

## Toni Morrison and Kara Walker: The Interaction of Their Imaginations

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### INTRODUCTION

Kara Walker (1969–) is an internationally recognized African American artist who works in a variety of media. She is best known, however, for her racially and sexually coded controversial silhouettes that represent life-size human figures. They are physically placed within occasional clumps of landscape and psychologically placed within the fragmented narratives of the antebellum South. Made of black paper, most of the human figures are literally black, but within what Walker calls her “plantation family romance” it is possible to distinguish the “white” figures from the “black” ones according to their stereotypical profiles, postures, and attire. Walker’s silhouettes exhibited in the form of wall installations create a spectacular space that often renders the viewer disoriented and speechless, leading to both fascination and repulsion, as she interweaves fantasy and reality in her tableaux of fictionalized scenes of slavery.

Walker’s use of the medium of the silhouette is subversive in terms of its nineteenth-century gendered status as well as its historical linkage to racism and American slavery.<sup>1</sup> Silhouettes prevailed as folk art in Europe and America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the American South, it became especially popular as a “ladies art” among

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the middle-class. Walker ironically uses a “ladies art” to create racially and sexually provocative works. Black-paper silhouettes were also a means of preserving images of one’s loved ones. Such images served as family portraiture before the advent of photography. Walker’s silhouettes, then, evoke memories of the antebellum South in that they are the kind of images available to people living at that time. Moreover, by using the medium of paper cut-outs as a family portrait and creating the scenes inhabited with black and white figures battling with each other, Walker’s silhouettes radically suggest that antebellum black-white relations were like an “extended” and “dysfunctional” family.<sup>2</sup> It is also significant that the use of silhouettes seems to have originated with the rise of racial anthropology, particularly the eighteenth-century pseudoscience of Johann Casper Lavater’s physiognomy. Lavater’s theory states that facial features—the silhouette lines of the forehead, nose, and chin—not only reveal a person’s natural and “national” character but also give evidence pertaining to the individual’s moral disposition. Back in the late seventeenth century, American slave traders used silhouettes as “bill of sale” identification for slaves and “a mug shot” that would facilitate identification in the case of escape. Thus, Walker’s use of the silhouette explores race and its means of representation in a way that extends far beyond the surface African American stereotypes of the cut-outs into consideration of the origins of racism itself.

Walker’s silhouettes are frequently referred to with regard to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987). Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw, for example, finds in Walker’s silhouettes “a shadowy fantasy of Morrisonian memories.”<sup>3</sup> Dinah Holtzman refers to the artist and her work as “the art world’s *Beloved*.”<sup>4</sup> Walker herself has acknowledged Morrison as a source of inspiration, stating in a 1999 interview, “Toni Morrison has had an obvious influence on my work from the beginning.”<sup>5</sup> Art critics often refer to Morrison’s influence on Walker, but such statements rarely extend beyond the description. A comparative study of their works has centered only on *Beloved*, and the interaction of their imaginations has not been fully explored.

It is possible to assert that Walker’s career as artist has developed along with Morrison’s historiographical love trilogy—*Beloved*, *Jazz* (1992), and *Paradise* (1998). Walker’s group exhibition history starts in 1991, four years after *Beloved* was published, and her solo exhibition history starts in 1995, three years after Morrison’s publication of *Jazz*.<sup>6</sup> Since then, Walker’s slavery-themed works have been exhibited in major



museums both domestically and internationally. It was in 1997, when Walker received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's "genius" grant, that an anti-Walker campaign was initiated by black senior artists—many of those in Morrison's generation—such as Betye Saar, who wrote a letter to more than two hundred artists and politicians warning about the "negative images produced by the young African American artist, Kara Walker."<sup>7</sup> Howardena Pindell has accused Walker's art of "betraying the slaves of the antebellum South, recycling stereotypes of African Americans that were born in the post-Reconstruction days of lynching."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, critics who support Walker consider her work as ironic and a conscious intervention in racial iconography. Henry Louise Gates Jr. praised Walker's art as "the post-modern, signifying, anti-racist parody" and "a profound act of artistic exorcism."<sup>9</sup> In short, during the period Morrison was working on *Paradise*, Walker made her debut in the mainstream art world and became one of the most successful and controversial contemporary young artists. Morrison must have been well aware of Walker, who has cited Morrison's work as a source of inspiration.

In this article, I explore Morrison's influence on Walker's visual arts, or the interaction of their imaginations, focusing on Morrison's love trilogy—*Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*—and Walker's silhouettes. I elucidate the ways in which Walker's visualization of traumatized history has strong affinities with Morrison's writing, demonstrating how both artists represent motherhood under slavery, the myth of the antebellum South, and the cultural and social construction of race and gender.

## I. REPRESENTATION OF MOTHERHOOD UNDER SLAVERY

Many critics point out that Walker's silhouettes, like Morrison's *Beloved*, represent the unspeakable horrors of slavery. They make visual the horrific experiences that slave narrators such as Harriet Jacobs, the author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), could not convey because of censorship and the traumatic nature of sexual and racial oppression. In *Beloved*, Morrison gives voice to the interior life of slave women, especially focusing on the psychological damage inflicted by white masters' sexual exploitation. Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, is tormented by humiliating memories of how "they took [her] milk," how they treat her like an animal, and, as she learns later, how her husband was driven mad as a result of witnessing such a degrading scene:

"I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. . . . There is also my husband squatting by the churn smearing the butter as well as its clabber all over his face because the milk they took is on his mind."<sup>10</sup> Such horrific scenes abound in Walker's silhouettes of sexually abused and brutally violated black bodies.

It is insufficient, however, simply to assert Morrison's influence on Walker based on surface resemblances. Morrison and Walker share considerable affinities not only in subject matter but also in their use of imagery, motifs, and themes. If we look at the visual elements that repeatedly appear in Walker's art<sup>11</sup>—items such as water, birth, shoes, knives, and mother's milk—they recall many of Morrison's literary elements. Among them, those most explicitly influenced by Morrison can be found in Walker's images of mothers, infants, and childbirth. Walker's silhouettes contain peculiar and disturbing scenes of childbirth as well as of children in vulnerable situations: women giving birth standing up; infants falling lifeless to the ground, dangling from delicate umbilical cords (figs. 1 and 2); a mother throwing babies away (figs. 3 and 4). Such scenes imply abortion or infanticide, which could be the slave woman's means of revolt against "forced breeding."<sup>12</sup> As Yasmil Raymond argues, Walker's representation of mothers and infants "epitomizes the suffering and sacrifice of slaves while simultaneously alluding to the disturbing and conflictive role that motherhood played in the lives of female slaves. In literature, this dilemma is keenly personified in the character of Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*."<sup>13</sup>

Walker's disturbing images of mother and child also remind us of the way in which Morrison reworks the maternal love and the victimized child from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Harriet Beecher Stowe foregrounded the enforced separation of mother and child to evoke public sympathy for the abolitionist cause. In order to convey the devastating effects of slavery, writers of slave narratives and abolitionists have also utilized the pathos of the suffering mother and child.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the Margaret Garner case in Cincinnati in 1856, an actual incident that inspired *Beloved*, is also utilized in abolitionist discourse as a heroic act of maternal love. Sethe's repeated assertion of maternal love, equation of motherhood with freedom, and her remorseless claim that "what she had done was right because it came from true love" (*B* 162, 251) echo the abolitionist discourse of figures such as Frederic Douglass and Lucy Stone, who took Garner's side as part of their indictment of slavery.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 1 Kara Walker, *Untitled* (1995). Cut paper on canvas, 48 × 54 inches (121.9 × 137.2 cm). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.



Figure 2 Kara Walker, *Negress Notes* (1995). Collage, ink, gouache, graphite, and watercolor on paper, 6 × 9 inches (15.2 × 22.9 cm). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.



Figure 3 Kara Walker, *An Abbreviated Emancipation (from the Emancipation Approximation)* [detail] (2002). Cut paper on wall, 9 × 89 feet (2.7 × 27.1 meters). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

Yet such conflation of infanticide with maternal love is problematized by the figure of *Beloved*, who appears not as an innocent child victim but as a vengeful spirit or a spiteful reincarnated ghost of Sethe's dead daughter. Simultaneously, the text undermines Sethe's maternal love, describing another kind of infanticide committed out of rage and hatred. Sethe's own mother killed all the children fathered by whites who had raped her during the Middle Passage and afterward: "She threw them all away but [Sethe]. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The one from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them" (*B* 62). Ella, representative of the community women, also



Figure 4 Kara Walker, *Untitled* (2002). Cut paper on wall, 8.5 × 21 feet (2.6 × 6.4 meters). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

killed her baby, as she spent her adolescence as the sex object of her master and his son. She refused to nurse the “hairy white thing, fathered by ‘the lowest yet’ ” until it died after five days “never making a sound” (B 258–59).

As if echoing Morrison’s maternal figuration, Walker chooses to cut the moment of infanticide into her silhouette, a detail (fig. 4) from Walker’s 2002 exhibition *For the Benefit of All the Races of Mankind (Mos’ Specially the Master One, Boss): An Exhibition of Artifacts, Remnants, and Effluvia EXCAVATED from the Black Heart of a Negress III*. The woman in the long billowing skirt is tossing babies into the air. One baby has already fallen dead to the ground in front of the figure of the slave catcher or master. He grieves not over the dead baby but over the loss of his property, indicated by the coins falling out of his pouch. Another baby is flying through the air, upside down, his chest open to the sky, while the woman is poised to deliver a third to the same fate. A toddler stands behind her, looking at the arc of the flying baby. The woman’s tossed-back head and her gaping mouth reveal the agony of the slave mother who has been compelled, for whatever reason, to throw her babies away to certain death.

Walker’s image reminds us of Sethe’s mother who threw her babies away, yet an association can also be made with Sethe herself. While this silhouette does not exactly correspond to Sethe’s infanticide scene, several of the visual elements resonate with Morrison’s text. Walker’s woman resembles Sethe because of the flying movement of her body, the beaked nature of her face, and the headcloth tied in the shape of hummingbird wings, all of which recall the bird imagery with which Sethe is associated in her act of infanticide. The former slave Stamp Paid, who has witnessed Sethe’s flight from slave catchers, recalls “how she flew, snatching up her children like a hawk on the wing; how her face beaked, how her hands worked like claws” (B 149). In an attempt to put her act into words, Sethe also remembers:

When she saw them coming and recognized schoolteacher’s hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of little she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where they would be safe. And the hummingbird wings beat on. (B 155)

Moreover, Rebecca Rae Peabody indicates that Walker's image repeats "the arc of [Sethe's] swing,"<sup>16</sup> which appears when schoolteacher witnesses Sethe's attempted murder and Stamp Paid's intervention: Sethe "simply swung the baby [Denver] toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time, when out of nowhere . . . the old nigger boy . . . snatched the baby from the arc of its mother's swing" (*B* 149). Such details seem to give evidence that Sethe directly inspired Walker's imagery for the woman.

If this woman is Sethe, what is significant is the way in which Walker's silhouette evokes Morrison's methodology of speaking the unspeakable through absence. Morrison leaves a blank in Sethe's infanticide scene by excluding not only the actual moment of killing, when Sethe pulls the saw across the neck of her daughter, but also by leaving out any description of what is inside the character's mind at that moment. While exploring the means of speaking about the unspeakable experiences of a slave woman, Morrison simultaneously includes absence by refusing to flesh out the details. This blank, as Mark Reinhardt argues, is "the mark of respect for [Margaret Garner's] humanity and the necessary condition of an ethical and politically fruitful telling of this story of slavery."<sup>17</sup> Like Morrison, Walker does not represent the actual murder—despite the fact that such horrific scenes of mutilation are not unusual in her silhouettes. Moreover, Walker creates absence in the huge blank space under the beautiful arc of the mother's swing. In this way, she signifies Morrison's ethical writing, which, in the phrase of Giorgio Agamben, "bear[s] witness in the name of the impossibility of bearing witness."<sup>18</sup> Walker's silhouette also confronts the viewer with this impossibility.

What remains disturbing is the cherubic appearance of the children in this silhouette. How do we interpret the appearance of these children, who are far different from Sethe's "blood-soaked child" or "two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt" (*B* 141)? Do they imply Sethe's "precious and fine and beautiful" children? Why does the flying baby look so serene? Is it because she is, as Sethe and Margaret Garner assert, going to a place "where they would be safe"? Why does the child behind the mother look as if he is waiting for his turn? Given that this silhouette represents an infanticide scene, the ludic atmosphere produced by this child is problematic for many viewers and a source of controversy, as is often the case with Walker's silhouettes.

In terms of Walker's postmodern critique of the legacy of slavery, this cherubic child figure may be "signifying on" in a Gatesian way or



parodying the political and cultural appropriation of historical icons of slavery in the past, as readers of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Margaret Garner case will recall. Walker may also be making an ironic reference to the cultural consumerism of historical trauma, including Morrison's *Beloved*, which has been adapted as a film, an opera, and, self-reflexively, into Walker's silhouette.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, in light of Walker's engagement with Morrison, this child can be interpreted as Walker's reworking of the victimization of children in the present-day configuration of "postmemory." With its ubiquitous presence of mothers and infants, Walker's art, like *Beloved*, addresses the crucial issue of postmemory, that is, how to represent the memory of historical trauma that is not experienced but inherited. As is suggested by trauma studies, the foregrounding of the suffering mother and vulnerable child is a feature often found in representations of historical trauma, like slavery, war, the Holocaust, famine, and natural disaster. According to scholars like Claire Kahane and Marianne Hirsh, this staging of mother and child not only utilizes pathos to evoke the sentimental sympathy of the public but also functions as "a kind of screen or a cover-up" for the terror of confronting "more crucial implications—context, specificity, responsibility and history—of the traumatic event."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, as Hirsh argues, "the obsessive repetition of these images in itself is an example of acting out and the compulsion to repeat, which interfere with efforts at working through the traumatic past."<sup>21</sup> While Morrison rewrites the innocent child victim into the vicious and vengeful *Beloved*, Walker in turn transforms it into the ludic and serene cherubic figure. Walker's representation of the child not only parodies victimization of the angelic child but also functions to distance the viewer's subjectivity from the traumatic past, which is necessary for the working through. If the beauty of this silhouette is "the lure" for the viewer, as Walker intended,<sup>22</sup> the serene and ludic child in such a horrific scene encourages the viewer to work thorough the historical trauma.

Finally, I suggest that Morrison's maternal figuration also influenced Walker's methodology of representation. Art critics often explain Walker's imagery in terms of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection, which is defined as a reaction to the confrontation with our own materiality—mutilated or fragmented bodies, the corpse, urine, feces, blood, and images of giving birth. Walker's art, of course, reflects the abject art movement of the United States in the 1990s, which reveals not only what we have "abjected" (thrown away) or repressed in order to construct our subjectivity



or agency but also what we have oppressed and marginalized in order to structure our society. In this respect, abject art often evokes political debate, as is often the case with Walker's art. Here, I assert that both Morrison and Walker share abject imagery in their representations of the atrocious effects of slavery on the enslaved people.

According to Kristeva, the abject imagery triggers our gut sensation such as nausea, disgust, horror, and fascination, and destabilizes our subjectivity/agency, returning us to an archaic psychic space where boundaries between subject and object are blurred. The abjection for Kristeva is closely related both to religion and to art, which she considers as two ways of purifying the abject: "The various means of *purifying* the abject—the various catharses—make up the history of religions, and end up with that catharsis *par excellence* called art, both on the far and near side of religion."<sup>23</sup> In other words, art is the privileged space that enables us to enact the abjection and the sublimation: through art, we can explore the boundaries of our subjectivity/agency and subsequently reemerge as newly reconstructed or reaffirmed.

In *Beloved* Morrison also utilizes the Kristevan notion of abjection, especially staging its process of not only abjection but also sublimation. Walker's abject imagery reminds us of the scene in which Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, evokes abject images in her healing ritual that she terms "Call." It is for the ex-slaves who suffer from the corporeal depredations of enslavement long after they are freed. Baby Suggs commences her ritual by evoking how their bodies are treated as abjects by white masters:

"In this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs: flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. . . . They do not love your neck unnoosed and straight. . . . And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them." (*B* 88–89)

Here, Baby Suggs's use of the word "flesh" implies not only abjection but also sublimation. What she calls "flesh" is the body in pieces, and she tells them to love each of their bodily parts, including invisible internal organs. Baby Suggs's message shows that the body is not simply the product of cultural construction. Even if the bodies of ex-slaves are constituted as "abjects" in white supremacist sociocultural narratives and metaphors (such as those of the animal, the breeding stock, and of

commodities), Baby Suggs returns their bodies to “flesh,” which implies a raw, volatile, bodily materiality outside of or prior to cultural inscription. Her message to “love your flesh” means more than claiming self-love and self-ownership. As psychoanalytic insight clarifies, “flesh” suggests something that resists symbolization—some residue in our organic body.<sup>24</sup> If language is saturated with white supremacist patriarchal ideology, how do black people reemerge as newly speaking subjects within the master’s language? Baby Suggs addresses her listeners with the words “We flesh” because as “flesh” black people resist such symbolization. Simultaneously, “flesh” as a verb signifies the body’s fluid processes enacted as a communal healing, which implies recovering the individual body’s capacity for pleasure and love, the possibility of black subjectivity/agency.

Baby Suggs’s “Call” functions in correspondence with the workings of abjection and sublimation within an already constructed subject of the ex-slaves. Walker’s debasing figures are often criticized in exactly the way white supremacist culture is described. Yet, like Baby Suggs’s ritual, Walker’s silhouette not only reminds us of how black bodies are constructed as abject under slavery, but it also explores a way of resisting such symbolization.

## II. REWRITING THE MYTH OF THE ANTEBELLUM SOUTH

Morrison’s influence on Walker can be also found in their critiques of Southern mythology. Both Walker and Morrison rework the myth of the antebellum South, such as that of the benevolent agrarian society, harmonious plantation life, and loving relations between masters and slaves. In this section, I would like to elucidate how Walker’s silhouettes of the antebellum South correspond to Morrison’s representation of a rural plantation in *Beloved* and her narrative of the Southern past in *Jazz*.

In her 1997 mural, *Slavery! Slavery! Presenting a GRAND and LIFE-LIKE Panoramic Journey into Picturesque Southern Slavery or “Life at ‘Ol’ Virginny’s Hole” (sketches from Plantation Life)” See the Peculiar Institution as never before! All cut from black paper by the able hand of Kara Elizabeth Walker, an Emancipated Negress and leader in her Cause* (fig. 5) Walker explicitly quotes the scenes from Eastman Johnson’s oil painting *Old Kentucky Home—Life in the South (Negro Life at the South)*, 1859 (fig. 6). Johnson’s picture, a famous example of antebellum genre painting, is a picturesque scene of a plantation on a leisurely afternoon



Figure 5 Kara Walker, *Slavery! Slavery! Presenting a GRAND and LIFELIKE Panoramic Journey into Picturesque Southern Slavery or “Life at ‘Ol’ Virginny’s Hole’ (sketches from Plantation Life)”* See the Peculiar Institution as never before! All cut from black paper by the able hand of Kara Elizabeth Walker, an Emancipated Negress and leader in her Cause [detail](1997). Cut paper on wall, 11 × 85 feet (3.4 × 25.9 m). Installation view: *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2008. Photo: Joshua White. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

when a white mistress enters the yard of the slave quarters and finds a slave man playing the banjo and a slave child dancing with his mother. Johnson is known as “a painter of black scenes” who introduced the perspective of African American slaves into his pictures and created an ambiguous image of slavery that was acclaimed by both antislavery and proslavery advocates.<sup>25</sup> Produced two years before the outbreak of the Civil War, however, Johnson’s *Old Kentucky Home* has been generally recognized as perpetuating the myth of a harmonious plantation life while disguising the inhumane treatment of slaves that defines the peculiar institution of American slavery.<sup>26</sup>

In Walker’s silhouettes (figs. 5 and 7), the scene of afternoon leisure in Johnson’s picture is transformed into an unsettling nightscape under a crescent moon. Outside the slave quarters, most of the figures are in

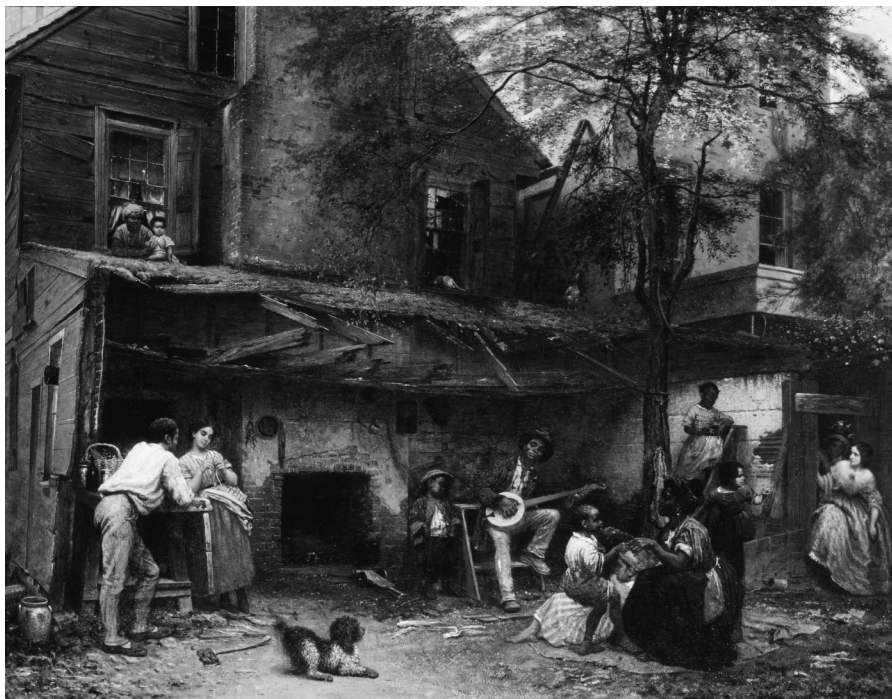


Figure 6 Eastman Johnson, *Old Kentucky Home—Life in the South (Negro Life at the South)*, 1859. Oil on canvas, 36 × 45 inches. Accession #S-225. Collection of the New-York Historical Society.

motion—some are walking, others are dancing, and the shoes they wear signify the possibility of escape.<sup>27</sup> An older man with a pitchfork prepares his family to flee by hiding the children inside a hay wagon. A young woman eating an apple is at the head of the procession carrying an infant on her back. For a naked woman, precariously hanging over the edge of the roof in the background, a fall might be the only escape from the white boy's sexual assault.

Walker's reworking of Johnson's picture evokes Morrison's representation of Sweet Home, the Kentucky plantation in *Beloved*. Owned by the generous Garner family, Sweet Home first appears as a harmonious rural plantation like that created in Johnson's picture. Especially for Sethe, it is almost like an Edenic place where she first experiences love and protection, bears her three children, and creates a family with her husband. Yet, it is also at this Sweet Home that she learns of the atrocity of slavery. After Mr. Garner's death, Sweet Home slaves are



Figure 7 Kara Walker, *Slavery! Slavery! Presenting a GRAND and LIFELIKE Panoramic Journey . . .* [detail] (1997). Cut paper on wall, 11 × 85 feet (3.4 × 25.9 m). Installation view: *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2007. Photo: Dave Sweeney. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

brutally treated by schoolteacher: They are tortured, hanged, burned to death, driven mad, or quickly sold. Paul D, the only male survivor, is manacled, shackled, collared, fitted with a bit, and finally sold. He ends up working on a chain gang. In Walker's silhouettes, we can easily find these figures of tortured, abused, humiliated, and mutilated slaves. Indeed, *Sweet Home* is ironically named to highlight these brutal aspects of slavery as well as "to expose its illusory nature."<sup>28</sup>

According to Alexis L. Boylan, "all attempts to reimagine or redefine the South and plantations were forever altered by the phenomenon that was Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936)."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Mitchell's novel became a Pulitzer Prize-winning bestseller that sold more than 30 million copies worldwide. Along with its equally popular 1939 film adaptation, Mitchell's mythologized depiction of the period as a genteel and benevolent agrarian society fixed in the American psyche a distorted account of the American South.



As if to challenge the seductive power of such mythology, Walker subverts and parodies the Southern romance in her 1994 mural, *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* (fig. 8). As the title evokes Mitchell's novel and its film version, the work seems to represent, at first glance, the iconography of the plantation romance. Yet, such a sentimental impression is soon undermined by the legs of somebody else, probably a young male/female lover, hiding beneath the belle's garment. Here, the hoop skirt, "a symbol of morality and virtue of Southern women,"<sup>30</sup> does not protect their virtue but disguises their repressed desire. The man's sword also points to the bottom of a little black boy with hair bobs like the devil's horns. He displays a strangled bird to a female figure whose lower body is disproportionately elongated. According to the art critic Annette Dixon, this black boy holds up a swan, which symbolizes racial mixing in Walker's silhouettes.<sup>31</sup> Does the boy's gesture imply the miscegenation between this gentleman and the black woman floating on the river? As we move our attention to the right, a landscape of lustful events unfolds and the silhouettes become more and more difficult to decode. Although objects like a sword, a bust, a pumpkin, and a broom



Figure 8 Kara Walker, *Gone, An Historical Romance of a Civil War as it Occurred between the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* [detail] (1994). Cut paper on wall, 15 × 50 feet (4 × 15 m). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

suggest fairy-tale illustrations, the overall impression of their doings is “sex” between the master class and enslaved blacks, whether under coercion or by mutual consent (fig. 9).

Walker’s reworking of the Southern romance, especially her foregrounding of interracial relations, evokes Morrison’s narrative of the Southern past, Golden Gray’s story in *Jazz*. Golden Gray is an eighteen-year-old youth, the illegitimate son of Vera Louise Gray, a Southern aristocrat exiled from her family plantation for carrying a black child as a consequence of her covert relationship with a black slave, Henry Lestory/LesTroy, known as Hunters Hunter. Due to his light skin color, Golden Gray has been raised as white and was only recently informed that “his father was a black-skinned nigger.”<sup>32</sup> In order to confirm his self-identity as a white gentleman, he sets out on a patriarchal adventure, seeking to kill the black father who had had illicit sex with his white mother. During his trip from Baltimore to Virginia, Golden Gray encounters a pregnant black woman, who is later called Wild. Wild plays a crucial role in altering the Faulknerian oedipal scenario. For, according to the narrator, Golden Gray did not “kill . . . his father” (*J* 143) or “blow



Figure 9 Kara Walker, *Gone, An Historical Romance . . .* (1994). Installation view: *Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2008. Photo: Joshua White. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

[his] head off,” as he initially intended to, because “the girl [Wild] changed his mind” (*J* 173). Later, it is suggested that Golden Gray lives with Wild in a rock cave (*J* 184).

Deliberately imitating the formula of Southern romance narratives,<sup>33</sup> Morrison parodies the mythic values and iconic figures attributed to the Old South. Golden Gray is depicted as a “white” feminized Southern gentleman who is ironically awakened to manhood and chivalry by his encounter with the “black savages,” Wild and Hunters Hunter (*J* 160). Vera Louise Gray, who is impregnated by a black man, is apparently a parody of the white lady figure whose physicality is traditionally defined by the “ideology of purity and modesty.”<sup>34</sup> Like the Southern belle in Walker’s silhouette, she uses her garment to disguise her desire: she wears the “green dress” during their *aventure* to “make it hard to see her in the grass” (*J* 172). Being a rebellious daughter disowned by her patriarchal father, she gives no thought about the need “to look for a husband” and enjoys a luxurious life as a single mother, “taken up completely with book reading, pamphlet writing and the adoration of the orphan [her baby]” (*J* 139). Yet her autonomy and single motherhood are possible due to the devotion of her faithful servant, True Belle. As a black mammy figure of the Old South, True Belle is also complicated. Wise and thoughtful, she plays a crucial role in the survival of not only her mistress but also her own family members. Yet she has an essentialist notion of race (as is suggested in her parable of “the irrevocable nature of the rattler” [*J* 155]) and has internalized a white supremacist notion of beauty (as her name ironically means the “true” Southern “belle”/white lady). Adoring Golden Gray’s creamy skin color and yellow hair, she embeds such notions of beauty in the mind of her young granddaughter, Violet (*J* 139).

It is not difficult to find Morrison’s parodied iconic figures in Walker’s other silhouettes. For example, in *The Rich Soil Down There* (1999–2000) (fig. 10), Morrison’s True Belle-like figure is carrying a Southern belle on the head like an enormous bundle of laundry. White liquids covering the black figures suggest their internalized white supremacy. More recently, in her mural *The Long Hot Black Road to Freedom, a Double-Dixie Two-Step* (2005–8), a Vera Louise-like white woman holding a baby puts her booted leg on the chest of a black man whose lower part is underground (fig. 11).

There is ambiguity in the interracial “love” between Hunters Hunter and Vera Louise. As Angela Burton argues, their interracial love sub-





Figure 10 Kara Walker, *The Rich Soil Down There* (2002). Cut paper and paint on wall, 15 × 33 feet (4.5 × 10 m). Installation view: *Tempo*, Museum of Modern Art Queens, Queens, NY, 2002. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

verts the convention of miscegenation stories in which “a white slave owner overpowers and impregnates his black female slaves, characteristically without the women’s consent and in situations more analogous to rape than seduction.”<sup>35</sup> Hunters Hunter (a black male slave) is sexually desired by Vera Louise (a white lady), and their sexual act is a mutual seduction. Vera Louise never mentions the name of the baby’s father, and Hunters Hunter keeps her “green dress” for eighteen years (*J* 172). Implying nothing more, however, Morrison foregrounds only the mutual sexual attraction between the former slave and the white lady. Likewise, Morrison leaves ambiguity in the relation between Golden Gray and Wild. Golden Gray is sexually attracted to Wild, and Wild also hungers for his golden hair (*J* 167). Yet, despite their togetherness and cohabitation, nothing more is revealed or suggested.



Figure 11 Kara Walker, *The ~~Long~~ Hot Black Road to Freedom, a Double-Dixie Two-Step* [detail] (2005–8). Cut paper and paint on wall, 15 × 150 feet (4.6 × 45.7 meters). Installation view: *Kara Walker: The Black Road*, CAC Málaga, 2008. Photo: José Luis Gutiérrez. Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

According to Arlene Keizer, Walker is related to literary counterparts like Gayle Jones, Carolivia Herron, Octavia Butler, and Alice Randall through her representation of enslaved black women who have sexual desire for the white men who dominate them. Keizer features such desire of black women in Walker's silhouettes as "a breaking of the last taboo" in the black community.<sup>36</sup> Yet, concerning the desire of black female subjectivity, Walker's silhouettes are more ambiguous and complicated in many cases. Although Keizer does not mention Morrison's name, Walker's silhouettes of interracial love are also closely related to Morrison's representation, especially in its ambiguity.

### III. DISASSEMBLING THE RACIALIZED AND SEXUALIZED BODY

Morrison's *Paradise* tells the story of lost women living in the Convent at the edge of an all-black town called Ruby. The novel begins with a scene of a horrific massacre of the Convent women, and reveals how

the patriarchs of Ruby repeat the violence that they themselves have suffered and sought to evade in their dream of constructing a safe haven without white persecution. At the same time, through the story of the Convent women who are marginalized and victimized in a racist and sexist society, Morrison explores the possibility of being freed from the traumatized past as well as of creating a community “which is not based on exclusion.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, *Paradise* addresses the issue of a black community constructed on traumatized history, which is also the issue Walker is forced to confront in creating her art.

In a sense, Walker is doing what Patricia Best, a light-skinned schoolteacher of Ruby, cannot do in the novel *Paradise*. As an unofficial historian of the town, Patricia creates the genealogies of the fifteen “founding” families of Ruby, which in turn becomes an attempt to fill in the blanks of the “town’s official story.” This project allows her to realize the unspeakable of the community’s racial sexual politics and her own alienated position in town: she finds that the town’s racial “purity” has been preserved by the oppression of light-skinned people, especially women like her own mother and daughter, as well as consanguineous—sometimes semi-incestuous—marriages among the founding families. Patricia eventually burns her history due to the silent resistance of the townspeople and her fear of ostracism and violence.

Unlike Patricia, Walker represents what the black community has repressed in its traumatized history—especially sexual oppression of black women. Moreover, Walker’s use of racial and sexual stereotypes in her silhouettes evokes Morrison’s representation of the Convent women. Like Walker, Morrison explicitly utilizes stereotypes in order to emphasize that the Convent women function as the feminine Other for the Ruby men: Consolata, the central figure at the Convent, is basically a maternal figure who always accepts visitors and gives them necessary care. Yet, having once had a passionate love affair with a Ruby man, she is also seen as a sexually uninhibited woman, an image of “Salome,”<sup>38</sup> witch, and vampire; Mavis, who accidentally suffocates her babies, is seen as a negligent mother and battered wife; Gigi is a sexually enchanting woman who suffers from a violent memory of the civil rights movement; Seneca, abandoned by her teenage mother, grows up as a victim of child molestation; Pallas, emotionally abandoned by her wealthy parents, becomes a rape victim. The stories of the Convent women reveal how their identities are reduced to cultural and social stereotypes in a society largely governed by patriarchal and racist ideology.

In order to be freed from these culturally constructed bodies, the Convent women create body art like Walker's in the healing ritual conducted by Consolata. In the womblike maternal space of the Convent cellar, Consolata returns the women's subjectivity to the archaic disposition, reducing their bodies to mere silhouettes: "In the beginning, the most important thing was the template. Consolata told each to undress and lie down. They tried arms at the sides, outstretched above the head, crossed over heads or stomach. . . . When they each found the position she could tolerate on the cold, uncompromising floor, Consolata walked around her and painted the body's silhouette" (P 263). As "the templates [draw] them like magnets" (P 264), they start to fill in the empty spaces of the template with the images of what haunts them or their unspeakable experiences. Their etchings of body parts and of haunting memories represent their experience of abjection; however, transforming the abject images into body art, they overcome this unnamable loss, which in turn leads them to a talking cure:

They spoke to each other about what had been dreamed and what had been drawn. [. . .] January folded. February too. By March, days passed uncut from night as careful etchings of body parts and memorabilia occupied them. Yellow barrettes, red peonies, a green cross on a field of white. A majestic penis pierced with a Cupid's bow. Rose of Sharon petals, Lorna Doones. A bright orange couple making steady love under a childish sun. (P 265)

Through this process of abjection and sublimation, the Convent women begin to transform themselves: they become aware that the bodies they wear are culturally constructed/symbolic bodies, that is, dead ones; they have "to be reminded of the moving bodies they wore, so seductive were the alive ones below" (P 265); they become "calmly themselves" and are "no longer haunted" (P 266). Then, finally, their sublimation/resubjectification culminates in their sensual and ecstatic dancing in the rain, that is, in *jouissance*.

While one of the women of Ruby witnesses the Convent women's body art as "the turbulence of females trying to bridle, without being trampled, the monsters that slavered them," the men of Ruby report it as "the pornography" and "Satan's scrawl" (P 303), accusations that Walker's art has received. Here, we might be tempted to imagine that Walker's art, in turn, has influenced Morrison's representation of the Convent women in *Paradise*. In fact, it is probable that Morrison saw

Walker's art while she was working on *Paradise*. As mentioned, the period during which Morrison was working on *Paradise* coincides with Walker's debut in the mainstream art world, and especially in 1997, the year before the publication of *Paradise*, Walker became one of the most controversial art world celebrities in the United States. In order to explore the possibility of Walker's influence on Morrison, I would like to focus on one of Walker's most impressive large-scale silhouettes: "The three suckling women" detail in her 1995 mural *The End of Uncle Tom and the Grand Allegorical Tableau of Eva in Heaven* (fig. 12), which was exhibited from March 30 to June 1, 1997, at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Walker's *The End of Uncle Tom* is full of radical images of violence and sexual transgression. As many critics point out, the most striking image is at the left side of the installation: the arrangement of three black female figures suckling each other. The three women, probably slaves, are naked from the waist upward, either nursing or being nursed. One woman stoops a little to suckle the breast of a second woman, who also stands on tiptoes to suck the breast of a third woman, balancing a large watermelon behind her back. On the knees of a first woman, an infant is straining to get her teat. But all three women are too intent on satiating their own thirst to placate the infant. Walker's women seem to be enjoying themselves, with their bodies no longer being used by others, by men or even by babies.

Shaw generally reads this life-size silhouette installation as a "rememory of slavery" that offers "a haunting visualization . . . of the personal and collective trauma of slavery."<sup>39</sup> Especially by linking the three suckling women to "Morrison's gothic novel *Beloved*," Shaw argues that "the depiction of sexual self-reflexivity" and mutual nursing in Walker's silhouette visualizes "a mother hunger" imposed by the institution of slavery, "a desire for the lost maternal nurturing."<sup>40</sup> Indeed this silhouette evokes Sethe's claim for the stolen milk as Shaw suggests, but the term "mother hunger" simultaneously reminds us of Violet's "mother hunger" in *Jazz* as well as that of the Convent women who are equally abandoned by or separated from their mothers in *Paradise*. Shaw also indicates in this silhouette "transgression of sexual and gender roles" repressed in the black community—that is, lesbianism and child neglect. Yet, when Shaw explains these taboos in terms of "standard gothic tropes,"<sup>41</sup> these women rather evoke the Convent women who gather at





the gothic mansion of the Convent and explore their identities/subjectivities through their conflictive but sensual relations.

Moreover, if we focus on the ways in which Walker reworks Stowe's novel as is suggested in the title, the link between this silhouette and *Paradise* becomes more evident. Walker has reworked Stowe's characters. For example, Walker parodies Stowe's "feminized" Tom by his act of giving birth. Also, angelic Eva is represented as a violent girl who holds an axe backward over her head. Peabody argues that, unlike in Stowe's novel and its popular illustrations, Eva and Tom are physically separated, as if Tom's newborn baby were the result of their illicit relation. Tom and Legree stand back-to-back, but their symmetrical arrangement suggests their similarities. According to Peabody, Walker's three suckling women are identified as Eliza, Cassy, and Emmeline, the three main female characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: they are meant "to elicit desire by way of their beautiful, sexualized bodies." Walker's silhouette "represents three young, nubile, semi-naked women who—with their arched backs and slender bodies—refocus the viewers' attention on Stowe's use of sexual desirability as a way of establishing viewer empathy."<sup>42</sup> Yet, being aware of their own beauty and sexualized bodies, Walker's women ironically refuse to grant the viewer the same pleasure that Stowe would.

Peabody's interpretation of the three suckling women illuminates, I would argue, that Walker's silhouettes signify not only Stowe's novel but also Morrison's reworking of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As we have seen, Morrison's influence on Walker is found in her representation of mothers, infants, and childbirth. Here, even this signature image of childbirth is "queered" by Uncle Tom's act of giving birth. While Morrison has reworked Stowe's maternal figures, especially Eliza and Cassy, into Sethe, Walker reworks Stowe's women into the three suckling women, signifying with their sexual transgression the heteronormative endings that occur in both *Beloved* and *Jazz*. At the end of these novels, both female protagonists are united with their male partners. Then, in *Paradise*, Morrison seems to be responding to Walker, with her representation of the Convent women who free themselves from the racialized and sexualized bodies by creating abject body art like that of Walker. Moreover, the women reconstruct themselves through the sensual and erotic female bond, which is especially articulated in the lesbian relation between Gigi and Seneca.

Finally, Joan Copjec's explication of Walker's silhouette further illuminates how Walker's art and Morrison's work resonate with each other. Walker explains that this silhouette is a metaphor for "history . . . a constant need to suckle from history, as though history could be seen as an endless supply of mother's milk represented by the big black mammy of old."<sup>43</sup> Yet Walker's image does not show the stereotypical corpulent body of the black mammy. Rather, as Copjec argues, "the internal void left by the definitive loss of the mammy can account for the replication of the woman, or the splitting of the image from itself." Walker in her artwork breaks from "the commonplace of the superabundant mother that prevails . . . in the vulgar imagination" and conceptualizes the mother, on the contrary, "as a void, a hollow."<sup>44</sup> If this silhouette is a metaphor for history as Walker explains it, history is represented as the mother who holds the void, that is, "the never present" of the traumatic event. The three women suckling the milk of history encounter the void, and at the same time, they are connected through the void. According to Copjec, Walker's reworking of "the big black mammy" into the self-reflexively repeated figures of women reveals "a rupture that constitutes the never present origins of a race" and opens up "the possibility of conceiving racial identity as repeated self-difference."<sup>45</sup>

Copjec's reading of Walker's silhouette reminds us of Morrison's remark that she created the Convent women "to write race and to unwrite it at the same time."<sup>46</sup> Morrison renders the racial identities of the Convent women ambiguous, especially by never disclosing the identity of the white girl who is killed in the opening line of the novel. Also, countering the story of an all-black "racially pure" town that is constructed on the historical trauma, the story of the Convent women suggests the possibility of identity/subjectivity as well as of community that "is not based on exclusion."<sup>47</sup> Like Walker's silhouettes that create "an erotic disassembling" of stereotypical figures, "a mad and vital tussle to break away from their stale scent and heavy burden,"<sup>48</sup> Morrison gathers the stereotypical women in the maternal space of the Convent and renders their painful but rapturous break from the traumatized past as well as from the cultural and social construction of race and gender.



## CONCLUSION

According to W. J. T. Mitchell, Sethe's "rememory" is not simply a matter of filling in the gaps of history but "the very act of telling which has the potential to produce a re-experiencing of the original event." Yet the act of telling is immensely complex, as Mitchell's questions indicate: "What if the materials of memory are overwhelming, so traumatic that the remembering of them threatens identity rather than reconstituting it? What if identity had to be reconstituted out of a strategic amnesia, a selective remembering, and thus a selective dis(re)remembering of experiences?"<sup>49</sup> As *Beloved* ends with repeating the ambiguous phrase, "this is not a story to pass on," Morrison reveals both the necessity and the difficulty of "passing on." Walker's almost obsessive visualization of traumatized history and its controversial reception also reveal that Walker shares this difficult task with Morrison.

Both Morrison and Walker continue to explore the possibility of "passing on" as an important role for contemporary artists. In 2002, the interaction between Morrison and Walker was realized in their collaboration, *Five Poems*, in which Morrison's poems are illustrated by Walker's silhouettes. *Five Poems* was published in a limited edition to raise funds to secure freedom for writers whose voices are muffled by censorship and persecution.<sup>50</sup> In 2006, Morrison hosted at the Louvre a multidisciplinary program entitled "The Foreigner's Home," which focused on "the pain—and rewards—of displacement, immigration and exile." In her special exhibition and lecture, Morrison featured Théodore Géricault's 1819 oil painting, *The Raft of the Medusa*, which shows desperate sailors struggling to survive after a shipwreck. Morrison finds this image the perfect metaphor for those millions who are wandering in search of new homes.<sup>51</sup> Walker reworked the same picture by Géricault into her silhouette made in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which revealed the continuing difficulty of solving the racial problems of the United States. Walker's *Katrina-Adrift (after Géricault)* (fig. 13) appeared on the cover of the post-Katrina issue of the *New Yorker* on August 27, 2007. In the interaction of Morrison's and Walker's imaginations, we find articulations of the crucial roles that artists can play in the contemporary world.



Figure 13 Kara Walker, *New Yorker* Cover Aug. 27, 2007, *Katrina—Adrift (after Géricault)* (2007). Cut paper on paper, graphite, 25.625 × 19.875 inches (65.1 × 50.5 cm). Courtesy of Sikkema Jenkins & Co., New York.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of silhouette art, see Emma Rutherford, *Silhouette: The Art of the Shadow* (New York: Rizzoli, 2009). Also, for a detailed discussion of Walker's use of silhouettes, see Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable: The Art of Kara Walker* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004); Anne M. Wagner, "Kara Walker: The Black-White Relation," *Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress*, ed. Ian Berry, Darby English, Vivian Patterson, and Mark Reinhardt (New York: Rizzoli, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Arlene R. Keizer, "Gone Astray in the Flesh: Kara Walker, Black Women Writers, and African American Postmemory," *PMLA* (October 2008): 1665.

<sup>3</sup> Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable*, 64.

<sup>4</sup> Dinah Holtzman, "'Save the Trauma for your Mama': Kara Walker, the Art World's *Beloved*," in *Revisiting Slave Narratives II*, ed. Judith Misrahi-Barak (Montpellier, FR: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2007), 377–404.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, "All Cut from Black Paper by the Able Hand of Kara Elizabeth Walker . . ." *Artorbit* (Feb. 1999), [http://www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue4/i\\_walker/i\\_walker.htm/](http://www.artnode.se/artorbit/issue4/i_walker/i_walker.htm/) (accessed May 11, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> As for Walker's exhibition history, see Berry et al., eds., *Kara Walker: Narratives of a Negress*, 185–89.

<sup>7</sup> Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable*, 114–15.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Juliet Bowles Harris, "Extreme Times Call for Extreme Heroes," *International Review of African American Art* 14, no. 3 (1997): 12.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., quoted in Harris, "Extreme Times," 5.

<sup>10</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 70. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be cited in text in parenthesis as *B* with a page number.

<sup>11</sup> Yasmit Raymond, "Maladies of Power: A Kara Walker Lexicon," in *Kara Walker: My Compliment, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love*, ed. Hatje Cantz Verlag (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2007), 347–69.

<sup>12</sup> See Patricia Morton, *Disfigured Images: The Historical Assault on African American Women* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1991); and Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

<sup>13</sup> Raymond, "Maladies of Power," 359.

<sup>14</sup> Claire Kahane, "Dark Mirrors: A Feminist Reflection on Holocaust Narrative and the Maternal Metaphor," in *Feminist Consequences: Theory for the New Century*, ed. Elizabeth Bronfen and Misha Kavka (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 161–88.

<sup>15</sup> Concerning the Margaret Garner case and its abolitionist responses, see Levi Coffin, *Reminiscences of Levi Coffin, 1876* (New York: Kelly, 1968); and Mark Reinhardt, *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Rae Peabody, *A Strategic Cut: Kara Walker's Art and Imagined Race in American Visual Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 2006), 141. My account of this silhouette is indebted to Peabody's excellent monograph, although her explanation of the novel *Beloved* is incorrect in some details.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Reinhardt, "Who Speaks for the Margaret Garner? Slavery, Silence, and the Politics of Ventriloquism," *Critical Inquiry* 29 (Autumn 2000): 119.

<sup>18</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 1999), 34.

<sup>19</sup> Peabody, *Strategic Cut*, 129–44.

<sup>20</sup> See Kahane and Marianne Hirsh, "Projected Memory: Holocaust Photographs in Personal and Public Fantasy," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover: UP of New England, 1999), 3–23.

<sup>21</sup> Hirsh, "Projected Memory," 16–17.

<sup>22</sup> Thelma Golden, "Thelma Golden/Kara Walker: A Dialogue," in *Kara Walker: Pictures from Another Time*, ed. Annette Dixon (New York: Distributed Art, 2002), 43–49.

<sup>23</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 17.

<sup>24</sup> Charles Shepherdson, *Vital Signs: Nature, Culture, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>25</sup> Maurie D. McInnis, "The Most Famous Plantation of All: The Politics of Painting Mount Vernon," in *Landscape of Slavery: The Plantation in American Art*, ed. Angela D. Mack and Stephen G. Hoffius (Columbia: U of South Carolina, 2008), 107–9.

<sup>26</sup> Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 483.

<sup>27</sup> Raymond, "Maladies of Power," 351.

<sup>28</sup> Howard W. Fulweiler, "Belonging and Freedom in Morrison's *Beloved*: Slavery, Sentimentality, and the Evolution of Consciousness," in *Understanding Toni Morrison's Beloved and Sula: Selected Essays and Criticism*, ed. Solomon O. Iyasere and Marla W. Iyasere (New York: Whitston, 2000), 118–19.

<sup>29</sup> Alexis L. Boylan, "From Gilded Age to *Gone with the Wind*: The Plantation in Early Twentieth Century Art," in Mack and Hoffius, eds., *Landscape of Slavery*, 132–34.

<sup>30</sup> Raymond, "Maladies of Power," 348–49.

<sup>31</sup> Annette Dixon, "A Negress Speaks Out: The Art of Kara Walker," in Dixon, ed., *Kara Walker*, 11–25.

<sup>32</sup> Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 143. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be cited in text in parenthesis as *J* with a page number.

<sup>33</sup> See Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison* (Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1998), 136; and J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet as It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (New York: State U of New York P, 2000), 175.

<sup>34</sup> Diane Roberts, *The Myth of Aunt Jemima: Representations of Race and Region* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 5.

<sup>35</sup> Angela Burton, "Signifying Abjection: Narrative Strategy in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*," in *New Casebooks: Toni Morrison*, ed. Linden Peach (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 179.

<sup>36</sup> Keizer, "Gone Astray," 1666. It is worth noting that in the 1970s Morrison worked as an editor for Carolivia Herron at Random House and highly admired Gale Jones's *Corregidora* as one of her most favorite novels. See Toni Morrison, "Toni Morrison on a Book She Loves: Gayle Jones's *Corregidora*," in *What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction*, ed. and intro. Carolyn C. Denard (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2008), 108–10.

<sup>37</sup> Oprah Winfrey Show, "Paradise." Ophra Book Club site, [http://www.oprah.com/obc/pastbooks/toni\\_morrison/obc\\_pb\\_19980116\\_a.html](http://www.oprah.com/obc/pastbooks/toni_morrison/obc_pb_19980116_a.html) (accessed March 5, 2008).

<sup>38</sup> Morrison, *Paradise* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 280. All subsequent quotations from this edition will be cited in text in parenthesis as *P* with a page number.

<sup>39</sup> Shaw, *Seeing the Unspeakable*, 64.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>42</sup> Peabody, *Strategic Cut*, 209.

<sup>43</sup> Kara Walker, "Big Black Mammy of the Antebellum South Is the Embodiment of History," in *Kara Walker*, exhibition catalogue published by the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Jan.12–Feb.23, 1997, not paginated.

<sup>44</sup> Joan Copjec, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 107.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 100–102.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>47</sup> James Marcus, "This Side of Paradise," interview with Toni Morrison, *Literature and Fiction*, Amazon.com, <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/feature/-/7651/104-7286901-1554360> (accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Copjec, *Imagine*, 107.

<sup>49</sup> W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994), 200–203.

<sup>50</sup> Morrison, *Five Poems*, silhouettes by Kara E. Walker (Las Vegas: Rainmarker Edition, 2002).

<sup>51</sup> Morrison, “The Foreigner’s Home,” pamphlet for the lecture, Louvre Museum (Nov. 6, 2006).