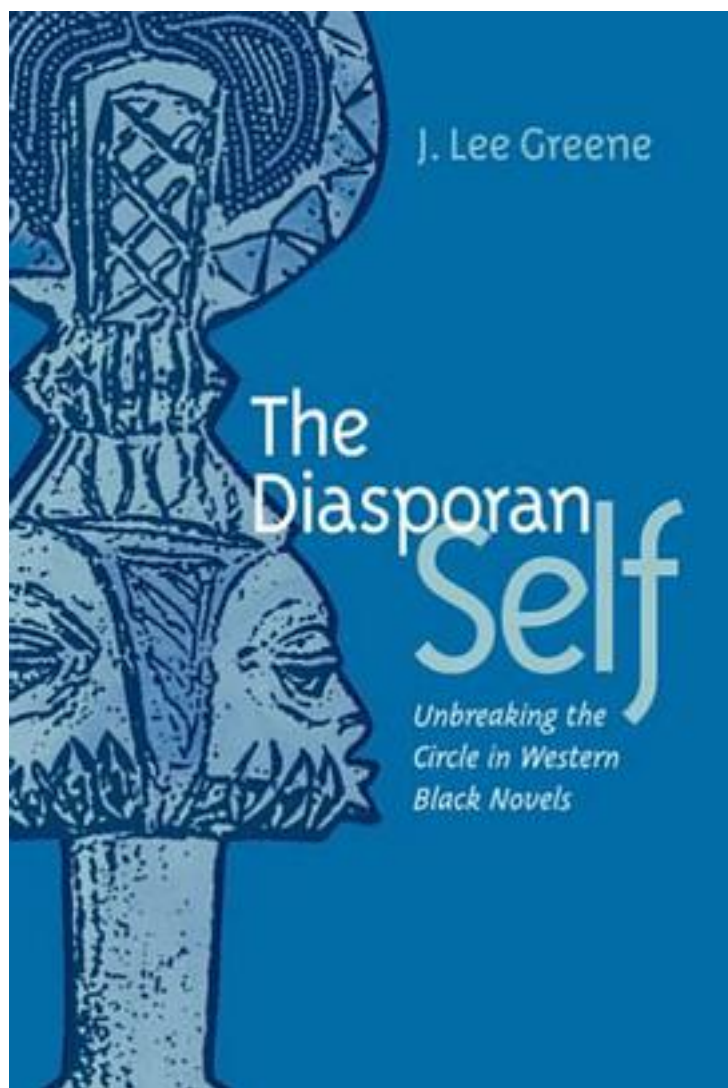


# The Diasporan Self



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Through its critical examination of novels by Toni Morrison, Charles Johnson, Sherley Anne Williams, Octavia Butler, John Edgar Wideman, Phyllis Perry, Ishmael Reed, Caryl Phillips, and others, "The Diasporan Self" presents a fresh and insightful approach to canonical and noncanonical contemporary fictional slave narratives. Through his careful study of the discourse of this subgenre, J. Lee Greene formulates a significant new approach to the interpretation of contemporary African American literature. Drawing directly from the authors' novels, essays, and interviews, Greene extracts, synthesizes, and narrativizes a foundational myth that the novelists collectively generate. This diasporan myth and its accompanying theory of Western black Being are grounded in the historical black African diaspora. Together they seek to explain the history and nature of Western blacks, and thus give rise to key aspects of form and meaning in the texts Greene discusses. "The Diasporan Self" convincingly establishes the self-theorizing nature of these postmodern novels, constructing from them a critical vocabulary germane to their production and interpretation. Greene explores the strong influence of Jean Toomer's fictional and philosophical writings on these contemporary authors as well as the authors' incorporation of religious philosophy and cultural anthropology from several Western and non-Western cultures. The critical paradigm Greene formulates is applicable not only to contemporary fictional slave narratives and other diasporan novels but also to other Western black art forms.

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