Georgia State University
Digital Archive @ GSU

Graduate English Association New Voices Conference 2007

English Department Conferences

9-2007

In 'Rememory': Beloved and Transgenerational Ghosting in Black Female Bodies

Sonya McCoy-Wilson
Georgia State University, smccoywilson@gsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/english_conf_newvoice_2007

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
McCoy-Wilson, Sonya, "In 'Rememory': Beloved and Transgenerational Ghosting in Black Female Bodies" (2007). *Graduate English Association New Voices Conference 2007*. Paper 5.
http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/english_conf_newvoice_2007/5

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the English Department Conferences at Digital Archive @ GSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate English Association New Voices Conference 2007 by an authorized administrator of Digital Archive @ GSU. For more information, please contact digitalarchive@gsu.edu.

McCoy-Wilson, Sonya
2007 New Voices Conference September 27-29
Graduate English Association
English Department, Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia

In 'Re-Memory': *Beloved* and Transgenerational Ghosting in Black Female Bodies

While thinking about transgenerational ghosting, even before I had a term to represent my thoughts, my point of reference was my phobia of prisons. Yes, the very idea of prisons frightens me beyond belief; therefore, I don't break the law. I have an aversion to federal court buildings, police departments, prison movies, prison scenes within other movies, people confined to chain-gangs, people in handcuffs, I distrust the police, and the list continues. When I realized that others don't categorically share my fear, I started to wonder about the source of it. I wondered, "Do prisons frighten me because my ancestors were enslaved? Do I remember, somehow, that feeling of insurmountable captivity? Do bodies remember?" Apparently, my questions did not exist in isolation; others had been investigating this notion as well. Toni Morrison provides an evocative perception of the notion of freedom, and its lack, in the foreword to her critically acclaimed novel, *Beloved*. She provides a personal narrative illustrating how she conceived the idea for the text. She explains that she was forced to resign from her editing job in a well-know publishing house because her writing, ironically, was interfering with her editing. She describes her feelings after leaving her job,

> A few days after my last day at work, sitting in front of my house on the pier jutting out into the Hudson River, I began to feel an edginess instead of the calm I had expected. I ran through my index of problem areas and found nothing new or pressing. I couldn't fathom what was so unexpectedly troubling on a day that perfect, watching a river that

> serene. I had no agenda and couldn't hear the telephone if it rang. I heard my heart, though, stomping away in my chest like a colt. I went back to the house to examine this apprehension, even panic. I knew what fear felt like; this was different. Then it slapped me: I was happy, free in a way I had never been, ever. It was the oddest sensation. Not ecstasy, not satisfaction, not a surfeit of pleasure or accomplishment. It was a purer delight, a rogue anticipation with certainty. Enter *Beloved*. (Morrison)

What Morrison had experienced was the shock of freedom, a freedom that had eluded her while working for the publishing house. I do not wish to infer that working for publishing houses is akin to slavery; however, I am implying that Morrison's body remembered. Her body remembered, sitting on the pier that day, a psychic ancestral connection to the shock the enslaved may have experienced in their newfound freedom. Therefore, she was inspired to uncover what the notion of freedom really meant and means for black women and to articulate how the bodies of black women remember slavery. If we place *Beloved* within two historical contextual time periods, we find that the narrative is both contemporary fiction, written in 1995, and narrativizes an historical event, the Margaret Garner story. Critic, Linda Hutcheon categorizes this type of contemporary, or post-modern fiction as historiographic metafiction, as it "problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge" by keeping "distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context," thus precluding a dialectic and leaving unresolved contradictions (Hutcheon 106). History and literature converge, in order to make audible competing and multiple truths, thus making literature as viable as historical record. In *Beloved*, Morrison wishes to fill in the gaps left by history, magnifying the historicism of slavery, as well as the ghosting of slavery, through a dramatization of transgenerational haunting in the figures of Beloved and Sethe. *Beloved* reveals much about the notion of freedom and the black female

body as text. Like a metaphorical palimpsest, the black female body has been layered transgenerationally with ghosts of oppression and slavery. In this essay, I suggest that slavery is psychically "ghosted" transgenerationally in the bodies of contemporary African American women, and this ghosting continues to impede the formation of black female body identity.

Before discussing the theories of transgenerational haunting, a brief plot summary of *Beloved* is in order. Throughout the narrative, Sethe attempts to reconcile the trauma of slavery through a repetition compulsion, a "re-memory," of the numerable atrocities she experiences: a group rape, the steeling of her breast-milk, the back-splitting beating during her pregnancy, her perilous escape on bare-feet, cracked and swollen under the enormity of the long journey and the weight of her pregnancy, and finally the birth of her child, inside the leaky canoe, rapidly filling with her own amniotic fluid and the waters of the Ohio River. Once she reaches freedom, the odious slave overseer called, Schoolteacher, comes to Ohio to recapture Sethe and her four children. Rather than have her children returned to the abjection of slavery, Sethe slits the throat of Beloved, the "already crawling baby," killing her, and attempts to kill her other children, but is stopped before she can complete the act. Consequently, Sethe is haunted by her memories and the ghost of her dead daughter, Beloved, for the remainder of the narrative. When Beloved manifests in the flesh, Sethe attempts to atone for her rough choice.

We move now to the work of Maria Torok and Nicholas Abraham. Students of Freudian psychoanalysis, they discuss the concept of "transgenerational haunting" in their text, *The Shell and the Kernel*, which postulates the psychological and physiological manifestations of trauma across generations. Abraham and Torok refer to this phenomenon as a "phantom," a "haunting," or a "phantomatic haunting," saying that it "moves the focus of psychoanalytic inquiry beyond the individual being analyzed because it postulates that some people unwittingly inherit the

secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives" (Abraham and Torok 166). Therefore, Abraham and Torok locate the source of repressed trauma not in the individual but in phantomatic haunting inherited transgenerationally.

If we return to *Beloved*, we see this theory playing out in the world of the text. Once the character of Beloved, the "crawling already baby," transcends her poltergeist state and manifests in the flesh, the community decides to support Sethe and exorcise Beloved's ghost. Talking to Paul D, Ella says, "You know as well as I do that people who die bad don't stay in the ground" (Morrison 221). Transgenerational haunting supports Ella's assertion, as it gives psychological substance to folklore. Like many folkloric and ancient beliefs, Abraham and Torok argue that "certain categories of the dead return to torment the living: those who were denied the rite of burial or died an unnatural, abnormal death, were criminals or outcasts, or suffered injustice in their lifetime. In Abraham's view, the dead do not return, but their lives' unfinished business is unconsciously handed down to their descendants" (167). The very nature of chattel slavery is in keeping with this theory. As many slaves were hanged from trees, with their bodies left on display to rot, denial of burial rites, abnormal death, and the suffering of injustices were the order of the day. Moreover, in the world of Morrison's text, Beloved, the murdered child, dies badly, as Ella asserts, and returns in spirit, like a transgenerational ghost, and later in flesh to wreak havoc on her murderer, her mother Sethe.

As well as attempting to reconcile her trauma, Sethe, like many slave women, struggles with body identity development. At Sweet Home, the plantation from which she escapes, Schoolteacher measures Sethe's body and attempts to delineate her "human" and "animal" characteristics. Schoolteacher's Eugenicist notions trouble Sethe. She attempts to resist these racialized perceptions of her body as part animal part human. Eugenics can be described as the

science of controlled breeding in order to control a population by rendering "preferred" genetic characteristics. Although this "science" gained proliferation during slavery and imperialist movements, its theory and practice continued to haunt black women well into the twentieth-century.

In her text *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*, Dorothy Roberts provides an extended discourse and research data about the evolution of Eugenics in the U.S. At the turn of the twentieth century, for example, "Eugenicists opposed social programs designed to improve the living conditions of the poor. They argued that adequate medical care, better working conditions, and minimum wages all harmed society because those measures enabled people with inferior heredity to live longer and produce more [inferior] children" (Roberts 65). By the 1930's, Eugenicists became interested in the "Negro problem," "proposing government programs that would reduce the Black birthrate" (71). These programs came in the form of anti-miscegenation laws; consequently, "by 1940, thirty states had passed statutes barring interracial marriage" (71). There were also programs promoting birth control and sterilization as a method of population control. Accordingly, Margaret Sanger, founder of the birth control movement, joined forces with Eugenicists in support of their racist ideologies. She believed the "mass of Negroes, particularly in the South still [bred] carelessly and disastrously, with the result that the increase among Negroes, even more than among whites, [was] from that portion of the population least fit, and least able to rear children properly" (76-77). This marriage of Eugenicist ideology and the birth control movement gave rise to health clinics targeted at black women living in impoverished and disenfranchised communities. These clinics supported population control in order to eradicate inferior genetics, disguising their

rhetoric as sound medicine in the form of long-term birth control and sterilization for the greater good.

According to Roberts, by the 1960's and 1970's "sterilization became the most rapidly growing form of birth control in the United States . . . Teaching hospitals performed unnecessary hysterectomies on poor Black women as practice for their medical residents. This sort of abuse was so widespread in the South that these operations came to be known as 'Mississippi appendectomies'" (90). Therefore, the Eugenicist theories and subsequent indoctrination into black women's healthcare was predicated on the same Eugenicist ideology promulgated by slavery.

We must ask, then, how did this ideology affect black female body identity during slavery? Let us return to the narrative *Beloved* to find answers. This passage is particularly evocative of the malformation of black female body identity. Here, Sethe contemplates the atrocities that befell her before she escapes the plantation. She wants to provide an account, an explanation for her daughter Beloved. She explains:

> Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else – and the one time I did it was took from me – they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby. Nan had to nurse white babies and me too because Ma'am was in the rice. The little white babies got it first and I got what was left. Or none. There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it is to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left. I'll tell Beloved about that; she'll understand. She my daughter. The one I managed to have milk for and to get it to her even after they stole it; after they handled me like I was the cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the

> horses. But I wasn't too nasty to cook their food or take care of Mrs. Garner. (Morrison 236-237)

Although she resists the racist perception of her body as "nasty," as animal rather than human, object rather than subject, Sethe, like many slave women, internalizes this racist perception of herself, viewing her body as commodity, used for what it can produce, breast milk and children.

Another example of body identity distortion is the textual representation of fragmented bodies. Beloved experiences this after she transcends her ghost stage and becomes flesh. She feels it difficult to keep "her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself. Among these things she could not remember was when she first knew that she could wake up any day and find herself in pieces" (Morrison 157). Beloved carries multiple psychic and physiological traumas, which render her unable to maintain wholeness. Beloved's transgenerational haunting is multifarious, as her presence in the world of the text represents the ghosting of slavery psychically and physiologically. Her re-memory reveals a recollection of collective repressed memories: the transatlantic slave trade and the traumatic middle passage, the trauma of having been murdered by her mother, Sethe, as well as Sethe's guilt for having committed the act and the trauma Sethe experiences at Sweet Home. In the following passage, Beloved explicates the depth of her psychic origins. She explains,

> All of it is now it is always now there will never be a time when I am not crouching and watching others who are crouching too I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked . . . the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face. (Morrison 248)

Here Beloved describes the middle passage. The men without skin are the white slavers; the crouching she describes illustrates the layering, one atop the other, of African bodies on slave ships. The dead man on her face suggests the historical record of the vast numbers of Africans who, during the middle passage, remained shackled to a person who had died. Beloved recalls memories that have been transmitted to her transgenerationally.

Sethe also experiences body fragmentation after her perilous passage from bondage into freedom. When Sethe arrives at 124, the house where her mother-in-law Baby Suggs awaits her, she arrives broken in body as well as spirit. By the light of a "spirit lamp," Baby Suggs methodically and ceremoniously bathes Sethe's body in sections, "starting with her face" and ending with the infected whip lacerations on her back (Morrison 109). In doing so, Baby Suggs does the perfunctory work of metaphorically piecing Sethe's fragmented body back together.

In her essay, "Summoning Some Body: The Flesh Made Word in Toni Morrison's Fiction," Vanessa Dickerson argues, "The Black body all in pieces constituted, as Sethe and Baby Suggs both knew, flesh subject to the most destructive legacies of all–self-hatred" (211). Therefore, by killing Beloved, Sethe attempts to spare her daughter the "haunting knowledge" (Dickerson 211) "[t]hat anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up" (Morrison 295). Although Sethe spares Beloved this self-hatred, she experiences it herself, along with an entire generation of enslaved black women, who have transmitted their experiences across generations into the bodies and collective consciousnesses of contemporary black women.

This pejorative self-image is ghosted in the bodies of contemporary black women not only because of psychic phantomatic haunting by their ancestors, but because of the ghosting of racist ideology itself, transgenerationally, into contemporary white society.

Dorothy Roberts' research, in her text *Killing the Black Body*, along with the theoretical discourse of Patricia Hill Collins in her book *Black Feminist Thought*, demonstrates this transgenerational ghosting in contemporary African American women. The following is an excerpt from an interview Roberts conducted with a thirty-year-old black mother from Baltimore who describes her experience with the long-acting contraceptive Norplant. This mother was trying to have the contraceptive removed because of the numerous side effects she was experiencing. She explains:

> I feel like because I'm a social service mother that's what's keeping me from getting this Norplant out of me. Because I've known other people that has the Norplant that spent money to have it put in and spent money to have it put out with no problems…. That's how they make me feel, like 'you got this Norplant you keep it.' (Roberts 104)

Because she is a welfare mother, this woman's side effects are irrelevant, and her desire to have the contraceptive removed is rendered mute by a system that has nullified her personhood and legitimacy as a subject. Furthermore, Roberts argues that in the 1990's, legislators and policymakers in the United States seized upon Norplant as a means of domestic population control," targeting poor Black women in the hopes of decreasing the birthrate of purported genetically inferior offspring (Roberts 104). Therefore, contemporary African American women are experiencing the transgenerational haunting of racist ideologies that have demonized their bodies and the offspring those bodies produce.

The afore mentioned mother from Baltimore refers to herself as a "social service mother," a mother receiving public assistance in the form of food stamps, TANF, Medicaid, or some combination thereof. Feminist theorist Patricia Hill Collins discusses the stereotype of this type of black woman in her book chapter entitled, "Mammies, Matriarchs, and Other Controlling Images." Collins explains, "The dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of four interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood:" mammies, matriarchs, welfare mothers, and jezebels. All of these stereotypical images of black women were predicated on a nineteenth century ideology: the cult of true womanhood. In this ideology, white females defined their identity on the basis of who they were not rather than who they were. According to the cult of true womanhood, "*true* women possessed four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (Collins 71). Black female identity, then, serves as the binary opposite of this ideology. Many slave women fit the mammy stereotype: the amiable and obedient, usually obese, domestic servant, "an asexual woman, a surrogate mother in blackface devoted to the development of a white family," as "*good* white mothers are expected to deny their female sexuality and devote their attention to the moral development of their offspring" (Collins 72). In the afore mentioned passage from Morrison's text, Sethe describes this phenomenon of the slave mother being forced to subordinate the nutritional needs of her own children, sacrificing her breast milk for the nourishment of white children. Indeed, the slave mother did not own her children, as she did not own her own body.

The character of Sethe, however, most closely resembles the "breeder woman," and her contemporary double is the welfare mother. Collins explains,

> Essentially an updated version of the breeder woman image created during slavery, [the welfare mother] image provides an ideological justification for efforts to harness Black

> women's fertility to the needs of a changing political economy. . . A closer look at this controlling image reveals that it shares some important features with its mammy and matriarch counterparts. Like the matriarch, the welfare mother is labeled a bad mother. But unlike the matriarch, she is not too aggressive – on the contrary, she is not aggressive enough. . . She is portrayed as being content to sit around and collect welfare, shunning work and passing on her bad values to her offspring. (76-77)

This stereotypical image is what plagues the Baltimore mother attempting to dispense with the harmful contraceptive. She and her children are a burden on the economic betterment of the dominant culture. Although she is behaving like a "good" welfare mother by attempting to halt the reproduction of her "inferior" offspring, her complaints are invalid and unworthy of legitimating. Therefore, these stereotypical images of Black women and their bodies did not die with slavery. Rooted in racist ideologies, they have infiltrated the consciousnesses of Black women transgenerationally. These negative images continue to haunt black women psychically, and thus thwart the formation of positive body identity.

In the text, *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self Representation by African American Women,* feminist theorist Deborah E. McDowell writes an Afterword entitled, "Recovery Missions: Imaging the Body Ideals." In it, she speaks of the historical racialized representations of black women delineated by Patricia Hill Collins. She explains that after slavery, the "nineteenth century was a watershed era for black women's recovery of their bodies from discourses that functioned to consign them to the realm of the 'serviceable corporeal.'" Therefore, the slave narratives of Harriett Wilson and Harriet Jacobs attempt to "decorporealize" the black female body, "making it symbolically disappear" (299). One of the rhetorical strategies of the slave narrative is to invert the image of a serviceable corporeal black body,

making the body disappear by cloaking its identity in pseudonym, thereby resisting bodily exposure. Others, like Sojourner Truth, chose instead to uncover the body, yet appropriate its uncovering in their own terms. When Sojourner Truth spoke, she often uncovered her breasts and arms, and by "turning her body into spectacle, [. . .] Truth rescued it from nineteenth-century proscriptions of racial and gender abjection" (qtd. in McDowell 299). In her "specularization" of her body, Truth self-represents and decorporealizes not by cloaking or covering rather by uncovering.

McDowell uses contemporary pop-culture examples of this decorporealizing of the black female body through spectacle. She discusses Tina Turner's perfomative use of her body in the 1980's exemplified by her revealing costumes, her blonde wigs, and the gyrating titillating movements of her body. McDowell contemplates her admiration of Tina Turner's bravado, her deconstructing of the "bourgeoisie body-in-the-making" ethos of the 1950's, which not only mandated covering the body in modest, blandly colored clothing but prohibited any movement that would "call attention to what lay below the waist" (297). Of course, this type of socialization was a direct reaction against the jezebel stereotype Patricia Hill Collins discusses. In an attempt to defy the transgenerational ghosting of the sexualized jezebel image of their bodies, contemporary African American women have either confined their "bourgeoisie bodies-in-the-making," reminiscent of the "New Negro" and "talented tenth" ideology of W.E.B Dubois and Booker T. Washington, or uncovered them boisterously like Tina Turner.

McDowell continues to cite examples from contemporary culture, in which black women seek to recover their bodies and self re-present. She provides an example from the 1990's when Oprah Winfrey invited the public to share in her weight loss journey. Subsequently, Winfrey received numerous letters from fans, mostly white female fans, who felt alienated by the new

slimmer Oprah. During an episode devoted to flushing out these issues, McDowell explains, "Oprah had invited twelve white women (there might have been ten? fifteen?) to her show to air their grievances, face to face" (303). In short, their grievances amounted to the new image of Oprah's slimmer body as an affront to their white womanhood. Oprah had dared to break the mold of the mammy; "[s]he was clearly not 'corporeal' enough" (303). These white female viewers imagined the svelte Oprah as no longer the amiable, obedient, comforting mammy; now, they had hurled her into the ranks of the jezebel, sexually available, competition for their white male resources.

Mapping on to McDowell's analysis, I offer an even more contemporary example of this mammy to jezebel paradox. In June 2006, Star Jones Reynolds, a well-known black female attorney, and protégé to the infamous Johnny Cochran, resigned, or was forced to resign, from the daytime talk show, "The View." The controversy surrounding her resignation, during a live taping of the show, unceasingly permeates the tabloid media. At the risk of being reductive, the conflicts between Star, the producers, the viewers, and the other white females on the show, amounts to a fall from grace, Star's "fall" from amiable obese mammy to a slender diva jezebel figure.

According to CBS News, journalist and creator of "The View," Barbara Walters said "ABC network chiefs had decided last fall not to renew Reynolds' contract because its research showed that Reynolds' dramatic weight loss and 2004 wedding to banker Al Reynolds had turned off viewers" (CBS News). Therefore, the way in which Star resigned was an attempt to control her departure from the show. When Star transformed her body image from the obese desexualized mammy figure to a slimmer version of herself, she was catapulted into the sexualized gaze of dominant white culture. To say that Star's weight loss "turned off viewers,"

says that the expectations of the viewers (undoubtedly most of the offended viewers were white), are that black women are only acceptable when their bodies are desexualized, reifying the tenets of white female womanhood. In other words, when black female bodies transcend the stereotypical mammy image, they are sexualized, more aesthetically pleasing to the dominant culture, and therefore have crossed into territory in which they do not belong. Consequently, the dominant culture must now vilify them.

Furthermore, other reports cite justifications for Star's resignation in the anticipated arrival to the show of comedian Rosie O'Donnell. Apparently, there had been a public feud between Reynolds and O'Donnell about Reynolds' drastic weight loss. O'Donnell claimed to be offended because Reynolds refused to admit that her weight loss was the result of Gastric Bypass surgery rather than exercise and diet. O'Donnell, who is famously and defiantly overweight, argued that Reynolds' surgery was an affront to "fatties" everywhere. Essentially, O'Donnell is saying, "How dare she take the "easy" route to losing weight? Doesn't she know her place?" Moreover, Star's elaborate wedding to Al Reynolds has a connection with this conflict, as Star's weight loss occurred during the year of planning leading up to the ceremony, and Star transformed herself from mammy to married woman. How dare she? Again, this kind of rhetoric returns to the rhetoric of slavery. Black women's bodies continue to be a site for public discourse. If black women do not adhere to their role as mammies, then they become the sexually available jezebel, the loose woman, the whore.

As I close, I wish to return to the question at hand: do bodies remember? Fervently, I say, Yes! Perhaps, my phobia of prisons is nothing more than a mere phobia, like fearing spiders, heights, or close spaces; or, perhaps my body remembers, remembers being shackled to other African bodies, remembers the white slavers policing those bodies, remembers the

bondage. Torok and Abraham's work provides a plausible theoretical framework by which to examine this notion of transgenerational ghosting of slavery, as it gives psychological substance to folklore. As their research asserts, "certain categories of the dead return to torment the living," or, as Ella says in *Beloved*, "Nothing that dies bad stays in the ground" (221). Didn't scores of Africans die badly during slavery? How many were denied burial rites, died unnatural deaths, were outcasts, and suffered injustices? The very nature of slavery sanctioned this type of genocide. Therefore, the pain and unfinished business of these ancestors returns transgenerationally, haunting the bodies and the psyches of contemporary African American women. Similarly, racist ideology, like Eugenics, originated during the slave trade and is ghosted likewise in the psyches and bodies of white contemporary society. Furthermore, contemporary black women are not alone in their present day pain; they are carrying the weight of ancestral pain inside their bodies and collective consciousnesses. This pain has perpetuated generations of self-hatred that must end. Only when African American women begin to make correlations to slavery in their contemporary lives will they begin to start this healing process. In Morrison's *Beloved*, Baby Suggs was the catalyst for this kind of purgation. For the newly freed Africans, the traumatized men, women, and children, she offers a space in which they are allowed to laugh, cry, and dance; she offers a space at the Clearing for healing. Baby Suggs reassures them that they can begin to trust freedom, and as freed people, they are the owners of their once objectified bodies; they are now freed subjects, free to love their wives, husbands, children, and perhaps most importantly their own flesh, their own bodies. She tells them, "Love it. Love it hard. . .You got to love it" (103-104).

Works Cited

Abraham, Nicholas and Maria Torok. *The Shell and the Kernel*. Ed. and Trans. Nicholas T. Rand. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Bauder, David. "'View' Divas React to Star Jones' Exit." *CBS News* 28 June 2006. http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/06/27/entertainment/main1757977.shtml

Collins, Patricia Hill. "Mammies, Matriarch, and Other Controlling Images." *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Rev. 10th ed. New York: Routledge, 2000: 67-89.

Dickerson, Vanessa. "Summoning Some Body: The Flesh Made Word in Toni Morrison's Fiction." *Recovering the Black Female Body*. Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 2001: 195-218.

McDowell, Deborah E. "Recovery Missions, Imaging the Body Ideals." *Recovering the Black Female Body*. Rutgers: Rutgers UP, 2001: 296-317.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987. New York: Vintage-Random, 2000.

Roberts, Dorothy. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Vintage-Random, 1997.