A Rhetoric of Abandonment:

The Act of Representation and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

by

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ABSTRACT

A Rhetoric of Abandonment:

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This dissertation examines a rhetoric of abandonment as it operates in, and shapes our experience of, Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. My study argues that hegemonic representations are both constituted by and are meant to constitute material, social bodies; consequently, these representations are sites of symbolic action and, when they racialize bodies, are potential perpetrators of symbolic and actual violence. *Beloved* is both a narrative representation and also an *act* of representation: that is, it provides insight into the ways social, cultural, and ethical assumptions about race are coded into contemporary hegemonic practices, and it recuperates the losses caused by racial dividing practices.

To make these arguments, I introduce a three-fold concept of abandonment ("Introduction: Representational Practices, Toni Morrison, and *Beloved*") which defines "abandonment" as: the relinquishing of hope, the abrogation of responsibility, and the yielding to desire. The first two of these meanings cluster as consequences of hegemonic representational practices; the last inheres in acts of representation that seek to reclaim such losses.

Chapter II provides the theory and method that inform a rhetoric of abandonment; that is, I assemble resources from discourse, narrative, rhetorical, and social theory in order to set up a framework for engaging in the theoretically-informed, contextually-sensitive, close readings of later chapters.

For each of my three definitions of abandonment, and using the critical methodologies developed earlier, I engage in readings of *Beloved* to argue (Chapter III: "Abandonment as Representational Practice") that hegemonic representational practices are "ways of seeing" and acting that compromise epistemology and ontology, and that Morrison both reveals these ideological perspectives and counters their "seeing" with "listening" as a strategy for bearing witness and constructing identification between the text and readers. Representational practices have a divisive effect on society; Chapter IV ("Abandonment as Dividing Practice") discusses the motives for and consequences of white supremacist dividing practices that are both constructed by and enable hegemonic representations. I trace the rhetorical move from "white" to "whiteness" to examine how dividing practices are reified, and argue that Morrison interrogates the paradox of substance on which such practices are based by constructing "reality" on congregating, rather than segregating, terms. Chapter V ("Abandonment as Transformative Performance") argues that Morrison employs transformative, embodied, strategies to reorient readers' ideological positions: *Beloved* performs as a communicative body whose dyadic relatedness for the other constitutes the ecstatic element of a rhetoric of abandonment.

Finally, I conclude this study by claiming that *Beloved* functions as a radically epideictic rhetoric which re-members and memorializes fragmented bodies to enable a revision of community (Chapter VI: "Lament for a Disappeared Body").

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More than a list of names, these acknowledgements recognize a cast of characters who have been more than supporting of my attempt to understand the explanatory power of rhetoric for language and life. A project that takes so much time and effort can never be lived through nor completed alone; besides the "friends" whom I know only through their writing (Kenneth Burke and Toni Morrison are chief among them), I thank several others for their generous assistance.

I chose my thesis committee well. Professor William Macnaughton's enthusiasm for and appreciation of my work greatly encouraged me, and Professor Catherine Schryer's careful reading and comments spurred me to rethink the progress of my argument. My supervisor, Professor David Goodwin, consistently and generously helped me clarify and reformulate my ideas. Because, when I teach writing, I advise my students to forego adjectives for strong nouns, I here take my own advice and identify Professor Goodwin with the strongest noun I know: with me, he has always been a *mensch*.

Many of my friends and fellow graduate students have given me courage and faith to continue with this dissertation when my own wavered. I owe thanks to J Wielenga and Alice den Otter, who believed in my project before I did and helped me get it underway. I thank Teresa Zackodnik for her long-distance infusions of advice and cheer. I am grateful especially to Lois Carley and Mary-Eileen McClear, who were close by and always ready to listen and fortify me; to Sandra Gold and Carol Sherman, who had no doubts; and to Randi Patterson and Kim Jernigan, who made valuable suggestions and, along with Mary-Eileen, met with me for a proofreading binge. Lynn Zinkann gave me hope.

Finally, I thank my family for living through this with me; their feelings at different times (impatience, patience, disinterest, excitement) have culminated, along with mine, in happy relief.

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PREFACE

My dissertation started very simply, with a gift. Because of my habit of including Yiddish words in my speaking, a friend gave me Arthur Naiman's book called *Every Goy's Guide to Common Jewish Expressions*, which she inscribed "To Gail–a *mensch* with *rakhmones*." I knew what *mensch* meant,[1] but I didn't know the word *rakhmones*, so I flipped immediately to the r's, and this is what I found:

> rakhmones
>
> > Compassion, empathy. Not your thin-
> > blooded, abstract, Christian pity, but real,
> > sloppy, emotional caring for people.
> > The best example of rakhmones I know of is
> > Toni Morrison's book, *The Bluest Eye*.
> > (120)

I'd never heard of Morrison, but I was intrigued enough that I hurried to buy *The Bluest Eye*. When I read it I found it immensely sad, troubling, and, yes, compassionate. Coincidentally, shortly after I'd read it, a book club I belonged to offered Morrison's *Beloved*, and I bought it and consumed it in a couple of gulps.

I didn't spend any time then considering what it was about *Beloved* that so compelled me. I recognized intuitively it had all the qualities I look for in a novel: a complex and mysterious story line that drew me along irresistibly; characters I either loved, hated, or was fascinated by; beautiful, poetic language, rhythmic and rich with

images vibrant to the eye and ear; and an address so personal that I felt I was being spoken to, told a story, if not by a friend, then a trusted teller. But it wasn't until I wrote an essay on *Beloved* spurred by a line that haunted me: "*Why did you leave me who am you?*" that I realized how strongly I identified with Sethe and uncovered my own emotional link with the novel: the issue of abandonment.

Maybe it's because I'm Jewish, and because I'm a woman, and because I'm the only survivor of a family of women who resolutely saw themselves as victims, but I identified with this woman, Sethe, who had been abandoned by her mother and suffered everything implied by that abandonment–loss of home, of safety, of history, of culture, of any sense of self–and yet also resolutely *refused* to see herself as a victim. This refusal was new to me, and I wanted to understand what acts of reclamation had to go on before Sethe could be her own "best thing." Again, maybe it's my being Jewish, one of a "minority," an outsider, that makes me sympathetic to the excluded, and angry at systems of domination that use language to represent certain classes of humans as "other" than human. And because I'm a woman, at least one reason the writing of black women came to appeal to me was because they address those systems not only on the basis of race, but on those of gender and class as well.

So *Beloved* for me covers all the bases: in a story about the systematic victimization of a woman (and a people) who refuses to be victimized, it explores the oppression that results from hegemonic and hierarchical symbolic systems; and, under the theme of "abandonment," it investigates just what and who gets left behind when institutions narrate their own histories; it investigates as well just who must choose to let

things go ("pass on") and why; and it ponders exactly what those various acts of abandonment cost and what has to be paid to redeem them.

What do I mean by "abandonment," and why do I think it's important? Let me answer the latter question first. "Abandonment" describes what is perhaps our most basic human condition, perhaps what we fear most. Under its various definitions, meanings cluster: the word speaks to the issue of exclusion and estrangement; it describes acts of victimization, when people are forced to surrender what is most dear to them, and acts of mortification, when we surrender parts of ourselves to conform to some notion of an "ideal" way to be; it encompasses the psychological trauma of loss; and it registers all these effects on the body, which acts and reacts to abandonment on the level of agency. In short, abandonment is a theme that recurs sufficiently in the drama of human relations to gain substance as an ur-plot: even the traditional "quest" theme of literature (and life) can be seen as a search for something lacking or lost.

To return to the first question: *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1986) lists three meanings for the verb "to abandon." First, it means to give up, completely and forever, as in, "to abandon all hope." This definition implies force, or at least necessity: to be made to leave a person or thing as a necessary measure. In *Beloved*, this meaning redounds with the "Sixty Million and more" Africans who were forced onto slave ships; those who survived the Middle Passage were forced into slavery. Thus this first definition of "abandon" raises the ethical question of who gets to have the power to commit such acts and then narrate them as a history in which black people are represented as subhuman "others." The power resides in the symbolic act of representation, which conceals the

ideology in its terms so as to neutralize or "naturalize" such historical narratives as acceptable, white, hegemonic practice. By contrast to such a hegemonically represented history, this definition of abandon is narrated in *Beloved* as a history of forced abandonment by Africans of their home, community, culture, and freedom, an abandonment represented by Morrison as a fragmenting, or dismemberment of the originary memories that constitute community, culture, and identity. As I discuss in Chapter V, Morrison embodies "rememory" and the possibility for counter-narrative within the novel in the character of Beloved, and in the bodily experiences of (primarily) Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and Baby Suggs. *Beloved* represents what happens to both black and white people when hegemony subordinates others to its own way of seeing the world; its text self-reflexively examines acts of representation.

How something is represented determines, for those people without symbolic power, nothing less than what is understood as "reality." And reality in someone else's terms can be crazy-making, because once we grant certain representations status as reality, they become what "is." Under those conditions, is it possible first, to know, and then to remember (and thus be) anything else? The disjunction between an imposed reality and one based on the body's own experience (further complicated by the fact that representational practices even determine how we regard the experience of our own bodies) calls into question the reliability of memory, and whether a body can assume, or must abandon its own agency. Memory itself is a representational practice affected by both epistemology and ontology, and hence is a site of ideological struggle. What we know is always mediated by some particular way of seeing and enforcing how we all

should behave in the world. Since memories are what we know from the past, or how we represent the past to ourselves, we remember in accordance with how we have been trained to see, or understand, past experience. By remembering in hegemonic terms, we continuously rehearse the same conditions of being, thereby limiting our ability to claim ownership over our bodies and our actions.

Beloved politicizes hegemonic representational acts by making memory a major issue, by directing the reader's attention to acts of remembering and forgetting. Sethe's unsuccessful struggle to "beat back the past" reveals the cruelties imposed upon her by the system of slavery, and all the other black characters of the novel have similar problems with memories "cruel enough to stop the blood" (to borrow Alice Walker's phrase). In its themes and grammar, then, *Beloved* examines not just the memories of all the horror done to the bodies of black people against their will, but the institutional representation of those acts as the *is*. The novel asks: How do some people get to be the definers of that *is*, and how do memories of the *is* accrete until a person thinks of him/herself as an animal? What makes a woman think the only safety for her children lies in their death? What makes for despair? Baby Suggs's answer is: white people.

This answer brings me to the second definition of "abandon": to leave; forsake; desert. In this definition, "abandon" means leaving as a complete rejection of one's responsibilities. "Forsake" implies renouncing something or someone formerly dear; "desert" emphasizes leaving in wilfull violation of one's obligations. In the face and fact of slavery, for example, Sethe's mother's abandoning Sethe can be seen as her enforced or necessary rejection of her responsibility to her daughter on two levels: first, she is forced

to abandon her maternal fondness for and responsibility to Sethe by slavery's destruction of the family unit among slaves. Sethe's mother hasn't the agency to act as mother, but is represented (as were all slave mothers) as an agent of production (and reproduction)–a commodity rather than a nurturing human being. So she is not, with brief exception, allowed to nurse Sethe nor bond with her maternally. Secondly, the conditions of slavery force her to run for her life, thereby leaving Sethe; the slaughter of Sethe's mother renders this abandonment final. By extension, this same *is*, the conditions of slavery, "explains" (if such an act can be explained) Sethe's murder of her own daughter. This murder is the primal scene in the novel. Sethe's act stands as the signal example of dismemberment caused by hegemonic representations: the abandoning of familial substance.

But this giving up of something as a necessary or wilfull rejection of one's responsibilities describes the definers as well as the defined. What the white power structure abandons as a "necessary" and "natural" act of hierarchy is part of its own human substance. Once black people have been represented as animals or ignorant children, ideology demands that its motive be concealed. A supposedly benevolent patriarchal "responsibility," which would be appropriate to animals or children, is thus substituted for, or allows one to "forget," a rejected ethical responsibility for the other('s) body. Even more important to ask is *why* black people have been represented in this way: what is the fear or benefit that drives white people to abandon their humaneness? Morrison answers by explaining that the "jungle" white people represent as existing in black people exists instead under their own white skin rather than being exterior to it: for white people, representation becomes a way of scapegoating black people, driving out

(abandoning knowledge of) the blackness in their own "white" hearts. Abandoning the "other" in oneself is an act of mortification, achieved by conforming to dividing practices which separate "us" from "them." We mortify qualities consigned to the "other" in order to stay "on top."

But *Beloved* is not merely a horror story of a shameful historical period; it is a novel, after all, and, as Carolyn C. Denard notes, "A novelist addresses a question similar to that of the cultural anthropologist. If history is what happened, then literature–or, for the anthropologist, ethnography–is what what happened *means*" (40). In *Beloved*, Morrison is after the meaning of history for those individual human beings who experienced its horrors one by one, and she focuses on how they survive to create meaningful lives. They survive by bearing the witness of their bodies' experience to those they love; the novel, despite its depiction of a world filled with hatred, is redeemingly full of love–"thick love, tiny love, jealous love, thirty-mile love, self-love, family love, community love" (Denard 42)–and it is the ability to bear witness, through love, that opens to them the possibility for transforming their lives. The novel itself offers that ethical possibility to the reader through various narrative strategies that open communication between the reader and the text.

This ethical possibility is manifested in the third definition of "abandon": to yield (oneself) completely, as to a feeling or desire. Here the word gets even more interesting: it contains within itself meanings that are contradictory. Instead of "abandon" meaning to divest oneself of something, here "abandon" means to open oneself to take something in, or, more precisely, even to release the boundaries of self entirely, give them up to feelings

of desire. The transformative possibility of a rhetoric of abandonment lies in part in our desire for stories, whereby we open ourselves to different representations of reality, which makes it possible to politicize representation and destabilize its ability to naturalize dividing practices. In yielding to feelings, we locate a rhetoric of abandonment on the level of the body and shift the possibilities for agency. In *Beloved*, this meaning of "abandon" is embodied in Beloved, the liminal figure who time travels, who pushes other characters to yield to their own reconstitutive memories and impulses, whose feelings and desires are those of the forgotten Sixty Million and more, whose hunger for stories represents our own desire for narrative, and whose unrestrained desire finally becomes so murderous it provokes her own dissolution. The final vision of Beloved readers see in the novel is as the naked, pregnant girl who has fattened herself on her mother's life, eaten her almost to death; Morrison represents her as a parallel to the voracious hegemonic representations that eat up the lives (past, present, and future) of "others." The notion of abandoning oneself to desire is both transformative and dangerous; nothing can exist without form, but an "other" form for representing the dominated body can be found in the communicative body, one which abandons hegemonic dividing practices for the ethical practice of seeing the other in ourselves.

We need a *rhetoric* of abandonment because rhetoric offers a way to examine the human condition as a social drama enacted by language. Rhetoric is both a theory and method through which we can understand how the "is" is constituted; it theoretically attends to language as a symbolic act mediated by symbol systems, and it methodically analyzes human relations as symbolic relations. Furthermore, rhetoric draws our attention

to the discourses that attend abandonment: even on the level of the word, the terms (or what Kenneth Burke calls "terministic screens") we choose entail consequences–they determine attitudes toward the reality we construct, which is why Burke reminds us that attitude is an incipient act. Discourse is the act of making meaning; rhetoric gets at the discursive activity of making something look like it's not an activity but a *state*–the *is* which a text instantiates.

Through a rhetoric of abandonment, I have chosen to analyze Toni Morrison's *Beloved* because *Beloved* represents, as a fictional narrative, a particular historical situation and characters who lived and died under its conditions of racism and slavery. It is a story about those people and that time. It represents those people telling stories, and thus it establishes a specific context for examining human relations and actions. But as well, *Beloved* is an act of representation that reveals both the estranging and congregating *is*-ness of its language, the selections and deflections that invite some particular view of "reality."

By identifying the motives behind our discursive choices, rhetoric grounds itself in the realm of social relations, which it explains as symbolic relations. But that should not deflect us from the fact that symbolic acts have real motives that play themselves out on real, material, bodies. Morrison's characters embody the symbolic: their bodies are marked with the indexical signs of hegemony–scars, brands, impressions left by the bit and chains–and stand for the real presence that has been absented by ideological representation. Consequently, I look at the bodies in *Beloved* to examine how they act under conditions of domination, and how they solve the problems their bodies are for

them. The conditions of a slave's life are wholly contingent under slavery, and by imbricating Arthur W. Frank's typology of bodies into a rhetoric of abandonment, I can focus on the body's agency, how the body constructs itself with regard to its own contingency. Frank offers a method for examining how, first, the actions of the characters in *Beloved* reveal the oppositional possibilities for bodies constrained by the representational practices of a hegemonic system, and second, how *Beloved* itself acts as a communicative body. To Frank, the communicative body is not simply an "ideal" body type, as are the others he offers as models for bodily action, but an "idealized" type, because it recognizes itself in ethical praxis, the opening out toward other bodies. What most impelled my choice of *Beloved* is its ethical praxis: *Beloved* acts as a communicative body by recursively producing itself through the metaphor of memory and rememory to open the boundaries between itself and readers, destabilizing the dividing practices enacted by hegemonic representations. The communicative body is where the transformative possibility in a rhetoric of abandonment lies: when the boundaries between self and other become permeable, systems of order collapse, and new forms of relation emerge.

My attention to language, rhetoric, narrative, and the body constitutes a rhetoric of abandonment that addresses the text of *Beloved* to see how new forms of relation are enacted textually rather than simply thematically. A rhetoric of abandonment works on three levels: it examines the language of *Beloved* grammatically and stylistically, because language and its forms are our resources for meaning-making; it examines the novel's language and narrative strategies rhetorically, to discover the motives behind its language use; and it examines its rhetoric as a symbol system that both constrains and enables bodily

agency to uncover the institutional motive behind the discursive motives.

To this point, a rhetoric of abandonment functions no differently from any rhetorical method; its approach adds, however, an attention to loss and reclamation. When the body is excised from, or forgotten by, hegemonic representations, a rhetorical method that fails to foreground this loss forgets the possibility for change. As Kristie S. Fleckenstein warns, "Without embodiment, without a mouth to speak and a tongue to protest, disenfranchised minorities are reduced to textual lacunae, constructed, filled, and colonized as the hegemony determines" (285). Consequently, in the textual instance of *Beloved*, a rhetoric of abandonment above all pays attention to the act of bearing witness. Every text is an act, and when a text acts to contest the dominant narratives of its time, it bears the burden of evidence. *Beloved* positions itself in and on bodies, letting them bear witness to their own stories as a visceral address to the reader, one that draws the reader in and permits us to identify with the characters and thus transform our position.

The issue of transformation on the level of the body coalesced for me under the notion of "bearing witness" when I read two studies about memory, history, and narrative. Robert Brinkley and Steven Youra, in "Tracing *Shoah*," investigate "the burden that evidence places on language" (109) in the context of stories of annihilation (the Holocaust). They write of a historical incident, told by its survivors, whose witness was filmed in 1985 by Claude Lanzmann. The survivors, they say, "bear witness to Lanzmann in the film and Lanzmann bears witness to the viewers of the film. As viewers bear witness....The transmission has yet to end." The problem becomes one of countering how the event has been written about by those who would "erase any reliable sense of the

events to which they refer and in which they participate" (109). I was struck by the similarity to Morrison's problem in *Beloved*: just as revisionists have attempted to erase the history of the Shoah–making it a fiction–and turned the witness of its few remaining survivors against themselves,[2] so have hegemonic representations tried to erase the motive behind and the violence of slavery. Brinkley and Youra cite Jean-Francois Lyotard, who writes about the Shoah in terms that might describe slavery as well. Lyotard writes that it "cannot be represented without being missed, being forgotten anew, since it defies images and words," and "representing...in images and words is a way of forgetting this" (in Brinkley and Youra, 115). This study maintains that representation forgets, in its terminology, the lived reality of bodies. I argue that Morrison's text bears witness by presenting her characters' marked bodies as indexical signs of a real history–she replaces the referent which has been erased. While there are still some survivors of the Holocaust who continue to speak it, and there remain written and film records, Morrison has the added burden of somehow making her fictionalized account speak for those who did not survive, never left records, and so were never heard; her text must serve to bear witness for those nameless and voiceless victims. Brinkley and Youra point out that, "to the extent that witness works not by representing but by referring...perhaps witness is not 'a way of forgetting' but a way of finding that reference can recur" (115).

This notion of recurring reference is embodied by Morrison in her strategies of recursion and repetition, and the importance of those strategies was reinforced for me by Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Caruth regards repetition (specifically, the way "catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for those

who have passed through them" [1]) as "the possession of some people by a sort of fate, a series of painful events to which they are subjected, and which seem to be entirely outside their wish and control" (2). She describes precisely what happens to the characters in *Beloved*, and adds yet another dimension to this repetition: "the experience of trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the [perpetrator]" (2). While slaves were subjected to a painful fate beyond their control, and black people continue to be subjected to the consequences of hegemonic representations that have perdured through time, what is "unknown" or "forgotten" by representational practices creates divisions in society that are indeed traumatic; and as long as white society fails to politicize its representations, to recognize and make known the terms on which they operate, white people continue to repeat acts that wound. Caruth works from Tasso's romantic epic, *Gerusalemme Liberata*; its hero, Tancred, strikes a tree in which the soul of his beloved Clorinda is imprisoned. Tancred has unknowingly killed Clorinda earlier, and when he strikes the tree, her voice calls out from the wound to tell him he has killed her again. What I find particularly striking in Caruth's use of this example of traumatic repetition is, as she says, "not just the unconscious act of the infliction of the injury and its inadvertent...repetition, but the moving and sorrowful *voice* that cries out, a voice that is paradoxically released *through the wound*" (2, author's emphasis). Tancred first realizes what he has done when he hears the voice; this recognition models how *Beloved* acts to make known to readers what has formerly been forgotten or unknown. *Beloved* embodies the voice of the beloved which speaks from the wound; Caruth interprets Tancred's act as I interpret Morrison's novelistic act, where "we" stand for Tancred: "The voice of [our]

beloved addresses [us] and, in this address, bears witness to the past [we have] unwittingly repeated. [Our] story thus represents traumatic experience not only as the enigma of a human agent's repeated and unknowing acts but also as the enigma of the otherness of a human voice that cries out from the wound, a voice that witnesses a truth that [we ourselves] cannot fully know" (3). Caruth's analysis points out that literature can unravel this complex relation between knowing and not knowing that resides in representational practices, and I argue that *Beloved*, through the bodied language of the text, witnesses a truth that we cannot fully know until we hear and embrace the witness.

I chose *Beloved* as the object of my analysis not to work *on* it, but *with* it. Morrison hardly needs my help in giving the characters in her history-based novel access to speech; it is because of the triumph of her languaged act that its "reality" continues to have a bodily effect on me and moves me to investigate the consequences that representations enact. She herself suggests that a greater effort by non-black critics and writers to examine how blackness is made present by its absence would enrich both literature and life (*Playing x*). *Beloved* demonstrates, through its act of representation and its representation of acts, that both writers and readers can "take responsibility for *all* the values they bring to their art" (*Playing xiii*).

Taking responsibility for the value system represented in its performance means that narrative functions as an ethical act, one we would categorize, rhetorically, as "epideictic." The function of epideictic rhetoric is to praise or blame, and *Beloved* does both. Furthermore, in re-membering bodies which have been "chewed and swallowed" into oblivion by hegemonic representations, the epideictic function of *Beloved* is

specifically memorial; it mourns what has been forgotten, or abandoned. I conclude this study by arguing that *Beloved* challenges the classic function of epideictic rhetoric to reinforce social values by increasing identification with the *is*. By using rememory and the body as vehicles through which the communicative body can re-represent the *is* to bring about change, *Beloved* enacts a radically epideictic rhetoric that has the power to politicize and transform hegemonic value systems.

Beloved is a story that is "passed on" in two senses–it is about death and abandonment, and it is shared; its import persists in its literary, symbolic act. Karla Holloway describes the epideictic function of *Beloved* in her study of factual narratives of deaths, which she calls "mourning stories":

> These are stories of loss. Their spectral coherence represents a sustained lament for a disappeared body, and it contextualizes a troubled and ambivalent narrative. Disembodiment is often the first indication of the spirit's persistence. (Consider the persistence of Sethe's daughter in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.) Despite what seems to be a body's commitment to dying, in fact, the fictive body contradicts this effort and perseveres in a literary construction. (33)

That fiction can *persevere* when bodies *disappear* reinforces the importance of memorial epideictic rhetoric for challenging the values of a culture by remembering, as story, the abandoned bod(ies) of that culture; this value-laden body then becomes the agent for

change: a transformative rhetoric. "The urge to tell past the passing on is the legacy of a mourning story" (Holloway, "Cultural" 36); that legacy is the urge, in the face and fact of annihilation, to communicate renewed meaning, to re-member a fragmented society. It is with that purpose in mind that I offer, as a way to begin to analyze the troubled and ambivalent narrative of our past and imagine new terms for our future, a rhetoric of abandonment.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICES, TONI MORRISON, AND *BELOVED*

According to Michael J. Shapiro, "representations do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently" (*xi*). The problem, as Shapiro states it, is that "because the real is...always mediated through some representational practice...we lose something when we think of representation as mimetic. What we lose, in general, is insight into institutions, actions, and episodes through which the real has been fashioned" (*xii*). Throughout this study, I examine, in theoretically-oriented, historically-sensitive close analyses, what it is we lose, or abandon, when we naturalize the objects of representation and thus fail to make visible the ideology that operates transparently in representational practices. When these representational practices racialize bodies, the loss will differ in degree and kind for different people. When I use the word "we" in this study, I write from the perspective of a white person who assumes her audience to include other white people who are aware of, and wish to interrogate, "whiteness" as an exclusionary category.

The threefold method of a rhetoric of abandonment aligns its practice with the definitions of "abandon" developed in the "Preface" to this study on representational practices and *Beloved*. In keeping with the first definition–being forced to leave something as a necessary measure (Africans, in being abducted into slavery, were forced to abandon their homes, languages, and culture)–a rhetoric of abandonment first examines hegemonic

representations for the perspective they enforce. The second definition–"leaving," defined as the rejection of one's responsibilities–prompts investigation into the motives for, and effects of, white dividing practices. Representations which construct these dividing practices invite black people to accept degraded images of themselves; by that invitation, white people abandon responsibility for the "other," treating black bodies as if they were less than human. The third meaning of "abandon"–to open oneself to desire–aligns with a rhetoric of abandonment's orientation toward moments of reclamation embodied in the text of *Beloved*. The first two processes of a rhetoric of abandonment function as does Shapiro's effort to "politicize" language–that is, they are part of an interventionist project to make visible the dimensions of power and authority that fashion representations–but the final process goes beyond this political intervention to seek out how language can also form alternatives to the social dividing practices that such representations enact.

By recognizing that institutions, actions, and episodes function via their power and authority as epistemological and ontological constraints, we call into question the valuative practices of society, particularly their force as dividing practices that act on human bodies. The symbolic force of spoken or written representations exerts real force on real bodies, and we need consider only a few brief examples to understand its ethical impact on society. Since its inception, American history has been fraught with racial conflict couched in nation-serving representations whose ideological distinctions remain in effect even today, distinctions fashioned to construct a "real" history that abandons racialized classes of people to the status of "other." Unfortunately, the symbolic order reifies those distinctions in the practices people enact in the social order. Native peoples,

for example, were slaughtered on and displaced from the land they inhabited under such representational alibis as "colonization" or "Manifest Destiny." Today we face the continuing problems of Native poverty, "reservations," and Native land claims. Currently, the U.S. government is building a wall–an actual rather than symbolic "iron curtain"–along miles of the Texas border to divide "Americans" literally from the brown-skinned "hordes" that seek to permeate that border, while Florida bemoans the fact that water alone does not provide a divide sufficient to exclude them. Most significant for this study are representations of African Americans that recall America's shameful legacy of slavery, continued to haunt American society throughout decades of segregation, and persist today in what is notably called the "*post*-Civil Rights" era. Orienting the issue of Civil Rights temporally represents it as currently a non-issue, displacing it and the human struggle it signifies to a past we can conveniently forget, a past we can homogenize into "American history."

Despite the historical mythos that turns America's personified face to the world in the form of the Statue of Liberty, inviting the world to "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," white America forgets its Constitutional ideals, forgets its immigrant past, forgets, in fact, that "unless otherwise specified, 'Americans' means whites" (Lipsitz 369). (Toni Morrison makes precisely this point in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*.) What is forgotten gets lost, and even when the "otherwise" (that is, in the different condition of being other) is specified by an implied or actual, graphic, hyphen–Native-American, Asian-American, Hispanic-American, African-American, for example–the urge both to mark difference and

eradicate difference persists. California, for instance, has voted to eliminate equal opportunity employment legislation, claiming, in the American idiom, that each person should compete "equally" and "fairly." What is forgotten in such a construction of "equal and fair competition" is the "always already" disadvantaged status of non-whites that such legislation was designed to remediate. California has also instituted an "English-only" program in its schools in an effort to homogenize into "American" the over 100 languages that students enter its schools speaking and, presumably, the students who speak them.

Language is, originally and finally, both the act that initiates such battles and the scene on which they are fought, the "symbolic violence"[1] that constitutes abandonment: language enforces motivated constructions of the "real" in the form of hegemonic representations, and hegemony invites complicity with its rules of order. Abandoned in such practices is the ethical recognition of and responsibility for the "other" in our valuative language practices; as Shapiro notes, "If we historicize 'ethics' [we will] recognize that the ethical discourse of a society is closely tied to its developing social, political, and administrative practices" (9). Discourse both constrains and enables conceptions of human agency, and when we divide "us" from "them," we linguistically mark a difference that makes a difference in how each of us can live in the world. America is a country which many experts agree will be mainly non-white within fifty years; a way must be found to acknowledge and embrace difference rather than to construct borders which cast it out of sight. We need rhetoric to reveal the relationship between language and institution, and a rhetoric of abandonment to recuperate the other who is lost to us when we fail to recognize that the "real," or the "what" of our knowing, is inextricably

bound to how it is represented.

We can recuperate the other by abandoning ourselves, in the ecstatic sense of that term. "Ecstasy" derives from the Greek *ekstasis*–a being put out of its place–and suggests the urge to re-form a compartmentalized social body into a communicative body, one in which borders are permeable and "place" becomes a field of possibility rather than a valuative marker of exclusion. A rhetoric of abandonment therefore attends to textual acts that seek to disturb our sense of place or "position" in order to reorient our ideological perspectives and thereby enable us to share an-other('s) place from which the "real" may be known differently.

Shapiro maintains that the constructedness of the real "has not been so much a matter of immediate acts of consciousness by persons in everyday life as it has been a historically developing kind of imposition, now largely institutionalized in the prevailing kinds of meanings deeply inscribed on things, persons, and structures" (*xii*). These deeply inscribed meanings are ideological; that is, implicit in every representational practice is a worldview motivated to articulate a particular bias in socially operational terms. Because ideologically infused representational practices cluster to produce texts that constitute a narrative of our world, I characterize ideological practices, along with Shapiro, "as a kind of writing[,] and ideological thinking as a kind of reading, an enforced dyslexia wherein the reader is disenabled by being encouraged to adopt a politically insensitive view of the surrounding social formation and the objects, relationships, and events it contains" (6). I am interested, in particular, not only in how politically insensitive writing and reading has enabled representations of race to divide our society, but also in how these representations

may be unmade for the reader in a strategic act of writing that intends the reading act to inhabit a space in which the reader's accession to hegemonic values may be transformed. To investigate these acts, this thesis examines a work of politically sensitive fiction because of its doubled complexity: a novel both narratively represents, in Shapiro's words, a "social formation and the objects, relationships, and events it contains," but also is itself an *act* of representation, one that can render the rigid dividing lines of hegemonic representations problematic in its own terms. It thereby enables two major processes: first, the recognition that what we have regarded as "natural" are in fact ideological constructions we choose or are made to live by, and second, as Kristie S. Fleckenstein asserts in "Writing Bodies," the recognition that "our bodies [are] places of and participants in the violence of choosing–of resisting or submitting to, of negotiating or challenging cultural and moral ideologies–[and through them we have] the power to (re)create our realities" (286). Specifically, this thesis examines in *Beloved* not only how "reality" is enforced in a racialized system, but also how it can be challenged by a flexible, visceral, language to enable a new, embodied vision of the world.

This study of representational practices makes several claims, chief among them that 1) language is a socially symbolic act with consequences that obtain in potentially violent representational practices–the truth-value of which is taken for granted as historical and transparent signifiers of experience; 2) that reading *Beloved* for evidence of discursively constructed narrative representations may provide insight into the ways social, cultural, and ethical assumptions are coded into contemporary ascriptions of race that divide our society; 3) that *Beloved* acts to make visible and transvalue the motives behind

such signifying practices through an embodied language that reasserts the body as referent; and 4) that the textual features through which hegemonic representational practices are revealed and challenged in *Beloved* can be identified as functioning through multi-layered strategies that negotiate consubstantiality with the reader.

My study aligns itself with Shapiro's project to "politicize" discourse by exploring "tactics of linguistic evasion" and by being "conscious of how power and authority are sequestered in the language of those understandings [of political systems]" (48). Shapiro "impiously" politicizes what he calls "pious" discourses, "using piety broadly in Kenneth Burke's sense, which extends the concept beyond its theological implications to refer to any representation of something in a way that celebrates its appropriateness" (55); my study focuses on an already impious discourse–*Beloved*–in an effort to understand and identify how Morrison's narrative both acknowledges slavery as the hegemonically constructed "is" or "scene" of her novel, while it also destabilizes that "is" to construct an embodied substance on which we can base more ethical forms of identification. In its conclusion, this study claims that *Beloved* is not only a politicized discourse, but functions specifically as a radical form of epideictic rhetoric, one which implicates readers in performing the anamnesis necessary to enable a contemporary re-membering of social community.

This chapter continues by considering Toni Morrison's approach to politicized writing, and her definition of what resources "black" writing brings to such a task, as the occasion for my assembling this study's theoretical stance. I then suggest briefly the appropriateness of *Beloved* as an example of a narrative representation that acts, through

both its form and content, to remediate past and present linguistic meaning-making practices so that the future might be lived on different terms. I then review contemporary approaches to Morrison's work and their general failure to investigate the rhetorical strategies by which she has learned "to maneuver ways to free up the language from its sometimes sinister, frequently lazy, almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains" (*Playing xi*). Following this overview, I comment on my own method as responding more directly to her textual strategies, and to her invitation to "analyze the manipulation of the Africanist narrative (that is, the story of a black person, the experience of being bound and/or rejected) as a means of meditation–both safe and risky–on one's own humanity" (*Playing* 53). Finally, I offer a brief preview of the following chapters.

TONI MORRISON

Toni Morrison won a Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* and, in 1993, the Nobel Prize for Literature. Although recognition of the value of her work was initially slow in coming, she has become, in Nellie Y. McKay and Kathryn Earle's words, a "veritable industry" (ix). She is an author who has made herself and her opinions unusually accessible through interviews with scholars, critics, fiction writers, and media reporters and personalities; equally, if not more important for understanding her opinions on writing, language, and race in America is her non-fiction prose, which continues to address the influence and presence (albeit ignored) of blackness in both the life of America and its literary tradition (for example in *Race-ing Justice, En-gendering* Power, Playing *in the Dark*, and

"Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature"). In two highly cited essays, "Memory, Creation, and Writing," and "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," Morrison discusses her commitment to "authentic black writing," the culture-bearing function of the black novel, and her own responsibility to her art and her readers. Throughout all her non-fiction prose runs a concern with the nature, source, and effects of representations of black people. Her major concern as a black writer is that because she lacks "access to these traditionally useful constructs of blackness," she must "struggl[e] with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive 'othering' of people and language" (*Playing x*).

The struggle Morrison describes implicates us all, and this study tracks how we might write our way out of it by attending to Morrison's languaged act of representation. She writes that: "The imagination that produces work which bears and invites rereadings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, implies a sharable world and an endlessly flexible language" (*Playing xii*). By inviting rereadings of a "flexible language" that mark the historical process of ideological inscriptions, she challenges the politically insensitive view of the (*un*sharable) world that accepts hegemonic representations not as *acts*, but as disembodied reality. Morrison asks a question that aroused my interest in representational practices: "How do embedded assumptions of racial (not racist) language work in the literary enterprise that hopes and sometimes claims to be 'humanistic'?" (*Playing xii-xiii)*. Asking, moreover, when and why such a goal is and is not achieved, Morrison frames the problem in this way:

> Living in a nation of people who *decided* that their world view would combine agendas for individual freedom *and* mechanisms for devastating racial oppression presents a singular landscape for a writer. When this world view is taken seriously as agency, the literature produced within and without it offers an unprecedented opportunity to comprehend the resilience and gravity, the inadequacy and force of the imaginative act. (*Playing xiii*, author's emphasis)

The problem Morrison describes of writing from within such a paradoxical epistemological and ontological position challenged me to accept the opportunity to comprehend her own work because she consciously attempts to address the problem of racial representation as an *imaginative* act–a construction–rather than as something "given," or "real."

As Morrison contends with the language of hegemony in her writing of *Beloved*, she imagines abandonment as it is played out in practices attached to her characters. Through strategies enacted on the levels of grammar, rhetoric, narrative, and the body, she constructs the novel as an addressed act the reader is asked to respond to in order to make reclamation possible. Morrison's strategies led me to assemble the resources of discourse, rhetorical, narrative, and social theory to develop a method for identifying the relationship between language and institution, and how bodies negotiate their agency within that relationship.

Morrison's project, she says, "is an effort to avert the critical gaze from the racial

object to the racial subject; from the described and imagined to the describers and imaginers; from the serving to the served....All of us, readers and writers, are bereft when criticism remains too polite or too fearful to notice a disrupting darkness before its eyes" (*Playing* 90-1). Here again is the language of abandonment, focusing on the chasm between those white people empowered and those black people made powerless by acts of representation, and the knowledge we are bereft of when we ignore those acts. Morrison's reaction to this loss is to assert that her fiction, like all art, is "inherently political" (Taylor-Guthrie viii), an act first, of re-vision, and finally, of reclamation. To reclaim what operates in that disrupting darkness, she brings to bear characteristics of writing she defines as "black." From interviews between Morrison and various critics, scholars, and writers, Danille Taylor-Guthrie culls and lists these characteristics in her "Introduction" to *Conversations with Toni Morrison*:

> a participatory quality between a book and reader; an aural quality in the writing; an open-endedness in the finale that is agitating; an acceptance of and keen ability to detect differences versus a thrust toward homogenization; acknowledgement of a broader cosmology and a system of logic in touch with magic, mystery, and the body; a functional as well as aesthetic quality; an obligation to bear witness; service as a conduit for the "ancestor"; uses of humor that are frequently ironic; an achieved clarity or epiphany and thus a tendency to be prophetic; and an ability

> to take the "tribe" via art through the pain of a historical experience that has been haunted by race to a healing zone. (x)

All these characteristics are present in *Beloved*, and this study will investigate their presence as devices of Morrison's evolving concept of language, particularly as they act to construct identification between the text and reader, most especially in the act of bearing witness.

"This prophecy, or bearing witness," says Taylor-Guthrie, "is essential to [Morrison's] belief that the future is inextricably tied to the past" (x-xi). Bearing witness provides the voiced experience that counters, with embodied evidence, the history silenced by hegemonic representations, and it is in this space of contention over presence that Morrison constructs "a healing zone." The healing zone is the place where representational practices that have perdured from the past are transformed for the reader, where the reader's ideological thinking is dis-placed through experiencing the text as a communicative body. Morrison enables displacement in *Beloved* primarily through the appeal to *pathos*: the emotional appeal is a staple of epideictic rhetoric, which seeks to achieve identification–at the level of felt sense–on the basis of shared values. By textually appealing to the reader on the level of the body, Morrison employs a strategy that challenges disembodied ideological thinking. Burke's rhetoric highlights the awful thing about human beings: we can't get congregation without segregation. But by appealing to the reader on the level of the body, Morrison moves the reader from the place of estrangement to a consubstantial ground, transforms attitude to act, practice to

performance, a racialized past to a future in which difference might be valued rather than expunged. This transformative act is the ecstatic component of a rhetoric of abandonment, and it is embodied in *Beloved*.

Beloved

The historical time span of *Beloved* encompasses the decades preceding and following the end of the Civil War and represents the experiences of its characters under the institution of slavery. The novel also gestures toward a future in which the racial dividing practices which enabled slavery, and maintain even today its ideological motive, might be remediated by an embodied practice that imaginatively transforms its values. Particularly in its focus on memory, the novel poses questions about history, knowledge, power, and reclamation that led me to question the function of representational practices.

Remembering and forgetting is an apt metaphor for all these issues: history is represented for us in terms that symbolically select and deflect (remember and forget) past events and agents; when certain events and the people who lived them are forgotten, our knowledge of the past is compromised. Everything we know must be remembered to be present to us; otherwise we live in terms of re-presentations constructed by those who are authorized to write them by their position in the social hierarchy. These authorized representations thus become the conditions of existence we live in terms of, the only "reality" we remember as we daily negotiate our possibilities for human agency. A rhetoric of abandonment examines how acts of representation both constrain and enable knowledge, power, and reclamation; in *Beloved*, memories are under contention–whether

they are beaten back, retrieved as ideologically-inflected images, experienced painfully, or self-serving–they represent, in Morrison's terms, a power struggle over what gets remembered, and who has the right to remember and thus (re)claim autonomy.

The power struggle in this novel occurs during the period of slavery and its aftermath. A major question *Beloved* poses for me is how people victimized by such a system not only manage to survive those conditions of existence, but are able to reclaim the agency that allows them to live on their own terms. As Denard remarks, "If *Beloved* were written just to criticize a system that subjected a group of human beings to inhuman treatment, Morrison would not need to show the code of ethics among the oppressed group" (43). In an interview with Mervyn Rothstein, Morrison herself says:

> The novel is not about slavery. Slavery is very predictable. There it is and there's [information] about how it is, and then you get out of it or you don't. The novel can't be driven by slavery. It has to be the interior life of some people, and everything they do is impacted on by the horror of slavery, but they are also people. (C17)

Because the black characters in *Beloved* are represented as "people," they are more than victims, so the process by which they achieve the right to be their own "best things" is instructive. All the black characters in the novel are represented as representing to one another their guilt, their repentence, their asking for forgiveness, and their attainment of community. By demonstrating an alternative code of ethics to that imposed by the slave system, Morrison represents a pattern whereby her characters keep their humanity intact,

but she also *enacts* a pattern with which readers can identify to remember their own humanity.

Rememory is the metaphor that generates this activity. Morrison represents rememory in *Beloved* as both noun and verb; it is the site of, and the agency for, transformation. Transformation is a process that is recognized in each of the levels of analysis this study employs: grammatically, it marks a terministic change in meaning and value (which I sometimes therefore refer to as "transvaluation"); narratively, it marks the process of change and development in characters and their acts; rhetorically, it marks a change in the selections and deflections that effect congregation and segregation; and socially, it marks the "flip-point" where the body changes according to how it views its contingency within those terms. Through rememory, Morrison represents in *Beloved* the transformations that occur when her characters bring memories of the past into the novel's present as an act of sharing; knowledge then becomes public and performative, freeing divided selves to be re-membered within the context of community. Readers are asked by Morrison's act of representation to rememory their full humanity, free from a past "disremembered" by hegemonic representations, to make possible in the real world a transformed perspective of what constitutes community and how to achieve it.

Literature review

Beloved is the object of my analysis, but this is not a literary thesis. I do not seek to "interpret" the novel, or to position it within (or without) any literary tradition (American Literature, African American Literature, African American Women's

Literature, Postmodern Literature, etc.). Instead, I read it as a representational practice. Nonetheless, all such interpretive and historical studies are of significant value, because they attend to the writing of a woman who can be said to have changed the conditions for and critical reception of the writing of African Americans in the Twentieth Century.

The enormous amount of literary scholarship on Morrison's novels–Nancy J. Peterson characterizes it as having, in only the past 13 years, "increased exponentially in terms of the sheer number of articles, book chapters, and books, as well as the variety of approaches taken" (6)–has offered me a rich context for the perspectives from which the novels are read and interpreted, and has informed my work with an appreciation of how Morrison uses African and African American cultural values to counter the Eurocentric tradition. We do not lack for close analyses of Morrison's novels, and other kinds of studies have emerged in recent years on such subjects, for example, as comparisons between Morrison and other authors,[2] especially black and other "minority" women writers; investigations of Morrison's place in and use of African and African American cultural traditions (especially her focus on the ancestor, and village values); analyses of treatments of race, gender, and class in her fiction; her constitution of community and sense of place; and her treatment of the issue of literacy and schooling–to name a few. With some exceptions which I will address shortly, however, literary scholarship on Morrison's writing has not pertained directly to my work in that it does not combine discourse, rhetorical, narrative, and social analysis to reveal how hegemonic representations act to constrain the epistemology and ontology of human bodies. I do not make the claim, however, that no critique of Morrison's novel(s) views her writing as

rhetorical; any attempt to interpret or bring some theoretical perspective to a written work recognizes implicitly, if not explicitly, that the work has something to say and argue. And Morrison, in her own critical essays and spoken comments to interviewers, has emphasized beyond any possibility of ignoring it, the political intent of her writing. But critical studies which do use the term "rhetoric" usually do so to set up their own analyses, which position her novels within one or more of the literary traditions named above.

One recent text (1995), for example, which claims in its subhead to be "*A Rhetorical Reading*," is Herbert William Rice's *Toni Morrison and the American Tradition*. But Rice's rhetorical reading is confined to an analysis of Morrison's construction of and attitude toward her audience, which he recovers from Morrison's comments in her written essays and in interviews. He concludes that her comments, over time, have been self-contradictory, and that "Morrison clearly envisions various audiences who hear in various ways" (3). However, while his analysis is an interesting and informative summary of Morrison's authorial concerns, it identifies tensions in her work that set up his own approach to her novels: "those forces in Morrison's work which make her a part of the Western tradition and those forces which separate her from it" (11). He reads *Beloved* under the heading of "Narratives of the Self" (101), and while he points out there is a "tension implied in this novel between literacy and orality, between history as written records, as political document, and history as lived experience" (104), his analysis does not focus on Morrison's representational practice, but on how she "places [the] past in the context of the American experience...in some respects undermining a traditional American understanding of history, or slavery, of personal responsibility" (116). The

issues he identifies (literacy and orality,[3] the re- or de-construction of history) are common themes in Morrison studies which I have absorbed into this study, but Rice is concerned with locating Morrison within and without the American literary tradition, and his analysis remains on the semantic level.[4]

Linden Peach, in *Toni Morrison*, written for St. Martin's Press's "Modern Novelists" series, also claims to emphasize "each text as a 'rhetorical structure' which extends or challenges what readers might expect of a novel" (1). His "Introduction" provides an excellent background on Morrison herself and the issues raised by her writing for all literary scholarship. This is a far more detailed study than Rice's, and while Peach aligns (as do I) Morrison's novels with the postmodern position that "we are all the products of discourses which are historically specific" (22), and states he will investigate how "the space that opens between the narrator(s) and the focaliser(s) challenges the imposition of singular unified perspectives and promotes a plurality of worldviews" (17), his analysis of *Beloved* (94-111) does not focus on narrative form and/or technique but relies on a semantic reading of themes that arise from both "Western discourse" and "Black Aesthetic discourse" (96). I offer these examples because each author claims to read Morrison's novels rhetorically, but in fact does not examine how her language works on any but a semantic level to effect what each sees as her thematic purpose. Peach, for example, ends on a note similar to my perspective: that *Beloved* is a "healing" novel, but he identifies the healing as coming from the "message[s]" (111) of its characters, not from the form or language structures of the text.

The most recent (1997), and most complete, bibliography of works by and about

Morrison is included in Nancy J. Peterson's edited collection, *Toni Morrison: Critical and Theoretical Approaches*. Peterson lists 25 books about Morrison's novels which are either authored or edited collections. Each authored (or co-authored) text works out its own critical perspective on Morrison's novels, most touching on the same issues I mention above. Among these authored collections, one whose approach most closely resembles mine is Philip Page's *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels* (1995). Page uses the term "fusion and fragmentation" to express the concept that "any entity is simultaneously unified yet divided, a whole yet an aggregation of parts." This terministic focus allows him to address how Morrison's fiction "details the efforts of African Americans to find viable identities in a racialized society" (3), while it also grounds his reading of her novels' content, form, and context. In his reading of *Beloved* he pays particular attention to the "circularity" (133) of its form, which I discuss in terms of recursion, repetition, and narrative withholding, and he concludes that the novel's "complex discourse...documents the continual raveling and unraveling of the fragments of experience and memory that constitutes ongoing life" (158). What this study adds to his analysis is a more specific analysis of language, particularly how it constructs substance, which is precisely what is "simultaneously unified yet divided" in *Beloved*.

Nellie McKay, in her recent (1997) co-edited text *Approaches to Teaching Toni Morrison*, annotates those books and collections on Morrison's writing which she considers among the most important. Her annotations reveal what I have observed myself: that edited collections of works on Morrison's novels almost always include articles that have been formerly printed elsewhere. Peterson's own collection of eleven

articles includes only three which are original to her text; only Nellie McKay's *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison* (1988) is made up wholly of original essays. McKay, in *Approaches*, does not even attempt to list any uncollected critical essays (17), probably because, as I said before, the production of scholarly writing on Morrison is astounding; I recently surveyed the MLA and Humanities indexes for articles on *Beloved* alone, and accessed well over 300, written, with few exceptions, within the past five years. The topics of these articles continue to address, for the most part, the same themes I have outlined; to be more specific, they are concerned with: race and/or gender issues; mother/daughter relationships; language, naming, and/or memory as a function of reclaiming/healing the self and history; the novel as counter-narrative; the function of ghosts; and the function and importance of time and/or place as a deconstructive practice. These studies usually are written from the theoretical perspectives of postmodernism, post-colonialism, black feminism, Western feminism (including psychoanalytical theory), cultural and ethnic studies, and semiotics, and often from a combination of two or more of these theoretical perspectives. No article or book I have read on Morrison's novels combines this study's methods of analysis, but the approaches that initially directed me toward my project are those that combine an interest in language and the body; sometimes these sources have been articles and books that are not exclusively about Morrison's work.

Kate Cummings's article, "Reclaiming the Mother('s) Tongue: *Beloved, Ceremony, Mothers and Shadows*, for example, investigates the three novels in her title as "tales of resistance or 'effective' histories that articulate different 'minority' perspectives"

(552), focusing on protagonists "tortured by those whose access to power is materially greater than their own" (553). Her method looks for "an affective history in objects," which she finds in "wounded bodies." Her attention to how bodies are marked by domination, and how these bodies "impinge upon our bodies in the act of reading so that history is registered viscerally, flesh calling out to flesh" (553), provokes my investigation into how bodies are a problem for themselves, especially when dominated by others, and how bodies act to manage and resist such dominating practices. I do not limit my investigation to the bodies of Morrison's characters, but extend it to how the textual body of *Beloved* acts in relation to its readers' bodies, how, in other words, the "calling" is embodied in *Beloved* as a representational act. Cummings summarizes dominating practices under the term "pedagogy," which, she says, "discriminates, reforms, and regulates. At one end of the pedagogical process stands the master teacher/disciplinarian to whom belongs the power of defining; he reproduces the relations of domination and subordination particular to the ruling order. At the other end lies the student/subject who, in internalizing the master's lessons, finds himself/herself a captive of the dominant ideology specific to his or her (e)state" (561). In this study, I unpack Cummings's concept of pedagogy to examine it as a hegemonic representational practice, one that captivates while it discriminates. Furthermore, for Cummings, "education" is "always about learning 'to speak (again)'" (561); I use this concept to explore the body's possibility for agency: how and under what conditions a dominated body can "flip" to a communicative body which has the potential to re-form the terms and rules of order to which it has been subjected.[5]

Although my exploration of the body will follow Frank's terminology, my inquiry into how the narrative body acts is informed in part by Laura Doyle's phenomenological notion of "intercorporeality." Doyle's project is "to show how...mother-entangled complications of identity determine the unorthodox narrative practices of experimental novels," particularly those in which "mother figures give birth to racial plots" (4). In *Bordering on the Body: The Racial Matrix of Modern Fiction and Culture*, Doyle reads *Beloved* as an intercorporeal narrative; while she sees *Beloved* primarily as a story of black motherhood, she maintains that Morrison's "narrators...make bodies and objects the favored level of the real, a narrative medium and a narrative locale." This study maintains the same view: rendering history at the level of the body is a narrative method for allowing the body to speak itself; the novel thus becomes the embodied site for communicating an "other" reality. Like Doyle, I note that "the narrator lingers in bodies, at the horizons of their flesh, positioning herself where bodies touch and in touching remember pain and joy" (206). While Doyle's project differs from mine in that she focuses her attention on "motherly and daughterly violations," I agree with her view that Morrison's "intercorporeal narrative strategies...transform such a heritage" (206).[6]

Each of the scholarly works I review here approaches Morrison's work from its own personal impulse and critical perspective. This study hopes to draw together the many themes discussed in these works and deepen their complexity by considering them as problems of representation, in two senses: *Beloved* is a narrative representation, and generates levels of analysis that attend to the world "inside" the novel–what and how the narrator, and/or the characters represent themselves as seeing, saying, and doing, for

example. But the novel itself is a motivated *act* of representation, and consequently generates levels of analysis that direct the attention to a world "outside" the novel–the mode of address to, and the desired response from, readers. In other words, what is being performed, and how is the reader being invited to join the performance? From what substance will we form our humanity?

A rhetoric of abandonment deals with the problem of representation on three levels, all of which refer to the worlds "inside" and "outside" the novel: it examines the "taken-for-granted assumptions" that lie behind representations of "black images and people" (Morrison, *Playing x*); it investigates the effects of such representations on racialized bodies; and it identifies the grammatical, narrative, and rhetorical strategies that constitute *Beloved* as an embodied, joint, performance between implied author and implied reader. This study addresses both the tendency of language to discriminate and the ability of language to identify and challenge discrimination. If, as Richard Weaver claims, "language is sermonic"–that is, it "persuad[es] human beings to adopt right attitudes and act in response to them" (201)–then the analyses that make up this study are meant to identify how attitudes and the acts which arise from them are preached as "right" by hegemonic representations. My hope is that the method of this study, which combines attention to language with attention to how language acts on human bodies, will prove useful for invigorating politicized response to literary texts, and perhaps be useful as well for interrogating the texts of everyday life.

PREVIEW

The following chapter identifies the discourse, narrative, rhetorical, and social theories from which this study fashions its analytical method and explains how these theories interconnect. Chapters III, IV, V, and VI each focus on portions of *Beloved* as the sites for inscriptions of meaning by which Morrison both represents hegemonic forms, and challenges them by an embodied performance. Chapter III considers representational practices "ways of seeing" and acting that compromise epistemology and ontology; I read salient portions of the text to demonstrate how Morrison reveals the ideological perspectives of symbol systems and counters their "seeing" with "listening" as a strategy for constructing identification between the text and readers.

Chapter IV discusses the motives for and effects of dividing practices. I trace the rhetorical move from "white" to "whiteness" to examine how dividing practices are reified, and critique sections of text which both reveal the terministic construction of those practices and also construct "reality" terministically to demonstrate the congregating and segregating function of language. In Chapter V, I investigate the transformative strategies Morrison employs to reorient readers, and argue that the text performs as a communicative body to effect consubstantiality with readers on terms dissociated from hegemonic representations. This dyadic relatedness for the other constitutes the ecstatic element of a rhetoric of abandonment. In Chapter VI, the "Conclusion," I argue that *Beloved* functions as a radically epideictic rhetoric which remembers and memorializes fragmented bodies to enable a revision of community.

This study, then, develops a rhetoric of abandonment as a three-fold method for

examining how language acts in forming representational practices, reacts with conforming dividing practices, and abreacts by performing community–all in the form of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CRITICAL METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study understands abandonment to mean three things: the relinquishing of hope, the abrogation of responsibility, and the yielding to desire. Under those meanings, *Beloved* raises issues about language, power, and human agency. This study identifies, explains, and critiques the textual features that *Beloved* performs as it both reveals and challenges hegemonic representational practices. To do so, I assemble resources from discourse, social, rhetorical, and narrative theory and transform them into a critical methodology.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I begin with Shapiro's attention to the stylistic structure of representational practices: "The imaginative enactments that produce meaning are not simply acts of a pure, disembodied consciousness; they are historically developed practices that reside in the very style in which statements are made, of the grammatical, rhetorical, and narrative structures that compose...discourses" (7). My study examines Morrison's imaginative act of *Beloved* at the grammatical or discourse, rhetorical, and narrative levels Shapiro pinpoints, and adds the level of social-ideological theory to identify how the meanings produced at those levels play out on the bodies of her text. The theoretical bases that support this study are the particular "cut" I have taken through multiple critical

approaches and terminologies to develop the threefold method of a rhetoric of abandonment. To describe this theoretical framework I borrow terms from Stillar, who says that when we attend to the characteristics of complex texts, "we require a theory that is **diverse, systematic,** and **applicable**" (8). For me, **diverse** signifies the range of analytical practices with which I examine the form, function, and social effects of representational practices as instantiated by *Beloved*. My interrelation of discourse, rhetorical, narrative, and social theory and their terminologies is **systematic**; that is, I organize and explain the terms within each perspective, but also explicitly explain the relationships among the perspectives. And it is **applicable**, in that it allows me not only to identify textual features in *Beloved*, but also to make claims about the significance of those choices in a social context. The interrelationships among these levels of analysis mirror the interrelationships among texts, contexts, representing agents and represented objects, and systems of power and authority.

By developing a diverse, systematic, and applicable approach I hope to communicate that a rhetoric of abandonment is a method, not a theory, because "theory" remains too often abstract, a set of "meta" ideas that holds itself above, rather than engaging with, the human implications of what it seeks to describe; and theory too often tries to claim for itself an objectivity belied by its selected terminology. A rhetoric of abandonment should, at its best, demonstrate a productive kind of reflexivity, one that recognizes its analysis is affected on a human level by the textual acts it engages with. For this reason, I have assembled the particular theoretical tools I will use; each is a selection from among a vast array of theories and theorists who have together intellectually led us

to our present postmodern condition. My motive is not to discount any theories, but to select from among them those that remain closest to the human body, so we can perhaps remember what and whom we theorize about, and turn theory into a more ethical practice. Consequently, I organize my discussion of theoretical approaches around two axes, the first of which is "representational practices: the body."

Representations are ideological scripts which circumscribe "reality" in particular ways, determining how bodies are treated in hierarchical social systems. They raise such questions as: whose body will dominate, whose will be dominated, and how will dominated bodies be marked so that their difference makes a difference? I rely on the interrelation of social and rhetorical theory to identify, examine, and critique the ideological practices that act on bodies. And to identify, examine, and critique how these issues are coded in language and marked in the text of *Beloved*, I rely on the interrelation of rhetorical, narrative, and discourse theory. These latter inventories constitute the second axis of this study's approach: "the representation of embodied practices: language." Rhetoric forms a crucial bridge between the two approaches: it provides both the theory from which to understand the human motives that produce ideologically charged representations, and also a method for marking those motives and their effects in texts.

Representational Practices: The Body

The ideological content of representational practices is constituted by what Morrison calls "taken-for-granted assumptions" (*Playing x*)." Particular kinds of

assumptions are motivated by the interests of a group or class to represent the "truth" about itself; these representations act *as if* the "truth" were not a discursive construction but a "fact of life." Shapiro views such discourse as "a form of writing that encourages a misreading." He explains further that:

> [I]deological scripting can be viewed primarily as a discursive mode that naturalizes and universalizes those practices, so that it appears that the world is being described rather than contrived. Once human enactments are banished from the value- and meaning-creation process, the effect is depoliticizing, for the assumption that a discursive mode delivers truth, rather than being one practice among other possibilities, discourages contention. (21)

In other words, when ideologically-scripted representational practices are misread as truthfully *describing* the "real," the power that authorizes such scriptings is forgotten, and individuals assimilate their roles, positions, and relationships in society according to what they see as a "natural" and even ethical social formation. In such forgetting lies the power of hegemony: one particular way of seeing the world becomes the dominant social practice acceded to by even those people subordinated to it. The ideological motive behind such formations hides in the symbolic systems that enforce its representations, but surfaces in the social divisions and inequities that enact violence upon those who lack the resources (what Pierre Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital") to contest them. Such social violence is the effect of representational practices, and through the interaction between symbolic and

social systems, representational practices are reified in social forms. As Bourdieu explains:

> There is a properly symbolic effectiveness of form. Symbolic violence, of which the realization *par excellence* is probably law, is a violence exercised, so to speak, in formal terms, and paying due respect to forms. Paying due respect to forms means giving an action or a discourse the form which is recognized as suitable, legitimate, approved, that it is a form of a kind that allows the open production, in public view, of a wish or practice that, if presented in any other way, would be unacceptable....The force of the form...is that properly symbolic force which allows force to be fully exercised while disguising its true nature as force and gaining recognition, approval and acceptance by dint of the fact that it can present itself under the appearance of universality–that of reason and morality. (*In Other Words* 85)

By presenting itself under the *appearance* of universality, a symbol system in fact only *re*-presents itself, because what is present can be only that which is actually *there*: the universal "reason and morality" of any form is simply wishful thinking, the *as if* of its practice.

The ideological content of representational practices is instantiated politically in

the human realm, reifying how we see our bodies and those of others not only personally, but through the formal acts of symbolic systems: for about the last three hundred years, for example, representation has been "a crucial concept in political theory, forming the cornerstone of representational theories of sovereignty, legislative government, and relations of individuals to the state" (Mitchell 11). When slaves are "seen" as property (as they were, historically, and as they are, in *Beloved*), a paradox of substance–those qualities that constitute identity–results between their representations as persons and as property. This paradox was exemplified in early American apportionment discussions over the Representation Clause of the Constitution. Cheryl I. Harris recounts that:

> Representation in the House of Representatives was apportioned on the basis of population computed by counting all persons and "three-fifths of all other persons"–slaves. Gouveneur Morris's remarks before the Constitutional Convention posed the essential question: "Upon what principle is it that slaves shall be computed in the representation? Are they men? Then make them Citizens & let them vote? Are they property? Why then is no other property included?" (1718-19)

Gouveneur Morris's question is indeed "essential," because it queries how substance is represented, and thereby determined, by the principles of order governing symbolic systems. Although in the seventeenth century some Africans entered the American Colonies as indentured servants, the growing need of whites for a reliable and permanent

form of labor subsequently "required" that Africans who were forcibly brought into the country could exist only as slaves. The questions asked by Gouveneur Morris demonstrate how representation can function to determine substance, and then reify that symbolic act by the symbolic violence of law, which determines who is a person and what resources, or symbolic capital, that person may access. Morrison explores this aspect of representation in *Beloved*, where the symbolic violence it promotes is embodied in the lives of her characters. But her novel also prompts us to remember that symbolic violence manifests itself as actual physical and psychological violence on the bodies of real people.

Gouveneur Morris's remarks are a historical example of how symbol systems enact violence on social bodies, and, as history becomes naturalized into "culture," cultural meanings inhere in representations of black people, the effects of which persist in the present. Writing of this symbolic violence, culture critic bell hooks asserts that:

> There is a direct and abiding connection between the maintenance of white supremacist patriarchy...and the institutionalization via mass media of specific images, representations of race, of blackness that support and maintain the oppression, exploitation, and overall domination of all black people....From slavery on, white supremacists have recognized that control over images is central to the maintenance of any system of racial domination. (2)

The power of these representations to dominate what black people see and experience

through employing a particular terministic screen–"the lens of white supremacy" (hooks 1)–is the action of hegemony, what Shapiro identifies as an ideological "practice, a way of treating collectivities" (10).

Lumping people as "collectivities" allows hegemonic practices to forget that those entities are not anonymous masses, but are in fact individual bodies represented in such a way as to control the conditions of their existence. The effect of hegemonic representational practices on bodies is described by hooks:

> For black people, the pain of learning that we cannot control our images, how we see ourselves (if our vision is not decolonized), or how we are seen is so intense that it rends us. It rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self and identify. Often it leaves us ravaged by repressed rage, feeling weary, dispirited, and sometimes just plain old brokenhearted. (3-4)

She speaks here of real , material, bodies, but every character, every event in *Beloved* shimmers in her words; hooks's prescription for healing is, like Shapiro's and Morrison's, "the effort to critically intervene and transform the world of image making" (hooks 4), because behind the enforcement of images–pictorial or textual–lurks control over bodies, individual and social: how they form themselves, what agency they have, and what resources they have for governing their own contingency. Consequently, representational practices are inherently rhetorical and ideological–they act to persuade some body of somebody else's version of reality–and they are inherently social, because as symbol

systems they both construct and are constructed by hierarchical social systems which enable some, and constrain "other," bodies. The title of this study, "A Rhetoric of Abandonment: The Act of Representation and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," foregrounds rhetoric as my context and principle resource for understanding "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (Burke, *Grammar xv*) and for examining how texts, as sites of symbolic action, both represent and enact on bodies the reality of lived experience. When we interrogate people's motives, we look at the social and symbolic systems within which they operate. The social and the symbolic are provinces of rhetoric, and we can enrich explanations of how and under what rhetorical conditions bodies form, perform, and transform, through the resource of social theory. This study understands rhetorical theory and social theory to be inextricably imbricated in one another.

Social theories of the body as resources for rhetoric

When we consider representations as symbolic acts that are both enabled and constrained by symbol systems, we are dealing always with social practices, and social practices are enacted by, and on, some *body*. An interest in the body has been present in one form or another throughout the history of rhetoric, most pertinently for this study, in Burke's concepts of identification and consubstantiality. But "only recently...has 'the body' as such become the explicit locus of debates about the interrelation of power and discourse" (Patterson and Corning 5). Sociological theories of the body in particular have altered sociology's traditional study of the history and constitution of human society, re-

evaluating the importance of the body in relation to issues of gender, class, culture, and consumption. Studies of the racialized body are, however, rare, and by interrelating social theories of the body with discourse, rhetorical, and narrative approaches to *Beloved*, this study seeks to extend understanding of how the racialized body and its conditions of existence are constructed by hegemonic representations.

Once we read hegemonic representation as a rhetorical locus of power and knowledge, we also read the body as the site of ideological inscription, regulation, and resistance. In our article on theories of the body, Randi Patterson and I write that sociological theories of the body

> stress the body as a sign of, or site for, the social and political inscription of meaning. As anthropologist Mary Douglas notes, the human response to risk and disorder is to create systems of classification, and the primary model for order, both social and political, is the body.[1] Consequently, body metaphors are used to explain the organization of many social organizations and patterns at the same time as individual bodies are read as surfaces for the marks of countless cultural distinctions. (7-8)

Marks on the bodies of slaves and former slaves in *Beloved* function as indexical signs for such cultural distinctions–scars, burns, marks left by the bit and other restraining devices; they are the signs of how substance is divided and classified to secure the principles of order of white supremacy. These issues of order and marking emphasize the social

component of rhetoric, and vice-versa–the social and the symbolic are always interrelated–but also reveal where social theory's inattention to race can be enhanced by rhetorical inventories of analysis.

Pierre Bourdieu, for example, who along with Douglas is often credited with the renewed focus on the body in sociology, provides a vocabulary for articulating the body in relation to symbol systems and practices through his concept of *habitus.*[2] This concept describes how social meaning is inscribed as a set of embodied cultural dispositions–the way we act in various social settings, how we speak, how we carry our bodies, for example–and how bodies reproduce received cultural meanings in their practices. But habitus is usually described (as in Stillar, for example) as "the dispositions marking differences between different genders, classes, and age groups" (96), without consideration for how race cuts across these distinctions. Even so, Bourdieu offers important concepts that apply to racial divisions: the cultural meanings embodied in habitus are carried by language, and, depending on a body's access to the resources of language, its "linguistic capital," persons may find themselves subject to being represented in ways they cannot contest (Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* 57). This issue is certainly racial, as bell hooks's writing makes plain, and Stillar points out that "[r]epresentation, in Bourdieu's scheme, is both a product of and a site of reproduction of the divisions in the social world" (105-6). Thus the concept of habitus allows us to recognize (as does Burke's logology, which I will explain shortly), how the symbolic power of symbol systems functions both to name, and conceal its naming, of racialized substance through its hegemonic force. Bourdieu explains symbolic power as

> a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming and transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization–is a power that can be exercised only if it is *recognized*, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. (*Language* 170, author's emphasis)

In symbolic power inheres the accession ("recognition") to hegemony, which relies for its functioning on social bodies' complicity with certain dominant ideas that in fact articulate the needs of a dominant class. Bourdieu's notions of symbolic power and symbolic violence provide complex concepts which further interrelate the rhetorical, political, and social consequences of symbolic action, and, at the same time, provide a concise terminology for arguing that in representation lies the construction of what we know about, and how we live, in the world.

However, Bourdieu's concept of habitus assumes that the dispositions affected by bodies act by a kind of centripetal force to maintain a certain stability of the borders, or dividing practices, that delineate different positions. That is, although there is the possibility for mobility, the body is disposed to prefer that which it has grown up knowing as "natural" to its condition. The stabilizing force of habitus may, for the most part, inhere

for class, age, and gender distinctions, but race cuts across those categories in ways that habitus cannot always account for, because the distinctions the dominant group determines may in fact be too intolerable for racialized bodies to maintain. Habitus marks the internalization of the social practices that make and legitimize distinctions according to what Bourdieu calls "taste"; Bourdieu defines this term in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*:

> Taste is a practical mastery of distribution which makes it possible to sense or intuit what is likely (or unlikely) to befall–and therefore to befit–an individual occupying a given position in a social space. It functions as a sort of social orientation, a "sense of one's place," guiding the occupants of a given place in social space toward the social positions adjusted to their properties [habitus], and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position. (466)

The social positions adjusted to the properties of slaves, however, depend on their being co-opted into symbol systems enacted as a "natural" order: the order of law, and white supremacy, for example. While the characters of *Beloved* do represent themselves in those *terms*, and are constrained by them to stay in their "place," the "practical mastery" of such dividing practices is marked so violently on them that they finally cannot participate in such an order. Burke has said that "only the law can make sin" (*Religion* 186); that is, the very construction of order presupposes those who would transgress its

principles. When symbolic violence enacts actual violence, bodies react, and sometimes the system breaks down. This breakdown is the condition for fluidity–the point at which we interrogate the strength of boundaries and the principles that enact them–and the possibility for rhetorical and social transformation.

According to Bourdieu, bodies act always in specific social contexts, which he calls "fields"; and thus their actions are not merely a product of habitus, but of the relation between habitus and field. As Stillar explains it:

> Field, in Bourdieu's sense of the term, is also structured by and structuring of social practices: It is not merely a "setting" or unstructured context for practice. If we think of habitus as a "feel for the game" (a metaphor Bourdieu often uses), then the field is the "game." Games are both structured...and structuring....The structure of a particular field does not determine the function of habitus; it constrains it and makes certain of its aspects relevant or not. (100)

But since a field "is structured in terms of the distribution of agents and capital" (Stillar 100), and the field or "game" in *Beloved* is the slave system in which any such distribution is frozen along the line dividing white from black, constraints on the habitus of slave bodies would be almost total in relation to their mobility. And as Frank notes, "Even the disposition for mobility may be a matter of habitus" ("Analytical" 68). Consequently, the theory of habitus does not adequately account for the action of the racialized body under a

symbol system like slavery; because habitus addresses the predictable rather than the transformative, this study turns to Arthur Frank for a method of reading bodies.

Frank notes that "if the study of the body teaches us anything, it is that the proclaimed determinancies of one theoretical moment...usually signify little more than the imminence of that system's collapse into a wholly different order of things." It is the possibility for transformation that accrues to moments of breakdown–to see what a wholly different order of things might look like–that turns him (and me) to the body. I will explain what Frank calls his "action theory of the body" ("Analytical" 38) more fully in Chapter V, but here let me note his understanding that the inequities effected by symbolic systems are visited on bodies: "fundamental inequality...depends on conditions of embodiment. The conditions are never absolutes, but embodiment is defined by societies and cultures as a principal means by which domination is practised and rationalized" ("Analytical" 39). I argue, along with Frank, that the theoretical or abstract privilege of symbol systems takes us away from "the symbol's embodiment in bodies recognizing other bodies" ("Analytical" 42). A rhetoric of abandonment identifies this separation of symbol from body as the abandonment of the other; Frank reminds us that "the theoretical jump of language to 'embodied consciousness' should not hypostatize the latter term: embodied consciousness is always a body conscious of itself" ("Analytical" 50-1). I will speak, then, of a body both symbolic *and* corporeal when I consider the issue of representation in *Beloved*. Although a body may choose to represent itself (Sethe represents hers as "mother," for example), under conditions of domination or appropriation, bodies must struggle against the representations society provides for them. And in that struggle lies

the possibility for transformative acts by both characters' bodies in *Beloved*, and the textual body of *Beloved*. As Frank says, "On the questions of domination and appropriation hang much of the story of society....That story both begins and ends with bodies" ("Analytical" 42).

Frank's concern with embodiment and domination aligns his theory with this study's attention to "the relation of the body to ethics" ("Analytical" 38). His focus provides a method for investigating, not merely how the body may be described or explained, but also the body's own agency, how the body constructs itself with regard to its own contingency. People construct and use their own bodies, but not always in conditions of their own choosing; the symbol systems we live within often constrain us ideologically. Frank develops a typology of bodies to explain how the body is a problem for itself rather than for society, a problem of action rather than system ("Analytical" 47); this focus directs the attention away from social practices that "manage" bodies as problematic collectivities, toward the agency of each body that makes up what we call "society." This move is an ethical one: it recognizes that social and symbolic systems are constructed by individual bodies who act on other bodies; thus it is not "society" that bears responsibility for its dividing practices, but each one of us.

Each of Frank's body types constructs itself along four dimensions: control, desire, relation to others, and self-relatedness (association with or dissociation from its own corporeality) ("Analytical" 51-2). The types this study finds most useful for understanding the body as a site for symbolic practices are the "disciplined body" ("Analytical" 54), a body which regiments itself to control its predictability under certain conditions; the

"mirroring body," which bases its predictability on its reflection of what it sees around it ("Analytical" 61); and the "dominating body" ("Analytical" 69), which controls its contingency by wreaking violence on others. The disciplined body undertakes acts of mortification whereby it abandons parts of itself in order to conform to some particular societal norm; the mirroring body abandons itself and its agency, almost completely, to assimilation. The dominating body is configured by lack; it abandons its own humanity by destroying others it considers subhuman ("Analytical" 71). The body's constructions are not static, however; they contain "oppositional spaces" ("Analytical" 47), and so bodies shift, according to their dispositions within certain conditions of existence. These shifts occur at what Frank calls "flip-points," points of transformation between controlled bodies and the "communicative body," an idealized body type that realizes itself in praxis–appropriately for this project, Frank seeks the emergence of the communicative body in aesthetic performance ("Analytical" 79). "What is realized," Frank says, "is simply the body itself, producing itself, recursively, through the variations of a life which is no longer appropriated by institutions and discourses but is now the body's own" ("Analytical" 80). The conditions of a slave's life are wholly contingent under slavery, and Frank offers a method for examining how first, the actions of the characters in *Beloved* reveal the oppositional possibilities for bodies constrained by the representational practices of a hegemonic system; and second, how *Beloved* itself acts as a communicative body, recursively producing itself through the metaphors of memory and rememory to open the boundaries between itself and others.

A rhetoric of abandonment identifies opening boundaries as an ecstatic act both

ethical and transformative: social systems and the relationships they enact shift when symbol systems change the terms by which they construct those relationships. This study posits that bodies which dominate others are dysfunctional, performing out of a sense of lack, anxiety, and fear (Frank, "Analytical" 69); but where dominating bodies draw on rhetorical resources to effect symbolic and social dividing practices that rigidly define a body's "place," *Beloved* draws on rhetorical resources to intercede symbolically–in its relation with readers–by performing as a body that communicates desire: being seduced out of one's place disrupts the boundaries between bodies, opening the possibility for identification with and reclamation of the other. This rhetorical inducement to action connects bodies and text.

Rhetoric as the context for bodies and texts

This study foregrounds rhetoric as the functional context for both bodies and texts. I take as my guide Kenneth Burke, from whose rhetorical perspective I understand and analyze language as a symbol system that acts with real consequences in the real world; these consequences are enacted socially in oral and written exchanges between people who make, use, and mis-use symbols to persuade others of their version of reality. Because Burke's perspective is so all-encompassing, seeing as "texts" units as small as single words or as vast as institutional or ideological discourses, his rhetorical theory and method not only cohere with Shapiro's, but also provide a locus from which other inventories of analysis may be enriched by interconnection. Each inventory I use constructs its own strategy of reading bodies, whether textual or human, and Burke's

method adds to their ordering principles the heightened awareness that language is the filter through which we understand, first, what the "this" is that's doing something in the text, and second, to whom it's being done. In other words, Burke provides the connection between how language functions as symbolic act and symbolic system and the way we humans actually conduct ourselves in what he calls our "Human Barnyard" (*Grammar xvii*).

Because the rhetorical act of persuasion functions to induce cooperation through language and language constructs meaning, Burke calls the use of language a symbolic act. This function of rhetoric, according to Burke, is rooted in the function of language as "a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (*Rhetoric* 43), and his analysis focuses on the interplay between how we act as symbol users, and how symbol systems–larger patterns of language that depend for their force on directing the attention through their choice of terminology–act on us. I borrow from Stillar for a gloss of this interplay:

> [S]ymbol systems enable us to construct a world of experience and orientation. Through symbols, we actively shape and interpret words and orient ourselves to those represented worlds and the other agents in them. They constitute our ways of knowing and acting in the world. At the same time, the symbol systems and symbol-using patterns of our cultures define us as social agents. They constitute our ways of being in the world. (60-61)

Burke's rhetoric examines nothing less than how language use de-termines epistemology–our ways of knowing–and ontology–our ways of being. Here lurks Burke's major attraction for me–his preoccupation with the ethical, not as an arbitrary "moral" standard, but as it is rooted in the being of language, which embodies the possibility of transformation. Concerned with good and evil, Burke acknowledges that our power-inflected ways of knowing and being can often be "invitations to mistreatment," and this study will examine how such invitations are embodied in the symbolic act of representation.

As a way of knowing and being in the world, the symbolic act is called by Burke "*the dancing of an attitude*" (*Philosophy* 9), a phrase I once thought of as playful. But I have since come to see it in a different light. "Dancing," of course, is an apt term for rhetoric, because it is an act often done in cooperation with a partner, usually according to a particular pattern–one must know the "rules" of the tango to dance it–and it is a performance that has meaning–the dance represents "tango" to those watching. And dancing requires bodies: it demonstrates somatically the "moves" we make in a particular situation. "Dancing" is such an apt metaphor for rhetoric particularly because it *embodies* Aristotle's classic definition: "the faculty of discovering in the particular case all the available means of persuasion" (*xxxvii*). The situation in which the dance is danced is the "particular case"; the pattern or movement strategy of the dance is "the available means"; and the representation of those moves is the "persuasion" effected on the participants and audience that this act "means" tango. In adding the embodied substance of dancing to Aristotle's abstract definition, Burke both highlights the performative quality of rhetoric as

an act that seeks to convey meaning, and also directs our attention to its acting through, and on, bodies.

But what happens when the person who is asked, "May I have this dance?" doesn't want to, yet is not free to refuse? What is danced, Burke says, is an attitude, and attitude connotes our orientation to each other, to the act, and to the audience. If the orientation between partners is not one of equality, if one is forced to dance a pattern designed by the other, then what exactly is being enacted? Or, more specifically, in the name of conforming to a prescribed and proscribed form, a particular symbol system, who's doing what to whom? The way I begin to answer these questions is through Burke's concept of the "terministic screen," a concept which undergirds all his work and helps us to understand that what we know and how we live is always *in terms of* some version of reality represented by those terms. Burke offers this explanation:

> We *must* use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another. Within that field there can be different screens, each with its way of directing the attention and shaping the range of observation implicit in the given terminology. (*Language* 50)

Burke's work is appropriate and effective for examining representational practices particularly because such practices re-present what is absent *in terms of* their own version

of reality or, in Burke's shorthand, in terms of their own "motive." It is precisely because language is never *neutral* to Burke–and he recognizes in his dialectic that even his own words can be always under review–that he highlights its orientational and attitudinal qualities.[3]

This study attends to motive, particularly those motives which construct bodies in such a way as to constrain what we know and how we constitute ourselves as social agents. To examine how motives are represented in hegemonic symbol systems, this study will use the three analytical approaches which comprise Burke's theory and method. While I will explain and use each more thoroughly in Chapters IV and V, I offer here a concise summary. They are, first, his "grammar," which is not a traditional grammar, but one which focuses on language patterns through a system of ratios that identify the forms and functions of symbolic action. He calls this method "Dramatism," and defines it as a "method of analysis and corresponding critique of terminology designed to show that the most direct route to the study of human relations and human motives is via a methodological inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions" (*Symbols* 135). Dramatism focuses on language not as "an instrument of definition," but as "primarily a species of action, or expression of attitudes" ("Dramatism" 447). "Act," says Burke, "is thus a terministic center from which many related considerations can be shown to 'radiate,' as though it were a 'god-term' from which a whole universe of terms is derived" (*Symbols* 135). A symbolic act does not merely tell us about something, but expresses our attitude toward that something together with our attitude toward those we address. "The symbolic act," adds Stillar, "is the material with which we play out our motives, our

interests, and our stance in relation to others and ourselves" (5).

Burke's second analytical method is his "rhetoric," which is concerned with how identification and division function to construct substance, especially where there is a hierarchical motive present. People identify with one another according to how they represent the world; Burke points out that the terms used in such representations promote identification through choices that foreground certain aspects of reality while they obscure or marginalize others. He explains that people "seek for vocabularies that will be faithful *reflections* of reality. To this end they must develop vocabularies that are *selections* of reality. And any selection of reality must...function as a *deflection* of reality" (*Symbols* 13, author's emphasis). People's selections and deflections determine their moves in the processes of identification and division; at the same time, the dividing lines they draw will determine their selections and deflections of "reality." Stillar summarizes this process: "Rhetorical acts initiate congregation and segregation in social orders based on the symbolic acts' positing the terms through which participants may share or not share substance" (59). Burke's grammar and rhetoric inform this study's examination of the ways in which Morrison constructs in *Beloved* a form of address that invites readers to congregate as communicative bodies *in terms of* its textual selections.

The third component of Burke's method is his "logology"—words about words—which extends his analysis of symbolic acts as dynamic processes among human bodies to an examination of the conditions and effects of motives that are hidden in symbol systems. Because Burke's logology is an important resource for this study's method, I explain it here more fully: when we perform symbolic acts, we do so in terms of symbol

systems, which are "logological" because they rely on words (logos) and forms (logic) that enable and constrain meaning-making. A specific text will not only draw on other logologic systems, but will itself constitute a logologic system that circumscribes a set of meaning-making potentials.

Burke actually began to develop the concept of logology in *The Rhetoric of Motives*, where he introduced the idea of "god-terms" (299), later summarizing their properties in *The Rhetoric of Religion* as a "linguistic analogue...found in the nature of any name or title, which sums up a manifold of particulars under a single head" (2). The act of naming thus becomes a practice for assigning a range of characteristics to a thing or a human body, a kind of shorthand for "motive." In this latter text, Burke named his concept "logology" and turned to theological texts as a source for investigating "the authorship of men's [sic] motives" (*vi*) because:

> Insofar as man is the "typically symbol-using animal," it should not be surprising that men's thoughts on the nature of the Divine embody the principles of verbalization. And insofar as God is a *formal* principle, any thorough statement about God should be expected to reveal the formality underlying their genius as statements....[I]nsofar as religious doctrine is verbal, it will necessarily exemplify its nature as verbalization; and insofar as religious doctrine is thorough, its way of exemplifying verbal principles should be correspondingly thorough. (*Religion* 1)

Words and forms are the key to symbolic systems, and we can best characterize them by recourse to instances of text. Burke's "logological" thesis is that, "since the theological use of language is thorough, the close study of theology and its forms will provide us with good insight into the nature of language itself as motive" (*vi*). While the text this study analyzes is not theological, it instantiates, nonetheless, god-terms and naming practices that reveal the forms implicit in the constitution of their authorship, as well as the manner by which Morrison both reveals and contests such authorship.

I said earlier that I chose to use theories that stay close to the body, and Burke's logology sounds abstract. But Burke is concerned with how logological systems determine epistemological and ontological conditions and consequences for the human bodies who are subjected to them. His concern is preeminently social and ethical: words and forms are not isolates, but are social acts that arise from particular situations, "not words alone but the social textures, the local psychoses, the institutional structures, the purposes and practices that lie behind the words" (*Permanence* 182). All Burke's dramatistic, rhetorical, and logological concerns spin out from his "definition of man [sic]" (*Religion* 40) (later shaped as a "Poem") in which we are first and foremost, "*bodies* that learn language" (in Simons and Melia 263, my emphasis). As bodies who learn language and wield it as an act, we embody its practices.

The Representation of Embodied Practices: Language

All three of Burke's analytical approaches depend on rhetoric's fundamental nature as an addressed act. The embodied quality of address is for me the key component of

representational practices, which function rhetorically in precisely the way they constitute addressor and addressee. As Stillar puts it, "The rhetorical act [representation] hails its audience. The meaning-making resources instantiated in the rhetorical act not only create the 'I' that addresses but also the 'you' being addressed, thus enabling (and constraining) meaning-making potentials for what the 'you' can see and how the 'you' can respond" (60). As a symbolic act that addresses an audience, representation plays a potentially violent role in its semiotic creation and manipulation of how things are seen, constructing a version of reality whereby certain selections stand for or take the place of something or somebody else. Functioning as a terministic screen, representation determines by language use what "facts" we live *in terms of*, how we see not just things, but ourselves.

The claims this study makes about hegemonic representational practices–particularly about their action on racialized bodies–and Morrison's *Beloved*, require forms of analysis that link the embodied consequences of language use with their textual instances. These forms of analysis must also identify the strategies *Beloved* performs for insight into, and resistance against, the ways social, cultural, and ethical assumptions about difference are coded into contemporary social practice. From Burke's perspective on the motivated nature of language use, this study accesses narrative and discourse theories to identify, explain, and critique how the difference that makes a difference is marked in the text of *Beloved*. The novel is Morrison's act of confrontation with embodied representational practices, one designed to liberate language and knowledge from dominant forms of "obscuring state language...designed for the estrangement of minorities, hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek"; this kind of

"dead" language, Morrison says in her Nobel Lecture, "must be rejected, altered, and exposed" (*Lecture* 16). She states her subject as: "The estranged body, the legislated body, the violated, rejected, deprived body–the body as consummate home. In virtually all these formations, whatever the terrain, race magnifies the matter that matters" ("Home" 5).

Race is a construct of language, represented to embody ideological perspectives. Morrison says her efforts in *Beloved* "were to carve away the accretions of deceit, blindness, ignorance, paralysis, and sheer malevolence embedded in raced language so that other kinds of perceptions were not only available but were inevitable" ("Home" 7). This kind of rhetorical sculpting comes from Morrison's thinking of language "partly as a system...but mostly as agency–as an act with consequences" (*Lecture* 13), and in *Beloved* she acts to expose, reject, and alter the language of hegemonic representations. Her three intentions mirror the praxis of a rhetoric of abandonment: to expose the ideological content of representational practices; to reject the dividing practices they enact; and to identify how Morrison's text recuperates a more ethical form of community by altering readers' (mis)recognition of the social and symbolic systems of order from which hegemonic representations draw their currency. The currency of representations is their linguistic capital, and, as a narrative representation, *Beloved* too is a site of symbolic action in which Morrison invests her own linguistic capital; it specifically addresses, and is meant to transform, readers' attitudes toward an urgent, immanent, social issue. Narrative is an embodied rhetorical structure; it comes out of bodies and produces bodies: the narrative, stylistic, and grammatical selections Morrison makes work toward particular

kinds of congregation and segregation, not only by the narrative representation within the text, but also by the embodied narrative performance effected between the text and its readers.

The dynamic interrelationships of these resources for meaning-making–discourse, narrative, and rhetoric–reflect symbolically the negotiations of social reality, whereby bodies are constantly performing and being performed in ways constituted by their position on the social hierarchy. This study maintains that narrative–in this case, *Beloved*–is not simply a story, a textual artifact that can be examined separate from its social context, but is a rhetorical act that responds to an exigency posed by a particular situation. As a rhetorical act, narrative both performs a specific ethical posture embodied in its discursive constructions of reality, and also solicits a specific performance from readers. Consequently, the transformations effected by the narrative occur both for the characters' bodies within the text, and for the reading bodies outside the text.

Narrative

By the simplest dictionary definition, the noun "narrative" is equated with "story," and is generally understood to mean a spoken or written text by which a teller represents characters engaged in events over some period of time. That conception of story is so familiar to us that we tend to think even of our own histories in terms of the commonplace metaphor, "the story of my life," and wonder, as we narrate, how our story will come out in the end. But as Dennis Mumby notes, narrative has far broader implications: "The articulation of social actors as *homo narrans* provides one alternative to the model of

rationality that has characterized Western thought from Descartes to the present" (1).

Narrative as a form of rhetoric

In postmodern terms, narrative is viewed as an "alternative way of making knowledge claims and...develop[ing] new ways of seeing the world" (Mumby 2), and hence is an ideologically potent, rhetorical, form that both represents and enacts reality symbolically and socially. Mumby highlights the rhetorical nature of narrative when he explains that: "Narrative is a *socially* symbolic act in the double sense that (a) it takes on meaning only in a social context and (b) it plays a role in the construction of that social context as a site of meaning within which social actors are implicated" (5, author's emphasis). Since the social order (or "hierarchy," in Burke's terms) is inherently unstable, "society," adds Mumby, "is characterized by an ongoing 'struggle over meaning'" (5). Narrative addresses and responds to this social struggle by drawing on the rhetorical resources of language; as Mumby points out, "control...is exercised...through the discursive constructions of a...culture that maintains and reproduces the prevailing system of power relations. In this sense, the construction of social reality is not spontaneous and consensual but is the product of the complex relations among narrative, power, and culture" (6-7). This study views narrative as a rhetorical act that, on the one hand, can enforce prevailing discursive systems through value-laden representations; and, on the other hand, can also challenge hegemonic representations of social reality by instantiating selections and deflections that effect indentification on different terms.

As an example of the relationships among representation, rhetoric, and narrative, I

refer to Samia Mehrez's focus on undoing the power of hegemonic representation, a process she calls "an act of *exorcism* for both the colonizer and the colonized" (258, my emphasis). *Beloved* is a ghost story in which the eponymous ghost is exorcised toward the end of the novel. Her exorcism frees the novel's black community of the haunting reminder of its past pain and guilt: pain which stems from the conditions they have been subjected to by the slave system, and guilt which stems from leaving behind aspects of themselves so that they become complicit in the system's practices. And the novel itself acts as an exorcism for white readers, freeing us–by offering congregation on different terms–from our continuing guilty enslavement by hegemony's representations of black people. In Burke's terms, "exorcism" might be seen as "redemption": the principles of order of logologic systems enforce victimage ("all the Disorder that goes with Order"), and guilt needs cleansing (*Religion* 4). Cleansing marks the site of transformation, where we move from the division enacted by symbol systems to embodied identification with the "other"; this study will identify such points of transformation in the text.

The metaphor of exorcism-as-transformation is performed by Morrison in the structure of the novel: Beloved's exorcism precedes Sethe's possibility for seeing herself as her own "best thing." The meaning of a narrative is imbricated in its content and form; Hayden White explains that a narrative reveals "what might be called its form in 'plot' and its content in the meaning with which the plot endows what would otherwise be only mere event" (*Content* 53). Because the "meaning" of narrative–both its content and form–is enacted in language, and because narrative is one form of representational practice that has as its purpose the communication of meaning through language symbols, I select as

resources for this study narrative theories that view narrative as an addressed, rhetorical, act. The motivated property of narrative makes White's coinage of the term "narrativity" in his article "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" salient: "a discourse that narrativizes" is one that "feigns to make the world speak itself and speak itself *as a story*" (7, author's emphasis). The text of *Beloved* attempts precisely to make its world speak itself, primarily through a language of the body, and thus aligns itself with White's consideration of this impulse to story reality as "a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling*" ("Value" 5).

When we represent reality in storied form, we do so not to create a structure for analysis, but to access a "metacode, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" ("Value" 6). White speaks here of historical narratives, but the "translatable" quality of narrativized discourse inheres as well in fictional narratives like *Beloved* which seek to translate the author's knowing of a particular culture into a telling that can be performed with an "other" audience across social spaces. This spatial move shifts the ground or substance upon which identification is effected: what is at issue is the ethical transformation "from one moral order to another"; the performance of story–narrativizing–endows a text's reality "with the kind of [moral] meaning that both displays itself in its consummation and withholds itself by its displacement to another story 'waiting to be told' just beyond the confines of 'the end'" ("Value" 26). When Morrison repeats, at the end of *Beloved*, the past tense declarative "It was not a story to pass on," then changes the subject, the tone,

and the tense of the sentence to present imperative: "This is not a story to pass on" (274-5), she does indeed dis-place the displayed meaning to another story waiting to be told beyond "the end." "This" story–of symbolic violence enacted by hegemonic representations–must be abandoned before future narrative performance, beyond the confines of the end of *Beloved*, can tell a different story, one that reclaims community. A rhetoric of abandonment identifies the textual displacements and replacements in *Beloved* that move readers to position themselves apart from the territory of hegemonic practice.

Displacement is the rhetorical act of shifting attitude through narrative performance. Barbara Hernstein Smith supports this position when she describes narrative as:

> the verbal acts of particular narrators performed in response to–and thus shaped and constrained by–sets of multiple interacting conditions. For any narrative, these conditions would consist of (1) such circumstantial variables as the particular context and material setting (cultural and social, as well as strictly "physical") in which the tale is told, the particular listeners or readers addressed, and the nature of the narrator's relationship to them, and (2) such psychological variables as the narrator's motives for telling the tale...that elicited his telling it on that occasion, to that audience, and that shaped the particular way he told it. (226)

Although Smith does not call this description of narrative "rhetorical," her words describe it as such: rhetoric concerns itself with the motivated verbal acts of a particular speaker/writer, performed in a particular setting on a particular occasion, and addressed to a particular audience. And rhetoric would regard "the formal properties of an individual narrative...as *functions of all these multiple interacting conditions*" (226, author's emphasis). This study understands narrative as a form of rhetoric embodied in its address and therefore also considers rhetoric as a narrative performance.

Rhetoric and narrative performance

The efficacy of rhetorically based narrative theories for identifying, explaining, and critiquing texts as symbolic acts increases when we consider narrative as a performed rhetorical act. Marie Maclean, in her study *Narrative as Performance*, describes this act as "a carrying out, a putting into action or shape" (*xi*) which foregrounds movement and interaction in a way that echoes Smith's "situational" sense of narrative: that it is "constructed...by someone in particular, on some occasion, for some purpose, and in accord with some relevant set of principles" (Smith 218). Maclean stresses as crucial to narrative performance what "distinguished theorists of the genre (Propp, Todorov, Bremond, Prince, Greimas)" leave out: an "emphasis on the teller-hearer nexus inherent in all narrative" (1). Her emphasis on the rhetorical nature of narrative, which addresses itself to, and requires the active participation of, an audience aligns with mine: this study claims that *Beloved* both represents, in the text, how hegemonic representation acts to constrain the epistemological and ontological agency of its characters, and also

rhetorically *performs* interactively with the reader. By involving the audience in interactive performance, *Beloved* enables identification: the transformation of substance.

Narrative interaction, conceived as performance, communicates on the level of the body. It includes, along with language, "extra-linguistic choices and combinations required to produce personal interaction," that is, seductive moves that lure the reader (Maclean *xi*). Beyond achieving merely the purpose of exchange between teller and reader, a successful narrative performance must have "energy and effect" so that the reader's active participation is assured; Maclean asserts that "enactment demands interaction...a tale is altered in *each* telling" (2). Morrison herself says, in an interview with Christina Davis, that her writing "has to have certain kinds of fundamental characteristics (one of) which is the participation of the *other*, that is, the audience, the reader....so that two people are busy making the story" (Davis 231). Morrison strives to perform the oral/aural qualities of narrative in her writing–particularly in her mode of address–and she speaks and writes of her own standards for her novels (in much the same terms as does Maclean) in "The Language Must Not Sweat"[4] and other interviews and essays. She structures her language to engage the reader's performance, for it is, she says, only through that interaction that the story and its meaning–what Maclean calls "the phenomenon of interpretability" (21)–are actually created. Morrison's narrative body performs, first, to engage readers' emotions, and second, to change their position. Maclean describes this textual interaction in almost the exact terms that Stillar describes the addressed nature of representation (cited above), and does so as if she were writing specifically about *Beloved*: "Through a narrative text *I* meet *you* in a struggle which may

be cooperative or may be combative, a struggle for knowledge, for power, for pleasure, for possession" (*xii*, author's emphasis). In *Beloved*, "possession" is precisely the issue in both the ghostly sense and also in the sense of who owns what and whom; Maclean calls the textual interaction an "erotic interplay" (20), and Morrison's text performs the narrative seductively, providing enough pleasure that readers remain willing to participate in a story which challenges their knowledge and position with regard to a certain period of history as well as the representations that have perdured from that period.

Maclean claims that "performance is not subjected to the criterion of truth or falsehood....Its standards are those of desire or lack rather than of fact" (*xi*). Desire or lack is one dimension along which bodies constitute themselves in Frank's typology of bodies; the question is whether the body produces or lacks desire, that is, whether it communicates toward and for another body, or disciplines itself to deficiency and incompleteness ("Analytical" 51). Remembering the body at this juncture both reminds us that we are, rhetorically, "bodies that learn language," and also heightens the rhetorical nature of narrative as an embodied act, one capable of performance. The difference between *performance* and *practice* is that the former is embodied; it is an *acting-for* an audience which is *present* and responsive. As Maclean puts it, "performance relies on an agreed relationship of the seer and the seen, of the hearer and the heard" (1). In contrast, practice is an *acting-on*; a monologic discourse that speaks in place of an audience that does not or cannot speak back–is, in effect, *absent*. Practices attempt to re-present what is absent by defining and classifying how things, people, and events should be seen; desire is subsumed by ideology, which determines and maintains the disciplinary systems to which a

body must conform by abandoning aspects of itself. Performance instead demands an intimate, desirous, relationship with the reader, marked by excess: "a [narrative] performance," says Maclean, "will always be more than its parts" (*xii*). The form of *Beloved* textually asks its readers to fill in the gaps in order to perform the fusion of fragmented stories into "the" narrative; Morrison overcomes the dividing practices of hegemonic representations by requiring her readers to perform as a communicative body.

There is more than one level of interaction going on in a narrative, as I have indicated: the narrative representation is itself an act performed by a writer for a reading audience, and there is the interaction represented among the characters in the novel. The relation between the narrator and the listeners in the text and, eventually, between the narrator and the reader, must be formed by the text, negotiated in some way, since the reader must accept the point of a story (Maclean 20). Consequently, the text must construct narrative authority such that the reader is seduced into accepting the narrative performance. In Ross Chambers's study of the dynamics of narrative performance, his comments on narrative control seem particularly apt to Morrison's textual strategies, especially with regard to her construction of the novel's narrative voice. I quote here Maclean's translation of his words from French:

> This [the narrator's skill], in short, is a matter of recruiting the power of the narratee in such a way as to produce what is called "authority" for the narrator; it is a seduction of the pre-existing desire for narration in favor of the desire to narrate. The power is not challenged, but used. (in

Maclean 20)

This study considers in more detail (in Chapter V) our desire for stories, but here let me note, as an example of how this theory informs my method, that the reader's desire for narration is solicited by the very first sentence of *Beloved*: "124 was spiteful." The reader's response is likely to be, What is "124"? Why should it be "spiteful"? The narrator answers this last question in the next sentence: "Full of a baby's venom," but that sentence only raises other questions: What baby? And why is it venomous? And, to continue into the next sentence, who are "the women in the house" and "the children"? Finally, the second sentence, "The women in the house knew it and so did the children" (1), answers the first question by indirectly telling us that "124" identifies "the house." The information that answers the question is, however, processed by the reader on the fly, so to speak, as the narrator moves us to the next two sentences which identify the key characters and some of the background for the story. The desire to know more leads the reader to succumb to the text's enticement, moving along with the narrator's slow release of the secrets of the text.

Morrison's narrative strategies tease us into the text with a "compelling confusion" she calls a "kidnapping" ("Unspeakable" 33, 32). Kidnapping is a kind of possession, the seduction of the reader's own willingness to move, an overt "textual interplay [that is] constantly open to negotiation, just as is erotic interplay" (Maclean 20). Furthermore, what is evoked in this interplay is the more subtle dialogue between a spoken text and a listening reader performed by a written-yet-oral address[5] which solicits a responsive performance from the reader. This "complicated...exchange" produces an

"interpretability" which shifts as does the narrative performance, the reader's performance, and the reading (Maclean 21). Each step the reader takes into 124 changes the place from which interpretation is produced: the very doorway provides a frame which sets up new parameters for what this text, *Beloved*, can mean. Those desires in the reader that are not directly or immediately responded to by the text progressively alter interpretability, opening the possibility for the world's being represented differently, or redescribed; the text seems to say: Come in, and together we'll make a new place. Morrison issues this invitation to enter a rhetorical struggle over representation when she opens her novel with a house number.

Because "no narrative version can be independent of a particular teller and occasion of telling," Smith reminds us, "we may assume that every narrative version has been constructed in accord with some set of purposes or interests" (215). Morrison's narrative selections perform symbolically to construct identification and division in the social context of a racialized society; her novel rhetorically responds to and addresses this situation, forming and performing her text to both reflect society as it is and reimagine society as it might be. Performance remembers, in the interreaction between reader and text, what practice forgets. Morrison's rhetorical purpose is well described in bell hooks's words as:

> a political struggle to push against the boundaries of the image, to find words that express what I see, especially when I am looking in ways that move against the grain, when I am seeing things that most folks want to believe

> simply are not there....Since decolonization as a political process is always a struggle to define ourselves in and beyond the resistance to domination, we are always in the process of *remembering* the past even as we *create new ways* to imagine and make the future. (4-5, my emphasis)

The writing project hooks describes is one *Beloved* enacts semantically, but this study will examine the very *form* of the novel, at the level of its sentence syntax, for how it models the larger form of the narrative and the symbolic system in which it is placed.

Discourse as a resource of narrative and rhetoric

While this study does not specifically use theories of "discourse analysis," it does adopt from discourse analysis the understanding that texts are dynamic social processes in which various meaning-making resources from all levels of language use–grammatical, narrative, and rhetorical—are continuously being selected, and in turn affect the selections of those stages that follow (Stillar 20). At the "lowest" end of the language hierarchy, specific grammatical choices affect the meaning-making potential of discourse at the levels of narrative and rhetoric by dividing up the social world in particular ways. Naming practices effected by nouns, for example, are reflected in the narrative representation of characters and agency; in turn, narrative draws on rhetorical resources to perform symbolic acts of congregation and segregation. These rhetorical resources are the stylistic strategies of language, the symbolic acts that enact social consequences: schemes and tropes that integrate form and matter to persuade readers, to arouse in them appropriate

emotional responses, and to perform the ethical posture of the text. Shapiro's project to "politicize" hegemonic practices is what Morrison performs in *Beloved* through her embodied discursive act: her language makes salient representations of how and what white people *see* when they look at "slaves," how the bodies and agency of the black characters in her novel are determined by how they are seen, and how they are made to see themselves. Morrison reveals, in other words, representational practices which determine bodies, while she represents embodied practices in language. To investigate her strategies, I assemble the vocabularies of rhetorical, social, narrative, and discourse theories as operative methodological terms.

METHODOLOGY

Theory provides conceptual bases from which to develop a diverse, systematic, and applicable approach to analyzing texts and contexts, with the ultimate aim of producing significant work. A methodology then selects from among those theoretical bases vocabularies which enable the identification, explanation, and critique of specific instances of text. Resources from discourse, rhetorical, narrative, and social theory provide this study's methodological vocabularies for first, identifying in *Beloved* words and patterns that reveal Toni Morrison's textual strategies for displaying the ways hegemonic representations shape historical and current conceptions of racialized bodies; second, analyzing those textual instances to explain their functions and consequences in social and cultural contexts; and third, critiquing the strategies of Morrison's narrative performance for their ability to achieve identification with white readers and thus alter attitudes toward

race and racialized language.

This study's attention to grammar and stylistic strategies follows Shapiro's recognition of "the grammatical, rhetorical, and narrative structures" that constitute representational practices (7). His "special kind of reading" that "challenge[s] ideological inscription" (26) does not depend on a specific grammatical terminology (functional, or transactional, for example), but moves nimbly across "the relationships among narrative, grammar, and ideology" (25), so that he might at one moment focus on some particular aspect of grammar–"the juxtaposition of individual terms" (51) or "the displacement of simple nouns by verbs and nominalizations," for example–and at another focus on rhetorical figures of speech or read with Burke's "perspective by incongruity" (53). The point is not to proceed by some orderly pattern–in fact, the complex imbrications by which texts make meaning work against such orderliness–but to identify at particular sites the specific textual features that combine to produce the kind of "knowledge" we think of as "natural" or "ordinary."

Shapiro's project is to politicize texts that purport to be unideological, but this study investigates the stylistic strategies of a fictional narrative which *foregrounds* the ideological by drenching its text in the language of hegemonic representational practices. Morrison's problem of both displaying and countering such representations is to marshall the ability of language to describe "phenomena such as physical pain and physical labor whose materiality might leave them outside the reflexes of language" (Scarry 3). In *Beloved*, Morrison must draw readers' attention to representations we might accept as natural or ordinary, and at the same time perform a narrative act that establishes the

materiality of the text as a ground on which identification can be built. For examining literary texts which have the problem of engaging subjects that resist representation, Elaine Scarry provides additional support to Shapiro's focus on style and argues further that there is a "constancy" between grammar and institution, so that by looking at pronouns, for example, the exercise of power enforced by institutional practices can be seen (6).

This study identifies such constancy, moving from individual word to institutional motive, but it also attends to how words and larger narrative and rhetorical resources act to effect congregation between reader and text. As Scarry points out,

> ...one might notice some narrative unit larger than, or different from, the solitary word that performs the same function....Music in a film, for example, acts like a steady stream of indefinite and definite articles, situating the auditors in relation to pre- and -post information, now instigating, now relaxing, our readiness to perform the work of identification. (5)

Texts are social acts: in both small and large units of language they are addressed to someone, are about something, and exhibit forms that both enable and are constrained by the social systems within which they orient themselves. This study examines *Beloved* to identify textual features that expose the motive of hegemonic institutions and their restrictions on who can do what kind of symbolic act, with what symbolic resources, and to what outcome. "What is overtly at issue" in this symbolic struggle, notes Scarry, "is

the knowability of the world, and that knowability depends on its susceptibility to representation" (3). A rhetoric of abandonment confronts the problem of representation in three ways: 1) it examines hegemonic representations for how they control the knowability of the world; 2) it investigates the motives behind the dividing practices enacted by that kind of knowing; and 3) it identifies the strategies by which *Beloved* makes susceptible to representation another kind of knowing: one which performs and invites reciprocal performance on the level of the body. The interrelationships among levels of theoretical analysis–grammar, style, rhetoric, narrative, and social–form the method by which I approach these acts.

Like society, these levels of analysis form an interlocking hierarchy of relations: working "up" the hierarchy, grammatical forms supply a resource for narrative forms which themselves draw on rhetorical situations for their practice. Rhetoric, in turn, responds to and supplies resources for motivated meaning-production to the social-ideological dimension. Particular grammatical constructions–whether verbs are transitive or intransitive, or noun choices, for example–may offer the discursive sign of which characters have, or lack, agency; the presence or absence of agency may function rhetorically to invite identification and division in ways linked to social-ideological motives and practices. At the same time, individual terms–"rememory," for example–may alert us to a neological "cracking process" (Burke, *Permanence* 119) that enables a transvalued perspective on those motives and practices by constructing identification and division along different axes.

These levels of interrelationship can also be traced downward: social-ideological

power structures will determine the ways in which characters are represented as acting according to which rhetorical practices, with what resources, and with what success or futility. The rhetorical nature of the circumstances will suggest which narrative forms will be selected, and those forms will similarly enable and constrain the selection and deflection of grammatical terms. The power relations between the white "four horsemen" and the black characters in the scene of Beloved's murder, for example, determine what acts are possible for whom, which suggests the focalizing perspectives of the narrative. Those perspectives are enacted on the grammatical level by the selection of terms of "seeing," which cluster as a metaphor for hegemonic representational practices. My study proposes a rhetoric of abandonment as a method for identifying moments of both loss and reclamation as they are represented in a politicized text.

The selections from the text that this study analyzes were chosen for their salience with regard to the purposes, claims, and arguments of each chapter. The "Clearing," for example, which Morrison represents as a space that opens to receive wounded bodies, is the textual site of their re-memberment in language, and, for this reason, the scene is one this study examines. Each reading of these selections enters at one level of analysis and moves either "up" or "down" the hierarchy of interrelations. Each reading does not always use every analytical resource this study employs; sometimes the levels of analysis progressively layer as the chapters proceed.

In Chapter III, for example, which explores the epistemological and ontological consequences of hegemonic representations, I rely on grammatical, stylistic, and narrative analysis to demonstrate how language operates to determine the "is" of the world,

focusing primarily on nouns, verbs, and focalization as signs of social position and agency. A single word entails meanings which cluster to form a terministic screen through which "reality" is represented from some particular bias; those ideologically-inflected representations determine in turn the relations and resources available to social agents.

In Chapter IV, I add Burke's rhetorical and logological vocabularies to identify and critique ideological motives of language and relate them to the social-hierarchical motive behind hegemonic dividing practices. Just as single words cluster to make meaning, the symbolic acts of language enact that meaning in representational practices which form, and are formed by, the symbolic systems that are the contexts for their use. Symbolic systems are by no means mere disembodied constructs, however; they determine how individual bodies will live the "reality" they enforce.

In Chapter V, I add to the above analytical resources Frank's vocabulary of body types to demonstrate how the symbolic acts and systems Burke's rhetoric and logology explicate result in action problems for the body. Frank's "body language" also provides an analytical tool for deepening understanding of the ethical and transformative implications of Burke's "identification," particularly as embodied by Morrison's textual strategy of address. In each chapter, my readings focus on symbol use within the text (Morrison's representation of acts), and also how that symbol use extends beyond the text (Morrison's act of representation).

In my conclusion, I combine all these levels of analysis to argue that *Beloved* performs and transforms the conditions we live *in terms of*; from its small grammatical units to its larger narrative and rhetorical structures, the text exhibits and embodies a

constancy with the social-ideological context in which it positions itself. In other words, *Beloved* sets the terms of the rhetorical relationship performed between text and reader, and proceeds, by selections and deflections at every level, to determine how difference might make a difference differently from how we now represent it.

PREVIEW

To this point, I have described an overview of this study's method; in each succeeding chapter, I apply the method to the text of *Beloved*. Here, however, I outline the progress of my argument through Chapters III, IV, and V, and its conclusion in Chapter VI. The trajectory of the argument leads toward the understanding that it is unethical to enact representational practices that construct reality in such a way as to marginalize or otherwise diminish the agency of "others" on the basis of race, gender, class, or any number of other "orientations"; and that to do so risks great loss, not only to the defined, but also to the definers. It may be trite to note that the world seems always to be fraught with conflicts around borders–national, racial, ethnic, clan, gender–but ideas are regarded as "trite" when they, and the events they address, become all too common. These border clashes are implicated in representational practices, which construct the way we divide up the world, and unless we politicize these practices we abandon responsibility for our acts, we abandon the "other," we abandon hope of social and communal probity. A rhetoric of abandonment foregrounds the losses inherent in representational practices and looks to a politicized narrative to understand how an "other" act of representation can reclaim such losses.

Abandonment as Representational Practice

In Chapter III, I argue that representation, particularly narrative representation, is a symbolic practice that selects and deflects the terms by which we know, and live in, the world. This practice, when its ideological tendency goes unnoticed, becomes hegemonic; that is, the bodies subjected to its ideology become complicit in its ways of "seeing" the world. In the first part of this chapter, titled "Knowing and Not Knowing," I explore the ways in which epistemology and ontology are compromised by hegemonic representational practices, choosing for analysis a section of *Beloved* which addresses the issue of memory, because memory--what we know--is constrained by the "is" enforced by hegemonic representations. Reading the text at the levels of grammar and style, I demonstrate how Morrison's word choices reveal the symbolic violence of representation, and how her stylistic strategies counter the abstraction of ideology with a concrete, embodied language.

The second part of Chapter III, "Ways of Seeing," addresses these ideological abstractions in the primal scene of *Beloved*--the four horsemen's arrival at 124 Bluestone Road and Sethe's subsequent killing of Beloved--because compressed into this scene is the novel's ethical issue of symbolic violence and its consequences. Here I add resources from narrative theory--primarily focalization and modes of representing spoken discourse--to identify how Morrison reveals (and grammatically reinforces through verbs of perception) ways of seeing as the ideological perspectives perpetuated by symbol systems that form, and are formed by, representational practices. At the same time, Morrison's stylistic

strategies, particularly irony and allusion, work rhetorically to align readers' identification with her black characters, undercutting hegemonically enforced perspectives which abandon the other in their representations of "reality."

I conclude this chapter with a section titled "Listening to the Voice That Cries Out," which discusses how Morrison constructs her mode of address to encourage identification. I select and analyze sections from both the beginning and end of *Beloved* to identify the textual strategies which involve the reader as listener and participant throughout the text's performance; and I analyze a section in which Sethe rememories her mother's "code" to suggest that Morrison relies on listening to another('s) language to reinsert into history the voices of those formerly silenced. By juxtaposing the "rememory" of this scene–which depends on listening to "different words"–against Sethe's memory discussed earlier, I identify rememory as the metaphor by which Morrison both enables her characters' healing and also politicizes hegemonic ways of seeing, opening the possibility for social change.

Abandonment as Dividing Practice

In Chapter IV I add to grammatical, stylistic, and narrative analysis the vocabulary of Burke's rhetoric and logology for investigating the motives and effects of dividing practices in symbolic systems. In "Drawing Boundaries" I analyze a section of *Beloved*, in which Amy helps Sethe birth Denver, to illustrate how Morrison's text constructs "reality" terministically to demonstrate the congregating and segregating function of language. I use this same section of text to argue that Morrison's grammatical and rhetorical

strategies–particularly her selection of god-terms–enable congregation between reader and text, and that this congregation is motivated to effect a transformation in hegemonic dividing practices.

The second section of this chapter, "Whiteness as Property," investigates how, historically, the rhetorical move from "white"–an adjective–to "whiteness"–a noun–reified hegemonic dividing practices by granting to whites actual properties that black people could not, by definition, have. I use Burke's "grammar," and his conception of hierarchical psychosis, to illuminate sections of *Beloved* that focus on act and agency; where scene dominates how substance will be constructed, the acts and agency of Morrison's black characters are severely, even fatally, determined. I analyze sections of *Beloved* which represent the novel's white characters to critique the textual constructions which foreground white supremacist dividing practices. I claim that Morrison's strategies–irony and recursion, for example–demonstrate that whiteness is an ideological construction imposed by these dividing practices, and that *Beloved* represents the symbolic and actual violence that results from our abandonment of the responsibility to remember this constructedness and its motives.

Abandonment as Transformative Performance

I maintain in Chapter V that Morrison uses a number of strategies encompassed by Burke's term "perspective by incongruity" to reclaim language from hegemonic representation. This transformation relies on the ethical performance of story as an embodied realization of the communicative body. In "What Time Is It, and Where Are

We?" I analyze sections of the text having to do with memories of places to argue that Morrison's text disrupts readers' perceptions of time and place so as to demonstrate that constructions of time and place and our memories of them are a function of power. *Beloved* functions through various textual strategies, I argue, as a body which communicates consubstantiality with the reader on terms dissociated from hegemonic practices.

I explore how Morrison's text performs associatively in the second section of this chapter, "The Communicative Body." By recourse to Frank's typology of bodies, I add to stylistic and rhetorical analysis the social perspective on how bodies react when they encounter resistance. Focusing on sections of text that demonstrate points at which characters' bodies transform (or "flip") from disciplined, or mirroring, to communicative bodies, I argue that the text itself provides readers the possibility to join in the communicative body's process of creating itself, of constructing symbolic substance on the level of the body. The major strategy by which the text performs this transformation is the perspective by incongruity effected by the metaphor of rememory.

In the last section of this chapter, "Rememory as the Possibility for Transformation," I argue that Beloved embodies this metaphor and analyze sections of the text in which her contact with other characters moves them to a different state of being. I combine Burke's notions of substance and its construction with Frank's notion of bearing witness to argue that *Beloved* moves readers in much the same way: Morrison's neological term, rememory, changes the rhetorical possibilities for congregation to remind us that borders are always permeable, that no body speaks without the other, that substance is

fundamentally one, and that storytelling is a communal and communicative performance that re-members what has formerly been divided. This dyadic relatedness *for* the other constitutes the ecstatic element of a rhetoric of abandonment.

Conclusion: Beloved as a Radically Epideictic Rhetoric

This chapter brings together all methods of analysis to argue that *Beloved*, in remembering those people lost to a hegemonically represented history, performs memorially a public anamnesis that reclaims the past as a fund of possibility on which the future may be grounded. I analyze the scene in "the Clearing," where Baby Suggs calls upon her communicants literally to re-member their fragmented bodies, to argue that the text asserts a language of the body as an identifying strategy that works against the ideological abstractions that disconnect us from one another. By establishing a different perspective on what constitutes "fact," *Beloved* changes readers' attitudes and values, performing as a radically epideictic rhetoric that promotes an ethical construction of community.

CHAPTER III

ABANDONMENT AS REPRESENTATIONAL PRACTICE: "IT NEVER LOOKED AS TERRIBLE AS IT WAS"

> *Oppressive language does more than represent violence. It is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge.*
>
> Toni Morrison, *Nobel Lecture*, 1993

We so regularly and naturally tell stories, representing, in them, the actions and thoughts of ourselves and others, that we tend to abandon the sense that narrative is not merely the representation of action, but also is in itself an act, the act of representation. When we abandon this awareness, we "forget" the intention in our words and remain "innocent" of the consequences they may enact. Morrison reminds us that when we use language, we are never innocent: representation is an act, the potentially violent practice of subjecting others to our own value systems.

Michael J. Shapiro capsulizes the issue of representation as the "absence of presence"(*xii*). This epigrammatic phrase focuses on the impossibility of *mimesis*, that is, representations that purport a lack of difference between the copy and the real. Representations, rather, "do not imitate reality but are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently" (*xi*). This transparency is the seeming absence of the presence of ideology, the erasure of the motive behind value-laden human

practices. If, as we tell stories, we forget to remember the ideology that underlays our representational practices, we are caught in the paradox of both knowing and not knowing: representation compromises both epistemology and ontology because it dictates the operational terms through which we come to know what the "is" is.[1] The act of representation inextricably imbricates epistemology and ontology within each other: since language imposes a kind of "tunnel vision" by selecting and deflecting what we can know, it also acts to structure and maintain our conditions of existence by determining how we may act. If we act only in accordance with what we have been trained to know, then we do not have freedom of choice and may continue to act in self-defeating ways that perpetuate these conditions. If we know the "real" world only through a hegemonic terministic screen, how can we know there are other ways of constructing a world, other ways of making meaning, other stories to tell about what the "is" is?

Narratives, therefore, fictional or otherwise, represent epistemological and ontological choices that entail ideological and political implications. Literary realism fostered, through *mimesis*, the idea that narratives could "truthfully" represent "real" life; historiography, according to Hayden White, favored the more cautious belief that "history itself consisted of a congeries of lived stories...and that the principal task of historians is to recover these stories and retell them in a narrative, the truth of which would reside in the correspondence of the story told to the story lived by real people in the past" (*Content ix-x*). However, the problem with both these assumptions is their failure to recognize that, rhetorically conceived, "narrative is...a...system of discursive meaning production by which individuals can be taught to live a distinctively 'imaginary relation to their real

conditions of existence,' that is to say, an unreal but meaningful relation to the social formations in which they are indentured to live out their lives and realize their destinies as social subjects" (*Content x*).

How we realize our destiny as social subjects can be more difficult for some of us because meaning is constrained by hegemony, defined by Raymond Williams as "a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships" (145). This "way of seeing," when transposed into writing, becomes more accessibly realized as a representational practice. And particularly because we "see" our lives in terms of stories, because narrative form entices us to translate knowing into telling, narrative representation acts rhetorically not only to educate us, but also to indoctrinate us. The difference between education and indoctrination depends on the action of ideology, that "set of ideas which arise from a given set of material interests or, more broadly, from a definite class or group" (Williams 156). While "sensible people rely [for their knowledge of 'real-life conditions'] on EXPERIENCE" (157 author's emphasis), ideologists deal in unreal abstractions motivated to "perfect...the illusion of the class about itself" (Williams citing Engels 155). Hence, according to White, the current interest in narrative discourse allows us to "account...for the interest that dominant social groups have not only in controlling what will pass for the authoritative myths of a given cultural formation but also in assuring the belief that social reality itself can be both lived and realistically comprehended as a story. Myths and the ideologies based on them presuppose the adequacy of stories to the representation of the reality whose meaning they purport to reveal" (*Content x*).

But what happens when this adequacy is questioned? White answers that "the

entire cultural edifice of a society enters into crisis, because not only is a specific system of beliefs undermined but the very condition of possibility of socially significant belief is eroded" (*Content x*). Literature is often a response to this crisis, offering new possibilities to read and make sense of society's texts, challenging language with language. Political in its own right (and by Morrison's stated design), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a narrative that tests the adequacy of our cultural stories to represent an accustomed reality. In Shapiro's terms, *Beloved* does what "a politicized form of writing must do": "somehow disturb us, force us out of our narrative habits by giving us an experience of discord in both our relation to things and to each other, by making unfamiliar, through transcoding or refiguring or otherwise recontextualizing, what has been familiar. This writing can reorient our valuations by dislodging privileged subjects, objects, and relationships in our conventional discursive practices" (54). In particular, Morrison's focus on language that is both oral and aural allows analysts to "feel the words in our mouths" (Shapiro citing Beckett 54). What we need, to continue with Beckett's metaphor, are "strategies which make our words chewy" (54). Shapiro refers to strategies which interrogate style, or the way form is imposed: through its grammar and valuative terminology. But his choice of Beckett's metaphor links his project with a primary figuration in Morrison's text: being chewed, eaten, and swallowed. Shapiro calls his project "impious" in contrast to Burke's conception of "piety," which Shapiro understands as "a 'system-builder,' a desire to round things out and fit experiences together in a unified whole" (51). Under the subject of "perspective by incongruity" (which I will address in Chapter IV), Burke defines "piety" as "the sense of what goes with what" (*Permanence* 74); hence, an "impious" form of

thinking, writing, and reading would disturb or denaturalize our ideological valuations. Morrison's strategies thus seek to disturb our customary reading practices by enacting, in her own narrative, the paradox of how words that are not chewy, that remain transparent, are able to consume the bodies of those without the power to be present. *Beloved* is a narrative performance that makes present those who have been absented by the ideology implicit in hegemonic representations, makes them present by enabling us to hear their witness to an embodied history.

In this chapter, I will examine in examples from *Beloved* how Morrison's language reveals the problematics, of first, "Knowing and Not Knowing." Memory and rememory are the crucial tropes in *Beloved*; Morrison signals this fact early in the text by having her narrator relate Sethe's memory of Sweet Home. Sweet Home is the place, or scene, of the acts that drive the novel's plot: the place where Sethe is placed, or fixed, within certain conditions of existence that constrain her possibilities for agency. How Sethe's memory functions in the narrative determines when, and how, readers apprehend the "what" of the text–its events and relations–as it is represented in language. This emphasis on scene accords with Burke's dramatistic pentad, which is a grammar of representational practices: the dominance of the term becomes the "in terms of" by which the narrative is told, becomes its filter or organizing principle. Hence, a passage in which "place" dominates as "scene" will determine what kinds of actions and attitudes will play out certain ideological motives; these narrative selections and deflections draw on specific grammatical and stylistic resources to create the terministic screen through which the text structures its attitude toward what it addresses. Specific lexical clusters that refer to location, for

example, the transitivity of verbs, and the use of certain rhetorical schemes, suggest not only Morrison's attitude toward the symbolic violence the text represents, but also what attitude readers are encouraged to adopt. For these reasons--the passage's focus on memory, its early placement in the text, its dramatistic ratios, and its selection of certain linguistic and stylistic strategies--I analyze the passage about Sethe's memory to critique how Morrison reveals that memory--what is known of the past--is constrained by the "is" imposed by hegemonic representations. Once memory is compromised, knowledge is similarly skewed to conform to the dominant ontology, and the past is "seen" differently--bodies are caught between knowing and not knowing--because they carry into the present memories that differ from what they might otherwise experience and know as their own reality.

Morrison's focus on "seeing" prompted my examination of the "four horsemen" passage in the second part of this chapter, "Ways of Seeing," for three reasons: first, the passage contains the primal scene of the novel--Sethe's murder of Beloved--and second, we read that scene through the eyes of four white men who enforce the institution of slavery. Third, this passage demonstrates how Morrison ironizes the text's language to undercut the narrative representation; she invites new identifications, and, by doing so, affects readers' ideological positions, changing the terms on which they identify. In this passage, Morrison reveals how perspective exacts hegemonically enforced conditions; the power and agency of the characters are determined narratively through focalization and grammatically by how and what they "see": certain nouns, for example, cluster with their terministic entailments to effect identification and division--or congregation and

segregation–along particular lines. Narrative, grammatical, and rhetorical resources interlink: since we tend to congregate with those who "see" the world in the same terms–with the same entailments–that we do, the narrative description of the four horsemen reveals how hegemonic ways of seeing effect violent dividing practices on those bodies "othered" by language. I examine the ironic chain of associations Morrison sets up to critique the paradox inherent to these practices: her selection of a symbolic allusion–the apocalypse–enables a revision of hegemonic representations through the transformation of valuative terms.

In the final section of this chapter, "Listening to the Voice that Cries Out,"[2] I focus on the rhetorical transformations made possible by the text. I maintain that Morrison's strategy for enabling readers to change their perspectives begins with her dialogic mode of address, which solicits identification from the *listening* reader. For this reason, I analyze sections from the beginning–the opening words–and end of the novel to identify and critique the performative nature of the text: the ways in which it asks the reader to participate in the making of the story, thereby constructing identification on shared, embodied, terms. Morrison's narrative performance also fosters identification between the text and reader by giving voice to those formerly silenced. The healing potential of this transformation is mirrored in the text by Sethe's rememory: hearing Nan's story of Sethe's mother's "code," Sethe begins recuperating her body's agency by recognizing another('s) language. Consequently, I analyze Sethe's *rememory*–which depends on her listening to "different words"–to critique its contrast to her earlier *memory*: rememory becomes the metaphor for healing the breach between knowing and not knowing for both Morrison's

characters and her readers.

My attention in these analyses to grammar and valuative terminology follows Shapiro's strategy for politicizing discourse; it is in language that our societal motives are revealed. As Elaine Scarry puts it, "A society that distributes the right of self-description has a different grammar from a society that gives an executive,...attended by a cadre of security officers, the right to describe all other citizens in the third person" (5-6). Representing others "in the third person" casts them as objects in the possession of the powerful, to be positioned at will in their syntax as in their society. Hence narrative, "both as theme and as technique, becomes an implement in political struggle, an aspect of what de Certeau calls tactics, because it is a source of cultural memory and survival for marginalized groups" (Homans 8).[3] *Beloved* is a narrative that embodies the cultural memory of a marginalized group. Morrison's narrative theme demonstrates how that memory fosters the survival of both individual characters and their community; at the same time, her narrative technique reveals the problems that exist for bodies which resist hegemonic representations.

KNOWING AND NOT KNOWING

In *Beloved*, Morrison writes the story of characters who have been possessed, not only by a ghost but, more significantly, by a hegemonic system that has subjected them to painful, even catastrophic events outside their control. Slavery, in *Beloved*, is the paradigmatic example of hegemony: it literally possessed black people, owned and "othered" them, commodified them as objects of labor and reproduction that fed its own

success. Because the power of that possession extended over not only the bodies of black people but also their minds, slaves were doubly victimized: Morrison demonstrates how the imposition of white representations abandons black people to an "is" that contradicts their own experience and at the same time compromises their ability to remember and thus know that experience as their own; it forces them to live, as White puts it, an imaginary relation to the real conditions of their existence. What does it mean to an oppressed culture when hegemonic representations are naturalized as "reality"?

The opening pages of *Beloved* quickly focus on Sethe's effort to forget the traumatic events of her past, "to remember as close to nothing as was safe" (6).[4] But her brain is "devious," and out of the nothingness she covets, something triggers a memory, and:

> ...suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too. Fire and brimstone all right, but hidden in lacy groves. Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her--remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that. (6)

This passage describes the paradox of knowing and not knowing: Sethe knows what she sees in the images her memory recalls to her; yet, at the same moment, she does not know what compels her to remember the beauty rather than the horror. Why does "it never [look] as terrible as it was"? And to whom does it look that way? The very beauty of the scene represents the invitation of the symbolic order; the beauty of Morrison's language, particularly in the rhythmic scrolling of Sethe's memory ("rolling, rolling, rolling out...") seduces us as readers to imagine what might indeed be a sweet home. But while we all know that appearances can be deceiving, both to Sethe and to the reader, what is perhaps less apparent to us is that language invites a certain knowing. This breach between experience and how it comes to be known is signalled by the word "suddenly," which shifts us to the ontological conditions of Sethe's position: "*there was* Sweet Home." Anchored in a place named oxymoronically to the experience of those black people who live there, Sethe can know only what the existential demands of Sweet Home allow. Later in the text Paul D will say, "It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home," and Sethe will reply: "But it's *where we were*....Comes back whether we want it to or not" (14, my emphasis). What she can know about what she remembers is constrained by that "is": the verb "to be" represents an enforced position, a state that stands against and distorts her memory.

Clusters of words reveal motive, and Morrison emphasizes the forceful insistence of the representations that haunt Sethe by using the scheme of polyptoton: playing on variations of the verb "to make," she allows us to see that "there was not a leaf on that farm that did not *make* [Sethe] want to scream," and "it *made* her wonder if hell was a

pretty place too." Here the intransitive form of the verb enforces Sethe's position as object; against this insistence, Sethe's attempt at agency, represented transitively as her effort "to *make* it otherwise" fails, and her memory, buried in the middle of the passage, betrays her. Although she sees "[b]oys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world," it is the trees she remembers "rather than the boys." That she cannot know the reality of her own experience–what she saw–burdens her with guilt. Her transitive move as a subject–in which she "could not forgive her memory"–produces not a sense of agency from which she can act to affect a changed state, but only a problematic self-reflexivity. This is what "shame[s]" her, while Sweet Home and the symbolic order it represents can remain "shameless," innocent of its own motives. The collocation of "shameless" with "beauty," and "shamed" with "remembering" suggests the hidden and therefore unknown but implacable violence enacted by ideology upon the actual experience of its victims.

The problem of representation that each author faces, suggests Scarry, "is how to argue that assertions do not have enough stability to secure their own content, while [her]self enlisting the deep coherence of language to enable [her] to transmit that speculative argument" (8). Morrison's problem is to find a way to argue the instability of the assertions we accept, to reveal how they have been naturalized until we fail to know we accept them. Using only language, she must somehow counter the abstraction of ideology by representing the experience of her characters as concrete. The strategies Morrison uses to attack this problem are stylistic: in the first two sentences of this passage she represents Sethe's memory in negatives: "there was *not* a leaf on that farm that did *not* make her want to scream," and "it *never* looked...." Why not choose to write,

for example, the positive statement that "every leaf on that farm made her want to scream"? By folding negation into the sentences, Morrison not only enacts in language the aspect of memory that always questions its own accuracy, but enacts as well the effort at negation that Sethe herself makes in the process of recall, allowing the reader to experience Sethe's difficulty rather than simply to accept a diegetic direction from the narrator. The latter choice would reinforce our passivity as receivers of information, precisely what Morrison would have us avoid if we are to "chew" the words, become "politicized" readers.

Morrison, as if to disturb our possible passivity, subtly slips the diagetic narration into free indirect discourse in two sentences mid-way through the passage, sentences which signal its modality. Modality reflects a writer's attitude through the use of lexical and grammatical resources; from what is represented as interior to Sethe's mind, we hear: "Fire and brimstone, *all right*, but hidden in lacy groves" (my emphasis). Whose assertion is this that, in fact, Sweet Home is hell? The very presence of "all right" conveys attitude–we are asked to agree that the violence of the symbolic order is "hidden" in its beautiful representation, in its "lacy groves." And from that perspective we see, along with Sethe, that the "[b]oys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world" have been lynched. The play on "shameless" and "shamed" then resonates for us in a new way, implicating us in the grammatical distinction. These sentences presage *Beloved*'s "narrative architecture," which, as Scarry says, "must question both external and internal assumptions about reference" (8). The physical, experiential reality of the bodies in this passage questions the "reality" of the representation of slavery, reminding us that the

representations of oppressive institutions are only partially verbal: the violence they enact bears real consequences on the bodies in question.

The relationship between knowing and not knowing that haunts memory as the recurrence of traumatic events might be spoken of as the relationship between remembering and forgetting, where ideology is understood as the act of "remembering to forget." Memory, as Morrison demonstrates in the passage quoted above, betrays the rememberer when it naturalizes or "forgets" the ideology in representation. The final passage of *Beloved*, where Morrison insists "This is not a story to pass on" (275), complicates what we, the readers, are willing to know and not know, what responsibility we are prepared to take for the story, the history, the fate representation enacts. Sethe's memory of the sycamores rather than the boys demonstrates the betrayal of ideology: how representation as "reality" is a breach between what the body knows and what the mind thinks it knows. The difference between memory and what Morrison calls "rememory" is in the unassimilated nature of the trauma–the way violence is not known, forgotten because of representational acts. Sethe's conflicted memory explains how what is not known comes out of an identification with the aggressor enforced by representation; *Beloved* attacks the problem of knowing and representation that arises from violent experience.

The crisis between knowing and not knowing both demands and defies witness because of the problem of representation; but if we are entangled in language, how can a story text act as a witness? How can we be enabled to see differently?

WAYS OF SEEING

In the chapter where "the four horsemen" come to reclaim Sethe and her children to slavery (148-53), Morrison describes what the text has only so far alluded to, Sethe's murder of Beloved. Instead of representing the scene at Bluestone Road through the eyes of a condemning or sympathetic narrator, the scene is focalized through the eyes of the first three of the horsemen: schoolteacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff. That is, we are asked to adopt their perceptual positions, so we must examine the terms in which their perception of the events is represented. The narration first presents the slave catcher who, in fact, looks away from the house with "eyes trained" instead to see the expectations that have been ingrained in him: he remains on his horse as the others dismount and averts his eyes from the house to scan the surroundings, "because likely as not the fugitive would make a dash for it" (148). Within the first sentence that describes his acts, the narrative shifts to free indirect discourse so that we can see from within his mind's eye that this term, "fugitive," does not just describe, but circumscribes Sethe and her children, trapping them within its terministic entailments: a fugitive is a wrongdoer, someone dis-placed by the need always to flee. The free indirect discourse of the slave catcher strengthens the irony of our associating a fugitive with one who flees from justice: in his mind, a "nigger" will do "disbelieveable things" to escape the "justice" of being enslaved. The inability of the slave catcher to make sense of desperate acts results from his way of seeing "Negroes" as "niggers" and "fugitives": a non-imaginary relation to the real conditions of existence has no place in justice as he represents it. His representation of justice sees "niggers" as having value only as a commodity: "Unlike a snake or a bear, a

dead nigger could not be skinned for profit and was not worth his own dead weight in coin" (148).

The shift of focalization to schoolteacher's young nephew reveals that ways of seeing are trained into us: his way of seeing is tentative, because he is not yet fully indoctrinated into the ideological mind set that represents black people, particularly slaves, as "other," as animals like snakes or bears, divided from his own humanity. The nephew's eyes are "peeping," a word that suggests a child's shy or hasty way of seeing, and when again the narrative shifts into free indirect discourse, we see that when, from his position, he regards Stamp Paid "grunting" and Baby Suggs "fanning her hands as though pushing cobwebs out of her way" (149), he can make no sense of their actions: he thinks the word "crazy" three times, but this kind of "crazy" differs from the "disbelieveable" judgment of the slave catcher because it is based not on expectations colored by the long-ingrained violence of dividing practices enacted by representation, but by his seeing before him the actual but inexplicable (to him) actions of real people. When he sees the contents of the shed—"two boys [bleeding] in the sawdust and...a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest" (149)—he is thrown into "confusion" because, although he recognizes that "he was white," he persists in trying to comprehend Sethe's actions in terms of his own behavior: "he'd been beat a million times" but "no way could he have..." Three times he asks, first of himself and then of the sheriff, "What she go and do that for?"

His confusion is the kind "his uncle had warned him against" (150), the confusion of failing to accept what White calls "an imaginary relation to real conditions of existence," of failing to accept the representations of slaves as non-human. Were the

nephew fully indoctrinated, he would have no trouble seeing what schoolteacher sees: of the slaves schoolteacher intended to "take back...to do the work Sweet Home desperately needed," there was "nothing there to claim" because slaves are not human but animal, and when you "beat [them] beyond the point of education" (149) they react no differently from horses or hounds. That schoolteacher sees there is nothing to claim reinforces the slave catcher's collocation of "dead niggers['] " worthlessness with the value of dead animals.

But the "education" schoolteacher speaks of that his nephew is derelict in learning goes deeper, because that education is implicit in the language of ideology, which determines the god terms of its own representational practices. Schoolteacher's other nephew has been prevented from coming on the "hunt," "punished" so he could learn to "*[s]ee* how he liked it; *see* what happened when you overbeat creatures God had given you the responsibility of" (150 my emphasis). What schoolteacher wants his nephews to see is his society's ontological assumption of God-given responsibility; this is the oppressor's act of taking over the authority of representation, and it is from this ontology that epistemology draws its reference. Schoolteacher instructs his nephews to write lists that put Sethe's "animal [characteristics] on the right" (193), teaching them through language to use language as a weapon. The authority not merely to write, but to determine what is "right," marks the violence in acts of representation; the bodies that demonstrate how representation works are bodies marked with a vocabulary of domination--the chokecherry tree on Sethe's back, the brand under her mother's breast, the permanent "smile" of those subjected to the bit, the threadlike line across Beloved's neck, the broken hip of Baby Suggs--these marked, mutilated bodies are Morrison's answer to

the problem of representation, her reassertion of reference into narrative, memory, and history.

In this scene of devastation that we are witnessing, Morrison shifts our vision: in contrast to the free indirect discourse of the slave catcher, schoolteacher, and his nephew, Morrison represents the sheriff through direct discourse and diegetic narration. Without being allowed direct access to his thoughts, we must assess the affect of the events perpetrated by the other horsemen by only what the narrator tells us the sheriff says and does. Here the narrative is framed as if we were the sheriff, which calls into question our seeing in the terms of the other three characters. Being "outside" him in a sense, we must see for ourselves, judge for ourselves, the "justice" implicit in the ways the others have seen; see if, indeed, "justice is blind," as the saying goes, or whether it is in fact only the imposition of a certain way of seeing.

The narrative shifts to the sheriff with the nephew's vocalized question, "What she want to go and do that for?" (150). This question adds two words to the question the nephew has formerly asked himself–"What she go and do that for?"–raising the issue of desire, and choice. Why would Sethe *want* to kill her children? The sheriff does not answer the question directly; instead, he turns the only "seeing" word in his discourse back to the three: "*Look* like your business is over," as if their looking would be answer enough. The idiomatic representation of his speech omits the "it" that would be grammatically conventional ("It looks like..."), separating the sheriff from the "it"; the pronoun "your" distances him further from their "business." His business now begins: enforcing not the justice that represents humans as animals to be pursued, beaten, and

murdered at will, but enforcing a law which deals with human acts: an animal would bear no penalty for killing another animal. Even his words to Sethe are not an imperative, but reveal his reluctance to do his business: "I'll *have to* take you in" (151 my emphasis). So we are subtly shifted away from the ways of seeing dictated by schoolteacher and the slave catcher, shifted to identify with the sheriff's point of view so that we too are "cold" in "the August sunlight" and don't "want to touch anything" (151). The grammar and the syntax of the text provoke a rhetorical transformation–as readers, we are moved to congregate with the sheriff and the black characters who remain to assimilate the horrible events.

As the sheriff and we are left behind by the three riders, they look back on "the damndest bunch of coons they'd ever seen." Their final joint free indirect discourse summarizes their vision of the events as "testimony to the results of a little so-called freedom imposed on people who needed every care and guidance in the world to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred" (151). The modality of the term "so-called," when linked to "freedom," begins an ironic spiral: freedom is "so-called," because, in their terms, slaves when free of "care and guidance" are free to live only as cannibals–it is precisely this kind of discourse that determines the "is" of Sweet Home. One irony lies in the fact that, as *Beloved* demonstrates, it is the slave system that devours human flesh, "chews and swallows" (215) the bodies that feed it. Another lies in this so-called freedom's being "imposed"; here the modality of the term reminds the reader to ask how anything that is "imposed" can be called "freedom"? And even granting that Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid are "freed" slaves and that Sethe has escaped to the free territory of Ohio, how "free" is someone who lives always under the threat of recapture, of being dis-placed?

The text bears witness by forcing us to ask such questions. As a result, we may move away from the perceptions of schoolteacher and the slave catcher to a place where we recognize that the difference between being free and being enslaved by representation lies in having a place to call our own, a place from which to question how representation enacts ideology's desire to mask itself as the real conditions of existence. As Paul D recognizes, "to get to a place where you could love anything you chose–not to need permission for desire–well now, *that* was freedom" (162). Paul D describes a different ontological "is," a place Sethe thought she had reached but has wrenched from beneath her feet by the four horsemen. She attempts to kill her children in what she imagines to be her last "free" act, to get them "[o]utside this place, where they would be safe" (163). She "wants" to kill her children to save them, yes, but also because she believes it is her last moment in which she will need no permission for desire.

The brutality of hegemonic representation, which "educates" the victim through acts of language, determines the ways in which seeing is possible, the "is" that limits free choice. Finally, because of this de-termination, representation enacts the ultimate irony of blinding us to its force. In a way, unless we politicize language, we all identify with the aggressor and allow justice to remain blind. But for a subject culture, the violence is more potent. As Roger Rosenblatt writes of white-inflicted brutality in *Cane* and *Invisible Man*,

> a black man seeking recognition in the white world must be brutalized to the extent that when recognition comes, it will be to him as an animal. If he decides not to fit this pattern at the outset, he will be pushed by its designers until he

> becomes violent in protest. Should he become violent enough, he will be considered an animal and so satisfy his predetermination just as effectively. (173)

Hegemonic ways of seeing create a double bind. Sethe flees from Sweet Home when she hears herself being defined as an animal; in killing Beloved she prompts from Paul D the comment, "You got two feet, Sethe, not four" (165). At the point when he says this, Paul D remains blind to his white-defined values, but he will come to "see" differently later in the text.

But the four horsemen chapter clarifies just who gets to see and what they choose to see. Verbs of perception locate the seer's ideological position, reveal the power relations between subjects and the objects of their seeing and the possibility for a mutual connection. Sethe "[does] not look" at her children, and Stamp Paid and Baby Suggs, surrounded by the four horsemen, "star[e]" only at the inanimate shed (149). They are powerless to resist the hegemony of the scene. Schoolteacher, his nephew, and the catcher's avoidance of its reality is emphasized in the narration: they don't simply leave but, the narrator makes a point of telling us, they "*didn't look* at the woman in the pepper plants [Baby Suggs]....And they *didn't look* at the seven or so faces that had edged closer in spite of the catcher's rifle warning" (150, my emphasis). They can blind themselves to their actions, choose what they want to see: "Enough nigger eyes for now." But even schoolteacher cannot fail to register that the eyes of the blacks are unseeing:

> Little nigger-boy eyes open in sawdust; little nigger-girl eyes staring between the wet fingers that held her face so her head wouldn't fall off; little nigger-baby eyes crinkling up to cry in the arms of the old nigger [Stamp Paid] whose own eyes were nothing but slivers looking down at his feet. But the worst ones were those of the nigger woman who looked like she didn't have any. Since the whites in them had disappeared and since they were black as her skin, she looked blind. (150)

For Sethe and the other black folks, there is no way of seeing; the power of representation destroys any alternative vision.

When not only the present is marked by vision, but also the future–the visions of those who have power–then Morrison's focus on vision can be recognized as social criticism. The final irony of this chapter's focus on ways of seeing is compounded by the apocalyptic symbolism evoked by the "four horsemen." "Apocalypse" means "revelation"[5] or "unveiling"; just as we unveil acts of representation to see what remains hidden by them, apocalypse refers to those matters which would otherwise remain forever hidden from the unaided vision of human beings. The four horsemen signify the variety of evils to be visited on the world to mark the beginning of its dissolution and the coming of the Messianic era. Positioned precisely in the middle of *Beloved*, this chapter both illuminates what is hidden and prophesizes what may come: the separation of the godly from the ungodly, the clean from the unclean. Prophesy is revealed as a vision of the seer, or see-

er; the irony therefore does not entail in the representation of the slave catcher, schoolteacher, his nephew, and the sheriff as the four horsemen–surely there are few events in history that compare with the savage slaughter enacted by the slave system–but instead rests in what follows their apparition: in the book of seven seals, each horseman appears as the first four seals of the book are broken. The book of seven seals presumably contains the secrets of the future, not to be revealed until the seals are breached, and the irony in Morrison's choice of symbol emanates from the breaking of the fifth seal and the significance of the "seal" itself.

As Isaac Asimov explains,

> It was customary in ancient Babylonia from the most ancient times to use seals for identification. These were small cylindrical intaglios which could be rolled upon the soft clay used by the Babylonians for a writing surface. A characteristic picture would appear, serving the place of signature on our own documents.
>
> A slave might be similarly branded...to show indelibly who the master was....The picture being presented here, then, is of the righteous beings marked somehow...with a symbol...that identifies them as God's slaves to be kept safe through the final disasters. (1205)

The "God-given responsibility" that schoolteacher assumes as his empowerment to represent blacks as "other" than human and thus to enslave them, to write on their "soft

clay" his mark of indelible mastery, ironically marks them as the righteous who will be saved in the ultimate cataclysm. The final judgment–"What she want to go and do that for?"–will be enacted not on Sethe, but on those who commit the original violence through oppressive acts of representation. Indeed, the very motive behind ways of seeing whose substance is "black" and whose is "white" is called into question by Morrison's allusion: when the fifth seal is broken, "the righteous now stand before the Lamb and all their sufferings are washed away in what has become a famous phrase:

> Revelation 7:14....*they...came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* (Asimov 1207)

Morrison's *Beloved* only alludes to this final judgment, but its textual language makes explicit what might be considered the final paradox: the valuative entailments of the terms "white" and "black" shift to make obvious that *what* we see–who is godly and who ungodly, who is clean and who unclean–is determined by *how* we see.

The slave bodies we see in the four horsemen chapter not only have been blinded by the power relations implicit in representational acts, but have been silenced as well. Only after the slave catcher, schoolteacher, and his nephew have left does Baby Suggs speak, and she speaks only to Sethe. Neither Stamp Paid, nor any of the "throng...of black faces" (152) of people who have gathered speaks at all. The narrator asks us, in direct questions, to consider why this might be: "Was [Sethe's] head a bit too high? Her back a little too straight?" Perhaps. That judgment is left to the reader. But in the light of that August–"august"–day, the awful events permit the characters "No words at all"

(152). When representation dictates who can see and who can speak, how can we come to know a story which is not known because those voices who might speak it have been silenced? And if we would listen, what would we listen for?

LISTENING TO THE VOICE THAT CRIES OUT

Beloved takes as its jumping off point a historical event: As Morrison recounts it, Margaret Garner "was a slave woman who escaped from Kentucky and arrived in Cincinnati to live with her mother-in-law. Right after she got there the man who owned her found her. She ran out into the shed and tried to kill all her children. Just like that. She was about to bang the head of one up against the wall when they stopped her" (in Moyers 271). Margaret Garner did succeed in killing one child, but Morrison did not pursue further any factual correlation between Margaret Garner's fate and Sethe's because, as she says, "I wanted to invent [Sethe's] life, which is a way of saying I wanted to be accessible to anything the characters said about it" (in Darling 5).

If history is, as it's said, written by the victors, then listening to the voices of those formerly silenced becomes a political act, one that reinserts into history an alternative narrative, an "other" story that fleshes out history with the experience of those bodies negated by ideological representations. *Beloved* makes accessible to us these voices, making it difficult for us to distance ourselves from the particular events it addresses, and hence difficult as well to "forget" the history out of which we fashion our own innocence. Morrison's form of address is an act which asks the reader first to listen, and then to participate in the making of the story: the very title of her novel, which we might

reasonably assume to be simply descriptive of a story about a character called "Beloved" (a character who is, in fact, unnamed) could instead be heard as a written but audible address to the reader whom Morrison wishes to constitute as "beloved," much as the preacher at Sethe's baby's funeral addresses those who come to hear and bear witness: "Dearly Beloved" (5). Furthermore, our very entrance to the world of the novel confronts not words, but an address: "124" (1).

Morrison has written that her intention in beginning *Beloved* with numbers rather than words was to give the house on Bluestone Road a particular kind of identity, one "personalized by its own activity [spiteful], not the pasted on desire for personality," as plantations like "Sweet Home" were named ("Unspeakable Things" 31). But her opening with this address forecasts as well her address to the reader in the fashion of an oral/aural story that encourages readers to hear the characters' voices, share their ontological conditions, and participate in their story's construction:

> There is something about numerals that makes them spoken, heard, in this context, because one expects words to read in a book, not numbers to see or hear....Whatever the risks of confronting the reader with what must be immediately incomprehensible...I determined to take. Because the *in media res* opening that I am so committed to is here excessively demanding. It is abrupt, and should appear so. No native informant here. The reader is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign [as slaves

> were], and I wanted it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the reader and the novel's population. ("Unspeakable Things" 31-2)

This shared experience is constituted "[i]n the same way that a Black preacher requires his congregation to speak, to join him in the sermon"; we are asked not merely to bear witness to a series of events but, in particular, to "work *with* the author in the construction of the book" ("Rootedness" 341). To do this, we must listen for more than what is said. We must listen as well for what is unsaid: Morrison tells us that "[w]hat is left out is as important as what is there" ("Rootedness 341); her narrative performance plans textual spaces or gaps into which the reader is invited as co-performer.

The gaps which Morrison creates in her text ask her "beloved" reader to perform in different ways. Because of the absence of adverbs, for example, we are asked to work out for ourselves whether the characters speak menacingly, or loudly, or lovingly, or what it is they feel as they listen to others speak. When Paul D returns to 124 to find Sethe almost dead from grief and loss, he hears her say, "She [Beloved] was my best thing" (272). His reaction is described in declarative sentences that represent the position and condition of his body:

> Paul D sits down in the rocking chair and examines the quilt patched in carnival colors. His hands are limp between his knees. There are too many things to feel about this woman. His head hurts. (272)

After the first compound sentence in this description, each is simple and works to focus

the reader on Paul D's state. The two that describe parts of his body–"His hands are limp between his knees" and "His head hurts"–are short, and the last is the shortest. Since we are not told initially that "Paul D sits *dejectedly*...," which would determine our response, we must feel for ourselves what the state of his hands and head signify, especially since they are represented in fewer and fewer words: Paul D's diminishing–energy? confidence? hope? The narrator leaves that to our conjecture, asking us–in the present tense–to assume Paul D's position–imagine our bodies positioned as his–and invent at the reading moment the "how" from the "where" and "what." The text asks the reader to perform Paul D's feeling, embody his emotion, as a strategy for promoting identification.

More than the absence of adverbs, however, stimulates the reader's performance. Absences, or gaps, exist as well in what the narrator knows and can (or will) tell. Sometimes these gaps are indicated explicitly, as in the questions I quoted from the four horsemen chapter, where the narrator asks the reader to decide whether it is pride or some other reaction to trauma that Sethe's posture indicates; sometimes the gaps are implicit in the refusal of the narrator to assume omniscience. When, for example, the thirty women assemble at 124 to drive Beloved out with their singing, "Sethe feels her eyes burn and it *may have been* to keep them clear that she looks up" (261, my emphasis). These gaps are planned and could, as Morrison says, "be filled in with other significances." Her point is that:

> into these spaces should fall the ruminations of the reader and his or her invented or recollected or misunderstood knowingness. The reader as narrator asks the questions the

> community asks, and both reader and "voice" stand among the crowd, within it, with the privileged intimacy and contact, but without any more privileged information than the crowd has. That egalitarianism...places us all (reader, the novel's population, the narrator's voice) on the same footing. ("Unspeakable Things" 29)

These gaps or spaces, as Joseph Francese notes, "forestall both authorial abdication from and control over the text." By leaving textual room for the reader to question his or her position and to assume the "same footing" from which the text operates, Morrison's narrative performance "fosters dialogs among equals that affirm the validity and the interdependence of writerly and readerly recountings of a shared past" (112). She fashions spaces so that her narrative is "told in such a way that whoever is listening is in it and can shape it" (Morrison in Darling 6). Her story, rather than telling a series of finished events, invites readers to embody the life experience of her characters, so that listening to the characters' past may transform our present and reshape the future.

The transformative power of listening, which Morrison enacts between her text and the reader, is paralleled by the transformative power of listening that she represents among her characters in the novel. For her characters, listening is a kind of sustenance, as it is for the reader: a way of taking in forgotten information from the past that can nourish possibilities we remain starved for because of imposed representations. Once Beloved appears at 124, the narrator tells us, her demand for stories "became a way to feed her" (58), and having such a demanding listener prompts Sethe to begin recovering a past life

that was previously "unspeakable" (58) because of its pain and loss. What she has lost is an apprehension of her own history unmediated by hegemonic representation.

Hegemony asserts, in social practice, the ontological conditions of existence, and compromises the epistemological possibilities for knowing what is real and what is only represented as such. Sethe's memory, stimulated by visual images such as the "boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world," is similarly compromised because she sees these images through a hegemonic lens as an abstract illusion rather than as a reality she has assimilated into her body. Or, rather, she has taken the experience into her body, but she remembers it differently, so that there is a chasm between two ways of knowing--Sethe does not own the language with which to explain the reality her body knows. Because "seeing" is unreliable, Sethe, to assimilate her body's knowledge and so transform her image of herself, must hear precisely what she has decided is "unspeakable." Not the least of her losses is that she has abandoned a language she once did own, her mother('s) tongue, a language made unspeakable by the practice of slavemasters.[6] When she begins to tell the stories that will eventually reveal what had formerly been hidden or distorted by hegemonic representation, she finds to her surprise that "it was an unexpected pleasure" (58), because Sethe's stories activate her rememory.

"Rememory," which Morrison uses both as a verb and as a noun, implies, in its derivation from the now defunct verb "rememorate," not just the recalling of events or experiences, but the bringing *to mind* of those events for conscious interrogation. When the past is not simply recalled but is made present, a "new look" becomes possible, a reevaluation that may conflict with or at least throw into question hegemonic ways of

seeing. Rememory thus constitutes a politicization of Sethe's memories formed by motivated ways of seeing and it moves Sethe to listen, which enables her to hear "different words":

> Words Sethe understood then but could neither recall nor repeat now. She believed that must be why she remembered so little before Sweet Home except singing and dancing and how crowded it was. What Nan told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma'am spoke, and which would never come back. But the message–that was and had been there all along. Holding the damp white sheets against her chest, she was picking meaning out of a code she no longer understood. (62)

Although she claims no longer to understand them, her mother's words have remained with Sethe, encoding vital messages: the code from which she picks out meaning predates the representations of the slave system which assumed full force over Sethe at Sweet Home and are explicit in schoolteacher's lessons with his nephews. In rememorying her past, Sethe herself becomes a listener; twice, she hears Nan say: "Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe" (62), and this act of listening is transformative for her, because it allows her, for the first time, to begin to assimilate the trauma of her past in her own terms. "As small girl Sethe, she was unimpressed" by what Nan tells her, but "[a]s grown-up woman Sethe she was angry, but not certain at what" (62).

Emotion is the awakening of the body to its own reality: it is the site of activity, of

being moved, and provides the impetus to move or change things. Experiencing her own anger, even without understanding its source, moves Sethe toward apprehending the embodied meanings of a narrative she has formerly "forgotten," an originary narrative which runs counter to the hegemonic representations she has irresistably accepted. This alternative narrative from the past, spoken by many voices in the text of *Beloved*, provides a critique for Sethe that "involve[s] notions of what a [slave] woman is supposed to be angry about, what she should not tolerate, what is worth valuing, notions that are not merely moral but also social...in nature" (Mohanty 46). Listening is inherently social, because listener and teller form a group in which shared experience may be socially re-constructed to yield genuine knowledge (42). In telling her stories to other listeners, Sethe moves from merely seeing images to also hearing voices, voices which provide another context on which to base the epistemic status of her own culture and identity.

Listening allows an "other" language to surface, one that is "the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words" (261). When, toward the end of the novel, Sethe hears this sound which shatters hegemonic representation, she is "baptized" (261), washed clean of enslavement to its practices and of her "privately shameful" (61) abandonment of her own body's knowledge. Morrison switches from the past to the present tense to grammatically shift the ideological ground of representation and signify the change in Sethe: "Sethe feels her eyes burn and it may have been to keep them clear that she looks up" (261). The metaphors of bathing and burning both mark her purification: Sethe's way of seeing is now uncontaminated by a false lens, and when she looks up she sees, not boys hanging from sycamores, but trees in which there is "[n]ot one

touch of death in the definite green of the leaves" (261).

Significantly, this sound that breaks the back of words comes "[b]uilding voice upon voice" (261) because these voices constitute a community which shares a common language they are free, at this moment, to speak and hear. *Beloved* resounds to our hearing the voices of those who have been silenced by our discourse and absented even from being among its audience. As we are drawn to listen, we are drawn as well into this community, transforming our position from being outside the text, looking in at "others," to one of sharing the experience of those within the text. As a narrative, *Beloved* is not different from other acts of representation in that it is a discourse ideologically motivated; however, by its narrative performance, it establishes a dialogic relationship with the reader that remembers the "other": Morrison insists we become part of the referent, opening the possibility for social change.

The possibility for social change that is remembered in performance is negated by hegemonic representational practice. Instead, hegemony directs us to forget others, those whom Philip Wander calls the "Third Persona":

> –the "it" that is not present, that is objectified in a way that "you" and "I" are not. This being not present may, depending on how it is fashioned, become quite alien, a being equated with disease, a "cancer" called upon to disfigure an individual or a group; or an animal subordinated through furtive glance or beady eye....The potentiality of language to commend being carries with it the potential to

> spell out being unacceptable, undesirable, insignificant.
>
> (209)

Who is allowed to speak, and who is allowed to hear, is an ideological act made political by the unwillingness of the masters to hear the voices of the unacceptable, the undesirable, the insignificant.

The only character at Sweet Home who speaks Sethe's mother's tongue is Sixo, who understands, as Sethe and Paul D have not, that learning the master's discourse will "make him forget things he shouldn't and memorize things he shouldn't and he didn't want his mind messed up" (208). While Sixo eventually "stopped speaking English because there was no future in it" (25), in Sethe's rememory she hears Sixo deny to schoolteacher that he stole a shoat, although Sixo admits killing and eating it:

> "And you telling me that's not stealing?"
>
> "No sir, it ain't."
>
> "What is it then?"
>
> "Improving your property, sir."
>
> "What?"
>
> "Sixo plant rye to give the high piece a better chance. Sixo take and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and feed Sixo give you more work." (190)

Sixo's cleverness makes perfectly good sense, but his logic doesn't belong to one of his position: schoolteacher refuses to listen because Sixo is the "it" who is not present, who has been, therefore, re-presented and objectified as insignificant. Schoolteacher beats Sixo

to show him "that definitions belong to the definers–not the defined" (190).

The violence of hegemonic representational practices depends for its force on the kind of silence that fails to confront "the asylum offered by a world of ideas [with] the world of affairs, the sensual, material 'is' of everyday life" (Wander 198-99). Politicizing our discourse forces this confrontation, makes present the sensual, material "is" which is the bodies and minds of not only literary characters but also real human beings. What we also must ask is, how does this "is" come about that allows our hegemonic representational practices the right to define others and thus to reject responsibility for the human community? In my next chapter, I will explore how the mystery of hierarchy is founded on the principles of identification and division, and how those dividing practices are invitations to mistreatment.

CHAPTER IV

ABANDONMENT AS DIVIDING PRACTICE: "...PUT HER HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS ON THE LEFT; HER ANIMAL ONES ON THE RIGHT"

> *As the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations.*
>
> George Lipsitz

African Americans have been represented by, and in, American narratives since before that country divided itself from Britain to become a separate entity with a separate identity. What it meant then, and what it means now to be an "American," is compromised for both black and white Americans by these representations. Toni Morrison maintains that "through the way [white] writers peopled their works with signs and bodies of this presence--one can see that a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness" (*Playing* 6). In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, Morrison concerns herself with literary representations of what she calls "Africanism," examining how, as they mark the Africanist presence, they simultaneously enact distinctions that define the white American in a way that has gone explicitly un*re*marked. "Whiteness" is predicated on the "blackness" that lurks but is not spoken other than as a "trope" to which "little restraint has been attached." The abandon

with which this trope has been employed acts as a way of dividing whiteness from blackness because it makes one sense of Africanism "a disabling virus within literary discourse" that

> has become, in the Eurocentric tradition that American education[1] favors, both a way of talking about and policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations on ethics and accountability. Through the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of color on a palette, American Africanism makes it possible to say and not say, to inscribe and erase, to escape and engage, to act out and act on, to historicize and render timeless. (*Playing* 7)

Morrison here describes how Eurocentric representations enact dividing practices that become reified as a value system which erases its own substance.

By "dividing practices" I mean the way we make distinctions. We "chunk" everything: space, time, different sorts of reality, and even our "selves," to make meaningful units. That is, we divide things to decide how difference *makes* a difference. Boundaries help us to separate one item from another; without them, we wouldn't be able to "see" the difference between here and there, now and then, true and false, good and bad. The way we isolate categories applies to how we experience our selves, for example–*identity* is the distinction between us and the rest of the world. The things we chunk assume identity through being differentiated, and, as Eviatar Zerubavel points out in

The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life, "their meaning is always a function of the mental compartment in which we place them. Examining how we draw lines will therefore reveal how we give meaning to our environment as well as to ourselves" (3). Such an examination is crucial because the boundaries we draw so "naturally" escape our attention; because we take them for granted, we fail to recognize they are social constructions with little basis in reality.

Because dividing practices are constructed to persuade us that one thing is meaningfully different from another, they are inherently rhetorical; because they define different sorts of reality that separate different experiential realms so that they don't spill into one another, they are inherently ideological. The practice of dividing things into categories of reality separates them from other things, and, in the social realm, the emergence of hierarchy assigns value to only certain classes of people–those "highest up." Those who are "beneath" us, or outside the realm of what is perceptually relevant to us, become unseen, disregarded non-persons. To enforce our position in the hierarchy, we must assure that our particular perception of the world and human nature and relationships predominates. And for hierarchy to evolve into hegemony, the dividing practices of the dominant group must come to be "taken for granted" by all social classes: the motive of hegemonic dividing practices is to conceal the constructedness of their distinctions, to assure they go unremarked.

What goes unremarked is soon forgotten, so that the constructedness behind the distinctions becomes naturalized as the unmarked "is" from which the presence of ideology seems to absent itself. Once "whiteness never has to acknowledge its role as an

organizing principle" (Lipsitz 369), white supremacy[2] has already assumed hegemonic status. Why should the scene of white supremacy dominate the acts which it perpetrates? Because it is the principle of social hierarchy in which white entitlement, and black subordination, makes sense. In hegemony hides the "right" to make distinctions, the power to represent social, economic, and human properties in its own terms as conditions of being that exist forcefully and even violently. The efficacy of this organizing principle relies on accession to its rules of order; the terms with which it represents itself presuppose and reproduce social practices and systems by enacting the rhetorical strategy that Kenneth Burke calls "identification" or "consubstantiality": the practice of constructing substance in terms which allow one to align with others of the same purported substance to achieve a unity from which one can act in prescribed and proscribed ways.

But as Burke points out,

> Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men [sic] were not apart from one another, there would be no reason for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man's very essence. (*Rhetoric* 22)

In other words, the purpose of identification is "to confront the implications of division" (*Rhetoric* 22), to investigate what happens to those excluded by dividing practices

committed to maintaining a hierarchical motive. In *Beloved*, Morrison confronts these implications explicitly, narrating them as acts and representing their consequences not merely on the bodies and minds of slaves, but as "an effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behavior of masters" (*Playing* 12). She confronts what Burke seeks to uncover in his rhetorical analyses of human discourse: what drives these acts? In what lies their motive?

In the first section of this chapter, "Drawing Boundaries," I derive from the work of Kenneth Burke a framework for investigating the effects and motives of dividing practices in symbolic systems. According to Burke, dividing practices fulfill "incentives of organization and status" (*Language* 15) by drawing boundaries that reify the divisions between "us" and "them," establishing incommensurate classes of beings; these hegemonic dividing practices depend on abandoning recognition of and responsibility for the constructedness of their own motive. To illustrate how Morrison's text constructs "reality" in terms which demonstrate the congregating and segregating function of language, I analyze the only section of *Beloved* in which a white person acts for a black person without regard to race: the passage in which Amy helps Sethe birth Denver. Using the same passage, I illustrate how Morrison's grammatical, rhetorical, and narrative strategies–particularly her selection of god-terms, her narration of this scene as a joint construction by Denver and Beloved, and her mode of address–enable congregation between reader and text. I critique Morrison's strategies *in terms of* the symbolic property of language: she describes what the "blackness" of a slave's body represents for whites, and the consequences of that representation for both black and white people.

In the second section of this chapter, "Whiteness as Property," I investigate how, in American history and law, the rhetorical move from "white"–an adjective–to "whiteness"–a noun–established whiteness as a substance that defines what it means to be "American." Whiteness becomes a property that can be owned, with boundaries that must be patrolled. I use Burke's grammar, and his conception of hierarchical psychosis, to critique sections of *Beloved* that focus on how acts and agency are scenically constrained by this ownership. Because schoolteacher's writing Sethe's characteristics is the act that causes Sethe to recognize what difference her "difference" makes to her body and her body's agency, I analyze this section of the text for its symbolic construction of dividing practices, and the scenic power and motives that enable and conceal that construction. I analyze other brief segments of text to critique Morrison's representation of the concomitant effects of, and guilt engendered by, hegemonic dividing practices and the hortatory impulse of hierarchy. Because I claim that *Beloved* represents the symbolic and actual violence that result from abandoning the responsibility to remember the constructedness and motives of white supremacy, I identify Morrison's strategies of irony and recursion which provoke readers' awareness of whiteness as an ideological construction. Finally, I analyze sections of *Beloved* which represent white characters to critique the power and perquisites of whiteness, whatever the eulogystic motives by which they are concealed.

DRAWING BOUNDARIES

In one passage in *Beloved*, despite the division enacted by the slave system, a whitewoman and a black woman identify with each other. Amy and Sethe "do something together appropriately and well" (84), share in Denver's delivery. According to Burke, the purpose of rhetoric is to overcome division through identification and consubstantiality; we identify with one another by constructing "what is" in the same terms, terms which are the substance of our understanding "reality." As Burke explains,

> A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so.
>
> Here are ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is "substantially one" with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another. (*Rhetoric* 21, author's emphasis)

Amy and Sethe are not identical–Amy is white and Sethe is black–but they are both disadvantaged runaways, fleeing from different sorts of brutality. Because Amy is also a "fugitive," Sethe behaves "recklessly"–she crosses the boundary drawn by the divisive rules of order that would normally govern her conduct with whites to trust this

whitewoman with a "tenderhearted mouth" (79). Within the narrative construction of *Beloved*, this scene is itself a construction: the narrator tells us that Denver and Beloved together join to "do the best they could to create what *really* happened, how it *really* was" (78 my emphasis). Two levels of identification occur here: between the characters, and between the text and the reader. Morrison's repetition of the word "really" acts to persuade the reader to share the construction, share the substance of her representation. Her narrative, rhetorical, and grammatical strategies destabilize hegemonic dividing practices by effecting identification on consubstantial terms.

To explain how Morrison accomplishes these strategic moves, I detour briefly here from analyzing the textual portrayal of Amy's and Sethe's actions to enlist Burke's theoretical support. Burke relates representations of reality to attitude, address, and the terms with which they are constructed, particularly within hierarchical systems. His "grammar" investigates texts precisely to see how they construct their representation of "reality." As Stillar explains, "the representation is attitudinal and motivated because every representation is the situated social practice of real social agents who necessarily construct 'reality' with reference to their practices and the terminologies that are a part of them" (64). Morrison directs our attention to a counter-hegemonic representation of reality by both the form and function of her discourse; her motive, we may assume, is to permit an-other's way of seeing a historic "reality" that has been erased because it has formerly been seen in hegemonic terms.

Burke understands language as an act motivated toward identification and division, an act that has consequences in the real world. His understanding is particularly relevant

to an examination of *Beloved* because, where a system such as slavery is in force, Burke's methods of analysis reveal how its hegemonic and hierarchical rules of order "direct the attention" so that, for different classes of people, there is different access to and control over the resources of language. That is, language, as a symbol system, both means and constrains what we "see" *in terms of* some particular orientation; the terms in use direct the attention to a representation of the social order which acts *as if* the substance it constructs (and the division it effects) is ontologically "real." The inequity of power embodied in the slave system, for example, where whites are free to represent black people as the inferior "other," is what Burke calls "mystery" (*Language* 15): a major resource of persuasion which preserves rather than contests the hierarchy by highlighting selected differences that motivate its participants who are free to "move up."

How does a novelist concerned with reordering hierarchy negotiate such mystery? Since rhetoric, by "its nature as *addressed*,...implies an audience" (*Rhetoric* 38), Morrison's narrative representation of the scene, characters, and action of *Beloved* must act not only to tell a story, but Morrison must also perform *Beloved* as an act capable of achieving identification with its readers. "A primary requirement to identification," Stillar points out, requires "addressing one's audience in...terms [that construct] one's own subjectivity [so as to] make congregation possible" (73-4). I have considered, in Chapter III, how Morrison constructs a narrator who invites the reader to share substance with her characters through various grammatical and narrative strategies; her rhetorical act constructs an implicit "I" of the narrator as well as the "you" of the implied reader, opening a counter-hegemonic way for the reader to "see" and respond to the text. We

might understand her motive as an attempt to transact a change in the social order: overcoming division between her readership and her text allows the possibility for transforming hierarchy by changing the way readers apprehend the "is" in terms of the how and what of its representation (Stillar 74). For this reason, the theme of memory and rememory in *Beloved* becomes salient to the process of identification, both as form and function: the novel proceeds as does memory, in a non-linear fashion, recovering the story in bits and pieces told by many voices; rememory performs the function of recovery and transformation of the past in terms which allow for identification and the possibility of a newly envisioned future.

Pursuing the possibility of transformation in a literary work is not merely an idealistic motive because all language use is rhetorical, and rhetoric, as Burke defines it, has to do with the "*persuasive* aspects of language, the function of language as *addressed*, as direct or roundabout appeal to real or ideal audiences, without or within" (*Rhetoric* 43-4). And to heighten our understanding of language as a symbolic resource ungrounded in any incontrovertible or foundational "truth," Burke reminds us that

> *rhetoric as such is not rooted in any past condition of human society. It is rooted in an essential function of language itself, a function that is wholly realistic, and is continually born anew; the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.* (*Rhetoric* 43, author's emphasis)

Here Burke points to our situation as symbol using beings who act within the constraints

of a symbolic system that enables us to persuade ourselves and others by constructing, through language, a world of experience and orientation. Through symbol use, we represent a world that constitutes our epistemological and ontological choices (or the lack of them): what and how we know, how we may act, and what defines us as social agents. Burke's rhetoric is concerned with "showing how a rhetorical motive is often present where it is not usually recognized" (*Rhetoric xiii*), and focuses on his key terms, "identification" and "consubstantiality." But his "grammar" focuses on language in its own terms. Not a grammar in the standard sense, Burke's is a system for answering the question, "What is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" by investigating "forms of thought which...are exemplified in the attributing of motives" (*Grammar xv*).

The forms of thought Burke refers to are the patterns of language we use in all discourse–our choice of vocabularies and the ways in which we structure them. He calls his analytical method "'dramatism,' since it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that...treats language and thought primarily as modes of action" (*Grammar xxii*). How we act upon one another embodies our social constructs, relationships, and the motives behind them; Burke's investigation into human relationships and motives thus focuses on a "critique of terminology," an "inquiry into cycles or clusters of terms and their functions" ("Dramatism" 445).

In Chapter III, for example, I analyzed a passage from *Beloved* in which forms of the verb "to make" cluster within the narrator's description of Sethe's misguided memory of the sycamores at Sweet Home rather than the boys hanging from them. When we ask

what her memory is and why it should be skewed so that her attention is directed to the beauty and not the horror, the language reveals the motive of force or domination enacted by the slave system, whereby slaves are "made" to accept certain conditions of being and knowing. It is in the interests of the slave system to persuade its perpetrators, as well as its victims, to the "beauty" of its principles of organization and status; hence the cluster of "shamed" (Sethe's remembering) and "shameless" (beauty) blames Sethe–her guilt is a property of her low status in the system–while reinforcing the innocence of the system itself, allowing it to construct symbols while concealing its motive. "The dramatistic view of language," Burke tells us, "in terms of 'symbolic action,' is exercised about [its] necessarily *suasive* nature": "Even if any given terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a *deflection* of reality" (*Language* 45). The slave system, within the larger system of white supremacy, represents itself in a discourse which conceals its motive, but Morrison's terminology shatters that deflection. *Beloved*, as act, attacks the problem of countering such representation in terms of its own: the text must achieve consubstantiation with its readers in language that persuades them to select a different vision of the reality of the slave system.

Morrison invites consubstantiality between text and readers by performing a number of narrative, rhetorical, and grammatical strategies. Narratively, she introduces a white character who shares substance with Sethe. Because Amy largely ignores hegemonic dividing lines to help an "other" human being, she is a character with whose humanity white readers can identify. Moreover, the story of Denver's birth is framed as a

shared construction of Denver and Beloved. Frames transform the meaning of what they bracket, separating experiential realms and the "accent of reality" (Zerubavel 11). By drawing readers out of their accustomed mental position toward one the text frames, Morrison's narrative and rhetorical strategies interlink; by shifting readers' narrative apprehension of what is real, she transforms the ground from which they identify. Furthermore, Morrison imbricates narrative, rhetorical, and grammatical strategies in her construction of discourse patterns (particularly the way she uses free indirect discourse), dialogue, and imagery; she invites readers into the minds of characters who speak without stereotypical patterns that mark them as different from the reader, and encourages identification on the level of the body by the vividness of her images.

To return to the chapter that links Sethe and Amy: this chapter relates one version of the story of Denver's birth. It begins with Denver's attempt to mollify Beloved after an argument about who is more important to Beloved, Denver or Sethe.[3] Denver begins a story that answers Beloved's demand: "Tell me how Sethe made you in the boat" (76). Denver will "construct [this telling] out of the strings she had heard all her life"; in other words, the story is a gathering in of pieces, threads of memory; not a succession of "facts," but a construction based on particular narrative and rhetorical selections. Morrison calls this construct a "net to hold Beloved," but the net is also a frame that holds the reader within this experiential realm.

The text puts the story in Denver's mouth but there is a double layer: Denver's direct discourse repeats, at first, in indirect discourse, what was Sethe's direct discourse: "She had good hands, she [Sethe] said. The whitegirl, she said, had thin little arms but

good hands" (76). Denver is telling a story about Sethe and herself, about how Amy "g[o]t us both across the river" (77). She speaks for Sethe and herself both figuratively and literally. This dialogue is just one example of how Morrison avoids representing the dialect of the speaker mimetically, but suggests the speaker's voice by making careful, almost unobtrusive, grammatical choices: "ain't" for "isn't," for example, and the use of the double negative: "there wasn't no meanness" (77). Otherwise, the speech of Morrison's uneducated, unsophisticated black people betrays none of the mimetic representation of speech that might conform to white stereotypes and reinforce hegemonic dividing practices.

Morrison avoids marking her characters as substantially different from an implied reader by creating a slippery, hybrid language: one that, with small exceptions, maintains grammatic conventions (rules) while managing to inscribe character. In other words, while she does not alter the means or medium of representation (language), she alters its manner, the way the code is employed.[4] Within the genre of the novel, she alters other conventions as well: her use of free indirect discourse accomplishes the opposite of its conventional practice.

Usually, in free indirect discourse, the narrator's voice gives way to the character's voice, so that we know we are in the character's thoughts by the apparent disappearance of the narrator.[5] Morrison, however, begins in the character's discourse, then eventually absorbs that discourse into the voice of the narrator. This strategy allows Morrison's characters to say or think things far more lyrically and from a more complex perspective than the reader could reasonably expect from uneducated folk, performing a

transformation in the exchange between text and reader. For example, Denver finishes the *narratio* of her own birth in direct discourse, filling in the background for Beloved. Then she stops because she's coming to "the part of the story she loved" (77). The narrator tells us this, and tells us as well about Denver's interior state, that is, why "she loved it...but hated it too," and her confusion as to why this should be.

Whereas some narratologists (Todorov, for example) would consider this simply "telling" on the part of an omniscient narrator, we have already seen that Morrison's narrator is not omniscient; furthermore, the words describe Denver's thoughts about how she feels, eliding narrative telling with the free indirect discourse of Denver's thoughts. This elision becomes more evident as the paragraph goes on: "Denver began to see what she was saying and not just to hear it" (77). In other words, instead of the narrator's telling Sethe's story so that the reader and Denver simply (read) hear it, Denver begins to envision it for herself, *in terms of* her own seeing: "there is this nineteen-year-old slave girl–a year older than herself–walking through the dark woods to get to her children who are far away" (77-8). The text asks us to accept at this point, from the focalization of the narrator, that Denver is both narrator and focalizer, reinforcing that conflation with the emphasis of a new paragraph: "Denver was seeing it now and feeling it–through Beloved" (78).

These strategies are both rhetorical and narrative; they represent not only the formal act of re-vision with which readers are asked to identify, but enact as well the semantic function of the text–Morrison's meaning that stories don't get created, made present, make people *feel* (and thereby open possibilities for sharing substance) unless

they're shared. This enactment functions as *enargeia*, very useful, according to Edward P.J. Corbett, "in a recital of past events....Here if we can paint a word picture[6] of the scene instead of merely telling what happened we can produce that vividness–not to mention the emotional impact–which will etch the 'facts' in the imaginations of our readers" (319). Some of the vividness and emotional impact of the scene relies on the text's complex mode of address: readers are drawn into a listening present as part of a group with whom they will share as the narrative voice shifts from one to another of the characters. As Rimmon-Kenan remarks, the complex interweaving of narrative voices and focalization "transposes the scenic quality from the birth event itself to its re-living in the present" (112), encouraging readers to identify emotionally with the event and characters.

Denver at this point shifts from her own focalization to Sethe's, "feeling how it must have felt to her mother. Seeing how it must have looked" (78). So although the narrator is still present in the act of narration, both telling and seeing, Denver is also feeling and seeing and about to tell her mother's feeling and seeing; moreover, she creates her own telling by taking it into the substance of her body–she gives "blood to the scraps her mother and grandmother had told her–and a heartbeat." And this is all in the service of Beloved's hunger–Denver anticipates Beloved's (and the text anticipates the reader's) desire–they enact for one another the dialogism of speaking and response, and they do this on the same level–both Denver and Beloved are lying on a bed together (readers hold the book in their hands): "The monologue became, in fact, a duet....Denver spoke, Beloved listened, and the two did the best they could to create what really happened, how it really was, something only Sethe knew."

Morrison writes overlay upon overlay to achieve the *narratio*–the statement of fact in her terms–of "what really happened, how it really was"; the overlays are necessary because what "really" is is never unitary, but is constructed by those who share the work of rememory, transforming a textual event into its "re-living in the present." Furthermore, in dispersing the origin of the memory, that is, framing the memory sequence so that it is not clear who is speaking/seeing whose memory of what events, the reader is implicated in the construction by its very *copia*–one must identify with the fullness, even the excess, of the construction because of the very lack of clarity that results. We must watch very carefully to see, as Burke advises, what is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it. Morrison plays with standard narrative conventions and thus frustrates the standard rhetorical arousal/fulfillment pattern: instead of a passive lover, the text requires the reader to get into bed with Denver and Beloved, persuading the reader to share in the reconstruction of the story. Beloved asks Denver "tell me how Sethe made you" and the text implicitly (Morrison's text does this explicitly in *Jazz*) asks the reader to "make me, remake me" (*Jazz*, 229).

Small shifts in the narrative voice keep the reader in close: direct discourse erupts into the dominant narrative voice–"because here come the head, as Amy informed her as though she did not know it" (84)–to incorporate Amy's diction, for example. Furthermore, the description of Denver's being born comes from a point of view that is close enough to see in detail even the crowning of Denver's head (84), so the focalizer and reader have to be right there with and on the same level as the women rather than "looking down on" them from a hierarchical perspective of distantiation.

Morrison consistently works to move the reader; in this scene, she emphasizes the connection between physical and attitudinal closeness by the modality of the narrative voice. The paragraph describing Amy's bringing Denver into the world ends with the sentence: "Amy wrapped her skirt around it [the baby Denver] and the wet sticky women clambered ashore to see what, indeed, God had in mind" (84). The word "indeed" might be written alternatively as "in fact"; its modality reinforces the text's address to readers, persuading them to accept as "fact" the text's representation of events. Furthermore, the mention of "God" calls into play an attribution of motive. As Burke explains,

> the tactics behind all terms must be referred back to the matter of circumference--for if the substance of the terms is to descend "substantially" through all the lines of modification, it makes a strategic difference what the quality of this original constitutional act may be: whether it be supernatural, naturalistic, or referred to the broader or the narrower aspects of our "second nature." Many a term may be chosen or rejected as the imputing of motives because of the political or programmatic quality which the term happens to possess at the given time and place.
> (*Grammar* 104)

At this particular time and place in the novel, Morrison introduces the term "God" to suggest the circumference of her discourse, the substance her terms are motivated to achieve. She shifts abruptly from the close-up of the women to the following extended

metaphor:

> Spores of bluefern growing in the hollows along the riverbank float toward the water in silver-blue lines hard to see unless you are in or near them....Often they are mistook for insects–but they are seeds in which the whole generation sleeps confident of a future. And for a moment it is easy to believe each one has one–will become all that is contained in the spore: will live out its days as planned. This moment of certainty lasts no longer than that; longer, perhaps, than the spore itself. (84)

Morrison here uses metaphor to help us see, first, Denver's resemblance to a spore or seed "in which the whole generation sleeps confident of a future." But secondly, the sense of who or what the seed is–whose is "the...generation" and whose "future" is spoken of–spirals out from the words, clustered under the term "God," which direct our attention to a schema of perfection. Her choice of metaphoric form reinforces the entailments of this schema, because metaphor both highlights and hides aspects of comparison; it forces us to look beyond "natural" representations, forces us to work to reclaim the principles of selection on which it operates. The function of metaphor parallels the semantics of the passage: it is a generative trope that invites us to see more by disrupting classificatory schemes. Where dividing practices determine and reify difference, metaphor implies that, even if things *seem* unlike, they yet have something in common; thus metaphor widens the possibilities for identification.

Metaphor also invites closeness, as does Morrison's image: the spores are "hard to see unless you are in or near them"; it is a powerful trope because "it embodies the notion of transfer and movement from inward personal space to external domain" (Foss, Foss, & Trapp 150). The text asks the reader to accept the selection of terms on which the metaphor is based, and in doing so, creates a sharing of substance. Consubstantiality functions to transform what Burke calls "atttitude" (which he views as an "incipient act"), so that individuals may transcend the orientation of one terminology for another and act from it. "Viewed as a sheerly terministic, or symbolic function," he says, "that's what transcendence is: the building of a *terministic bridge* whereby one realm is *transcended* by being viewed *in terms of* a realm 'beyond' it" (*Language* 187, author's emphasis).

Morrison's metaphoric image itself performs this transcendent movement: the barely visible spores must explode outward to release their seeds into the external world. Thus the most immediate resemblance (seed: Denver) explodes outward to the abstraction "hope": "the whole generation sleeps confident of a future." Morrison writes "*the* whole generation," not "a" generation, to make it clear we are all in this together–her prefacing this passage with the term "God" expresses a motive for what might be: a perfect system wherein we might all sleep "confident of a future." Perfection is not likely to be achievable in an imperfect world, may be, in fact, only an impossible hope; but Morrison selects "God" as the ultimate god-term to subsume beneath that term the complex motives with which she wants her readers to identify: motives which might create a world *substantially* perfect, "whole," rather than divided. Burke explains we must examine precisely such points of textual simplification to see what kind of world is being posited:

> In any term we can posit a world, in the sense that we can treat the world *in terms of* it, seeing all as emanations, near or far, of its light. Such reduction to a simplicity being technically a reduction to a summarizing title or "God term," when we confront a simplicity we must forthwith ask ourselves what complexities are subsumed beneath it. For a simplicity of motive being a perfection or purity of motive, the paradox of the absolute would admonish us that it cannot prevail in the "imperfect world" of everyday experience. It can exist not actually, but only "in principle," "substantially." (*Grammar* 105)

Morrison's scene represents a situation in which two women—one white and one black—are for a while substantially one. Burke maintains that "substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*" (Rhetoric 21, author's emphasis). During those moments Amy and Sethe's consubstantiality enables them to join in an act which in principle should be possible in a perfect world, even though the ambiguities of substance will part them:

> On a riverbank in the cool of a summer evening two women struggled together under a shower of silvery blue. *They never expected to see each other again in this world and at the moment couldn't care less.* But there on a summer

> night surrounded by bluefern they did something together appropriately and well. (84, my emphasis)

Although Amy and Sethe "couldn't care less" that they will never see each other again, their doing something together appropriately and well is the transformative possibility inherent in identification, and Morrison's motive is discernible in her use of metaphor. According to Ernesto Grassi, metaphorical speaking is "the transference of meaning *of beings* to a new level, i.e., to the level of *human being*" (in Foss, Foss, and Trapp 155, my emphasis).[7] The hegemonic representation of Sethe as "slave" sees her in terms of her being non-human, an animal; and such a terministic screen determines her conditions of existence.

As Burke says, "We must use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding screen; and any such screen necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another" (*Language* 50). Directing the attention by the use of terministic screens produces consequences because "[o]ur words negotiate relations of power, legitimacy, and authority" (Stillar 61): the slave system, representing itself within particular screens and playing out the entailments motivated by them, enacts the dividing practices that circumscribe Sethe's actions, thoughts, and her conception of self. Morrison, in her own terms, allows us another way of seeing: the "But" that begins the third sentence of the prior quotation ("But there on a summer night...") signifies that, although Amy and Sethe are *not* of the same substance, they are able to act together to do "what, indeed, God had in mind": "something...appropriately and well."

However, Morrison is not unaware that such perfection, as Burke puts it, "cannot prevail in the 'imperfect world' of everyday experience." Immediately following the sentence above, what the text has represented as "appropriate" is contrasted with how a "pateroller" would see Sethe and Amy. Following Burke's attention to terms and their implications, we might note that "appropriate" shares the same root with the words "proper," "propriety," and "property," all of which suggest boundaries: the bounds of decorum, or attention to the organizing principles of societal behavior,[8] and the boundaries that mark ownership. And "property" is not merely a *thing*, but an *attribute*, a quality by which we constitute substance. Morrison brings all of these implications into play in her introduction of the pateroller passage.

The very word "pateroller" is a changed spelling from "patteroller," a word the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as a southern United States variant of the word "patroller"; by changing "patter" to "pater," Morrison introduces the sense of the word "father," the patriarchal authority whose word is law. The following sentence suggests something that does not happen, makes an assumption counter to narrative fact, yet its construction uncovers Morrison's strategy for revealing the consequences for black people of their representation by a white supremacist society, and for how our ways of being are constituted by language:

> A pateroller passing would have sniggered to see two throw-away people, two lawless outlaws–a slave and a barefoot whitewoman with unpinned hair–wrapping a ten-minute old baby in the rags they wore. (84-5)

The pateroller's reaction to seeing the two women is given in the conditional "would" because, as we're told later, no pateroller came. Why mention him (and later, a "preacher") at all then? Morrison posits the eye of this kind of beholder to contrast the terms of this sentence's "reality" with that of the prior passage. Immediately after the reader has experienced what might be possible in a perfect world, the text represents the narrator representing the predictable "everyday" representation of one who patrols at night, watching for fleeing slaves. Juxtaposed against pages of text that describe in intimate detail the bodily experience of Sethe and Amy with which the reader has identified, this sentence reminds the reader of how differently this experience would "naturally" be seen through eyes conditioned by hegemony. The importance of the pateroller's visual representation is signalled by the inclusion of the verb "to see"; the sentence could as easily have read: "A pateroller would have sniggered *at*...."

And who would he "have sniggered to see"? "[T]wo throw-away people, two lawless outlaws–a slave and a barefoot whitewoman with unpinned hair–" (84-5). The first noun phrase defines Sethe and Amy, the following appositive classifies them further: if we collocate the adjectives and nouns we see that "throw-away" lines up with "lawless," and "people" gives way to "outlaws." Just as, in representation, the indexical sign "stands for" something by virtue of its physical proximity or cause/effect relationship, these terms entail, by virtue of their contiguity, that these two people, Sethe and Amy, are "throw-away people" *because* they are "lawless outlaws"; the polyptoton in the latter phrase punches home by its repetition of the root word "law" the utter affront of these people to civilized eyes, their social outsider-ness, emphasising the ideological point of view of the

pateroller, a man who walks the border between slave states and free states, who represents society's dividing practices. The parallelism of the first two noun phrases (both begin with "two," and then follow an adjective-noun pattern) models the quickness with which representation mirrors back problemmatical shifts in meaning which obscure the motive implicit in the move.

Particularly because appositives are commonly separated by commas, the rhythm created here by the build-up of successive phrases and their parallel structure carries readers forward, leaving little time for reflecting on how they are being moved to share the pateroller's vision. Yet there is a deviation in both punctuation and parallelism in the third noun phrase of the series. The phrase which further names the women who are discards, outside the boundaries of free white society, "a slave and a barefoot whitewoman" instead of being linked to the former phrase by commas, is separated from its context in the sentence by en dashes, the graphic equivalent of the borders that expel the women from society. But because rhetorical emphasis occurs at the beginning and end of series, the en dashes act to "set off" the contents of this noun phrase in another way--they bring to the reader's attention not only the act of separation, but the image of who's being separated, who was "really" there: a slave and a whitewoman, whom the reader recognizes as Sethe and Amy, linked together equivalently by the conjunction "and." Thus the text subverts its doubled, "white" judgment by leaving in readers' minds the "actual" people whose experience they have shared.

Yet even while the text introduces more concrete nouns to describe Sethe and Amy, the nouns themselves, and the way they differ from one another, bear examination:

the first, "slave," describes an undifferentiated class of people. Wherever there is a lack of discrimination, there is the presence of discrimination: the pateroller sees a black woman, whom he classes as "slave"; that representation blinds the pateroller to seeing any further, to making any finer discriminations. Grammatically, the noun "slave" is not modified by any adjective.

Morrison draws the reader's attention to this lack of qualification by not linking the word "slave" with a similarly broad, recognizable category such as, for example, "slave and *master*," or even by including the obvious, "black" slave, since the very word "black" *meant* "slave," and "white" meant "free."[9] Instead, the very unparticularized (the indefinite article "a" is used) "slave" is linked with the discriminating description of Amy, which befits the way a white man looks at a white woman. The text hence employs two adjectives to modify what the pateroller sees when he looks at Amy: he represents her as "barefoot," suggesting that a proper white woman should be wearing shoes, and he also sees that she (or at least her hair) is "unpinned." Sethe is a slave and therefore her being classed with a group which is beyond consideration even as human needs no explanation, no adjectives to collocate with "throw-away" and "lawless"; Amy, as a white woman, is explained away by two adjectives which put her beyond the bounds of decorum, render her "inappropriate": the adjective "unpinned" in particular suggests that more than her hair might be untamed, untamped; she herself is undisciplined, "loose," with all that word's dangerously erotic connotations. That which is erotic cannot be contained; Amy certainly crosses a border by associating with a slave.

The text's very grammar models the novel's motive in calling into question the

adequacy of dividing lines. By representing what the pateroller "would have seen," Morrison unmasks the representational practice against which *Beloved* exerts pressure. Immediately after this sentence, the text stresses the lack of need for this white point of view by its negative construction: "*But no* pateroller came and *no* preacher" (85 my emphasis); as well, the abrupt inclusion of the preacher by the insistence on his absence suggests that the eye of neither civil nor religious "law" was present to mar the act. Perhaps most significantly, the text frames these two sentences: both before and after them the narrator states that these women together did something "appropriately and well" (84, 85).

From the beginning of the chapter, the reader is led through various levels of representation to question what is "really" there; textual strategies lead her/him to adopt the narrator's guidance rather than to accede to the disciplinary codes of law and/or religion which determine the dividing practices of our culture. Furthermore, the chaotic nature of the text's surplus: layers of memory, layers of focalization, layers of detail, leads the reader to question as well the very rationality of those disciplinary codes. Had the pateroller seen Sethe, he would have seen a black woman, whom he would have called "slave." By lumping her in that undifferentiated category, he would have avoided examining the representation of black people–exemplified by what David Lawrence calls "the chilling scientific rationality of schoolteacher"–that "abstracts the human corporeality of the slave into a sign for the other in the discourse of the dominant ideology" (190).

Morrison describes, in a larger narrative portion of text, precisely what the

"blackness" of the slave's body represents for whites and what the consequences of that representation are:

> Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood....But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through, and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (198-99)

In this passage, Morrison demonstrates the rhetorical constancy between terms and the consequences they entail, between grammar and institution. The supremacist institution that allows "whitepeople" to represent blackness as animal rather than human is one that empowers schoolteacher to beat Sixo "to show him that definitions belonged to the definers--not the defined" (190). Beatings like those administered in *Beloved* were no fiction. So Morrison's problem of representation, revealed by the grammar of the clause "A pateroller would have sniggered to see," is how to reclaim the multidimensionality of

black experience and identity from a language that hides, in its naming practices, the violence done not just to the defined, but to the definers.

WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

If hegemonic dividing practices do violence to both the definers and the defined, then who benefits? Clearly, if we mean to exist in a society where "equality and justice for all" is the self-evident "truth" or ontology on which the substance of our relationships is founded, the answer must be: no one. But one of the major clauses of Burke's "definition of man" reminds us that, as "symbol-using, symbol-making, and symbol mis-using animals" (*Language* 6), we are "[g]oaded by the spirit of hierarchy" or "[m]oved by a sense of order," and are hence motivated by "incentives to organization and status" (*Language* 15). We create organization and status by drawing boundaries which divide classes of substance so as to exclude "them" from "we" who identify with each other. Cheryl I. Harris notes that "property performs the critical function of identification"; she cites Kenneth Minogue's statement that "property is the concept by which we find order in things. The world is a bundle of things, and things are recognized in terms of their attributes or properties" (*fn* 44, 1721). Identification functions to divide off "things" in terms of their attributes and properties to assure the consubstantiality of a particular group; those "things" (or people) who lack the "right" properties are represented as beings of unequal status. "*Any* pronounced social distinctions," Burke asserts, "as between...'superior race' and underprivileged 'races' or minorities," is an "invitation to mistreatment" (*Rhetoric* 115, author's emphasis) of those beyond our dividing lines.

A clear invitation to mistreat others inheres in our willingness to conceal motive: "unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement" (1745), as Harris puts it, led to "natural" divisions based on such god-terms as "paternalism," for example, during the periods of slavery and emancipation. "Paternalism," with its misguided entailment of "benevolence"–hence, "benevolent despotism"–embodied and reified the treatment of black people as ignorant and wayward children at best, and, at worst, as savages, "people who needed every care and guidance in the world to to keep them from the cannibal life they preferred" (151). The paradox of substance–that it is arbitrarily represented according to selected terms of division–inheres in the "contradiction between the bondage of Blacks and republican rhetoric that championed the freedom of all men," which "was resolved by positing that Blacks were different. The laws did not mandate that Blacks be accorded equality under the law because *nature*–not man, not power, not violence–had *determined* their degraded status" (Harris 1745, my emphasis). When schoolteacher directs his nephews: "I told you to put [Sethe's] human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up" (193), he is doing what comes naturally: determining Sethe's ontological substance by masking verbs of doing into verbs of being. That is, schoolteacher conceals what he *does*–the act of determining Sethe as animal–as what she *is*.

Schoolteacher is able to mask his motive of subordination under another god-term, "science," because in the nineteenth century, as Peter Conn documents, black people were represented by science as being excluded from the category "human." Conn cites the ninth edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1844:

> By the nearly unanimous consent of anthropologists this type ["the African aborigine"] occupies...the lowest position in the evolutionary scale, thus affording the best material for comparative study of the highest anthropoids and the human species. (140-41)[10]

Relying on "nature" as an excuse to quantify[11] and qualify substance in biological terms invokes what biologist Jay Scott Gould calls "the traditional prestige of science as objective knowledge, free from social and political taint" (20). That such innocence is a terministic screen is revealed in its very name, "biological determinism," which Gould defines as:

> hold[ing] that shared behavioral norms, and the social and economic differences between human groups–primarily races, classes, and sexes–arise from inherited, inborn distinctions and that society, in this sense, is an accurate reflection of biology. (20)

The two fallacies on which biological determinism is based are imbricated in the act of representation as a hegemonic dividing practice: "*reification*, or our tendency to convert abstract concepts into entities," and "*ranking*, or our propensity for ordering complex variation as a gradual ascending scale" (Gould 24). Schoolteacher maintains his position in the racial hierarchy by enforcing his representations of black people on his nephews, reifying the abstract qualities of black people into a degraded substance.

Morrison here terms schoolteacher's nephews "pupils" (193) highlighting

education's potential for perpetuating symbolic violence. Her text maintains that this violence is not simply symbolic: having overheard schoolteacher's dictum, Sethe's "head itched like the devil. Like somebody was sticking fine needles in my scalp" (193). Morrison's similes reproduce a kind of horror movie or science-fiction image of how schoolteacher–the devil–inserts his representations into Sethe's brain to interfere with her own conception of herself, of who she substantially *is*. When Sethe asks the failing Mrs. Garner "What do characteristics mean?", Mrs. Garner replies, "Features" (194), and the text reveals her reliance on "nature" as illustration: her example is, "a feature of summer is heat." Even more explicitly, the text has Mrs. Garner continue: "A thing that's *natural* to a thing" (195, my emphasis).

Morrison's schoolteacher appropriates the scientific discourse that abstracts black men and women into objectified substances to be studied, and perpetuates the violence of his dividing practices by inscribing and reifying these abstractions into a written "book about us [the Sweet Home slaves]" (37). As an "author," schoolteacher co-opts the right to make distinctions; Goran Therborne observes that "author-ization...establishes the principle that one author...or certain authors or a particular type of author are the only ones who can make valid assertions" (84).

Hegemony dictates that only those with symbolic and actual power may have the agency to write or speak; Sethe is whipped not merely for telling Mrs. Garner that schoolteacher's pupils took her milk, but for claiming the authority to speak her own experience. By punishing Sethe for claiming the agency to seek identification with and support from a white woman, schoolteacher reinforces the dividing practices of the slave

system and his own place in the hierarchy over both Sethe and Mrs. Garner; furthermore, he must in turn deny that his authority is dependent on Sethe's degradation: his reputation, which Burke would class under the god-term "Honor"–a eulogistic term for the motives of "[p]ride, interest, self-love" (*Rhetoric* 149)–depends on it. Burke notes that "the unresolved problems of 'pride' that are intrinsic to privilege also bring the motive of hierarchy to bear here; for many kinds of guilt, resentment, and fear tend to cluster about the hierarchical psychosis, with its corresponding search for a sacrifical principle such as can become embodied in a political scapegoat" (*Language* 19).

Punishing Sethe as a scapegoat for his own hierarchical motive paradoxically identifies schoolteacher with Sethe. As Anne Goldman points out,

> If the book in which schoolteacher writes up the seizure of Sethe's milk will enhance his reputation as *litterateur*...his enactment of abuse is performed in order to deny his dependence on the woman whose objectification enables him to produce his own identity. (325)

Schoolteacher's "reputation" is grounded on a paradox of substance: different substances have different resources for making antinomies invisible, and it is the power of the slave system, not any inherent human qualities, that determines how those resources are apportioned. When Sethe learns from Paul D that Halle was in the loft overlooking the theft of her milk, she reacts as a wife and mother, although these are substances she has no "right" to claim: "He saw them boys do that to me and let them keep on breathing air? He saw? He saw? He saw?" The text stresses the act of vision by repeating Sethe's cry

three times. But what Halle is able "to see" is made clear in Paul D's response: "A man ain't a goddamn ax. Chopping, hacking, busting every goddamn minute of the day. Things get to him. Things he can't chop down because they're inside" (69). Paul D *doesn't* say, "What did you expect him, a slave, to do against a white man and two white boys?" The text instead focuses on how hegemonic representations are so embodied as to become interior, so that we understand Halle's lack of agency as a function of the imposition of its vision: his resources are substantially lacking for dealing with the mystery of schoolteacher's hierarchical motive.

Intrinsic to the idea of hierarchy is its hortatory impulse–its address is couched in terms of "thou shalt," and "thou shalt not." "Such considerations," as Burke says,

> make us alert to the ingredient of rhetoric in all *socialization*, considered as a *moralizing* process. The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification. To act upon himself persuasively, he must variously resort to images and ideas that are formative. Education ("indoctrination") exerts such pressure upon him from without; he completes the process from within. (*Rhetoric* 39)

Halle cannot "chop down" what is "inside"; he is "broken" (70) by schoolteacher's indoctrination.

The "valid" assertions which enact the dividing practice that steals human substance from those who are "othered" by them, are not merely abstractions, as Morrison's text makes plain. Sethe rages:

> 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. I am still full of that, God damn it. (70)

Schoolteacher has his nephew empty Sethe of her most cherished bodily substance--her maternal milk, meant to nurture her children and identify her as "mother," an outrageous claim in the face of slavery's insistence on black women's representation as a means of reproduction of the master's property--one who increases the master's substance, not her own. Yet the text twice represents Sethe as being "full." The substance she has been filled with in exchange for that with which she identifies herself is: "[n]o misery, no regret, no hateful picture too rotten to accept" (70). The repeated negative, "no," reminds us that Sethe does not choose to be full of this kind of substance, but she, like Halle, is powerless to resist.

Furthermore, in contrast to the act in which Amy and Sethe are consubstantial, doing together what "God had in mind," the text here (as in Paul D's speech) focuses on what God would "damn": the actual and symbolic consequences of dividing practices. The symbolic theft of one person's substance for another's benefit is embodied by the text in the god-term "milk," and as Sethe struggles to rememory herself differently from the representations that have trapped her in unbearable conditions of existence she declares:

> Nobody will 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 whitebabies and me too because Ma'am was in the rice. The little whitebabies got it first and I got what was left. Or none. There was no nursing milk to call my own. I know what it means to be without the milk that belongs to you; to have to fight and holler for it, and to have so little left. (200)

Whitebabies get to have the black women's substance to feed on, while black babies get little. "Or none." The insertion of that emphatically terse phrase in the centre of this passage directs the attention to being "without the milk that belongs to you," that most basic substance–repeated nine times as noun or pronoun in the above passage–from which identity is constructed. And not just the substance itself, but the identification with a mother and the generational ties which allow one to construct a culture with which one can be consubstantial.[12] While black women and men were reviled for their black blood which the slave system spilled at will, white people paradoxically took freely the generative bodily substance of milk from black women and left them "so little." Black babies instead fed on the hatred and violence that inheres in dividing practices: when Sethe, covered with blood after killing Beloved to prevent her from being subjected to such conditions of being, nurses Denver, "Denver took her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister" (152). The text reveals how the substantial violence of dividing

practices is imbibed at birth and continues from generation to generation.

Hegemony relies for its force on the complicity of those subordinated to it, and hierarchy, in Burke's terms, relies on identification "with the very *principle of order*" (*Rhetoric* 307, author's emphasis). Toward the end of *Beloved*, when Sethe is almost destroyed by the consequences of hegemonic principles of order, she recognizes her complicity in acceding to their representations. Schoolteacher's "writing them down" is what possesses her: "I made the ink," she tells Paul D; "He couldn't have done it if I hadn't make the ink" (271). Those who have been "othered" are made to bear the guilt incurred by the hierarchical motive to stay "on top" (Burke *Language* 15). Staying "on top" requires persistent symbol-using and mis-using to simultaneously conceal and reinforce both the ideology on which hegemonic representations are based, and the paradox of substance hidden in the mystifications of hierarchy. As Burke puts it, hierarchy

> includes...the entelechial tendency, the treatment of the "top" or "culminating" stage as the "image" that best represents the entire "idea." This leads to "mystifications" that cloak the state of division, since the "universal" principle of the hierarchy also happens to be the principle by which the most distinguished rank in the hierarchy enjoys, in the realm of worldly property, its special privileges. (*Rhetoric* 141)

The special privilege of those on top of the hierarchy inheres in the power to "represent the entire 'idea'": Morrison has schoolteacher direct his pupils to put Sethe's "animal

characteristics on the right" to reveal that determining what conditions of existence are appropriate or "right" to the idea of white supremacy is what enables schoolteacher to draw the boundary that "line[s] them up," to turn a perogative into an ontology.

While schoolteacher is the most obviously heinous of the developed white characters in *Beloved*, Mr. and Mrs. Garner, and even the abolitionist, Mr. Bodwin, betray the white supremacist notions that "garner" their privileged status. All of them have a "reputation" to uphold. Harris explains the historical and legal implications of the term:

> Reputation as honor is...grounded in historical traditions...[and] embodies the values of society that endow social roles....The underlying presumption is one of social stratification, in which hierarchically determined roles are assigned rather than earned....Being regarded as white, or the reputation of whiteness, represents a blending of the concepts of reputation as honor–that which is claimed by virtue of status–and reputation as property–that which has value in the market. Whiteness was honorific in that it was conferred and not earned, based on the inherent unequal status of dominant and subordinate groups. (*fn.* 121, 1735)

The word "white," an adjective, evolved rhetorically into the noun, "whiteness," which thereby became a "thing," a property that could be owned: a definer of substance, but a substance based on the inequity of hierarchy. Furthermore, "[p]rivate identity based on racial hierarchy was legitimized as public identity in law....Whiteness as interpersonal

hierarchy was recognized externally as race reputation. Thus, whiteness as public reputation and personal property was affirmed" (Harris 1736).

Even before whiteness as public reputation and personal, very private property[13] was affirmed in law, whiteness carried special privilege, the "godly" right to divide light from darkness. But to identify with the idea of hierarchy requires an acting together, or a sharing of substance. Whether enacted under the alibi of science or paternalism, the division practiced by white supremacy sought to resolve the paradox of substance inherent in denying that shared substance: the slave's humanity. Eugene Genovese argues, for example, that "[p]aternalism defined the involuntary labor of the slaves as a legitimate return to their masters for protection and direction....Paternalism's insistence upon mutual obligations...implicitly recognized the slaves' humanity" (5). Nothing in the slaves' condition of existence altered: involuntary labor and its violence remained. Only its symbolic violence changed: its name and definitions. Morrison exposes the unchanged state of slavery under its new name through Sethe's recollection:

> [S]he was reckless enough to take for granted...Sweet Home really was one. As though a handful of myrtle stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against the door in a whitewoman's kitchen could make it hers. As though mint sprig in the mouth changed the breath as well as its odor. A bigger fool never lived. (23-4)

Again, as she was with Amy, Sethe is "reckless"; but here she ignores the peril in identifying with the paternalistic alibi and takes it (symbolized in the name "Sweet Home")

"for granted." Under those conditions, "really" takes on an ironic cast; *in fact*, she is granted nothing: the kitchen belongs to Mrs. Garner, and Sethe's contingency is represented in the text by the repeated qualification "as though" that begins each following sentence and negates its semantic possibility. The verb "propped" also represents what can be only a temporary bulwark against the incursion of reality: the breath, or substance of the slave system, remains masked by the odor of paternalism, the mystification of hierarchy.

Although Sethe is "fool[ed]" into believing the Garners are different from schoolteacher, Halle recognizes that their shared substance, "white," erases any difference among them. The text represents its point in direct discourse, so that we receive its meaning from the mouths of those excluded from the attribute of whiteness: "'Him and her,' [Sethe] said, 'they ain't like the whites I seen before....they talk soft for one thing.' [Halle:] 'It don't matter, Sethe. What they say is the same. Loud or soft'" (195). The Garners' brand of slavery may bear a different name spoken in a subdued voice, but it marks its slaves just as effectively.

As Paul D comes to know of Garner, "[d]eferring to his slaves' opinions did not deprive him of authority or power" (125). The text reminds us of the efficacy of whiteness's authority and power to make distinctions: Garner may conceal his dividing practices under paternalistic conditions of being at Sweet Home, but those who are there allowed to consider themselves "men" "...were only Sweet Home men at Sweet Home. One step off that ground and they were trespassers among the human race" (125). Their definition as animals inheres to recur past the boundary lines drawn around the master's

property; beyond that line they are "[w]atchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses whose neigh and whinny could not be translated into a language responsible humans spoke" (195). The scene:act and scene:agency ratios represented by this sentence of text reveals the structure of existence to which the characters of *Beloved* are subjected, and how whiteness functions to shape the attitudes of such a construction.

These ratios are among the resources of Burke's grammar. Burke calls his grammar "dramatistic" because it investigates the drama of human relationships in terms of its dramatic elements: his pentad of five terms acts in ratios to identify, as Stillar puts it, "the structures (what goes with what) and functions (indexing, constructing, and shaping attitudes) of elements of symbolic action" (63). If the meaning-making resources of a text are to be analyzed to reveal motive, then, in Burke's terms,

> ...you must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means or instrument he used (*agency*), and the *purpose*. (*Grammar xv*, author's emphasis)

Structured by the scene of slavery, the act of naming functions to define what goes with what: it divides the Sweet Home men from the "human race," which consists only of *white* men. The white man acts, by means of his whiteness, to *secure* that privilege: only he may be "human," while black men may be only animals.

The text points to the constructedness of this definition by having Paul D ask: "Is that where the manhood lay? In the naming done by a whiteman who was supposed to know?" (125). These questions, although they are structured as Paul D's free indirect discourse, seem also to be addressed directly to the reader; and the modality of the second question–expressed in the qualifying phrase "was *supposed* to know"–invites readers to dissociate from the reasoning of the whiteman as they would from any conflict between appearance and reality: "*supposed* to know" points out the absence of "actually *does* know." Positioning a dependent clause at the end of a question not only qualifies but rhetorically emphasizes how the question is to be received. The reader is asked to answer "yes" not just to the information that naming is an act done by a whiteman; that "yes" is reinforced by the late insertion of an auxiliary verb which also provides the attitude with which the reader should identify: the whiteman does *not* in fact "know." He ignores the substance of his act: the supposed knowing is based on the attribute of whiteness constructed by the scene, which grants the whiteman his agency to enact, through language, his dividing practices.

This agency is made more vivid by the images of the text: being able to name slaves "[w]atchdogs without teeth; steer bulls without horns; gelded workhorses" erases the common substance that humans share. Each image makes present as well the *lack* of agency of the slaves by the qualification of its adjectives or adjectival phrases: a "watchdog without teeth" lacks the resources to act in accordance with his purpose; a "steer bull" is not only a cipher, an oxymoron that negates itself, but this impotent animal is even without the horns to aggress or defend itself; the "gelded workhorse whose neigh

and whinny could not be translated" is impotent on two counts: it cannot act to increase its substance, nor can its language be made commensurate with that spoken by "responsible" human beings. The irony of the adjective "responsible" undercuts the purposive alibi of paternalism and reveals the motive of white supremacy: no trespassing allowed.

While Garner is able to mask his corrosive dividing practices under the alibi of paternalism, his status as a slaveowner bespeaks his motive. When Halle's labor has bought Baby Suggs's freedom from Sweet Home, Garner takes Baby Suggs to the Bodwin's, continuing to call her "Jenny" (142) because that name is on her bill of sale. He attempts to continue to define what he no longer owns.[14] But even those who have not owned slaves come under the text's scrutiny. Although Miss Bodwin comments, "We don't hold with slavery, even Garner's kind" (145), Morrison follows this recounting of Baby Suggs's arrival at the Bodwin's and her memory of the "celebration of blackberries" (147) that marked Sethe's coming with the chapter which represents the consequences of the four white horsemen's arrival at 124.

The juxtaposition of these two chapters might seem to offer a contrast between "good" whites and "bad," but Morrison has previously had "Baby Suggs, holy," say, "There is no bad luck in the world but whitefolks" (89), and the contiguity of these two chapters suggests a constancy between the purpose of Morrison's grammatical structures and her narrative structure. As Scarry explains,

> A given subject resists representation. In order to overcome that resistance, the artist bends the sentence into a particular shape. But precisely that same grammatical or syntactical shape may then, in magnified form, reappear in larger patches of language such as a scene or finally even the narrative as a whole. (3)

In fact, argues Scarry, "the attributes of these sentences reappear in the language-drenched institutions...to which they are attached" (5). Similarly to how Burke's grammar focuses on patterns in discourse "from actual texts to whole philosophical schools" to reveal motive (Stillar 63), Scarry notes the iterative constancy between grammar and institution: "[W]hat is overtly at issue is the knowability of the world, and that knowability depends on its susceptibility to representation" (3); Morrison's textual introduction of the Bodwins immediately preceding the apocalyptic chapter which represents the actions of the four horsemen suggests that *Beloved*, her act of representation, is motivated to make knowable that all whitefolks are identified with the institution of white supremacy.

When Denver, forced to leave her home to seek work to support her mother and Beloved, applies to the Bodwins, she receives assurance from their maid Janey that the Bodwins are "good whitefolks" (255). Yet she sees,

> sitting on a shelf by the back door, a blackboy's mouth full of money. His head was thrown back farther than a head could go, his hands were shoved in his pockets. Bulging like moons, two eyes were all the face he had above the

> gaping red mouth. His hair was a cluster of raised, widely space dots made of nail heads. And he was on his knees. His mouth, wide as a cup, held the coins needed to pay for a delivery or some other small service....Painted across the pedestal he knelt on were the words "At Yo Service." (255)

The representation of this figure as a comment on the Bodwins is striking for what its does not say up front: that the figure is a statue or figurine. Instead, we see a "blackboy's mouth," and the attributes that are the substance of the blackboy are represented five times by the pronoun "his" rather than "its"; the blackboy himself is represented three times by the pronoun "he," not "it." Thus the text asserts the humanity of the figure in contrast to the objectification of black people by white dividing practices, and the verbs that represent his state are mostly violent, indicative of the torture to which black people were submitted as a result of those dividing practices: his head is "*thrown* back farther than a head could go"; his hands are "*shoved*"; his eyes are "*bulging*" and his mouth is "*gaping*" as if from the iron bit. Into his head, nails have been driven. To focus on these verbs, my own language "naturally" represents their action in terms of the verb "to be"; in fact, these were the conditions of existence in force, and that this image is represented as being by the Bodwin's "back door"–black people not being allowed to enter the front door–reveals that the Bodwins, abolitionists or not, adhere to the dividing practices of white supremacy.

The horror and poignancy of this image as a representation of supremacist dividing

practices are emphasized by the central placement of the only short, simple sentence in the paragraph: "And he was on his knees," which addresses the reader almost as a plaint; the "and," following the horrific description and beginning the new sentence, both links his torment to his state and stresses the additive compilation, as in "all this. *And* yet more." In addition, it seems a cruel irony that the unvalued mouths of black people should be tricked up to hold coin, even to pay for "*small* service"; and the words "painted" as coming from that mouth are a sign of the figure's status: "At Yo Service,." is the only speech in *Beloved* represented in stereotypical black dialect.

Moreover, the terms with which this image is constructed, coming this late in the novel's text, cannot help but remind us of former similar images: the "nail heads" recapture schoolteacher's "sticking fine needles in [Sethe's] scalp" (193), and the blackboy's "gaping red mouth" recovers the narrator's comment that "the red gums were the [whitepeople's] own" (199). Although the Bodwins are abolitionists, "good whitefolks," the text's recursive practice links the Bodwins to other images of oppression and scapegoating intrinsic to the operation of hierarchy.

Just as these images are recursive for the reader, events in the text are recursive for the characters. When Sethe sees Bodwin arrive at 124, "[l]ittle hummingbirds stick needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair" (262). This recursive sensation prompts Sethe to mistake Bodwin, "rising...with a whip in his hand" (262), for schoolteacher. While I agree with Mae Henderson that Sethe's attack on Bodwin/schoolteacher is more appropriate than attacking her daughter,[15] and I agree as well with James Berger, who asserts that Sethe is "in a state of delusion" (416) when she mistakes Bodwin for

schoolteacher, the text suggests that white is white: Bodwin, for all his "moral superiority" (and even perhaps because of it), views black people as subservient. Berger points out that the text represents Bodwin "as a vain and self-absorbed man whose chief interest in abolitionism may have been the feelings of moral elevation and political excitement he derived from the movement personally" (416). Bodwin "cool[s] his beautiful mustache" (259) and recalls that even as a young man he was marked by his white hair: "It made him the most visible and memorable person at every gathering, and cartoonists had fastened onto the theatricality of his white hair and big black mustache whenever they depicted local political antagonism" (260). The adjectives "visible" and "memorable" suggest Bodwin's vanity, and the noun "theatricality" names what may be his dyslogistic motive, pride, that lurks below the eulogystic motive of "conviction."

As Bodwin drives toward 124, he recalls:

> a runaway slavewoman [who] lived in his homestead with her mother-in-law and got herself into a world of trouble. The Society managed to turn infanticide and the cry of savagery around, and build a further case for abolishing slavery. Good years, they were, full of spit and conviction. (260)

Bodwin's selective memory is a continued participation in the power of hegemonic representation to remember only what supports its principles of order and forget the rest. His representation of Sethe is not particularized by even the definite article "the"; she is reduced to only "a" runaway slavewoman. And he does not recognize the irony of her

getting herself into a "world of trouble": she *exists* in the world of trouble represented by *Beloved*, the world of white supremacist representations. What Bodwin remembers as "good years" omits the details of that outrageous place full of "racial injustice and suffering" (Berger 417): the embodied lives of those excluded from the white world. In Bodwin's terms, Sethe's experience during those years is negated; she becomes but another kind of tool: her substance becomes merely the ground on which "to build a case" that supports Bodwin's moral superiority and affirms the attribute of whiteness as property.

A major issue addressed by *Beloved* is the right to claim ownership over one's self or, in Burke's terms, to claim the agency from which to act freely rather than being the object of another's domination. But agency is constrained or enabled by scene, and the scene of *Beloved* is a society structured by racial caste divisions in which the "valorization of whiteness as treasured property" (Harris 1713) is implicit to white supremacy. Bodwin's musings, as he drives toward 124, center on his own treasure: "the burial of his private things." These "things" are his "private" property: "the box of tin soldiers. The watch chain with no watch" (260). He wants to "recall exactly where his treasure lay. Then home, supper, and God willing, the sun would drop once more to give him the blessing of a good night's sleep" (261). Bodwin has been a tin soldier; although he has certainly performed acts which "circumvent[ed] obstacles" (260), once the "heady days" (259) were gone, he removed himself from the fray. He needs no watch, because time, for him, is now insignificant, consisting of peaceful days and nights unimaginable to the black characters of *Beloved*. His treasure lies in his being white; indeed, as the text tells us, "his

coloring was itself the heart of the matter" (260).

When identification is constructed by assuming the right to exclude others based on the unequal division of substance, or properties, mistreatment results, because the paradox of substance inheres in the very constructedness of its categories, a constructedness that goes unremarked. Harris reminds us that "[t]he law constructed 'whiteness' as an objective fact, although in reality it is an ideological proposition imposed through subordination." (1730). This move, she claims, is the central feature of "reification"; she borrows Lukács's definition of the term: "Its basis is that a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people" (in Harris 1730). *Beloved* represents, in pain-filled terms, the symbolic and actual violence that result from our abandonment of the responsibility to remember the constructedness of our dividing practices and the motives behind them. But the novel suggests, as well, routes toward reclamation: through rememory, the re-visioning of the past that confronts the implications of division; and through the re-membering of the bodies of those who suffered its effects.

CHAPTER V

ABANDONMENT AS TRANSFORMATIVE PERFORMANCE: "I WANT THE JOIN"

Bodies are realized–not just represented
but created–in the stories they tell.
Arthur W. Frank

I began Chapter IV by citing Toni Morrison's critique of how the Eurocentric tradition in American literature uses what she calls the "Africanist presence" to define its idea of whiteness. Arising in the midst of a racialized discourse that would write out, or erase, African American experience from the history of white American culture, the name she gives this impulse: "American Africanism," jolts us with its reversal of the adjective-noun combination. The term "African American," a qualification of Americanness that already names a difference-in-kind,[1] is one we're familiar with. Morrison's reversal of the adjective-noun valance of the term directs our attention to the constructedness of the term "Africanism," which is given its substance by its noun-ness. This substance is qualified and determined by the adjective "American." Her reversal changes our perspective so that we can see how the difference between "African" and "American" is formulated to *make* a difference. The disruption caused by the way in which Morrison names "American Africanism" reinforces what we have already noted: her project in *Beloved* is to reclaim the act of language from the scene in which it has been freighted with moral judgments which denigrate black people. Burke has exhorted us to recognize that the names we give

to things, ideas, events, people, determine our behavior toward them, because the names are "moralistically weighted" with social motives. If an author is to "neutraliz[e]...every moralistically weighted word....the very absoluteness of such a project drives [her] to the corrective opposite; namely: the thought of an ideally weighted vocabulary, grounded in an ideally ordered mode of material cooperation" (*Permanence liv*). Morrison has said that a "Black literary style" lies in "cleaning up the language so old words have new meanings" (in Wilson 136), and Burke advocates coming to such a transformative project through a "perspective by incongruity," transferring the settings of words so that "the 'proprieties' of the word in its previous linkages" are violated (*Permanence* 90). When Morrison transfers the settings and grammatical linkages of "African" and "American," she disturbs the proprieties on which our principles of order are founded, according to Burke, since perspective by incongruity "designates one way of transcending a given order of weightedness" (*Permanence liv*).

Morrison's project in *Beloved* is motivated toward transvaluing a given order of weightedness to arrive at a different mode of material cooperation; her act of representation can be called "perspective by incongruity" in that her text requires us to shift our pious perspectives. As Burke explains it, "'perspective by incongruity' could be likened to the procedure of certain modern painters who picture how an object might seem if inspected simultaneously from two quite different positions" (*Permanence lv*); it is a kind of irony that, like humor, requires readers to see from two perspectives at the same time and, in doing so, shifts the balance of their perceptions. Once the foundation of moralistic language upon which that balance rests is destabilized,

> one may next "play with" such terms, experimentally giving them a range of meanings that do not fit their orthodox use as sheer instruments of "social control." That is, *by setting up special conditions within a given work of art*, one might, without "demoralization," even bring things to a point where, in effect, terms for the loathesome could be applied to a most admirable person, and vice-versa. (Burke, *Permanence liv*, author's emphasis)

Morrison sets up such conditions within *Beloved*, wherein "loathesome" terms shift from the orthodox naming of black slaves to the impious naming of white supremacist motives. Within the scene of these special conditions, the embodied experience of slaves emerges as stories told in their own terms, stories which offer us a perspective by incongruity.

Within these stories, the transformative and transvaluative possibility of a rhetoric of abandonment lies: "abandon" shifts its meaning from the forced giving up of agency, and the rejection of responsibility for violent dividing practices, to the yielding of oneself to feeling or desire. Toni Morrison maintains that "[p]eople *crave* narration....[they] want to hear a story....That's the way they learn things" (in Bakerman 35). And Hayden White asserts that historical narrative "makes the real desirable, makes the real into an object of desire" ("Value" 24). White speaks here of representations of reality that establish and maintain the current order through the form, or structure of narrative, and thus he is suspicious of such desire. But the power of a narrative like *Beloved* can contest the

authorized narrative representations of history because, in our desire for stories, we open ourselves to learn different representations of reality, and by doing so, we politicize hegemonic representation and destabilize its ability to naturalize dividing practices. This potential for storytelling to subvert the relation between narrative and authority is supported by Hillis Miller in his study, *The Ethics of Reading*: "There is a peculiar and unexpected relation between the affirmation of universal moral law and storytelling....even if that storytelling in one way or another puts in question or subverts the moral law" (2). The subversion of "universal moral law" depends, in *Beloved*, on exposing that the force of its relationship to storytelling lies in the language and structure of its representations. Morrison uses story to provoke the reader to question the dividing lines such language constructs about just what *is* "moral," and how that "moral law" affects the bodies in question. Art, says Zerubavel, is a "mental type of adventure, in which limits tend to lose their tight grip on our mind"; it "legitimates transgression" for the reader (96). In effect, we accept the terms on which the work of art effaces the boundaries between self and other, returning agency to those from whom its been taken. Morrison has said of her writerly project in *Beloved*,

> the slaveholders have won if this experience is beyond my imagination and my powers. It's like humor: You have to take the authority back; you realign where the power is. So I wanted to *take* the power. They were very inventive and imaginative with cruelty, so I have to take it back–in a way that I can tell it. (in Caldwell 245)

Morrison takes back the power not by representing, but by re-membering bodies that have been "[d]isremembered and unaccounted for" (274). By putting these forgotten and fragmented bodies back together in *Beloved*, her text *realizes* bodies in the stories she and they tell. As Frank says: "This realization can and should be reflexive: by telling certain stories, ethical choices are made; the choices in turn generate stories" (*Wounded* 52). The ethical choices Morrison makes are a reflexive response to the narrative authority of hegemonic representations; her stories in turn generate a reflexive response in the reader that creates, through bodily identification, the communicative opportunity for the reader to transgress the boundaries of space and time that are determined by orthodox terminologies or perspectives. These transgressions help substantiate the "reality" of the textual world for the reader because "[spatial and] temporal differentiation...entails an experience of discontinuity among different sorts of reality" (Zerubavel 10). Such discontinuity opens the possibility for shifts in comprehending "other" experiential realms of meaning.

In Chapter IV I noted the usefulness of metaphor for the transference and extension of meaning across boundaries. Burke asserts that "perspective as metaphor" is an illustration of perspective by incongruity: "Indeed, the metaphor always has about it precisely this revealing of hitherto unsuspected connectives....It appeals by exemplifying relationships between objects which our customary rational vocabulary has ignored" (*Permanence* 90). Morrison's perspective by incongruity functions through her use of rememory as a metaphor for re-visioning social relationships: the stories of her characters that arise through rememory bear witness to an embodied reality that must permeate social and ethical boundaries to be realized and reckoned with materially. In *Beloved*, the

agency for this metaphor is embodied in its eponymous character, the liminal figure who time travels, who transgresses the boundary between living and dead, whose feelings and desires are those of the "Sixty Million and more," and who pushes other characters to yield to their own reconstitutive memories and impulses. Beloved's agency structures the recursive movement of the text, in which she and three of the other main characters--Paul D, Sethe, and Denver--go back to "take it back": to reclaim knowledge erased by hegemonic representations, knowledge that will allow them to re-form themselves as free agents. Their movement back, fueled by a sometimes reluctant desire, transgresses the boundaries of their conditions of existence, a transgression which readers share by abandoning mental limits to the "fluid conception of essence" legitimated by art (Zerubavel 97). Just as the text resurrects "the baby ghost" (12) into the body of Beloved, this movement back resurrects through rememory the characters' assaulted bodies. Abstracted and disremembered by white supremacy, these bodies are realized in the text as a body of reconstituted knowledge--one that provides a more complete form for putting the divided social body back in order. This reconstituted form relies on leaving behind the conditions of existence that inhere in supremacist representations and moving toward another possibility, an ethical one that, perhaps, "God had in mind" (84).

Perhaps the signal moment in the text where this possibility is envisioned occurs in Sethe's memory of the "Clearing," where "Baby Suggs, holy" (87) calls the company of men, women, and children to re-member their broken spirits and bodies. She tells them "that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it" (88). I will examine this passage in detail in this study's

concluding chapter, but here let me note that the text offers, earlier in the novel, a proleptic, metaphoric hint at what the source of that possibility for grace might be: Baby Suggs, "[s]uspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead" (3-4), lies in her sickbed. Sethe and Denver, to help Baby Suggs, "[wage] a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of that place" (4). The "place" referred to is 124, made "spiteful" (3) by the baby's ghost. But we come to know, as the novel progresses, that "the outrageous behavior of that place" refers metaphorically to the acts permitted by the scene of white supremacy. And the motives behind those acts are so hidden by hegemony that the scene itself *becomes* the act: the symbolic and literal violence is not "in" that place, but "of" it.

As well, the text says of Sethe and Denver that "they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light" (4). The specific referent is again the baby's ghost, but the metaphoric prolepsis will extend our understanding of the actual "source of outrage" as we continue to read, just as it will hint at "the source of light." Physically, the source of light is the sun, but metaphorically, the source is God, maker of a "perfect" world, bestower of grace. But to have it, we must *see* it, and we can't see what's beyond the borders we construct. The source of light inheres not in dividing practices, but in conjoining practices: the conjoining of disjointed body parts, whether they be individual or social, into a consubstantial entity. The fluidity of the text–rife with analepsis and prolepsis, and with metaphoric extension–enacts its ethical purpose by first disjointing orthodox structures of time and place and the meanings constrained by them, and then conjoining, through the embodiment of rememory, a reordered vision of the

social body. As Zerubavel explains:

> Fluidity is not just a fact. It is also an ideal and, as such, has a significant moral dimension. It is a moral objection to social divisions, for example, that inspires liberal immigration legislation to open national borders....Similar moral concerns underlie the communal objection...to private property, the foremost symbolic representation of the insular self. (103-4)

Social divisions, reinforced by representations of whiteness as property, lock us into insular spaces, constrain us in historical time. The textual fluidity of *Beloved* suggests that by abandoning the constraints of social divisions we can imagine a different source of light, see it, and perhaps have it. What we must see, first of all, is how time and place are imbricated in memory, because how we remember past times and places determines our construction of present and future possibilities.

In the first section of this chapter, "What Time Is It, and Where Are We," I conceive of time as a function of memory. In her study, *Narrative Remembering*, Barbara DeConcini points out that Twentieth-Century philosophy rejects the notion of time as an "objectified, spatialized, and quantified" succession of events which privileges the present and makes the "reality" of memory problematic. Once this notion of time is challenged, the traditional understanding of memory as a usually faulty mental substance also crumbles, and its significance for epistemology and ontology can be more readily considered as the human activity of remembering (3-4). The Eurocentric emphasis on

time as a quantifiable object is but one more dividing practice, a way of epistemologically objectivizing and abstracting from lived experience. *Beloved* reminds us that the past is not simply a collection of "facts," but a fund of epistemological and ontological possibility for human acts of remembering that recover both time and place on the level of the body. I will examine a passage from the text that focuses on Sethe's thinking about time and place, and Denver's physical movement which precedes that passage, to identify how Morrison shifts readers' perspectives of rememoried events by adding auditory and physical imagery to the use of visual imagery in order to represent the sensual body as the site of knowledge. Her text performs this knowledge for both her characters and readers through a somatic, visceral language that disrupts Western notions of mnemonic discipline.

In this chapter's second section, "The Communicative Body," I argue that *Beloved* reveals how characters who are placed by language are prevented from claiming ownership over their bodies: Morrison's strategic use of the word "plan" directs the attention to the scenic dominance of slavery over what agency is possible in a contingent world. But, as I will demonstrate in examples from the text where Sethe and Paul D share their memories in intimate contact, when bodies open to one another, their very contingency becomes the possibility for transformation. Both the characters and the text embody individual and historic memories, bearing witness and communicating a shared substance that contests the terms in which we remember the past.

In the final section, "Bearing Witness to the Really Real," I examine how bearing witness assumes an ethical responsibility. By using examples from the text in which

Beloved propels other characters to "go back" to reclaim something lost, I argue that she embodies Morrison's metaphor of rememory: the possibility for transformation. Once the symbolic and actual violence of hegemonic representations is exposed by the political act of rememory, the healing that inheres in bearing witness calls for response: *Beloved* directs our attention to the danger that the past will perdure as the present unless we examine the "facts" we live in terms of communally and openly; once we do, the past becomes a fund of future possibilities for imagining other terms by which to construct a world.

WHAT TIME IS IT, AND WHERE ARE WE?

In contrast to "the source of light," Morrison calls the failure to remember a past that has shaped us all "a disrupting darkness" (*Playing* 91). Remembering to forget the scene of memory locates us at the place of hegemony, that place from which the past becomes a struggle over whose memories have currency as fact. *Beloved* begins in a place haunted by memory embodied as a baby's ghost, and this ghost of that outrageous place vibrates 124 with the memories of slavery, which haunt our and Sethe's present lives. Sethe tries to forget these memories embodied in the ghost's acts in an effort to go on with her life, just as hegemony forgets the acts and ethic of its own construction so that it may persist. While Sethe's motives for forgetting are pragmatic, the presence of the baby's ghost and the disruption of Sethe's life suggest that her, and our, "keeping the past at bay" (42) is ineffectual at best, and destructive at worst. Through the course of the novel, Sethe's finding her own place from which to speak and act--a scene in which she can claim agency--depends on her reluctant abandonment of the battle between remembering

and forgetting, on her reordering of place and time. The text of *Beloved* performs this same act by dissolving the reader's perceptions of place and time: chronological sequence is abandoned; the "whole story" comes to us in onioned layers, and we are moved from place to place and through time by the action and memories of the characters.

For example, Sethe's discourse on time and place, which I will later examine in detail, is framed within a chapter that begins with "Denver's secrets" and "desires." As the chapter opens, Denver is in her secret place, a "ring" of "five boxwood bushes" (28). This ring frames the sequences that follow, and, as Zerubavel reminds us, a "frame is characterized not by its contents but rather by the distinctive way in which it transforms the contents' meaning....In cutting chunks of experience off from their surroundings, frames obviously define not only different but also separate realms of experience" (11-12). By drawing us into this frame, the text invites us to release ourselves to Denver's movements within the textual past and present through her memories and physical actions. Her body is realized for the reader through the text's emphasis on its physicality: imagery creates a sensory link between what Denver and the reader see and hear.

As Denver moves from her hiding place among the boxwood back to 124, which she approaches from the rear, she sees, in the only lighted window, her mother kneeling in prayer in Baby Suggs's room. Within this window frame, Denver sees as well that "a white dress knelt down next to her mother and had its sleeve around her mother's waist." This "tender embrace" that makes the dress and Sethe look "like two friendly grown-up women" (28) causes Denver to recall the details of her birth, when Sethe was helped by the whitewoman, Amy. Denver's memory is represented as a physical act of reclamation,

similar to the classical concept of memory as *techne*: students of the art of memory were advised to imagine themselves walking a path through a space in which they had mentally placed each image they had to recall. Seeing each image in its proper place allowed orators to recall the knowledge or facts they would speak in their proper order. The *techne* of the path requires students to mortify certain aspects of themselves to "see" in the prescribed and proscribed way, because the classical approach to memory as a *techne* teaches that memory itself is a discipline, controlled by a body of rules. Controlling memory means saying what is worth remembering, treating memory as the "is," rather than as the "as if."

Mary Carruthers, in her study of medieval memory, focuses on the nature of this trained memory–the techniques and how they were taught. In medieval culture, she explains,

> *Memoria* meant...trained memory, educated and disciplined according to a well-developed pedagogy that was part of the elementary language arts....The fundamental principle is to "divide" the material to be remembered into pieces short enough to be recalled in single units and to key these into some sort of rigid, easily reconstructed order. (7)

This "rigid, easily reconstructed order," which relies on dividing practices and visual recovery, describes the relentless yet effortless act by which hegemonic representations control memory. In contrast to this rigid, visual, mnemonic discipline, Morrison resists the reliance on visual representation and its "order" by returning, in *Beloved*, to the sensual

body as the site of knowledge.[2]

Denver does not *see* the story she's heard many times, but "step[s] into it." Although the story "lay before her eyes on the path she followed," the text represents her apprehension of it through her physical movement and her auditory sense. Furthermore, her memory does not proceed in "single units" that follow a rigid order. While her memory is represented spatially, in the classical sense of following a path, the fact that Denver has "to get to [the door of 124] from the back" and has "to start way back" to remember "the part of the story she liked best" (29) suggests, in the repetition of "back" and its different meanings, that space and time are folded into one another; that one has actually to traverse space physically to recover what was abandoned in time to the mental discipline of the slave system. This imbrication of space and time as a sensual, bodily movement is an important concept in *Beloved*, because in the novel each movement toward healing a breach–Denver's return to Lady Jones, Paul D's return to 124, the thirty women's return to their unspoiled youth and to "the beginning" (259)–involves a physical going back: originary memories must be reclaimed by some physical act to re-place those inscribed on the site of struggle. Readers are encouraged to abandon their complicity with the symbolic violence of hegemonic representations as they too "go back" with the characters along a winding path that moves fluidly through space and time, replacing a rigid order with an "other" order walked by Denver's body.

In keeping with this textual purpose, the images Denver recovers have sensory force beyond the visual: she "hear[s] the birds in the thick woods, the crunch of leaves underfoot" (29). While Cicero recommended that recalling images could be facilitated by

using more than one sensory cue, Denver's auditory images are more than simply a mnemonic; they are represented as enacted by her body's movement–hearing while moving through the woods, hearing her own treading on brittle leaves. Morrison's use of auditory imagery dis-places the reader's usual reliance on only the visual, with its connotations of intellectual comprehension–I *see* what you mean–and replaces this distantiation with the closeness of bodily sensation. She has said she makes a "deliberate effort...to get a visceral, emotional response" ("Rootedness" 343) from the reader to establish community; this bodily representation of memory both increases readers' emotional identification with the characters, and also reminds us that slavery is the site of appropriation, appropriating the slave's body for its own production and reproduction while enforcing a bodily discipline that stifles desire. The going-back of the body signifies the body's desirous return to claim its own time and place, one unmarked by the indexical signs of white oppression.

One of the events Denver remembers is Sethe's story of her escape while pregnant with Denver and Sethe's being discovered by Amy. But these memories have further embedded within them Sethe's memories of her own mother "danc[ing] the antelope" (31). The spatial and temporal divagations of the text disorient the reader from orthodox expectations; these torn fragments of the past must be not only read, but heard and felt for readers to follow and re-member their meaning. Sethe's mother becomes "[s)ome unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach" (31): the abandoned singing and dancing of some other time, some other place, are linked through the material, visceral body, the pregnant body, to the child

within the womb who is also described as "the little antelope" (31). Past experience does not exist merely as some mind-picture to be seen, but is *in fact* physically "out there" (36), linked through more than three generations: Sethe's mother's African heritage pulses in Sethe's body as Denver's fetal kicking.

As if to punctuate this physical continuance, it is Denver's memory of Amy's words about what is "dead coming back to life" (35)[3] that brings her back from the past to the textual present (as she walks from behind 124 to the front door), where she describes to her mother the white dress which embraced Sethe as she knelt. When Denver asks Sethe what she was praying for, Sethe denies praying and begins to explain to Denver what she talks about–time:

> I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down it's gone, but the place–the picture of it–stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened. (35-6)

These statements could have been written as complex or compound sentences, but have

instead been chopped into bits. That is, Sethe begins with non-modified, simple sentences which effect almost a tick-tock rhythm: "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. But it's not." The subject of time is enacted by the halting nature of her speech, syntactic moments which add up.

But as the semantic subject opens to enfold *place*, the sentence syntax unfolds as well, using commas and long dashes to locate phrases: "Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place–the picture of it–stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world." This latter sentence is composed of seven phrases (one embedded in another), each of which successively qualifies what's gone before, so that we get, finally, the insistence that an absence (the disappearance of the burned house) remains present "in the world." This is Shapiro's definition of representation–the absence of a presence–and the text encodes this issue as one of time and place, asking, what is it we forget in time? And what does that have to do with where we are in the world? The sentence moves forward in textually linear time and space, but the modifying phrases make it zig and zag, altering its meaning–this spatial spreading out of the modifiers acts like the unfolding of a story, where interpretation changes as the story progresses. In his study of narrative sequence, Frank Kermode notes that: "Stories as we know them begin as interpretations. They grow and change on the blank of the pages....Consequently...the nature of...narrative in general, is to be 'open'–open, that is, to penetration by interpretation. They [narratives] are...models for the redescription of the world" (86). The text directs attention to where this penetration should occur by placing the phrase

"–the picture of it–" literally dead centre in Sethe's long sentence. This placement draws attention to the phrase itself and to the issue of representation: how something is pictured, and the "reality" in which it's framed.

Moreover, the text is heading toward Sethe's warning: "The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there–you who never was there–if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you....Because even though it's all over–over and done with–it's going to always be there waiting for you." The implacability of the conditions of existence in that outrageous place–the scene of slavery–is signalled by the repetitions of the words "there" and "it," which refer to the picture Sethe remembers "floating around out there outside my head" (36). Floating in front of her eyes, this picture is all she can see, and thus remember. As long as we "see" only what we have been made to see, we cannot redescribe the world. Even when the actual violence is "all over," the symbolic violence persists, "waiting." Denver replies: "If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies," and Sethe concurs: "Nothing ever does" (36). Although the conditions of slavery may end, its effects do not die: hegemonic representations persist in haunting the text, the characters, and the reader.

Morrison has said she works hard for this haunting: it "is important because I think it is a corollary, or a parallel, or an outgrowth of what the oral tradition was....The point was to tell the same story again and again....People who are listening comment on it and make it up, too, as it goes along." By merging techniques of the oral tradition into her literary address, Morrison encourages her audience to do more than just read passively;

she wants them "to listen, participate, approve, disapprove, and interject" (in McKay 146) so that they "kill off, or feel the laughs, or feel the satisfactions or the triumphs" (147). This kind of participation requires readers to share substance with the characters and the story, "make it up, too," and *feel* the haunting.

As if to make this haunting material, the text places these memories of Sethe and Denver next to Sethe's memory of schoolteacher and "the ink [Sethe] made" so he could "write [about the Sweet Homes slaves] in his book" (37). Contiguity is a technique of oral storytelling, and the juxtaposition of schoolteacher's writing with the statement "nothing ever dies" reminds us of the permanence of representation; given that this issue of the dead not staying dead is another way (a way that will be embodied in Beloved) of representing the past's not staying put, then the dead not staying dead models, through substitution, the inexorability of memory, where the question becomes how one represents "the picture of it."

So the "time" that Sethe talks about is "hard for [her] to believe in," not because her rememory is faulty, but because "the picture of what [she] did, or knew, or saw" (36) is ideologically forgotten–dis-placed–by the power of representation. As she says, "Some things go. Pass on."[4] But "places are still there," the places of *her* rememory. Sethe's use of the word "rememory" rather than "memory" alerts the reader that, in this place where "nothing ever dies," transformation is still possible. The sequence of appositional phrases renames the nouns and reinforces their transformation from "house" to "place" to "picture" to "rememory": Sethe's rememory is itself represented as a place, the object of the spatial preposition "in," emphasizing that rememory is the place that contains images,

pictures, in which she *can* believe, if she can reach a time and place where she can claim the agency to recover them.

Furthermore, Sethe's notion of what represents reality is modelled in the pattern of the sentence: "If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place–the picture of it–stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world," which undulates between "if this, then that," and "not this but that": its parallellism lines up "the place–the picture of it–stays" with "out there, in the world." That is, the second phrase gains equivalence with and/or substitutes for the first, emphasizing that what Sethe sees, the place/picture, is materially in the world, has substance, exists. At the same time, the back and forth movement of the sentence represents Sethe's ambivalence, or uncertainty: what we all know by virtue of "common sense" is the orthodox past, which is eternally present. But Sethe's memories, what she "knows," have been compromised by her experience as a slave, which was not only *not* common sense but made *no* sense. While the mood of the sentence is indicative, which communicates to the reader Sethe's certain knowledge that "the place" of contestation remains, the sentence is conditional, to suggest to us a future where there might be another possibility.

The style of these sentences advances the story temporally as an oral narrative would,[5] by a kind of continguity; in addition, a sentence full of subordinate phrases/clauses is indicative of a writerly, literate narrative. The sentence is grammatically correct, even while the words are simple lexical choices (only two are more than one syllable) that seem appropriate for an uneducated person; yet the syntax represents, in its back-and-forthness, how we continually modify what we say as we think out loud, which produces a

verisimilitude that reinforces identification. A longer, meandering sentence requires more investment from the reader--one gets "caught" up in it, along with the speaker and listener in the text.

The very movement of the sentence indicates that memory is an activity that works in time but dwells in and on places. The sequence of the first section of this chapter moves the reader dizzyingly through time and space: Denver's thoughts begin during "[o]ne of the War years," then proceed through stages of her need for sanctuary in this place amid the boxwood where she is "closed off from the hurt of the hurt world" (28) and "salvation was as easy as a wish" (29). She remembers yet another time long past, then moves, in the text's present, from the boxwood back to 124. What she sees as she approaches the house calls up yet another memory of something she's heard in the past--"the details of her birth--" (29), and the narration shifts to the locale of that story, from Sethe's point of view in time. When Sethe reaches the part of the story "Denver loved best" (32) the narration cedes to the voices of Sethe and Amy in direct discourse. Finally, something Amy says as she massages Sethe's swollen feet and legs--"Anything dead coming back to life hurts"--returns us to the text's present and to 124 with Denver's agreement: "A truth for all times, thought Denver" (35).

In these few pages, Morrison moves the reader through time and space, enfolding several stories in different voices, disorienting our orthodox perspectives.[6] These perspectives--the metaphors we live by, in effect--[7] have become so naturalized as to be "dead";[8] a perspective by incongruity, however, can revitalize metaphor by exemplifying ignored relationships. Amy reminds us of Denver's "truth for all times"--that "anything

dead coming back to life hurts." And from the framed perspective of a place–the ring of boxwood–where salvation is possible, we have to do painful work to revitalize those relationships by recovering the pattern of the thoughts and events embodied in the narrative voice and the voices of the characters. This is how a rhetoric of abandonment functions for the reader: from that reordered pattern we recognize "a truth for all times"–that constructions of place and time and our memories of them are a function of power. Bodies are placed by language in conditions of existence that trap them in time by denying them agency, and *Beloved* reminds us that we cannot keep remembering in these same terms–there has to be a new substance, a new body of recollection which allows for new possibilities. How and what we remember of the past determines how we construct a substance we can share in the future. *Beloved* functions as a body which communicates such consubstantiality: through its dissociative techniques it offers the possibility for association.

THE COMMUNICATIVE BODY

Association is the primary state of being for what Arthur Frank calls "the communicative body" (*Wounded* 14) in his study of storytelling as an act that heals through its bearing witness.[9] In an earlier study, Frank developed four ideal body types to describe the types of action possible when a body "encounters resistance." He proposes four "questions which the body must consider as it undertakes action in relationship to some object" ("Analytical" 51), and each question interrogates continua of possible body use. The first question concerns the continuum of control over the body's action, ranging

from predictability to contingency, and the second concerns the continuum along which the body lacks or produces desire. Within the world of *Beloved*, these two questions relate most obviously to the wholly contingent nature of the slaves' bodies (even a freed slave's possibility for action relies on only one predictability--that white people are trouble) and to the way that appropriation of these bodies enforces a self-discipline that stifles their possibility for desire.

One of Morrison's strategies for intensifying the reader's apprehension of this contigency and foiled desire is the oral/aural technique of repetition: key words and phrases are repeated in the text.[10] But with one particular word--"plans"--Morrison signals Sethe's and Paul D's foiled agency by planting the word early in the text, then using it sparingly until the end of the second section of the novel when Sethe recounts the story she feels will justify her actions to Beloved. Between these two sections of text, any form of the word "plan" (as verb or noun) is used only four times in connection with Sethe or Paul D, and always reinforces the futility of their desire or agency. While the escapees from Alfred, Georgia, are "planning their next move," for example, Paul D is "without a plan," (112), and he "could not say what he planned to" (128) when he tries to tell Sethe of Beloved's seduction; Sethe is so "loaded with the past" it leaves her "no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day" (70). She plans but never asks Mrs. Garner for permission to spend time with the black midwife who delivered her babies when she has "no woman to help [her] get through" (160). "Plan" is associated with desire and with control over the body's agency, neither of which is allowed to Sethe and Paul D under the scenic dominance of slavery.

Morrison introduces this key word early in the novel, when Paul D has come to 124 and "gotten rid of" (19) the baby's ghost. The possibility for desire seems to exist between Sethe and Paul D, and as Sethe begins to consider this possibility, she recalls Denver's remark that "the baby got plans" (37). Sethe "think[s] about what the word could mean" after her first night with Paul D, and asks of herself, "Would it be all right to go ahead and feel? Go ahead and *count on something?*" (38, author's emphasis). The text hints proleptically of the consequences of a slave's making plans: "The one set of plans she had made–getting away from Sweet Home–went awry so completely she never dared life by making more" (38), and as the novel proceeds, we learn how the characters' desire to enact plans through their bodies' agency is always thwarted. The force of this futility builds, paradoxically in this case, through the *absence* of the word "plan": the presence of this absence signals the impossibility of desire for the characters, and creates a tension for readers by withholding information that would satisfy our narrative desire. This lack culminates toward the end of the novel when the slaves' most important plan–to escape from Sweet Home–is represented through Paul D's memory. This "Plan" (221) is generated by Sixo, the only slave who resists his contingency by refusing to speak the master's language and who ensures, in the end, some control over his body by regenerating its substance within the body of his "Thirty-Mile Woman" (222). Every contingency of the Sweet Home slaves' Plan to escape is carefully worked out to achieve their desire, BUT. The text presents an entire page (223) on which each of the following five consecutive paragraphs, and then a final paragraph, begins with the single word, "But." The visually graphic representation of this string of "buts" on the page enacts a

border the slaves' bodies cannot cross, and the repeated aural pounding drives home the utter futility of their desire, not only to escape, but also, for those who do escape, to claim "ownership over that freed self" (95). In fact, much of the novel's narrative tension comes from whether the characters will be able to overcome the contingency enforced by both symbolic and actual violence to abandon themselves to desire. As Paul D says: "to get to a place where you could love anything you chose–not to need permission for desire–well now, *that* was freedom" (162).

If contingency is problematic for the slave's disciplined body, for the communicative body, contingency is "its possibility" ("Analytical" 79). The communicative body can apprehend the past not as a time or place of lack, but as a source of possibilities for the ethical task of re-envisioning a future. Frank calls the communicative body "not only an ideal type but also an *idealized* type," because "its specifications are not only descriptive but provide an ethical ideal for bodies" (*Wounded* 48), the "undertaking of an ethical task" (*Wounded* 52). *Beloved* functions as a communicative body because first, the novel undertakes the task of providing an ethical ideal for the social body and, second, the novel focuses on its black characters' claiming ownership over their bodies by storying those bodies graphically: through the graphemes of the text, and through the marks *on* bodies that bear witness of the body's story. As Frank says, "The body itself *is* the message; humans commune through their bodies" (*Wounded* 50) and, therefore, claiming ownership over one's body signifies the ethical refusal to let *any* body be controlled by hegemonic practice: "Only the communicative body abjures appropriation, or such is its ideal" ("Analytical" 94).

The "flip-point" from bodies regimented by hegemonic representations to the communicative body will be, suggests Frank, "when the boundaries of the body are open" ("Analytical" 68). Since bodies act always on a continuum, they move across degrees of possibilities–time, space, and agency–depending on the contexts in which they find themselves. Flip points are moments of transformation, where a difference of degree becomes a difference in kind, the point at which one body type transforms to another. Each of Frank's body types is an ideal type which is "analytically separable only in isolated moments of [its] existence in real time and space" ("Analytical" 90); but in fact, as he says, because "the differences between them can only depend on how the practices are undertaken...the truth is a mess" ("Analytical" 61). Body types shift messily, but when they approach contingency as possibility, and when shared relationships intersect with productive desire and an associated self-relatedness, the body has the potential to "open" and realize itself:

> The body's association with itself...is a realization. What is realized is simply the body itself, producing itself, recursively, through the variations of a life which is no longer appropriated by institutions and discourses but is now the body's own. The body continues to be formed among institutions and discourses, but these are now media for its expression. For the communicative body institutions and discourses now enable more than they constrain. (Frank, "Analytical" 80).

Beloved is a communicative body which opens the boundaries between itself and the reader and thus invites the reader to "flip" from orthodox perspectives formed by hegemonic institutions and discourses into an embodied experience of an "other" reality.

This "other" reality is communicated by the body of the text through the embodied memories of its characters, which emerge in proximity to other bodies. When Paul D arrives at 124, his presence generates the surfacing of his, Sethe's, and Denver's memories that begin to represent, in horrific yet enticing fragments, the reality of the textual world which they inhabit and which readers must begin to feel as they put them together into a coherent story that will challenge a history abandoned by hegemonic practice. Morrison's narrative technique of withholding information is not only a narrative strategy but also the communicative body's ethical act of care, as if too sustained a disclosure would destroy the relatedness among the characters, and between the text and reader. The text voices this concern in Paul D's statement: "Saying more might push them both to a place they couldn't get back from" (72). Consequently, Paul D withholds from this reunion with Sethe the story of Halle and the butter, just as she and we will only later learn the details of Paul D's imprisonment in Alfred, Georgia.

At both of those times, Paul D is restrained—by the bit, and by chains—but although he has been appropriated by slavery's domination and has dealt with that contingency by disciplining himself to abandon desire—he "protected [him]self and loved small" (162)—in the relative safety of Sethe's kitchen, his disciplined body flips from being closed in upon itself to a willing connection with Sethe's:

> Behind her, bending down, his body an arc of kindness, he held her breasts in the palms of his hands. He rubbed his cheeks on her back and learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it; its wide trunk and intricate branches....And when...he saw the sculpture her back had become....he would tolerate no peace until he had touched every ridge and leaf of it with his mouth, none of which Sethe could feel because her back skin had been dead for years. What she knew was that the responsibility for her breasts, at last, was in somebody else's hands. (17-18)

This tender and intimate contact of body part with body part–in particular, Paul D's tracing the tree-like scar on Sethe's body with his mouth–enacts the possibility for relation between Sethe and Paul D, both of whom have become "monadic," or isolated within their own bodies, in reaction to the discipline they've had to maintain.[11] Taking responsibility for another's body, feeling its scarred witness, is the text's way of modeling the transformation enabled by relatedness to cross boundaries: the third dimension of Frank's continua within which the body acts, "its sense of its *relation to others*," may be monadic or "dyadic, existing in relation of mutual constitution with others." The dyadic body of the text opens itself to the reader "as a medium through which self and other are connected" ("Analytical" 52). The place from which the reader reads connects, in the text, with the site of slavery and the way it has placed the bodies of its victims. "Places are powerful histories," notes Kate Cummings, and we find "the most compelling histories of

domination and resistance....in...wounded bodies....These bodies impinge upon our bodies in the act of reading so that history is registered viscerally, flesh calling out to flesh" (553).

This visceral connection, and its possibility for transforming and transvaluing the meaning of history the text embodies for the reader, continues to be modulated through bodies. While Sethe's and Paul D's sudden and unaccustomed desire leaves them resentful of one another as they lie close together in bed, their touching bodies remain the medium for the recall of memories the reader must be made privy to. Their coupling provokes Paul D to remember Sweet Home and the other Sweet Home "men," particularly Sixo, whose way of dealing with contingency and desire leads Paul D to think, "Now *there* was a man" (22); a brush of his elbow against Sethe's shoulder activates her memory of Mrs. Garner's kitchen, a place Sethe had "to take the ugly out of" (22) before she could work there, and of Halle, and of Baby Suggs's "nast[y]...life" (23). As Sethe remembers her six fortunate years of marriage to Halle,[12] she jostles Paul D by crossing her ankles, spurring him to remember Sixo's courtship of the Thirty-Mile Woman. Paul D turns toward Sethe, and his movement and the weight of "his gaze...on her face" (25) calls from her more memories of Halle, the kind of "wedding" they had (26), and their coupling in the corn.[13] She uncrosses her ankles and, at that contact, Paul D's memory of Halle's taking Sethe to the corn merges with hers; he moves once again, and Sethe remembers the broken corn stalks and the "cornsilk hair" (27).

In eight pages (21-27), the text imparts to the reader a thick pastiche of details about the histories of the Sweet Home slaves, and does so in a kind of dialogue between the memories of Sethe and Paul D, stimulated by the close relation of their bodies. This

bodied relation heals the resentful breach between them so that their individual memories converge at a point of "simple joy": the conjoining of a young couple in a cornfield, shared by friends who also partake of the corn's "juice." The text demonstrates that "no matter" how "jailed-up" bodies are, their relation communicates fluidly across boundaries. The condition for fluidity is the breaking down of boundaries, which opens the possibility for transformation between the characters, and between the text and the reader. The resonance of the repeated word, "free," in Sethe's and Paul's fused perspectives, communicates to the reader that what Sethe and Paul D have in common–a concern with their own sense of agency–expands into larger ethical implications:

> How loose the silk. How quick the jailed-up flavor ran free.
>
> No matter what all your teeth and wet fingers anticipated, there was no accounting for the way that simple joy could shake you.
>
> How loose the silk. How fine and loose and free. (27)

Freedom for a slave involves more than fleeing the bonds/boundaries of the slave system; hegemony continues its practice until it is confronted as an ethical, substantive matter. Sethe later recognizes that "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership over that freed self was another " (95), but this ownership, as the novel goes on to demonstrate, is not an individual, monadic affair. Each of the characters, and the reader, must have access to the buried memories that, together, constitute shared experience. The narrator celebrates this possibility by bringing the past event of Sethe and Halle's marriage into the textual present of Sethe and Paul D's union: their separate memories conflate, and the

chapter ends with an epithalamion marked by the alliterative fluidity of repeated sibilants: "How loose the silk. How fine and loose and free" (27).

Sethe and Paul D, through the relation of their shared memories, create a realm of safety within which their contingency is reduced. They flip from being disciplined bodies, monadic and lacking desire, to dyadic communicative bodies which embody *Beloved*'s purpose: as Frank maintains,

> Dyadic contingency becomes the body's potential to realize itself diffusely. Desire is producing, [and] the communicative body's desire is for dyadic expression....It produces itself...as an expressiveness recreating a world of which it is part. ("Analytical" 80)

The task Morrison sets for *Beloved*, in its re-membering of fragmented memories and bodies and its dyadic inclusion of the reader's sharing in its own making, is this ethical recreation of a world which might be. The essential quality of the communicative body, as Frank explains it, "is that it is a body *in process* of creating itself....The task is...to bring together fragments of its emergence" ("Analytical" 79). These fragments are brought together in Morrison's metaphoric perspective of rememory, as embodied by Beloved.

REMEMORY AS THE POSSIBILITY FOR TRANSFORMATION

The novel opens with a spiteful baby ghost and closes with the single word "Beloved" (275). Circumscribed within this frame, the connection across boundaries that Beloved represents is symbolized in the text by the bridge Beloved claims to have stood

on before finding her way to 124. Her omnipresence as both spirit and fleshly child embodies communal and individual memories of a vicious past, and her contact with the readers and characters of the novel moves us all to cross a bridge to "go back," moves us to re-member what has been "disremembered and unaccounted for." As one who crosses the boundaries between the dead and the living, one who changes from spirit to child to mature pregnant woman, she embodies as well the possibility for transformation: instead of a history we all, for various reasons, have been too eager to forget, she provokes a fluid narrative that will communicate, through the body, painful stories that summon a reconstruction of "reality" and of the ethic of hegemonic practices.

As a narrative strategy, the ghostly intervention of Beloved enacts the text's purpose of reclaiming another way of knowing about our hegemonic condition. We know that Toni Morrison's early life was filled with "[b]lack lore, black music, black language, and all the myths and rituals of black culture"; in particular, that "her parents told thrilling and terrifying ghost stories," so that her "childhood world [was] filled with signs, visitations, and ways of knowing that encompassed more than concrete reality" (McKay 396). This "other" way of knowing, what Arnold L. Weinstein calls "[t]he logic of ghosts[,] is wonderfully pure":

> It announces that spirit is real, outlives flesh, and refuses to be silenced. It is the very voice of history, the stubborn vocal evidence that others preceded us, that we despoiled them, that we too were Other and have despoiled ourselves. Ghosts announce that nothing is ever over. They are a

> strident language of permanency that punctures the here and now, keeps the wounds bleeding, shows what awful material "progress" is made of, brings unwelcome tidings. (268)

These unwelcome tidings are presaged in the opening line of the novel–"124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom"–to suggest the permanence and scope of such venom.[14] Weinstein suggests that the "baby's venom is narrative itself; the stories, the unspeakable past, must be told, exorcised, if there is to be peace; until then the unquiet dead will growl and sigh, and the denied ghosts will tear the place up, much the way 124 is terrorized by the virulence of its dictatorial haint" (269).

Paul D tries to exorcise this "haint," but she materializes in response. Her materialization as a fleshly body begins the shift from memory–the monadic recounting of the past–to rememory–the dyadic transformation of recollection to a reconstructed comprehension in the present of just what that past means. The healing potential of rememory is available only when shared, and its present force obtains not only for the characters involved, but for anyone, including the reader, who enters its sphere:

> Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. (36)

Apprehending and healing the symbolic and actual violence of the past through bumping

into some body's rememory is the ethical project of the communicative body; in *Beloved*, crucial scenes "are never just individual events or independent memories of those events," agrees Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, but "a project of community, memory always situated within a context of rememory" (304). Beloved provides this context; she is the fluid principle of connection that moves Paul D, Denver, and Sethe back to rememory themselves into the bounds of community.

When Paul D arrives at 124, he does so as one who "had shut down a generous portion of his head" (41), and his response to the contingency of his existence–his monadic stifling of desire–is widely noted in the text. His memories are sealed off in "that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (72-3), and "[b]y the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry it open" (113). But, in fact, Beloved is not precisely of "this world," and she moves him irresistably: his self-discipline, even conceived as fealty to his relation to Sethe, is useless. Frank's fourth dimension of the continua along which bodies act is the self-relatedness of the body. He asks, "Does the body consciousness associate itself with its own being...or dissociate itself from that corporeality?" ("Analytical" 52). Paul D's "tobacco tin" is an image that recurs in the text to signify his dissociation from his body's corporeality: under constant psychic and physical assault, that body has been victimized by the abuse that results from its being commodified as a debased, generic substance. Differentiated from his brothers only by Garner's tag–the letter "D"–it is no wonder, as Weinstein summarizes, that "Paul D agonizes about his manhood, experiences his drastic lack of autonomy and integrity as a series of parts, is sexually humbled by the rooster of Sweet Home, appropriately named Mister" (272). The

very purpose of "mortification practices," says Frank, "is to cultivate an attitude of dissociation" ("Analytical" 156); when Sethe asks Paul D where the "wildness in [his] eye" is that she assumes the bit would have put there, he answers: "There's a way to put it there and there's a way to take it out. I haven't figured out yet which is worse" (71). Paul D has learned to tolerate the degradation of his body by dissociative acts, by being "in but not of the body" (Frank, "Analytical" 56).

Frank enlarges on Foucault's theory of the disciplined body to point out that, while

> we may see domination as imposed,...to understand its effectiveness, we must also understand this domination as chosen. Bodily domination is never imposed by some abstract societal Other; only bodies can do things to other bodies. Most often, what is done depends on what bodies do to themselves. ("Analytical" 56)

I have been maintaining that hegemonic representations enable dividing practices that subject certain members of society to violence, both symbolic and actual; but symbolic violence can become actual–physical and psychological–only when the dominant representational symbols are accepted as "true" by actual bodies who then enact violence as a consequence of "doing what comes naturally." In *Beloved*, the bodies who dominate other bodies are, primarily, the Garners, schoolteacher, and even the Bodwins. Outside *Beloved*, the bodies who dominate others may be those of us who accede to and act from hegemonic representations because they support our possessive investment in whiteness. *Beloved* asks us to politicize those representations, to transform our bodies from

dominating to communicative first, by recognizing the terms on which these representations operate; second, by abandoning the instrumentality of those terms; and third, by opening ourselves to the witness of bodies who have been subjected to their acts.

Paul D demonstrates that perhaps the most heinous effect of those acts is their indirect imposition of self-domination through "truth games." Frank explains truth games as "discourses" which relate to the ways bodies understand themselves ("Analytical" 56). Paul D understands himself through the metaphor of his tobacco tin as self-control: the hardened, impervious man is the truth; the maintenance of the tobacco tin's shut lid becomes the daily truth game; and dissociation is the disciplinary regimen. As Frank notes, "The truth game is always a contest: [the tobacco tin versus the feeling body]. But the game cannot be won." The integrity of the tobacco tin's lid can determine only if Paul D's body "is continuing to play, game without end." Bodies who are dominated will play truth games because believing in the possibilities of one's own truth is preferable to dissolution and despair. When power moves from symbolic to embodied, it "takes its volition from each person's search for his or her own truth" (Frank, "Analytical" 57), and that is why Beloved's moving Paul D to an "other" truth, one that is not a game, is one of the most luminous moments in the text.

"She moved him" (114) marks the text's terse introduction to and summation of this process, which is presented as an elemental, irresistible tide that shifts Paul D helplessly in its flow. This movement signifies more than just a coupling between Paul D and Beloved: there is a fusion of Beloved's cleaved self, of name and body; and of Paul D's choked past and present condition. "I want you to touch me on the inside part and

call me my name," demands Beloved, and when Paul D can no longer withstand her, it is his own dissociated body that surges to life:

> "Beloved." He said it, but she did not go. She moved closer with a footfall he did not hear and he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made either as they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin. So when the lid gave he didn't know it. What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "Red heart. Red heart," over and over again. Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D himself. "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart." (117)

The passionate language of the text speaks of and through the body to join and forge relatedness. Paul D's "Red heart," which has been beaten to death and interred in the coffin of his tobacco tin, moves out of the cliche of some Valentine's Day discourse to denote the beating pulse of the corporeal body.

Beloved's coupling with Paul D accomplishes a fusion of his resurrected self-relatedness with a past from which it has been divided, a past which she embodies. His connection with her moves Paul D to go back to "some ocean-deep place he once belonged to" (264), the connection with his ancestors and the sea-going slave ships of the Middle Passage. Only after his coupling with Beloved does Paul D abandon himself to a "life hunger" (264) that propels him to reclaim ownership of his own body through the painful work of becoming re-present to himself in his own terms. Like Sethe, "he didn't

understand the words" (227) Sixo shared with Sethe's mother. "But the message–that was and had been there all along" (62), and his journey back leads him to imagine himself in a discourse other than Garner's, which "isolated [him] in a wonderful lie" (221). *Beloved* reminds us that, as Satya P. Mohanty puts it in his study of the postcolonial condition,

> We cannot really claim ourselves morally until we have reconstructed our collective identity, reexamined our dead and our disremembered. This project is not simply one of adding to our ancestral line, for...it often involves fundamental discoveries about what ancestry is, what continuity consists in, how cultural meanings do not just sustain themselves through history but are in fact materially embodied and fought for. (67)

When Paul D returns to 124, the text tells us "his coming is the reverse of his going" (270), not simply because he approaches 124 from the rear but, more importantly, because he has revised the abstract "moral law" represented by a hegemonic practice that denies its own constructedness, the "law" that allowed him to judge Sethe: "You got two feet, Sethe, not four" (165). By the end of the novel, when he returns to join his life with Sethe's, Paul D's rememoried past has reconstructed the connective identity which enables his dominated body to flip to a communicative body: rememory has brought him, and the reader, back to "a place where you could love anything you chose" (162).

Beloved, says Weinstein, "is the red heart of the novel, the 'returnee' from 'over

there' who re-fuses what violence and death have sundered" (273). What she re-fuses most immediately is the divided family:

> She is the sister Denver has lost; she turns Paul D's tobacco tin into a red heart; she is, above all, the living child, and she displays for us the indestructible mother-daughter bond at the core of Morrison's vision. The world of slavery is one of atomized parts, and schoolteacher is its metaphysician of abstract measurements and labels. But the other view, the view from "over there," is one of pure continuum, of endless connectedness, of the integral and holy body, of fusion rather than separation. (Weinstein 275)

Although Sethe will not recognize Beloved as her daughter until later in the text, when she first sees her sitting on a stump in the yard of 124, Sethe's bladder fills with such urgency that she voids as if it were "water breaking from a breaking womb" (51). The repetition of the word "breaking" reminds us of all that has been broken apart by slavery, but Beloved's presence will bridge the absence left by those fractures; rememory will join what has been separated.

While Sethe's womb-like flow most obviously signifies the (re)birth of Beloved, Sethe's memory connects it at once to the first sight of her own mother and to the birth of her younger daughter, signifying more obliquely the birth through rememory of her matrilineal connection. This connection prompts Sethe to reject the text's animal simile in favor of a matrilineal link to her younger daughter:

> Not since she was a baby girl, being cared for by the eight-year-old girl who pointed out her mother to her, had she had an emergency that unmanageable....Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born. (51)

Immediately following the simile, "like a horse," the text interjects "she *thought*," suggesting the uncertainty implicit in that word, then reinforces Sethe's misguidedness by adding "No." Even this fleeting connection to her mother enables Sethe to elevate herself to human, albeit a deformed human, status: "Just about the time she started wondering if the carnival would accept another freak, it stopped" (51).

Sethe has been both misguided and de-formed by the white world and, like Paul D, has become both monadic and dissociated from her own corporeality, dealing with her contingency by spending her life "beating back the past" (73). But Beloved provides the generational bridge which enables Sethe to rememory and to communicate what she formerly believed was unspeakable. These rememories embody Sethe's matrilineal links and her possibility to re-form a self free from domination; the text communicates to the reader the same possibility by expressing itself as bodied speech: blood, urine, and milk are the primary fluids that voice communal, corporeal stories which challenge abstract representational practice.

Like the "[s]pores of bluefern" growing along the Ohio river where Sethe gives birth to Denver accompanied by Amy/Aimee, Sethe's rememories release these stories, which are "seeds in which the whole generation sleeps confident of a future" (84).[15]

Frank's insistence on the healing potential of stories from wounded storytellers relies on the power of these stories "to shift the dominant cultural conceptions" of the wounded as passive "victim" (*Wounded xi*) toward active creators of "empathic bonds between themselves and their listeners" (*xii*). Sethe's stories "transform fate into experience; the [wound] that sets the body apart from others becomes, in the story, the common bond of suffering that joins bodies in their shared vulnerability" (*xi*).

And these stories emerge in response to Beloved's insistent desire: they "became a way to feed her":

> Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable. (58)

Sethe's pain has formerly caused her to silence her body. But now the text signals that her dissociation from her own body is shifting as a result of the connection with Beloved and, through Beloved, with her own mother. The pain changes to a hurt "like a tender place in the corner of her mouth that the bit left" in her mother's mouth. As she begins to tell a story, Sethe's desire surfaces: she finds herself "wanting to, liking it"; telling stories suddenly becomes "an unexpected pleasure" (58).

Formerly, Sethe has hardly thought about her mother, who has been categorized and commodified by slavery into a generic "Ma'am" (30) (much as the "Pauls" are generic at Sweet Home). But in response to Beloved's queries, Sethe remembers something more

singular about her mother. In perhaps the only contact they have ever had beyond the "two or three weeks" (60) each nameless Ma'am was permitted to nurse her baby, Sethe remembers that her Ma'am

> never fixed my hair nor nothing. She didn't even sleep in the same cabin most nights, I remember. Too far from the line-up I guess. One thing she did do. She picked me up and carried me behind the smokehouse. Back there she opened her dress front and lifted her breast and pointed under it. Right on her rib was a circle and cross burnt right in the skin. She said, "This is your ma'am. This," and she pointed. "I am the only one got this mark now. The rest dead. If something happens to me and you can't tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark." Scared me so. All I could think of was how important this was and how I needed to have something important to say back, but I couldn't think of anything so I just said what I thought. "Yes, Ma'am," I said. "But how will you know me? How will you know me? Mark me too," I said. "Mark the mark on me too." (61)

These are Sethe's earliest memories, prior to Sweet Home, and we can read them as a story that bears witness of both loss and kinship, told by the body. Five times the text repeats the word "mark," which speaks the body's specifically corporeal disfigurement by

slavery–the skin symbol of circle and cross burned into the body–as well as the symbolic way bodies are marked as "other" by dividing practices. And twice the text repeats, "how will you know me?" to emphasize the child Sethe's desperate cry for connection with the mother who will be forced by her contingency under slavery to abandon her. Although the circle and cross Sethe's mother bears is the generic mark of slavery, the de-identification of black women into "Ma'ams," between Sethe and her mother it bodily re-inscribes a recognition of relatedness: a mother-daughter kinship language of breasts and skin symbols that will signify the connection of family even under slavery's dismemberment.

What Sethe did not know as a child was that she too would be marked by slavery, and her monadic refusal to remember her mother abandons this matrilineal link. She has dissociated herself from the pain of knowing that her mother ran off and left her; as Deborah Horvitz explains, "Sethe's memories of her mother are buried not only because their relationship was vague and their contact prohibited but also because those recollections are inextricably woven with feelings of painful abandonment" (159). These feelings of painful abandonment cause Beloved to cry, in an agony of loss, "Why did you leave me who am you?" (216) Through Beloved, the text embodies the cry of the "Sixty Million and more," all the disremembered and dispossessed. This cry challenges our very construction of substance: on what basis do we draw the lines that divide our bodies from others'? How do we mark substance so that our representations enable us to abandon what is substantially the same? In abandoning our connection to all those others who are us, we, along with Sethe, eradicate not only Beloved and the potential for rememory, but all the "Beloveds" who are re-counted among the others on the slave ship by her ghost-

child's dreadful reverie of the Middle Passage. The rememory enabled by Beloved is the text's way of reminding us that borders are always permeable, that no body speaks without the other, that substance is fundamentally one, and that storytelling is a communal and communicative event. Rememory connects us with this past history and challenges our moralistically weighted vocabulary by communicating to us an ideally weighted vocabulary, one which Cummings calls "the Mother('s) Tongue" (552).

As Sethe explains her earliest memories to Beloved and Denver, other memories she has forgotten are loosed and connect around the woman, Nan, who "yanked her away from the pile before she could make out [her mother's] mark" (62). Nan was the one

> who used different words. Words Sethe understood then but could neither recall nor repeat now. She believed that must be why she remembered so little before Sweet Home except singing and dancing and how crowded it was. What Nan told her she had forgotten along with the language she told it in. The same language her ma'am spoke, and it would never come back. But the message–that was and had been there all along. Holding the damp white sheets against her chest, she was picking meaning out of a code she no longer understood. (62)

Sethe has been "schooled" in the master's language, representations that have cut her off from her own body's story. Coming a quarter of the way through the novel, here is Sethe's rememory that powers the others, the connection with her mother's language, a

"code" passed on through the body that challenges the "damp white" (one can hardly avoid hearing "damn white") vocabulary that has constrained her body like a shroud.

But perhaps the more crucial part of this rememory Beloved awakens in Sethe is the story Nan told the "small girl Sethe":

> She told Sethe that both her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew. "She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The others she did not put her arms around. Never. Never. Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe." (62)

In short, declarative sentences that drill the point home with blunt emphasis, the text repeats the verb phrase beginning "threw" in four consecutive sentences, distinguishing clearly between what must be discarded and what must be held on to: that which ensures continuity. Sethe's mother *never, never* held on to the product of intercourse with whites, but she passed on to Sethe, "gave" her, the name of the man she loved. Weinstein points out that these two passages are "what we reductively call background, but we gradually understand that the quest in *Beloved* is precisely for background: the characters' tortured and blocked sense of their own origins....And by the time we finish this novel, we can see in this story of Sethe's 'ma'am' the central enabling paradigm of the entire fiction: to make

and/or recover the forgotten mother language" (285). What Sethe did not understand then, but does as her rememory makes it re-present to her, is this code's message which has helped her survive to bear witness through her body's story. As well, she understands that she "sprang from a chosen union, a full embrace. This recovery of the mother eloquently offsets the disabling countertruth of slave culture: the absent mother, the abandoned child, the ungrounded self" (Weinstein 285). Here is the ideally weighted vocabulary that offsets the disabling representations that divide or dissociate the disciplined body from a full embrace of the other. The communicative body of the text speaks *in terms of* the other, to witness and embrace its substance.

Sethe and Paul D have survived slavery's depradations, but have done so only at the cost of disciplining themselves to resist contingency by becoming monadic, by forgetting desire, and by dissociating themselves from their bodies. But survival, as Frank notes, "does not include any responsibility other than continuing to survive." At the end of the novel, Paul D will re-member Sethe's body parts so that "the parts hold" (272), and he will do that by "put[ting] his story next to hers" so that their unspeakable "yesterday" will testify to "some kind of tomorrow" (273). *Beloved*, through Beloved, embodies the transformative power of rememory to heal the divided body by making the connections that allow it not simply to survive, but to speak its story and bear witness. "Becoming a witness assumes a responsibility for telling what happened. The witness offers testimony to a truth that is generally unrecognized or suppressed....What is testified to remains the really real, and in the end what counts are duties toward it" (Frank, *Wounded* 137-8).

BEARING WITNESS TO THE REALLY REAL

The duties toward testifying to the "really real" are borne by Denver, but it becomes possible for her to bear testimony only after intervention by Beloved. The one character in *Beloved* willing to dwell on the past, Denver is interested, however, in only the story of her own birth, which she never tires of hearing and rehearsing. In the years after Sethe's murder of her "crawling already? girl" (152), Denver has lost all contact with the world outside 124, even going deaf for two years in response to a question about those cataclysmic events. Her self-absorption is confirmed by her unwillingness to hear and remember any events other than those of her birth; by dealing with her body's problem in this way, Denver conforms to Frank's "mirroring body" type: she guards against her body's contingency by consuming only the predictable story made available for it, and she remains monadic, "open to an exterior world, but monadic in [her] appropriation of that world" ("Analytical" 61). Worn out by loneliness and loss–for Baby Suggs, for her brothers, for her dead sister, and even, after Paul D's arrival, for her sister's ghost–she resents Paul D's intrusion as the object of her mother's attention: "They were a twosome," she thinks, "saying 'Your daddy' and 'Sweet Home' in a way that made it clear both belonged to them and not to her" (13). If the disciplined body makes itself predictable by stifling desire in fear of its own contingency, the mirroring body, says Frank, "is endlessly *producing* desires in order to keep its lack unconscious" ("Analytical 62").

Desiring her mother's undivided attention and the predictability of her own birth story provokes Denver to associate her body only with its surface appearance as her mother's child; Sethe, for Denver, is not a complex body with her own stories to tell, but

merely an object of desire. When Paul D tells Denver the last time he saw her she was "pushing out the front of [Sethe's] dress," Sethe remarks that Denver "Still is,...provided she can get in it" (11). "As the [mirroring] body sees the object it immediately aligns itself in some fit with that object; its desire is to make the object part of its image of itself. Thus the object becomes a mirror in which the body sees itself reflected, but only...on its own terms" (Frank, "Analytical" 62). Only in contact with Beloved can Denver's terms shift to a bodied relatedness with Sethe's story; she flips from acting as a mirroring body to being the communicative body that assumes responsibility for bearing witness. When Denver once again rehearses Sethe's account of Amy's assistance in delivering her kicking body, she does it as she and Beloved "lay down together" in bed: "Denver was seeing it now and feeling it–through Beloved. Feeling how it must have felt to her mother." She gives "blood to the scraps her mother and grandmother had told her–and a heartbeat." As it emerged from Beloved's contact with Paul D, the body's speech here again expresses itself as blood and beating heart, and Denver shifts from being monadic to dyadic: "The monologue became, in fact, a duet....Denver spoke, Beloved listened, and the two did the best they could to create what really happened, how it really was" (78).

Communicating how it really, really was is the task of Beloved/*Beloved*; but to enact that ethical task, the healing potential of rememory must be made public. Denver too has to "go back"; she leaves the cauldron of 124 where her mother's "thick love" and Beloved's insatiable desire has materialized as a substance so dense that "it was difficult for Denver to tell who was who" (241). Weinstein rightly observes that "the basic reality principle of this novel is the indestructible mother-child continuum, that it cannot be

ruptured because thick love holds, binds together, more than slavery or even handsaws can separate" (279). But thick love is also tyrannical; it possesses, it kills. And the desire summoned by the ineradicable losses of Beloved/*Beloved* are unappeasable. Denver warns Beloved that Sethe "chews and swallows" (216): Sethe's claim that she has "milk enough for all" (100) is a truth game, one in which "care" emerges as a disciplinary regimen that dominates not only Sethe's body, but those bodies she wishes to exercise power over in reaction to their selfsame contingency.[16] In discussing Sethe's "outrageous claim" of motherhood, Morrison explains that Sethe

> merges into that role, and it's unleashed and it's fierce. She almost steps over into what she was terrified of being regarded as, which is an animal. It's an excess of maternal feeling, a total surrender to that commitment, and...such excesses are not good. (in Darling 6)

Sethe's excess of maternal feeling, her outrageous claim, is that she *owns* her children; when she, Beloved, and Denver are closed up within 124, she thought-speaks: "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine" (200). Although the ownership Sethe, Beloved, and Denver each claim over the others embodies the text's tragic insistence on maternal continuity in the face of slavery's severing force, and we can hardly resist the somatic "right" of each to claim such ownership, the ethical claim of the communicative body is for ownership of *itself*; owning another's body reifies the conditions of slavery. Frank reminds us that "[b]odies discipline themselves, but they do so within institutions and discourses that are not their own. Thus we have the paradox that resistance will often reproduce that which it

initially opposed" ("Analytical" 60). The ideal function of the communicative body is to commune *with*, not to *become* the other, which is why, near the novel's close, Paul D wishes to put his story *next to* Sethe's. Becoming another is an act of possession, and *Beloved* demonstrates that possession kills, and must not be tolerated.

Denver recognizes this crucial moment of possession, when Sethe and Beloved have become one another and murder, in reverse, is imminent:

> Then it seemed to Denver the thing was done: Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child, for other than those times when Beloved needed her, Sethe confined herself to a corner chair. The bigger Beloved got, the smaller Sethe became; the brighter Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that never used to look away became slits of sleeplessness. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled with it, grew taller on it. (250)

The key clause, "the thing was done," sets up the description of possession as a grammatical series of opposites (mother/child, bigger/smaller) where one term eventually consumes the other and grows fatter and taller from the act. As readers, we "know" that Beloved is pregnant, most reasonably from Paul D's seed, but the grammar models the institution of slavery, which "does its thing"–grows and fattens–by feeding off the bodies of others, reproducing itself by claiming ownership over their product. And the hegemony

that enables slavery does so in a secrecy as hidden as these acts in 124 because it "forgets" the substance of the ground from which it acts. The irony of the text's perspective by incongruity is increased if we remember that this child Beloved carries is the child Paul D wanted to have with Sethe: their product has been dis-placed by an act of possession as ruthless as slavery's.

Denver has been excluded from this fierce metamorphosis taking place between her mother and Beloved. In her time closed up with them at 124, she has internally voiced her fears of her own contingency, centred on Sethe's too thick love–"the thing in her that makes it all right to kill her children"–and the threat of white people, which "comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on in the yard if it wants to" (206). But having been moved by Beloved outside her monadic isolation, Denver rememories that, even after white people did come in the yard and Sethe killed in response, her safety lay in closeness with Baby Suggs. In Baby Suggs's room, Sethe "can't get to [Denver] in the night" (206), but perhaps more importantly, Denver rememories that "Grandma Baby....boarded up the back door...because she said she didn't want to make that journey no more. She built around it to make a storeroom, so if you want to get in 124 you have to come by her" (207). Baby Suggs rejects the boundary white people draw at their front door, requiring black people to enter from the rear; now, when Denver enters or leaves 124, she has to "come by her," draw on her rememory of contact with Baby Suggs. This relation with Baby Suggs enables Denver to bear her own contingency. Even while she remembers Baby Suggs's and Sethe's conversations about whites, Denver remembers too Baby Suggs's final words which tell her that it is *because*

of what their family's bodies have suffered at the hands of whites that she must leave the porch. Denver bears the responsibility of the communicative body; she must "*Know it*, and go on out the yard. Go on" (244, my emphasis). The text repeats "go on" to widen the implication of the terms: Denver must *continue*; she must join with the community of the text, just as *Beloved* must join with the community of readers, to bear witness of all she rememories, so that what is really real can be known.

To do so, she too goes back; her first act to re-join the community and to realize her body is to return to Lady Jones, the woman who taught her "the beauty of the letters in her name" (102).[17] "The power of connection between name and identity is experienced," as Dana Heller rightly points out, "not simply in the rejection of the slave name, but in the exchange of stories that provide a context in which the name functions as an arbiter of history and identity" (113). Having left Lady Jones (significantly, as she was practicing writing the letter "i") in response to Nelson Lord's question about her mother's crime, Denver has lost this context but, even after twelve years of isolation, "the way came back" (245). In going back to Lady Jones, Denver courageously accepts her dyadic contingency, which is the body's potential to realize itself diffusely. She realizes this diffusion as "a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve" (252), and this desire transforms her to a communicative body, where "diffusion is no longer a threat of dissolution but the various possibilities of pleasure and expression" (Frank, "Analytical" 80). Her body is now her own, and she acts to save her mother and herself through the healing process of bearing witness. She rejoins the community understanding that "[n]obody was going to help her unless she told it–told all of it" (253). That her resource

for transformation is the realization of her own body is revealed in the pronoun: "she" is the subject/agent who must tell; but by her dydadic telling, she becomes the object ("her") of help.[18]

Denver crosses the boundary between an isolated place where bodies consume one another and a place where bodies commune in caring relation. Having secured a job with the Bodwins, Denver sits on the porch of 124, waiting for Mr. Bodwin to come. She is uneasy because of a frightening dream of "a pair of running shoes," a metonymic term for fleeing slaves. The text twice repeats that Denver "was looking to the right," tripling the emphasis by ending the paragraph with that phrase slightly recast: Denver "looked to the right" (257). What Denver fears is the contingency of slavery, the site of dismemberment and consumption. The "right" she watches for uneasily is the principle of order which enacts such practices, the "right" which Bodwin, and all the whites Baby Suggs has warned her of, represent. An atmosphere of stench and decay pervades the scene, a textual scene:act construction in which we can "trust the devil to make his presence known." Consequently, Denver does not at first see the "thirty women," who come from "the left" (258)–an "other" place. These women are, in effect, what is "left" of slavery's depradations, and they come to help:

> Some brought what they could and what they believed would work. Stuffed in apron pockets, strung around their necks, lying in the space between their breasts. Others brought Christian faith–as shield and sword.[19] Most brought a little of both. (257)

This communal action reasserts a connection which is not only cultural but bodied–necks and breasts in this context "other" than the "right" bear what "would work": the resources for countering possession. The healing power of community is dyadic–it extends not only to Sethe, but to the women themselves, who "go back" to a time before their monadic "meanness" prevented them from warning Baby Suggs and Sethe of schoolteacher's approach.

They take "a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like" (259). The text negates the biblical injunction, "In the beginning was the Word," because this Word is the voice of authority, the author of "right" principles of order that divide the social body and de-termine whom we see as human. Instead, the text asserts a different perspective: "In the beginning was the *sound*," and to ensure that we hear it, the aural repetition of "sound sounded" turns the term *into* sound, one that resounds repeatedly between the text and the reader as "the *sound* that broke the back of words," "a wave of *sound* wide enough to *sound* deep water." This sound the thirty women make is "the key, the code" (261) that breaks the back of words, words used to determine black people as "slaves" and "animals." It sounds to the depths of the sea where the Sixty Million and more were lost or carried into slavery. This is the sound that opens "wide" the possibility to hear all those voices, to join a communicative body so that not just Sethe, but we, can be "baptized in its wash" (261), cleansed of the stain of hegemony. Denver's bearing witness brings the thirty women to 124 to exorcize Beloved and free Sethe from her possession by an unspeakable past, and her witness communicates even more strongly that *Beloved* is a

story of how the past can and will possess us unless we take a step back from the language we use and examine what goes unspoken. Our own possessive investment in whiteness is maintained by those representations which allow us to act as dominating bodies, but the text communicates to us that there is "[s]ome other way" (165) that is "really real," a possibility for transforming the dominating body into the communicative body.

I have been describing the black characters of *Beloved* as wounded bodies, taking my cue from Frank's work on illness experience and embodiment; but *Beloved* demonstrates that it is racist society which is ill. Our unexamined stories, Frank says, "are about living in the fundamental conditions of the ill body: lack, dissociation, contingency, and monadic self-relatedness." "There are then," he continues, "two kinds of ill: those who remain in this condition [as] captives of their condition, and those who achieve interpersonal recognition, through some combination of their own efforts and the care of others" ("Analytical" 87). Recognizing the "other" is the medium of the communicative body, and *Beloved* both enacts and provokes such recognition.

My trajectory in this chapter, from social divisions to the communicative body to bearing witness to the real, has conceived of Beloved as the metaphoric embodiment of rememory and its possibility for transforming orthodox perspectives into recognition of the "other." But that trajectory has overleapt the textual mystery of Beloved's origins. Her origins are mysterious because the text offers multiple possibilities for what or who she may be: A ghost? Sethe's dead baby come back to life? A girl locked up for years by a white man? The characters have their own ideas; certainly Sethe believes Beloved to be her actual child, and Denver believes her to be her sister, and each of these "truths" works

within the text. But for the reader, what is most haunting about Beloved is how she is *not* daughter or sister, but the embodiment of a real past. At the beginning of Part Three of the novel, the narrator recounts the arguments between Sethe and Beloved: "Beloved accused her of leaving her behind. Of not being nice to her, not smiling at her. She said they were the same, had the same face, how could she have left her?" When Sethe responds,

> Beloved wasn't interested. She said when she cried there was no one. That dead men lay on top of her. That she had nothing to eat. Ghosts without skin stuck their fingers in her and said beloved in the dark and bitch in the light. (241)

Here is a story of real horrors: the slave ship, abandonment, rape. Deborah Horvitz has convincingly argued that Beloved has multiple identities beyond those rooted in the story:

> At the same time she represents the spirit of all the women dragged onto slave ships in Africa and also all Black women in America trying to trace their ancestry back to the mother on the ship attached to them. Beloved is the haunting presence who becomes the spirit of the women from "the other side." (157)

These multiple identities are meticulously drawn from the text by Horvitz to demonstrate their forging links, a "fluidity of identity among Sethe's mother, Sethe's grandmother, and the murdered two-year-old, so that Beloved is both an individual and a collective being....Beloved is the crucial link that connects Africa and America for the enslaved

woman. She is Sethe's mother; she is Sethe herself; she is her daughter" (163-64).

Beloved connects not only the characters in the text, but also those beyond the text, those African women and men who once existed, only to be forgotten, disremembered and unaccounted for by history. She is the communicative body who enables the reader, through her bearing witness, to recognize and join in communing with those "others." To reinforce the perspective Beloved offers and to bring it into present reality, the text represents her lyrical passage (210-213) without orthodox rules of order: sentences begin without capitalization, paragraphs are not clearly defined, and, after the first sentence, open spaces replace conventional punctuation. Without conventional spacing, paragraphs abandon their closure, and without punctuation, time abandons its markers: "All of it is now it is always now" (210). What we are being offered is the shape of reality itself: diffuse moments linked not by boundaries but by openness. Morrison, as Weinstein accurately puts it, "has written her facts of dis-memberment into a fiction of re-membering":

> Her task was to depict the conditions of severance and blockage, but to reconfigure them, by dint of the very language by which they were conveyed, into a fable of connection. For such a project fluidity rather than line was necessary; for such a novel the body must receive its due and find its long-muted voice. Finally, in such a venture we must see connectedness as the very shape of experience

> rather than the isolated, contoured world of individual careers and discrete objects. (282)

"Beloved" begins and ends the text; the title is an address, and the final word a lamentation for what has been abandoned. Hegemonic representation forgets that its cold, abstract, symbolic violence enables real violence to be done to real, material, bodies and minds; a racist past is "not a story to pass on" (275). The text represents Beloved's passage as an almost pre-formal longing for connectedness. The fusion of bodies is prior to the act of division, and the mind's project is to politicize representation so we can remember the constructedness of that act and communicate ethically by moving toward the other. *Beloved* moves us from the place of forgetfulness so that "now we can join a hot thing" (213).

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

LAMENT FOR A DISAPPEARED BODY: *BELOVED* AS A RADICALLY EPIDEICTIC RHETORIC

Beloved blames the historical conditions of existence under which its characters were forced to live and praises those characters who "went forward....to make a life" (Morrison in Darling 247). Blame and praise are the strategies by which epideictic rhetoric confirms local values, and for this reason I identify *Beloved* as epideictic rhetoric. However, because *Beloved* does more than confirm local values--by its narrative performance which recalls a racist past it moves readers from the place of hegemony--I argue that *Beloved* performs as a radically epideictic rhetoric.

The function of epideictic rhetoric is seen classically as a discourse which pertains to the present moment, one which cements the community by its focus on the traditional values of that community and does not call for action on the part of the audience.[1] As Cynthia Miecznikowski Sheard writes in her essay "The Public Value of Epideictic Rhetoric,"

> [V]alue rather than reason has long been seen as the special province of epideictic rhetoric. From antiquity to the twentieth century, epideictic has been seen as a rhetoric of identification and conformity whose function is to confirm and promote adherence to the commonly held values of a

> community, with the goal of sustaining that community; unlike deliberative or forensic rhetoric, epideictic rhetoric can be seen as both beginning and ending in agreement. (766)

But whereas the urge toward conformity has been seen as epideictic rhetoric's primary function–it acts as a community's "social glue"[2]–I maintain that its urge toward identification promotes a more radical possibility, because in identification lies the possibility for transformation across boundary lines, for reaching a place of agreement between positions formerly divided. Borders *are* permeable, and as Sheard asserts, epideictic rhetoric "can be an instrument for addressing private and public 'dis-ease,' discomfort with the status quo....By bringing together images of both the real–what *is* or at least *appears to be*–and the fictive or imaginary–what *might be*–epideictic discourse allows both speaker and audience to envision possible, new, or at least different worlds" (766, 770, author's emphasis).

I have argued that the text of *Beloved* challenges hegemonic representations–the *is* that *appears to be*–by narrating a fictive world that allows its readers just this possibility for envisioning different ways of knowing and being. No narrative performance has a passive audience, and I have noted how Morrison in particular works to relate to her readers and assure their active participation in the making of her text. As *Beloved* memorializes the values of its black community, it also effects textual strategies that move the reader toward identification with that community to invoke shared values. A major strategy I addressed in Chapter V is Morrison's use of metaphor. Morrison accesses

metaphor for its "perspective by incongruity" which functions to disrupt readers' hegemonic values: "rememory" is the metaphoric trope by which she turns readers toward a history and a people who have been represented as "other." Cynthia Ozick, in her essay "Metaphor and Memory," stresses the significance of metaphor and memory for achieving identification with the other: "Without the metaphor of memory and history, we cannot imagine the life of the Other. We cannot imagine what it is to be someone else. Metaphor is the reciprocal agent, the universalizing force: it makes possible the power to envision the stranger's heart" (279). This "universalizing force" is not one which would erase difference, but rather one that inheres in the communicative body's being dyadic *for* others and thus able to relate productively with difference: "The dyadic relation is the recognition that even though the other is a body outside of mine, 'over against me,' this other *has to do with me, as I with it*" (Frank, *Wounded* 35, author's emphasis).

Functioning as a memorial discourse, *Beloved* not only remembers the lives of disappeared bodies, but uses rememory as a metaphor for imagining and invoking a communicative body, one that can permeate borders between text and reader. In reaching out to and recognizing that the other "*has to do with me, as I with it,*" the communicative body envisions the stranger's heart–the body part that is metonymically the site of emotion and values. The ethical component of the communicative body has to do with the body's feeling the suffering of others in its own body and, in contrast to other body types which deny desire, being moved to relieve the suffering of others. Epideictic rhetoric, specifically *memorial* rhetoric, can move an audience toward the same active impulse by increasing identification with those "dis-eased" by hegemony's symbolic and actual

violence. It is in crossing the border between the textual body and the reading body that *Beloved* crosses as well the border between epideictic, forensic, and deliberative rhetoric: the values and beliefs of readers are influenced by a performance of what "really" happened. By this performance, *Beloved* moves them to an "other" attitude; this attitude is the incipient act that may predispose them to act differently in the future.

I conclude this study by examining, first, the conclusion of *Beloved*. The novel's double ending complicates the perspectives with which readers leave the scene, provoking readers to identify with a set of values different from those of the dominating body. By evoking communal values, *Beloved* performs epideictically and ethically as the communicative body, one which recuperates responsibility for the other. Second, I critique Morrison's use of rememory as a hermeneutic act which constitutes the radical component of epideictic rhetoric. Reinterpreting the past by assimilating present knowledge affects future action: this persuasion to change adds to the novel's epideictic performance the function of deliberative rhetoric. Finally, I argue that, through rememory, Morrison effects a communal *amannesis*, bringing together the fictive world of *Beloved* with the life world of the reader, re-membering and embodying community. To do so, I analyze the "Clearing" scene as the narrative moment that prepares readers to remember a different vision of community.

I begin at the end: in the final pages of this novel about death and loss readers are provoked to ponder its double ending. Its "first" ending focuses on Paul D's return to 124 to reunite with Sethe. The text tells us that, instead of abandoning her, "His holding fingers are holding hers" (273). "Holding" is repeated as adjective and verb to emphasize

a body part ("fingers") modified for connection rather than separation, and the importance of a freely chosen act of union between two bodies. The verb is transitive, and literally "takes" an object: Paul D fastens himself to Sethe. This is, in effect, a "happy ending," in which Sethe awakens to "the possibility of an individual pride, of a real self which says, 'you're your best thing'...to begin to think of herself as a proper name" (Morrison in Darling 251). Holding onto Paul D, Sethe assumes the agency of a communicative body: diffuse with desire, she regards her body not as a dominated subject named by supremacist representations, but as the object of the ontological verb "to be": the subject/object of her own defining. "Me?" she asks; "Me?"

Yet the following page, which begins the "second" ending, reminds the reader of "a loneliness that roams," that "is alive, on its own" (274), a loneliness that resists the easy closure of a love story that lets the reader off the hook, so to speak. As readers reflect on the text's repeated insistence that "It was not a story to pass on" (274, 275), we must face the puzzle of what "it" is, and consider the various meanings of "pass on." The "it" seems to refer to the story of the lonely ghost or girl, unnamed, but called "Beloved," who metaphorically stands for the Sixty Million and more; and "pass on" seems most immediately to mean "share." So we seem to be told that we are not to share this story of Beloved(s). But following the first use of that sentence, the text relates "They forgot her like a bad dream. After they made up their tales, shaped and decorated them, those that saw her that day on the porch quickly and deliberately forgot her" (274). These two sentences describe the activity of hegemonic representational practices, which construct their tales, shaping them to deliberately forget the presence their constructions absent; and

in fear of "bad dreams," they forget as well the motive behind the act. Morrison suggests what her black audience's motive for forgetting might be; she says: "Afro-Americans in rushing away from slavery, which was important to do–it meant rushing out of bondage into freedom–also rushed away from the slaves because it was painful to dwell there, and they may have abandoned some responsibility in so doing" (in Darling 247).

But for her white audience, the text suggests that forgetting is more problematic. Even if our usual perspective "shifts," and we are reminded of what motive "moves there," recognizing the *is* as something we have constructed threatens to disrupt our rules of order: "They can touch it if they like, but don't, because they know things will never be the same if they do" (275). Hegemonic rules of order have established whiteness as a property from which we derive real benefit, and it is our hierarchical motive that causes us to abandon responsibility for those othered by our dividing practices. Rules keep things orderly, bely the contingency of human existence, which is often a frightening "mess." We know that things will never be the same if we recognize the *is* and reach out to touch the other who is caught in its traces. So there is no easy closure in this final ending of *Beloved*: the reader must confront the valuative content of hegemonic representations that take on a life of their own, are so naturalized as to seem like "[j]ust weather" (275), seemingly dissociated from the bodies who construct and maintain their practice out of a fear of life's contingency. Because in fact, these representations are not "natural" but are characteristic of the dominating body, which defines itself in terms of force, and deals with its fear of contingency by displacing its rage onto others (Frank, *Wounded* 47).

Although the dominating body is, like the communicative body, dyadic, the quality

of its relating differs: "When the body is dissociated from itself but linked with others, the body's will turns *against* the other" (*Wounded* 47-8, my emphasis). When the dominating body turns against the other *in terms of* hegemonic representation, it lives in the state of absence such representations construct. The last, poignant word on the dominating body is that it is configured by lack; it is a body from which can come "no clamor for a kiss" (275). Before the penultimate paragraph in *Beloved* that contains these words, the text's repeated sentence, "It was not a story to pass on," changes slightly. From the declarative, the text shifts to a vocative imperative: "*This* is not a story to pass on" (275, my emphasis). The "this" is the story of abandoning the other, and its direct address to the reader insists that we not forget the consequences of representational practices that divide and segregate bodies into a "dry and spreading" loneliness (274), a community of none. One final word reminds the reader of what has been lost, and at the same time addresses us as: "Beloved" (275). Both a plaint and an invitation, the word calls and names the reader, imbricating us into a community of communicants, from which we can ethically assess our responsibility for the other. The reader responds to the epideictic rhetoric that *Beloved* performs narratively by identifying with a different set of values, a reconstructed common sense from which we may act in the future.

Frank maintains that "storytelling is informed by a sense of responsibility to the commonsense world and represents one way of living *for* the other. People tell stories not just to work out their own changing identities, but also to guide others who will follow them. They seek not to provide a map...but rather to witness the experience of reconstructing one's own map." He continues:

> The idea of telling one's story as a responsibility to the commonsense world reflects...[a] core morality....In the reciprocity that is storytelling, the teller offers herself as guide to the other's self-formation. The other's receipt of the guidance not only recognizes but *values* the teller. The moral genius of storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story *for* the other. Telling stories...attempts to change one's own life by affecting the lives of others. (*Wounded* 17-18, author's emphasis)

Beloved functions not just epideictically, by constituting an ethos that recognizes the other in its valuative narrative act, but also deliberatively, by bearing witness to how the reader might construct his/her own map for acting responsibly in the commonsense world we inhabit. The relatedness of *Beloved*, as a textual body, to its readers who are also bodies, affects who we are, not merely to each other but *for* each other. How "other-relatedness" may be transformed into action "is concerned with how the shared condition of being bodies becomes a basis of empathic relations among living beings" (Frank, *Wounded* 35). The recognition of this shared condition moves us from the place of forgetfulness, from epideictic memorialization to deliberative action.

An important way Morrison invokes the shared condition of being bodies is through her construction of the character of Beloved. Beloved challenges the abandonment of responsibility for the other by performing the memorial function of rememorying, and the forensic function of bearing witness, both speaking for and standing

for the "[d]isremembered and unaccounted for" (274). In speaking and standing for those bodies, Beloved embodies a representation that is empathic rather than dominating, one that "realizes the ethical ideal of existing *for* the other" (Frank, *Wounded* 49). This ethical form of representation is the possibility for deliberative action, the boundary-crossing between epideictic and deliberative rhetoric. *Beloved* communicates this possibility by its narrative act, and it does so by locating its ethic in rememory, that activity which makes the past present to us, not as a power-inflected copy or representation limited to some noetic faculty, but as an *embodied* act that relies on empathic relatedness for its availablity to conscious reflection and interpretation. Through rememory, Sethe, Paul D, and Denver go back to recontextualize past events, to recover the persisting *I* without which they can have no self-consciousness or even self. Rememory frees them from being immured in the present and denied the self-conscious, embodied knowledge with which to confront how they have been "othered" by hegemonic representations; it enables them to recover a sense of personal identity and agency.

While memory may be construed simply as recollection, the subject of memorial or epideictic rhetoric, *rememory* is the hermeneutic act of apprehending and assimilating the past into a present knowledge that operates to affect future action–the function of deliberative rhetoric. To borrow Santayana's famous dictum, "those who ignore the past are doomed to repeat it"; that is, we who remember to forget the ideology behind our representations are doomed to live each present moment *in terms of* the past. Without rememory, the motives behind the terms in which we have lived past acts would be irretrievably forgotten, and we would be trapped by what Burke calls the "trained

incapacity" to see in terms of a different perspective: present values would perdure to make every day simply a re-presentation of the day before. But memory, says Barbara DeConcini, "is the capacity which frees us from entrapment in the immediate present" (46).

DeConcini, in her study *Narrative Remembering*, reconstitutes "the controlling paradigms for memory in the history of Western [tradition]" (*xii*) in order to shift their focus from "*mneme* (substantive/memory)...to *anamnesis* (gerund/remembering)" (*xi*). This shift toward understanding "remembering" as at once both noun and verb aligns with Morrison's use of "rememory" and provides a way to explore how human remembering is embodied and performed (in fiction and in life) as a public and hermeneutic act with transformative agency. As DeConcini explains,

> Our English translation of anamnesis, by way of the Latin noun *memoria*, as remembrance, commemoration, or memorial, does not adequately embrace the Greek participial term. Already we find ourselves hampered by a fallacious substantizing tendency, for memorial connotes something which is past and absent now brought to mind, whereas in the Greek *anamnesis* conveys the re-calling or re-presenting of something not as absent but as presently operative by its effects. (59)

The phrase "operative by its effects" emphasizes the efficacy of *anamnesis*--rememory--as the border-crossing between the epideictic and deliberative functions of rhetoric achieved

by identification. Even beyond this operative sense of *anamnesis*, the word's use in ancient ritual discourse heightens its attention to the public and active qualities of remembering–its communal performance–especially in prayer.[3]

I have written in earlier chapters of the public and active qualities of remembering between characters in *Beloved*, focusing on how rememory's healing property is effected by communication between bodies and how it allows those bodies the agency to act deliberatively in relation to future possibilities. I have maintained as well that *Beloved* provides this same communicative possibility between text and reader. Rememory, or *anamnesis*, makes the past present to both characters and readers in the form of, and in the context of, a narrative; since the words and actions of the text are "ingredient in each other's logic and must always be taken together," "the story is embodied" (DeConcini 58, 63). Through that embodiment, the transformation of value systems becomes possible. Here I turn to considering how *Beloved* performs the anamnetic context of rememory as the locus for bringing together both the fictive world of the characters and the life world of the reader to enable that possibility. As an anamnetic epideictic rhetoric, *Beloved* asserts the values of a culture by rememorying as story the body(ies) of a culture: this value-laden body then becomes the deliberative rhetorical agent for change by enacting strategies to increase identification between text and reader. When Holloway says that "the urge to tell past the passing on is the legacy of a mourning story" ("Cultural" 36), what she means, it seems to me, is the desire to communicate the ethical ideal of existing for the other into a transformative communal act: "the community [needs]...the fact of [its bodies] to make their 'being' different–to manage their living" ("Cultural" 35).

This "being" is the ontology that de-termines the *is* of a community, and only the reconstitution of bodies can enable the community to manage its living. "This is a time for storytelling," says Holloway, and the "storied moment" ("Cultural" 36) for the community of *Beloved* occurs when Baby Suggs, "holy," preaches[4] to the company of men, women, and children in the Clearing:

> Here...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...*You* got to love it, *you!* And no, they ain't in love with your mouth...they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight...this is flesh I'm talking about. Flesh that needs to be loved. (88)

This is the place of remembering. In one unbroken paragraph (88-9), Baby Suggs calls on the assembly to achieve, body part by body part, both the material and figurative re-membering of the body. The scene is called forth as Sethe's memory: she goes to the Clearing suffering from the image of "Halle's face between the butter press and the churn," and needs "[s]ome fixing ceremony" (86) to relieve her pain. But another meaning of "fixing" is "to make permanent": a ceremony that ritually enacts the re-membering of the body constitutes (literally, is a "fundamental part of the substance of") a cultural narrative. "These issues of our flesh–its ways and wounding–are the boundary conditions of a culture," says Holloway. "These are our constructed remnants–the remains of our daily lives" ("Cultural" 36). But Baby Suggs's ceremonial discourse remembers these remains across cultural boundaries; as she "fixes" the value of remembering and

loving the body and realizes the ethical communicative act of being for the other within the text, the text of *Beloved* performs the same act for the reader.

The memorial discourse of *Beloved* functions as deliberative rhetoric for the reader through its anamnetic strategy, particularly in this Clearing scene, which "clears" our vision of its ingrained perceptions. We watch the activity in the Clearing, which begins with "laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath" (88). Here are the torn-apart bodies Baby Suggs will turn from remnants into a whole community that entails the reader by the text's public and performative quality. Positioned before the section of the text in which Sethe remembers her arrival at 124 and her twenty-eight "[d]ays of healing, ease, and real-talk" (95), the Clearing scene is the narrative moment that prepares the reader to remember a different vision of community. The connection between narrative and remembering is obvious: as readers, we are always being asked to remember; our reading between the first and last sentences of a story, while sequential, is actually layered by our memory of what went before, so that we read differently as we read on. But Morrison's anamnetic strategy demands that we not only remember the text as a private act of recollection but also participate in its making, so that the text remains not simply an accretion of past events but becomes present to us here and now as a lived experience. As DeConcini reminds us, "anamnesis invariably carries with it the sense of an activity of remembering–performatory and public–which belies the apparent pastness of the past, and which provides the past

access to the lived present" (60). These performative and public qualities of *anamnesis* bely the "pastness of the past" not only for the characters in *Beloved*,[5] but also to make our reading memories come alive here and now.

Once the memory comes alive on the page and is accessible to the reader, readers must either close the book or participate, make the (re)memory enacted by the characters ours as well, take it into our own bodies. Morrison's text draws on the call and response pattern of the African American sermon to ask the reader to answer Baby Suggs's call with respons-ibility: this is where the possibility for transformation takes place among communicative bodies. The narrator tells us that Baby Suggs told the assembly, which includes readers by virtue of our being present and reading: "The only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it" (88). In case we haven't pricked up our ears, the very next word is "Here," as if to reinforce that this Clearing scene is not merely an act of representation, but an immediate, on-site call for participation. The pronoun is inclusive: "Here...in this here place, *we* flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard." (88, my emphasis). No reader can deny inclusion in this condition of being flesh, and the lack of the definite article before "grass" makes the language refer not to "the" grass of only that long ago time and only that place, but just "grass," "here," where the reader is. Once readers are drawn into this place, enter the Clearing and stand on its ground, our perspective is shifted to share this sub-stance with the text's participants: we become the *we* of the text, standing against the "they" who commit divisive acts. This bonding of the reader's perspective with Baby Suggs's words is further influenced by the textual scheme

of anaphora, which establishes a marked rhythm in the sequence of clauses about the "they" who "do not love your flesh" by beginning each with this same word: "*They* despise it. *They* don't love your eyes; *they'd* just as soon pick em out." Anaphora produces a strong emotional affect which promotes the reader's identification with the characters being addressed, and this effect is enhanced by the repetition of the word "they" (used 13 times in the next 14 sentences), a pronoun which names difference. Furthermore, the place term, "yonder" is used four times to distance "us" from the "they," who are not "here," but "[y]onder, out there" (88). Apostrophe clarifies this identification--twice the reader is appealed to specifically as one among Baby Suggs's chosen: "O my people."

Once the reader's position as an addressed and participating member of Baby Suggs's assembly is enforced by these rhetorical and grammatical strategies, the text shifts to cataloging the "what" that is done by dominating bodies. In three successive sentences, the "what" is rhythmically stressed by anaphora, while the acts of those who are not us are repeated in parallel structure, using the scheme of epistrophe :

> What you say out of [your mouth] they will not heed. What you scream out of it they will not hear. What you put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away. (88)

Epistrophe not only doubles the rhythmic effect achieved by anaphora but also secures a special emphasis, both by repeating clauses beginning with the word "they" and by putting them in the final position in the sentence. These rhythmic patterns and emphases are a staple of the black sermonic tradition,[6] but even for those unfamiliar with this tradition, the strategies produce an emotional, sensate response that heightens our identification with

those who have been dominated, and separates us from those who "use, tie, bind, chop off, and leave empty" (88) bodies which have been othered by hegemonic representations.

Baby Suggs's initial call is rendered in short sentences and sentence fragments that intensify the beat, piling up image after image of flesh rended by picking, flaying, hanging; and the call culminates in the directive, "You got to love it." Following the careful textual distinction as to which pronoun the reader is encouraged to identify with, the repetition of this sentence emphasizes that Baby Suggs here addresses the reader directly; it is we who must respond as a communicative body to identify with the body of the other. Two more short sentences clarify our responsibility: "This is flesh I'm talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved." Once this point is made, the text begins the process of reconstitution, rememberment, with a compound sentence composed of three sentence fragments linked together; that is, the text enacts what Baby Suggs advises, joining fragments: "Flesh that needs to rest and dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I'm telling you." The sentences roll with the rhythmic emphasis of parallel structure, and are followed by a complex sentence that reinforces the reader's position by beginning with a conjunctive link followed again by the specific address of apostrophe: "*And* O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight." Again the reader is placed within the community by being differentiated from the "they" who are "out yonder"; reached out to by the text as a communicative body, diffuse with productive desire, the reader is stirred to reach out to other bodies in their suffering as if they were the reader's own:

> So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and

> hold it up. And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver–love it, love it, and the beat and beating heart, love that too. (88)

Here is a language of the body that the text asserts as an identifying strategy against the abstraction that disconnects us from one another. The public, active, and present quality of prayer asks that God *remember* each individual in the assembly, "see [each] with a view which encompasses [his or her] whole identity" (DeConcini 60), and Baby Suggs's sermon embodies a re-memberment that achieves this perspective. In his study of the African American sermonic influence on African American literature, Dolan Hubbard maintains that "Morrison plays off the sermon as an *ideology*, in contrast to the sermon as *practice*, that arouses...people with words that are disconnected from...present reality" (124, author's emphasis). The distinction Hubbard makes between "ideology" and "practice" highlights the public and performative quality of the latter. Enacting Baby Suggs's sermon in the Clearing as an anamnetic performance challenges ideology by instantiating a dialogic interplay between reader and text that affirms and celebrates the rememberment of community.

This publicly performed sermon builds to a climax by again using anaphora: three sentences begin, as if in desirous demand of all we have been cheated of, with the word "More" (88-9). The erotic quality of stroking and soothing, loving oneself back together, is heightened by the last, long sentence which focuses on generative and life-sustaining body parts: "More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear

me now, love your heart" (89). A final, terse phrase sums up the lesson: "For this is the prize" (89). The prize is the heart of a communal body that beats with wholeness. Remembered in the text and *by* the text, together with the reader, Baby Suggs's sermon is, as Hubbard puts it, "a reminder of the shifting field of interpretation" (139), a place where perspectives are freed from their ideological boundaries through identification with the other. It is in the Clearing that Sethe recognizes that "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership over that freed self was another" (95). All of *Beloved* promotes this recognition in the reader–that we may claim ownership over our selves only after freeing ourselves from the practices hegemonic representations enact on the dominators as well as the dominated–but the Clearing scene in particular embodies how epideictic rhetoric, in its anamnetic enactment, promotes identification from the reading audience and the transformative possibility for us to act differently in the future.

Identification is the movement across boundaries, the movement from inhabiting one carefully determined form of substance to recognizing consubstantiality with another. The paradox of substance inheres in our not recognizing that substance is a cultural construct of language; there are no negatives in nature, as Burke would remind us (*Language* 9), things are simply similar or different. But "*action*," Burke says, "involves *character*, which involves *choice*–and the *form* of choice attains its perfection in the distinction between Yes and No (shall and shall-not, will and will-not)....[*A*]*ction* implies the ethical, the human personality" (*Language* 11). It is by our construction of, and responses to, the "thou shalt nots" of language that we reveal our ethical nature, because such acts enable and constrain the action choices of bodies. In Hayden White's words, "It

is the encoding of things as opposites, an encoding that reenacts within culture, the conception of the opposition of things human to things animal, that gives to culture in general both its repressive and its liberating aspects" (*Culture* 157-8). I wish to quote from White at length here because he both elaborates on how this paradox works on a social level and then speaks to how literature, specifically the novel, instantiates a cultural dialectic that makes visible the forgetfulness by which the paradox perdures, and so offers a vision of ideal community.

He writes that, at the "moral" level of cultural constructions,

> where things, practices, and relationships are marked with the signs of positive and negative, presence and absence, fullness and lack, anteriority and posteriority, high and low, and so on, a social formation marks out the "conditions of possibility" for its members' attainment of full humanity. In this respect, a society narrativizes itself, constructing a cast of social "characters" or "roles" for its members to play, if they are to play its game; a "plot" or ideal course of development for the relations presumed to exist among its recognized character types; and appropriate sanctions for those who deviate from the norms of social being and comportment adequate to the reinforcement of the values the society takes to be its own. This is the conservative side of symbolic action, which takes for granted the

> contradictions inherent in the relegation of a certain portion of its members to the obloquy of mere nature while reserving for itself the title of a full humanity. This denial of the rights of a full humanity to certain members of society, who become the "lower classes," is the fundamental contradiction inherent in any group that falls short of realizing a true community. (158)

Acceding to the terms of hegemonic representations limits the conditions of possibility for all society, because those who reserve certain privileges to themselves perpetuate the fundamental contradiction that is the paradox of substance, and suffer the consequences of living in a divided society. Although it is terrible to contemplate the chaos that might result in abandoning the rules of order that determine our conditions of existence, failing to politicize the *is* abandons our ethical responsibility for the other and the possibility to realize true community. A literary work like *Beloved* can achieve, as White says, "an instantiation of the human capacity to endow lived contradictions with intimations of their possible transcendence. The [novel] does this by giving the ideality of form to what otherwise would be a chaotic condition made more unbearable by the awareness, constantly supressed, that this condition is a product of only human contrivance....Narrativity not only represents but justifies, by virtue of its universality, a dream of how ideal community might be achieved....Moreover, in its purely formal properties, the dialectical movement by which a unity of plot is imposed upon the superficial chaos of story elements, narrative serves as a paradigm of the kind of social

movement by which a unity of meaning can be imposed upon the chaos of history" (*Content* 157).

The chaos of history is the subject *Beloved* speaks from and to, and its project is the realization of true community. The novel performs as a communicative body to offer to the reader an anamnetic collaboration between remembering and imagining a transformed future. In serving as a paradigm of social movement, *Beloved* functions epidectically not just to memorialize the past, but also to identify the reader with values that promote deliberative change. Its universality inheres not in any effort to instantiate sameness but in its message that we are different, yet consubstantial, bodies who can act together to transcend the violence that dividing practices enact. *Beloved* encourages us by its formal properties to remember that we construct the lives we live *in terms of*, and it "is the most radically personal of rememberings because it is by doing the anamnesis that the community re-members who it is" (DeConcini 71).

* * *

When we are confronted by loss, we often observe that words fail us. This thesis, in positing a rhetoric of abandonment, has attended to the ways in which words fail us, the ways in which they keep us separated rather than joined in human community. This separation is indeed a loss, and *Beloved* is a story that mourns the ways words divide us so that bodies disappear from the human community, either because they have been erased by hegemonic representations or because they have died—in fact and in fiction—as a result of

the dividing practices on which such representations are based, and which they enforce. Holloway notes, however, that "[d]espite what seems to be a body's commitment to dying, in fact, the fictive body contradicts this effort and perseveres in a literary construction" ("Cultural" 33). *Beloved* is an example of such a construction: as a fictive body it performs the memorial epideictic function of remembering the disappeared body and promoting what Holloway calls "the critical role of a community's reflection on the constructedness, permeability, and violence of its borders as its members engage the ritual of death and dying" (34). Reflection by a community on the constitution of its borders calls forth the values that sustain it in times of loss, and *Beloved* functions epideictically not only to mourn a people and a culture fragmented by loss but also to influence the values of the reading audience by performing its anamnesis.

Beloved functions for the reader as what Holloway calls a mourning story:

> "The mourning stories of African American culture form a cultural narrative....These are stories of loss. Their spectral coherence represents a sustained lament for a disappeared body, and it contextualizes a troubled and ambivalent narrative." (Holloway, "Cultural" 33)

By confronting the symbolic violence of hegemonic representations, and by demonstrating how bodies negotiate their action problems successfully despite the actual violence symbol systems enact, *Beloved* embodies an epideictic text through which the reading community can reflect upon its value systems, so that our historically troubled and ambivalent narrative becomes more than a lament: it becomes a call.

NOTES

Preface

1. Naiman says: "Literally, *mensch* means a person, a human being. But it means much more than that. To call someone a *mensch* is...the highest compliment you can pay them. It means they're mature, compassionate, decent, loving--everything a human being should be" (93).

2. Holocaust revisionists claim the Shoah never happened and that the Nazis are being slandered by Holocaust survivors; this claim negates the evidence of witness, casting the Nazis as victims, and the survivors as the perpetrators of violence.

Chapter I

1. This term is borrowed from Pierre Bourdieu. Briefly, it describes the harm that results when representations of social divisions are accepted as "reality" rather than as products of those divisions.

2. For example, an entire collection edited by Carol A. Kolmerten, Stephen M. Ross, and Judith Bryant Wittenberg compares Morrison with Faulkner: *Unflinching Gaze: Morrison and Faulkner Re-Envisioned*; Marilyn Sanders Mobley compares aspects of Morrison's work to Sarah Orne Jewett's in *Folk Roots and Mythic Wings in Sarah Orne Jewett and Toni Morrison: The Cultural Function of Narrative.* Jan Stryz writes, however, in "Inscribing an Origin in *Song of Solomon*," of how Morrison "negotiates the obstacles imposed by the task of freeing her own story from a literary past" (31) in recognition of Morrison's stated objection to being compared critically to writers from the Western tradition like Faulkner, Joyce, and Hardy.

3. For an excellent survey of the literacy/orality debate, particularly as it applies to one of Morrison's novels, see Joyce Irene Middleton, "Confronting the 'Master Narrative': The Privilege of Orality in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*." For a discussion of how the primary difference between orality and literacy obtains in the immediacy of the contact between reader and text in the former, and distantiation in the latter, see Trudier Harris, *Fiction and Folklore: The Novels of Toni Morrison*. Harris also discusses throughout her text the importance of the oral tradition to African American folklore, which she considers "the basis for most African-American literature" (2); see especially 1-14.

4. Rice's text is his published doctoral thesis; over 200 doctoral dissertations have been written on Morrison in the past few years.

5. Cummings's article is unusual in that she uses "contrastive grammars" to analyze one section of *Beloved*–Garner's "joke"–as a method for getting at "the efficacy of [Garner's]...denomination process" (558). I use grammatical anaysis throughout my thesis to examine how we live always *in terms of* symbolic acts and systems.

6. Other discussions of the body, motherhood, and history in *Beloved* which provided context for my approach to the novel are: Anne E. Goldman, "'I Made the Ink': (Literary) Production and Reproduction in *Dessa Rose* and *Beloved*"; Barbara Offutt Mathieson, "Memory and Mother Love in Morrison's *Beloved*"; and David Lawrence, "Fleshly Ghosts and Ghostly Flesh: The Word and the Body in *Beloved*." In addition, Hortense J. Spillers's article, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An Annotated Grammar Book," provided a helpful discussion of representations of the flesh and the material world in relation to history in African American women's literature.

Chapter II

1.See Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*.

2. Habitus is not simply a term for our habitual ways of acting but encompasses a complex of features that have to do with the ontological force of "principles which generate and organize practices and representations" (Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* 53). For a detailed explanation and demonstration of the resource habitus provides for reading texts and the bodies who represent and are represented by them, see Stillar, 95-106.

3. For a discussion of how Burke's dialectic acts as an analytical tool on his rhetoric, see Timothy W. Crusius, "A Case for Kenneth Burke's Dialectic and Rhetoric."

4. Published as an interview with Thomas LeClair.

5. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. calls the representation of the oral voice in a written text "speakerly," and considers it a mode of "signifyin(g)." See his "Introduction" to *The Signifying Monkey*, especially *xxv-xxviii*.

Chapter III

1. Shapiro substitutes the noun for the verb to imply that something represented as a "fact about the world" is instead "something imposed...the making of a world" (4).

2. I am indebted for this title to Cathy Caruth, who in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, reads "the address of the voice...as the story of the way in which one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another's wound" (8). Her study of how traumatic or "catastrophic events seem to repeat themselves for people who have passed through them" (1) resonates with the action of memory in *Beloved*.

3. For an overview of how women writers counter linear or "male" narratives, and how Eurocentric feminist narrative theory does not necessarily fit the narratives of writers from "other" cultures see Margaret Homans, "Feminist Fictions and Feminist Theories of Narrative."

4. All citations from *Beloved* are from the 1988 Plume Edition.

5. The only entirely apocalyptic book in the Bible, this final book of the Old

Testament is called "The Revelation" in the King James version.

6. One of the reasons slavers separated Africans of the same tribes and families was so that they could not speak to each other in a common language.

Chapter IV

1. Kenneth Burke has pointed out that "education" is a eulogystic term for "indoctrination."

2. My use of the term "white supremacy" follows that of Cheryl I. Harris, in "Whiteness as Property." She states: "By 'white supremacy' I do not mean to allude only to the self-conscious racism of white supremacist hate groups. I refer instead to a political, economic, and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread, and relations of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings" (fn. 10, 1714).

3. This is the second telling of Denver's birth; the first appears in pp 28-42. See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, "Narration, Doubt, Retrieval: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" (particularly 110-12) for a discussion of the handling of narration and focalization in both accounts.

4. Morrison's attention to language as a way of sharing substance is a major theme in *Beloved*. Because the knowledge and lived experience of black people has been constructed in representations beyond their control, reclamation of the "code" which Sethe pieces together as she begins to rememory her mother and Sixo, and the thirty women's "[breaking] the back of words" (261) take on symbolic importance as a means to counteract the "mystery" of the ruling hierarchy.

5. See, for example, Janie's discourse in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

6. Word pictures are also a part of the arsenal Morrison draws from the language devices employed by black preachers. According to Robert O'Meally, the preacher "persuades his congregation not only through linear, logical argumentation but also through the skillful painting of word pictures and the dramatic telling of stories" (195). Morrison relies on word pictures not merely for imagery as we understand it, but to depict her characters in the posture of their acts rather than having her narrator "tell" what they're doing. This kind of representation capitalizes on the identification that results from the reader's *feeling* the words rather than only seeing them and thereby promotes a sharing of substance. O'Meally also points out that the black sermon has two purposes: salvation and conversion (196, 197), purposes we might also attribute to *Beloved*.

7. From "The Denial of the Rational and the Priority of Metaphoric Thinking," paper available from Ernesto Grassi.

8. An instance of Sethe's complicity with how the social order represents what is "appropriate" for a woman, that is, the conditions of existence she must observe to be identified as having that substance, occurs when Paul D takes her and Denver to a carnival. In the sweltering Cincinnati summer, Sethe nevertheless dresses "appropriately"

for a social occasion: "Sethe was badly dressed for the heat, but...she felt obliged to wear her one good dress, heavy as it was, and a hat. Certainly a hat" (46). Despite the obvious contradictions involved in being both a slave and a woman in hegemonic terms, Sethe embodies the recognition that "[c]lothes give us *individuality, distinction, social polity*" (Burke, *Rhetoric* 119) and aspires to the only "valid" representation offered to nineteenth century white women: the cult of perfect womanhood, a cult which dictated what properties a "woman" must have to be so named. Those properties, although definers of internal substance, were, as Hazel Carby points out, reflected externally: "there existed a shared social understanding that external physical appearance reflected internal qualities of character and therefore provided an easily discernable indicator of the function of a female" (25). In repeating and qualifying Sethe's choice of apparel with a modal adverb, Morrison represents the force of hegemonic representation on Sethe's conditions of being: "*Certainly* a hat."

9. Harris recounts that "[b]y the 1660's, the especially degraded status of Blacks as chattel slaves was recognized by law....Racial identity was further merged with stratified social and legal status: 'Black' racial identity marked who was 'free,' or, at minimum, not a slave. The ideological and rhetorical move from 'slave' and 'free' to 'Black' and 'white' as polar constructs marked an important step in the social construction of race" (1718).

10. I am indebted to Teresa Zackodnik for bringing this source to my attention in her unpublished paper, "She is Mine: Reclaiming Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*."

11. The text tells us that all the Sweet Home slaves were quantified by schoolteacher. Sethe remembers schoolteacher's pseudo-scientific method: "Schoolteacher'd wrap the [measuring] string all over my head, 'cross my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth" (191).

12. For a discussion of how the slave system divided mothers from their children and thereby severed the bonds of "matrilineal ancestry," see Deborah Horvitz, "Nameless Ghosts: Possession and Dispossession in *Beloved*."

13. Harris points out that to support the property value of whiteness, racial classification became a crucial task assumed by the law: "This core precept of race as a physically defined reality allowed the law to fulfill an essential function—to 'parcel out social standing according to race' and to facilitate systematic discrimination by articulating 'seemingly precise definitions of racial group membership'" (1737). This "essential" function attempted to define the substance of whiteness by excluding its properties and privileges from any who had the merest fraction of black "blood." Moreover, this distinction was perpetuated through generations by the legal acceptance of the "rule of hypodescent....the American system of racial classification in which the subordinate classification is assigned to the offspring" (*fn* 137, 1737).

14. Baby Suggs, however, insists on sharing substance with the "husband" who named her, and resists Garner's urging to the contrary; the name "Baby Suggs was all she had left of the 'husband' she claimed" (142). Her assertion of self-determination marks the text's direction of attention to how representational practices function through

language, and to how those practices may be resisted and revised.

15. Henderson sees Sethe's attack on Bodwin as the successful working through of the trauma of infanticide.

Chapter V

1. It is only fairly recently that "African American" has replaced the term "Afro- (or "Afra-") American," eliminating at least the hyphen which graphically divides two apparently different kinds of substance.

2. For a discussion of the non-Western sense of time in African American women's writing, particularly as it is revealed in recursive structures, see Karla F.C. Holloway, *Moorings* (71-84).

3. In French, "Aimee" means "beloved." Morrison's choice of name for this white girl who heals Sethe's afflicted body parts--brings what is dead back to life--gives us another proleptic hint of Beloved's emergence and her function in the text.

4. The final passage of *Beloved* enjoins us that "This is not a story to pass on" (275). "Pass on," in this sentence, is often taken to mean "communicate"--that the story should not be told or shared--but Sethe's use of "pass on" in the context of her discourse suggests the opposite: that the story should not be forgotten.

5. For a discussion of the disruption of linear time in relation to history in African American women's texts, see Holloway, *Moorings* 100-05.

6. Holloway notes that the "blurring" of time sequences and the intermixing of telling voices in black women's writing has its roots in African American culture. Such strategies, she says, "simultaneously construct (historic) contexts (for discourse, meaning, and reading) and revise those same contexts *in an intentional effort to destabilize them*" (*Moorings* 73, author's emphasis).

7. In George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By,* they explain how our metaphorical concepts "structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people" (3). They maintain that our everyday reality, what we conceive of as "truth," "is always relative to a conceptual system that is defined in large part by metaphor" (159).

8. Chaim Perelman explains that "[m]etaphors become worn out by repetition, and we have a tendency to forget that we are dealing with metaphors: we say of them, metaphorically, that they are 'dead'" (122).

9. In *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics,* Frank discusses his four ideal body types in the context of illness and the stories that bear witness to the body's pain and disease. His concern with assaults on the body are relevant for *Beloved*, where bodies are also subjected to pain and dis-ease.

10. Holloway argues that in black women's writing, "the intertextuality of repetition at both syntactic and semantic levels is central to an understanding of the speakerly text because it behaves as both subject and object and its collective structures of repetition, signification, and figuration represent the intertextual nature of its being" (*Moorings* 75).

11. For a phenomenological reading of the contact between Sethe and Paul D and the shifting points of view between past and present, see Doyle 217-19. Doyle notes that the text's narrative structure models for the reader "a structure of the phenomenal intertwining of histories and bodies" (219).

12. The felicity of this long connection is juxtaposed in the text against Baby Suggs's more common slave experience: "Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, bought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby's eight children had six fathers" (23).

13. Eusebio L. Rodrigues notes the narrator's reference to Sethe's "bedding" dress (59). "The strange adjective is used to trigger an ironic rhyme-echo, for a slave woman could never have a 'wedding' with a ceremony and a preacher, but only a coupling" (157). This refusal of any ceremony, preacher, dancing, or party (26) to celebrate Sethe's marriage to Halle is yet one more way slaves were divided from the white "human race."

14. For Morrison's explanation of why she crafts her openings as she does, see her "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." Of her *in media res* opening of *Beloved*, she says: "It is abrupt, and should appear so. No native informant here. The reader is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign, and I want it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the reader and the novel's population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, without preparation and without defense. No lobby, no door, no entrance--a gangplank, perhaps (but a very short one)" (32).

15. The significance of the generational continuity of the body is not exclusive to female characters in *Beloved*; it is conjoined more importantly with the remnants of their African heritage which slaves are able to retain. Although women in Morrison's novels are usually the "culture bearers" (Morrison in McKay 140), Morrison creates in Sixo a male character who remains connected to his African heritage, through which he negotiates his contingency, his self-relatedness, and his desire. Like Sethe's mother, Sixo speaks his African language, refuses to "mess up" his mind by learning from "the boss" (208), and finally gives up the master's language altogether when he sees it is of no use--even in "trickster" parlance. Sixo thus retains, to a degree, his own agency to act as a communicative body: the African song he sings when captured is full of "hatred so *loose* it was juba" (227, my emphasis), convincing schoolteacher Sixo "will never be suitable" (226) as a slave. Although Sixo dies horribly, he is able to laugh out his final words: "Seven-O! Seven-O!" (226) because his seed will continue in the body of the escaped Thirty-Mile Woman.

Halle is the only other male slave on Sweet Home who is not a generic "Paul"; Paul D recognizes that Halle and Sixo "were men whether Garner said so or not" (220). Claiming ownership of one's body as "man" depends on the African value of generational continuity: Sixo remains connected to his heritage, Halle to his mother, the self-named Baby Suggs. As Eugene Genovese says of the family names of slaves, "The important thing was to establish a real history, preferably well back in time but in any event in a

family experience....One way or another, the name had to be 'real'; it had to embody a living history without which genuine identity could not become possible" (446). In retaining her husband's name, Baby Suggs forges an embodied link with history to "place" herself.

16. See Frank for a discussion of "care" as a truth game, particularly how its practice flips between the disciplined and mirroring body ("Analytical" 60-61). While care, for the disciplined body, can express itself in the practice of dominating or possessing others, the primary mode of the mirroring body is consumption, and Beloved, throughout *Beloved*, consumes food, stories, and the agency of others. Closed up in 124, Beloved literally consumes Sethe.

17. The symbolic act of naming provides a basis for the establishment of identity in contrast to the generic naming done by the slavemasters. Denver's name was given to her by her mother (it is the surname of the whitegirl, Amy, whose first name in French means "beloved"), just as Sethe's name was given to her by *her* mother. Baby Suggs retains her husband's name. This act of connection and continuity is significant to reclaiming the cultural devastation of slavery; Morrison has explained: "If you come from Africa, your name is gone. It is particularly problematic because it is not just *your* name but your family, your tribe. How can you connect with your ancestors if you have lost your name?" (Morrison in Rubenstein 153).

18. In her unspoken thoughts, Denver rememories her father in details she's heard from Baby Suggs. Heller points out that Denver's "heroic" act connects her to her father. Both have made use of "what resources they can muster...in the interests of securing a future" (115). Halle sells his own labor to secure his mother's freedom, and Denver gives up her mirroring appropriation of her sister to secure freedom for Sethe.

19. The text sets off, with an endash, the specific tenets of Christianity that would be useful to black people, and so draws attention to those elements that are not. For a discussion of Christianity as a psychological and ideological foundation for strengthening the master-slave relationship and how African slaves fought to shape it for themselves, see Genovese (161-93).

Chapter VI

1. See George A. Kennedy's translation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (7).
2. I am indebted to my former teacher, Judy Segal, for this descriptive term.
3. DeConcini locates these qualities in the translation of *anamnesis* from the Hebrew root *ZKR*, where its Biblical usage "involves a real presence—of God to God's people or of the people to God" (60). Praying was a ritual activity by which the believer asked God to *remember* her, not by a private or subjective recollection, but by publicly re-enacting earlier Godly manifestations to make their power and effects known as present experience.
4. The sermon was a Christian addition to the ancient category of epideictic rhetoric, and while Aristotle designated this form of rhetoric as being concerned only with present time, Corbett notes that "preachers are also concerned with man's past and future

actions" (40).

5. Genvieve Fabre, in "African American Commemorative Celebrations," emphasizes the importance of "the concept of performance and ritual" in African American commemorative acts. She notes that "African Americans were not simply performing culture, they were performing crucial social and political acts. They were using the power of the imagination to invent, visualize, and *represent themselves* in roles they had always been denied; and their symbolic acts held significances [as]....'rites of passage,' transitions from invisibility to visibility, which included collective responses to social and political injustice and wrongs; they marked the passage from various forms of subordination and enslavement to a 'season' of change which could ultimately bring complete emancipation and liberation" (74-5, my emphasis).

6. See Dolan Hubbard for Morrison's use of sermonic form in *The Sermon and the African American Literary Imagination* (124). Hubbard also maintains that Baby Suggs's sermon challenges the deafness of hegemonic society to those silenced by its practices, and her unchurched status challenges the ontological condition of black women in particular. He claims that "Morrison presents Baby Suggs as a preacher in exile in response to those black men who perpetuate against black women the exclusive practices they condemn in white men by establishing their experience as normative in the black community" (139).

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