

Â In nineteenth-century America, many black women left their homes, their husbands, and their children to spread the Word of God. Descendants of slaves or former "slave girls" themselves, they traveled all over the country, even abroad, preaching to audiences composed of various races, denominations, sexes, and classes, offering their own interpretations of the Bible. When they were denied the pulpit because of their sex, they preached in tents, bush clearings, meeting halls, private homes, and other spaces. They dealt with domestic ideologies that positioned them as subservient in the home, and with racist ideologies that positioned them as naturally inferior to whites. They also faced legalities restricting blacks socially and physically and the socioeconomic reality of often being part of a large body of unskilled laborers. Jarena Lee, Julia Foote, Maria Stewart, and Frances Gaudet were four women preachers who endured such hardships because of their religious convictions. Often quoting from the scripture, they insisted that they were indeed prophesying daughters whom God called upon to preach. Significantly, many of these women preachers wrote autobiographies in which they present images of assertive, progressive, pious women "steadfast and unmovable in their religious beliefs and bold in voicing their concerns about the moral standing of their race and society at large. Chanta M. Haywood examines these autobiographies to provide new insight into the nature of prophesying, offering an alternative approach to literature with strong religious imagery. She analyzes how these four women employed rhetorical and political devices in their narratives, using religious discourse to deconstruct race, class, and gender issues of the nineteenth century. By exploring how religious beliefs become an avenue for creating alternative ideologies, *Prophesying Daughters* will appeal to students and scholars of African American literature, women's studies, and religious studies.

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