

# **Black Water Women Collective: A Theatre of Care Syllabus (Redux)**

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## **Syllabus Overview**

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This care syllabus was first presented at the 2023 conference for the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE), *Building from the Rubble: Centering Care*, in Austin, TX, as part of an interactive workshop titled, “Black Water Women Collective: A Theatre of Care.” The session, chaired by Dr. Mysia Anderson, sought to consider the ways in which theatre has and can operate as a space for reflection, healing, and collective reconsideration for Black women. Across the African Diaspora, the element of water has been a conduit for such intentions, and our session conjured its cross-generational embodied epistemologies as they appeared in works and ways of Black theatre. The goals of the session were to create a space that embodied care through Black feminist rituals, performances, and studying and creating care together; to support academics, artists, and activists who believe that theatre, theory, art and spirit can reside in one place; and to share works of care and pedagogies of care.

We are grateful to *the Black Theatre Review (tBTR)* for the invitation to include an edited version of our original care syllabus in Vol. 3.1 and hope that readers find the strategies of care within it useful. Each contributor offers a declaration orienting the reader to their positionality respective to the suggested rituals for self-care included within this care syllabus, which does not reflect the entirety of what was provided to ATHE participants. The rituals are for each reader’s educational and personal use only and are to be used at the readers’ discretion and risk. They are not replacements for each reader’s judgment and decision-making, counseling or therapy with a licensed practitioner, or medical care from a licensed physician. Contributors can be reached at the emails provided in the bios listed at the end of the syllabus if readers have additional questions.

## **Care Syllabus Contents**

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- Declarations

the Black Theatre Review, Volume 3, Issue 1, July 2024

- Suggested rituals of self-care
- Recommended books and plays
- Recommended music
- Self-reflexive ritual performances

## Mysia Anderson

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Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie and I began this collaboration based on a hunch. We both felt there was something that connected our work and intellectual inquiries, just like we had a feeling we were called to accompany each other on the unwinding road of life. I recall her sharing with me her powerful work on Black women, water, and orisha epistemologies. As a practicing Christian, my orientation to water felt syncretic to the knowledge she beautifully explicated.

My father's church has a pool behind the pulpit, beyond the choir, that is draped in royal blue and gold curtains. This displays the importance of a spiritual connection with water as a crucial factor of our Black Baptist tradition. The choir's voices, drums, and piano often oscillate between joyful and sorrowful sounds that testify to the transformational power of the water. I told Mariahadessa, "yes, that's it," and eagerly knew that this path of exploration would orient us on an intellectual communion rooted in healing, reflection, self-love, and sisterhood.

When we submitted the beginnings of this idea to the American Theatre in Higher Education's Black Theatre Association in 2023, Professor Khalid Long put us in contact with Professor Omiyemi (Artisia) Green. Her grounding presence and deep knowledge made her a wonderful collaborator. She is a priest of Ifá and Yemoja; it is with her leadership and affirmation that we collectively decided on the spine of our work. We knew that we wanted our collaboration to be about how water continuously shows up as a conduit of care through ritual and performance for Black women throughout the African Diaspora. Soon after, Mariahadessa introduced us to Dr. Nina Angela Mercer, a powerhouse Interdisciplinary Artist who is also Founder Executive Director of Ocean Ana Rising, Inc. She brought a particular and necessary attention to language through her generous questions that made her an important collaborator in the alchemy of our group.

I belabored the origins of this gathering of artist-scholars because the spirit of how we gathered is at the heart of what we created together. We met over the period of some months to embody, experience, and create a practice of care that we shared at the ATHE conference and now with *the Black Theatre Review*. Some of what we share here is our work and pieces of our lives through which we were nurtured. When reflecting on what my contribution would be, I desired

to find the threads that connected all our diverse perspectives. I created a video, Black Water Women and a Theatre of Care, that demonstrated how I interpreted our journey together.

### Omiyemi (Artisia) Green

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Although I was on sabbatical when I received the invitation to join the Black Water Women Collective, it was a moment I could not refuse. It was an opportunity to bear the tradition into which I was initiated in service of Black women in higher education. Not only do I live by the ethics of the Ifá-Òriṣà tradition, and the Egbe to which I belong for my growth and self-actualization, but my culture bearing is deeply situated within my knowledge production, art making, and leadership.

When citizens of the nation and within institutions of higher learning are confronted with and devastated by the challenges of racism, a key part of rebuilding from the rubble is first acknowledging that there are parts of those impacted that, for a while, may remain broken, fleshy, bloody, and tender to the touch. It is helpful when restorative spaces are created within our workplaces, at our professional convenings, and within our publication outlets to hold space for this tenderness. We are humans, not robots. From the two sessions I facilitated at the 2023 ATHE conference, “Black Water Women Collective: A Theatre of Care” and “The Ananse Enclave: An Intervention for Black Women Theatre Faculty,” it was clear to me that leaders were focused on fixing *the system* without first regarding the injuries that were still being held by Black women who had been wounded, abused, and broken by it. I am grateful for Mysia, Mariahadessa, and Dr. Michelle Gibbs (the originator of the idea behind the Ananse Enclave) who sounded the reveille and invited me in to create space for ritual, listening, and for lifting up those who needed support. Based on participant feedback, both sessions proved to be necessary interventions and effective medicines.

The license, protection, and ever-growing insight afforded to me as a priest, is a lens through which I view not only the rubble, but also search for a remedy. During the Black Water Women Collective care session, I shared that whenever I was wounded by acts of anti-Blackness I turned to the healing source of water, because within the orature and panegyrics of the Ifá-Òriṣà tradition, water is often described as a resource for peacemaking. For example, a verse in the orature of Odù Ifá, Èjìogbè says:

Èlà the prosperous man,  
Cast divination for cold water while coming to the earth,  
Èlà, the prosperous man,  
We know cold-water for peacemaking on earth

Give us peace and comfort. Àṣẹ!

In the face of that which seeks to drain, depress, dehumanize, and destroy us, water can be a gentle or forceful, yet generative solution for raising up and re-invigorating those who seek its comfort. In her praise poetry, Yemoja<sup>1</sup>, from the ellison yeye-omo-eja, is known as Jogun Oso or the one who inherits (or fights off) the curse,<sup>2</sup> and “one who listens to our complaints.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, I closed the care session by blessing a vessel of water, preparing individual cups for each participant, and then inviting them to privately speak whatever they wished to release into their own cup. After everyone concluded with their confidential communication, I poured the contents of each cup into my larger vessel, and released the water into the nearby Lady Bird Lake.

In the spirit of water’s impactfulness and healing properties, I offered then and now to *tBTR* readers two suggested rituals of communication through water for self-care. Before beginning either ritual, while holding the vessel of water you will use for your work, first take a moment to reflect on and express gratitude for the presence and power of water.

### **Suggested Rituals for Self-Care:**

#### **Omi Tutu**

Among the Yorùbá, coolness or itutu is an important concept. Itutu confers calmness, gentleness, inner power, and “the confidence to cope with all situations.”<sup>4</sup> To refresh yourself and your environment, sprinkle water directly on the ground (or into a plant) as this chant is recited. You can follow this chant with any affirmations you wish. Perform this ritual as often as needed.

<u>Yoruba</u>	<u>Translation</u>	<u>Phonetic pronunciation</u>
Omi Tutu	Cool water	O-me-too-too
Ori Tutu	Cool head	O-re
Ile Tutu	Cool house	E-lay
Ona Tutu	Cool road	O-nah
Tutu Egun	Cool ancestors	Too-too-eh-goon
Tutu gbogbo Orisa	Cool all Orisa	Too-too-bo-bo-orisha
Tutu Aiye	Cool earth	Too-too-I-ye

In short, what you are saying is may this offering of water cool my head, my house, the roads I travel, the ancestors and Orisa supporting me, and the ground on which I am standing.

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes referred to as Iyemonja, Yemonja, or Yemaya depending on the region or diasporic formation of the Ifá-Òrìṣà tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Eric, M. Bridges, “The Opulent Mother: A Brief Discussion of Yemonja and her Worship in Yorùbáland,” in *Recovering the African Feminine Divine in Literature, the Arts, and Practice*, eds. Lajuan Simpson-Wilkey, Sheila Smith Mckoy, and Eric M. Bridge (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2021), 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Lorand, J. Matori, *Sex and the Empire that is No More: Gender and the Politics of Metaphor in Oyo Yoruba Religion* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 231.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, “Black Saints Go Marching In,” in *Flash of the Spirit* (New York: Vintage, 1983), 16.

### A Poetic Chant for Good Luck with Water<sup>5</sup>

To bring blessings to yourself, place a pinch of camwood powder in your left hand, bring your hand to your mouth, and recite this verse from the Odù Ifá Òtùrá Méjì. Add any additional affirmations that you wish. Afterwards add the camwood powder to a glass of water (stir if needed), and drink. Do this three times in a single day. Perform this ritual as often as needed.

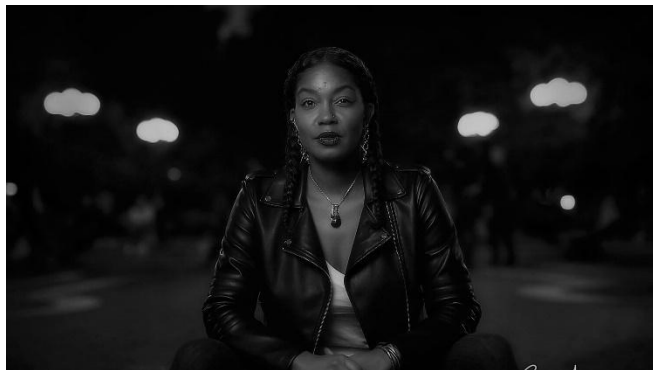
The day breaks with good tidings!  
Cast Ifá for Ọ̀rúnmilà (witness of destiny),  
The child of the healthy ones of Ile-Ife  
Who chant that stepping into water never stops water from flowing.  
Let nothing stop today's goodies from getting to me today!

The day turns into afternoon with all the goodies  
Cast Ifá for Ọ̀rúnmilà,  
The child of the healthy ones of Ile-Ife  
Who chant that stepping into water never stops water from flowing.  
Let nothing stop my good tidings from reaching me today!

As the day turns into nightfall  
It arrives with all the goodies  
Cast Ifá for Ọ̀rúnmilà,  
The child of the healthy ones of Ile-Ife  
Who chant that stepping into water never stops water from flowing.  
Bring me money, wife/husband [a good partner], good health, joy and happiness today! Àṣẹ!

### Nina Angela Mercer

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When Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie reached out to invite me to join the group presenting the workshop “Black Water Women and A ‘Theatre’ of Care” for ATHE’s 2023 conference in Austin, Texas, I was on a short break from being on the road with the dance theatre company, Urban Bush Women. For three years, I collaborated with UBW as a writer and performer for their latest project, *Haint Blu*.<sup>6</sup> *Haint Blu* imagines a journey under water into the ancestral archive for medicine to support communal healing. During my break from *Haint Blu*, I was completing the

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<sup>5</sup> Apena Taiyewo Ogunade, *Ifá Foods for Restoration of Spiritual and Physical Balance* (New York: Ogunade Publications, 2001), 15-16 and 75-76.

<sup>6</sup> Urban Bush Women is a dance theatre company that was founded by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar in 1984. For more about the company, see *Urban Bush Women*, <https://urbanbushwomen.org>, accessed August 28, 2023.

fourth and final chapter of my dissertation, *Transnational Ritual Poetics of Blackness in Performance*, “The Water.” So, Tallie’s invitation felt aligned with my life. I tend to follow the water. I named my non-profit organization Ocean Ana Rising, Inc. in 2005 to honor an ancestor who was born on the middle passage according to family stories passed down through generations. I have written the water into ritual performances and plays as ancestral presence, nonlinear flow, a source of ritualized renewal, and as an aesthetic emphasizing erotic embodiment for years.<sup>7</sup> So, I whole-heartedly welcomed the opportunity to be in conversation with scholar-artists about their own understandings of water as an epistemology opening the way for an important ontological shift in our work as theatre practitioners and researchers that can become an embodied praxis transforming ways of being and relating in time and space.

Through email correspondence, Tallie introduced me to the scholar-artists joining us in the creation of a collective to present the workshop, Tallie’s colleague, Dr. Mysia Anderson, then a PhD candidate at Brown University, and Omiyemi (Artisia) Green from William & Mary. Though Anderson and I were new to each other, Green and I first met during *An August Occasion: A National Conference on the Life and Legacy of August Wilson* at Howard University in 2016. At that conference, I presented a paper exploring how a Black transnational cosmology with a connection to the Bantu-Kôngo shows up in Wilson’s *Gem of the Ocean* and *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* through the ritualization of travel across the *kalûnga line*, a doorway or threshold of and in water that permits knowledge production through an ancestral archive.<sup>8</sup> In 2017, Green and I reconnected through our attendance of the Obatala Egbe’s annual conference.<sup>9</sup> We were also both mentored by the late theatre scholar, director, playwright, and dramaturg, Paul Carter Harrison. Our work-lives flow in inextricable relation to our spiritual lives much like water, a commingling resonating in temporal and spatial waves, rippling outward into a future that cannot matter without the past.

In a series of Zoom meetings and emails, we collectively devised our workshop. We bore witness to one another’s journeys. We were seen and heard. We held space for each other. And, in so doing, we discovered the importance of centering care in cultures of labor that have often eschewed accountability and ethics through rigid claims emphasizing professionalism and

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<sup>7</sup> For more about my work, see [www.ninaangelamerccer.com](http://www.ninaangelamerccer.com).

<sup>8</sup> Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, *Tying the Spiritual Knot: African Cosmology of the Bantu-Kôngo: Principles of Life and Living* (Brooklyn: Athelia Henrietta Press, 1980), 21. “The *kalûnga*, also meaning ocean, is a door and a wall between those two worlds [the terrestrial and the oceanic/submarine and spiritual] ... *Kalûnga* became also the idea of immensity ... that one cannot measure; an exit and an entrance, source and origin of life, potentialities ...” The concept of the *Kalûnga line* is central to the paper I presented in Howard University’s Founders Library at *An August Occasion: A National Conference to Assess the Life and Legacy of August Wilson* in October 2016. The paper’s title is “The *Kalûnga Line* in August Wilson’s *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone* and *Gem of the Ocean*.”

<sup>9</sup> The Obatala Egbe conference is an annual gathering of Yoruba practitioners in the United States organized to honor orisha Obatala and issues highlighted by the community.

economies of power that alienate whole human lives, even as we simultaneously lay claim to a moral high ground rooted in the pursuit of social justice and human rights. Through our work together, we were reminded of the importance of embodying what we research and theorize; it's all in the water together as are we. There is joy in living that connection.

### **Spiritual Bath Recipes for The People**

I believe that we exist in a world of energy waves. In my mind, it's as if life is a vast ocean. Sometimes the waters are tranquil. Sometimes they are not. When the energy waves of life become chaotic, and we find ourselves being carried too far in one direction or another, we can respond to those often-debilitating shifts on an elemental level. We can acknowledge the shift and work the waters so that we can navigate better. Awareness is a start. That's our life preserver. Once we have awareness of the energy shift, taking enough time to stop and assess the texture, tone, and flavor of where we are, we can respond in an appropriate fashion.

I first started making spiritual baths out of desperation. I was a couple of years into my walk as an aleyo in the Yoruba religion, and I'd been told that I needed to receive Olokun immediately. Olokun is the orisha of the mysterious depths of the ocean. I needed to receive Olokun so that I could spiritually clean my home, children, and self with Olokun's waters. Apparently, I had become, or had always been, much like a sponge in the world, picking up more energetic chaos than was rightfully mine, not to mention the messiness I'd cultivated on my own. The trouble in this reality check was that I didn't have the money to pay for the necessary ceremony to receive the orisha. And there began my own intuitive process of creating baths from what I could find.

It's been about 20 years since then. I've received Olokun among other orisha necessary to my path. I am also an apetebi in Ifa. I've been initiated as Yayi Nkisi Malongo, a high priest in Palo Mayombe with 17 years of initiation. I've met many practitioners who swear by the hands of priests who can make the most phenomenal baths. But my initiation has only furthered my own belief that whether initiated into a particular system or not, we all have the right and ability to cleanse ourselves spiritually. It is not about what religion we choose to practice but about holistic wellness and the courageous choice to put on your own boots, dig your hands into the earth (or the fresh herb and plant section at your favorite market), and love self through it all. This is knowledge whispered by our ancestors. And it is a necessary tool for a practice that could be broadened if we ceased specializing the knowledge, creating a profession out of a cleansing ritual that should be no less common than brushing our teeth or washing our hair.

When we make our own spiritual baths, we are remembering practices that stretch back generations. This does not mean that there is no role for community to play in an individual's healing process, but that in the long run, it is healthiest for us all to become more conscientious and self-determined in this ongoing commitment to well-being. It is from this vantage point we meet each other and connect. We can better hold space for each other, listening and seeing the

fullness of our interdependent brilliance when we slow down, focus inward, and attend to what needs care in ourselves first.

Each of the baths listed below has a particular purpose. Each bath counters a particular type of energy wave and helps us respond to it more efficiently. In turn, energy will respond to us. I have listed four baths for a solid start. There are many others. These baths may not work for everyone. And they definitely won't work if you don't believe in the purpose and make them with the necessary intention. They are not meant to replace other strategies for wellness. They are a start to pro-active spiritual health - the root of all and everything.

**Note:** Each bath recipe calls for “holy water.” Some people believe that you must go to a church to retrieve “holy water.” If you want, you can do that. It's simple. It's free. Just enter the church with an empty container, walk to the front, and get the water! If you don't want to do that (I don't), pour cold water into a container, light a candle, and pray over it. You can bless the water yourself. Note that I do not use measurements. Making a bath is about soul - your own sacred signature. So, use your intuition when determining how much of anything you will use in your bath. Your spirit knows how much you need. If it's noted that you take a cold bath, do it. Cold temperatures break energy immediately for a definite shift in the clutch. Warm baths are usually sweet (sometimes sweet baths can be cold, though). Regardless, the temperature of a bath has an impact on the work it will do. So, pay attention to notes about temperature.

**White Bath** (purpose: calming, tranquility, clarity) — goat milk, coconut milk, and/or cow's milk, white flower petals, holy water, florida water, one egg white, and holy water. Optional: cascarilla/efun (purchase at a local botanica; efun/cascarilla adds a bit of force to the mix for immediacy so don't use very much ... just a pinch). Combine all ingredients into a bowl. Light a candle as you mix each ingredient, petition the energy of tranquility and clarity as you mix the bath. Be in conversation with that energy. This bath should be taken cold. Stand in the shower and pour it over your head with prayer. After the bath, it is best to get some rest in light colored or white clothing. Cover your head in light or white fabric as well. Sometimes, I pour a bit of cool water over myself after the bath so I don't wake up smelling like sour milk!

**Milk n Honey** (purpose: sweetening, love, sensuality) — goat milk, coconut milk, and/or cow's milk, lots and lots of honey, 5 sweet oils, and holy water. Optional: a pinch of cascarilla/efun. Combine all ingredients in a pot and place on the stove (keep at a low temperature). Always keep a candle lit near-by and be sure to put it out before you take the bath! Call on the energy you need. Stand in the shower and pour over your head with prayer. After the bath, get some rest in light or white clothing, cover your head in the same colors. Don't forget to pour some warm water over you after the bath! You may be a little sticky ... but you'll be sweet!



**Fresh Basil Bath** (purpose: expelling doubt, uncertainty, and negativity; attracting love, strength, and a refreshed head) — buy fresh basil from your local grocery store or botanica (never use dry plants), put the basil in a large bowl or bucket of cold water with stems removed, light a candle and pray or sing as you rub the plants together in the palms of your hands (you are squeezing the juice out of the plant as you do this) ... the bath should become vibrantly green and cold. Strain the bath so that the plant matter is no longer part of the bath (only the juice remains). Stand in the shower and pour the bath over your head. Do not rinse. \*You can also mop the floors of home with this bath. In fact, most plant baths can be used as floor washes as well. I like to make enough of these mixtures to bathe and clean the house. When I do this, I clean the house first and then myself. If you have children or other members of your household, try to get them to clean, too! If you choose to clean your home with a bath, mop from the back of the house to the front. If you can, dump the remaining floor wash into the street (but the toilet will suffice).

**Three Bitter Plant Bath** (purpose: stripping away negativity, doubt and fear) — use fresh aposote, quita maldecion, and espanta muerto purchased from your local botanica & **Three Sweet Plant Bath** (purpose: sweetening your energy, welcoming prosperity, abundance, balance) — use rosemary, menta (mint), albaca (basil). It is best to take both the bitter and sweet baths together. You are first stripping negative energy away, and then replacing that with sweetness.

**On candles:** The candles simply add light and a strong energy to intensify your prayers and work. Use a simple white candle.

**Steps for both baths (for you and your home):** Dedicate a glass of water and light a candle for the guide who will help you to make this bath. Spray plants with rum and tobacco to clean them. Strip leaves from stem of plants. You will need two basins of cold water, one for the bitter and one for the sweet. Start with a little water in each basin and add water as you add plants while mixing together, rubbing all plants between your palms, squeezing the juice from plants out. Spray rum, white wine, and tobacco into baths as you make them. You can strain the baths after you are done; use left-over plant matter after straining as a scrub for your body when you take the bath. Let the baths sit for one night with your white candle and glass of water.

**Doing your floor wash & taking the baths:** Mop floors with bitter bath first from back to front of house. Throw remaining floor wash into the street. Always clean your door as well. You can use some of the remaining plant matter to scrub the door. Follow the same process with the sweet floor wash. Always remember to take your spiritual baths AFTER you clean your home. When you are ready to clean your aura and body with these baths, put the bath on top of your head in a large bowl, pray and pour over your body. Repeat the process for the sweet bath after you have completed the bitter one. You may choose to take 3 bitter baths for 3 straight nights, and then

three sweet baths for three nights. Or you can simply take one bitter bath and one sweet bath at the same time. It depends on how much cleaning you feel you need to do. Just be honest with self. Let your intuition guide you.

## Mariahadessa Ekere Tallie



One day while discussing our hopes and concerns about the session, Omiyemi said that what we needed to bring into the space were concepts and practices that felt like care for participants and care for ourselves. Her wisdom allowed me to see the session as a sharing and I from that point on, I felt able to plan spaciously, in ways that honored the myriad ways that I engage in care for myself and others.

One of my offerings during the session was a poster, *10 Self Care Tips for Artists, Activists and Other Folks Who Give a Damn*. My daughter Joy-Shanti and I made this in 2017. I wrote 9 self-care tips for artists, activists and other folks who give a damn and posted

Our collective had a number of meetings online in order to get to know each other and plan our session. Each meeting felt different and new ideas emerged every time we gathered in the Zoom room. Our project felt ambitious and outside the box in a way I craved. It refused the lines that are often drawn between scholarship, spirituality, and art. Our project felt huge and unwieldy in ways that I had not anticipated. The collective we formed and found is a gift. “Black Water Women a Theatre of Care” reminded me that care can and must be woven through all I do.



them to social media. Someone suggested that I turn it into a poster. I got a poster board, thought of one more suggestion, and wrote ten tips but there was something missing: art! Joy-Shanti has always been a gifted visual artist, so I asked her to draw on my poster. She was nine at the time and it felt special to do this particular project with her. We are now on our third printing of the poster. During the session I read the first tip aloud and then I passed the poster around for others to read it. It was the first time I'd heard the tips read by other people and it was a joy seeing heads nod, hearing gentle laughter, and "uh huhs" as tips were read.

### **Recommended Books and Plays:**

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *undrowned: black feminist lessons from marine animals*. Chico: AK Press, 2020.

August Wilson, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. New York: Plume, 1988.

August Wilson, *Gem of the Ocean*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2003.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays & Speeches*. 1984. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007.

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

D. Soyini Madison, *Critical Ethnography, Method, Ethics, and Performance* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2019).

Daniel Alexander Jones, *Duat*. New York: On Stage Press, 2016.

"dat Black Mermaid Man Lady/The Show," written and conceived by Sharon Bridgforth, directed by Ebony Noelle Golden, featuring Aimee K. Bryant, Florinda Bryant, Pavielle French, and Kenyai O'Neal, produced by Pillsbury Playhouse in Minneapolis, MN, aired July 10, 2021, on PBS, <https://www.pbs.org/video/dat-black-mermaid-man-ladythe-show-38818>.

Erika Dickerson Despenza, *Cullud Wattuh*. New York: Samuel French Inc., 2022.

Joni L. Omi Osun Jones, *Theatrical Jazz: Performance, Ase, and the Power of the Present Moment*. Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2023.

Ntozake Shange, *Lost in Language and Sound*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011.

Wallace J. Nichols, *Blue Mind: The Surprising Science That Shows How Being Near, In, On, or Under Water Can Make You Happier, Healthier, More Connected, and Better at What You Do*. New York: Little, Brown Spark, 2015.

Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*. 1935. New York: Amistad, 2008.

**Recommended Music:**<sup>10</sup>

“Be Like Water,” lyrics by PJ Morton, featuring PJ Morton, Stevie Wonder, and Nas, track 6 on *Watch the Sun*, 2022.

“Float,” lyrics by Janelle Monáe, featuring, Janelle Monáe, Seun Kuti, and Egypt 80, track 1 on *The Age of Pleasure*, Wondaland, Bad Boy, and Atlantic Records, Feb 16, 2023.

“Water,” lyrics by Pharrell L. Williams, Beyoncé Gisselle Knowles, Nana Afriyie, Nija Aisha Alayja Charles, and Richard Isong Oluwaranti, featuring Beyoncé, Salatiel, and Pharrell Williams, track 14 on *The Lion King: The Gift*, Columbia Records, July 19, 2019.

“Water Get No Enemy,” lyrics by Fela Kuta, featuring Fela Kuta, produced by Fela Kuta, vinyl, track 4 on *Expensive Shit*, Arc Studio, 1975.

**Self-Reflexive Ritual Performances:**

“Dance of the Orcas” directed by Roy Petersen and Omiyemi (Artisia) Green, choreography by Ann Mazzocca Bellecci, featuring Audrey Bucknor, Tamiyah McClary, and Taylor Hayes, *YouTube*, 2021. [https://youtu.be/ThFA\\_QP-CWk?si=zzFjteNapxDwNg3e](https://youtu.be/ThFA_QP-CWk?si=zzFjteNapxDwNg3e).

In this film adaptation of a 2018 phenomenon, the character of Tahlequah is assisted by her ancestors and the forces of nature toward an emotional excavation and untethering. The film is based on a live performance that premiered at the 2019 Association for the Worldwide Study of the African Diaspora conference. <https://www.youtube.com/live/TUnk68Jppeg>.

“Invocation” written and performed by Nina Angela Mercer and Toshi Sakai, *YouTube*, 2017. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q39\\_QRyYay0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q39_QRyYay0).

This video poem traveled nationally and internationally with the “Visionary Aponte: Art and Black Freedom” exhibition for three years. <https://aponte.hosting.nyu.edu/visionary-aponte>.

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<sup>10</sup> These recordings are available on multiple online music streaming platforms.

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**Omiyemi (Artisia) Green** is a professor of Theatre and Africana Studies at William & Mary, Provost Faculty Fellow, an award-winning educator, and interdisciplinary scholar-artist. She is the editor-in-chief of the *Black Theatre Review*, and is published in *Theater*, *Continuum*, the *Stage Directors and Choreographers Society Journal*, the *August Wilson Journal*, *August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle: Critical Perspectives on the Plays*, and forthcoming work in *Applied Theatre* and *Racial Justice: Radical Imaginings for Just Communities* and *August Wilson in Context*.

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