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Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement (Post-Contemporary Interventions)

By Caren Kaplan



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Contemporary theory is replete with metaphors of travel—displacement, diaspora, borders, exile, migration, nomadism, homelessness, and tourism to name a few. In *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan explores the various metaphoric uses of travel and displacement in literary and feminist theory, traces the political implications of this “traveling theory,” and shows how various discourses of displacement link, rather than separate, modernism and postmodernism.

Addressing a wide range of writers, including Paul Fussell, Edward Said, James Clifford, Gilles Deleuze, Jean Baudrillard, Gayatri Spivak, Edward Soja, Doreen Massey, Chandra Mohanty, and Adrienne Rich, Kaplan demonstrates that symbols and metaphors of travel are used in ways that obscure key differences of power between nationalities, classes, races, and genders. Neither rejecting nor dismissing the powerful testimony of individual experiences of modern exile or displacement, Kaplan asks how mystified metaphors of travel might be avoided. With a focus on theory’s colonial discourses, she reveals how these metaphors continue to operate in the seemingly liberatory critical zones of poststructuralism and feminist theory. The book concludes with a critique of the politics of location as a form of essentialist identity politics and calls for new feminist geographies of place and displacement.



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Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement (Post-Contemporary Interventions) By Caren Kaplan Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1355397 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Duke University Press Books
- Published on: 1996-08-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .72" w x 5.86" l, .94 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 256 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"*Questions of Travel* is a multilayered inquiry into the ideological function of metaphors in discourses of displacement. Kaplan richly historicizes these metaphors in order to explicate the situated meanings that inhere in the myriad kinds of displacement that characterizes contemporary writing and lives. Her meditations on the rhetorics of displacement—including nomadism, exile, migrancy, and other practices of movement across space—take the reader on an exciting excursion into the fraught politics of travel discourse."—Donna Haraway, University of California, Santa Cruz

From the Back Cover

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Caren Kaplan is Associate Professor in the Department of Women's Studies at the University of California at Berkeley. She is coeditor (with Inderpal Grewal) of *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* and *Between Woman and Nation* (with Norma Alarcón and Minoo Moallem).

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