

THE AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRICAL BODY

Presenting an innovative approach to performance studies and literary history, Soyica Diggs Colbert argues for the centrality of black performance traditions to African American literature, including preaching, dancing, blues and gospel, and theater itself, showing how these performance traditions create the “performative ground” of African American literary texts. Across a century of literary production using the physical space of the theater and the discursive space of the page, W.E.B. Du Bois, Zora Neale Hurston, James Baldwin, August Wilson, and others deploy performances to resituate black people in time and space. The study examines African American plays past and present, including *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Blues for Mister Charlie*, and *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, demonstrating how African American dramatists stage black performances in their plays as acts of recuperation and restoration, creating sites that have the potential to repair the damage caused by slavery and its aftermath.

SOYICA DIGGS COLBERT is an assistant professor of English at Dartmouth College. She has published articles on James Baldwin, Alice Childress, and August Wilson, and is currently working on a second book project entitled *Black Movements: Performance, Politics, and Migration*.

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THEATRICAL BODY

Reception, Performance, and the Stage

SOYICA DIGGS COLBERT



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To Rodger

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