



Recovering the Black Female Body: Self-Representation by African American Women

Michael Bennett, Vanessa D. Dickerson

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Despite the recent flood of scholarly work investigating the interrelated issues of race, gender, and representation, little has been written about black women's depictions of their own bodies. Both past and present-day American cultural discourse has attempted either to hypereroticize the black female body or make it a site of impropriety and crime.

The essays in this volume focus on how African American women, from the nineteenth century to the present, have represented their physical selves in opposition to the distorted vision of others. Contributors attempt to "recover" the black female body in two ways: they explore how dominant historical images have mediated black female identity, and they analyze how black women have resisted often demeaning popular cultural perceptions in favor of more diverse, subtle presentations of self.

The pieces in this book—all of them published here for the first time—address a wide range of topics, from antebellum American poetry to nineteenth-century African American actors, and twentieth-century pulp fiction.

Recovering the Black Female Body recognizes the pressing need to highlight through scholarship the vibrant energy of African American women's attempts to wrest control of the physical and symbolic construction of their bodies away from the distortions of others.

Contributors are Margaret Bass, Dorri Rabung Beam, Michael Bennett, Jacqueline E. Brady, Daphne A. Brooks, Vanessa D. Dickerson, Meredith Goldsmith, Yvette Louis, Ajuan Maria Mance, Noliwe Rooks, Mark Winokur, and Doris Witt. This book also contains a foreword by Carla L. Peterson and an afterword by Deborah E. McDowell.

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