'?: *The African-American Migration Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Isabel Wilkerson's widely celebrated *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010) highlights extensively a black southern doctor's journey from Louisiana to California in the early 1950s. Wilkerson acknowledges that the migration of blacks to the West during the twentieth century is the third and final stream of the Great Migration. See also "In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience," Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, accessed April 10, 2008, <http://www.inmotionaame.org/>. This website offers a remarkable picture of African peoples' movement, dating back to the 1400s.

8. Michael Keith and Steve Pile, *Place and the Politics of Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.

9. Cleage, *Flyin' West*, 12.

10. Chaudhuri, *Staging Place*, xxi.

11. Gerald D. Nash, *Creating the West: Historical Interpretations, 1890–1990* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991), 198.

12. *Ibid.*, 147.

13. For an analysis of the development of western spectacles, see Sarah J. Blackstone, *Buckskins, Bullets, and Business: A History of Buffalo Bill's Wild West* (New York: Greenwood, 1986).

14. Linda Ben-Zvi, " 'Home Sweet Home': Deconstructing the Masculine Myth of the Frontier in Modern Drama," in *The Frontier Experience and the American Dream: Essays on American Literature*, ed. David Mogen, Mark Busby, and Paul Bryant (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1989), 219.

15. Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South* (Xenia, OH: Aldine, 1892), 134. See also Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982). Kimberlé Crenshaw provides an insightful reading of "the location of black women in dominant American social relations" in her essay "Whose Story Is It, Anyway?: Feminist and Antiracist Appropriations

of Anita Hill,” in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Pantheon, 1992), 402–40.

16. Glenda Riley, “American Daughters: Black Women in the West,” in *Black Women in United States History*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, vol. 4 (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1990), 1149–74.

17. Lynda F. Dickson, “Toward a Broader Angle of Vision in Uncovering Women’s History: Black Women’s Clubs Revisited,” *Frontiers* 9, no. 2 (1987): 62–73; Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California, 1910–1963* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, eds., *African American Women Confront the West, 1600–2000* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 4. See also Anne M. Butler, *Gendered Justice in the American West: Women Prisoners in Men’s Penitentiaries* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

18. Margaret Thompson Drewal, “The State of Research on Performance in Africa,” *African Studies Review* 34, no. 3 (1991): 1.

19. Ibid. See also Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35–116. Drewal utilizes Schechner’s theory that performance is “twice behaved behavior.” In fact, Schechner asserts that through repetition, this “restored behavior is . . . loaded behavior multivocally broadcasting significances.” *Between Theater*, 36.

20. Drewal, “State of Research,” 1.

21. Paul Carter Harrison, “Praise/Word,” in *Black Theatre: Ritual Performance in the African Diaspora*, ed. Paul Carter Harrison, Victor Leo Walker II, and Gus Edwards (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 8.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid., 2. Lawrence Levine reminds us that “oral culture” also highlights “the multi-dimensional complexity of black America’s past.” *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 444. See also Carla L. Peterson, *Doers of the Word: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830–1880)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

24. VèVè Clark, “The Archaeology of Black Theatre,” *Black Scholar* 10 (1979): 45 and Marvin A. Carlson, *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 42. See also Sandra L. Richards, “Writing the Absent Potential: Drama, Performance, and the Canon of African-American Literature,” in *Performativity and Performance*, ed. Andrew Parker and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (London: Routledge, 1995), 83.

25. Elsa Barkley Brown, "Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (1994): 108.
26. Chaudhuri, *Staging Place*, argues that new models are needed for understanding modern drama. She examines the staging of spatial configurations such as home and place with twentieth-century drama.
27. Hedrick Smith and Stanley Nelson, *Duke Ellington's Washington*, produced by Hedrick Smith and Stanley Nelson (Bethesda, MD: Hedrick Smith Productions, 2000), videocassette.
28. Darlene Clark Hine, *Hine Sight: Black Women and the Re-Construction of American History* (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1994).
29. James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 17. Nathan Huggins describes a different, yet important, mask "worn" by early black minstrel performers. By going to extreme measures to portray grotesque characters, he claims these performers attempted "to achieve distance between themselves and their stage characters." *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 258.
30. Paul Laurence Dunbar, "We Wear the Mask," in *The Poetry of Black America: Anthology of the 20th Century*, ed. Arnold Adoff (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 8.
31. Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.
32. Glenda Dickerson, "Territories and Premises of Black Popular Culture and Black Performance: Panel 1," (lecture, Making the Spirit of 20th and 21st Century Culture Symposium, Palo Alto, CA, October 9, 1999).
33. Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983) and Elsa Barkley Brown, "African-American Women's Quilting: A Framework for Conceptualizing and Teaching African-American Women's History," in *Black Women in America: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Micheline R. Malson et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 9–18.
34. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, introduction to *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: New Press: 1995), 2.
35. Virginia Hamilton, "The People Could Fly," in *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 171. The full-length account suggests that the power to disappear or take flight was often associated with the Angolan slaves of the Gullah Islands, who were thought to possess supernatural powers. Joseph E. Holloway argues that "[a]fter 1739, fewer Angolans were brought into the colony, for by then the southern planters were prejudiced against them. In

southern planters' minds, the Angolan dominance contributed to the unrest of 1739, in which Angolans revolted, killing whites while en route to Florida." *Africanisms in American Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 7.

36. Sanaa Lathan, Kimberly Hébert Gregory, and Karen Olivo, performers in *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, written by Lynn Nottage, directed by Jo Bonney, Second Stage Theatre, New York, April 8, 2011.

37. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End, 1991), 42 and Anita Hill, *Reimagining Equality: Stories of Gender, Race, and Finding Home* (Boston: Beacon, 2011), 140. See also Norris L. Nunley, "From the Harbor to Da Academic Hood: Hush Harbors and an African American Rhetorical Tradition," in *African American Rhetoric(s): Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Elaine B. Richardson and Ronald L. Jackson II (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 2007). Nunley claims "African Americans have utilized camouflaged locations, hidden sites, and enclosed places as emancipatory cells where they can come in from the wilderness, untie their tongues, speak the unspoken, and sing their own songs to their own selves in their own communities . . . Enslaved African Americans referred to these spaces as cane breaks, bush arbors, or *hush harbors*." "From the Harbor to Da Academic Hood," 223.

38. Carole Boyce Davies writes that "escape for Black women/men has necessarily involved the seeking out of protective spaces, or concealment at some points, as the logic of "underground railroad" implies and particularly the darkness of night during which time freedom/flight was often undertaken." *Black Women, Writing and Identity*, 132.