

*Anger and M/otherlove in the  
Fiction of Toni Morrison*

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## **Declaration of Authorship**

I, Inderjit Kaur Grewal, hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2013

This thesis examines Toni Morrison's fiction and how a complex relationship between love and anger forms the centre of each narrative. This centre is identified as an ambivalent black feminist space in which angry motherlove takes shape. The ambivalent thoughts and actions of African-American mothers, in *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Paradise*, *Jazz*, and *Love*, gain clarity only when they are reassessed in relation to Morrison's black feminist standpoint. Here, 'New Seeing' is required of Morrison's reader so as to recognise anger as enabling each mother's black feminist protest; she is demanding both her right to be a mother and to be an autonomous self. A uniquely formed angry motherlove represents black women empowered by the knowledge that in loving another they must never deprive themselves of self-love. Black feminist anger also works to oppose the patriarchal anger that is favoured by black men in a post-emancipation era. Hence, there shall also be consideration of how patriarchal anger affects black fatherlove. The thesis is divided into four chapters that look at motherlove in different situations. Chapter One explores black mothering in slavery and how it is protected using angry motherlove. Subsequent chapters will identify how this oppressive regime has continued to impact upon the lives of African-Americans in a post-emancipation era, with the power to distort their expressions of love and anger. Chapter Two investigates how black feminist anger offers a defence against black patriarchal anger in nuclear family homes. Angry love exists in these marital relationships that go on to produce angry motherlove and angry fatherlove. Chapter Three analyses motherlove in relation to self-love within black matriarchies. Chapter Four reflects upon Morrison's changing perspective in her later fiction; she now focuses on forms of 'otherlove' and there is the suggestion that the time for anger has passed.

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## Introduction

There is a sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth. It is a lovely surging. (37:38)

Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, [and] stupid people love stupidly. (163)

-- *The Bluest Eye*

Expressions of love and anger form significant moments in the fiction of African-American author, Toni Morrison. In her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison begins constructing an important argument that is then developed further in her subsequent works of fiction. The thoughts and experiences of Pecola Breedlove and Claudia MacTeer are used to deliver the opening statements for Morrison's argument. Pecola, albeit in a momentary episode, comes to realise that in anger one can gain important and positive value. Claudia takes on the role of Morrison's narrator in the novel, and in her concluding remarks she notes that love can be expressed in various ways all of which are equally valid.<sup>1</sup> Morrison's fiction registers an entire spectrum of emotions that qualify as examples of love and this thesis is primarily concerned with her various portrayals of black 'motherlove' (*Beloved*: 155) that is experienced in anger or anger-filled violence, and is also fortified by it; such love becomes 'fierce' and '[p]owerful' and '[d]istorted'<sup>2</sup> all at once. She clearly works against the commonly held view that love and anger or anger-filled violence are opposing entities by linking them together in the space of her narratives. At the same time, her line of thought presents a direct challenge to the overarching feminist position 'that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist'.<sup>3</sup> This thesis contends that Morrison uses her fiction to create a unique black feminist standpoint primarily in relation to black women's rights as mothers: to experience motherlove, define it as a personal experience, and defend it in instances when external factors pose a threat to its existence. Morrison's vision of black mothering is associated with black women's freedom to practise it even if that means 'do[ing] it another way'<sup>4</sup> to how culture or society demands it be done, for they can create choices for themselves. Their anger

becomes a valuable asset in the process of defining and redefining maternal experiences since it can be an enabling force to resist such policing and enforced stereotypes. Equally, anger allows these mothers to recognise, or maintain, a sense of self-energising “me-ness” (*Sula*: 29) that identifies their own needs in relation to the mothering of another being, and which must not be lost at any cost. This thesis recognises the ambivalence that runs through Morrison’s fiction and views it as offering fertile ground for a re-examination of the complex relationship between anger and motherlove that forms the centre of her narratives.

Since the mothering experiences that emerge in these works of fiction do not correspond with common perceptions of motherlove they could all too easily be condemned as acts of ‘unmothering’ (*Jazz*: 167). However, this thesis aims to identify Morrison’s unique black feminist standpoint and use it to review the actions of the paradoxical mother figures she presents. In *Bluest Eye*, Pauline Breedlove’s motherlove is bound up in violence against her children since she acknowledges that “sometimes I’d catch myself [...] beating them, and I’d feel sorry for them, but I couldn’t seem to stop” (96). In *Sula* (1973), in reference to her daughter Hannah Peace is heard saying “I love Sula. I just don’t like her” (57). In the case of Hannah’s mother, Eva, she willingly sacrificed a leg so as to claim insurance money for the purposes of providing for her starving young children (34). Years later, Eva kills her beloved son having once been so determined to keep him alive (47). In *Song of Solomon* (1977), Ruth Dead continues to breastfeed her four-year-old son, Macon, even though ‘he [comes] reluctantly’ (13) every time she calls him into the study. This private activity stops when Ruth is caught out and suddenly shame is associated with it. In *Beloved* (1987), an enslaved woman ensures her children will enjoy freedom in their lives when she exercises ‘safety with a handsaw’ (193). Sethe Garner takes an axe to baby Beloved’s throat so that she can enter into her protective custody and ‘be safe’ from harm at the hands of the slave master. In *Jazz* (1992), Joe Trace desperately searches for Wild, who disappeared forever soon after giving birth to him. Yet, this ‘[e]verywhere and nowhere’ (179) figure remains close; in changing shapes and forms that are associated with the natural elements she returns again and again to her son. In *Paradise* (1997), having ‘fought her [daughter] like a man’ (152), Patricia Best is yet to determine exactly why she has done so (202). The image of a hardened woman gives way to the narrator’s testimony that Pat is ‘tast[ing] salt[y] [...] tears’ (204), which she has cried for Billie

Delia. In *Love* (2003), having been sent off to boarding school at the age of thirteen, Christine Cosey reflects on how ‘May wasn’t much of a mother to me’ (184). May is focused upon rescuing the family’s ailing business and whilst this leaves her with little time for her child, her aim is always ‘to protect’ (99) Christine as well as the inheritance to which she is entitled.

In Morrison’s novels instances of violence, control, enforced separation, and abandonment, along with examples of excessive closeness, controversial opinions, and emotional breakdowns, are all underpinned by motherlove. Within the context of Morrison’s fiction the value of love is determined in relation to the giver’s intention, even if what is received on the other end is violence. She accepts that even ‘with the best intentions in the world, [...] [l]overs and mothers and fathers and sisters [...] can hurt each other a lot’. Yet, it’s ‘[a]ll about love ... people do all sorts of things, under its name [...]’. The violence is a distortion of what, perhaps, we want to do’.<sup>5</sup> Morrison relies on her readers to recognise the best intentions with which these maternal figures express their motherlove even if it is distorted by acts of aggression and violence; just like Sula Peace they must discover their ability for ‘see[ing] old things with new eyes’ (*Sula*: 95). Equally, what they must take away from a reading of her novels is that they, too, ‘can choose to [...] do it another way’.<sup>6</sup> Morrison’s black feminist standpoint is also an important message that she intends to deliver to a specific group of readers as is made clear in her declaration that ‘I write *for* black women’.<sup>7</sup> This thesis follows Morrison’s example by taking a position of ‘[N]ew [S]eeing’<sup>8</sup> so as to uncover fresh, and not always comfortable, aspects of her black feminist standpoint. Indeed, the author offers a line of New Seeing into mainstream feminism itself by identifying it as a rigid theoretical concept that threatens her freedom as a creative writer since it works to inhibit the imagination. She also believes it allows no room for reinterpreting her texts or the experiences she is writing about.<sup>9</sup> This viewpoint is aligned with Patricia Hill Collins’ charge against ‘feminist theory [...] as having] suppressed Black women’s ideas’.<sup>10</sup> Morrison objects to the white middle-class voice that represents the centre of a feminist experience, meaning that other female communities have had to occupy the fringes for so long.<sup>11</sup> She rejects this central feminist model, but also identifies a problem with the black feminist position, referring to it as ‘the Black feminist thing’. Morrison elaborates, ‘it’s not the goals that I object to, [...] it’s just that it seems not to question what’s behind that desperate need to love only one person’.<sup>12</sup>

Morrison believes there is a fine line between a black woman addressing her needs with the support of a black feminist framework, and her becoming self-centred to the point that she cannot experience fulfilling relationships or share responsibilities with others. In response to the failure she sees in the feminist model as well as her dissatisfaction with the black feminist position, Morrison chooses to explore new ground by using her narrative space to create an innovative black feminist standpoint that advocates the importance of experiencing oneself in relation to another, and finding a balance so as not to be entirely selfless or selfish. In this vein, Morrison's standpoint endorses the separation of *motherhood*, meaning 'the patriarchal institution [...] that is male-defined and [...] deeply oppressive to women', from *mothering* that is a 'female-defined and centered [experience ...] potentially empowering to women'.<sup>13</sup> Mothering enables women to freely experience relationships with their children and not be governed by the tenets of motherhood that determine a good mother shall sacrifice all for her children, and that she 'has responsibility, but no power'.<sup>14</sup> Whenever a black woman's mothering is constricted by the demands of motherhood and agents of patriarchy she has the right to respond in anger. Morrison's standpoint allows for multiple definitions of this term to form. Firstly, against the silence imposed by slavery and agents of patriarchy, anger can enable a woman to find her voice with regards to her maternal experience, as does Sethe. Secondly, anger is an energising force that allows mothers like Sethe and Eva to recognise the need for "'me-ness'" (*Sula*: 29) in relation to their demanding daughters; Mavis Albright also desires it upon quietly realising her ability for anger whilst trapped in the dually oppressive experiences of motherhood and marriage (*Paradise*). Thirdly, anger allows for honest appraisals of a black woman's mothering experience and in this way an opportunity for open dialogue is created between Eva and her daughter, Hannah. Fourthly, anger is a self-protective measure and it is used by Pauline to shield herself against new threats of racist shaming, while it is clear previous experiences have affected her ability for mothering. Fifthly, anger is a form of protest and almost every black mother that features in Morrison's fiction discovers the value of it in her life, especially when it triggers acts of rebellion. Angry protests enable Sethe to take on the might of Schoolteacher and pro-slavery laws; Ruth and Pauline force hierarchies of power to collapse within their homes so that their husbands' patriarchal power is disabled and cannot become a valuable inheritance for their sons.



Whether it is discussed in the context of voice, self-discovery, honesty, self-protection, or protest, anger becomes linked to black women's freedom as mothers, and even daughters. In moments where these women discover their anger there is also some kind of indication from Morrison that they are aware of their ability for self-love in relation to that which is felt for their children, or their spouses, friends, and sometimes even strangers. Recognition of the ambivalence that is present in Morrison's depictions of angry love signals the reader's entry into the black feminist space she has created. Whereas anger becomes a driving force for moving her narrative forward, ambivalence tends to turn it cyclical so that it becomes a dedicated space for testing new possibilities for black mothering through the practice of New Seeing. This black feminist space will play with linear time and rules of language that represent conformity,<sup>15</sup> thus the events that feature in *Beloved* do not follow a chronological order, and *Bluest Eye* presents an indecipherable mass of print so as to deliberately disfigure words that were used to introduce the Breedlove story. This central space is dedicated to the 'interior life'<sup>16</sup> of black experience and so the voices of Morrison's characters must be heard whether they choose to speak all at once, or they opt for non-verbal forms of communication that gain meaning through symbolic references. Even the voices of the dead shall be heard as with Ma'am in *Beloved*, or Sula once she reaches the other side of life. No one here is assigned a victim status; instead women like Sethe, Eva, and Pilate must rely upon their resources for survival. As mothers they have the freedom to hybridise their maternal experiences using aspects of African tradition and relying on instinct. Much like the Convent in *Paradise*, this space represents a therapeutic zone that allows for the sharing of personal experiences. It is also a battleground that is used by Pauline and Ruth to draw in their husbands so that the patriarchal boundaries separating them become redundant. Here, Cholly is able to experience what might otherwise be termed as feminised emotions. This black feminist space also allows for the giving and receiving of care which is, of course, synonymous with love. The onus is not just on black mothers to give care, but also fathers, daughters, grandmothers and, at times, outsiders. Hence, forms of what shall be termed as otherlove can also be shaped here, and love gains value as a shared experience that need not be defined by biological relationships. Finally, this black feminist space promotes the importance of New Speaking that, ultimately, must precede New Seeing. It relies upon sharing one's experiences with another, "telling it face-to-face" (*Paradise*: 41). This is the ultimate gesture of love

because it requires partnership or community; love is also, quite simply, the ability to “[j]ust ... talk” (*Jazz*: 216) and listen (262).

In the last decade, three studies in particular have examined representations of black motherhood in Morrison’s fiction. A fourth study of interest focuses on anger as a trope in her work. In 2002, Paula Gallant Eckard wrote *Maternal Body and Voice in Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Lee Smith*. Eckard investigates how, despite an ever-present ‘patriarchal culture hav[ing] objectified the maternal and disregarded female subjectivity’,<sup>17</sup> a select group of female authors have successfully ‘establish[ed] a discourse in which the mother’s body, language, and experiences are fundamental’.<sup>18</sup> The maternal subjectivity that these works present invites feminist readings and Eckard proceeds to offer her own analysis of three novels by Morrison: *Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*. She considers a number of feminist theories in relation to these texts, including the work of French feminists Cixous, Irigaray, and Kristeva. She acknowledges that the Western standpoint of these theorists is reflected in their work and that, as such, it has been deemed by certain critics as being unsuitable for an analysis of African and African-American experiences of motherhood. However, Eckard counters this view by stating, ‘I believe they have [...] applicability in the examination of the maternal body and voice in Morrison’s novels’.<sup>19</sup> Eckard does make brief references to the work of noted black feminist Barbara Christian, but does not engage enough with a black feminist perspective and this limits the scope of her argument.<sup>20</sup> Brief references to the work of other black feminists, including Hortense Spillers and Alice Walker, can be found in an earlier chapter that maps historical and theoretical perspectives on motherhood, but this is not expanded on much further and so their names read as if they were simply part of a checklist. Even so, Eckard does offer interesting theoretical readings of the black maternal experience in Morrison’s novels. She is interested in how the maternal voice is conveyed in each of these novels and how, in *Sula*, mothers and daughters are able to communicate with one another in place of words.

The women in the Peace household enjoy engaging in regular sexual activity and this, according to Eckard, endorses Irigaray’s theoretical viewpoint that moments of sexual pleasure for mothers become ‘acts to maternal speech’ and they are able to link these mothers with ‘the bodies of their [own] mothers and daughters’.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, when Sula succumbs to death she ‘reenters not only the womb but also a version of Julia Kristeva’s semiotic chora’, indicating that ‘destruction of the self and of symbolic

language'<sup>22</sup> has occurred in this moment. This would suggest an end to Sula's relationship with words as well as the end of her presence in the novel. Of course, the story of Sula continues beyond death as she symbolically returns to the womb, but Eckard does not explore this important aspect of the narrative scene. Regarding *Beloved*, she notes that milk is a recurring reference and a "privileged" sign of the maternal'; it is 'a metaphor for nonspeech in Kristeva's theorization and [it] serves as a precursor to language in [the novel]'.<sup>23</sup> Eckard stops short of detailing exactly what Sethe is able to express whilst she engages in acts of non-speech. Certainly, this communication allows for the black maternal voice to be expressed in the most creative forms in Morrison's novels, but Eckard fails to fully develop her argument since she does not specify what messages are communicated between the mothers and daughters in *Beloved*, and also *Sula*. Furthermore, Eckard recognises these characters' feelings of anger in relation to guilt, and love in relation to hate, but she does not connect their anger to love even though Sethe and Beloved both demonstrate their love for one another in episodes of anger, and also reveal their anger in moments of love.

Victoria Burrows also offers a perspective on black motherhood in Morrison's fiction. Her study was published in 2004, entitled, *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison*. She investigates only one of Morrison's texts, offering a feminist reading of *Sula* in relation to theories of whiteness and trauma. Burrows is interested in 'reforming a feminist solidarity not predicated on an implicit reliance on the binaries of differences'.<sup>24</sup> She claims that the focus of feminism has become divided as it now represents various strands of thought that are reflective of the diversity in women's experiences. Her project intends to cut across lines of division by evaluating mother-daughter relationships in the works of white and black women authors. These are investigated from a position of ambivalence, which Burrows describes 'as a strategic trope within feminist theory [that] could perhaps provide one small intermediary rhetorical space in which to meet across difference'.<sup>25</sup> In relation to *Sula*, she considers how 'psychic trauma'<sup>26</sup> has impacted upon the lives of the Peace women. Eva's state of emotional paralysis is recognised as being the consequence of 'brutalities of poverty', but Burrows also states, '[t]his does not mean that love between mothers and daughters does not exist, just that it is transmitted in different forms'.<sup>27</sup> She recognises Eva's ability for motherlove even if it cannot be expressed in conventional terms. A direct link is made

between love and anger here since Burrows acknowledges that, ‘Eva hides her fierce maternal love under her disparaging language and angry, ambivalent tone’.<sup>28</sup> Whilst offering an interesting assessment of Eva’s experiences as a matriarch, Burrows does not go on to analyse the progress that she makes as a black woman. This investigation reduces the status of Eva to that of a ‘vulnerable body’ following the loss of her leg, and also as a result of her ‘psychic stunting’.<sup>29</sup> Morrison offers plenty of evidence to show that her character is able to counter any vulnerability she may have with her strengths, including the ‘sovereign’ (30) status she has created within her house. Burrows’ study would have been strengthened by an analysis of Eva’s gains alongside her losses.

Another study of interest was written in 2004, and it focuses entirely on Morrison’s canon of literary work. In *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, Andrea O’Reilly considers representations of the maternal in *Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved*, *Song, Tar Baby*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*. O’Reilly’s investigation also positions itself as a feminist study and applies two key theories to an understanding of Morrison’s fiction; the work of the maternal theorist, Sara Ruddick, as well as that of black feminist, Patricia Hill Collins. O’Reilly explains that, according to Ruddick, ‘motherwork is characterized by three demands: preservation, growth, and social acceptance’. Furthermore, ‘[t]he first duty of mothers is to protect and preserve their children’.<sup>30</sup> Collins’ theory helps to form an understanding of the black female perspective, including the view that it is possible for black women to challenge those ‘derogatory stereotypes’ which have been created by the dominant white culture in an effort to oppress them and their experiences of motherhood. For O’Reilly, Morrison qualifies as a maternal theorist who has created her own black female standpoint as a means of resisting the efforts of others to oppress the experiences of black mothers.<sup>31</sup> She declares that ‘Morrison defines and positions maternal identity as a site of power for black women. From this position [...] mothers engage in a maternal practice that has as its explicit goal the empowerment of children’.<sup>32</sup> Using both maternal and black feminist theories, O’Reilly analyses Morrison’s literary representations of black mothering. Mrs. MacTeer, in *Bluest Eye*, is associated with ‘practices of preservative love’.<sup>33</sup> She appears as a stern and impatient woman, especially when her daughter, Claudia falls ill, and the little girl confesses, ‘[m]y mother’s anger humiliates me’ (7). However, O’Reilly is certain that Mrs. MacTeer carries out her mothering responsibilities faithfully by taking care of her daughters’ practical needs. Her

motherlove is ‘thick and dark as Alaga syrup’ (7) and young Claudia experiences it alongside the anger which, upon reflection, she accepts was not directed at her but her illness.

Further acts of preservative love are identified in this study, including Plum Peace’s murder at the hands of his mother, Eva. O’Reilly’s view on this key event is that it shows ‘not callousness or vengeance, [...] but a maternal anguish so deep that it is ultimately unrepresentable in language. Eva’s pain can only be glimpsed and signified by the prediscursive language of her maternal body’.<sup>34</sup> O’Reilly here recognises the love that is present in an act of maternal violence as well as a black mother’s ability to convey her anxieties in nonverbal forms of expression. It becomes a more difficult task to explore the motherlove of Pauline Breedlove who appears not to show any outward signs of motherlove when she beats her daughter and curses her in ‘a voice thin with anger’ (84). O’Reilly’s study also fails to consider evidence of Wild’s motherlove, in *Jazz*. Instead, attention is drawn to the experiences of her son, Joe, as he searches for his abandoning mother and appears to fail in his efforts. Wild’s silence and her unspoken story also deserve to be considered in this study on black motherhood in Morrison’s fiction. Furthermore, O’Reilly’s theoretical position does not consider the mother’s needs in relation to those of the child so that they can be experienced equally. She applies Ruddick’s theory in relation to her feminist reading of Morrison’s fiction, but it fails at the outset by virtue of the fact that she identifies what black women’s duties should be, thereby endorsing a tenet of motherhood rather than the freedom of mothering. This failure becomes even more obvious when it is examined in relation to the theoretical standpoint on feminist mothering that O’Reilly has developed in a separate study,<sup>35</sup> but which she has not applied to this examination of Morrison’s fiction. The groundbreaking vision that O’Reilly presents here is weakened as a result of the conformity that it ultimately represents.

Representations of anger are also important in Morrison’s novels, and they are examined in a study that was published in 2000. In *Male Rage Female Fury: Gender and Violence in Contemporary American Fiction*, Marilyn Maxwell views *Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *Jazz* as postmodernist works that invite a re-examination of gender roles in the black community, especially because they feature violent women.<sup>36</sup> Yet, Maxwell’s critical comments fail to create new directions of thought. She claims that *Bluest Eye* ‘whispers the sufferings of the traditionally silenced black female’.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding Cholly Breedlove's rape of his daughter, Pecola, it is claimed that Morrison "softens" her portrayal of the male aggressor'.<sup>38</sup> This would suggest Morrison is maintaining patriarchal norms of gender behaviour that align women with passivity and men with agency, but this is simply not the case. The silence that is associated with the experiences of Pecola, Pauline, and Cholly, must be reviewed because it reveals anger-filled responses to the injustices they have suffered, and so Maxwell's assessment appears incomplete. In reference to *Sula*, she believes Hannah has not been 'show[n] much love' because her mother 'manifests a degree of self-interest and self-preservation that contravenes society's image of the devout mother who should [...] remain selfless'.<sup>39</sup> Eva's ability to experience her sense of self in relation to this mothering experience is recognised here, and whereas this observation offers an interesting starting point for new discussions on gender roles it is not explored further. Interestingly, Maxwell does recognise the 'blending of anger and love, of gentleness and despair, in [the] female-initiated act of violence'<sup>40</sup> that is committed by Eva against Plum. She agrees that Morrison creates an ambivalent moment of anger borne out of love, and whilst acknowledging the complexity in Eva's act of violence she does not take the same view when analysing the infanticide committed by Sethe. Maxwell lacks empathy for this character and her complex motherlove, stating that 'Sethe and the institution of slavery are both responsible for the death of her child',<sup>41</sup> thereby inferring that the act of infanticide is equal to the crimes of slavery. This analysis shows that Maxwell has not fully engaged with the theme of anger in Morrison's slave narrative and so this limits her investigation of it.

The investigations conducted by Maxwell, Eckard, Burrows, and O'Reilly, do offer some interesting points of discussion for this thesis and its examination of anger and motherlove in the fiction of Morrison. Firstly, Eckard's feminist analysis acknowledges that mother and child are able to communicate without the need for words. Her study draws attention to the feelings of pleasure and power that are experienced in moments of silence, as is conveyed during Ruth's prolonged breastfeeding of Milkman, and Eva's final moments with Plum. Eckard's assessment confirms that motherlove is experienced in moments of non-verbal communication and it counters Maxwell's comment about Morrison assigning silence to the experiences of African-American female characters as a way of allowing forms of gender-based discrimination to continue in the community. Secondly, Burrows' study promotes the

unifying aspects of applying different schools of feminist thought to a single study and O'Reilly also demonstrates the benefits of this approach in her work, which incorporates the standpoints of maternal theorists and black feminist thought in her investigation of Morrison's fiction. This thesis will also consider the work of maternal theorists and black feminists in relation to Morrison's black feminist standpoint on mothering. Both O'Reilly and Nancy Chodorow examine practises of mothering against the institution of motherhood; bell hooks, Audre Lorde, and Patricia Hill Collins focus on the history of black women in America and how they have effectively challenged forms of oppression ever since the days of slavery. The work of these theorists and feminists offers interesting historical and sociological frameworks that will form the foundations for this thesis and its analysis of motherlove, self-love, and anger in Morrison's fiction.

As was touched upon in the earlier discussion on existing studies in the field, O'Reilly's *Feminist Mothering* (2008) effectively separates the act of mothering from the institution of motherhood. She views feminist mothering as an inheritance for daughters:

[A] mother-daughter connection empowers the daughter *if and only if* the mother with whom the daughter is identifying is herself empowered. [...] [W]hat our daughters need most from us is not self-sacrifice or selflessness, as preached in patriarchal motherhood, but selfhood, and, yes, a healthy dose of *selfishness*. For a mother who insists on "a life of her own" tutors her daughter that she, too, is deserving of the same.<sup>42</sup>

Feminist mothering builds itself upon the foundation of a motherlove that is independent of patriarchal definitions; rather, it is self-directed and enables daughters to learn to love themselves just as their mothers learned to do before them. In teaching their daughters the value of self-love, they are also encouraging them to explore new possibilities for themselves and assert themselves as independent women rather than conformists or victims. In *Sula*, a feminist motherlove encourages the youngest member of the Peace matriarchy to explore her options. She has been mentored, albeit indirectly, by a mother and grandmother who have dealt with situations in their own way and therefore qualify as feminist figures. In comparison to O'Reilly's practice-based theory, Nancy Chodorow's work offers a psychoanalytic approach on maternal relationships. In *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (1978),

she constructs a theory that is relevant to Morrison's portrayals of separated mothers and daughters.<sup>43</sup> In her reworking of the original psychoanalytic model, Chodorow acknowledges an 'internal world'<sup>44</sup> that belongs to mother and child, within which the child can develop a sense of self with the support of its mother. Her theory is particularly interested in exploring self-development within mother-daughter relationships and here she departs from the Freudian model and its claim that psychically, girls will reject their phallus-lacking mothers in the same ways that boys do at the end of the Oedipal phase in their development.

In her work, Chodorow traces a lasting object-relational tie that binds the daughter to her (primary object, the) mother.<sup>45</sup> According to the heterosexual model that Chodorow works with, the primary relationship between a young daughter and her mother continues on a psychic level, into adulthood. Therefore, the relationships she shares with men count as secondary ties and experiences. These relationships become effective substitutes because within them she searches for something physical that equates with her experience of a sensed but unseen motherlove. Likewise, it can be argued that in *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *Jazz*, Hannah, Sula, Sethe, and Violet, are daughters that remain psychically connected to their absent mothers, even if they do not realise this at first. However, on a physical level Hannah and Sula lack a connection and so they try to experience that missing love through sexual relations with various male partners. The Bottom or Medallion community is aware of Hannah's 'steady sequence of lovers, [who are] mostly the husbands of her friends and neighbors' (42). Sex becomes a frequent activity in her life following the death of her husband, Rekus. Morrison believes that Hannah 'doesn't want an affair, a relationship, or a meaningful anything'.<sup>46</sup> Rather than a steady romance, Hannah searches for ways back to her mother and the frequency of these brief sexual liaisons indicates she is disappointed each time, but her search continues. The reader is told, she 'would take the man down into the cellar in the summer' or 'in the winter they would step into the pantry' (43). These small rooms, in offering privacy and darkness, become womblike spaces that satisfy her primary desire for her mother, Eva. In adulthood, Sula uses the act of sex in the same way that her mother did when she was alive. A man by the name of Ajax visits Sula's home, and she 'pull[s] him into the pantry. There [is] no need to go there, for not a soul [is] in the house, but the gesture [comes] to Hannah's daughter naturally' (125).



The pleasure Sula experiences is momentary since she is left feeling a sense of ‘deep sorrow’ (122) and her ‘mother-hunger’<sup>47</sup> remains along with a growing sense of anger.

Alongside the work of these maternal theorists, a black feminist perspective is equally important to a study of black mothering in Morrison’s fiction. In *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981), hooks offers a socio-historical background, asserting that slavery was shaped and maintained by a web of racist and sexist ideologies that deliberately targeted black women: ‘[w]hile racism was clearly the evil that had decreed black people would be enslaved, it was sexism that determined that the lot of the black female would be harsher, more brutal than that of the black male slave’.<sup>48</sup> hooks also offers her assessment of life on the slave ships that transported African people to the Americas. She comments that, ‘[b]lack women with children [...] were ridiculed, mocked, and treated contemptuously by the slaver crew. Often the slavers brutalized children to watch the anguish of their mothers’.<sup>49</sup> Cruelties against a slave mother’s children would be matched by the slavers’ brutal treatment of her own body which was subjected to all kinds of violations along the journey of the Middle Passage. In *Beloved*, Morrison’s often forgotten character, Ma’am, has also travelled on a slave ship to the American shores, but she remains connected to her homeland by speaking its language (74). She, too, is a victim of sexual exploitation during this time as she is ‘taken up many times by the crew’. Furthermore, Ma’am reveals her own branding as ‘a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin’ (72). It is tucked below her breast and, as such, becomes a symbolic reference to her maternal resolve as it eclipses the cruelties of slavery. She proves herself to be a rebellious figure by appropriating this mark of ownership as a signature of her identity as a mother, telling young Sethe, “[t]his is your Ma’am. [...] If something happens to me and you can’t tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark”’. hooks’ analysis of the intersecting relationship of racism and sexism is developed further in *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (2004), as her attention turns to a post-emancipation era and problems within the African-American community itself. She believes it is primarily men who are responsible for divisions that have occurred, since they have taken on the former masters’ characteristics by adhering to the rules of ‘patriarchal masculinity’.<sup>50</sup>

hooks explains that newly emancipated black men ‘used violence to dominate black women, which was a repetition of the strategies of control white slavemasters used’. She adds that ‘patriarchal masculinity had become an accepted ideal for most

black men, an ideal that would be reinforced by twentieth century norms'.<sup>51</sup> According to this viewpoint, the black man's quest for patriarchal masculinity has divided the black community and the family home along gender lines. This perspective can also be used to examine the Dead family home in *Song*, and especially the relationship that is shared by Macon and Ruth. In Morrison's fiction there is a noticeable difference between her staging of anger in the lives of black men, which is often influenced by patriarchy, and that which is possessed by black women, to be read as a feminist protest. In *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (1994), hooks offers an understanding of such a protest as she momentarily moves to the centre of the feminist circle to speak on behalf of all women. She contends that 'women of all races and classes who step out on the edge, courageously resisting conventional norms for female behavior, are almost always portrayed as crazy, out of control, mad'. Now speaking once again on behalf of black women, she notes that when '[s]et apart, captured in an African American circus of raging representations, women's serious cultural rebellion is mocked, belittled, trivialized'.<sup>52</sup> Like Morrison, hooks gives positive value to black women's ability for 'the kind of rage that allows [them] to resist'.<sup>53</sup> This standpoint is also shared by Lorde in her work, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984). According to Lorde, '[e]very woman has a well-stocked arsenal of anger potentially useful against those oppressions [...] which brought that anger into being [...] and] it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change'.<sup>54</sup> Lorde reflects on her personal experiences as a black woman who has dealt with racism, claiming that, '[m]y anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival'.<sup>55</sup> Morrison is also aware of this duality that marks black women's experiences of anger and such knowledge is reflected in *Sula* and *Beloved*. Both mothers lose their children to death whilst satisfied they have also been saved from the cruelties of racism.

Lorde attests that '[a]nger is loaded with information and energy',<sup>56</sup> and this statement lends weight to this thesis' view that even in silence Sethe's anger is communicating something important to her former slave master. Schoolteacher's retreat is in response to Sethe's non-verbal communication, and this crucial moment also reveals a scared man who loses his own power of speech. "I stopped him" (164), she later declares in defiance. Here, Morrison effectively subverts the generally held view that silence is associated with oppression; nonverbal communication enables her angry

black female characters to protest against forms of injustice, but also express their motherlove. Lorde recognises the ambivalent nature of anger:

When there is no connection at all between people, then anger is a way of bringing them closer together, of making contact. But when there is a great deal of connectedness that is problematic or threatening or unacknowledged, then anger is a way of keeping people separate, of putting distance between us.<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, the marital relationships that Morrison illustrates in *Song* and *Bluest Eye* are simultaneously connected and unconnected by anger. In anger, Cholly turns on Pauline, and she fights back so that another one of their frequently fought battles ensues. They need one another in order to stay above the psychological quicksand that is sucking them down, and whilst there is anger in this violence there is also evidence of love which cannot be articulated in conventional terms. Past battles have left them both feeling loved and satisfied they have also reciprocated love. Pauline wants to mother Cholly in return for his gift of love: “so I pat him like you do a baby. He asks me if I’m all right. I say yes” (102). Anger is also responsible for the disconnection between Pauline and her children even though her silent thoughts confirm her love for them. Love fused with anger is a common feature in Morrison’s fictional representations of black mothering and, as such, her standpoint is aligned with that of Collins. In *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), she asserts that ‘[t]he range of Black women’s reactions to motherhood and the ambivalence that many [...] feel about [their] mothering reflect motherhood’s contradictory nature’.<sup>58</sup> This statement is applicable to Morrison’s disclosure of Hannah’s mothering experience. When Hannah claims to love, but not like, her daughter, her simple words knit together a complex statement about her motherlove which Sula cannot comprehend. Collins also considers how black mothering and maternal love are performed in racist and sexist environments. She contends that the onus is on daughters to accept ‘the difference between the idealized versions of maternal love extant in popular culture and the [...] often troubled mothers in their lives’. Furthermore, every daughter must realise that ‘her mother’s physical care and protection are acts of maternal love’.<sup>59</sup> Collins strips motherlove of its ideological shine and presents the reality of mothers who must fight the odds to ensure the survival of their children along with their own. Hannah’s survival is the key evidence that Eva has to offer her as motherlove performed against the odds. Morrison is also concerned with

the survival of her people and she claims, '[i]t's the complexity of how [they] behave under duress that is of interest to me—the qualities they show [...] when their backs are up against the wall'.<sup>60</sup> In fulfilling her maternal duty under stressful circumstances and with limited options available to her, Eva also demonstrates her qualities as a survivor.

This thesis shall examine representations of black motherlove in relation to anger in seven of Morrison's texts: *Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song*, *Beloved*, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, and *Love*.<sup>61</sup> I have selected these particular works because they fully explore the ambivalent relationship of motherlove and anger, and they also offer evidence of the stages of development in Morrison's black feminist standpoint. These works all acknowledge slavery and its lasting impact upon the African-American community and so mothering in slavery shall become the focus of the opening chapter. *Beloved* will be evaluated as a slave narrative that is valuable not only because it recovers the lost voices of maternal experience, but also as it reveals whole truths. A slave narrative that speaks in anger stands apart since it becomes both a creative and revolutionary act and I contend Morrison achieves this objective with *Beloved*. Anger in relation to love shall also be considered as maternal inheritances that are passed along the matrilineal line to subsequent generations. This chapter shall consider how Morrison herself turns ambivalent to present motherhood in slavery as being an oppressive force. With slavery being identified as a patriarchal practice, Chapter Two will consider how patriarchy continues to influence the African-American community in a post-emancipation era. *Bluest Eye* and *Song* effectively portray how camaraderie has been lost amongst black men and women due to the choices that men have made. Within nuclear family homes the anger of men shall be identified as being influenced, but also masked, by patriarchal ideals, and the anger of women shall be examined as a black feminist response; in this way the home represents a battleground for power and I claim there is evidence of angry love in these relationships.

This complex yet interesting dynamic also reflects the anger and love that defined the black experience throughout the 1970s, when Morrison began writing; this is the decade in which *Bluest Eye* and *Song* were published. There shall also be consideration of fatherlove alongside motherlove within the nuclear family home. Chapter Three will examine a different kind of family structure that is presented in *Song* and also *Sula*. Black matriarchies are recognised as larger networks that are led by women but their role is often one of service rather than leadership. Working from her

black feminist standpoint Morrison reassesses the role of the matriarch and recognises her as an individual. In this way a point of New Seeing is created that will allow for a consideration of her ability for self-in-relation-to-another. Within these intergenerational networks there will also be an examination of anger being an inheritance that is passed down. I go on to suggest that matriarchies fail to become forms of sisterhood and these failures shall be compared to the successes of the non-biological sisterhood that Morrison presents in *Bluest Eye*. Chapter Four shall investigate Morrison's changing black feminist perspective that is reflective of a shift in black feminist politics of the twenty-first century. Hence, this chapter will examine Morrison's later works, *Jazz*, *Paradise*, and *Love*. I will suggest that she is resting the voice of her own black feminist anger to step back and focus on love that is now promoted as a unifying and diverse experience. Morrison maintains her black feminist perspective that individuals should experience their sense of self in relation to another, and now she also demonstrates the need to work against silence so that one can reveal their experiences whilst supported by a community, allowing for New Speaking alongside New Seeing.

## Chapter One

### Anger and Motherlove in Slavery

Advocates of African-American slavery offered numerous arguments to support their cause and did so with great conviction. It was promoted as ‘a highly profitable investment’<sup>62</sup> that had ‘provided the foundation on which the South [would now] r[i]se and gr[o]w’.<sup>63</sup> As ‘profit-maximizing capitalists’,<sup>64</sup> plantation owners employed fellow white citizens as overseers to steer the population of imported Africans in their work so as to ensure goals of productivity would be achieved and power structures maintained. In return for their work in the fields and in kitchens all the hands were to receive bed and board, and thus apologists would describe this set-up as a ‘reciprocal’<sup>65</sup> transaction between master and slave who were dedicated to the same purpose. Ronald Takaki replicates the rhetoric that pitched an ideal life down South:

The Old South, according to Southern legend, was the best of all possible worlds. There were lovely ladies and gallant gentlemen. [...] There were huge plantations and stately white mansions with Grecian columns and rose gardens and magnolia trees. The planter aristocracy was full of splendor. And the slaves were a happy people. There were the old plantation mammy, who was lovable and loving, and the butler, dedicated and polished. Then there were the field-hands who sang as they picked the cotton. [...] Here, then, was the great society!<sup>66</sup>

This image of a perfect life for all Southern residents is defaced by Takaki in the proceeding sentence which states, ‘[a]ctually, the legend of the Old south is just that—a legend. It is more fiction than fact’.<sup>67</sup> The words of the enslavers, purported as facts of life, were aimed with precision at audiences far and wide, to be read in newspaper articles and open letters, and be heard at speech rallies and election campaigns;<sup>68</sup> but what of those devoted mammies, skilful butlers, and industrious field hands, who were constantly pointed out and talked about, but were not heard from themselves? The voices of some of these individuals would eventually be heard but much later along the historical timeline, on the platforms of abolitionist assemblies and documented in numerous slave narratives. These written accounts intended to expose readers to a fresh perspective on the slave experience that would not correspond to the rhetoric supporting

official accounts of American history. In one such narrative it is clearly asserted that whereas ‘pride, pomp, and luxury’ would define the experience of masters, on a daily basis slaves would encounter ‘servility, dejection, and, misery’.<sup>69</sup>

Slave narratives continue to be identified as important historical documents and are equally valued as literary works of art. Yet, for Toni Morrison, who speaks both as a descendent of the enslaved people and a writer of distinction, the narrations of these experiences lack a vital quality because of which they fall short in their representations. That missing element, to which Morrison refers but never actually names, must be identified here as anger. In possession of anger the writers of slave narratives would have become empowered to speak openly and honestly without the need to then pull back at critical moments in their recollections. In her critique Morrison addresses these shortcomings and then proceeds to offer her method of writing black history as a point of resolution. She stresses that:

[W]hatever the level of eloquence or the form, popular taste discouraged the writers from dwelling too long or too carefully on the more sordid details of their experience. [...] Over and over, the writers pull the narrative up short with a phrase such as, “But let us drop a veil over these proceedings too terrible to relate.” In shaping the experience to make it palatable to those who were in position to alleviate it, they were silent about many things, and they “forgot” many things. There was a careful selection of the instances that they would record and a careful rendering of those that they chose to describe. [...] But, most importantly—at least for me—there was no mention of their interior life. For me, a writer in the last quarter of the twentieth century, not much more than a hundred years after Emancipation, a writer who is black and a woman—the exercise is very different. My job becomes how to rip the veil drawn over “proceedings too terrible to relate.”<sup>70</sup>

The metaphorical act of ripping the veil away from black historical experience hints at a degree of violence that is necessary for full disclosure. However, I would suggest it is anger, rather than violence, that Morrison is calling for here because evidence of anger in a slave narrative provides it with a pulse and allows it freedom to recall the past and respond to it with honesty. If, as suggested by Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates, such a document ‘represents the attempts of blacks to *write themselves into being*’,<sup>71</sup> then that effort should be supported by the drive to reflect a true self willing to fully expose the treatment of cruel masters and mistresses, to effectively voice personal beliefs, and to openly assert their right to freedom and citizenship. A slave narrative that

speaks in anger stands apart since it is not another static piece of writing, but a creative and revolutionary act. In light of Morrison's critique, this chapter begins by examining the renowned works of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, and Sojourner Truth, to test the effectiveness of their voices of experience, both male and female. The focus shall then turn to Morrison's own production of a slave narrative, *Beloved*, in which she positions herself as 'a writer who is black and a woman' to give voice to the 'angry dead' (*Beloved*, 234).

### 1. Giving Voice to the Beloved and the Angry Dead

According to James Olney, a first time reader of a slave narrative shall expect it to be 'a unique production; for—so would go the unconscious argument—are not slave narratives autobiography, and is not every autobiography the unique tale, uniquely told, of a unique life?' Upon reading more of these narratives, the same reader shall eventually come to view them with 'a sense not of uniqueness but of overwhelming sameness'.<sup>72</sup> This uniform status of slave narratives is the result of a stage managed operation that takes something away from their intended purpose as personal accounts and polemic writings. '[T]he 'political' (abolitionist) message took precedence'<sup>73</sup> in these narratives and so there would be certain conventions to follow in terms of the themes covered and modes of presentation. Turning first to an examination of the format offered in three well-known slave narratives, it is clear to see they are marked by familiar features, including supplementary material that tends to divert the reader's attention away from the subject's story. In *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*,<sup>74</sup> illustrations that intersperse the narrative include portraits of noted abolitionists, like William Lloyd Garrison and John Brown. Eleven out of eighteen of these illustrations sketch significant moments in Douglass' life whilst the rest mark moments in anti-slavery history and important figures associated with it. The effect is that of a blurring of the subject's agency in what starts off as a personal story but then extends to become a mapping out of the abolitionist movement, its champions and their achievements.<sup>75</sup>

In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*,<sup>76</sup> Jacobs' personal account is sandwiched between an Introduction from L. Maria Child and an Appendix by Amy Post; both of these white ladies from the North were well known figures associated with the Abolitionist movement. Child states that upon a request from Jacobs she 'revised her



manuscript [...] for purposes of condensation and orderly arrangement'.<sup>77</sup> For P. Gabrielle Foreman, these words have the power to significantly impact upon the narrative even before the reader has turned to the opening page of Jacobs' account. Foreman claims that, '[a]s Child takes responsibility for the presentation of the narrative, she also wrests responsibility from Jacobs'.<sup>78</sup> Immediately, suspicions are raised in the mind of an astute reader about this authorized intrusion and we are left wondering as to which aspects of Jacobs' story have been omitted, or emphasised—even manipulated—and, equally, which portions of the narrative might be supplements inserted by the editor. Child goes on to claim, 'it will naturally excite surprise that a woman reared in slavery should be able to write so well',<sup>79</sup> giving further weight to the idea that segments in Jacobs' account may well have been ghost-written. Since she shares narrative space with Child and Post, this written production becomes a shared platform on which all three of them shall be heard. The term, 'facilitated autobiography', suggests a not too dissimilar format from what is offered in Jacobs' narrative. This type of text is 'created through conversations with a literate ally'<sup>80</sup> who then takes on the important task of transforming the spoken word into a written document.

*The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* is a facilitated biography since it is a collaboration between a former slave woman and her abolitionist supporter, Olive Gilbert. Truth's experiences are delivered using the voice of an outsider, which creates a distancing effect; the reader shall hear about 'our heroine' and 'our sufferer'<sup>81</sup> but cannot get close enough to the subject herself because she lacks a self-possessing 'I' to claim ownership of her experience. At the same time, the narrator makes her own presence felt. She tells us 'I asked her'<sup>82</sup> about her master, yet we cannot be certain that Truth's response has been fully documented. The reader is also sidetracked by 'editorial asides'<sup>83</sup> included by the narrator. In her retelling of the death of Truth's mother, Mau-mau Bett, Gilbert stops to ask, '[w]ho among us, located in pleasant homes, surrounded with every comfort, and so many kind and sympathizing friends, can picture to ourselves the dark and desolate state of [Bett's husband,] poor old James [...]?'<sup>84</sup> Gilbert uses this narrative as a vehicle to communicate with her contemporaries, the Northern white population who live these relatively privileged lives. The result is a commandeering of this subject's story so that she becomes, at times, a character lost within it; and yet the abolitionist influence remains throughout. Evidently, in

articulations of the experiences of enslaved people white voices shall also be heard. Robert Stepto explains that the presence of these other voices would serve ‘to authenticate’ such accounts as documents of truth so that they may be ‘accepted as historical evidence’.<sup>85</sup>

A slave’s association with the Abolitionists would be beneficial to their mission to produce a slave narrative; it would ensure they were supported in their efforts and that the finished document would be widely circulated, nationally and internationally. The primary readers of these slave narratives would also be members of the Northern white community, a privileged and powerful group of people who were observers of slavery in the South and commonly viewed as being the only ones capable of stopping it. Hence, any appeals made to them using the written word would need to cater to their refined tastes. The style of language employed in these slave narratives works within such a remit, which would have served its function in appealing to its chosen reader but it would also limit the capacity of its voice of experience. The titles of the narratives under discussion here hint at what is lacking in the main body of the text. *The Life and Times of Douglass*’ history shall never be fully revealed and, as he warns, ‘the reader must not expect me to say much of my family’<sup>86</sup> because this might divert our attention from an analysis of the slave system. The reader is held back at arm’s length when Douglass delivers his personal story—not even naming his wife<sup>87</sup>—but then drawn in closer as it turns into a history lesson, and a mapping out of the politics of slavery.

The title of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* indicates the reader shall be presented with short summaries rather than a complete historical account. In constructing shorter sentences she cuts herself off from having to reveal these incidents as a whole; ‘[m]y master began to whisper foul words in my ear’,<sup>88</sup> we are told, but his mutterings shall not be disclosed. For Jacobs, the focus must turn to her ‘virtuous reader’,<sup>89</sup> who possesses the power to end slavery. In contrast, the title of *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* suggests it does not intend to highlight a select few ‘times’ or ‘incidents’ in the life of an individual; rather, it offers itself as a complete *Narrative of Truth*. In keeping with the familiar format of presentation for a slave narrative, the narrator uses the opening page to provide details about the subject, including her name, approximate time of birth, the names of her parents and her first slave master, and the location of her childhood home.<sup>90</sup> This completes chapter One of Truth’s story, which shall continue to be told principally in one-to-two page instalments. This fracturing

effect is further felt by parenthetical references that disrupt it quite frequently. In one example, the reader is informed of Master Charles' cellar that 'was assigned to his slaves, as their sleeping apartment,-all the slaves he possessed, of both sexes, sleeping (as is quite common in a state of slavery) in the same room'.<sup>91</sup> This method of underscoring statements regularly interrupts the flow of the narrative but it is also evidence of a necessary stylistic practice; it would enable the storytelling team to prick the collective conscience of Northern white readers whose lives were shaped around a framework of Christianity that promoted certain morals,<sup>92</sup> including the notion that where there are no relationships to connect people of the opposite sex they should not sleep in one room.

The authors of these slave narratives display an awareness of their ideal readers' religious and political ideologies, and especially their refined speech. They aim to communicate with their audience using the same elegant and highly polished language. Of course, abolitionist editors and narrators would have had an important role to play here. As a consequence of such a process black dialect has largely disappeared in these accounts. John Edgar Wideman explains that the use of black speech in nineteenth-century American literature 'was to indicate black inferiority'. Since it was the commonly held belief for a literate white readership that 'Negro dialect lacked proper grammar [...] its "dats" and "dems" and "possums" implied lazy, slovenly pronunciation if not the downright physical impossibility of getting thick lips around [...] English'. Wideman states that '[o]ne strategy for a black writer who wished to be taken seriously was to avoid altogether the incriminating dialect tradition'.<sup>93</sup> This is certainly the approach that has been taken by the authors of these slave narratives. In Douglass' account, descriptive language illustrates the slave system as if it were a mythic creature or an otherworldly presence, 'wrapt in congenial darkness', and possessing an 'infernal and barbarous spirit'.<sup>94</sup> The author's slick style reflects a respect for rules of grammar whilst also being able to draw in the reader and maintain their interest. In a tome that is nearly six hundred pages long we stumble across minor instances where black dialect is used. Slave customs are referred to, or, rather, confined by quotations marks; there would be "'jubilee beating'" where instruments were played by the "'Juba" beater"<sup>95</sup> on each farm.

In defence of Douglass, Valerie Babb believes he does show a respect for his black heritage through references to song. She claims, '[s]pirituals are often considered

the songs that link African Americans to the expressive creations of their African ancestors',<sup>96</sup> and Douglass does include one of these songs in his work. A verse that the slaves would sing begins, '[w]e raise de wheat, / Dey gib us de corn: / We bake de bread, / Dey gib us de crust'.<sup>97</sup> These lyrics are presented in their original dialect without any efforts to disguise their anger-filled attack on the slaveholders, and for this reason they stand off the page. Douglass' own words, however, appear to be rationed as he talks of slavery and its agents. His description of the practice of slavery, as referred to above, is symptomatic of an approach that directs criticism towards something but not someone and, therefore, it lacks precision. As is indicated in the use of italicised text, he hides behind sarcasm to disapprove of Hugh, as 'my *good, kind* master' who is also 'the author of my situation'.<sup>98</sup> This shying away from revealing the truth in its entirety carries risks for Douglass' narrative. He does not wish to condemn an entire race of people that would also include his ideal readers, but in his efforts to achieve this aim he appears to absolve slave masters of their crimes. He claims, '[t]he slaveholder, as well as the slave, was the victim of the slave system', and that any cruel 'treatment was a part of the system, rather than a part of the man'.<sup>99</sup> Douglass' narrative becomes a dangerous revision of the history of slavery, in which masters and slaves are to be seen equally as victims. This account of personal experience is very much restricted in its scope, and the style of language employed by the author boxes him in further. At the same time, it is possible to detect a definite masculine tone in his choice of language.

Whereas Douglass' voice trails off in discussions on the subject of enslavement, he is clearly heard when speaking on what is essentially the central theme of this narrative: the claim of a male slave over his manhood and his manhood as being on a par with his freedom. The Abolitionist figures illustrated in his work are all white men of authority that represent the ideal of strength in manhood he wishes to emulate. In his efforts to appeal to this reader Douglass has chosen his content carefully; the title for his narrative and subheadings for each chapter are void of any emotional triggers.<sup>100</sup> He speaks directly to the reader—man-to-man—because 'he'<sup>101</sup> must be told of this swashbuckling tale of heroism that qualifies Douglass as his equal. There are repetitive references to the subject's 'manhood lost in chattelhood'<sup>102</sup>; and slavery is condemned as 'a system which had deprived me, in common with my fellow-slaves, of all the attributes of manhood'.<sup>103</sup> He declares that in freedom 'the hopes of my manhood, were completely fulfilled'<sup>104</sup> because now 'I felt myself a man among men'.<sup>105</sup> Later in his

story, upon the discovery that, in fact, a ‘freedman was [still] powerless’,<sup>106</sup> Douglass comes to the conclusion ‘that to guard, protect, and maintain his liberty the freedman should have the ballot’.<sup>107</sup> These statements refer to the wrongs committed against black men, and the necessary steps that must be taken to ensure they maintain their freedom and gain rights to reflect their new status. Douglass is highly focused in his mapping out of this argument and in the process he largely neglects to tell his reader of the black female experience in slavery. In a brief paragraph he does refer to Caroline, who Mr. Covey uses as “‘a breeder’”<sup>108</sup> so that she shall produce children to add to his slave property. However, Douglass declares, ‘I will pursue this revolting subject no farther’<sup>109</sup> for the purposes of ensuring this remains a desensitised account of experience and also, so it would appear, because the black female experience is a minor theme in this narrative.

When Douglass shows solidarity for his ‘outraged sisters’,<sup>110</sup> he is not speaking of those black women who shared the shackles of enslavement and whose stories of suffering would be familiar to him. Instead, he refers to those ‘honorable [white] women’ who ‘have generously contributed to the abolition of slavery, and the recognition of the equal manhood of the colored race’.<sup>111</sup> Douglass now reciprocates by supporting them in their fight for rights, for he has become ‘a woman’s-rights man’.<sup>112</sup> He does not speak of the rights that should be awarded to black women alongside white women or, indeed, of the rights that should be given to black women alongside black men. In this deliberate act of aligning the entire enslaved race with a male gender Douglass brings to the fore his own prejudices; whilst seeking justice he remains ignorant to the injustices that he himself is committing using the written word. References to black manhood overload Douglass’ text, but they also provide it with a focal point for his protest against slavery and he speaks with clarity about this subject whilst relating it to his own experiences. The plight of black women cannot be heard in a narrative space that is marked by a masculine boundary, however, Jacobs endeavours to speak up for her sisters through her text. It is remembered as ‘the first full-length slave narrative by a woman and the first to challenge the dominance of the male slave narrative as the voice of all slaves’.<sup>113</sup> Jacobs’ written venture would convey an insight into the lives of black women trapped in slavery; however, similarly to how Douglass’ black male voice of experience becomes boxed in by its deliberately pitched tone and style of language, this woman-centric narrative faces its own difficulties.

Jacobs speaks directly to ‘you happy free women’<sup>114</sup> who belong to the white community and live outside the parameters of Southern slavery. In a preceding action, her editor establishes a relationship between herself, as a white woman of the North, and her black ‘sisters in bondage’.<sup>115</sup> This deliberate act of uniting black and white women lays the foundation for Jacobs’ appeal as one ‘sister’ to another so that she may use her abolitionist connections to communicate this story, and to also condemn the wrongs of slavery against black women. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese states that in order to appeal to her ideal readers Jacobs ‘wrote as far as possible in their idiom. She so doggedly followed the model of sentimental domestic fiction’.<sup>116</sup> Sentimental fiction layers itself with emotive content that aims to overwhelm white female readers and induce an emotional response from them,<sup>117</sup> and to achieve this purpose Jacobs uses the themes of womanhood-under-threat and motherhood-under-threat as her narrative hooks. Her story is mapped out like a bildungsroman, as is indicated by the titles of the opening and closing chapters: ‘Childhood’ and ‘Free at Last’.<sup>118</sup> Details of Jacobs’ early years are offered to establish her innocence and purity in sexual terms; hers was a ‘happy childhood’<sup>119</sup> under the protection of loving parents. A loving ‘kind mistress’<sup>120</sup> educated this young girl so that she could become like any one of *you* happy, loved, and protected young girls who grew up to become ladies of the house. Living a perfect family life would have enabled Jacobs to dream of achieving the goals of marriage and motherhood that are shared by her nineteenth-century readers but, evidently, slavery would not allow her this ‘privilege’. She makes it known that their black counterparts have been ‘put on par with animals’.<sup>121</sup>

Like Douglass, Jacobs has made stylistic choices that will allow her to communicate clearly with her chosen reader; she, too uses ‘a form of “literary” Standard English most familiar to readers of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction’,<sup>122</sup> thereby mostly erasing from her account evidence of the black dialect. She offers grammatically correct, long and evenly flowing sentences to remember the happy and secure moments in her life,<sup>123</sup> but when it comes to recalling the downturns she, too, rations her words to produce much shorter sentences that skimp on detail. ‘So vanished our hopes’,<sup>124</sup> she almost whispers to her reader in a mournful manner. Examples like this might also be viewed as indicators of Jacobs’ narrative ploy to create a pause so that the readers can reflect on her revelation and then ask themselves what they could do to help overturn the fate of their sisters in need. She is careful in her criticism of white mistresses so that

it is not misinterpreted as censure of all white women. The use of shorter sentences in these instances provides a sense of words being spoken through gritted teeth; it would be better for her to say 'I pitied [rather than hated] Mrs. Flint'.<sup>125</sup> Evidently, Jacobs holds back in her revelations of the truth and even in those moments where she begins to speak about her ordeal at the hands of her cruel master a counternarrative emerges to interrupt and cut her off. This other narrative is also in the voice of Jacobs as she attempts to step back from her statement, but it might also indicate a coerced action. Having already stated, 'if you were to hear the enormous lies' slaveholders 'tell their slaves, you would have small respect for their veracity', her voice now falters with its apologetic tone asking the reader to '[p]ardon me'<sup>126</sup> for speaking out.

This counternarrative sees the author turn on herself, featuring confessions such as, '[m]y heart is so full, and my pen is so weak!',<sup>127</sup> and an appeal to the reader to 'pardon me'<sup>128</sup> once again for having offended their sensibilities by disclosing her relationship with a Mr. Sands that results in motherhood out of wedlock. This relationship denotes a rare moment of independence for a young slave woman since the act of sexual intercourse is associated with personal choice. The threat of sexual abuse is also a part of Jacobs' narrative experience yet she holds back on giving details. Since discussions on this particular issue would work against the sentimental form,<sup>129</sup> Jacobs makes a conscious effort to draw a veil over such details resulting in her suffering being relegated to the status of 'relatively minor forms of abuse'.<sup>130</sup> This can also be read as a self-protective act so as to maintain her dignity especially since, as she tells us, '[t]he remembrance fills me with sorrow and shame'.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, black women would have held back from revealing every detail upon the realisation that 'both the slave narrative and the sentimental novel [would be] deficient representations of their experience'.<sup>132</sup> Indeed, the formulaic frameworks adopted by both Jacobs and Douglass fail them given that their personal histories appear incomplete. They do, however, offer rare narrative moments that can be read as instances of rebellious action and these exist only when the subject is prompted by a surge of anger. In Jacobs' account the focus is on her motherhood and the need to protect her body from sexual abuse, and in Douglass' narrative earning the right to be called a man alongside white men becomes the central theme; it is only when some form of threat is presented against these aspects of their lives that the enslaved individuals react in anger and commit some form of rebellious action.

Douglass experiences a build-up of anger and it is personified as the ‘monster [that] had obtained complete control over me’,<sup>133</sup> or a ‘fighting madness [that] had come upon me’.<sup>134</sup> It prompts violent action as Douglass fights back when Covey attacks him; now triumphantly, he speaks in terms of exchange and value to declare that he disabled Covey’s assault by responding with his own violence, and that overcoming his oppressor enabled him to feel liberated; ‘I was *nothing* before; I was a *man* now’.<sup>135</sup> In Jacobs’ narrative, she reveals how Dr. Flint’s incessant sexual advances finally push her into action and her fear is held back by a rush of anger; as he turns violent she roars back, “‘How I despise you!’”<sup>136</sup> She registers her anger once again when her efforts to reunite with Ellen, who became separated from her mother when she was sold on, are thwarted by Mrs. Hobbs. In anger Jacobs underscores the injustice that has allowed this separation to occur, because now ‘my child *belonged* to her daughter’.<sup>137</sup> In italicising this word Jacobs also carries out an imagined act of violence against slavery because it has dared to claim rights over her child and threaten her motherhood. The anger has gone when this sentence is rewritten in the closing page of the narrative to mark Jacobs’ success in rescuing both herself and her children; and now ‘my children certainly belonged to me’.<sup>138</sup> The evidence of anger in both of these slave narratives indicates the trigger that will prompt rebellious action. Yet, the power of anger is rarely acknowledged by the authors and is spoken of only in brief episodes. Undoubtedly, the white female readers of sentimental fiction would be cautious of a writer or subject displaying rage because she would not be seen as ladylike and worthy of their trust or support, and so Jacobs will not allow her anger to gain momentum. As for Douglass, this is the third version of his slave narrative and each time he has ‘creat[ed] himself over and over’.<sup>139</sup> As James Matlack notes, something important has been lost in the process in that Douglass ‘dilute[s] the earlier tone of cold scorn and righteous anger toward slavery and its masters’, most probably because ‘[t]he battles are over and an old warrior rests’.<sup>140</sup> For a restless Toni Morrison, however, the battles must be remembered and retold; this time there can be no holding back because a debt is owed to the enslaved generation who she identifies as ‘the angry dead’.

It is clear that Morrison’s critique is accurate in its reading of slave narratives from the past. An examination of these accounts shows they were written as appeals to white Abolitionist readers and, equally, their production was achievable only because of Abolitionist support. Hence, they became stage-managed operations that would show an



awareness of the readers' religious and political ideologies, and speak to them in the style of refined language they were familiar with. Narratives written about the black male experience were usually heroic tales void of emotional content in order to appeal to white male readers, and narratives written about the black female experience were promoted as highly emotional accounts akin to the sentimental fiction read by Northern white ladies. Whereas slave narratives became popular reading material amongst the Abolitionists, it is clear to see the writers have largely failed in their endeavours to present a complete account; the narrative flow is frequently interrupted and the content also lacks important details. The presence of a secondary voice—a white Abolitionist voice—can be sensed throughout and it steers the direction of the narrative. At times, it becomes difficult to ascertain who is speaking to the reader especially because the choice of vocabulary used raises suspicions. A black dialect is rarely registered in these accounts suggesting that the black voice of experience has been largely silenced. Conversely, it becomes obvious that the former slave writer is somewhat reluctant about getting too close to the readers and so they must be kept at arm's length; they shall be offered summaries rather than full accounts of experience. When the narrative voice speaks about the traumas and abuses of slavery it often becomes quieter or declares its inability to recall fully, thereby indicating a self-protective gesture on his or her part. There is also evidence of fear in this voice, that any verbal attacks against former slave masters and mistresses might be misread as an attack on an entire race that would include the intended readers. Hence, the criticism is directed at *something*, in the form of the slave system, rather than at someone, in terms of its agents. When there is the risk that too much might have been spoken a counternarrative emerges to reign in the speaking subject. There are those slave narratives in which the subject intends to speak up for themselves and for others, and then there are those that speak only for the self whilst consciously negating the experiences of others.

Morrison's slave narrative intends to offer something new, that will answer with honesty the important questions of who, what, where, when, why, and how, in relation to the experiences of slavery on American soil. Her work is recognised as a “neo-slave narrative”<sup>141</sup> precisely because of its ability to step back in time to recover an important history and then leap forward with it, bringing this past into the present, so that she can deliver it using a wholly innovative approach;<sup>142</sup> the result is a multilayered production that is built up around dense content and the employment of bold technical skills. The

title of this narrative is *Beloved* and whilst it is the opening word that greets the reader, it is also a reference to the core layer that will be peeled back at the very end; the *Beloved* is an elapsed history that is aligned with a female identity using pronouns of 'her' (323) and 'she' (324). The narrator informs the reader that those linked to this history 'forgot her like a bad dream' and that '[r]emembering seemed unwise'. Evidently, Morrison is commenting on the efforts of previous writers of slave narratives who she believes have failed to deliver a true account of black women's history. Through the narrator she responds to a statement originally made in Sojourner Truth's narrative, about the 'long series of trials in the life of our heroine, which we must pass over in silence' out of the need to save individuals from 'undeserved pain' and to protect their identities.<sup>143</sup> Morrison talks back to Truth telling her, '[i]t was not a story to pass on' (323). This play on words allows her to somewhat chastise Truth for her inability to share the important details of her story, whilst also registering Morrison's frustration that African-American people of the past should not have passed on their history meaning they should not have neglected to tell it all. She repeats the same words a second time almost as if to speak in a pitched volume and then, on a third attempt, there is the sense that these words are now being yelled out in the present tense. Morrison makes it clear to her own readers that '[t]his is not a story to pass on' (324), for it should be remembered even today.

Jan Furman declares that Morrison 'is continuing an unfinished script of slavery begun [...] centuries ago by the first slave narrative',<sup>144</sup> but it is more accurate to state that she has, in fact, torn up that original script because it has proved to be inadequate; she intends to start afresh relying on her pen as an effective tool. Harriet Jacobs in her slave narrative would repeatedly lament her inabilities as a writer for failing her in her efforts to offer more details of her experiences; '[m]y heart is so full, and my pen is so weak!' she claims, and that '[n]o pen can give an adequate description of the all-pervading corruption produced by slavery'.<sup>145</sup> In comparison, Morrison does not doubt the power of her pen and she is one of several black women writers who are 'wielding their pens like spades, unearthing forbidden treasures buried in old soil'.<sup>146</sup> She uncovers the *Beloved*, which is the forgotten history of the 'Sixty Million and more' to whom she dedicates her narrative. This history now becomes an inheritance to pass on to the current and subsequent generations of African-Americans, and their foremothers are also identified as the forgotten *Beloved*. In the final paragraph of her narrative,

Morrison refers to the black female ancestor, whose ‘footprints come and go, come and go. They are so familiar. Should a child, an adult place his feet in them they will fit’ (324). Here, she takes a sideswipe at those men who have claimed the entire community as theirs alone, and this is why she aims to rebalance this inequality by speaking for, and speaking to, primarily African-American women. The child she refers to here is any one of those young black women that will come to read her narrative and discover the history of their foremother, Margaret Garner; they shall find that her historical footprint matches their own.

Although Morrison offers her readers a work of fiction, her creative skills enable her to convey a vivid sense of what life was like for those women who lived through the atrocities of slavery. Having ripped down the veil that cloaked the ugly truths of daily life in previous slave narratives, Morrison is able to draw her readers into the ‘interior life’ of black women’s experience. We learn how ‘slave life “busted [the] legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue”’ (102) of an elderly woman like Baby Suggs, who survived ‘years of losing children to the people who chewed up her life and sp[at] it out like a fishbone’ (209); and how slavery turns a young mother like Sethe into the murderer of her beloved child. The experiences of black mothers in slavery become the focal point of this novel, and while it is identified as being a fictional account, its real life source is a woman who paid the ultimate price for her right to remain a mother to her children. Morrison first came across the story of Margaret Garner as she edited a series of historical records that would form *The Black Book*.<sup>147</sup> One of these records was a newspaper article, which reported the crime of a runaway slave. In interviews, Morrison has revealed important details about this case. In 1851, Garner escaped to freedom with her children and when her slave master found her and demanded that his property be returned, her response was to kill her children rather than see them returned to slavery. Morrison states that Garner ‘was tried not for murder, which was hardly a crime for a black woman, but for stealing property: herself’.<sup>148</sup> A Reverend who met with Garner and listened to her account would later share the details of what was discussed with the *American Baptist* newspaper:

I inquired if she was not excited almost to madness when she committed the act. No, she replied, I was as cool as I now am; and would much rather kill them at once, and thus end their sufferings, than have them taken back into slavery, and be murdered by piece-meal. [...] She alludes to the child that she killed as being free from all trouble and sorrow, with a degree of satisfaction that almost chills

the blood in one's veins; yet she evidently possesses all the passionate tenderness of a mother's love.<sup>149</sup>

This statement confirms the sanity and calmness with which Garner's mind worked when committing the act of infanticide. Note how the common signifiers associated with key words are problematized here; murder is not violence or suffering but it is linked to love; death is not associated with the end of life but with freedom and happiness; and yet under slavery life comes to signify death. Evidently, those familiar markers of nineteenth-century morality, which defined what was good and evil, and what was right and wrong, are thrown into confusion by the Reverend's account, and also by Morrison herself. Her fascination with this historical figure has led to her speaking about her on several occasions, offering interpretations of Garner's thoughts and actions. For Morrison, pictures of this woman reveal someone 'very quiet, very serene-looking'.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, Garner's explanation, which came only after she had committed the murder, proves that she 'was not a mad-dog killer'.<sup>151</sup> Morrison gives words to the silence that marked Garner's act of infanticide, and which allowed her to communicate to her former master, 'I'm a human being. These are my children'<sup>152</sup> and, 'I will decide what will become of their lives'.<sup>153</sup> Morrison believes that in this moment a slave '*became* a mother, which [... meant] becoming a human being in a situation which [was] earnestly dependent on [her] not being one'.<sup>154</sup>

In *Beloved*, Morrison pays her own tribute to Margaret Garner's motherlove, and whereas she 'freely alters the facts'<sup>155</sup> of the original story, she ensures that the mother's voice is brought to the fore. The reader must also experience the 'passion' and 'anguish'<sup>156</sup> of a mother caught in slavery. The original account of Garner's story appeared in a nineteenth-century newspaper that would have been written for a white readership,<sup>157</sup> but Morrison's partial retelling of this case caters for a different kind of audience. She declares, 'I write for black women', adding further that the mission of all black women writers is 'to repossess, rename, re-own'.<sup>158</sup> A revisiting of the past is necessary for this group, in recognition of the fact that something is missing from the textbooks of history, and that that *something* must be identified in its entirety for it to be reclaimed, even celebrated. *Beloved* considers the experiences of black women in slavery, with particular focus on their motherhood. White masters would demand that female slaves reproduce often and then snatch their children away from them, claiming them as their own property. In many cases, mothers were stripped of their maternal

identity and simply returned to their work; their dual roles were clearly defined as ‘producer and reproducer’.<sup>159</sup> Morrison’s fiction embodies a therapeutic model of healing as it gestures towards reclamation of these black women for the present generation so that their maternal wounds can be passed down and a process of healing can take place. Sandi Russell explains that such a tactic unites the author’s work with the concept of black sisterhood since Morrison, ‘want[s] to capture the relationship that black women have historically shared with one another’.<sup>160</sup> Morrison’s prose takes on the tone of a personal black feminist appeal for all her sisters to engage in a reassessment of the Garner story; a slave criminal, but also a woman, a mother and a sister. For Morrison, Sethe, like Margaret Garner, needs to be claimed as *one of us*.

In *Beloved*, the character of Denver, as a young black woman of the community, comes to represent any one of Morrison’s intended readers. She lives in the present and reaching back into the past does not interest her unless it relates to a retelling of ‘the magic of her birth’ (36). ‘This was the part of the story she loved’ (91), the reader is told, thereby pointing to the peripheral scope of her search into the past. However, there is evidence to suggest that Denver is subconsciously being drawn into a matrilineal history; she makes discoveries that establish an important link as is confirmed when she declares to her mother ‘nothing ever dies’ (44), and Sethe repeats the same words back to her. Later in the novel, Denver declares a fear and distrust of her killer mother but also a deep love for her. These conflicting emotions are conveyed through a monologue that suggests her fear is borne out of great uncertainty about her mother’s past especially because they have never talked about it, whilst Denver’s love for this woman is the result of tender moments they have shared and that which she has actually experienced. The definite statements made by Denver, where she tells us ‘I know’ or ‘I’m afraid’ (242), are overshadowed by frequent moments of uncertainty: ‘I heard’ / ‘That’s what they told me’ / ‘I guess’ / ‘I don’t know what it is, I don’t know who it is, but maybe there is something else’. The sub-narrative that runs through this monologue relates to Denver’s quest for her inheritance; it is a forgotten or silenced history that she could access through her mother’s story. Unable to identify what she is looking for herself, Denver is still able to communicate the need to satisfy her curiosity despite the fear; she tells us, ‘I need to know what that thing might be, but I don’t want to’ (242). Morrison expects her black woman reader to tread a similar path so as to connect with her history and upon uncovering the personal stories of her female ancestors she shall also discover

something import about herself; she is the Beloved to whom Morrison speaks in the space of this narrative.

Morrison equates her chosen reader with a young child who upon making important discoveries in the space of this narrative shall grow as a person and come to inherit her identity as an African-American woman. Yet, the author will not make this an easy task for her reader who is suddenly thrown into the narrative to immediately contend with themes of sexual degradation (5), infanticide (6), bestiality (13), and rape (19). The opening sentences talk of a house that '[is] spiteful' (3) and 'a baby's venom'; and an elderly woman becomes '[s]uspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead' (4). The baby is dead and yet still capable of hostility; her mother is also her killer and yet she declares "I loved her" (5); and Baby Suggs is the elderly lady caught between an unpleasant life and conflict that continues on the other side of death. Susan Bowers observes that in the space of her slave narrative Morrison 'is [...] giving African Americans back their voices'<sup>161</sup>, but the critique fails to identify the energy that accompanies these recovered voices. As the dead are brought 'back to life'<sup>162</sup> here their voices are coated thick in anger to reveal stories of resistance and of love caught up in violence. Morrison makes her reader listen to the many appalling truths of their experiences, but hearing alone will not enable us to fully connect with their stories; rather, Morrison creates a multidimensional and multisensory experience and we find ourselves 'not merely *know[ing]* about the horror of slavery but [also] *feel[ing]* what it was like'.<sup>163</sup> A.S Byatt adds, 'the reader is *inside*' the 'doings and sufferings'<sup>164</sup> of her characters. Morrison successfully achieves her objective in bringing her reader into the interior life of those that have suffered the traumas of slavery.

Morrison's black women characters represent the forgotten foremothers now revealing their anger through actions and words. She, too, has inherited this anger and it shows itself through extraordinary narrative technique. *Beloved* deliberately places itself outside of familiar genres linked to previous slave narratives so that it cannot be pinned down by their requirements; it is neither a sentimental fiction nor a heroic tale. It resists a linear narrative structure and it frequently refuses to work with rules of grammar. "No more running—from nothing" (18) Sethe declares in double negatives; and Beloved's freefalling monologue, which is independent of syntactic anchors, hurls itself at the reader to reveal, 'I come out of blue water after the bottoms of my feet swim away from me I come up I need to find a place to be the air is heavy I am not dead

I am not' (252). Furthermore, familiar frameworks of reference become ineffective; consensual sex between Sethe and Paul D is void of romantic features and instead it is marked by something 'resentful' (24) and 'revolting' (25). In order to enable Morrison to present to her audience a multidimensional and multisensory experience, her narrative becomes a self-governing space that is free to do as it wants and when it wants to do it; what it has to offer is something quite unique. Written text also becomes the spoken word so that, as Morrison explains, it 'can be read in silence' and also 'one should be able to hear [it] as well', like a preacher who energises a congregation to join in, or a musician who can sway an audience to feel the beat and respond to it.<sup>165</sup> *Beloved* is a free flowing musical composition that changes its beat without a moment's notice. A conversation between Sethe and Amy, who meet as strangers but soon become birthing partners, can be read as a duet. The same words pass back and forth and find a rhythm; "[m]y back hurt me," cries Sethe, to which Amy responds, "[y]our back? Gal, you a mess" (93). Now Amy asks, "[w]onder what God had in mind" (94), and Sethe also questions herself, '[w]hat did He have in mind?' They have solo moments, too; Amy can be heard 'humming' (94) away, and Sethe's birthing body creates its own rhythms as '[s]he wait[s] for the sweet beat that follow[s] the blast of pain' (98).

Baby Suggs's sermon in the Clearing also becomes a melodic concert. Arlene Keizer equates it with 'a jazz performance' that is achieved through the 'children's laughter, men's dancing and women's weeping', as they add something of their own to Baby's solo.<sup>166</sup> Her alliterative references to '[l]et' (103), 'love', and 'life' (104), create a hard foot tapping beat that is felt by everyone. These examples point to moments of love that are achieved in the text—of sisterly love, communal love, and motherly love—but the chorus to which it returns again and again is an anger-filled performance and here the narrative peaks; it sings, it screams, and it shouts out in protest against the atrocities that slavery imposed against African-American women. Harriet Goldhor Lerner offers a detailed definition of what anger is and this allows us to better understand why anger is an essential fibre in Morrison's slave narrative. Lerner explains:

Anger is a signal, and one worth listening to. Our anger may be a message that we are being hurt, that our rights are being violated, that our needs or wants are not being adequately met, or simply that something is not right. Our anger may tell us that we are not addressing an important emotional issue in our lives, or that too much of our self—our beliefs, values, desires, or ambitions—is

being compromised in a relationship. Our anger may be a signal that we are doing more and giving more than we can comfortably do or give.<sup>167</sup>

Anger is a signal and it also becomes the vehicle through which Morrison's black female subject shall communicate messages of resistance to the outside world or a specific target, and it is preceded by key moments of consciousness that she must experience; it allows her to crystallise her thoughts in terms of who is the source of her hurt, she finds the voice to condemn her perpetrators, and she now objects to partaking in any activity that she disagrees with. Of course, there is a converse angle from which anger is seen as 'irrational or worse'.<sup>168</sup> In *Beloved*, Morrison presents anger as a valid emotion and it becomes the driving force of the text's plot and structure; in this unique narrative space anger is free to be both rational and irrational. Accompanied by a constantly changing musical tempo the narrative swings and loops between these positions and soon the rational and irrational come to be the very same and the reader can experience what would otherwise be impossible; a black woman shall speak even in silence, life becomes death and death becomes life, murder is a gift of motherlove, and we can trace both motherlove in anger and anger in motherlove.

Indeed, Morrison's neo-slave narrative offers something unique by bringing an elapsed history into the present time and giving voices to her silenced black female ancestors, including Margaret Garner. They are the Beloved that Morrison writes about and, at the same time, the Beloved is also her intended black woman reader who must work hard to earn her inheritance in terms of this matrilineal history. Morrison introduces the reader to her forgotten foremothers by throwing her into their interior lives so that she, too, can experience their sufferings in slavery. The veil that was previously drawn over details of the most horrific experiences does not simply slip away here; rather, it is ripped off by an angry Morrison and her reader shall witness this rage in almost every breath of the text. It is a self-governing narrative space that is free to explore and express the anger that is felt by the author and her characters. Hence, it presents a serrated structure that is the consequence of its rejection of a linear timeline, slippages in adhering to rules of grammar, and resistance against constructions of absolute villains and flawless heroines. It does, however, feature a constantly shifting musical beat that rouses the reader and provokes a response to the unfolding action. Morrison's composition offers solos and duets to mark various forms of love, but it



returns again and again to an anger-filled chorus and so it not only sings, but also screams and shouts out in protest. Anger gives Morrison's narrative its soul and the theme of love gives it its flesh. 'Beloved' is the title of this slave narrative and it is also the final word offered by the author, as the text completes a cyclical action to underscore the belief that love is the inheritance to be passed on and passed down to the next generation; the reader now understands that every one of us has the right to *Be loved* and to claim that right when it is being snatched away. *Beloved* explores a threatened motherlove and the reader comes to see it and feel it through cyclical references that build into an angry chorus where the black mother shall react and respond to such a threat. Cyclical actions are a regular feature of this otherwise unpredictable and eccentric text. The following section shall explore this process in further detail by aligning the cyclical turns with notions of care and defence in relation to the black maternal experience; cyclical moments of anger energise black mothers to defend themselves against the patriarchally-defined threats of slavery, and in cyclical moments of love it is possible to trace a connectedness between the mothers and daughters who are bound together even in separation. In order for these maternal binds to be achieved time itself must change its course from a linear route to a cyclical pattern. The cyclical processes also serve a practical function in this narrative and so I shall be identifying how they can bring together an otherwise fractured account of Sethe's mothering experiences in slavery, which are to be read as a sign of traumatic recall.

## 2. Cyclical Returns to Motherlove and a Mother's Anger

Morrison's slave narrative is written over a hundred years after emancipation was declared on American soil. She does not regard such distance as a safety net behind which she can position herself to convey the experiences of her forgotten ancestors. Instead, Morrison closes that gap by bringing the past into the present time for her reader; this proves to be a risky move because a Pandora's Box full of memories is about to be forced open just like Paul D's sealed 'tobacco tin' (86). A reading of previous slave narratives indicates it is not easy for the former slave to go back in time because of the sufferings that would be revisited; Jacobs tells her reader, '[t]he

remembrance fills me with sorrow and shame',<sup>169</sup> and Truth's narrator attests, '[s]he shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory'.<sup>170</sup> In Morrison's narrative, 'rememory' (226) is required of those who have lived through the atrocities of slavery and just like Jacobs and Truth, her characters work hard to resist going back in time. As a self-protective measure, Sethe's 'brain work[s] hard to remember as close to nothing' (6), but it also turns 'devious' at times and spills out partial memories into her consciousness little by little. Sethe's reluctance to remember her painful past and then her inability to stop herself from turning back in time can be seen as symptomatic of the trauma she has suffered. Cathy Caruth works with a Freudian model that identifies such trauma as 'a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind', and she goes on to suggest that 'the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against his very will'.<sup>171</sup> The emotional pain related to traumatic experience becomes the reason for a person holding back from recall and yet, as this theoretical position states, their restless mind shall circle around related memories until, finally, they can identify the source of that trauma. J. Brooks Bouson recognises that Sethe, too, 'suffers from rememories, that is, spontaneous recurrences of her traumatic and humiliating past'.<sup>172</sup>

In cyclical motions Sethe adds details to the hazy story of her past in slavery and the source of her trauma shall be revealed in this way. Each trigger of rememory is indicated by use of repetition; 'rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes' (7) is an image of Sweet Home farm, which she thought she had left behind. The narrator recognises these triggers and becomes witness to Sethe's recalls, telling us she is 'spinning. Round and round the room' (187). When she talks about early life with her husband, another rememory is marked by repetition; she states, "I got married. What they called married back there and back then" (70). Finally, when Sethe reveals what was going on inside her mind at the point of taking her children into the shed to slay them, the narrator assists by identifying another trigger and the reader is informed, 'if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nonno. Nonono' (192). On the one hand, the use of repetition in relation to the recall of traumatic experiences points to Sethe's reluctance to speak out; instead, her tongue trips up as the words are forced out of her mouth or they fuse together to further indicate her struggle. Conversely, the same words must be repeated again and again for the attention of Morrison's black woman reader who might find herself in the same position as young Denver, unable to hear the words the first

time they were uttered (243). At the same time, Morrison's narrative proves that whilst it is difficult for the survivor to talk about the past and their pain, it becomes easier to reveal these details through song. A reassessment of these moments of rememory indicates that the partnership of repetition and alliteration in Sethe's words builds up into a song, featuring a confident and unmistakable African beat.

La Vinia Delois Jennings observes that in '[m]aking the past like the present, Morrison implements the Africanist conception of traditional time'.<sup>173</sup> Since a merging of the past and present creates a narrative space that leans toward an Africanist sentiment it is also possible to associate the accompanying musical rhythm with it; the voices featured denote the various beats of a talking drum. The use of contracted speech delivers an African dialect which also adds a punchy rhythm to the text; during the search for his missing wife Stamp Paid recalls asking people, '[s]cuse me. You seen Vashti?' (274), and upon reflection of Sethe's past, he concludes, "[s]he ain't crazy. She love those children" (276). Morrison delivers the African dialect without apology since she does not regard it as an inadequate form of speech that needs translating so it can be understood; rather, she values it as a rich element of her ancestral inheritance that is being shared with the reader here. Furthermore, Morrison has stated she is interested in assessing, 'what the [black] writer does with the presence of an ancestor' who 'is always [...] there',<sup>174</sup> thereby confirming her belief in the ever-presence of those important historical figures. She, too, writes in the presence of a black female ancestor who guides her and becomes a voice circling through the text. When she is alive Baby Suggs tells Sethe to "[l]ay down your sword" (287) and on the other side of death she still speaks; only now she talks to Morrison, telling her again and again to '*lay it all down*' (203/5). She is asking the author to make a permanent record of the experiences of her ancestors and Morrison complies faithfully. In this process the history of her people becomes her very own inheritance and she intends to deliver it with honesty, and by also adding her own voice.

In the slave narratives offered by Douglass, Jacobs, and Truth, we hear a singular voice of black experience that is accompanied by the multiple voices of white Abolitionist supporters acting as narrators and editors, or offering testimonies that confirm the truthfulness of an account. In *Beloved*, we hear multiple voices of black experience and in cyclical actions each voice adds a little more detail to their personal story. Taking turns Stamp Paid, Ella, Baby Suggs, Paul D, and Beloved, each step

forward to reveal something about their past and then step back so that the cyclical narrative can swing in a different direction to gather another piece of someone else's story. For the reader experiencing this narrative, an effect is created of opening a door to enter a room and then finding another door in there that will take them into another room, and there will be further doors and rooms to seek out and then enter as the text progresses and the narrative space widens; this is a very different experience to that which was offered in previous slave narratives because readers would find the doors shutting them out just as details of personal memories were about to be revealed. As Morrison's account progresses individual voices begin to overlap as they now speak at the same time and build up to a crescendo; whilst 'ma[king] small circles in the palm of his hand' Stamp Paid speaks to Paul D about the things "I know / I did / I can't / I got / I never / I should have" and then tells him, "[y]ou got to choose / you'll see / anyone will take you in" (273-4); simultaneously, Sethe and Beloved talk about, and also talk to, each other with Sethe focusing on 'she my daughter. She mine. [...] she come back / She had to / she needed me / you mine / I saw you' (236-7, 239), and Beloved, too, wants to tell her mother 'she is mine' (248), before switching attention to what 'I have / I want / I am' (251-2); Baby Suggs comes back to Denver to speak about "you / your daddy / your mother's feet" (287-8); Denver speaks to Janey (299) who then speaks to the women of the community, and finally they gather outside Sethe's house to create a furious wave of sound that will reach her indoors and in this gathering there is the feel of a united "we [who must] pray" first and "[t]hen we got to get down to business" (302). Even 124 Bluestone Road comes alive and the narrator and people outside are aware it has become suddenly 'loud' (199) and is now 'roaring' (213).

The repetitious drumbeats achieved by these voices are connected by pronouns identifying 'I' and 'she' and 'you' and 'we'; the cyclical effect that is produced can also be read as evidence of the circles of care operating within the text. In a narrative that is so highly charged with anger there is also abundant space for black love to develop in its various forms. Whilst K. Zauditu-Selassie states that 'African people were denied the right to love each other in healthy ways',<sup>175</sup> Morrison demonstrates how her ancestors found unique methods of communicating their care and this adds further to the hammering heartbeat of *Beloved*. We see the companionship that keeps a chain-gang strong in Alfred, Georgia. The men unite by venting their anger through rhyming song; with words that attack like 'flat-headed nails for pounding pounding pounding' each

enslaved man makes it known, '[i]f I had weight in lime, I'd whip my captain till he went stone blind' (48). At the same time, Morrison demonstrates how strangers turn into brothers showing their care by relying on 'their eyes [...] to tell what there [is] to tell' (126); in seeming silence they assure one another "'I'm a make it'", or communicate to them to "'[s]teady now steady'" (127) as a protective gesture. There shall be no escapes because '[a] man could risk his own life, but not his brother's' (129). Their 'two step' dance 'to the music of hand-forged iron' (127) indicates the rebellious nature of these brothers who dare to transform their chain-linked shackles into familial bonds. There is also evidence of neighbourly love as Stamp Paid reaches out to Paul D in his hour of need. He invites him to "'pick any house, any house where colored live [...] and you welcome to stay there'" (271). Stamp repeats himself so that his words are able to travel further and touch Paul D, almost as if he were offering a warm embrace. In the case of Baby Suggs, she revels in her love for her community which motivates her to teach them lessons of self-love; they must learn to "'[l]ove your hands / love your neck / love your heart'" (103-4). In the Clearing, Baby's melodic performance is able to draw in the men and women who now regress to an emotionally childlike state, sometimes crying and sometimes laughing.

Although her name is Baby, Morrison's character holds a majestic presence in the text and comes to be seen as a mother to all; even at Sweet Home her motherlove for a group of young slaves has the power to transform this imprisoning plantation into a 'cradle' (258) where she shall embrace and comfort them. Sethe, too, regards her mother-in-law as a mother figure and now that she is on the other side of life Sethe still 'wishe[s] for Baby Suggs' fingers' (101) to stroke her skin as a way of reassuring her everything will be fine. Baby's death comes because the people of the community that she loves fail to reciprocate; instead she is 'mocked and rebuked' (208) in a time of crisis when she needed them to demonstrate their love and support. Although it would appear that this story of communal love is cut mid-cycle, Morrison's readers shall witness its repair by a group of thirty women as it swings back into motion and Baby's kin finally receive what she was owed. *Beloved* tells stories of women's capacity for love and it is clear Morrison promotes examples on both sides of the racial divide. Thirty black women as well as three white women come to the rescue of Sethe and her family, thus forming further circles of care that drive this energetic narrative. The black women in Sethe's community, who have not spoken to her for many years because they

strongly disapprove of her past actions, now find themselves emitting gestures of motherlove in her direction. In what becomes a daily event, food parcels are delivered to 124's porch to feed Denver who then also feeds her 'diminished' (295) mother and sister, thereby producing circles upon circles of motherlove that will satisfy the 'mother-hunger' of this trio.<sup>176</sup> Finally, the thirty women slowly march towards Bluestone Road as an army of 'black mothers'<sup>177</sup> and begin to swathe Sethe with the soft and strident sounds of motherlove resembling 'music[al]' (307) notes. Ella lets out a shout that is then accompanied by the 'murmuring and whispering' (304) of the other women. Sound becomes more powerful than words by transforming 124 into the pre-symbolic space of 'the maternal semiotic',<sup>178</sup> and now Sethe shall be embraced by a collective motherlove. Another 'wave of sound' (308) draws her outside and suddenly she is running towards these adversaries-turned-mothers.

In contrast to her portrayals of black maternal surrogates, Morrison shows that white women like Lillian Garner, Lady Jones, and Amy Denver, can also be entrusted with the responsibility of care.<sup>179</sup> This strategic move enables Morrison to briefly widen the scope of her angry protest, to denounce the ill-treatment of *all* nineteenth-century women whose fertile bodies were claimed by white men in power. bell hooks draws attention to how, as masters to slaves and also masters in the marital home, they 'defined the primary function of all women to be that of breeding workers'.<sup>180</sup> This statement points to the need for comparing and contrasting the historical experiences of motherhood across the racial divide, with consideration of the personal stories of conception, labour, and care for infants. However, Morrison wants her reader to examine this issue from a different perspective and for this reason her white women characters are associated with forms of motherlessness. She wants us to search for evidence of how these women are equally capable of finding their own ways to express their care, thus allowing for an altogether different kind of link between black and white mothering. Mrs. Garner, as Sethe's mistress at Sweet Home, steps forward as the first white maternal surrogate in this narrative. In previous slave narratives, portrayals of mistresses have been at times critical and at times empathetic. Jacobs reveals her mistress 'seemed to think that slaves had no right to any family ties of their own',<sup>181</sup> and Truth's mistress is described as a woman filled with 'contempt'<sup>182</sup> for her. Douglass, however, offers a sympathetic portrait of his mistress, telling his reader, '[w]e were both

victims to the same overshadowing evil, *she* as mistress, I as slave. I will not censure her harshly'.<sup>183</sup>

Zora Neale Hurston's fictional representation of the white mistress, in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, is that of a cruel woman who speaks the familiar language of masters. She makes a threat against young Nanny's child, making it clear that "as soon as dat brat is a month old Ah'm ging to sell it offa dis place".<sup>184</sup> In contrast, Morrison depicts a mistress who is 'kind'<sup>185</sup> to Sethe and her kin, but she remains an ephemeral character blurring in and out of the narrative. For Sethe, Lillian Garner holds a privileged status as a white 'lady' (69) whose marriage is recognised as legitimate, and who reigns over her own domestic space. Yet, still, she is defined by a sense of lack; although prior to her husband's death Lillian's value can be measured in terms of his economic successes, she is repeatedly presented as an image of emptiness. Her dialogue is limited and in place of words she 'hum[s]' (164), especially in the company of Baby Suggs and Sethe. Lillian's status is further dented upon becoming a widow, and the symptoms of her physical illness can also be read as indicators of her life as an inferior woman: she appears weak 'like a baby' and 'unable to speak' (10-11), 'failing' (229) and again, 'weak' and then, even 'weaker' (227). Alongside illness, her secondary status in life has effectively broken down her body and speech. According to Nancy Cott's study of nineteenth-century white womanhood, '[m]otherhood was proposed as the central lever with which women would bridge the world'.<sup>186</sup> Lillian's experiences do not correspond with this image of a productive and fulfilled white woman. Instead, we see her slipping away into the distance, having failed to achieve her purpose in a world ruled by men. An awareness of her inferior social position has left her deficient of desire.

Morrison's narrator refers to Lillian's deadened gaze, for 'it was hard to catch life in her eyes' (228). Here, we are reminded of the earlier description of an enslaved Sethe's gaze, when Schoolteacher 'punched the glittering iron out of her eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight' (11). The open wells reflect Sethe's momentary loss through this draining of her personal desires and the vacant state of Mrs Garner's eyes also implies a loss of desires, including the possibility of a wish to become a mother like Baby Suggs and Sethe. Prior to this tragic downturn and her life as a widow and bedridden patient, Lillian is filled with maternal warmth that is emitted in her humming as well as interactions with Sethe, whom she refers to as a "sweet

child” (31), and later Lillian also passes down a pair of crystal earrings (69) to her. Sethe, too, fulfils the duties of a surrogate daughter for her mistress; she recalls, ‘I tended her like I would have tended my own mother’ (237). Lillian and Sethe build a maternal relationship, and later Lady Jones and Denver also form their own special bond. Lady Jones, in her role as a teacher, promotes a different kind of education—all that ‘whitepeople thought unnecessary if not illegal’ (120)—to counter Schoolteacher’s lessons of racial hatred and dehumanization. However, the narrator describes her as inscribing ‘deeply mournful sentences’ along a blackboard. This sorrowful action indicates another instance of unfulfilled desires, made obvious by the hint of maternal warmth in her guidance to Sethe’s youngest daughter Denver, whom she affectionately refers to as ““honey”” and ““baby”” (292). Another circle of care can be traced in Sethe’s relationship with Amy Denver, a motherless teenager who also enters the narrative along its disruptive trail of Sethe’s rememory.

Amy is in search of an effective substitute that will satisfy cravings for her deceased mother. Repeatedly, she states the adventurous journey she is on will result in her acquisition of the finest ‘velvet’ (40), a material that she secretly hopes will somehow magically fulfil her desire to be mothered. Having met Sethe and now acting as a ‘midwi[fe]’<sup>187</sup> for the birth of Denver, Amy shows her caring nature and, in the words of Paula Gallant Eckard, she now effectively ““mothers” Sethe’.<sup>188</sup> Morrison illustrates Lillian and Lady Jones as women silently craving maternal identities for themselves, and Amy’s search for a piece of luxurious material translates as her desire for a lost mother which she also enacts in her care for Sethe. The lack in the lives of these white women—or a mixed-race woman in the case of Lady Jones (291)—fills them with pain; yet, they are still capable of feeling sympathy and empathy for Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Denver, for the lack that they suffer in their lives as mothers reduced to breeders and daughters reduced to chattel. Evidently, *Beloved* crosses up and down and over and across circles of personal narratives of experience and the voices that speak up are performing their part in what becomes an unruly orchestral piece. This is an energetic narrative with a rhythm of its own, as is indicated by Sixo’s observation that ‘[t]ime never worked the way [it should]’ (25). This is because, as noted by Marilyn Sanders Mobley, Morrison ‘challenges the Western notion of linear time that informs American history and the slave narratives’.<sup>189</sup> The lines of linear time belong to a white male history and language, but they are angrily smudged out by Morrison to ensure



white patriarchy will be largely silenced in her text.<sup>190</sup> This move can be understood as a black feminist action because it frees up the narrative space so that it now belongs to African-American history complete with its own African beat, and the voices to be heard shall be primarily black and female.

Sixo's statement indicates that he, as a black man, also stands outside facing in since he has failed to solve the mystery surrounding Morrison's treatment of time. Indeed, time in this narrative belongs to the black maternal experience and intends to explore its troubles and triumphs; hence, Sixo, Stamp Paid, Paul D, and Halle, must step aside or disappear at crucial moments so that the maternal story can unfold and the black woman reader can fully connect with the history of her foremothers.<sup>191</sup> Cyclical time achieves another significant victory for the author in that it allows her to bring back the dead; there is no sense of finality in death because Morrison believes in the ever-presence of those ancestors who tread between life and the other side. This strategy stretches the maternal narrative of *Beloved*, as if it were now fully gestated, to allow for a connectedness between a living woman and her departed mother and daughter. Although she was buried eighteen years ago, *Beloved* still returns to her mother, and Ma'am, too, comes back to Sethe (37) in cyclical moments of motherlove. Whereas the narrative returns again and again to the story of Sethe's troubles as a black mother, her experiences are foreshadowed by those of her own mother who remains a shadowy figure in the text, but Morrison expects her readers to find and claim this mother as one of us. The author conveys how slavery targeted black motherhood from the moment African women were forced onto the slave ships that brought them to the Americas; this truth is also confirmed in black feminist readings of an African-American history tracing the difficult journeys of the forgotten foremothers.

hooks reveals that whereas slavers felt threatened by the African males aboard slave ships, thus ensuring they were shackled at all times, 'they had no such fear of the African female'.<sup>192</sup> Female slaves with their family onboard were specifically targeted, 'brutaliz[ing] [the] children to watch the anguish of their mothers'.<sup>193</sup> Cruelties against the enslaved mother's children would be matched by brutal treatment of her own body, to be stripped so that it could be branded along the journey of the Middle Passage. At this stage rape became 'a common method of torture used to subdue recalcitrant black women'.<sup>194</sup> In *Beloved*, Ma'am can be identified as one such recalcitrant black woman. She also travels on a slave ship to the American shores and endures sexual exploitation

throughout this journey, having been ‘taken up many times by the crew’, yet she does not crumble to become another one of the victims that have commonly featured in slave narratives. Instead, she stands tall as a black ‘warrior’<sup>195</sup> woman and mother as is clearly indicated by the name we shall use to identify this character, and also the respect that it commands as a title. Ma’am reveals her own branding as ‘a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin’ (72). It is tucked below her breast and, as such, becomes a symbolic reference to her maternal resolve as it eclipses the cruelties of slavery. She proves herself to be a rebellious figure by appropriating this mark of ownership as a signature of her identity as a mother; the circle is never-ending just like her motherlove. She points to it when telling a young Sethe in her distinct African accent (74), “[t]his is your Ma’am. [...] I’m the only one got this mark now. The rest is dead. If something happens to me and you can’t tell me by my face, you can know me by this mark”. Sethe is Ma’am’s only surviving child, for she is fathered by a black man and not born out of rape, and she is most certainly loved.

Both the reader and an adult Sethe are informed that for Ma’am the preceding births, all of which were the result of rape by white men, would be followed by an unceremonious discarding of each infant, when “without names, she threw them away”. This repetitive action cannot be condemned or celebrated by any of us since the narrative space in which Ma’am’s story unfolds is free of those familiar markers of morality that would so easily define what is right or wrong. What we can be certain of is that, firstly, her actions are ‘symbolic gestures of defiance’<sup>196</sup> and, secondly, anger would have been the motivating factor in her decision each time. Of course, rebellious actions create risky situations and so it is unsurprising that Ma’am pays with her life for attempting to run away from her master. Morrison’s character is sketched into life through the memories of others, namely Sethe and Ma’am’s friend, Nan. She plays an important role in that she ‘gives Sethe not only nurturance but links to her maternal history as well’.<sup>197</sup> Nan’s repetitive speech is able to circle over a maternal history that continues despite the death of the mother, and it also emphasises the love that she felt for her daughter:

“Telling you, I am telling you, small girl Sethe [...] [s]he threw them all away but you. [...] 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” (74).

Once again, we hear that African cadence as pronouns identifying ‘I’ and ‘she’ and ‘you’ work to produce another circle of care, featuring a dead mother, a surrogate figure, and the young girl they both care for. Upon an initial reading of this scene, we understand the adult Sethe’s response to this testimony of Ma’am’s motherlove as an anger-filled rejection. The narrator tells us, ‘[a]s small girl Sethe, she was unimpressed. As grown-up woman Sethe she was angry but not certain at what’. Sethe’s reluctance to reveal her rememories prolongs the mystery for Morrison’s reader until the text circles back to the past and pinpoints the source of her anger. In a monologue, Sethe’s words pour out her emotions and we sense that she sees herself as possibly a victim of maternal abandonment; ‘nobody’s ma’am would run off and leave her daughter, would she?’ (240). Jill Matus views Sethe as suffering from ““mother-lack””<sup>198</sup> from infancy through to adulthood and although there is evidence to support this assessment, I would suggest there is the need to re-examine the evidence which shall show how this lack is satisfied by the reappearing dead mother. Certainly, Sethe does recall having had limited contact with Ma’am as a child: “‘I didn’t see her but a few times out in the fields. [...] She must have nursed me two or three weeks—that’s the way the others did. Then she went back in rice and I sucked from another woman whose job it was”’ (72). This statement is made with a matter-of-fact attitude and Sethe appears emotionally detached from the words she is speaking, but as the text circles back to this memory once more her emotions begin to surface. She reveals that, ‘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 over. Or none. There was no nursing milk to call my own’ (236).

We come to recognise the fusion of love and grief that Sethe feels whenever she revisits memories of her mother; her anger is reserved for whoever forced this separation. Throughout her life she searches for ways of returning to her beloved Ma’am, and in moments of need Sethe finds her by her side. Nancy Chodorow’s psycho-sociological and feminist perspective on the mother-daughter relationship enables us to form a better understanding of Sethe and Ma’am’s perpetual bond, which is especially feasible in a narrative space that conveys historical truth in the form of magical realism. Chodorow suggests that a lasting object-relational tie binds mothers and daughters forever since ‘[t]he mother remains a primary internal object to’<sup>199</sup> her

daughter. Likewise, Sethe is bound to Ma'am on a psychic level, even if she is no longer present in a physical form. Hence, when she considers the idea that her mother might have abandoned her in childhood, her thoughts are formed in a self-doubting moment as a question rather than a statement of fact: 'nobody's ma'am would run off and leave her daughter, would she?' (240). The dead mother returns at crucial moments in Sethe's life. When, as a fugitive, she goes into premature labour in the middle of the woods, suffering in pain and having given up hope of surviving this experience, Ma'am appears as the woman in 'a cloth hat' (37) and tells her in her distinctive accent, "'Seth-thuh. [...] Hold on to the baby'". "'Yes, Ma'am'", replies Sethe, and then perseveres with her support. Morrison offers an important clue to make us aware of Ma'am's ghostlike presence in the text.<sup>200</sup> Sethe remembers how she tried searching for Ma'am's body and wanted to not only 'check for the sign' (237), but also 'for that hat' which she wore. Later on, having survived the journey from Kentucky to Cincinnati and given birth, Sethe is caught in another difficult situation where she commits the act of infanticide. Witnesses to this event include Stamp Paid and an unidentified person who is described by the narrator as 'a woman with a flower in her hat' (175); it is her Ma'am. Sethe continues to love her mother and reveals that by killing her children as well as herself, '[m]y plan was to take us all to the other side where my own Ma'am is' (240).

In revealing the dynamics of relationships shared by Ma'am and Sethe, and later Sethe and Beloved, Morrison points to how the duality of a black mother-child bond would frequently be intruded upon by agents of the slave system. She uses this narrative to promote anger as a legitimate response to any such invasion because its shielding effect has the power to stop this action even if success is achieved using the most extreme methods. Matus correctly points out that Morrison is 'suggest[ing] a genealogy of mothering under slavery [...] would logically produce the excesses and extreme forms of Sethe's maternal subjectivity'.<sup>201</sup> Sethe's experiences mirror those of Ma'am, and her anger-filled response to Schoolteacher's plans for her children indicates she has inherited that same excessive and extreme maternal subjectivity. It enables her to experience emotions of love, grief, and anger, which find their outlet in the most extraordinary forms. The rebellious streak that Sethe has inherited also enables her to complete Ma'am's unfinished journey from slavery to freedom. The narrative of Sethe's cyclical returns to her mother may not have been recognised in previous critiques of

Morrison's text but *Beloved*'s return to her mother has earned attention every time. Prior to her return in the flesh, *Beloved* becomes known to the reader through Sethe's memories; her love for the deceased child is able to colour the narrative transforming it from a dusted over piece of history, that would be visualised in a dull sepia print, to the present time that will offer vivid details to command our attention.

In a 'gray and white house on Bluestone Road' (3) there exists 'a pool of red and undulating light' (10), and this is the first indication of the dead daughter's existence in the present time of the narrative action. She is associated with the colour red that we will recognise as a manifold signifier of love and also of danger; of life and also of loss;<sup>202</sup> of passion and also of anger. An entire spectrum of emotions can also be linked to *Beloved* and whether they are messages of love or anger that the ghost daughter is sending her way, Sethe receives them gratefully; she rejects the idea that *Beloved* might have bad intentions, stating she's "not evil, just sad" (10), and perhaps even somewhat "[m]ad" (16). Sethe declares her love for *Beloved* (5) yet, as we shall come to discover, she is also responsible for the murder of this young child which she defends as an act of 'safety with a handsaw' (193). When Sethe finally comes to talk about this past incident she focuses on it being that triumphant moment when "I stopped him", in reference to her slave master, but note how at the same time her hands fidget protectively over her maternal body; '[s]ometimes she crossed her hands behind her back. Other times she held her ears, covered her mouth or folded her arms across her breasts' (187). Whilst Sethe's anger-filled voice is communicating her story, her circling hands are also at work to convey important messages about the right and need to protect black motherlove. As with Ma'am and Sethe, the maternal story of Sethe and *Beloved* also features cyclical actions of love and anger that must operate at the same time and in the same space as a direct result of slavery's intrusion into their lives and relationship. The agents of slavery are white men of power who are also predators hawking over black women's bodies, but as Morrison's seemingly fractured narrative transforms into a cyclical movement we shall come to see how each act of violence committed against a black woman is responded to with her turning violent against white power.

It has been established that the cyclical processes operating within *Beloved* produce multiple layers of black experience that enable the text to change shape—by expanding and contracting—and direction and pace according to its own desires. In this

narrative space, Morrison disables linear time thereby rejecting its association with a white male history that is allied with patriarchal principles. Instead, time becomes a cyclical process that brings the African-American past into the present time as a way of revitalising a forgotten black women's history; this history must be retold but Morrison recognises its fractured and fragile state and so she has found a distinctive style of delivering it to her chosen readers so that they can then work to bring it together. A cyclical process allows for this harrowing history to be pieced together, and as individual characters reluctantly produce memories they also convey a sense of the emotional and psychological trauma that is buried within that history. At the same time, the cyclical process also produces an empowering connection to Africanness which shall be felt in the presence of the black female ancestor, namely Baby Suggs, as well as the repetitive speech patterns that take on the rhythmic beat of a talking drum. The narrative's musical rhythm continues to develop in cyclical moments and as the individual voices revealing each story now speak all at once to become part of a larger narrative, the tempo builds up to a vigorous crescendo. Here, there is evidence of a large circle of care that comes to protect Sethe and her family, and within it there are further circles of care in operation; they pass between white-black racial boundaries and shall also pass down matrilineal generations of black women. Through cyclical time Morrison can bring back the dead and this action stretches her rebellious narrative to reveal more stories of experience, and also so that black maternal relationships can continue to exist despite the efforts of the slave system to break them up.

Morrison's slave narrative is dedicated to the voices and experiences of black women as mothers and daughters; the cyclical turns draw attention to motherlove as the lifeline of such a bond. At the same time, we also see evidence of the anger that comes to exist within these relationships whenever the slave system presents a threat to motherlove, and it shall prompt some kind of daring action from the recalcitrant mother. The actions of angry black mothers caught up in slavery cannot be judged using familiar markers of morality because they would not allow for an understanding of the complexity of their situations; the fact that Ma'am makes an escape from the plantation where she is imprisoned and leaves her daughter behind would easily be criticised as an act of maternal abandonment, and Sethe's decision to take an axe to her infant daughter's throat would be condemned as coldblooded murder. In place of these markers, Morrison's slave narrative uses a black feminist lens to reveal the black female

experience; it re-evaluates infanticide and abandonment as necessary acts carried out for the sake of motherlove. Morrison expects that her black woman reader shall also come to repossess, rename, and re-own an ancestral inheritance that has been portrayed with honesty here. Evidently, ambivalence operates within this narrative space; firstly, the circling upon circling effect of storytelling produces a claustrophobic feeling that anchors the text, yet each new rememory is also able to move the narrative action forward and widen the narrative space; secondly, for the characters that reveal their stories the act of not remembering the past is key to their wellbeing but, equally, remembering it all is also vital to their survival; and thirdly, a narrative that claims to be about love—as indicated by its chosen title—chooses to show violence as the defining moment of this love, and we also see circles of love and circles of anger existing at the same time with both working to offer protection to mothers and daughters.

The ambivalence operating within this text is an important feature of the black feminist response to the pro-slavery movement and its wholly ambivalent argument. Agents of the slave system claimed to follow Christianity and the path of God—He who raised his people out of slavery and who forbade murder in one of his Ten Commandments<sup>203</sup>—and yet they endorsed slavery and committed mass murder in His name whilst also declaring it their mission to rescue slaves from a cannibal life.<sup>204</sup> In the following section, focus shall turn to how Morrison speaks through her slave narrative to add her own voice to the angry black feminist response against white patriarchal power. I shall examine the ambivalent and creative forms in which an anger-filled response is communicated by Morrison and her protagonist, who have both inherited the story and anger of Margaret Garner. It has been determined that anger is an inheritance passed down the black matrilineal line; since the recipients are condemned as ‘crazy’ women by observers, I shall be probing the ambivalent value of this term. In anger Sethe recognises her right to mother but as it dissipates she becomes vulnerable to motherhood itself. Here, Morrison herself turns ambivalent to offer a second argument about black mothering, which suggests it has the power to also enslave a woman like Sethe. If motherhood now stands as an oppressive force then the returning daughter must also be seen in a new light, as the agent of another kind of slavery. I shall begin by identifying how the ambivalence operating in *Beloved* is an essential element that enables Morrison to preserve the integrity and value of her neo-slave narrative.

### 3. Ambivalence in Angry Motherlove

*Beloved* is valued as a neo-slave narrative precisely because of its ability to, firstly, revive a forgotten black women's history and, secondly, to create new dimensions which shall now link this recovered history to a black feminist space offering fertile ground for the author to test a series of scenarios; and the partial account of a real slave woman's life story offers a reference point for this activity. Black women's history remembers those 'nursing slave women whose swollen breasts [would] spew milk *and* blood when they [were] whipped, [as...] motherhood and nurture combine[d] with [...] rage and brutality'.<sup>205</sup> Naturally, such accounts associate wounded slave mothers with a victim status whilst masters are linked to rage-filled violence. Whereas Morrison's narrative also attests to this historical truth, the details of which cannot possibly be passed over, she works within this context to manipulate the power imbalance that has traditionally defined master-slave, white-black, and male-female binaries. In contrast to the familiar stories offered by previous slave narratives, Morrison's reader shall witness 'an astonishing act of violence committed not upon but *by* a slave woman',<sup>206</sup> and the trigger for this violence is an anger that also shields her motherlove. Morrison wants us to work with her to consider what would happen if the injured mother came to possess a rage equal to the master's and responded with violence of her own; Barbara Lounsberry and Grace Ann Hovet suggest that in this way her fiction offers "'new perspectives" on "old" reality'. Indeed, the narrative technique of gradual disclosure, which is achieved through cyclical returns to Sethe's guarded history, forces Morrison's black woman reader into the practice of '[N]ew [S]eeing'.<sup>207</sup>

Morrison states that in the act of writing her 'single gravest responsibility [...] is not to lie',<sup>208</sup> and so she must carefully balance her presentation of slave history alongside an exploration of new perspectives; it becomes possible for her to achieve this objective within an ambivalent slave narrative. In the words of Barbara Christian, 'storytelling *is* a dynamic form of remembering/recreating',<sup>209</sup> suggesting it is entirely possible for the storyteller to remember the past and also reshape it at the same time and within that same narrative space. Morrison creates ambivalence in circling memories and repetitive speech patterns that also allow for free movement in her text, thereby enabling her to present and then re-present an important history that is also a work of fiction. Margaret Garner becomes Sethe and evidence is presented of her motherlove



and anger at the point when she turned violent against her child; the conflicting emotions or traits attributed to Sethe exist together and become valid all at once. At the same time, within this ambivalent narrative space, Morrison nurtures a black feminist defiance within patriarchal parameters. The reader is conscious of the fact that slavery was as ‘a culture held together by violence’<sup>210</sup> and control was assumed by white slave masters’ use of ‘terror tactics’.<sup>211</sup> Now, we shall see Sethe’s maternal narrative outgrow the patriarchal confines of Sweet Home Farm, and in a moment of violence it razes those boundaries of power. Evidently, Morrison is remembering and reshaping the master narrative of slavery using ironic references that also register her anger-filled protest at its treatment of her foremothers. In a measured move, she chooses an effeminate name for the slave plantation where two successive masters rule, thereby severing its link to wholly masculine or phallic signifiers of power. From this point of *New Seeing* it can be argued that Morrison obscures the patriarchal power of slavery by reforming its powerbase as a maternal space—a cradle (258)—that becomes a Sweet Home for Sethe and her kin.

In a converse action, Morrison identifies the ambivalent structure of the slave system itself to expose its cunningness. Whereas Sweet Home functions as both an enslaving plantation and nurturing home for the slaves living onsite, at the same time, their buyer claims a paternal role in their lives to become ‘the head of an extended plantation family’.<sup>212</sup> Linden Peach identifies how ‘the white myth of Southern paternalism’<sup>213</sup> enabled the master to cleverly disguise hierarchical structures of power as a way of ensuring compliance from his slave hands. Mr. Garner also positions himself as a Father who has “‘raised’” (12) slave boys into men and ‘[a]llowed’ (147) them privileged access to education and weaponry, but Morrison wrests power away from this master by discrediting his claim; it was Baby Suggs who raised those boys into men having rocked the cradle for twenty years. Morrison forces her own characters—namely Paul D and Baby Suggs—into *New Seeing* so they, too, can realise that whereas Garner and Schoolteacher ‘have different styles, they share the grammar of chattel slavery’.<sup>214</sup> The sudden demise of ‘high principle[d]’ (12) Garner brings about a climate of change with the arrival of his widow’s brother-in-law. The new master shall not position himself as Father of the pack, but as something far more superior. Interestingly, he is a man of Science and yet his appearance resembles those self-professed ‘agents of God’ who are, in fact, ‘agent[s] of white supremacist, capitalist

patriarchy'.<sup>215</sup> Schoolteacher's irremovable collar fixes his godly status as he makes it his mission to 'reeducate' (259) his new possessions according to the original script of ownership, viewing them as property rather than kin. Note how this almighty purveyor of patriarchal power is described by Sethe as being only 'a little man' (44); in comparison she spans 'that wide' (190) as her 'life-holding womb' (104) and motherlove stretch out and now something else also stirs within, to be identified as a prototypical black feminist anger.

Morrison's fiction conveys the anger of her foremothers, especially Margaret Garner, and it also delivers her own rage as a legatee of their recovered history. It is possible to recognise the significant value of this anger within the black feminist context offered by Audre Lorde. She states, '[a]nger is an appropriate reaction to racist attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change'. Lorde also reflects on her personal experiences as an African-American woman who has dealt with racism, claiming that, '[m]y anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival'.<sup>216</sup> These statements register the ambivalent nature of anger as well as the varying degrees in which it can be expressed. A black woman's anger is to be understood as, firstly, a legitimate response to racial injustice and, secondly, a symbolic weapon of power that will enable her to enforce change or, at the very least, disrupt this prejudiced system. Morrison's employment of anger in this narrative enables it to offer something different to those familiar accounts featuring an enslaved 'victim' who would not 'project [... the image of] a dominant warrior avenger to induce pride in a putative black reader'; instead their status would be used 'to evoke indignation and sympathy [... from] white readers'.<sup>217</sup> *Beloved* is written primarily for a black woman reader who shall engage with warrior avengers in the form of black mothers who rely on their anger rather than a victim status to give value to their personal stories; and in this state of being they communicate resistance and resilience against patriarchal rule. Interestingly, the communication between Sethe and Schoolteacher can be read as a largely silent dance of power play circling around the theme of excess. His first move as master is to rob his slaves of their sense of humanity so they shall no longer recognise themselves as men and women, but as property and 'trespassers among the human race' (148). With the termination of Garner's 'special kind of slavery', excesses shall now be curbed to ensure the work hands are no longer '[eating] too much, talk[ing] too much' (259). Excess is marked as a privilege for the master only, and yet Sethe, as the remaining

black female, is required for a mission that will be built on excess in terms of her ability to produce as many slave children as possible.

Sethe's fertile body marks her potential value as part of Schoolteacher's ambitious plans for future income and profit. Masters could easily view black mothers as a commercial interest by dehumanising them as "things," "chattel," [and] "property".<sup>218</sup> Schoolteacher uses similar terms of reference when he marks Sethe as 'the breeding one' (267) and her unborn child as a 'foal'. Schoolteacher's notebook qualifies as 'a pseudo-anthropological document',<sup>219</sup> and it is used to record his findings based on an experiment carried out on Sethe using a 'measuring string' (226); she recalls how he 'wrap[ped] that string all over my head, 'cross my nose, around my behind. Number[ed] my teeth [too]'. When tutoring his two nephews, Schoolteacher effectively communicates and passes down his scientific racism to the next generation of slave-owning white men. Their lesson outdoors transforms into the image of a disturbing wildlife trail. Using a blank page they clinically dissect the female slave, with "her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right" (228). As Sethe becomes aware of their activity and derogatory views she, too, is forced into New Seeing and Sweet Home now reveals itself as a prison before her eyes. These agents of patriarchy have scripted their personal observations on the black female slave and, at the same time, in a symbolic act of aggression their phallic pens have also written across her body, thereby dirtying it and leaving her sense of self stained. However, the narrator attests that for Sethe, '[w]hites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing—the part of her that was clean' (296). In reference to her motherhood, Sethe makes it known that that part of her is self-owned; it originates from within her and, she decides, it will not be violated at any cost. In slavery, 'definitions [may well have] belonged to the definers' (225)—meaning the white masters—but Morrison's reader is made aware that a black mother has the power to redefine those very definitions, as does Sethe upon realising the master's plans for her children (231). The irregular heartbeat of the novel suddenly gathers a frantic pace, which anticipates Morrison's protagonist is about to turn angry.

Sethe and her partner, Halle, agree upon a plan of escape and although their children leave Sweet Home safely, the couple's own getaway is interrupted as Sethe's body becomes a target for sexual assault and Halle disappears forever. Whilst carrying her fourth child, she is taken 'to the barn for sport' (269). Morrison's use of repetition

whips up a furious cyclone of anger when Sethe finally reveals the traumatic rememory of her body being violated and her maternal self harmed by the nephews: “those boys came in there and took my milk [...] [h]eld me down and took it [...] they took my milk [...] they took my milk!” (19). This heinous act is identified by Michelle Mock as being ‘a violation [much] worse than genital rape’.<sup>220</sup> At the same time, it is a (re)defining moment for Sethe because she refuses to succumb to a victim status and fade away; this institution has claimed rights over her body, her milk, and her voice, but in anger she begins her counterattack by snatching back the right to speak up and defy Schoolteacher’s rule. Her punishment for exposing the nephews’ brutality is a beating from them, but they take great care not to damage her unborn baby, which their ‘Onka’ (44) is claiming as his property. Sethe tells Paul D, “Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still” (20). Sweet Home’s landscape features ‘sycamore’ (7) trees and Sethe chooses to remember their beauty ‘rather than the [black] boys’ whose bodies hung from them; similarly, she chooses to accept the image that Amy offers her of an attractive ‘chokecherry tree’ (93) sketched on her back, with ‘a mighty lot of branches’ and ‘leaves’ with ‘little cherry blossom’. Here, a process of redefinition is in progress as Sethe aligns nature with the deadened scars; this translates to become a symbol of her rights to live life and to make life in freedom.

Sethe’s milk is the ‘primary emblem of her motherhood’<sup>221</sup> and whereas the nephews take their fill of it, her body still ‘manages to have [enough] milk for’ (236) her nursing daughter whom she must reach in Cincinnati. Although broken on the outside she is in possession of a steely determination within as she crawls towards freedom. Every agonizing move she makes is for the sake of the debt she owes to her daughter, rather than for her own survival. From a point of view New Seeing Morrison’s reader can begin to identify how Sethe’s motherhood, in its various symbolic forms, is taking on a life of its own to become an ambivalent character in the narrative. To begin with, it silently coaxes her away from Sweet Home and onwards. Sethe stalls along this difficult journey, and having gone into labour she collapses to the ground and waits for death. However, the subsequent birth of Denver marks the strength and freedom of her motherhood, for it survives against the odds. She arrives at 124 Bluestone Road carrying her wounded body and the newborn. Sethe is reunited with her other children as well as Baby Suggs, who sets about healing her wounds and fixing the damage done

to her maternal parts. The narrator describes how Baby ‘cleaned between Sethe’s legs with two separate pans of hot water and then tied her stomach and vagina with sheets. [...] The crust from her nipples Baby softened with lard and then washed away’ (109). Her maternity is ‘fed’ back to health with lard and water and its recovered appetite leads to a fully empowered state; it is now capable of ‘thick’ (193) love that is ‘deep and wide’ (190) and slowly consumes Sethe from within. Prior to facing Schoolteacher once again, Sethe enjoys precisely ‘twenty-eight days’ (204) of happiness. The Fugitive Slave Act was designed ‘to put thorns under feet already bleeding’<sup>222</sup> and, indeed, Sethe’s only slightly healed wounds are made fresh again when Schoolteacher arrives to reclaim his property with the Law supporting his cause (201). In a shed at the back of the house he witnesses the knelt down mother hacking away at her children, creating a pool of ‘bloodspill’ (208). Here, Morrison’s use of imagery ties in with her maternal theme since the description of twenty-eight days rounded off by a spillage of human blood links to our understanding of the female reproductive cycle; blood loss indicates a fertile woman has not conceived and remains childless. Sethe is also left without a child as she becomes a hazy depiction of the menstruating woman who on this occasion will not become the mother she has the potential to be.

From another position of New Seeing, we can reread Sethe’s murderous actions as messages of defiance against white patriarchal power. Lorde makes it known that a black woman’s ‘[a]nger is loaded with information and energy’;<sup>223</sup> and whereas an angry Sethe now communicates vital information to Schoolteacher, Morrison ensures that this time she does so in complete silence. A universal feminist standpoint identifies the muted voices of women as being suppressed by patriarchy especially because ‘[t]he entire history of women’s struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over’<sup>224</sup> by men. Morrison, however, reworks this notion in her ambivalent narrative space to reveal a black mother speaking the loudest when silent, using her hands in place of her voice. The hands of slaves would be used in service to masters,<sup>225</sup> and prior to Sethe’s escape, Schoolteacher ‘brag[s] about [...] the] fine ink, [and] damn good soup’ (176) that she would make with her hands. Morrison shows that slave hands were also capable of nurture; Baby Suggs nursed Sethe back to health and still she remembers ‘the touch of those fingers’ (115). Most importantly, Morrison makes it known that in anger these hands are equally capable of performing acts of resistance and such actions are motivated by love. Baby Suggs’ lessons of love included a call for her

people to reclaim these bodily tools for the sake of healing oneself; each person would need to realise, “[t]hese hands belong to me. These *my* hands” (166), and they must no longer be used for the ‘nurse and nurture [of] the white man and his family’.<sup>226</sup> Sethe claims ownership of her hands with the swing of an axe that also works to symbolically emasculate Schoolteacher by denying him property in the form of her child. The narrator describes how, ‘[b]y the time she faced him, looked him dead in the eye, she had something in her arms that stopped him in his tracks. He took a backward step with each jump of the baby heart until finally there were none’ (193). By holding him back with her threatening gaze, Sethe’s newfound power supersedes Schoolteacher’s, communicating quite clearly that her hands and womb will not serve his economic empire. Sethe’s violence recreates the moment of her violation at the hands of Schoolteacher’s family, but now power has transferred from the master to a mother. Whereas the milk-taking incident has left her with a ‘chokecherry tree [...] split open’ (93) across her back, she now draws a weapon of her own to sever the master narrative of slave ownership.

Previous slave narratives have attested to how death in slavery would be a welcomed event, for it promised something ‘better than slavery’.<sup>227</sup> Truth’s narrative recalls the demise of her father as an act of kindness from above that ‘relieved him of the many miseries that his fellow-man had heaped upon him’.<sup>228</sup> Jacobs remembers a mother who lost her newborn and yet ‘she thanked God for taking her away from the greater bitterness of life’.<sup>229</sup> The notion of death as mercy or freedom is also explored in *Beloved*; however, since Morrison portrays it as the deliberate action of an angry black woman rather than a natural event decided by fate she invites criticism both from within and outside of this narrative space. Schoolteacher believes Sethe’s violence is the result of her having ‘gone wild’ when ‘mishandl[ed]’ and overbeat[en]’ (176) at Sweet Home, and he is not alone in reaching this conclusion. Paul D does not recognise Sethe’s empowering action as having been motivated by love and anger; he judges her as having turned into a “crazy” (312) woman at that moment. Only Ella, who was also once used as a sexual play thing by white men, recognises the familiar ‘rage’ (301) in Sethe, which she herself experienced upon birthing and then getting rid of that ‘hairy white thing (305) fathered by ‘the lowest yet’ (206). Since Ella fears love—calling it a serious disability (301)—she fails to detect it in Sethe’s violence, but Morrison expects her black women readers to find evidence of both Sethe’s motherlove and her anger; our

attention is drawn repeatedly to two specific words and with each return they gain value. When speaking about Margaret Garner, Morrison has stated, '[s]he was not crazy. She was a young woman who was quite serene but who tried to kill herself and all her children rather than live in slavery'.<sup>230</sup> In *Beloved*, Morrison speaks again, through Stamp Paid, to defend Garner's fictional counterpart. In a conversation with Paul D, Stamp declares Sethe, "'ain't crazy. She loves those children. She was trying to out-hurt the hurter'" (276). When Paul D refuses to accept Stamp's testimony, still insisting "'[t]hat woman is crazy. Crazy'" (312), Stamp finally responds, "'[y]eah, well, ain't we all?'" This dialogue redefines our understanding of what craziness is; it can suggest a loss of control but now it also represents a targeted response, and every one of us is capable of responding in the same way to 'out-hurt the hurter'.

Morrison treats the words 'crazy' and 'wild' as something more than colloquial terms, and they can be understood twofold. Firstly, the atrocities of slavery could push individuals to the point of craziness and render them helpless; Baby Suggs feared 'it made children crazy to see' (246) their mothers being abused by masters, which she wanted to prevent at all costs. Secondly, displays of wild behaviour would indicate the potential power of a slave and for this reason they would be punished by their masters; alternatively, this wildness would reveal itself only after punishments. Sethe recalls, "'[p]eople [...] who'd had the bit [forced into their mouths] always looked wild after that. Whatever they used it on them for, it couldn't have worked, because it put a wildness where before there wasn't any'" (84). These statements recognise how an oppressive system had the power to reduce enslaved people to a point of helplessness, but they also suggest that individuals could transform helplessness into a rebellious power and use it against their oppressors. Previous slave narratives have only hinted at the potential of craziness and its true value has never been fully defined. Douglass offers various synonyms of this term when narrating his experiences. He recalls, 'I was completely wrecked, changed, and bewildered; goaded almost to madness at one time'.<sup>231</sup> Over time, his state of madness would transform into a power until, finally, '[t]he monster had obtained complete control over me',<sup>232</sup> and an escape plan would come into effect once 'the fighting madness had come upon'<sup>233</sup> him. Anger had the power to trigger slave rebellion and because the masters recognised this threat to their power they would quickly step in to deconstruct it as madness. When Jacobs reacts angrily to Dr. Flint's violence against her for having rejected his advances, he responds,

“[a]re you mad? If you are, I will soon bring you to your senses”<sup>234</sup> The insecure master believes he is devaluing his slave’s anger by writing it off as madness; he is convinced this shall stave off the threat that she suddenly presents as an empowered black woman.

*Beloved* commands attention as a slave narrative because its arrhythmic beat and cyclical movements reflect a fearless demeanour; in this manner it shall define and redefine anger in relation to craziness. Marianne Hirsch believes Sethe possesses an ‘anger handed down through generations of mothers who could have no control over their children’s lives, no voice in their upbringing’.<sup>235</sup> This statement suggests her inheritance comes from generations of angry yet helpless foremothers. From a point of New Seeing Sethe’s inheritance has been passed down to her by one woman in particular—her mother—who turns her own anger into a weapon of defence and presents it to her daughter in this way. This matrilineal line features angry black women who, because they are not helpless victims, shall be marked as crazy women; Paul D describes Sethe as a ‘crazy’ (312) woman; Ma’am, as the ‘woman with a flower in her hat’ (175), comes back to witness the murder of her granddaughter and she, too, is identified as being ‘crazy’; and now Beloved, according to Sethe, offers ‘[s]weet, crazy conversations full of half sentences’ (80). Sethe appears to be the craziest of them all in her use of violence accompanied by silent communication; this is a demonstration of deliberate madness fortified by anger through which she communicates her message with precision. If ‘hysteria [functions] primarily as a form of protest against patriarchal law’ then Sethe, in her angry protest, qualifies as a ‘hysteric’.<sup>236</sup> She ‘quit[s] the Word’ (209) and with it the realm of the symbolic that belongs to the Law-of-the-Father or master; words are replaced by actions that shall challenge the power of men thereby confirming her display of craziness is underpinned by rational thought. A silent hysteric ‘senses something *remains* to be said that resists all speech’<sup>237</sup> and Sethe, too, must speak beyond the boundaries of conventional language. Her hands, which previously made ‘the ink [that] he liked’ (44) to use for his written exercises of slave dehumanization, now create another colour. The human blood covering ‘wet red hands’ (178) belongs to *her* and it shall now silently communicate in place of his ink and his words.

It is clear to see that Morrison’s use of ambivalence allows her to remember and also reshape black women’s history. A patriarchal slave system could so easily



manipulate enslaved individuals into seeing its agents as masters but also father figures or gods who must be obeyed; Morrison employs a similar context to present the actions of a forgotten foremother as violence but also motherlove that is both shielded and empowered by anger. Readers witness Sethe's anger in cyclical returns to the pivotal scene and a repetitive speech pattern that grounds the narrative action, but it also offers an opportunity for her to redefine her violence as a form of protection for her motherlove. From positions of New Seeing that are informed by a black feminist standpoint we can review the anger that punctuates Morrison's narrative. Anger prompts violence and it also becomes a form of protest; it is an ambivalent emotion that can be expressed to varying degrees, and it can also be used by the women of this community as a symbolic weapon of power to communicate a legitimate response against the injustices they have suffered. Morrison recognises the power of anger and by enabling Sethe to possess it she ensures her protagonist will not fade away as a victim; instead, Sethe claims her rights whilst disabling Schoolteacher's power. The masters were quick to redefine displays of anger by an enslaved person as madness in an effort to deny its status as a trigger for rebellion. Morrison also aligns anger with craziness by redefining the latter term as deliberate madness since it is underpinned by rational thought. Sethe's anger in craziness is an inheritance passed down from her rebellious mother, which now enables her to communicate with the master through silent actions. Information is communicated in anger and Sethe conveys her message of resistance to Schoolteacher using her hands in place of words. Morrison's black feminist retelling and reshaping of an important history creates an angry and ambivalent narrative space in which she can explore conflicting emotions and actions as being equally valid. We see that history can also be told as fiction; death can also be freedom; in silence a black woman shall still speak; she is a murderer but also an angry mother demonstrating her love and a loving mother expressing her anger.

Whereas ambivalent moments prove to be valuable in carrying this narrative forward they cannot undo the actions of the infanticidal mother who turns a weapon on her 'best thing' (251). In discussions of this event—referred to as 'the Misery' (201)—Morrison herself turns ambivalent by stating, "[i]t was absolutely the right thing to do, but she had no right to do it".<sup>238</sup> Her reluctance to offer an absolute verdict of Sethe's actions is necessary because the slave narrative does not end here; indeed, it is about to change course as the author revisits the topic of black motherhood and also readdresses

what is Sethe's best thing. Morrison has followed the instructions of her black female ancestors, to '*lay it all down*'. In the process of narrating the important history of her foremothers, who are also the 'angry dead', she makes it her own by adding a personal perspective. Morrison now rests Garner's narrative in order to explore Sethe's story further; she creates a point of New Seeing whereby the return of the dead daughter 'leaves Sethe more enslaved than ever'.<sup>239</sup> Prior to Beloved's death, Sethe is surrounded by all of her children and takes pleasure in her motherlove. She recalls, "when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was *that* wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they weren't mine to love" (190). Sethe appears to be aware of a sense of self whilst repeatedly referring to 'I' and claiming ownership of all that should have been, and now is, 'mine'. However, a sub-narrative indicates she is bound up in a maternal duality, meaning there is no real sense of her as an individual because motherhood has commandeered her experiences and coerced her into sacrificing all that she is and has for her children; the repetitive reference to 'my milk' (19) is indicative of her sharing every part of her being with these children. As an ambivalent character in its own right, Sethe's excessively 'thick' (193) motherlove, which is also 'deep and wide' (190), has left her without a centre.

By completely stripping motherhood of its ideological status Morrison now re-examines black motherlove as a 'serious disability' (301), something that Sethe cannot comprehend. She claims "[I]ove is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all" (194) but, in interviews, Morrison has countered this statement by speaking of 'an excess of maternal feeling',<sup>240</sup> which becomes detrimental to the lives of mothers. She recognises the difficulties that especially black women have experienced, and continue to experience, 'in negotiating something very difficult. The whole problem [is] trying to [...] love something bigger than yourself, to nurture something; and also not to sabotage yourself, not to murder yourself'.<sup>241</sup> In the case of Sethe, her motherlove becomes a protective yet deadly substance that she uses to tightly wrap up her children to the point of it smothering them, and she is left with very little love and life for her own self. Instead, she is now experiencing 'a living death'<sup>242</sup> in the form of self-sabotage (8). With the return of Beloved, this mother-daughter relationship takes another grotesque turn, as suffocating motherlove is now accompanied by 'venom[ous]' (3) daughterlove. Sethe's body enters into an imaginary labour to birth Beloved once more. Since Morrison

disregards linear time in this narrative, it is unsurprising that ‘the functions of menstruation, pregnancy, birth, and lactation are not always preserved in their natural sequence’.<sup>243</sup> Hence, Beloved’s rebirth precedes the moment of Sethe’s water breaking (156), as is symbolised by her need to empty her bladder upon seeing that familiar face once again (61). In another ambivalent turn, Morrison shows Beloved as a doubling image of the ‘fully dressed woman’ (60) and a newborn child. At first, she struggles ‘to negotiate the weight of her eyelids’ and finds it difficult to hold her head as it is ‘too heavy for her neck alone’ (67); and her skin is ‘lineless and smooth’ (61). She also suffers from ‘incontinence’ (64), tends to let liquids dribble down her chin (62), and cannot digest solid foods (79). She spends most of her time sleeping (64), and when awake she struggles to produce speech, barely able to confirm that her name is Beloved (62). With each new detail that is offered about Beloved she grows into the narrative space and Sethe is further suffocated.

Beloved is Sethe’s dead daughter reborn but she also represents other people, forms, and stories, because of which this ambivalent character ‘resists particularisation’.<sup>244</sup> She is ‘a greedy ghost and need[s] lots of love’ (247); she is also a young black woman on the run from ‘some whiteman’—likely to be a sexual predator—who has used her ‘for his own purposes’ (140); and she speaks ‘the undecipherable language [...] of the black and angry dead’ (234), thereby confirming she ‘is the embodiment of the collective pain and rage of the millions of slaves who died in the Middle Passage and suffered the tortures of slavery’.<sup>245</sup> Beloved also takes on the role of a healer; she seduces Paul D by asking him to ““touch me on the inside part”” (137), but that intimate part is also a reference to the emotional paralysis that he suffered in slavery and it holds him back still. Beloved encompasses the forgotten past that Paul D must remember once again and in doing so he is no longer incapacitated. His repetitive and euphoric chanting of ““Red heart”” (138) indicates that with each heartbeat his emotions are being brought back to life, freeing him to grieve for the past before thinking to the future. Beloved is all of these things and I suggest she is something more, as is indicated by her ‘insatiable desire for sweet foods’.<sup>246</sup> We are told ‘sugar could always be counted on to please her’ (66); she eats ‘honey’, ‘sugar sandwiches’, and ‘taffy’, and still she desires more. Concerning Beloved’s desire, Emma Parker believes that it ‘invokes the history of slavery—[with] sugar being one of the main products of slave plantations’.<sup>247</sup> This connection can be extended to consider the idea

that *Beloved* is an embodiment of the slave system and patriarchal rules, which continue their efforts to oppress Sethe. *Beloved*'s milk when it is mixed with 'cane syrup and vanilla' (206) offers a metaphorical image of Sethe's contaminated motherhood. The sweetener evokes memories of Sweet Home farm and its seductive charm, but also the threat of its continued presence in Sethe's life as is indicated by *Beloved*'s 'breath sugary from fingerfuls of molasses or sand-cookie crumbs' (143).

This mother-child bond now becomes a re-enactment of those very positions of submission and ownership that defined patriarchal systems like slavery. In a threatening gesture, Denver, whose difficult birth marked a moment of hope for her mother, now also risks coming under this spell, because 'if *Beloved* faces her, she will inhale deeply the sweet air from her mouth'. If excess is a privilege allowed for patriarchal masters only, then *Beloved*'s desire for excess is evidence that she is one of them. Furthermore, although *Beloved* enjoys returning to a state of pre-Oedipal symbiosis with her mother—allowing her to communicate with her eyes as they 'lick' or 'taste' (68) Sethe—she also craves words, which were accessible to her father. A question arises, however, regarding his identity. For the biological father, Halle, an ability to understand the written word helped him to earn freedom for his mother (245), but for the ideologically placed 'Father', Schoolteacher,<sup>248</sup> it formed a permanent document of his scientific study of racism. The word signifies freedom and enslavement and *Beloved* embodies this binarism; the 'half sentences' (80) she produces reflect a childlike innocence but also her efforts to embody patriarchal power. At first, her hands are used in place of words to communicate with her mother. Sethe feels a pressure around her neck, as *Beloved*'s fingers 'circle' (113) towards the windpipe and begin strangling her. Denver witnesses this action and when she later confronts *Beloved*, the response suggests she, too, has conveyed her love and anger through violence: "I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it" (119). The would-be bite she gives her mother as a kiss on the neck, when it is communicated through words, marks a desire to inscribe a message upon the black woman's body, one of possession that is concealed by seduction. Her actions draw parallels with Schoolteacher's scribbles in a notebook, which were also intended to mark Sethe's body as a possession. Whereas the circling motion with which *Beloved*'s hands move across Sethe's neck indicate her desire to silently return to her mother, this moment also sees her transform into a figure of authority that aims to control Sethe as property.

Sethe's ability for excessive motherlove suffocates her further and only upon finding her anger once again can she fight back, having recognised her own self as separate to her children. The narrator conveys how she talks aloud as if conducting a form of self-therapy, or raising her voice in anger, to declare 'how much she ha[s] suffered [...] for her children' (284). However, in Morrison's narrative actions speak louder than words and so Sethe shall free herself in 'a restaging'<sup>249</sup> of the event that led to the death of Beloved. Sethe is armed with an ice pick as she leaves her house, now running towards a white man she mistakes for Schoolteacher, but also the circle of healing mothers who work to save her from an excessively maternal self. For Sethe to be able to find the embrace of these women, she must let go of Beloved's hand and separate herself from the oppressive hold that has worn her down (309). In order for Sethe's self-narrative to be able to grow out of this maternal narrative it is imperative that Beloved now depart from Bluestone Road. As for Sethe, who, eighteen years ago took it upon herself to free her child from a life in slavery at the cost of being condemned by an entire community, and who also sold her own body for an engraving to be put on the daughter's gravestone (239), who is now 'diminished' (295) by the return of that child and left with 'exhausted breasts' (321), Morrison suggests something else is required for her to be able to build a sense of self. *Beloved* embodies a therapeutic model of healing that develops over three stages, unfolding in each section of the narrative, and rememory is central to this process; in Part I, Sethe is seen resisting her memories but she also revisits them in brief moments; in Part II, she engages with those memories and comes to accept the past and in doing so she is on the verge of becoming a 'new Sethe' (193); and Part III focuses on her recovery and healing which is wholly dependent on her ability to rest past traumas and now step forward.

Sethe's healing is hindered because the larger circle of care that protected her suddenly stopped at the moment of Beloved's murder, when people stepped back and cut her off from their lives; even Baby Suggs took to her bed to await death and left Sethe to care for herself and her children. Sethe has survived over the years by giving care to Denver and even has some to offer Paul D, but Beloved's return has drained her of every last drop of love. The thirty women gathered outside 124 work to re-establish a circle of care around Sethe, but perhaps it is too late because Denver believes, "'I've lost my mother'" (314). Morrison, however, insists this must not be the end for Sethe. This circling narrative begins and ends with the word Beloved so as to inform Morrison's

black woman reader that in the end we must all come back to love and *be loved*. Motherlove is important to black women's history. Morrison, in making this history her own, adds to it by making it clear that motherlove remains a fulfilling experience as long as it is practised alongside self love; the self will find its value in relation to another—so as not to become completely self-obsessed—and so it is important for every black woman to recognise her worth in each relationship she experiences. Sethe also works towards this recognition with the help of Paul D who returns to reciprocate the care that he has received from her; in doing so he mothers her.<sup>250</sup> He returns to a 'cold house' (318) that signifies the death of Sethe's excessive motherlove. She now lies in Baby Sugg's old bed and mourns the loss of her beloved child, telling him, "[s]he left me. [...] She was my best thing" (321). Paul D now steps forward to fulfil the important task that Morrison has assigned to him, by countering Sethe's mournful statement with words of enlightenment: "[y]ou your best thing, Sethe. You are" (322). Paul D makes repetitive references to the pronoun, 'you', which is passed over to Sethe to enable her to begin the process of shaping it into her own term of reference: "Me? Me?" With the help of Paul D, Sethe 'begins for the first time to speak for *herself*'.<sup>251</sup>

We can see how Sethe's mothering itself becomes an ambivalent form; it empowers her and it also causes her to lose her sense of self since she is bound by maternal duality. Morrison re-examines motherlove from a point of New Seeing, as something that can be all-consuming and must be fought against by the mother for the sake of her survival. Motherhood now becomes an ambivalent character in its own right and *Beloved* is the embodiment of a new kind of slavery that oppresses Sethe. This mother-child bond becomes a re-enactment of those very positions of submission and ownership that defined patriarchal systems like slavery. Sethe's ability for excessive motherlove suffocates her further and it is only upon finding her anger once again that she can fight back, having recognised her own self as separate to her children but still capable of, and willing to, care for them. Sethe's self-narrative must grow out of this maternal narrative but for this to become a reality she requires healing and so a supportive sisterhood is required in her life once again. This circling narrative begins and ends with the word *Beloved* so as to inform Morrison's black woman reader that even though there is the need for anger we must all come back to love. Motherlove must be practised alongside self love; the self will find its value in relation to another and the message that comes out of this narrative is that every black woman must recognise her

worth in each relationship she experiences. Sethe also works towards this recognition with the help of Paul D who returns to reciprocate the care that he has received from her; in doing so he mothers her and helps her to realise her sense of self.



Morrison honours the oral tradition with the slave-narrative that she has created. Not only does it deliver the silenced voices of her black female ancestors, but it also effectively conveys their anger at the injustices suffered under a cruel slave regime that promoted patriarchal practices. Morrison adds her own angry voice to this important narrative that also represents a black feminist protest. She writes for black women readers who are being passed down an important history and there is the expectation that they, too, shall recognise the anger in those voices and come to value the truths that are being spoken. *Beloved* operates as a black feminist space in which stories are revealed in cyclical turns thereby rejecting the linear accounts of history as it has been presented by the dominant culture. Alongside anger Morrison also promotes love and so the cyclical narrative also represents circles of reciprocal care. In this way she is able to state her black feminist standpoint that calls for recognition of oneself in relation to another. This standpoint also allows Morrison to present black mothering that is a liberating force, and then re-present it as motherhood that is oppressive. This narrative space turns ambivalent so as to engage with her black women readers and enable them to readdress motherhood from a point of New Seeing. Anger is endorsed as a just response to oppressive motherhood and Morrison expects her readers to also recognise the value of anger when forming their personal protests against oppressive forces. The following chapter shall turn to an examination of the African-American community in a post-emancipation era and investigate the complex relationship of anger in relation to love that now exists within nuclear family homes, between husbands and wives, and between mothers, fathers, and their children.

## Chapter Two

### African-American Patriarchies, in Anger and in Love

In slavery African-American people were denied their right to family life, and personal accounts as well as academic studies have attested to this historical truth. Black women were assigned a ‘breeder’<sup>252</sup> status and ownership would be claimed of their reproductive bodies. They were expected to frequently produce offspring to meet white masters’ demands, and often newborns were destined to become property for sale. On a daily basis, enslaved women faced the threat of seeing ‘their babies being dragged off’<sup>253</sup> and knowing they might never hold them again. Black men were also targeted by this system by being denied ‘all the attributes of manhood’; there would be ‘no recognition of [them as] fathers’.<sup>254</sup> Alongside the bodies of female slaves, those of male slaves were also controlled and exhausted beyond their capacity; having toiled away in fields and on farms they would then be denied ‘the benefits of their labor’.<sup>255</sup> Such injustices were designed to remind them they were considered not man enough to ‘protect and provide for [themselves] and others’<sup>256</sup> in the form of a family. Slavery denied the rights of mothers and fathers and so, in emancipation, ‘[a]mong the first and perhaps most important decisions that freedmen and women made was the reestablishment of family ties’.<sup>257</sup> This statement by social historian, Paula Giddings, identifies a sense of unity amongst the newly freed men and women that would also suggest their homes could now flourish under healthier conditions. In contrast, a number of black women writers of fiction and non-fiction portray disharmony in African-American homes throughout post-emancipation history. In the fiction of Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, the source of the problem is identified as inequity in the male-female relationships formed under these roofs.

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Hurston speaks through Nanny to declare that in times of freedom, “[d]e nigger woman is [still] de mule eh de world”.<sup>258</sup> Her humanity has not yet been recognised and having served white masters in slavery, she is now expected to serve black men and submit to their rules. The character of Joe offers a justification for black male rule stating that, “[s]omebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows”.<sup>259</sup> In *The Color Purple*, Walker examines the



infantilisation of women by men. Mr. teaches his newly married son, “[w]ives is like children. You have to let ’em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating”<sup>260</sup> Hurston and Walker have created literary works to highlight gender inequality in African-Americans relationships, but they also use this creative process to test what might happen if powerless women came to realise their potential for resistance. The marriages of Joe with Janie, in *Their Eyes*, and Mr. with Celie, in *Color Purple*, are based on hierarchical structures that collapse as the wives begin to challenge the power of their husbands, and I suggest the trigger for this action is anger. At the same time, I suggest a rereading of the statements made by Joe and Mr. implies a distorted sense of care that these husbands believe they are offering their wives in violence and through other forms of control. Joe will take it upon himself to make decisions for Janie so as to keep her safe from certain dangers in the same way a responsible adult would for a child, or even an animal. Mr.’s suggestion that wives should be beaten in a way similar to how parents discipline their children using violence takes on a somewhat different meaning in relation to the familiar idiom, to ‘spare the rod, [... is to] spoil the child’.<sup>261</sup> In this context, however controversial it appears to be, it is possible to examine black male violence against black females as being motivated by the need to demonstrate care.

The African-American homes featured in these works of fiction show men investing in patriarchal conventions which problematize their care towards others, and also show oppressed women serving men until they can realise their potential for rebellion. Morrison recognises these same gender markers in *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*. Her reader is made aware of an unsettling climate in which nuclear families now feature black husbands, fathers and sons associated with material ‘acquisitions’, and black wives, mothers and daughters defined by ‘acquiescence’ (*Bluest*: 141). Outside of her fiction, Morrison has been vocal about what she perceives to be a lost camaraderie amongst the free people. She refers to her own family history as a reference point for understanding how previously stable relationships would unite black men and women:

[T]he relationship between Black men and Black women in those days was much more a comradeship[...] [...] I know my mother and father, my grandmother and grandfather, and the people that lived around me [...] took careful care of one another and there was something clear and common about what they were doing. They worked with each other.<sup>262</sup>

In Morrison's childhood home the strength of each relationship would be defined by the couple's ability for 'care' which is, of course, synonymous with love. Care, as a reciprocal act, would be experienced in cyclical turns that sustained individuals. However, the unity and effectiveness of a male-female comradeship would become weakened by an outsider influence, which is identifiable in Morrison's fiction. In *Bluest Eye*, she speaks through Soaphead Church to make a statement of admission on behalf of the community: '[w]e [...] took as our own the most dramatic, and the most obvious, of our white master's characteristics, which were, of course, their worst' (140-1). The vision they 'took' on as their own was a murky one that suddenly became clear; for some, at least, there is an awareness of what they 'mistook' for progress. Yet, there are also references to all that has been 'raised / reared / grow[n] / [and] develop[ed]' by them, and so there is the suggestion that an entire community is marked by ambivalent experiences of growth and stunting. The dangerous characteristics adopted by individuals have turned them into mimics of the worst kind; they are miseducated, violent, and guilty of upholding hierarchies. A gender hierarchy has enabled black men to rule over black women using the same patriarchal practices that were once favoured by white masters.

Alongside Hurston and Walker, Morrison also aims to do more than simply document the oppression of black women, however, her treatment of this particular issue differs to some extent. From the outset her novels feature failed patriarchies; almost immediately, we see defiant wives actively resisting oppression as their frustrated husbands seek new ways of bringing them down. Whereas Morrison believes that a sense of comradeship is missing in African-American marriages, she also acknowledges that a 'battle' for 'power'<sup>263</sup> is in progress. I suggest such battles occur because angry black women are worthy opponents for angry black men in marriages that have turned into battlegrounds for power. In *Song, the Deads'* marriage is kept alive by a 'brilliant bitterness' (126), played out as a game of 'cowboys and Indians' (132). As is observed by another member of this family, a submissive appearing Ruth is able to 'bring her husband to a point [...] of helplessness' (64). In *Bluest Eye*, the Breedloves' 'marriage [becomes] shredded with quarrels' (92) and Pauline reveals, 'I give him as good as I got. Had to'. She even admits to having 'tried to kill' (96) Cholly in the past. There are complicated yet interesting dynamics to these relationships that

are simultaneously growing and stunting in instances of violence that communicate anger but also a distorted love; angry black men and women are equally capable of this as husbands and wives, and as mothers and fathers. As a starting point, it is important to identify the gender-specific forms of anger that Morrison is exploring here. The anger of black men appears to be supported by a patriarchal vision that enables them to go on the offensive; black women's anger is reactive and it can trigger defensive action that reflects a feminist tone. In the following section, I shall begin by outlining the differing definitions of anger that relate to gendered experiences in this community. The focus shall then turn to Morrison's own anger and how it shapes her fiction. There is evidence to suggest that she uses anger to modify the narrative pace in *Bluest Eye* and *Song*.

### 1. Differentiations of Anger

A significant body of work has been produced by African-American male writers focusing upon issues affecting the men of their community. Whether writing from a political, socio-cultural, or theological perspective, their studies acknowledge the anger that has been felt by black men from the past through to the present time. Richard Wright and Malcolm X offer personal accounts of Southern and Northern life for young black men. In *Black Boy*,<sup>264</sup> which begins in 1912, Wright describes his father as a violent but otherwise distant man—'the lawgiver' but also 'a stranger'<sup>265</sup> in the house—who finally abandons the family. The other men that come into young Richard's life fall short of being role models and these failures add to his brewing anger. He describes 'a strange uncle who felt that I was impolite [and so he] was going to teach me to act [... like] backward black boys act on the plantations, [...] to grin, hang my head, and mumble apologetically when I was spoken to'.<sup>266</sup> Wright's anger enables him to challenge the uncle, telling him, "[i]f you want to fight, I'll fight. That's the way it'll be between us,"<sup>267</sup> as equals rather than master and slave. Such references to the black men in Wright's early life—as being strange or strangers—set the tone for his subsequent encounters with northern men. On arriving in Chicago, he witnesses the racism that is rife and it affects his anger profoundly in that it appears to have lost its vigour. He is 'sad[dened]' rather than outraged upon witnessing his peers 'act[ing] out' stereotypical 'roles that the white race ha[s] mapped out for them'.<sup>268</sup> Wright identifies

these young black men as having shut off their emotional and mental capacities,<sup>269</sup> and soon after he, too, joins their ranks to speak as a united ‘we’.<sup>270</sup> He acknowledges that ‘[o]ur anger was like the anger of children, passing quickly from one petty grievance to another’;<sup>271</sup> it lacks focus and potency and so it cannot provide a foundation upon which they would be able to form a protest against the racism plaguing their lives.

*The Autobiography of Malcolm X*<sup>272</sup> spans from 1925 to 1965, concluding at a point in time when the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements were highly active. The subject, who claims the title of being “‘the angriest black man in America’”,<sup>273</sup> delivers an energetic narrative by maintaining his rage throughout. Whereas Wright takes the reader along with him on a personal journey from childhood into young adulthood, X assumes the position of a learned guide who has experienced it all, learnt from his mistakes, and now advises his brother men whilst also sitting in judgment of their actions. He concludes little progress has been made since the days of slavery, because ‘the white man still has the black man begging’<sup>274</sup> in a racially unequal world. He is identified as ‘[o]ur *enemy*’<sup>275</sup>—a point that is angrily emphasised with the use of italicisation—and X advises that this adversary is now the cause of conflict within the black community. At a speech rally he would instruct, “‘the black man not to fight himself – that’s all part of the white man’s maneuver, to keep us fighting among ourselves, against each other’”.<sup>276</sup> X identifies the wrongdoings committed by outsiders and he also turns his glance inward to identify the effects upon black men for whom he has advice but little sympathy. He is direct in his criticism that is aided by the use of succinct language; he speaks of the ‘brainwashed’, ‘foolish’, ‘ignorant’, and the ‘delusion[al]’,<sup>277</sup> who believe they have earned their place in a racially biased America by realising that if any changes are required the onus is upon them, rather than the racists, to follow through. X speaks as an angry black man and many of his arguments are linked to the ideological teachings of the Nation of Islam. The religious element supporting his standpoint produces statements that have a simultaneously unifying and segregating effect.

X appears to speak from the centre of the community when addressing his black ‘brothers and sisters’,<sup>278</sup> showing concern for all yet there is a strong patriarchal undercurrent running through this narrative and it tends to blur the constructive focus of his anger. In one example, to justify why black husbands visit prostitutes X directs the blame at their wives; according to him, these ‘[d]omineering, complaining, demanding’

women have ‘robbed [them] of the satisfaction of being men’. In order ‘to escape this tension and the chance of being ridiculed by his own wife, each [...man is likely to visit] a prostitute’.<sup>279</sup> X endorses the view that black men belong “‘at the top of civilization’”<sup>280</sup> but note how there is no room for black women alongside them in this alternate hierarchy. Ironically, whereas X is determined to unveil the prejudice that continues to target the black community, his autobiography reveals a number of contradictions pointing to his own bias which, in turn, splinters this argument. Wives are portrayed as overbearing personalities and yet it is also suggested that ‘[a]ll women, by their nature, are fragile and weak’.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, it is stated that ‘the black man needs to start today to shelter and protect and respect his black women’,<sup>282</sup> and a few pages later it is clarified that ‘while a man must at all times respect his woman, at the same time he needs to understand that he must control her if he expects to get her respect’.<sup>283</sup> X adheres to the rhetoric that a black man can claim black women as *his* property and that respect is synonymous with control; these instructions to own a person and to also control them resonate with those core principles of slavery that X spent his life rejecting in anger. As his narrative draws to a close, X reflects on his anger in two statements; firstly, he confirms that “‘I believe in anger’” and, secondly, he concludes, ‘I was no less angry than I had been, but at the same time [... I now] recognize[d] that anger can blind human vision’.<sup>284</sup> These statements convey X’s recognition that anger has the potential to be valuable as a form of defence, but it is destructive as an offensive action.

The lives of angry black men continue to be studied by the black male writers of today; Ellis Cose and Michael Porter, amongst others, offer academic studies on how both the race problem and gender prejudice are interlinked with this experience. In *The Envy of the World: On Being a Black Man in America*,<sup>285</sup> Cose confirms ‘we [black men] are still wrestling with the demons of another age and time’.<sup>286</sup> He turns introspective to assess the value of this anger revealing that, ‘the world we build, too often, is constructed out of anger, confusion and pain’.<sup>287</sup> Here, there is the suggestion that anger is expressed in weakened moments that impinge on the subject’s sense of self. However, Cose then proceeds to offer a second statement claiming, ‘[a]nger is not necessarily a bad thing; provided it doesn’t lead you to sabotage yourself, provided you can use it as a shield’.<sup>288</sup> Like X, Cose observes that black men’s use of anger can produce positive outcomes, such as uniting a community and resisting forms of racism,

but it can also negatively affect their sense of self and outlook on life. Conversely, Cose differs from X's stance on gender issues within the community. In a confessional moment that is tinged with anger Cose confirms, 'when it comes to women and children, we as a group are guilty of just about everything of which we stand accused. And we damn well know it'.<sup>289</sup> Cose will not offer any defence of the violence used by men against women and children in what is, in essence, a naming and shaming exercise. However, he is keen to emphasise that whilst 'we attempt to relieve [...] frustrations by beating up our mates [...] [t]here is also a great deal of love [...] that cannot be denied'.<sup>290</sup> He conveys the idea of there being an ambivalent cycle linking anger, love, and violence, within this community as well as individual relationships.

Although Porter's study, *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women*,<sup>291</sup> examines the lives of black women, it tends to frequently shift its attention to problems faced by the men of the community. Porter makes it known that 'insecure African American men need someone to control;<sup>292</sup> this need is borne out of 'fear to assure loyalty, and displacement of anger'<sup>293</sup> that prompt violence against women. Once again, anger is aligned with a weaker element in terms of fear of the 'patriarchal White power structure'<sup>294</sup> and its agents that continue to target black men and women. Porter warns, '[m]en of color must realize that they simultaneously sabotage their struggle for liberation and oppress women when they attempt to exclude them from an active role in the liberation of their people'.<sup>295</sup> He highlights the inequality that exists and how a lack of partnership is affecting the political objectives of this community. Porter's solution to the gender problem is offered as a set of instructions black women would need to follow in their oppressed state and the sidelined role that he associates with them. They 'must socially and psychologically educate Black men. It is unfortunate that this burden, along with many others, must be placed on the[ir] shoulders'.<sup>296</sup> Furthermore, despite what these women can see playing out before them they 'must *not* believe that men of color, [...] are either puppets or cheap imitators of the White male supremacists'.<sup>297</sup> Whereas the men of the community are asked to realise the effects of their mistreatment of women, there is the expectation that these same women will take on a more practical role in changing the men who have pushed them to the periphery of the social sphere and also psychologically wounded them. They must not judge or condemn their perpetrators who, so it would appear, require a degree of mothering to better themselves.

All four of these writers have emerged at various points along an important timeline to present their views on the problems affecting men in the African-American community. They offer observations on who is to blame, and will also ask questions to encourage a debate; at times they turn self-reflective and confess to wrongdoings on their part and, equally, they launch into anger-filled protests that call for change. Each writer reveals an anxiety about the present and future progress of black men and I suggest that the searches for a solution to the problem also draw attention to the ambivalence that marks the thoughts and actions of those men. There is the common belief that events of the past, for which racist elements within the white community are held responsible, continue to affect the lives of these men who will frequently react in anger; this anger has a positive and negative value. Wright sees an atmosphere of prejudice being recreated in his own home by men who promote forms of gender and intraracial inequality. He angrily challenges efforts to assign him a lowly place in this internal hierarchy; however, he is unable to replicate his anger upon seeing racial inequality outside the home where even he takes on a subservient role. He reads his ability for anger as a form of self-protection and then appears to re-evaluate it as a force that must be contained in case it makes him a visible target for racist violence. As for X, his anger communicates a Black Power protest for the rights of men, and it is combined with a patriarchal justification for gender prejudice. He speaks to the entire community endorsing freedom alongside ownership, addressing black women as sisters and then condemning them as domineering yet weak; he claims they should be respected whilst also being controlled. In the concluding segment of his manifesto X reasserts his continued belief in anger but also provides a new insight into its power to corrupt thoughts.

Cose resists giving a positive value to the anger of black men by associating it with pain and confusion, but even he must concede that it could prove to be beneficial if used as a form of defence rather than self-sabotage. He also believes cyclical experiences of violence, anger, and love, shape relationships between black men and women. Porter identifies anger as a displaced reaction that is associated with violence but also fear, and even paranoia. He suggests that it impacts upon male-female relationships by producing inequality rather than equal partnerships. Porter's solution requires victimised black women to take it upon themselves to change black men by transforming from wives and lovers into educating mother figures, in effect.

Accordingly, black male anger can be read in multiple ways. Firstly, this anger strengthens voices of protest against racial prejudice targeting the community, but it also supports a defence of inequality and certain behavioural traits that are exercised by black men; secondly, anger is a sign of weakness and of fear; and thirdly, when coupled with violence this anger targets women to make them submit, but mixed in with anger and violence there is also love for them. As for black women, they are targeted by angry black men in order to control them because they appear weak or need to be weakened. It is fairly unsurprising that all but one of these writers have failed to declare any knowledge of black women's capacity for anger which, if it were to be explored, would clearly remove the victim status that is attached to such an identity. In contrast, a number of black women writers have studied anger as an expression that men and women are equally capable of showing. This exercise is celebrated by some observers and others condemn it as an act of black feminism.

Black women's writing on black men's discriminatory thought processes and aggression against women has often been rejected by those put under the spotlight. Calvin Hernton notes that 'when black women write about the [...] violence committed by black men against black females' and call them 'oppressors of black women, black men accuse them of sowing seeds of "division" in the black community. [...] [W]hen black women write about the sisterhood of black women, black men brand them as "feminist bitches."<sup>298</sup> Hernton points to the hypocrisy in operation within this community, but it is also possible to link the defensive anger of men to a fear of exposure whereby their acts of physical power will also reveal a related powerlessness. Noted black feminist, bell hooks, examines the thoughts and actions of men in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*.<sup>299</sup> She suggests that '[a]nger can be, and usually is, the hiding place for fear and pain' and, furthermore, it 'often hides depression and profound sorrow'.<sup>300</sup> She studies the anger of men, firstly, in relation to the principles of patriarchy and, secondly, to love. hooks states, '[t]here is only one emotion that patriarchy values when expressed by men; that emotion is anger. Real men get mad. And their mad-ness, no matter how violent or violating, is deemed natural—a positive expression of patriarchal masculinity'.<sup>301</sup> Anger, when it becomes the currency of patriarchal power, cannot possibly be given a positive value because it is dependent on a renunciation of all other emotions; and the consequences are, of course, devastating. Angry men adhering to patriarchal rule will consistently reject—or



suppress—love because, otherwise, it would destabilise their position of power; and ‘[i]f they dared to love us [women], [...] they would cease to be real “men”’.<sup>302</sup> It is a safer option for these men to control women rather than show love, or even respect, for them. Anger-filled violence ensures that a distance is maintained between the two sexes.

Whereas hooks cannot connect the anger of patriarchal men with any positive associations, Audre Lorde’s black feminist examination of black women’s anger reveals something encouraging in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*.<sup>303</sup> Offering a personal perspective she states, ‘[m]y anger has meant pain to me but it has also meant survival’.<sup>304</sup> Although this anger is presented in an ambivalent context there is the assertion that, overall, it is a positive expression since it can enable a woman to attain the ultimate achievement: her right to life. Acknowledging there are plenty of angry black women in the community, Lorde makes it known that ‘[o]ther Black women are not the root cause nor the source of [...] anger’<sup>305</sup> that is experienced by an individual woman. This statement reads like an open-ended sentence, leaving it up to the reader to find answers as to who or what is the cause of this anger; the efforts of black men to enforce patriarchal rules on black women in their daily lives can be identified as one such source. Lorde links anger to survival, but she also associates survival with love, referring to it as ‘the greatest gift of love’<sup>306</sup> for another but also for oneself. The interlinking of anger to survival and to love creates an ambivalent space that demands closer inspection. hooks and Lorde have reached different conclusions about anger in relation to the sexes; hooks reads anger as a suppressive force that hides personal grief as well fear, and this standpoint resonates with Porter’s study. hooks believes that in the context of patriarchy the anger of men enables them to separate themselves from women and position themselves in a hierarchically superior position; segregation strips these relationships of love. As for Lorde, she relates anger to the experiences of black women, presenting it as a valid emotion and also a form of defence that they must use in their lives. She defines anger in ambivalent terms just as Cose has done in his work on black men; they both suggest that male-female relationships experience love fused with anger.

It can be said then that a number of black writers recognize the ambivalent value of anger within the African-American community. In anger one can assert authority over another person, and anger can also be used as a form of self-defence to free oneself; it is a debilitating emotion that might hold a person back, but it is also possible

to trace a fortifying love in various expressions of anger. Morrison acknowledges the validity of all definitions of anger, the reason for which every one of her literary productions turns into an ambivalent narrative space. Morrison aims to explore the anger of men alongside that of women, however, her efforts as a black woman writer observing the male half of the community have often been rejected. Within academic circles and the literary arena, black men have ‘accused [her] of “selling out,” of turning back the clock of racial progress, [... and] of being a black-man-hater’.<sup>307</sup> These accusations reveal an obvious anger at what are perceived to be failures on her part, and it also appears to be a mirroring response to Morrison’s own anger which reveals itself in her fiction. It must be noted, however, the novels that are under discussion here were written by Morrison during an important period of black history that is remembered for its expressions of anger and also of love. Likewise, there are traces of love in Morrison’s anger with which she embraces an entire community through the written word. *Bluest Eye*, as her first novel, was published in 1970, and *Song*, being her third novel, was completed in 1977. This decade would continue to build upon foundations laid by the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements and create awareness of the issues affecting African-Americans in their daily lives. Sonia Sanchez remembers that in the Sixties, ‘[t]here was anger, there was love, [...] and there was us saying to America, “You’re racist!”’.<sup>308</sup> The Seventies would present new challenges because, as she reveals, ‘[w]e were [now] up against forces that said that we should stop being angry. After all, they would say, You people have got everything now’.<sup>309</sup>

The black community of the Sixties, which Sanchez illustrates as a united ‘us’—once again brought together by love and now shielded by an outward projecting anger—became divided in the Seventies. Sanchez speaks of ‘we’ in reference to the black women of this era; and ‘they’, who asserted there should be no more anger because progress had been made, were the men associated with Black Power.<sup>310</sup> The fact that during this decade Black Women’s organizations came into existence and black feminism also defined its theoretical standpoint,<sup>311</sup> clearly indicates that black women’s anger only intensified in response to such calls. It is not a coincidence that ‘Black women [...] began writing novels in unprecedented numbers’<sup>312</sup> and they, too, would convey the angry voices of women as a protest. Morrison’s commitment to this cause is apparent, yet her protest is marked by ambivalent feelings of anger and love. Indeed, she defends her anger by equating it with love. In *Song*, an unidentified speaker repeats

a series of rhetorical questions: “‘*It is about love. What else but love. Can't I love what I criticize? [...] It is about love. What else?*’” (282). These unsourced segments allow Morrison to communicate directly with the reader. We come to understand that her criticism reflects a personal anger but it cannot undo the love she feels for the community and its people. This love extends to *all* of her characters. Hence, in the same way that Morrison chooses not to show black women as absolute victims, she also will not portray black men as complete villains;<sup>313</sup> for they are all capable of demonstrating love in anger. Declarations of love introduce both of these novels. Although Morrison has confessed that *Song* came to fruition whilst ‘I was in such a rage because my father was dead’,<sup>314</sup> the text is affectionately dedicated to ‘Daddy’ to indicate her love for this special man which also extends to the men she has created in this fictional space. Furthermore, whereas Morrison’s portrayals of black domestic life have been deemed ‘pessimistic’ and ‘negative’,<sup>315</sup> in the opening pages of this text she presents a perfect partnership formed by the coming together of a black man and woman; Mr. (Robert) Smith and Pilate Dead meet as strangers.

An ordinary winter scene quickly transforms into a colourfully ambivalent performance of death alongside love, and it shall be witnessed by the people Mr. Smith has invited to attend in a touching suicide note that is signed off with a declaration of love for all. Stood at the top of a hospital building he spreads the blue silk wings attached to his body whilst down below Pilate ‘burst[s] into song’ resembling piano music (5-6). Their partnership now extends into a cyclical concert as Pilate’s voice settles into a gentle ‘humming’ (9) to swathe her sister-in-law, Ruth, who has gone into labour outside the hospital. Above, as Smith indicates he is ready to commence flight, Pilate launches into a song once more so that he may take a leap as if a stage performer gracefully taking his final bow. Circles upon circles of care can be traced in this moment; Pilate’s song for Robert indicates love and it is reciprocated by him since he respectfully waits for her to offer him another song before launching himself off the edge; Pilate also shows care when soothing Ruth with gentler notes; and Robert reveals his capacity for care when departing from this world to make way for the imminent arrival of Ruth’s son, Milkman. Confirmation of black love is followed by an introduction to the rigid home that is run by an angry Macon Dead; his ability for love has become caught up in patriarchal practice and it proves difficult to separate them. A reverse sequence of anger followed by love can be traced in *Bluest Eye*, but before the

narrative actions unfolds, in uppercase letters the novel is loudly and proudly dedicated 'TO THE TWO WHO GAVE: ME-LIFE AND THE ONE WHO MADE ME FREE'. Here, Morrison is paying tribute to the strong partnership formed by the first woman and man she ever knew; her mother and father. Furthermore, she acknowledges the oneness of comradeship that brought together an entire community to fight for its freedom and hers; this is the legacy Morrison wishes to celebrate and she makes her reader aware of it before launching into her protest.

Morrison declares love for her own family and then proceeds to angrily deface the image of an ideal family setup in the opening page. An initial paragraph features a fairytale element complete with visual references and an even rhythm that is supported by the use of simple language; '[h]ere is the house [...] Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane [...] They are very happy [...] See Mother. Mother is very nice [...] Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong [...] Father is smiling. Smile Father, smile' (1). Morrison now sets about destabilising this image with two revisions. In the first version, some elements of grammar are removed thus producing a claustrophobic effect that might also be read as a judgment about such an ideal; and in a second revision of the original text all grammar is removed so that words and sentences fuse together and our sense of claustrophobia turns into suffocation. Morrison plays with 'perfection' so that it is 'broken up and confused',<sup>316</sup> the resulting indecipherable mass of print effectively disfigures the beauty of this ideal. Suddenly, Father's strength outweighs Mother's niceness. She is a passive character whose laughter barely conceals her submissive acceptance of duty to the home, while he need only smile to confirm that the house and family are visible symbols of his phallic power. In contrast, Morrison now turns the narrative focus onto nuclear family homes featuring angry black wives and mothers on a par with angry black husbands and fathers, but in their anger there is also love. The narrator begins by speaking of her angry mother, Mrs. MacTeer, who ran an 'old, cold' (5) house and yet she was still capable of love. Claudia recalls that in childhood illness, the 'large and rough' (6) hands that pressed down on her chest and the angry voice that 'humiliate[d]' (7) her were also delivering doses of '[l]ove, thick and dark as Alaga syrup'. She also recollects her parents uniting to attack the man who dared to molest their other daughter. Circles of care would be created as Mr. MacTeer, using his hands, and Mrs. MacTeer, with her words, avenged Frieda, and Claudia hit the girl next door for speaking ill of her father

(77). The narrator testifies to the love that existed in her childhood home but when remembering the Breedlove family, she must work harder to offer evidence of the love that Pauline and Cholly were capable of in their displays of anger. Cholly, in particular, is remembered as a man of few words who, in a rage, burnt down his home and ended up in jail.

Although Morrison acknowledges various definitions of anger in her fiction, she gives positive value only to that which is expressed as a form of protest against dangerous—sexist, racist, and even intraracial—ideologies, or anger in which it is possible to trace reciprocative love. In these scenarios there is always the possibility for a return to the comradeship Morrison yearns for within her community. Expressions of anger that are eclipsed by a patriarchal vision prove to be ineffective because it ensures segregation is maintained between the ‘colored’ and the ‘nigger’ (*Bluest*: 68), and between the ‘kicker’ and the ‘kicked’ (*Song*: 102). The distinction between effective and ineffective forms of anger is made throughout *Bluest Eye* and *Song*. In moments when love becomes fused with anger there is the potential for Morrison’s linear narrative to turn into a cyclical action etching out the reciprocal care that is hidden away in male-female relationships. Demonstrations of love for black women are not easily visible in instances where they are being objectified at the same time. In *Song*, the Seven Days crew is associated with a Black Power protest that has become obscured by a patriarchal vision. When speaking about the mission of this group, Guitar declares that killing white people to avenge the racist murders of black people is a testament of love; “[i]t’s [all] about loving us” (159) black men, women, and children, he tells Milkman. Here, the text performs a half turn in acknowledgement of Guitar’s capacity for love but it is prevented from completing a cyclical action primarily because of his commitment to patriarchal ideals. With ‘[h]is nostrils flared a little’ (223), Guitar reveals a simmering anger but this subtle action might also resemble that of an arrogant man puffing up his chest as he makes it known he will avenge the rape and killing of every black woman “[b]ecause she’s *mine*”.

The distorted notion of love underpinning the actions of angry patriarchs in *Their Eyes* and *Color Purple* can also be linked to Guitar’s ambivalent statement because he, too, equates ownership of another person with the act of caring. Here, Morrison causes a tear in Guitar’s patriarchal mask so that the reader is able to catch a glimpse of the man behind it; he is capable of love even though his anger stems from a

fear of it. Interestingly, when Guitar confesses to this fear he does so in the company of a woman, telling Hagar, “[e]verything I ever loved in my life left me. My father died[.] [... My mother] ran away. [...] [I]t was hard for me to latch on to a woman. Because I thought if I loved anything it would die” (307). Yet, still, the narrative is unable to complete a cyclical turn because Hagar is a psychologically wounded woman and her fragile state indicates she is incapable of reciprocating care for Guitar. He feels a rush of affection for her which sees his patriarchal stance weaken as is confirmed by a moment of self-realisation; “[y]ou can't own a human being” (306) he informs Hagar whilst also re-educating himself. Unfortunately, alongside men who value patriarchal principles we shall also see a number of women who believe they need to be claimed by a man in order to feel valued. In her announcement that “[h]e is my home in this world,” Hagar’s choice of language derives from familiar patriarchal speech and it confirms the belief that her self-worth is determined by a man owning her life. Hagar’s exhausting ‘anaconda love’ (137) for Milkman is unreciprocated, and so she has no love for her own self; she is now also incapable of finding anger within herself that would offer some form of self-protection. The fact that Hagar’s story is given little narrative space signals the author’s angry objection of women having completely lost their way; they have spent all their energy sustaining another person who, in becoming the centre of their world, now opts to control them instead of reciprocating care.

Evidently, Morrison acknowledges anger as being an essential element in the lives of black men and also black women. Speaking through her narrator, in *Bluest*, she confirms, ‘[t]here is a sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth. It is a lovely surging’ (37-8). Whereas this statement offers a specific description of what anger is, Morrison is aware of its diverse qualities and explores them within her ambivalent narrative space. From this statement, we can conclude that, overall, she gives preference to the positive outcomes that can be achieved using anger, as a defence mechanism or a platform for launching a personal protest. Morrison’s own anger forms the protest that is conveyed in *Bluest Eye* and *Song*; it can be identified as a black feminist rejection of the objectification of black women by black men but her anger will not undo the love she feels for them all. She is critical of men who rely on borrowed patriarchal principles to position themselves as the new masters of women in a post-emancipation era. Equally, she objects to women who blindly serve the needs of men in the name of love only to get none in return, and so they lose themselves completely. In

contrast, Morrison is drawn to African-American relationships in which the anger-filled actions of one partner will wholly energise the other; whilst the husbands aspire to become patriarchs and masters in these nuclear family homes, the wives work to challenge this hierarchy by taking on their spouses in power battles. However, the angry exchanges can also be read as affirmations of love which define each of these relationships and the author relies on her reader to uncover the evidence. Our recognition of love in anger requires the piecing together of Morrison's "new perspectives" on "old" reality'.<sup>317</sup> Patriarchal language must be reread and the actions of aspiring patriarchs must also be re-evaluated; only then is it possible to separate men like Macon Dead and Cholly Breedlove from their borrowed ideologies, and to determine their ability for love towards the women they otherwise appear to hate.

Morrison shapes a black feminist narrative by breaking down patriarchal signifiers and then proceeding to offer new perspectives on black men's reality that are far removed from stereotypical representations; quite clearly, these are not the actions of a 'black-man-hater'. She achieves a balancing act by also presenting black women who appear to fight their spouses for power rather than equality, suggesting a lack of desire to unite with them. Pauline ensures that only she has access to the privileges on offer in the Fisher home, thus allowing her superiority above Cholly. Ruth is a potentially incestuous mother replacing Macon with his own son to claim her position of power above his. These same actions can be reread as anger-filled attacks that wives will use to provoke their husbands into reciprocating and, once again, there is evidence of love in this anger. As shall be demonstrated in the following section, the relationships of Macon with Ruth, and Cholly with Pauline, command the reader's attention precisely because of the reciprocal element that brings each couple together in anger that is also love. In these moments the linear text performs cyclical turns just as it does when snippets of the characters' past histories are offered to us to be pieced together; in these turns we can collect fragments of detail that have been missed along a linear narrative trail. The histories of Macon and Cholly will be explored in order to understand the distorted logic of care they have come to value in their present lives. The histories of Ruth and Pauline are equally important, as they illustrate the anger that black women rely on as forms of defence and protest against injustices suffered inside and outside the home. It is also the case that in an ambivalent narrative space the reader cannot always be certain the entire truth is being spoken by Morrison's characters. Likewise, information

provided by the narrator cannot always be relied upon because the statements offered lack conviction when conveying what ‘we thought’ (*Bluest*: 4), as opposed to what we knew, or referring to what has ‘probably’ (*Song*: 8), but not definitely, occurred in a situation. We soon learn that when it appears ‘[t]here is nothing more to say’ (25), our attention must turn to that which is unsaid or being enacted in silence. In this way we enter into the practice of ‘[N]ew [S]eeing’<sup>318</sup> and can make important discoveries relating to Morrison’s black feminist standpoint on male-female interactions in this community.

## 2. In Anger and in Love

In *Song*, Pilate’s carnivalesque celebration of Mr. Smith’s suicide is followed by a time leap of four years. The text is sapped of its energy as it now moves forward at a lethargic pace to introduce us to the Dead family living in a home that is ‘more [like a] prison than palace’ (10). Its operational inadequacies are reflected in the work of the Deads’ ‘dry daughters’ who partake in the mundane activity of stitching together ‘lifeless roses’, or Mrs. Dead’s failing cooking skills which, on this occasion, have produced a ‘baked-too-fast sunshine cake’. Macon occupies the positions of husband, father, and master, who aims to ‘ke[ep] each member of his family awkward with fear’. He is also a businessman who promotes the house and its inhabitants as symbols of his power. The regular Sunday afternoon ‘parades of possessions’<sup>319</sup> exhibit Mr. Dead’s prosperity, which he believes is equal to the successes of white men. In his ‘plush’ (31) Packard car Macon takes his wife and three children for trips to a rougher part of town. The appreciative glances of some observers validate the belief that he is ‘indeed a successful man’, but others look past the luxury and see, instead, the Dead family hearse parading corpse-like bodies that resemble those static figures featured in the white primer story of *Bluest*. In this second text, which begins with an insight into the tight-knit MacTeer family home, the narrator now turns her attention to the Breedlove house. It is described as ‘an abandoned store’ (24) that has been occupied by many businesses in the past and it still resembles a building rather than a home. Here, too, there is evidence of a sluggish narrative pace accompanying the clinical descriptions of people and limited activities taking place behind these walls. We are informed the four



occupants have ‘tried to make do’ (25), but are barely surviving in an environment where ‘[t]he only living thing [... appears to be] the coal stove’ (27). Pauline is a churchgoing woman whose ‘burden[s]’ (31) in life include her husband, Cholly; and he is described as a violent drunk whose power trips are achieved by targeting ‘weak people’ (28).

The languishing narrative beat used to introduce us to these families conveys the idea that they are cursed by ‘lovelessness’ (*Song*: 151) which, in turn, is to be understood as a sign of slow death. A feminist perspective will identify patriarchy as being responsible for such a situation because, as is stated by hooks, ‘male domination of women and children stands in the way of love’.<sup>320</sup> This account offers a context for identifying the conduct of men like Macon and Cholly, but further explanation is required to understand why they have chosen this path in life knowing that it will cut them off from love; events that unfold in Morrison’s narrative space allow us to investigate further. hooks also fails to consider what happens to the course of love when women challenge male domination and so we must look to Morrison’s fiction once more. We come to discover the wives of Cholly and Macon are actively fighting attempts to dominate them yet they, too, exhibit awkwardness in relation to love; Pauline projects lovelessness of her own, and Ruth exhibits something unnatural in the name of love. When insulting Cholly, Pauline’s words are aimed with precision at his failings as a patriarch; she reminds him that unlike her, he “‘sure ain’t bringing in nothing [to this house]’” (30). Cholly’s position as head of the family is threatened by an ambitious wife who reaches for her share of the American Dream and stamps on his manhood as she does so. Having stepped out of the home to take up employment at the Fisher residence, Pauline now has a limited attachment to her own family and turns ‘neglect[ful]’ (99) of those that remain within the fragile storefront accommodation. In *Song*, by using her maiden name, Foster (136), instead of her husband’s surname Ruth quietly asserts her resistance against Macon’s patriarchal vision. She refuses to become like ‘the winged woman careening off the nose of his car’ (32), on display as another one of his possessions. Instead, she views herself as being in a position to make certain demands of this man just as she did of the one who came before him.

Ruth’s peculiar ways have the power to induce fear in men. The reader is made aware that when he was alive, Doctor Foster became anxious of his daughter’s ‘steady beam of love’ (23) precisely because this unnatural trancelike power could force him

into responding to her whims. In these moments the pleasure visible across Ruth's face might also signify her silent victory over an otherwise powerful man. Now, as a married woman she resists her husband's attempts to maintain a safe distance from her by manipulating him into sleeping with her one last time, and he arrives at her bed in a drugged, hypnotic state (131). The birth of their son provides Macon with an heir to his fortunes but, for Ruth, the presence of this child in her life shall provide 'a balm[ing]' (13) effect along with personal 'pleasure'. She keeps him close, physically close, even beyond the infancy years. In doing so, Ruth claims her husband's prize as her own as is confirmed years later by an acknowledgment on behalf of both mother and son; for Ruth, '[h]er son had never been [...] a separate real person' (131), and as for Milkman, despite being a man in his thirties, '[n]ever had he thought of his mother as [...] a separate individual' (75). These statements hint at something unnatural having occurred in the triadic mother-son-father relationship at an unconscious level; despite having entered into the Symbolic realm and formed an identification with his father, as per the requirements of the Oedipal process, this son continues to experience a pre-symbolic bond with his mother, albeit reflexively. The lack of separateness between them—given that it is impossible to identify oneself in relation to this other because they are one and the same—creates a suffocating effect but it also works to exclude the father and an awareness of this shall nurture insecurities in him. Ruth's triumph is quietly confirmed by her 'crooked smile' (334) which might also suggest she is yet to gain total satisfaction in her endeavours.

Ruth's silent actions against Macon, and Pauline's obvious goading of Cholly, confirm Morrison's view that women have the power to weaken the hold of patriarchy in the home, but despite this strength they lack the capacity for wholesome expressions of love, or so it would seem. Only with *New Seeing* can we recognise and understand Pauline, Ruth, Cholly, and Macon's chosen methods of love. Barbara Christian leads us into this process by claiming both male and female characters are consumed by an internal pain that has detrimental effects on their daily lives and emotional capacities. Within this community, 'because grownups are distorted by the pain of their lives, they deny their own capacity for love' and '[i]n their intense yearning for, yet deep fear of, love, they distort it'.<sup>321</sup> In *Song*, we become aware of this fear of love when Porter, whilst contemplating suicide, shouts out a prayer, asking the Lord to "[g]imme hate, [...] [b]ut don't give me love. [...] I can't carry it. [...] It's too heavy" (25). Love might

be regarded as a burdensome emotion but Porter also confirms that it exists within the community. There is verification in *Bluest*, too, as the narrator declares, '[w]icked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly' (163). Morrison is making it known that every one of her characters is capable of love and that each individual will find their own way of expressing it. The fear that Christian identifies in these expressions of love must be traced back to its origins. Beginning with the histories of Macon and Cholly, they show that the fear felt by black men is linked to them having been deprived of love, and consequently they have developed a fear of love itself. They have turned to anger as a self-protective measure but, in a risky move, have chosen patriarchal anger because of its added promise to turn them into the 'kickers' of society so that they will no longer be the 'kicked', emotionally or physically. Patriarchy regards love as a hindrance to the progress of men and so it works to impede their ability to express it by fuelling their anger especially towards women.

For David Magill, 'Morrison's fiction reflects anxieties of African American men regarding their identities' as a result of 'the continued debasement directed at them through [...] racism'.<sup>322</sup> Racial debasement in childhood is responsible for anxieties in the present lives of Macon and Cholly, having affected their experiences of love and shaped them into angry black men. The racially motivated killing of Macon's father, Jake, separates a teenage son from his beloved hero, resulting in the collapse of an efficiently formed family unit and the circles of care experienced within it. Prior to this life-changing event, along with his father, Macon acts as a maternal surrogate to his sister following the death of their own mother in childbirth (150). Morrison is specific about the choice of referent that defines this relationship in its formative years; to demonstrate 'care' (28) for another person confirms one's ability to love and, in this case, Pilate is the one that Macon did 'his first caring for', creating a bond in which 'she and he were one' (147). Repetitive references to a united 'we' (51), working together on the family farm in Montour County, indicate the care with which this piece of land was cultivated by a father-son partnership. Macon's own son retraces his story and attests that, indeed, 'he loved his father [...] and] his father loved him, trusted him, and found him worthy of working "right alongside" him' (234). Jake's farm represents both his passion and pride; it is also the place where he delivers sermons to a community of his own similarly to how, in *Beloved*, Baby Suggs preaches in the Clearing. He offers them

his success as an example of what an ex-slave with only his freedom and a determined spirit can achieve in life, “if he puts his mind to it and his back in it” (235). In this message there is evidence of Jake’s love for them all and it bridges the gap between his achievements and the lack in their lives; hence, his pride will not offend them. Jake continues:

“We live here [... and] if I got a home you got one too! Grab it. Grab this land! Take it, hold it, my brothers, make it, my brothers, shake it, squeeze it, turn it, twist it, beat it, kick it, kiss it, whip it, stomp it, dig it, plow it, seed it, reap it, rent it, buy it, sell it, own it, build it, multiply it, and pass it on—can you hear me? Pass it on!” (235).

Jake establishes a form of equality by bringing ‘you’ and ‘I’ together as ‘we/brothers’ and also by identifying the path to follow towards success. The repetitive element of his words builds up into a rhythmic chant that has the power to induce pride within them, too, and in this way Morrison’s text performs a cyclical turn to indicate the care reciprocated by Jake towards those in attendance; and years later, his name and his words are still remembered with affection. Back then, Jake’s sermon would be understood as a call to arms for action that would need to be taken to rebalance the racial inequality still existent in a newly emancipated America. The claiming of one’s civil rights could be established through ownership of land along with the freedom of choosing a method to work it and make it grow.

Jake’s message of love for his brother men as well as the choices he has made in his own life are intended as important lessons for Macon; and they also become his inheritance at the age of seventeen. However, years later, it is clear Macon has misunderstood his father’s legacy. Whereas the father promoted ownership of land, the son also believes in owning people, and having heard his father encourage others to choose their individual method of working the land so that it will grow, the son has chosen violence and threats as his means of achieving personal growth. He stands tall as ‘the King of the Mountain’ (75) and at the top of this implied hierarchy there is only room for the one black man. He now views his sister as a ‘snake’ (55) for having failed to reciprocate the care that he gave her. For him, Pilate also represents their African ancestry (54), with her dark skin, distinct features, and quirky qualities, which Macon seems to have developed a phobia towards and so he shuns it. He is less successful in disassociating himself from the curse-like surname he has inherited. In 1869, his ex-

slave father was erroneously registered with the freedmen's Bureau as being Macon *Dead* by a drunken white soldier of the Union Army (53). Subsequently, the firstborn male of each successive generation has also been marked by this name and it appears to signify he will grow into an emotionally dead black man, shutting himself off from love yet fully capable of demonstrating his anger. Young Macon's pain turns into 'numbness' (50) upon seeing 'the man he love[s] and admire[s]' die from a gunshot wound. Later, this emotional paralysis transforms into 'something wild' representing a rage against Jake's killers, and suddenly Macon jolts back to life. His anger becomes a driving force for avenging his father's murder. From a point of New Seeing, Macon's rejection of Pilate counts as a necessary part of the mission because he cannot spend his energies bringing her round to his way of thinking. Furthermore, he is consumed by a fear of losing another loved one to death and so separating himself from Pilate allows him to maintain control of the situation that he finds himself in.

Macon's chosen path for revenge bears a striking resemblance to operational methods employed by his enemy, as members of the power wielding white community of the South. He remembers how the Butler men "tricked [Jake]. He signed something, [...] and [then] they told him they owned his property" (53). Macon's mission becomes to reclaim, at the very least, an equal amount of property in order to restore his father's lost status and heal the pride of Dead men. He moves up North and settles in Michigan, where he works hard to become a respected and 'propertied Negro' (20). However, his success is overshadowed by the fact that he now 'behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man' (223). He has, in effect, become a "Black white man"<sup>323</sup> whilst observing the rhetoric of capitalism coupled with the historical ideologies of slavery, valuing possessions in the forms of property and people. Now, as a father himself, Macon teaches his son that "[m]oney is freedom" (163), and, that one should "[o]wn things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too" (55). This inheritance is passed down in business terms that fail to reflect a father's care. Here, an emphasis on ownership sees the narrative pace almost stall in response to the false circle of care Macon has created to draw in his son. Unlike Jake, Macon's self-serving objectives see no value in black brotherhood or community, and there shall be no care directed towards him either. Mrs. Bains is an elderly lady caring for her young grandchildren and she is also one of Macon's tenants, whom he threatens with eviction for non-payment of rent. She offers a damning critique of her landlord:

“[a] nigger in business is a terrible thing to see. A terrible, terrible thing to see” (22). This statement laments Macon’s inability to show care for his own people and, at the same time, it angrily unmasks him as a black man; on behalf of Morrison, Mrs. Bains reminds the reader that he is black even if his actions depict him as a moneyed white man.

Despite his efforts to mirror privileged white men in almost every way, Macon’s blackness exposes him each time and yet, still, he denies the futility of this exercise. He wears ‘bow ties’ (63) to promote himself as a gentleman of class in the image of those white men he encounters daily. From the perspective of another black man, speaking in *Color Purple*, “[f]olks wearing ties look like they being lynched”,<sup>324</sup> and in this respect Macon appears to be less of a villain and more a victim of his injudicious approach. His behaviour can also be understood in relation to Tracey Owens Patton’s claim that, ‘[e]mulating Whiteness offer[s] a certain amount of protection’<sup>325</sup> to the individuals engaging in such actions. Macon emulates whiteness in order to guard himself from being further targeted for being black. His anger provides another protective barrier and it works to stem the memories of broken bonds of love, including that which was severed by racist murderers and that which Macon himself would break apart. Macon’s chosen white-man-persona and his anger are shaped by ‘patriarchal masculinity’<sup>326</sup> through which he has learnt to mistreat people as well as to hold back on love for family members (234). From a point of New Seeing, however, Morrison’s reader recognises Macon’s fear because of which he has turned destructive in order to survive, and a destructive man will, of course, love destructively. His ambivalent character, as a man who demonstrates love in anger, is conveyed in an oxymoronic reference to the ‘frozen heat’ (10) on his face. In anger Morrison exposes the consequences of choices made by black men like Macon and, equally, her love for them ensures they shall be allowed narrative space to offer a defence to her reader. Macon, when speaking to his son, is also telling us, “I am not a bad man, I want you to know that. Or believe it. No man ever took his responsibilities more seriously than I have. I’m not making claims to sainthood, but you have to know it all” (74). In *Bluest Eye*, Morrison allows narrative space for the history of another black man to be revealed so that it contextualises his preference for patriarchal anger as well as his ability for distorted love.

Whereas Macon embodies the traits of a ‘colored’ (71) gentleman of class,<sup>327</sup> Cholly evokes ‘the “bad nigger”’<sup>328</sup> stereotype. He lives in Lorain, Ohio, where

northern black folk confirm their understanding of a basic concept of care by teaching it to the younger generation; when nine-year-old Claudia receives a Baby Doll gift for Christmas, there is the expectation that she will mother it. Her failure is responded to with angry words and she is told, “[y]ou-don’t-know-how-to-take-care-of-nothing” (14). It is ironic that whilst adults are keen to teach ways of caring for inanimate objects, they themselves fail to show care for individuals living amongst them and, instead, treat them as outcasts. For these people, Cholly is ‘old Dog Breedlove’ (11) and he possesses ‘the meanest eyes in town’ (30). Their disdain for Cholly reduces him to a caricatured image of the poor-black-man-turned-villain stereotype. Morrison holds off on revealing Cholly’s history until the second half of the novel, and there is the suggestion that he chooses to spend his days in a drunken stupor to blot out memories of those people that he believes denied him care, and the few who got close to him but then failed to deliver, or disappeared forever. These incidents are paralleled by the racially motivated violation that emerges as the key cause of Cholly’s current situation as he lives out each day in ‘a chronic state of humiliated fury’.<sup>329</sup> This anger has grown over time, but it originated in childhood, down South. Morrison distinguishes between northern and southern ways of life and capacities for care. In comparison to his later experiences in Ohio, in Georgia young Cholly is rescued each time and even in moments where there appears to have been a lack of care for him, it’s not so easy for the reader to confirm this to be absolutely the case.

The narrator reports that ‘[w]hen Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by a railroad’ (103). Her mental illness is the trigger for this abandonment but note how she takes care when wrapping up her baby to ensure he will keep warm. Furthermore, she chooses a location where she is certain passersby will discover this precious bundle and claim him. Nonetheless, having been abandoned by the unnamed woman in an actual junk heap, the remainder of his life is spent trying to get himself out of a mess that is not of his making. Cholly is taken in by the elderly Aunt Jimmy; she names him after her own brother and with this gesture she establishes her desire to care for him as one of her own. Some years later, when Jimmy is taken ill, a community of aged black women form a circle of care around her that also envelops Cholly with its ‘lullaby of grief’ (109). Upon her death, Jimmy’s half-brother is prepared to step in to rescue the boy because he was ‘the last thing she loved’ (110), but events take an unexpected turn

immediately after the funeral. Cholly meets Darlene and with her eyes ‘full of compassion’ (113) she silently seduces him into reciprocating and a circle of care is created as he ‘retie[s] her hair ribbon’ (114). The pleasure of their subsequent sexual encounter is interrupted by two white intruders whose ‘long guns’ (116) symbolise their phallic power against the powerlessness of the young black couple. The scene transforms into an eerie reconstruction of past history, whereby the Law of the slave father shall hold ultimate control over the enslaved children or “‘coon bab[ies]” (117). Here, white power is expressed as a perverse pleasure as they command the boy to, “‘get on wid it [...] and make it good, nigger” (116). The metal sound of their guns threatens Cholly, and so he must comply with their demands; a gentle scene that witnesses the tender connection of young lovers is forcefully altered into one of shamed faces and a ‘violence born out of total helplessness’.

For the purposes of their own entertainment, the white men direct a hideous drama and Cholly is ‘forced to turn his spontaneous copulation into a performance before the[ir] flashlights’.<sup>330</sup> Having made sure they have injected enough vulnerability into Cholly’s mind, the men cheerily leave him to soak up the atmosphere of hatred that remains. He now turns on his lover but the narrator incorrectly states it is out of ‘hat[red]’ (116) that he ‘want[s] to strangle her’ (117), when actually it is the result of a helpless anger that reveals itself in his silent thoughts.<sup>331</sup> Upon an initial reading it would appear this anger is in response to the hunters’ parting message—“‘good luck, coon baby”’—because it scorches his already fragile pride. New Seeing reveals that Cholly’s anger is in response to the care Darlene suddenly withdraws from him at the point of their violation. She turns her face away and with ‘her eyes staring [...] into the surrounding darkness’ (116) Darlene disconnects herself from the situation so that the shame becomes Cholly’s alone. The hands with which she attempts to cover her face are described as ‘baby claws’ to indicate her regressed state in this moment of terror. In this instance Cholly finds himself demonstrating pseudo-parental care for Darlene by ensuring the hunters’ flashlights remain on him. Having been reduced to an ‘impoten[t]’ plaything by the men, Cholly’s wounded manhood is left requiring urgent attention, which he truly believes will come from the father he has never met because somehow he ‘would understand’ (119). A Freudian reading of this moment in the text would suggest the son begins an important journey that will lead to an identity formation with



his father, and which will draw him into the world of men where Samson Fuller belongs.

In the town of Macon, Cholly's fantasised image of his father is rocked by the reality of a short, balding, 'pitable' (122) man and his 'belligerent face' with its 'frighten[ing]' (123) eyes. There is a desire in Cholly to care for Samson by 'stroking' his head, but the lovelessness in those eyes holds him back. Whereas other male characters created by Morrison—including Macon in *Song*, and Bill Cosey in *Love*—have received wealth from their fathers, Samson's gambling habit indicates he has nothing of concrete value to pass down to his son. His offensive words sting Cholly just like those of the white hunters, but this is all Samson has to give. With a venomous tone he tells his son to “get the fuck outta my face” (123). Samson's story and the cause of his anger remain untold, but his obsession with gambling hints at a desperate need for him to equal the riches of white men. This father-son relationship is a damaged one, yet no real reason is offered as to why this is the case. Our understanding of this situation is enhanced by a reading of Houston Baker Jr.'s personal eulogy to black fathers. He states, 'I stand in sad and respectful witness now to what so many black fathers in America have known'.<sup>332</sup> In giving voice to the silence, Baker reveals:

All the black men of my growing-up time looked, at one moment or another, into their sons' lives and struggles—into their sons' very eyes—and saw that their sons' notions of the present and future were perhaps even bleaker than theirs had ever been. And they saw, in that moment, the unbearable. Their boys' racial existence in America was going to be as inescapably burdensome as their own.<sup>333</sup>

Fear has consumed black fathers when looking to their sons' faces and seeing in those eyes a fate similar to their own. These fathers are helpless in the knowledge that 'almost nothing ever alters in America with respect to race',<sup>334</sup> and so there is even the chance that the fate of their sons shall be worse than their own. The fact that racism can destroy people and their relationships is acknowledged by Morrison and conveyed in this fictional scene. The son's hopes of sharing a wholesome future with his father are crushed and the poison of this rebuke must be expelled. The narrator recalls how Cholly's 'bowels suddenly opened up, and before he could realise what he knew, liquid stools were running down his legs' (123). Cholly's expulsion of his fantasy in relation to Samson is marked by the uncontrollable excreta which leaves his body and renders

him 'weak, trembling, and dizzy'. Interestingly, in this abandonment Cholly experiences a form of catharsis; he singularly returns to a pre-symbolic space in which an embrace of the 'fetal position' by the river, and a refusal of 'sight' and 'sound' in favour of 'darkness' (124), allows for his raw grief to be released along with a number of unfulfilled desires.

Out of love for her ill-fated character Morrison stages a rescue of his damaged boyhood masculinity, but for this to become possible he must cross the socially dividing gender line into female territory. Three prostitutes are chosen by the author as unlikely saviours capable of performing small miracles. As 'their eyes float up to' (125) meet Cholly's the women indicate their desire to care for him; drawing him to them. By taking him indoors, offering him a drink and then sex, they fulfil, albeit figuratively, the duties of a Madonna figure who shelters her child in a 'dark and warm space', then satisfies his oral needs and, in time, will be able to stimulate his developing libido once more. Just as how, in *Beloved*, the singing women stage a rescue of Sethe, Cholly also finds himself being pulled out of despair by a small community of women who have the power to 'g[i]ve him back his manhood'. In a revision of the classic Oedipal drama, this scene shows maternal figures coming together to heal the son of the damage that has been done to his manhood by a castrating father; he is then returned to the world of men. Cholly, in possession of his repaired manhood, develops a '[d]angerously free' sense of self that also allows him to experience feminised emotions of 'fear, guilt, shame, love, grief and pity'. He now has important choices to make: will he adopt the framework of a 'patriarchal masculinity'—that promotes detachment from others—or a 'feminist masculinity'—that encourages relationships and community networks—in his life?<sup>335</sup> There is the assumption that by committing either 'tender or violent' acts Cholly shall demonstrate his preference for one kind of masculinity over the other. A further indication will be in the kind of care that he is capable of: will he favour self-serving care—that is an entirely isolating experience—or reciprocal care—that satisfies one's own needs alongside those of others and has the potential to grow—from this point onwards?

Cholly chooses patriarchal masculinity and it shall, of course, impact upon his ability to express affection and maintain relationships, yet he also displays ambivalent characteristics that suggest he is equally capable of engaging in non-patriarchal activities. He has 'conquer[ed]' and 'knock[ed]' down women that he has also been

‘gentle’ with and ‘cradled’ in his arms, thereby demonstrating his ability for love in anger-filled violence. *New Seeing* allows Morrison’s reader to draw evidence of Cholly and Macon’s lack of success as angry black patriarchs, even if Macon has perfected the ‘strut’ (17) and regularly parades his family as possessions, and even if Cholly, whilst possessing very little in comparison, is still capable of ‘violence [...] toward pretty things and weak people’ (28). Even if these men have learnt to use anger as a weapon of control, rather than one of defence, they have not been able to fully suppress their ability for love. A black feminist deconstruction of their private thoughts and outward actions separates them from their borrowed patriarchal values and, instead, places them within the context of their complex personal histories. In showing Macon and Cholly as failing patriarchs Morrison is also revealing their vulnerabilities; here, her aim is not to humiliate black men but to demonstrate love for them in a protest against the wrong choices some have made by displacing their anger onto the women in their lives. Another strand of Morrison’s black feminist agenda is to explore black women’s potential for resistance when using anger as a form of defence, and ambivalence marks their actions as well. Morrison declares that these fictional men *and* women ‘are complex. Some are good and some are bad, but most of them are bits of both’.<sup>336</sup> Our initial readings are of Macon being a callous patriarch and Cholly an aggressive husband, but there are further discoveries to be made in their stories. Similarly, we view Pauline as a self-centred woman, and Ruth as a submissive wife who has turned excessively maternal, but their histories offer important contexts for understanding their apparent flaws and extreme actions in the present time. In anger, they have finally found ways of resisting their husbands’ attempts to withhold care from them and in this anger there is also evidence of love.

According to Lorde, the ‘destruction of Black women by Black men clearly cuts across all class lines’,<sup>337</sup> and in Morrison’s fiction this notion is rebalanced in favour of black women. We see lower and upper class women fighting off angry men upon discovering anger of their own. Pauline proves her strength against Cholly, but the narrator reveals there used to be a time when ‘she never got angry’ (86) or ‘aggressive’ (89). She grew up down South, where the lilting accents could easily ‘make you think of love [...] and think you’ve been kissed’ (63). Yet, this young girl, who is marked by disability in the form of a deformed foot (86), is certain she has missed out on love. She is ninth out of eleven children born into the Williams’ home, where parental love for all

of them is spread thin and so Pauline feels the lack. She is sad to have missed out on being given a nickname but, unlike her twin siblings, Chicken and Pie (88), Pauline was given a wholesome and exotically placed first name which indicates the serious thought and love that guided Mr. and Mrs. Williams when making this choice for their child. Pauline remains silent on her childhood, but the narrator illustrates her as being an ‘unloved’<sup>338</sup> and ‘isolated’<sup>339</sup> child who grew up too soon. As a teenager Pauline manages the household in place of her working parents, and although she enjoys it at first, the pleasure of mothering her younger siblings as a way of compensating for what she has missed out on soon wears off; there is the promise of privacy and fantasy in this house but no reciprocal element of care for her. She needs to escape a life that is marked by ‘separateness and unworthiness’ (86) and now Cholly enters her life in the role of a rescuer. He is the ‘Presence’ (88) or the ‘Stranger’ (89) she has been waiting for, but these capitalised references emphasise his ambivalent status. The union of this couple is problematized by a number of factors; whereas he fantasises about ‘nest[ing]’ (126) with her in a mutually caring partnership, she is exhausted from having given care all this time and now desperately seeks care from him ‘with no effort on her part’ (88). Pauline’s expectations refresh old wounds in that Cholly is reminded of Darlene’s betrayal. It is the ‘constantness, varietylessness, [... and] sameness’ (126) of caring for Pauline without reciprocity that refocuses Cholly’s attention onto his own needs and so he attempts to use patriarchal methods to gain control of the situation.

The Breedlove marriage is also put at risk by a move to Ohio that uproots them from southern life and the ‘funkiness’ (64) that it promotes in various forms; whether as blues music or deliciously thick smells, funkiness is black love and it is expressed freely. Southern girls in preparation for northern life, learn to ‘get rid’ of this love; to silence it, mask it, or wipe it clean, because there is no place for it in city life. Pauline is ill prepared for a funk-free existence and it is to her detriment on arriving in Lorain. She meets a group of women who assume a status above hers based on their successful adaption to white power ideologies even if it is at the expense of their black identities. Their ‘intra-racial shaming’<sup>340</sup> of Pauline leaves her completely exposed so she responds by stunting her southern lilt and killing off the natural kink that complements her hair (92). It is possible to detect Morrison’s anger in her portrayal of Pauline’s story but it would be wrong to suggest this anger is aimed at Pauline.<sup>341</sup> In interviews Morrison has not defended Pauline in the way that she speaks up for Cholly or Macon, but she does

offer support for this character within the actual text itself; only Pauline is allowed to communicate directly with the reader through a series of monologues.<sup>342</sup> Contained within the safety of speech marks she rediscovers her southern lilt; she recalls how “*they made me feel like a no-count*” (91). This inner voice does not present itself until much later in the text but it offers an understanding of what lies behind the radical transformation Pauline has undergone and the acute personality she has become. Morrison’s anger is not directed at Pauline, but at the racial politics that have shaped her life. The author uses this character to demonstrate that although ‘[e]mulating Whiteness offer[s] a certain amount of protection’,<sup>343</sup> it also takes away a person’s true identity. Pauline’s role in the Fisher house offers her protection but at the cost of becoming an ‘ideal servant’ (98).<sup>344</sup> Here, the linear track of the narrative restricts Morrison and so she must find more subtle ways of registering her anger. She uses sarcasm to present Pauline as the ‘queen of canned vegetables’ (99) who also ‘reign[s] over cupboards’. One of the Fishers is heard praising her because “[s]he will *not* leave the kitchen until everything is in order”, and the same words can be reread as an instruction she must obey.

New Seeing allows us to understand that, for Pauline, the Fisher kitchen is a ‘private’ fantasy playground (100), where she can regress to a childlike state and become ‘Polly’ (99) who is worthy of love; she claims ‘her kitchen’ and ‘her pots’ like toys that a child snatches from another before they must be returned. Regardless, the narrator hints that whilst ‘such a role fill[s] practically all of her needs’ (98), there is still something that remains unfilled and so there is a need at the end of each day to return to the storefront. Prior to her employment with the Fishers, regular trips to the cinema aid Pauline’s learning in how to reenergise Cholly’s love for her. Upon first glance, her secret romance with Hollywood is a dangerous affair as it seduces her with images of white beauty that further negate her blackness and Southern roots.<sup>345</sup> New Seeing enables us to realise Pauline is more focused on the ‘ideas of romantic love’ rather than ‘physical beauty’ (95). In her private thoughts she refers to the cinematic image that caught her attention above all others, of those “*white men taking such good care of they women*” (96); and this is the fantasy that she wished for whereby Cholly would become like those caring white men if she became like the white women. Years later, Pauline is no longer a cinemagoer which might suggest she has given up on her fantasy, or, most likely, she has found another way of achieving her objective. In fact,

she has discovered a new kind of love that is certainly more interesting because it requires something from her as well as Cholly. At the end of each working day, docile Polly disappears and the woman who arrives at the storefront is a raging ‘Mrs. Breedlove’ (34), ready to draw in Cholly for another love battle. The narrator uses the past tense in an attempt to sidetrack the reader with the thought that perhaps ‘Pauline and Cholly loved each other’ (90) only up until the point of their departure for Lorain. Morrison expects us to find the evidence that disproves her narrator’s claim.

In a fight between Pauline and Cholly they show they need one another in order to stay above the psychological quicksand that is sucking them down. *New Seeing* makes us question the narrator’s claims that for Pauline, ‘[t]he lower he [sinks], [...] the more splendid she and her task bec[o]me’ (31), or that for Cholly, ‘[s]he [is] one of the few things abhorrent to him that he [can] touch and therefore hurt’. Cholly does not hate Pauline and with every touch his intention is not to hurt her but to demonstrate his love; and, likewise, Pauline’s task is not to let Cholly sink and she ensures this by drawing him towards her love. The argument begins with either party establishing their individual status and what might also be a fighting stance; Pauline tells Cholly, “‘I need some coal’”, to which he replies, “‘I don’t give a shit’” (30). He uses that familiar language of patriarchy to falsely declare a lack of care for his wife and her response is to, firstly, attack Cholly’s allegiance to this borrowed ideal; she uses words as weapons in telling him, “‘[i]f it was left up to you we’d all be dead’”. Secondly, these words are used to draw Cholly away from the imagined safety net he thinks patriarchal masculinity can offer him, and he now enters into a black feminist space with Pauline. Through a patriarchal lens the violence that follows would be identified as a pathetic struggle in which ‘a coward’ fails to bring down a ‘purely feminine’ (32)—and therefore, considered weak—woman. *New Seeing* enables us to redefine these same actions as a performance of love—albeit of a different kind—and it requires the both of them to come together as one to experience it wholly. Fights in the Breedlove home ‘lack spontaneity’ (29), thereby confirming they are well rehearsed and much needed by Pauline and Cholly. On this occasion, to thank him for his love Pauline demonstrates one final act of care by covering a now unconscious Cholly with a quilt (33).

The Breedloves’ angry love battles before an audience are paralleled by private sessions of lovemaking. These are becoming infrequent moments in their lives because they allow them to experience southern love for which there is no place in northern life

and its controlling environment. In her private thoughts, Pauline dreamily recollects one such occasion and Morrison's use of italicised speech here confirms her character has secretly experienced southern love in northern territory; her "*mind's eye*" (100) sees it all once more. Throughout the text, *New Seeing* allows us to recognise each character's ability for love in relation to their eyes; individuals that are not afraid of it will draw you in with their tender gaze, but those that fear it avert their eyes or will hold you back with a cold stare; as has been established, Samson's frightening stare was able to hold back Cholly in their first and only meeting; Darlene's were full of compassion for Cholly before they turned away from him; and the prostitutes who came to rescue this wounded boy allowed their eyes to float up to meet his and in doing so offered generous love. Nowadays Cholly's eyes are considered by others to be the meanest in town, but when he met Pauline for the first time 'he came with yellow eyes' (89) that might signify a gender neutral position and also a certain energy or warmth with which he would draw her in. Now, Pauline visualises with her mind's eye to refresh memories of that love, and so she switches to speaking in the present tense. She sees Cholly once again as an ambivalent mix of all that is "*[s]oft and slow-like*" (101) but also "*strong and hard*" and she wants all of him. Their sexual union creates a cyclical turn in the text to indicate the reciprocal care that is experienced; firstly, Pauline speaks of Cholly and how "*[h]e puts his thing in me / his fingers in mine*"; and then she takes over, telling the reader, "*I pat him like you do a baby*" (102). The narrative action appears to suddenly stall as if Pauline were jumping off her fantasy carousel and dizzily coming back to the reality of northern life. She reveals "*it ain't like that anymore*" because Cholly's physical touch lacks intimacy and resembles, instead, the emotionless patriarchal practice of "*thrashing away inside*" a woman. Pauline herself is observing the strict protocols of northern life by keeping her emotions intact, to the point that she is willing to lie to the reader as well as herself in declaring, "*[b]ut I don't care 'bout it no more*". Even now she speaks in italicised, southern speech to signal that she has found a unique and, perhaps, more interesting way of getting love from Cholly.

Unlike Pauline, Ruth has already perfected her chosen method of love by the time she comes to meet Macon for the first time. She hails from a privileged northern background, having been born into the home of a respected professional who was considered 'just about the biggest Negro in th[e] city' (71) by his own people. They would never know that he was, in fact, an 'arrogant, color-struck, snobbish' (329) man

who secretly '[c]alled them cannibals' (71). Although she has been "'pressed [into a] small'" (124) package of a woman in Doctor Foster's "'great big house'" (124), she uses this very position to attack his patriarchal status and assume her own power. Foster suffers under Ruth's love; each uncomfortable touch silently communicates that her 'slow-wittedness' (23) is simply a performance to mask the reality they are both aware of. Ruth shall not be passed on from father to husband as a possession, and Foster dare not make a decision on her behalf when Macon presents a proposal of courtship before him; the doctor can only say, "'I will abide by my daughter's preference'". Ruth does consent to this courtship and, later, to marriage with Macon. Morrison develops this narrative track by now inserting the husband into an already complex father-daughter relationship. Macon's witness account identifies an incestuous element to it but now looking back, years later, he confesses that since he remembers little of the facts, he has resorted to 'imagin[ing] them, even fabricat[ing] them' (16). This diversionary tactic represents the desperate measures Macon will go to in order to disempower Ruth and position himself above her in their own relationship, but his words also risk setting the reader off course and so Morrison ensures Ruth will reclaim her story.

Ruth's relationship with her father reverses the script of patriarchal ownership because she is of the belief that her father 'belong[s] to her' (134). Even when he is severely ill and no longer wishes to live, Ruth 'keep[s] him alive' and refuses to 'grant him peace'; her primary reason for this is the fear of becoming orphaned and so she desperately holds onto him with all the love she can muster. At the same time, she is also carrying out an anger-filled punishment for failures on Foster's part, because he would only reciprocate her love when forced into doing so. Finally, either death wins out or Ruth turns merciful in allowing Foster to pass away. She sleeps in his empty bed to maintain some form of closeness, or to claim all that was his as now being hers (73). Her childhood home is also her marital abode and with the departure of Foster, a needful Ruth turns her attention to an increasingly distant Macon and draws him into a new phase of their relationship; fearful of losing him just like her father, she is careful not to break him completely. Instead, with her 'passive aggressi[ve]'<sup>346</sup> tendencies she aims to provoke Macon into working with her to discover interesting ways of reciprocating love, even if it is in anger. Ruth's use of the language of ownership to identify herself as a "'small'" woman tricks almost everyone into believing she adheres to Macon's patriarchal authority. Furthermore, her house becomes his and it operates



like a 'prison' (10) in which Ruth is a portrait of submissive femininity in her fine blouses (13), and as the hostess for afternoon tea parties (11), and the cook who prepares meals for her family (12). She appears to have perfected the art of female self-sacrifice, and the 'water mark' (11) permanently imprinted on the elegant dining table signifies the stamp of male ownership on her life. From a point of New Seeing, however, this cyclical feature confirms that rather than dying of 'lovelessness'(151), Ruth is 'alive inside' because Macon loves her just as she loves him. What the narrator reads as Macon's 'contempt' for Ruth is actually his anger-filled love and she is 'wholly animated by it'. Having recovered from one angry love battle with Macon she prepares for the next one.

The façade of Ruth's image as a domesticated wife begins to unravel in the opening pages of the narrative. She displays 'hopeless helplessness in the kitchen' (300), making food that 'her husband [finds] impossible to eat' (11). Conversely, her care for Macon is the reason why she will not feed him an already baked but 'haggled' cake and, instead, prepares another dessert especially for him. Macon's criticism of Ruth's cooking offers an interesting moment in the text; in telling her "[m]ashed ain't the dish", his slippage into colloquial speech communicates southern love and it is received by Ruth. Our focus must turn to what goes unsaid in the statements and actions of this couple. In conversation with his son Macon says "I can't tell you I was in love with Ruth" (70), but neither can he deny it outright. In a union that is 'coated with disgust' (16), Macon's love for Ruth reveals itself; looking back on the physical aspect of their relationship 'he misse[s] only her underwear', but this item of clothing represents the whole woman, thereby indicating his muted love. Macon is cautious about revealing too much in case he might let slip about the shame of that last time. Whereas Macon no longer wished for a physical relationship with her, she was able to change his mind by drugging him. When she became pregnant, a violated Macon demanded she 'get rid of the baby' (125). According to Adrienne Rich, '[t]he woman's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected'<sup>347</sup> and so the man will assume complete control of it. For the Dead patriarch, however, having lost control over his own body he would now also risk losing ownership of hers. Patriarchal logic asserts that in a relationship, 'the child she carries and gives birth to is *his* child',<sup>348</sup> but in this case the child would symbolise Ruth's success and Macon's loss. His fear of losing control altogether manifested itself as desperate assaults on Ruth's body; she was made to

position herself over ‘a hot pot recently emptied of scalding water’, and even insert a ‘knitting needle’ into the opening of her womb (131). A final punch to her stomach also failed to end the pregnancy. Their baby becomes a symbol of Ruth’s love for Macon, but also her ‘triumph’ (133) over him.<sup>349</sup> Milkman becomes a pawn in the love battles that are played out between his mother and father.

Ruth is able to use her body to draw in Macon and give him care and, equally, she uses it to serve and satisfy her own needs, especially in the act of breastfeeding their son, even at the age of four. An uncomfortable sexual undertone is detected when this act is observed through a patriarchal lens. However, *New Seeing* shows that Ruth is ‘unbutton[ing] her blouse’ (13) to shed her feminine persona and reveal, in its place, her black feminist self that is simultaneously caring for her needs as well as those of another. Even if Ruth is offering her breast to a bored and reluctant child, this detail cannot undo her ability for care and it shows that obsessive people will love obsessively. Ruth’s actions also link to traditional practices of breastfeeding. In African culture mothers will feed their children in this way for ‘up to two years or more’.<sup>350</sup> Furthermore, long periods of nursing were regularly observed in slavery and ‘Ruth’s breast-feeding therefore extends a plantation practice beyond its temporal and spatial boundaries’.<sup>351</sup> A circle of care is created when Ruth also receives care in the form of ‘courtesy’ (15) from her son, and he does his best not to cause her pain as his teeth make contact with her skin. Macon is outside of this circle of care and so, in one respect, he might understand Ruth’s actions as a play for another one of his claimed ‘symbols of patriarchy’,<sup>352</sup> the heir to the Dead line. Indeed, Macon perceives a double threat in the rumours that begin circling around town. Firstly, although this mother-son moment is interrupted by the entry of Freddie the janitor, which forces it to shift back to a patriarchal setting, the young child is forever marked as hers. Whereas ‘Macon II sees proper names as the absolute symbol of patriarchal legitimacy’,<sup>353</sup> this legitimacy is replaced by ‘a “milk genealogy” based on the maternal’<sup>354</sup> when the laughing intruder renames Macon Dead III as ‘Milkman’ (15).<sup>355</sup> A second threat against Macon is that his non-sexualised and somewhat reluctant son might be used by Ruth to provide her with ‘marital surrogacy’;<sup>356</sup> Macon’s fear of being cut off from the care Ruth subtly gives him manifests itself as a determination to bring Milkman inside so that the closeness between mother and son can be broken and she can refocus her attention on Macon once more.

Morrison is fascinated by ‘the relationships of black men and black women and the axes on which [... they] frequently turn, [... to] fulfill one another or hurt one another and are made whole or prevented from wholeness by things [...] incorporated into their psyche’.<sup>357</sup> Her fiction identifies love and anger as the axes on which these relationships will turn. We can see how past experiences have directly influenced how individuals shape their emotional responses to others, and especially within relationships. Morrison presents these responses as being simultaneously comforting and injurious to reflect what she wants to see potentially playing out in the African-American community, whereby angry women will draw in angry men to engage with them even if this means that together they shall reproduce distorted notions of care. We see that the childhoods of boys marked by racist killings of loved ones, or abandonment, and even rejection, will wound their psyches and in these instances of being deprived of love they shall develop a fear of love itself. In an emotionally fragile state they will realise their anger and use it as a barrier to cut them off from their pain, and it might also focus their attention as they seek vengeance against wrongdoers. Anger is more valuable as a weapon of defence than as a weapon of control, but Morrison demonstrates how across the class lines some men have chosen patriarchal anger because of its added promise to give them new powers; these are entirely dependent on their ability to control the women and children in their homes, for they must become property rather than kin worthy of love. Conversely, patriarchy teaches them lessons in self-love but promotes ‘whiteness’ as the ideal they must emulate; it proves problematic for a black man to learn to love his supposedly evolved sense of self when it is based on an entirely borrowed identity and in embracing it wholly he must deny his ethnicity. He must also replace the black role models and ideologies that have been important to him, and in doing so he severs those final connective strands.

Equally, we must consider the histories of black women which also point to deficiencies of love in their lives. Childhoods in which girls must become surrogates for siblings within larger families where the love is spread thin, or belong to smaller families that are also controlling patriarchies, shall create feelings of a certain lack in their lives. As these girls grow into women, love becomes a wished for fantasy that they will attempt to create for themselves or expect from another without fear; but they shall keep failing in their endeavours until they come to realise that receiving love is dependent on one’s ability to give love to another. Their anger develops only in

response to that of patriarchal husbands who cut themselves off from love; in comparison these women are capable of love in anger. It is clear to see that within her fiction Morrison operates a three-pronged black feminist approach: firstly, she deconstructs the patriarchal language used by her black male characters in order to separate them from their borrowed ideologies so that they can then freely restate their original anger-filled protests; secondly, she explores her black female characters' potential for a black feminist anger to counter black patriarchal anger and its objective is to defend oneself rather than control another; and thirdly, Morrison mounts rescue operations of her black male characters—because she is aware of the reasons behind the “hurt” they have caused others even if they themselves “don't know why” (87)—but with the requirement that they cross over from patriarchal territory into a black feminist space, and for this narrative action to occur she relies on her female characters to draw them in. Ruth uses her cooking skills, sexuality, and method of mothering, to draw Macon into that space so that he disengages from his patriarchal persona to hazily communicate love and accept hers. As for Pauline, she is able to goad Cholly into brutal fights that turn into tender touches in this other space; they enter into well rehearsed performances of love and with each point of contact there is the silent communication of reciprocal love. Pauline and Ruth emulate a southern practice by becoming rescuers to Cholly and Macon and in helping them to (re)discover their ability for self-love in relation to love for another.

The married lives of these couples unfold in northern cities where there is no room for ‘wide-spirited’ (*Song*: 260) southern love and so it must be communicated in hushed tones and creative ways that are fronted by women. From the viewpoint of outsiders looking in, Pauline’s refusal of protection from her son when Cholly strikes her (31), and Ruth’s determination to provoke Macon into hitting her (67), are surely acts of craziness. Craziness, madness, wildness, and insanity, become derogatory terms when used by patriarchs to describe the women they cannot control; now feminists are in a position to counter these attacks, including hooks who states that ‘[p]atriarchy promotes insanity’<sup>358</sup> amongst men with its dangerous politics. As for Morrison, she uses her narrative space to strip craziness of its patriarchal association and then turn it into an effective feminist metaphor for expressing both the anger and love black women are capable of. Craziness is the term individuals will use to describe someone who has the power to make them feel uncomfortable, fearful, or deficient within themselves. An

elderly Circe's mysterious eyes appear 'crazy' (240) to Milkman because he cannot yet recognise the love she displays in them, but when Ruth refers to her sister-in-law as "[o]ld, crazy, sweet Pilate" (124) it is in respectful acknowledgement of her ability for both southern love and protective anger. Morrison develops craziness as a black feminist term by claiming it for black women but also black men. The Seven Days crew are silent assassins who have no room for love in their lives yet they operate their covert missions in the name of love (159). The Days are secretly represented by seven men who people view as being peculiar and so they are marked by craziness; Empire State is a "nut" (110), but Mr. Smith is an entire "nutwagon" (8), and Porter is a "crazy drunk" (24).

It is Guitar who, out of fear of this association, speaks on behalf of his brother men to communicate they are "[a]ngry. Never crazy" (295). However, black women who are entirely capable of love in anger shall not fear the tag of craziness. These women are entrusted by the author to work on the men in their lives, so as to draw out the love that is masked by their patriarchal anger and in their violence. This defining aspect of Morrison's black feminist standpoint poses a challenge to the overarching feminist position 'that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist'.<sup>359</sup> What Morrison promotes is not an ideal way of living everyday life but in situations where patriarchy promotes selfishness and segregation also operates, angry love proves strong enough to challenge these impediments and work towards (re-)establishing connections between men and women. This first step would provoke men who live their lives as individuals rather than as part of an integrated family or community into realising 'lonely [is] much better than alone' (*Bluest*: 119); even in this state they are being offered love by their female kin but New Seeing is required from them to recognise it. African-American families shaped by angry love will also develop in interesting ways, and in the following section focus shall turn to Morrison's portrayals of the Breedlove and Dead families. In relation to *Song*, the personal development of children will be discussed against the backdrop of a sexist culture in which sons will learn to first "piss" (214) on their sisters before turning their attention elsewhere, and upon entering manhood they shall discover that women are prizes to be 'w[on] with charm but ke[pt] with indifference' (177); and girls are educated solely for the purposes of '[finding] suitable husbands' (69) so that in marriage they can be passed on like possessions by their fathers. In *Bluest Eye*, racism coupled

with intraracial shaming affects the progress of children born into the Breedlove home. In spite of the somewhat misleading claims made by her narrators, Morrison contends that against these odds the Dead and Breedlove children do experience motherlove alongside fatherlove even if it is offered in moments of anger and violence.

### 3. Motherlove Alongside Fatherlove

Valerie Sweeney Prince's study of the domestic sphere in African-American literature asserts that frequently, '[h]ome is configured as a vortex [...] drawing all things into itself'.<sup>360</sup> In *Song* and *Bluest Eye*, Morrison also presents home as a vortex; as spectators of this furious flow we are easily mistaken in seeing only powerlessness where there is also power, only loss where there are also gains, and only anger where there is also love. New Seeing is required from us to recognise all that Morrison is presenting here, and having re-examined the marriages of Ruth with Macon, and Pauline with Cholly, in this way, we must now turn our attention to their abilities for parenting in anger that is also offered as love. Lorde recognises the ambivalent nature of anger when asserting that:

When there is no connection at all between people, then anger is a way of bringing them closer together, of making contact. But when there is a great deal of connectedness that is problematic or threatening or unacknowledged, then anger is a way of keeping people separate, of putting distance between us.<sup>361</sup>

Anger that connects individuals is enabled by a bonding love, and anger that separates them is motivated by protective love; and Morrison's portrayals of black parental relationships show they are simultaneously pulled together and pushed apart by angry love. When introducing us to members of the Dead family, the narrator claims that Macon, as the patriarch, 'ke[eps] each member of his family awkward with fear' (10), and that when his two daughters were young his 'disappointment' in them began 'choking [... their] girlish voices'. The sense of separateness and a gendered hierarchy that is established here is itself undermined in the proceeding chapter as we witness father and daughters conversing as equals. Macon answers every one of their questions; they address him informally and affectionately as "Daddy" (34), and in his company

one of them, at least, displays a carefree laughter. The daughters continue their ambivalent development in a home that oscillates between their father's patriarchal position and their mother's black feminist power. That First Corinthians and Magdalene are better known as Corinthians and Lena suggests they were lovingly given nicknames, but this cutting down of a given name might also represent the first step in cutting down their importance in the home, especially with the arrival of the true Dead heir.<sup>362</sup> It is no surprise then that in adulthood the sisters remain the 'half-grown daughters' (5) or little girls that were introduced in the novel's opening pages. Their existence seems just as unnatural as the 'artificial roses' (213) they make at home; rather than blooming into confident women they have become diminutive 'doll bab[ies]' (196).

The sisters' 'sterile, [and] confined lives'<sup>363</sup> confirm they are marked as the property of their father and so there is the expectation they will at all times remain within the domestic sphere, and yet one of them steps outside the home to attend college. Macon views education as simply 'time spent in idleness' (69), but the narrator attests that he himself gives it value by identifying college as the place where his daughters will find themselves husbands. His patriarchal logic can be reviewed as distorted care because he shows concern for the futures of Corinthians and Lena by identifying them as being in need of male protection, and not necessarily male control. It is claimed that upon graduation Corinthians has mastered the skills required to become 'an enlightened mother and wife' (188), but this learning is undermined by all that her mother has to teach her within the home that regularly turns into a black feminist space. Ruth proves herself to be a woman of action even if Corinthians chooses not to openly acknowledge this fact. She has witnessed Ruth 'bring her husband to a point [...] of helplessness' (64) with provocation. New Seeing reveals Ruth as an effective role model for her daughters, thereby invalidating Jill Matus' claim that she 'does little to prevent her daughters being pressed as small as she was'.<sup>364</sup> Lena and Corinthians' displays of rebellion against the power of their father and brother prove that they, too, have grown tall in anger and wide in love. Corinthians does not succumb to patriarchally defined marriage and motherhood and when finally, as a middle aged woman, she does find love, it is on her own terms. In the lead-up to this event she secretly steps out of the perfected picture of middle-class ladyhood to enter the public sphere and take up employment as a maid to Miss Michael-Mary Graham. As a 'responsib[le]' (190) and independent woman she joins ranks with her mother, leaving

behind those other middle-class 'doormat women' (306) that remain slaves to black men.

There is reciprocal care in the bonds formed between Ruth and her daughters. Whilst they were children she spent her days looking at that cyclical water mark permanently imprinted on the dining table, which offered not only confirmation of Macon's love for her, but also foretold of the sisterhood that would form under this very roof; it would be 'the world' to keep Ruth stable 'outside herself' (11). Morrison also recognises the value in sisterhood since she incorporates it in her fiction and promotes it as a model for black women's progress. She has stated that she writes primarily for black women,<sup>365</sup> for they possess the insight and strength to initiate circles of care within patriarchies, but each woman cannot work alone. Narrative moments like this allow Morrison to share a personal vision with these chosen readers, of a sisterhood that shall nourish them as individuals if they, in turn, will unite to strengthen the sisterhood as it stakes its claim in patriarchal spaces. In *Song*, Lena steps forward to defend the Dead sisterhood, identifying "'Corinthians. Mama. Me.'" (215) as three separate individuals but also united as a black feminist fist, ready to take on the next Dead patriarch stood before them. Morrison's claim over craziness, as an empowering black feminist term, is clearly demonstrated in Lena's angry words. She draws Milkman into a story of how she has enjoyed the activity of making artificial flowers because "[i]t [has] kept me ... quiet. That's why they make those people in the asylum weave baskets and make rag rugs. It keeps them quiet. If they didn't have the baskets they might find out what's really wrong and ... do something. Something terrible" (213). The quiet, steadied pace of these words reflects Lena's control over herself and now over Milkman; she retreats with a warning to her brother that can also be read as a warning on behalf of all women to those wanting to oppress them: "I want to give you notice. [...] I don't make roses anymore, and you have pissed your last in this house" (216). The unleashing of Lena's anger is prompted by love for her sister. Anger in defence of love is a lesson Lena has learnt from her mother, who also turns angry in defence of her children and motherlove.

When remembering the difficult circumstances surrounding the death of her father and the role that her husband possibly played in it, Ruth states, "I would have happily died except for my babies" (125), referring here to her young daughters. Love for her children is demonstrated once again when, years later, Ruth learns of Hagar's



failed efforts to kill her son. Ruth's anger surfaces as craziness with her 'whispered' (133) words growing into a storm of 'scream[s]' and 'shout[s]'; in this state she goes in search of the would-be assassin to warn her off harming Milkman (136). Motherlove is also what motivates Ruth's interruptions of father-son moments between Macon and Milkman. It is inaccurate to identify *Song* as primarily a story about 'fathers and sons',<sup>366</sup> because, as is stated by Marianne Hirsch, there is a 'space [...in between them that is] inhabited by women'.<sup>367</sup> Ruth inserts herself into that space between the Dead men so as to affect Milkman's learning of patriarchy. In mirroring Macon, Milkman stands parallel to him rather than beside him; Milkman lovingly calls him "Daddy" (70) but Macon maintains a certain distance by referring to himself in formal terms as the boy's "Father". The fact that Macon addressed his own father with deep affection, as "Papa" (53), indicates that his present life is consumed by the fear of getting too close to a loved one in case he might lose them and so he must protect himself. Milkman, too, out of 'fear' (63) and 'respect'—both of which amount to love—for Macon, learns the script of patriarchy. He proudly lists his father's assets to include a Buick and 'the daughter of the richest Negro doctor in town' (236), thereby devaluing his own mother as property. Furthermore, upon seeing Macon's authoritative 'strut' (17/62) he, too, develops one but Milkman's unexplained accompanying limp is a symptom of his failure to fully conform to his father's patriarchal ways (63).

Milkman's conflicted sense of self prompts him to act to save his supposedly 'helpless' and 'frail mother' (75) from the violence of 'the King of the Mountain' in the form of her husband; but unknown to this son it is his mother who has cleverly engineered this situation. In using anger-filled violence to counter that which is demonstrated by his father Milkman performs a circle of care in honour of his mother; his threatening promise, that if "[y]ou touch her again [...] I'll kill you" (67), works to insert Ruth between father and son once again. We know that Ruth's prolonged breastfeeding of Milkman is her ultimate gift of love to him and despite the silence they are both aware of it. Conversely, rather than an education in patriarchy, it is patrilineal history that Macon offers Milkman as his gift of love. His hardened voice drops to a southern lilt as he takes his son back in time, as far as 1869 (52), to share tales of Montour County, before realising that his angry mask is slipping and then drawing back. Milkman fails to grasp all there is to learn about love in the private moments or snatched conversations that his parents have to offer him, for these are reflective of

northern life and its closed off culture. His journey to the South is a life-changing one because ‘his self [...] [gives] way’ (277) to allow for a relearning of what love should be for a black man and a black woman. Circles upon circles of care are created as Milkman and Sweet give to, and take from, one another. The narrator recreates the scene which reads like a perfect duet; ‘he’ and ‘she’ (285) cyclically demonstrate an awareness of self in relation to the other over a series of actions that come to a natural conclusion and there is the hope their care shall continue with Milkman’s promise to return to Sweet. Northern life does not allow for the younger generation of African-Americans to fully comprehend what love is. In *Bluest Eye*, eleven-year-old Pecola Breedlove must ask, “‘how do you get somebody to love you?’” (23). The answers come to us with New Seeing that shall re-evaluate actions carried out by a desperate father who will love desperately and an anxious mother who will love anxiously.

Residents of the Breedlove house are at once ‘nestled together’ and ‘festering together’ (25), thereby confirming the ambivalent value of motherlove and fatherlove in this domestic space. The mothering of Pecola is marked by the racist violation of Pauline at the time of giving birth, which quietens the voice of her motherlove forever. We, however, shall hear it in another of Pauline’s private monologues, and a return to southern speech allows her to register the love she nurtured in pregnancy. In this romantic phase Pauline made promises to herself to, “‘love [the baby] no matter what’” (96). Still growing inside of her it became a “‘good friend’” with whom she could communicate. Here, we sense when speaking to us Pauline is also communicating with a teenaged Pecola to finally speak of what has gone unspoken for all these years. In the cold and clinical space of a hospital ward she felt the gloved hand of a doctor violently “‘rammed [...] up between [her] legs’” (97). Furthermore, Pauline was denied any form of agency by being ignored and having her black woman status reduced to that of an animal—a “‘horse’”—by one white doctor. In comparison to her own treatment, Pauline recalls how “‘nice’” and “‘friendly’” the doctors were to the expectant white mothers on this ward. Reacting to these discriminatory practices she made a desperate bid to regain her lost agency, telling us, “‘I moaned something awful. The pains wasn’t as bad as I let on, but I had to let them people know [...] I hurt just like them white women’”. Her choice of an unthreatening form of language would allow for this hushed but angry protest to play out. At the same time, Pauline might also have been experiencing a preverbal mother-child moment; her moans translated to become

humming notes for the lullaby with which she would welcome her infant daughter into the world.

This memory plays out ambivalently to reflect how Pauline's anger at the doctors quickly developed into anger at the helplessness of her child mixed in with motherlove for her. At first, Pauline viewed her in terms similar to her own objectification, as “*a black ball of hair*” (96), and a “*healthy thing*” (97); and then she felt pride in confirming Pecola to be a “*smart baby*” with “*pretty hair*” (98). We also note the return of that familiar signifier of love whereby, with her “*[e]yes all soft and wet*” (97), the newborn communicated she was satiated by her mother's love. Looking back, Pauline's delicate references to Pecola are cut short by a reminder of that moment in which she realised the child was “*ugly*”. Ugliness would become the sum of all the race-based shaming Pauline had suffered up to this point, and because her daughter was a partial witness to the most recent incident, it would also become her shame from this point forward. From a point of *New Seeing* we can be certain that Pauline's intention was never to condemn Pecola to a lifetime of degradation, but to fire up in her the same fight that we now associate with Pauline. She was not and still is not a hateful mother,<sup>368</sup> and by reviewing her words and actions is it possible to draw evidence of her distorted love. In the Fishers' kitchen, the narrator attests that Pauline ignores the burns Pecola has received as a result of dropping a hot pie across the floor and instead, she beats her and then demands that she leave (84). As the scene draws to a close Pauline is seen comforting her white charge, who has witnessed this event and is left in tears. According to Jan Furman, in this instance, Pauline proves she is ‘incapable of a mother's love’;<sup>369</sup> conversely, Prince identifies ‘maternal feelings’ in her but believes they are reserved exclusively for ‘the pink-and-yellow child’.<sup>370</sup> These critiques fail to consider those important details that link Pauline's motherlove to Pecola. With ‘one gallop’ the mother violently pounces on her child and in this same action she is using her own body as a shield to protect Pecola. The girl is called a “[c]razy fool” which is a mild form of chastisement in comparison to neighbour Geraldine Green's choice of words, calling her a “*nasty black bitch*” (72) in an unrelated incident.

In ordering Pecola to leave the scene Pauline is clearly demonstrating a damage limitation exercise; firstly, she wishes to protect her daughter from suffering further violence at her hands; secondly, in soothing her charge Pauline is also calming herself down and verbally detailing a plan of action to clean up, bake another pie, and keep the

girl quiet so as to silence the matter. Readings that condemn Pauline's mothering, in doing so, offer quiet acceptance of a core patriarchal rule, that 'all mothers [...] must] experience motherhood unambivalently'.<sup>371</sup> Pauline's mothering sets her apart precisely because it develops as love but also anger, and she will not lose her own self in the act of registering the needs of her child. She even illustrates this multiplicity through staggered speech; "[c]razy fool . . . my floor, mess . . . look what you . . . work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . my floor, my floor . . . my floor" (84-5). Here, Pauline creates a circle of care that begins with recognition of Pecola, then inserts her own self, switches the attention back onto Pecola and determines she must leave for her own safety, and then there is a return to Pauline's own self. Whereas it might appear that the cluster of repetitious words at the end prevents the circle of care from performing its final turn this is not the case; it is more likely that in her triple reference to "my floor" an anxious Pauline is attempting to say something else: the relationship between *my* daughter, *my* own self shall remain intact but . . . *my* job might be lost. The fact that Pauline works 'twelve to sixteen hours a day to support' (100) her family, is a testament to her motherlove. Her plan is prompted by a fear of unemployment which would then impact on her ability to satisfy their practical needs, like food; in planning this idea she ensures the circle of care that incorporates her kin and her own self continues and completes itself.

Motherlove for Pecola is never acknowledged by her precisely because of the complex terms in which it is offered by Pauline, as care that is expressed practically but never emotionally.<sup>372</sup> The fact that Pecola refers to her in formal terms, as 'Mrs. Breedlove' (84), signifies the emotional distance separating mother and daughter, and Pecola is left wanting. Her 'mother-hunger'<sup>373</sup> is indicated when she greedily drinks 'three quarts of milk' (16) in one go. Andrea O'Reilly states that since 'milk is [...] a symbol of motherlove [...] Pecola's insatiable thirst for it signifies [her] longing to be mothered'<sup>374</sup> beyond the means Pauline has to offer. Pecola has imbibed her mother's dangerous ideologies about whiteness, and when she asks a stranger to magically turn her dark eyes into blue ones (138), it is because she wishes to 'be[come] lovable'<sup>375</sup> enough for her mother to want her. In communicating directly with us Pauline sheds the outward appearing image of an emotionally sterile woman, letting down her guard for a brief moment. In her reflective statement she lets brimming emotions flow to declare, "*I loved*" (96) both children. She continues, "*sometimes I'd catch myself [...] beating*

*them, and I'd feel sorry for them, but I couldn't seem to stop*". Pauline's confession confirms her motherlove is fused with anger and this complex merger can be interpreted in different ways; her anger is helplessly misdirected at her beloved children instead of targeting all those people responsible for her debasement; anger is also used by her as a defensive measure against further humiliation and in this state of being it is the only emotion she is able to offer Pecola and Sammy. In terms of Pauline's ability for motherlove, her childhood experiences of what might be termed 'parental neglect'<sup>376</sup> have left her without a reference point for what love should be and so she has been forced to develop her own definition; at the same time, we know that northern life does not allow for generous expressions of love and so, just like Mrs. MacTeer, her use of anger ensures she won't cross that invisible line of control and risk becoming a target for further shaming.

Cholly's complex fatherlove can be understood in terms similar to Pauline's motherlove, with it also being a born out of helplessness but also the need for self-protection, and it riskily taking shape in the absence of a blueprint for fathering but within a restricting environment that denies love itself. Cholly's life is further restricted by patriarchal ideals but these are put at risk when, in the only example that is offered of his parenting skills, we see him perform instinctive fatherlove. Cholly's difficult experiences around relationships have left him unable to 'comprehend what [... his] relationship should be' (126) like with his daughter, Pecola, and how to best convey his suppressed love for her. His interpretation of fatherlove encompasses a spectrum of emotions including 'revulsion, guilt, pity, [... and] then love' (127) for her. Within, he is filled with anger upon seeing her 'loving eyes' because they have the power to rouse in him a reciprocating love. The fact that Cholly approaches Pecola with eyes closed conveys his fear of the love he is about to offer; he fears the unguardedness of this love; he also fears it because it is forcing him to recreate the past whereby, just like he helplessly 'crawled to the river edge' (124) to save himself as a young boy, he now must go 'crawling on all fours towards' (128) his daughter in order to 'save' her from 'her misery' (127); and he fears it because he must re-enter that black feminist space but this time without Pauline there to support him whilst drawing him in. We know that Cholly has successfully arrived there because his sexually violent act against Pecola is described by Morrison in language that is stripped of 'masculine' markers 'of aggression' (172) and so the word rape is not applicable here. New Seeing through a

black feminist lens reveals Cholly's ambivalent need 'to break [Pecola's] neck—but tenderly' (127), and then 'fuck her—[also] tenderly', (128), as evidence of fatherlove that is delivered in anger-filled violence.

According to Gurleen Grewal, a 'sympathetic portrayal of the oppression of Cholly [...] certainly complicates matters',<sup>377</sup> precisely because Morrison encourages us to review the evidence and realise Cholly's love for his daughter in this act of violence. Claudia, as Morrison's narrator, must also reflect on events and she concludes that, '[h]e, at any rate, was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, give something of himself to her' (163). In place of a final embrace, Cholly 'cover[s] her' (129) with 'a heavy quilt', just like Pauline demonstrated her care for him once before (33). Pecola, who loses consciousness during this act, wakes up to see 'the face of her mother looming over her'. Although the scene ends at this point, events are revisited by Claudia and by Pecola herself; both add their voice and inform us of what Pauline did next. Claudia hears a rumour that she "'beat her [daughter and that] she [is] lucky to be alive'" (149). Tragic Pecola is now consumed by rage because Cholly gave her love and then disappeared forever. In the absence of New Seeing her anger is regarded by others as 'madness' (163). If these accounts are to be believed then it is the case that Pauline chooses not to believe Pecola's account of the violation (158), and that she matches Cholly's violent act with violence of her own against the child. However, as the novel draws to a close there is the opportunity for New Seeing once more and we find evidence of Pauline's continued motherlove mixed with '*drop-eyed*' (154) guilt. Rather than 'looming over' Pecola her mother acts as a protector in the same way that, in *Song*, the grandmother and mother of a hurting Hagar stand protectively over her 'like two divi-divi trees' (315). We are told that Pecola became pregnant by her father and then miscarried. Furthermore, 'Sammy left town [...]; Cholly died [...]; Mrs. Breedlove still does housework. And Pecola is somewhere in that little brown house she and her mother moved to on the edge of town' (162). Felicia Beckmann claims the ending for this novel conveys a typical scenario whereby the man abandons the family, 'leaving his wife to pick up the pieces, [in] an all too familiar role for Africana women, and to deal with a [...] daughter who has lost her mind'.<sup>378</sup> Indeed, Pauline hasn't abandoned Pecola and as the narrative tense shifts from the past into present, it serves as an indication that her motherlove lives on.



New Seeing into these maternal and paternal relationships reveals the love that is mixed in with anger. We see how angry love is able to simultaneously push together and pull apart individuals within the space of each home and how this undermines the patriarchal principles that are in operation. Certainly, the Dead family home regularly turns into a black feminist space and Ruth is revealed as an effective role model for her daughters who also turn rebellious against the power of their father and brother thereby revealing their angry protest. At the same time, we see evidence of sisterlove as the three Dead women demonstrate their care for one another. Morrison presents the value of sisterhood so as to promote it as a model for black women's progress to her black women readers; circles of care can undo the power of patriarchy, but she also stresses that this work cannot be carried out individually. Lena, Corinthians, and Ruth, remain separate individuals whilst also representing a black feminist sisterhood that is most powerful when it embraces craziness that is also anger. Through Ruth's actions we also see how women can disrupt patriarchal practice, especially when it is passed down from father to son. Her success is confirmed when Milkman reveals his care for her by challenging Macon. Morrison reveals the value of patrilineal history over patriarchal practice and how this is the gift of love that a father should pass on to his son as inheritance, which Macon inadvertently does. Morrison also identifies the South as a place for learning what love between a man and woman should be. In comparison northern life cuts individuals off from love or, at the very least, from being able to talk about it. In the Breedlove home motherlove and fatherlove are also expressed in muted terms that are of ambivalent value. Racist shaming quietens the voice of Pauline's motherlove forever; although she wishes to induce a sense of fight in Pecola so that she can stand up to racism, her silence fails both of them. Pauline's distorted love is caught up in fear and violence and so it cannot be expressed in emotional terms thereby causing Pecola's mother-hunger to grow. Silence also marks Cholly's complex fatherlove. He has no reference point for love and his patriarchal values also restrict him; yet, he is prepared to risk everything when he chooses to perform an act of instinctive fatherlove. Morrison stages this scene within a black feminist space where the focus shall remain on the love that motivates Cholly's act of sexual violence; perhaps this is why Pecola is

consumed by rage when she acknowledges her father has disappeared forever. Morrison promotes the staying power of motherlove since Pauline does not leave Pecola and there is the slightest hint of optimism at the close of this novel that together the two of them might create their own form of sisterhood, and that Pauline might discover the voice of her motherlove.



## Chapter Three

### No Time for Anger in African-American Matriarchies

According to Denise Heinze, ‘alongside the traditional nuclear family, [Toni] Morrison[’s fiction] introduces an alternative lifestyle [in the form of the] female-headed household’.<sup>379</sup> It is interesting to note that whereas an African-American perspective shall identify the matriarchy as a traditional family unit, according to a western cultural framework, here being communicated by Heinze, this domestic setup is relegated to an alternative status in favour of the nuclear family that must take centre stage. As I shall go on to demonstrate, black matriarchies are characterised by important aspects of Africanness, because of which they have been assigned the status of Other next to all that represents quintessential Americanness. In her thesis on African Americanism Morrison recognises this practice as a somewhat desperate need to ‘fabricate’<sup>380</sup> Africanness so that it will become the antithesis of what defines the dominant culture and allows it to survive; there is the suggestion that in the absence of this foil American ‘whiteness [... would be rendered] mute, meaninglessness, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtailed, senseless, [and] implacable’.<sup>381</sup> In slavery an awareness of the Africanist presence was first created by white Americans as an image of all that was ‘not-me’.<sup>382</sup> Instead, it would be characterized as ‘a dark and abiding presence’<sup>383</sup> and the African people brought over in chains would be associated with ‘savagery’.<sup>384</sup> In Harriet Beecher Stowe’s slave time novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, we see that white supporters of this oppressive regime, in an attempt to establish control over the enslaved man’s Africanist presence would rename him as a “black beast”,<sup>385</sup> ““Sambo”” or ““Quimbo””,<sup>386</sup> and ‘not a man but a thing’.<sup>387</sup> In telling Tom, ““you’ve got to be as *I* say””,<sup>388</sup> his master, Simon Legree, establishes his superior cultural status and, equally, he confirms a desire to manipulate what Africanness shall symbolise in relation to all that he, as an American and a white man, shall define himself to be.

In a post-emancipation era the dominant culture maintains its efforts to redefine and relegate an Africanist presence on American soil. There are attempts to psychologically trap African-American men and women so that they will either reject their heritage,<sup>389</sup> or shall become subject to stereotypes that have been created in

reference to their physicality or cultural customs. Speaking on behalf of black men, Ellis Cose states, 'the role we are told constantly that we are expected to play' is that of the overpowering sexual deviant or criminal.<sup>390</sup> As for black women, they shall be defined by any one of four controlling images that relate to their mothering abilities, including the mammy and the matriarch.<sup>391</sup> Patricia Hill Collins explains that whereas 'the mammy represent[ed] the "good" Black mother' in submissive service to her master's home throughout slavery, now 'the matriarch symbolizes the "bad" Black mother'<sup>392</sup> in the space of her own home. She is condemned for relying on her skills to run the house and raise a family, a task that becomes even more difficult under conditions of poverty. She takes on a central role in this unit and for occupying the lead position in place of a man she is condemned as having overstepped the defined gender boundary and become 'unfeminine'.<sup>393</sup> It is stated that the men in her life, whether a husband or son, are unable to take on this role because she has effectively 'emasculated'<sup>394</sup> them with her overbearing personality. This dual targeting of black women along race and gender lines has drawn response from black feminists who, in rejecting the derogatory associations that have been linked to the matriarchy, feel they must also reject the use of this term altogether because it has become cancerous.<sup>395</sup> Conversely, Morrison insists upon a reevaluation of this term but it must be judged independently of those Othering markers set by the dominant culture; the focus must turn, instead, to the dedicated space that each matriarchy has created for itself along with the experiences of black women running it or residing within it.<sup>396</sup> I claim that in her reassessment of the black matriarchy Morrison reveals how it is cultivated by a rich African culture and, equally, it is a complex social network within which the leading figure loses her sense of self in service to the family, as provider of shelter, money, food, advice, crisis management, and that all-important ancestral link to the past.

Morrison writes for a black woman reader and in *Sula* and *Song of Solomon* she is introduced to ancestor figures in the form of matriarchs, Eva Peace and Pilate Dead.<sup>397</sup> As (grand)mothers and 'culture bearers'<sup>398</sup> these women represent 'both safe harbor and ship' and 'both inn and trail'.<sup>399</sup> These analogies convey a sense of the balance that matriarchs bring to the lives of their children, but also hint at how this rootedness has become a burden in that there are no other options available so that they might choose to become one thing but opt out of becoming another in their home. These women are often single mothers and we know that Morrison herself was a lone parent

for most of her children's upbringing; in communicating her own experiences to us she also appears to be sharing common ground with the matriarchs she is writing about. In the Foreword that introduces *Sula* Morrison strikes a note by acknowledging '[t]he things we traded!' (xii). This statement is cut short with the use of an exclamation mark so as to register her anger at the sacrifices that are expected of mothers in both cultural and social contexts. Here, there is also the suggestion that whilst mothers take care of their children's needs there is no reciprocal aspect in this relationship. Anger is a natural reaction to defend oneself against forms of injustice and whereas Morrison reveals hers we must also judge how effectively Eva and Pilate use their anger to express or defend their rights as individuals. Joanne Braxton observes that '[t]he ancestral figure [...] in the work of contemporary Black women writers is an outraged mother'.<sup>400</sup> If she is always a mother rather than an individual woman, then we are to understand her anger shall be in defence of her family and not her own self. Whereas Eva and Pilate are also represented in the image of this ancestor, Morrison breaks away from the norm identified by Braxton to consider these mothers as individuals first. As a starting point for this investigation the following section will determine how the Peace and Dead matriarchies are linked to an Africanist presence that is of ambivalent value. This familial space is reconsidered according to Morrison's "'new perspectives" on "old" reality'.<sup>401</sup> From a point of '[N]ew [S]eeing',<sup>402</sup> that is informed by the author's black feminist standpoint it is evident the lives of matriarchs have been enriched, but also burdened by cultural expectations; looking back some will acknowledge that with every day spent serving the needs of others "'there was no time"' (106) for them to nurture themselves, or realise their anger in response to this lack in their lives.

### 1. No Time For Anger

In her anthropological study, African-American scholar, Niara Sudarkasa, claims that West African women of the pre-colonial era were torchbearers who laid strong foundations for generations of African-American women. She reveals:

[M]any of the activities and attributes that have been taken to be the characteristic of Black women in America have their roots in Africa. These characteristics—leadership in the community, as well as in the home;

prominence in the world of work; independence and pride in womanhood—are usually pointed to as evidence of the strength of Black women. [...] [T]his strength had its roots in African societies where women were literally expected to “shoulder their own burdens”<sup>403</sup>

In stating that black women in America have been inspired to become leaders rather than followers and that they have influence over the home as well as in places of work and the community, Sudarkasa intends to celebrate well-rounded lives. These multiple roles have offered black women visibility inside and outside of the home and ensured they are not closed off from any opportunities to manage, but it is also the case that when working alone their time and energies have been spread thin and that leadership in these instances constitutes dedicated service but not freedom of choice. I suggest the so-called expectations that African and African-American women have had to fulfil have been set by men who despite abdicating their own responsibilities have still been in a position to set boundaries around the lives of these women. *New Seeing* allows for a review of this core Africanist principle of service that Pilate and Eva have also incorporated in their lives. They represent the remarkable ancestral mother and they are also lone women who must shoulder burdens without help from the community or kin that they themselves have supported. Turning first to the evidence confirming these women to be inheritors of African values, it is clear to see how in practising them they have earned respect from others, but also cut themselves off from personal development. Pilate first appears as the unnamed woman standing in a crowd but also apart from it, having ‘wrapped herself up in an old quilt instead of a winter coat’ (*Song*: 5:6). The quilt represents her special status as ‘ancest[or]’<sup>404</sup> and it is also the community for which she is responsible and must carry with her always. Pilate sings for her audience as a way of passing on and passing down an important piece of history but the lyrics reveal an imbalance; The *Sugarman* song is a patrilineal commemoration of the story of Solomon, who chose to ‘fly away’ leaving behind his twenty-one children and wife, Ryna, to raise them alone. In offering this ancestral link to the next generation Pilate offers no history of black women, and neither does she attempt to rebalance this particular story by singing about Ryna who, as we later find out, “‘lost her mind completely” (323) on being abandoned by Solomon and not having the same choice available to her.

Eva's important status is confirmed by her name which, according to Janice Sokoloff, 'mythically implies the ancestor mother of us all'.<sup>405</sup> She is claimed by an entire community but she has also played a part in this process by effectively 'ha[ving] given herself over to' (*Sula*: 120) others and so she 'belong[s]' to them rather than her own self.<sup>406</sup> Furthermore, as an ancestor Eva carries a history that she 'hope[s] to bequeath' (45) to her only son, Plum, rather than share it between all three of her children. Similarly, Pilate awaits the birth of her nephew, Milkman, so that she can pass on his history; and the narrator confirms that upon the arrival of this male heir Pilate 'seem[s] to be more interested in [... him] than she [ever] was in her own daughter' (19). We see then how in their commitment to the role of African ancestor Eva and Pilate serve men by carrying forward and nurturing their histories and then passing them on to male legatees of the next generation. It is perhaps unsurprising then that, at times, both women appear to be almost manly in terms of their physical attributes and chosen sartorial designs. Disabled Eva possesses a 'lovely calf' (41) in place of one leg and the remaining one is dressed in a 'neat shoe'. Here, the description of smartly presented footwear adheres to the feminine convention of immaculate appearance, but the calf symbolizes a fantasy phallus that dangles down below and communicates her unspoken masculinity to male visitors at the house. Likewise, Pilate prefers 'sitting wide-legged' (36) as if she were also in possession of a phallus and there is a further indication when she is seen 'holding her crotch' (38) in a mirroring of crude masculine behaviour. The single earring she has worn since her teenage years is indicative of the asymmetry that shapes her life (20); she stands as tall as her brother and even her shadow is mistaken to be the 'figure of a man' (186). Furthermore, Pilate chooses to wear caps on her head to go with the 'short hair cut regularly like a man's' (5/138), and lower down her body she opts for 'unlaced men's shoes' (38).

Even though their lives are curtailed by a commitment to serving others these women endorse the fantasy that they are living life on their own terms. Through ironic references Morrison shows how their lives have become an extension of the 'nigger joke' (4) that is explained in the opening pages of *Sula*: once upon a time a white farmer made promises to his black slave of freedom and prime land at the bottom of a valley in return for his hard work. Upon completing a series of tasks the slave did, indeed, gain his freedom but the farmer could not bring himself to fulfil the second part of their agreement. Instead, he tricked the slave into believing the dry hills at the top rather than

the rich valley floor were the ultimate prize, thus becoming the Bottom at the top. The former master worked hard to convince him that in living ‘up in the Bottom’ (5) he would be closest to ‘the bottom of heaven’ (6). This anecdote concludes with confirmation that the African-American people who settled in the Bottom saw beyond the trickery and wordplay and yet they would not challenge anyone or attempt to change their situation because ‘they had no time to think about it’. Similarly, Eva and Pilate occupy the place at the bottom even if it is promoted as a prominent position—that of the ‘African Queen’<sup>407</sup>—given that it is used to serve black men; the respect these women are promised in return for the hard work they shall carry out is matched by ridicule. As a serving ancestor mother, Pilate carries out her responsibilities with sincerity, but her delivery of history through song is ‘snigger[ed]’ (6) at by a crowd, her adoption of simplicity leads to her being labelled ‘queer’ (37) by her own kin, and the exotic scent that fills her home is condemned as a ‘sickening smell’ (20). In the case of Eva, she is the culture bearer who in return for agreeing to marry a man, become the mother of his children, and support his endeavours so that ‘[t]he two of them together [will] make one’ (83) of him, is guaranteed shelter and love and the pledge that he shall ‘grow old with her’.<sup>408</sup> This turns out to be a false promise equal to the cruel joke that the master played on his slave; and as I shall go on to demonstrate Eva, too, finds that in dealing with the trials of daily life there is no time left to think about the situation in which she finds herself.

In portraying the lives of black matriarchs as a failing joke, Morrison creates a point of New Seeing into their lives; firstly, their authority is, in fact, bound up in service to the community and within the home; secondly, these women complete the lives of men and in doing so represent a strengthened position but they will not challenge the cultural hold those men have over their lives because the heavy demands placed on them ensure there is never enough time for them to think about turning rebellious. Here, Morrison lays an important foundation for the black feminist standpoint giving shape to her fiction; as the storyline of either text progresses it becomes clear that in making time for themselves these women would realise the need for anger in their lives, for it would enable them to fight for what they have been denied in terms of a forgotten history, personal desires, and reciprocated love for all that they have given of themselves. Morrison manipulates the spatial aspects of each home to stress the ambivalent lives of these matriarchs and also to provoke situations that might

see them turn away from sacrifice and towards anger. Hence, these homes are simultaneously open and closed spaces. Pilate's home resembles 'an ideal African village compound',<sup>409</sup> free of the materialistic values and individualism representing her brother's contemporary world (55). In place of electricity or gas the natural elements feature as 'candles and kerosene lamps' and 'wood and coal' (27),<sup>410</sup> thus creating an inviting atmosphere. There are 'no curtains or shades' (40) to close it off as a separate space from the larger community and so it becomes an extension of it. *New Seeing* reveals that Pilate, standing like a 'tall black tree' (39), has, in effect, singlehandedly held up this structure from the inside and it has taken shape around her as 'a [fully stretched yet suffocatingly] narrow single-story house' (27). As for Eva, the shape of her 'enormous house' (30) changes several times over a period of five years with the addition of new floors, stairways, rooms, and doors. All at once this space expands and closes itself off. It, too, becomes an extension of the community with 'all sorts of people dropp[ing] in' (29) daily, and this energy creates a 'woolly house' that comforts Eva, but also suffocates her.

The Dead and Peace matriarchies represent 'the most powerful Africanism'<sup>411</sup> in the form of an extended family. These units are led by Eva and Pilate who, in the dual roles of mother and grandmother, exercise a second core Africanist principle, of survival. Tradition dictates that the most senior female figure in each home must fulfil an important responsibility by ensuring the survival of her children and her children's children. With her being the 'one who makes other people'<sup>412</sup> there has been little time for her to make her own self, but someone must take responsibility for this ancestor and her survival. Speaking outside of her fiction Morrison has underscored the seriousness of this issue by equating neglect with the crime of murder, stating that '[i]f you kill the ancestor you've just killed everything'.<sup>413</sup> This announcement suggests there must also be an onus on younger generations to ensure the survival of elders in order to survive themselves. As I shall go on to demonstrate, in *Song* and *Sula*, this core principle fails to operate as a reciprocal cycle of care because younger family members appear not to take on responsibility for their elders. Once again Morrison creates situations in which the leading matriarch might realise she, too, has options: she can continue to make others, or learn to put her own self first, or negotiate a middle ground between these two positions. These female-headed units come into existence out of the necessity to care for another even if Pilate and Eva arrive at this point in different ways. Morrison paints

Pilate as an admirable figure; she is ‘astute’,<sup>414</sup> ‘larger than life’,<sup>415</sup> ‘eccentric’, and ‘fearless’.<sup>416</sup> In this way the author acknowledges her character possesses all those key qualities necessary for making her own self and looking back on Pilate’s history we uncover further evidence of her potential. Her father unintentionally christened her with ‘a boy’s name’ (18), or ‘a man’s name’ (19), but it comes to serve as an indicator of the desire—indeed, the right—to live her life freely as an equal to any man rather than in the shadow of one. From a young age she claims the piece of paper on which her illiterate father had traced the word Pilate, because it seemed important when he saw it in the Bible, and she carries it in the brass box-turned-earring adorning her left ear. In doing so she takes ownership of her name, carrying forward its history and now ready to shape its future by adding something of her own self to it.

Pilate carried herself out of her dead mother’s womb and survived despite missing a navel; this birth story marks her ability to overcome difficult ‘struggl[es]’ (27) and live independently of others. Years later, although still a young child she turns traveller and begins the first of many journeys all on her own. Even as a new mother Pilate continues to travel and there is the indication that had she not done so those ‘depressed and lonely’ (147) feelings that crept up on her following the birth of Reba would have taken hold. Pilate responds to her sense of ‘restlessness’ (148) by becoming a creature of flight for a period of over twenty years, leaving behind Reba to be cared for by her grandmother. We also know that during this period Pilate rejects a marriage proposal from the father of her child so as to protect herself from further comments about her missing body part (147), and also because she does not want to be grounded forever by duty to a husband and home. The woman whose desire for so long has been ‘to keep moving’ (143) sees her life finally anchored with the birth of her granddaughter, Hagar (148). Now, as a grandmother her priorities change and the focus shifts onto the needs and wants of this child. Looking back the narrator describes what became Pilate’s subsequent actions and accompanying thoughts; ‘she cut her hair [... because] [t]hat was one thing she didn’t want to have to think about anymore’ (149), and in this way she would begin the symbolic act of cutting down her desires and sense of self. She then asked of herself, ‘[w]hat do I need to know to stay alive?’ However, the question of survival would not relate to Pilate’s own life even in its depreciating state, but to Hagar’s future. In putting needs before desires Pilate sacrifices herself to the care of her family; even now she will flick through the fourth-grade geography book



she was gifted as a young traveller, to quietly glance over the multicoloured maps that once guided her from one state into another (93/148). Her desires almost surface once again upon seeing a series of ‘newspaper articles and magazine pictures [...] nailed to the walls’ (39) in her house that signify the days gone by; having made it known that “‘I ain’t the one with the wants’” (37) anymore, Pilate catches herself creating a simple desire in describing exactly what “‘I want’” (39) in the form of a cooked egg. In the Dead matriarchy, only Hagar is in a privileged enough position to dictate and “‘do what I want’” (96).

In comparison to Pilate’s personal journey and realisation of her desires before arriving at the position of matriarch, Eva’s life is grounded and marked by all that it lacks. Whilst serving the needs of others as a wife and mother she has never experienced that sense of self-energising “‘*me-ness*’” (29),<sup>417</sup> in doing so she would discover her anger and use it to fight for the right to address her own needs alongside those of others. We learn details of the ‘sad and disgruntled marriage’ (32) that has kept Eva imprisoned for five years. Her husband, the aggressive and flirtatious BoyBoy, entertains himself throughout this period with three kinds of sport: abusing his wife, extramarital affairs, and drinking to excess. Even if BoyBoy’s actions do harm to the marriage Eva is committed to ensuring the survival of it and so she tolerates—or, more likely, she mothers—the needful boy trapped inside this man’s body as is emphasised by the doubling of his name. Then, finally, one day BoyBoy abandons his family forever. The fact that Pilate leaves her family behind to seek adventures represents a rare occurrence in the black culture we will read of in history books and critiques; indeed, black men are more commonly associated with this activity and have been ever since the days of slavery.<sup>418</sup> Hence, BoyBoy’s actions are less likely to surprise Morrison’s reader than those carried out by Pilate prior to becoming a matriarch, or by Eva from this point onwards. In the absence of her husband Eva’s survival instinct becomes an ambivalent force that simultaneously keeps her grounded, but also carries her forward; using qualities associated with the ancestor mother she is about to recreate her own self as something other than a “‘docile,” “‘submissive,” [and] “‘downtrodden,” powerless creature’.<sup>419</sup> Eva is left with the sole responsibility of caring for three small children along with ‘\$1.65, five eggs, three beets and no idea of what or how to feel’. Of all the items that feature on this seemingly bleak list, her emotional paralysis appears to be the most valuable at this moment in time since it enables her to deal quite efficiently

with the immediate predicament in which she finds herself. By informing us that Eva must ‘postpone her anger for two years’, there is the assurance from Morrison’s narrator that her character is about to begin an interesting journey from that point.

As with *Song*, in *Sula*, once again survival is shown to be most commonly equated with practical achievements rather than emotional terms, hence there are repetitive references to that key word, need; ‘the children needed [Eva]; she needed money, and needed to get on with her life’. Here, we are reminded of Sudarkasa’s reference to black women and their ability to shoulder burdens alone but, at the same time, this statement celebrates a rebellious moment in that Eva realises her life belongs to her and she must move forward on her terms for the sake of her survival. Eva remains committed to her children and so their needs shall be catered for alongside her own; she proves this by leaving home to go on a confidential trip and handing over care of her children to a neighbour called Mrs. Suggs, only to return eighteen months later and claim them once more. She is now armed ‘with two crutches, a new black pocketbook, and one leg’ (34). In comparison to the previous inventory noted by the narrator this one will be more valuable to Eva’s family and it has been achieved through what Morrison identifies as ‘physical sacrifice for economic freedom’ (xi). The ten-dollar bill Eva hands over to Mrs. Suggs certainly eclipses the measly \$1.65 she was left with when BoyBoy walked away. There are plenty more of these crisp dollar bills with which to buy food for her children and to build a new house on Carpenter’s Road, which will obscure ‘BoyBoy’s one-room cabin’ (35) and the miserable life intended for her. The hidden pages of Eva’s pocketbook conceal the story of how she came to lose her leg and it will remain a mystery to us. The Peace and Dead matriarchies are created out of the need for one’s kin to survive and they are sustained by dedicated service from the most senior female figures just as tradition dictates they should. From a point of New Seeing, however, Eva and Pilate exercise interesting concepts of care by hybridising elements of African tradition with ideas born out of instinct. With Eva’s house representing ‘throbbing disorder’ (52), and Pilate’s house being without ‘regular habits’ (182), possibilities are created for these women to rewrite the matriarch’s role, to include an address of her own needs alongside those of others and, as I shall go on to demonstrate, one of them is more successful than the other in her endeavours.

In forms of care that are exercised by Pilate and Eva the majestic Africanist presence becomes connected to the everyday activity of feeding, and in this way their

homes function as communities. We know that Pilate draws in Milkman by connecting him to his male ancestry and then offering him a place within the matriarchy as a “brother” (43) to Hagar; at the same time, she offers him food as a more practical demonstration of her care for him. Her offer is politely declined by Milkman which prevents a reciprocal circle of care from forming. Yet, Pilate continues to talk about food and now replaces Milkman with her own self at the centre of this conversation; she desires an egg that is ‘soft, [... and] like wet velvet’ (39). By speaking about what she would like to eat and demonstrating how to cook it in these terms she is also communicating her need to be cared for, and in the absence of other offers she must take responsibility for providing it. Note how the cooked eggs on her plate, featuring ‘reddish-yellow corners’ (42), trigger the memory of a red sun against blue sky, just as blue “as my mama’s ribbons” (43). In this way food also becomes the means by which Pilate feeds her ‘mother-hunger’<sup>420</sup> and the fantasy of a woman she has never met but whose brass box she has turned into an earring and wears always (167). Previously, Pilate also fed Milkman’s mother, Ruth, as a way of ‘comfort[ing]’ (131) her in her distressed state. Furthermore, the wine that is regularly made in this house and sold at a cheap price exemplifies Pilate’s method of care for her poverty-stricken neighbours, and it proved especially popular during the Depression (48). There is also evidence of food operating as an extended metaphor for care in Eva’s home. As resident storyteller to an audience of eager children she connects aspects of her history to their present lives and this transference is accompanied by Eva feeding them ‘goobers [that are produced] from deep inside her pockets’ (29:30) as if she were offering them something of her own self. We are also informed there is ‘always something cooking on the stove’ and this is indicative of care being a central feature in this home. Hence, Eva’s position as primary carer within this framework is an ambivalent one because it is at once aligned with privilege and power, but also expectation, responsibility and a heavy burden.

Although similarities can be found to link Eva and Pilate’s experiences as leading figures in their respective homes, the care that either matriarch demonstrates for her immediate family marks points of difference in terms of personal progress. Our introduction to Pilate’s home is a special moment in the text with all three generations of her family coming together to put on a melodic performance that is as natural as threads of ‘calico’ (29) and brimming with passion. Here, a grand circle of care is completed with each voice surrendering itself to the chord and then being serenaded by

the harmonious wave that is created, or so it would appear. In fact, a hierarchy is in place as is denoted by the part that each woman performs; Pilate is the contralto who shall lead with a base pitch whilst Reba takes on the supporting role of a soprano and Hagar has to offer only a 'soft voice' that is still to find its strength. This matriarchy's chain of command will not allow for reciprocal care to be experienced by the leading figure because her role involves giving of herself but never getting enough in return. Pilate's secret desire to be cared for shall not become a reality; it is the reason why she always appears to be 'chew[ing] things' (30) so as to satisfy her lack somehow. The narrator almost catches Pilate out when observing that in the act of mastication it appears as if 'she [... were] whispering to herself'; indeed, she is quietly confiding in herself and if only she were to speak up in anger the course of her life and that of her family members would be very different. Instead, Pilate dedicates the rest of her life to acting out the expected role of matriarch and it is perhaps even more harmful to her than the "Yassuh" (205) minstrel performance she shall put on before white police officers to free her nephew following his arrest. Pilate's role in her home is an ambivalent one; all at once she surrenders her life to a form of 'voluntary slavery' (224) in which she alone shall sacrifice on behalf of the entire family in the name of love, but she also becomes an advocate for its practices by claiming rights over Reba and Hagar with use of that familiar language of ownership.

Whereas Pilate's love for her own self is demonstrated privately as snatched moments, her love for both her daughter and granddaughter is expressed large-scale to the point of obsession and so, at times, it appears to be confused with ownership. For her, Hagar is "my baby girl" (318) and, equally, Reba is "my little girl" (94); there is the suggestion that Reba's status has been relegated by Pilate so that she alone can claim this matriarchy as her prize, or her burden. Just like Reba, Hagar also refers to Pilate as "Mama" (44), and in this way Reba is robbed of the right to be a mother by her own daughter who even refers to her by her Christian name. There is further evidence of Reba's infantilised state for which only Pilate can be held responsible; this woman with 'the simple eyes of an infant' (46) is largely excluded from exchanges between grandmother and granddaughter and whenever she attempts to insert herself into conversations she is told by Pilate to "[s]hut up, [...because] *I'm* talking to Hagar" (44).<sup>421</sup> Nonetheless, Pilate's love for her daughter cannot be ignored especially because it prompts her to finally find her anger and use it to protect Reba from a violent

boyfriend. Whilst holding a knife to his chest Pilate threatens him in her gentlest voice, and whereas it would appear she is calling him “honey / darlin / sugar” (93:95), these affectionate terms are actually aimed at an injured Reba. In this empowering moment Pilate also appears to reveal a weakness in her character by speaking, once again, as the agent of an imbalanced cultural notion that she is preserving whilst also being defined by it. She tells the man, “[w]omen are foolish, [...] and mamas are the most foolish of all. [...] Mamas get hurt and nervous when somebody don’t like they children. [...] We do the best we can, but we ain’t got the strength men got” (94). These words draw attention to how a life of service and sacrifice has taken its toll on Pilate to the point that she now refers to herself in such deprecating terms. *New Seeing*, however, reveals an impactful statement that serves as a warning on behalf of black women. Pilate is talking to men like him in the language she knows they will understand but they would be wise to also take inference from all that is unsaid here. In place of physical strength these women possess strong minds that are all too easily condemned as foolish; if fuelled by anger their minds would turn into weapons of defence as is demonstrated by Pilate.

Pilate is all too aware of the need to condemn women as fools so that the power of men can continue to exist in socially and culturally defined hierarchies. Men fear losing their power to women and this is the motivating factor for female stereotyping; and so, in the act of exposing a woman’s potential for rebellion the real aim is to confine her status so she shall desist from her efforts.<sup>422</sup> As an angry black woman Morrison might also be condemned as a rebellious figure but she resists being confined by such labels by using her narrative space to redefine a key stereotype. Crazy is synonymous with foolishness and this term is frequently repeated in Morrison’s fiction. Working from a black feminist standpoint she aligns craziness with various expressions of anger, and so her reader now sees crazy women as angry women who become unpredictable because they are in possession of freedom and power. Just like Reba’s boyfriend, Pilate’s nephew also sees up-close the true potential of a crazy woman and he spreads the word. Milkman’s good friend, Guitar, is naive to believe such women present no danger to him (178); he even mockingly asks, “[w]hat can they do? Whip us?” (182). Milkman, however, does his best to help re-educate Guitar so that he, too, will learn truly crazy women do not live contained lives and they are anything but weak. From this point of *New Seeing*, crazy women or, rather, angry women, can potentially achieve a game-changing status because, just like Pilate, they could overpower men. In

their unconfined state “[n]obody knows what they’ll do; *they* don’t even know” (182). If anger affords power then female inhabitants of the Dead home either remain oblivious to this fact, or choose not to explore it any further. Pilate’s anger surfaces out of the need to defend Reba, but she fails to maintain it to fight for her own self.

The Dead matriarchy progresses no further and becomes almost caricatured with Morrison’s comparison of it to an aspect of the Goldilocks tale. As a visitor Ruth observes the ‘three little beds’ (135) lined up in the one bedroom, which ultimately represent Pilate, Reba, and Hagar’s leaning towards regularity and safety. These women do not allow their craziness the freedom it deserves; they shall not, in the words of bell hooks, ‘step out on the edge’<sup>423</sup> of cultural expectations to make important new discoveries for the sake of their survival, certainly in emotional terms. Eva however, finds herself edging closer and closer to that point and despite her ‘odd’ ways it becomes clear that in anger ‘she[’s] got sense’ (100). As a newly single mother she quickly understood the sacrifices required of her so that her children would survive. When baby Plum was severely constipated she was prepared to relieve him using ‘the last bit of food she had in the world’ (34) to loosen the content of his bowels. Now, years later, Plum turns to his mother once again but since she has found her anger Eva must carefully consider her desires alongside the needs of her beloved son. Plum is a soldier returning from a tour of duty, addicted to drugs and dejected by life. A number of African-American soldiers fought during World War I and although their heroism was recognized and rewarded,<sup>424</sup> there was a dark underside to this experience in that they were mistreated by white colleagues who saw them as inferior beings.<sup>425</sup> Furthermore, the violent atrocities of War left many of these men traumatised by what they had witnessed and done. Both Shadrack and Plum return to the Bottom as shell-shocked soldiers and search for ways of relieving themselves of the emotional turmoil—or post-traumatic stress disorder—they are suffering. Both men find solace in death and whereas Shadrack is self-reliant, Plum reaches out to his mother for help. He is certain the woman who has for so long ensured that he ‘float[s] in a constant swaddle of love and affection’ (45) shall rescue him once more.

In anger an unpredictable Eva responds to her son’s silent plea with violence that shall somehow save him as well as her own self. She commits a revolutionary act because, as stated by Morrison, ‘revolution means [...] some violent action, and [...] if killing is part of it, this is the logical consequence of it [...] but] with the best intentions

in the world'.<sup>426</sup> If Eva's revolutionary act is carried out with her best intentions then it must be assumed it is triggered not only by anger, but also love, and so the violence that occurs must be examined from this point of New Seeing. Plum is 'a shadow' of his old self in his current unkempt state; he retains only the 'sweet, sweet smile' from before and it communicates his urgent need to Eva. She is angered by what War and the politics of segregation have done to her child, and is also moved by motherlove for him. With all the strength she has, Eva gathers Plum's weakened body close to hers to 'rock' (46) him to which he responds with a hearty 'chuckle'. In this revolutionary moment a genuine circle of care is completed and both Eva and Plum are satiated regardless of the suffering that is involved. The narrator's recollection that, '[s]he was angry, but not too, and laughed with him' (47), confirms Eva's actions are driven by ambivalent emotions. The mother, who once nourished her son with her own milk, now drinks his blood and then proceeds to baptise him in a swathe of fire because her logic dictates that it is necessary to do him violence. This bittersweet celebration is marked by '[b]alled up candy wrappers' (46), 'strawberry crush' blood water, and the smiling but suffering man whose name plays with the reader's sense of taste to infer sweetness and bitterness all at once. Plum receives this gift of death from his mother with gratitude, assuring her "I'm all right"; he even compliments his assassin, telling her "you so purty" (47). As the flames now take hold of his body, much like his mother's arms did moments earlier, he rests 'in snug delight'. Eva departs to her attic room and not long after she is disturbed by her daughter's cries, informing her Plum is burning. Her response appears to be a denial in the form of a question: "[i]s? My baby? Burning?" (48). In fact, the broken syntax allows Eva to restate the violent death of Plum as an act of revolution; he is not burning but he is free of pain, and so is she.

Crazy Eva introduces a self-defining 'I' into the experience of mothering her son that also becomes the murdering of him. Thus, when she finally comes round to speak about why she did it two voices are heard at the same time (71); with one voice she conveys an awareness of what constitutes maternal duties whilst the other communicates her anger at having sacrificed herself too many times but refusing to let it happen on this occasion. Eva recollects how just before his death, Plum communicated with her in his silent voice as mother and son returned to a pre-symbolic space where spoken words would not be required for her to understand his needs. She reveals, "he was crawlin' back. Being helpless and thinking baby thoughts [...] and smiling all the

time. I had room enough in my heart, but not in my womb, not no more. I birthed him once. I couldn't do it again" (71). The maternal voice confirms it has carried out the responsibility of birthing and then sustaining the life of her infant, and there is also recognition of his needs as an adult male in regression. However, the voice of individuation cuts off the maternal voice so as to refuse a reforming of the mother-child symbiosis. It also pronounces Eva's body is her property—with references to *my* womb and *my* heart—and she alone will authorise which other person can (re-)access it. The angry self-affirming voice gains momentum in this monologue as individual words fuse together and Eva cries out, "Godhavemercy". She proceeds to share details of the dream, or nightmare, she had prior to the death of Plum and how it threatened this maternal relationship with elements of potential incest, and even attempted rape. In this sequence, Eva reveals Plum is prowling around her bed "trying to spread my legs trying to get back up in my womb" (71:2). The dual voices now become synchronised to speak at once that Plum is no longer a 'baby', but a 'big man'. Eva decides that if he wants to possess her body she shall defend it as her personal space,<sup>427</sup> and if he wishes to die she shall help him to ensure he goes with pride, thus taking care of him as well as her own self.

We can see then how Morrison's fiction presents the lives of African-American matriarchs as being defined by traditional frameworks, and then proceeds to re-present them from a point of New Seeing. As inheritors of African values women like Eva and Pilate represent the ancestral mother in times of freedom. They shoulder heavy burdens and in this way have earned respect, but also hindered their personal development. In their daily lives they must observe the core Africanist principle of service which, in essence, means to serve men by carrying forward and nurturing their histories and then passing them on to male legatees of the next generation. Even though their lives are curtailed by a commitment to serving others these women endorse the fantasy that they are living life on their own terms. Through ironic references Morrison shows how their prominent position as African Queens offers no real power. They complete men yet they will not challenge the cultural hold those men have over their own lives because the heavy demands placed on them ensure there is never enough time for them to even think about turning rebellious. In response, Morrison uses her narrative space to lay an important foundation for her black feminist standpoint: in making time for themselves these women would realise the need for anger in their lives, for it would enable them to



fight for what they have been denied in terms of a forgotten history, personal desires, and care reciprocated for all that they have given of themselves. Turning her attention to the matriarchies created in either text, the author manipulates spatial aspects of each home to stress the ambivalent lives of Eva and Pilate, and also to provoke situations that might see them turn away from sacrifice and towards anger. Hence, these homes function as open spaces to become an extension of the community, and are also suffocatingly small to reflect the lack of personal space allocated to the lone women supporting them.

These matriarchies are forms of extended family in which the most senior female figure must exercise a second core Africanist principle, of survival. Tradition dictates she must ensure the physical survival of her children and grandchildren, but there is no one to take responsibility for her survival and so there is no reciprocal cycle of care operating in these homes. These matriarchs appear to lack in terms of their personal development, but Pilate's history shows she has always had the qualities necessary for making her own self. She is a lone traveller whose journeys continue even after she becomes a mother, until her life is finally anchored with the birth of her granddaughter. Now, she steps into the important role of grandmother who is responsible for the survival of this child and so she must sacrifice her desires to care for her family. As a self-sacrificing wife and mother, Eva is yet to experience that sense of self-energising *me-ness* in which she would discover her anger and use it to fight for her own needs alongside those of others. However, as a newly single mother Eva uses qualities associated with the ancestor mother to recreate her own self. Whereas matriarchs are expected to observe cultural traditions at all times, *New Seeing* shows Eva and Pilate exercise interesting concepts of care by hybridising elements of African tradition with ideas born out of instinct. In this way possibilities are created for them to rewrite the matriarch's role, to include an address of her own needs alongside those of others. Eva's feeding of others confirms her position is one of privilege and power, but it is also burdened by expectations; conversely, Pilate's feeding of her own self communicates her need to be cared for, and she takes responsibility for providing it. The care that either matriarch demonstrates for her immediate family bears a direct relation to her personal progress; in considering her own wants and desires she is likely to be condemned as crazy.

Morrison challenges socially and culturally defined hierarchies that serve men and stereotype women so as to confine their lives. Working from her black feminist standpoint she redefines a key stereotype within this narrative space by aligning craziness with anger; now crazy women can be seen as angry women who, in possession of freedom and power, become unpredictable. There is power in anger and although Pilate's rage surfaces out of the need to defend her child, she fails to maintain it to fight for her own self. In surrendering her life to what is voluntary slavery in the name of love, she will not allow her craziness the freedom it deserves and so she can't make discoveries important to her survival. In contrast, crazy Eva is finally in possession of her anger and she uses it to introduce a self-defining 'I' into the experience of mothering. This creates a balance between her desires and the needs of her child, and it even allows for a reciprocated circle of care to form. She shall defend her personal space, yet she does not stop being a mother to her son as is demonstrated by her motherlove. Despite the similarities that link their experiences as matriarchs, Eva and Pilate use their anger in different ways and it affects their personal development accordingly. Eva becomes the more interesting of these two characters because she actively explores what Morrison refers to as 'the rogue element in human life, in African-American life'. She continues, '[y]ou are not simply the consequences of what has happened to you. You can chose to be another thing or do it another way'.<sup>428</sup> Eva creates options for herself and in this way she is capable of producing a unique response to an otherwise common situation. Conversely, in addressing her own needs Eva appears to be going against a key tenet of the Africanist tradition that 'ancestor women are not [to be] themselves individuated' because 'they represent a group consciousness'.<sup>429</sup>

Morrison's portrayal of Eva is a redress of the purported role of black female ancestor, here exploring her life as an individual rather than someone who is claimed by all. This is a somewhat risky experiment on the author's part because she is speaking out against a well-preserved cultural heritage and the status of women within the African-American community. The fact *Sula* and *Song* were both published during the 1970s, when Black Women's organizations came into effect and black feminism began laying its theoretical foundations,<sup>430</sup> suggests Morrison also set out to represent this cause. Her literary project would allow her to consciously oppose the masculinist rhetoric supporting Black Power and also claim rights for black women in the

community.<sup>431</sup> Morrison writes as a black feminist, but she also ‘write[s] as [a] daughter’<sup>432</sup> out of genuine concern for the black ancestor mother and the legacy of her ‘wide-spirited and generous’ (*Song*: 69) love for all. In occupying the dual roles of black feminist and concerned daughter Morrison reveals her anger and her love and therefore, a conflicted position; she must use her narrative space to achieve a balance between preserving Africanist traditions and proposing certain changes so as to create a wholesome role model for the black women of today for whom she writes. Leading on from this point, the following section shall begin by identifying why Morrison rejects feminism in its current form and how she reworks it according to her own black feminist standpoint. There shall then be consideration of how Eva’s mothering relates to the concept of ‘feminist mothering’ and reveals love, but also lack, in the relationship she has with Hannah. The passing on of inheritance allows for an intergenerational connection along the matrilineal line and I shall identify what Eva has bequeathed to successive generations of the Peace family and the value it holds. Focus shall then turn to the conflict that marks Eva’s relationship with Sula, with the grandmother turning ambivalent and now speaking as the voice of tradition and her granddaughter representing a new generation and with it a point of New Seeing.

## 2. New Generations and New Seeing

In an interview with Zia Jaffrey, Morrison clearly rejects feminist associations with her work. She declares, ‘I don’t write “ist” novels’. She is probed further:

Jaffrey: Why distance oneself from feminism?

Morrison: In order to be as free as I possibly can, in my own imagination, I can’t take positions that are closed. Everything I’ve ever done, in the writing world, has been to expand articulation, rather than to close it to open doors [... and] I think it’s off-putting to some readers, who may feel that I’m involved in writing some kind of feminist tract.<sup>433</sup>

The interview continues, but Jaffrey returns once more to the topic of feminism relating it to Morrison’s history:

Jaffrey: Did you have any relationship to the word “feminism” when you were growing up [...]?

Morrison: I was surrounded by black women who were tough and very aggressive and who [...] would] work and rear children and manage homes. They had enormously high expectations of their daughters [...]; it never occurred to me that that was feminist activity.<sup>434</sup>

The initial statement offered by Morrison defines feminism as a rigid and closed-off theoretical concept that threatens her freedom as a creative writer because it works to inhibit the imagination. She alleges feminism allows no room for reinterpreting her texts or the experiences she is writing about. Morrison also claims some readers would be offended if they thought her work followed a feminist path. In the second statement she traces her matrilineal line and proudly identifies the strong qualities of women like her mother, but confesses she was unaware these might be equated with feminism. They were robust and aggressive women, and they would also multitask to occupy spaces in the home and workplace all at once. As mothers they became role models for their daughters who were expected to become strong women like them and follow the same path in life. In light of the responses offered by Morrison it becomes necessary to investigate why she is uncomfortable with the use of the term feminism, and why she would never have related it to the experiences of admirable women under whose influence she developed as a strong individual. Collins provides an interesting theoretical standpoint that can be used to explain the first of Morrison’s apprehensions. Through this lens feminism can, indeed, be seen as a segregating practice and Collins charges ‘feminist theory [...] as having] suppressed Black women’s ideas’.<sup>435</sup> She speaks of how black women intellectuals, including herself, possess ‘a unique feminist consciousness [...] relating to] race and class [...] and yet] we have not been full participants in white feminist organizations’.<sup>436</sup>

Morrison’s objection is in response to the fact that a white middle-class voice represents the centre of a feminist experience, and so other female communities have had to occupy the fringes for so long.<sup>437</sup> With its narrow scope feminism does not represent the experiences of a black woman like Morrison and, therefore, she objects to the use of it in relation to readings of her work. When she talks of her fear that some readers might be offended by such a track she is, of course, referring to black women who wish to connect these stories to their personal experiences and so they would not

appreciate feminist appropriations of this kind. Such reasoning would also clarify why Morrison is reluctant to affix the label of feminism to the experiences of her black female relatives, but there is another explanation for her disinclination. She remembers these women as being strong, nurturing figures who took on every role that was assigned to them alongside, or even in place of, men but there are no references to how they spent their leisure time, or if there was any time available to them in which they might address their own needs and desires independently of their children or families. Undoubtedly Morrison saw qualities in these women that she went on to incorporate in her own life but, overall, it would be fair to say that a life in which obstacles and challenges set by others are successfully overcome but without addressing of one's own self can hardly be endorsed as a feminist, or even a black feminist, blueprint. Morrison rejects the central feminist model, but she also makes it known she has a problem with the black feminist position, which she refers to as 'the Black feminist thing'. She elaborates, 'it's not the goals that I object to, [...] it's just that it seems not to question what's behind that desperate need to love only one person. It's not the comradeship of past generations'.<sup>438</sup> Morrison believes there is a fine line between a black woman addressing her needs with the support of a black feminist framework, and her becoming self-centred to the point that she cannot experience healthy relationships or share responsibilities with others.

Evidently, Morrison seeks a balance in the lives of black women so that they will not become entirely selfless or selfish. In response to the failure she sees in the feminist model as well as her dissatisfaction with the black feminist position, Morrison uses her narrative space to identify her own black feminist standpoint and it advocates the importance of experiencing oneself in relation to another. In comparison to Pilate, Morrison shows that Eva is far more successful in achieving this aim in her life and especially through her experiences of mothering, which combine elements of motherlove with self-love. To suggest, as Victoria Burrows does, that Eva's home lacks love,<sup>439</sup> is indicative of critiques that fail to assess Morrison's character from a point of New Seeing and rely, instead, on those institutional markers that define what mothering must be. Various feminisms have come together to be vocal about the need to separate *motherhood*, meaning 'the patriarchal institution [...] that is male-defined and [...] deeply oppressive to women', from *mothering* that is a 'female-defined and centered [experience ...] potentially empowering to women'.<sup>440</sup> Mothering or, rather, feminist

mothering, as it is termed by Andrea O'Reilly, enables women to freely experience relationships with their children and not be governed by the tenets of motherhood; these rules determine a good mother shall sacrifice all for her children and that she 'has responsibility, but no power'.<sup>441</sup> Feminist mothering is able to unite those women who have no place in the exclusive good mother club because they are not 'white, middle-class, married, stay-at-home-moms'.<sup>442</sup> In this way Eva, too, qualifies as a feminist mother and the value of this status is confirmed when it is linked to Collins' black feminist standpoint. She asserts that as mothers black women can 'express and learn the power of self-definition, the importance of valuing and respecting ourselves, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and a belief in Black women's empowerment'.<sup>443</sup>

In *Sula*, feminist mothering allows Eva to discover and then experience her own self in relation to the care she provides for her child, and this is exemplified during the final moments of Plum's life with both mother and son departing from each other entirely satisfied. However, Eva's relationship with Hannah reveals a slippage because in those precious moments where Eva finds her own self her daughter appears to suffer from a lack of motherlove. We know that when BoyBoy left home he also cut off his family from its only income and so they faced a grim future marked by poverty, but Eva rose to the challenge and turned things around; she was motivated by love for her three children and the need to prove to herself she was anything but weak. Many years later, Eva's motherlove is questioned by her eldest child. Hannah asks, "Mamma, did you ever love us?" (67). She enters her mother's bedroom armed with an empty plate that resembles her mother-hunger and a bag containing food which she shall use as a substitute for satisfying her craving in the event the answer to her question proves to be inadequate. A cutting silence fills the room and it is contrasted by the rush of anger that is suddenly whipping inside Eva's mind. Hannah proceeds to restate her question offering some form of context: "I mean, did you? You know. When we was little". The words exit her mouth in a fragmented state as she reverts back to childhood and reveals little by little the hidden pain of having felt unloved by her mother. Now 'Eva's hand move[s] snail-like down her thigh toward her stump, but stop[s] short of it to realign a pleat'. This self-protective gesture allows for quick reassurance that the self she has created is still intact, including the masculine stump dangling down below and the feminine skirt that is wrapped around it; and now Eva prepares to respond to

Hannah's question with her own words that shall be spoken in anger, but also love. She begins, "[n]o. I don't reckon I did. Not the way you thinkin'". Her emotions are at first controlled by succinct sentences, but soon she explodes into a full on rage because Hannah's attempt to pacify her—in uttering "[o]h well. I was just wonderin'"—appears to trivialise the seriousness of this attack on Eva's motherlove.

Hannah hears, "[y]ou settin' here with your healthy-ass self and ax me did I love you?" (68). In anger, Eva is fighting back for her right to be Hannah's mother because she senses it is being snatched away from her, and so she must offer evidence of her motherlove. As Audre Lorde explains, 'survival is the greatest gift of love' a mother can give her child, and sometimes, 'it is the only gift possible, and [so maternal] tenderness gets lost'.<sup>444</sup> Certainly, in ensuring young Hannah reached adulthood Eva has demonstrated her love, but it is also the case that both mother and daughter have opposing ideas as to what survival should entail. "[Mamma] [p]layin' with us" was what Hannah needed, meaning that she only ever saw evidence of Eva's mothering in practical terms and there was never any emotional nurturance. This statement discredits Eva's claim that Hannah has developed a 'healthy-ass [sense of] self' as a result of the motherlove she received. Eva reluctantly accepts she was unable to emotionally connect with her daughter because back in 1895 "things was bad" and "[t]hey wasn't no time" due to circumstances that were not of her making. Morrison has stated she is 'interested in survival' including, 'how people behave under duress [... and] the qualities they show at the end of an event when their backs are up against the wall'.<sup>445</sup> Morrison is equally interested in the survival of her characters, and she draws in the attention of her reader as well. Looking back on this event in Eva's life we see that with her back against the wall the kind of survival she chose for her children would typify the 'motherwork' performed by poverty-stricken African-American women.<sup>446</sup> In portraying the complexity of this mother-daughter relationship Morrison identifies another strand of her black feminist standpoint; when focusing on their children black mothers must strike a balance between the physical and emotional care they shall offer. Eva's failure contributes to the emotional paralysis felt by her daughter and so, when Hannah herself becomes a mother, she finds she is also unable to fully connect with her daughter, Sula.

Hannah's conversation with her friends, Patsy and Valentine, turns to the topic of children and becomes an exchange of confessions. "They a pain" (56), declares one

friend, and the other appears to be in agreement with this statement, with the both of them then expressing regret at having had “‘em too soon” or “‘atall” (57). Despite their grievances, these women proudly talk of their motherlove for the children they have borne. Here, Morrison allows narrative space for honest appraisals of mothering even if they are in defiance of motherhood and its rules. Hannah’s contribution to the discussion marks a crucial moment in the text because her daughter overhears her saying, “‘I love Sula. I just don’t like her” (57).<sup>447</sup> This simple statement confirms Hannah’s ability for feminist mothering; she has shaped it into an either/or experience so that it need not be all consuming. Through Hannah’s words, Morrison is adding her voice to Collins’ black feminist argument that black mothering is an ambivalent experience.<sup>448</sup> This point of *New Seeing* enables us to review the Peace women’s mothering experiences and identify their motherlove even in anger, or alongside feelings of dislike. As daughters Hannah and Sula fail to identify the motherlove being offered to them and so they search for other ways of satisfying their mother-hunger. For this purpose they make use of the inheritance that is passed down their matrilineal line, from Eva to Hannah, and then from Hannah to Sula. Although the narrator calls it ‘manlove’ (41) we can see how it transforms to become fleeting moments of motherlove, meaning that intimacy with men allows these daughters pleasure that shall somehow connect them with their mothers for however long each liaison will last. *New Seeing* of these mother-daughter relationships shifts to an entirely different dimension as Morrison turns to symbolism and it must be unpicked using feminist psycho-sociological thought.<sup>449</sup>

The Bottom community is aware of Hannah’s ‘steady sequence of lovers, [who are] mostly the husbands of her friends and neighbors’ (42). Sex becomes a frequent activity in her life following the death of her husband, Rekus, and upon returning to her mother’s house with a child in tow. In the simplest of terms coitus represents her need for ‘some touching every day’ (44), but in relation to Nancy Chodorow’s theory on mother-daughter relationships, we understand that Hannah is engaging in a much more complex activity. In her feminist reworking of the original psychoanalytic model, Chodorow acknowledges there is an ‘internal world’<sup>450</sup> of psychological experience, and she then goes on to suggest that having come together in this space during the initial years of maternal bonding each mother and daughter shall find their lives are forever linked.<sup>451</sup> In the external world there is every expectation the daughter shall come to live



her life separately from the mother. So as to satisfy her need for a reforming of that initial bond, which translates to mean motherlove, the heterosexual daughter must find alternative means; through intimacy with a man she hopes to recreate a sense of oneness with her mother.<sup>452</sup> Hannah's search for something that will allow her to (re-)experience motherlove sees her also enter into physical relationships with men. The frequency of these brief sexual liaisons indicates she is disappointed each time, and her search continues. *New Seeing* draws our attention to which part of the house Hannah chooses each time, including the cellar and pantry (43). These small rooms, in offering privacy and darkness, become womblike spaces that satisfy her desire for her mother, albeit briefly. Having witnessed Hannah emerging from the pantry 'looking precisely as she did when she entered, only happier' (44), her daughter learns something important in this moment. Years later, sex becomes the main feature of Sula's own quest for a return to her mother having known all that time she is loved but not liked.

Whereas Morrison defends Hannah as being 'genuinely maternal',<sup>453</sup> Hannah's pre-teen daughter is left lacking having overheard her mother's privately spoken words. Sula's immediate response is anger mixed in with confusion. Only her friend, Nel, can identify with this anger because they are both '[d]aughters of distant mothers' (52). They head down to the river to play, but *New Seeing* reveals these daughters are carrying out a complex ritual to satisfy their mother-hunger and Nel leads Sula through the motions. Nel begins violently 'tearing up rooted grass to make a bare spot of earth' (58). Each girl is armed with a twig and they work together to create a massive, deep hole. In the absence of their mothers, the friends are poking twigs deep into Mother Earth, killing her 'rhythmically and intensely' in the equally ambivalent language of daughterlove. The hole in the ground represents the injury Sula wishes to cause her mother, but its 'dishpan' size also signifies a womblike space into which she desires to gain re-entry. She proceeds to pollute this would-be womb with 'all of the small defiling things' (59) she can find, including fragments of glass. Now, they begin refilling the hole with soil and this action can also be seen as reparation, certainly on Sula's part, for the symbolic rage-filled revenge she has just carried out against her mother. At the same time, whilst the narrator describes the refilled hole as resembling a 'grave', it is, in fact, evidence of a daughter's search for closeness to her distant mother. If Hannah can love but not like Sula, she, too, proves she is capable of loving but not liking her mother and so she 'defil[es]' her in this way. Following the death of Hannah, Sula's mother-hunger

becomes even more obvious and in adulthood she aims to satisfy it just as her mother did. Across Morrison's fiction, references to milk become an assured 'symbol of motherlove'<sup>454</sup> and so, when Ajax arrives at Sula's door armed with a bottle of milk and proceeds to offer it to her, we understand the author has assigned to him the important task of delivering the love Sula is hungry for. With either hand Sula grabs the bottle and Ajax's wrist and leads the way into the pantry (125); but the pleasure of sex is momentary and she is left, once again, feeling a sense of 'deep sorrow' (122).

From an altogether different point of New Seeing, we realise that Sula embraces the darkness of the pantry because it allows her moments of respite from the anger growing within her, as is indicated externally by that 'birthmark over her eye [...] getting darker' (74) with each passing day. Since the birthmark also resembles 'Hannah's ashes' (114), this strongly indicates Sula's anger has found a new direction in that it is no longer aimed at Hannah. Indeed, Sula now carries anger on behalf of her mother and she unleashes it against her grandmother, Eva. This sudden shift occurs at the moment of Hannah's death in a yard fire. Whereas others are distressed by what they are witnessing and so they rush to help, Eva is convinced Sula is quietly and calmly observing because this child is 'interested' (78) in seeing her mother burn. What goes unnoticed is that Sula is equally interested in her grandmother's response in this moment. Eva flies out of the bedroom window in an effort to reach 'and cover her daughter's body with her own' (75). On seeing Eva 'fly' Hannah herself goes 'flying out of the yard gesturing and [...] running, dancing towards' (76) people, and Sula is aware this is because her mother is in jubilant celebration upon finally having proof of her own mother's love. As for Sula, she suddenly realises her grandmother has been the cause of much of her mother's discontent, and proof of her motherlove has come too late. Sula finally reacts to the horror she has just witnessed by vomiting (76). This action also signifies her releasing all the anger she has felt for her mother, which shall turn into mourning. Now, a new anger consumes Sula and it is directed at Eva. Years later, Eva confirms she is acutely aware of this anger when she takes to calling Sula a 'crazy roach' (93). Finally, Sula exacts revenge in her mother's name by 'putting Eva out' (121) of the family home.

Death also becomes an inheritance in the Peace matriarchy. It allows for that final fantasy of oneness with the mother; Plum laughs and Hannah dances as they both make their final journey, and when it comes to Sula's turn she goes quietly, with her

eyes closed and a thumb in her mouth (149). She experiences both pain and pleasure with her body withdrawing into itself to assume a foetal position, but also responding to the natural rhythms that come to surround her. Morrison inverts the image of maternal labour so that Sula moves back up the dark 'tunnel' before dropping into a watery womb. There is another dimension to Sula's association with water, which relates to her African heritage. Mohamed Larbi Bouguerra links water to myths and cultural symbolism and he reveals that, '[f]or Africans, water is energy, vigour, strength and resilience. [...] It is the "water of life" when it purifies; it can also be "water of death" when it corrupts, but it is never dead water'.<sup>455</sup> Likewise, in death water becomes a life source for Sula since it fortifies her with the strength to overcome pain. Her body lacks oxygen yet her smile indicates a continuity of experience. Morrison breaks away from this event to return to the main narrative, leaving Sula in the safety of her mother's womb, and nourished by the water of life. Interestingly, it is not death that marks the end of the 'short-lived'<sup>456</sup> Peace matriarchy, but the fact that its eldest and youngest members separate to become opposing forces. The narrator informs us that Sula has inherited both 'Eva's arrogance and Hannah's self-indulgence' (118), and a review of these values leads to redefinitions. They become signs of personal strength that confirm Sula's self-awareness and self-value. In recognising herself as an individual Sula is treading the same path that her grandmother discovered as a newly single mother, but Morrison shows along the way Eva has failed to maintain her sense of self. Instead, she has succumbed to conventional thought; perhaps it was Hannah's questioning of her motherlove that finally broke Eva's fighting spirit and so now she promotes a life of unquestioning service and sacrifice for black women as mothers.

Morrison's fiction reflects reality since she states, 'there's still an enormous amount of misery and self-sabotage, and we're still shooting ourselves in the foot'.<sup>457</sup> She identifies the choices that are available to African-American women, including her readers. Hence, if the grandmother is intent on promoting patriarchal convention, her granddaughter is determined to resist that script of conformity and will attempt to write her own rules. Perhaps Sula is unaware that she has arrived at this point in her life as a result of the feminist mothering she received. She has experienced what O'Reilly describes as 'a mother-daughter connection [that] empowers the daughter *if and only if* the mother with whom the daughter is identifying is herself empowered'.<sup>458</sup> Feminist mothering is built on the foundation of a motherlove that enables daughters to choose

their own path in life just as their mothers did before them. They are encouraged to become independent women rather than conformists or victims. The youngest member of the Peace matriarchy is also keen to explore an independent life and she has been mentored, albeit indirectly, by her mother as well as her grandmother, or 'Big Mamma' (92). However, the death of one woman, and now the resentment coupled with patriarchal conformity of the other, brings these model-mentor relationships to an abrupt end and Sula must find her own path. Having experienced city life Sula returns home after ten years, and it quickly turns into a battleground. There is an unmistakable tinge of jealousy in Eva's voice when she speaks to Sula. After leaving the Bottom for eighteen months Eva's return home was marked by the loss of a limb and for this she gained attention, but it is clear Sula has made only gains. She also draws a crowd and it is because she exudes glamour and grace much like 'a movie star' (90). Sula is wearing a 'black crepe dress' (90) that signifies a continued mourning of her mother alongside anger at her grandmother; it is offset by pink and yellow zinnias that symbolise her sense of self as being in full bloom. The most important gain Sula made whilst being away was that she made the time to shape her own self and to hone her anger. Now Sula returns battle ready, but Eva is no longer a worthy opponent.

Morrison herself draws attention to the fact that 'Sula doesn't use the same language Eva does because they perceive things differently',<sup>459</sup> and these differences come to light in a conversation on marriage and motherhood. Eva voices that familiar masculinist cultural tradition in informing Sula of what she "need[s]" (92) to anchor her life, including a man and babies. Sula rejects her grandmother's advice along with the traditions it endorses. Here, she is speaking not so much in anger than as the voice of New Seeing. Eva notices this newness about Sula and other sources also confirm she 'has an odd [yet interesting] way of looking at things' (104). Furthermore, Sula is able to seduce her best friend, Nel, into 'see[ing] old things with new eyes' (95), albeit temporarily. The Green matriarchy comes to grow in place of the Peace matriarchy with Nel taking on the role of ancestor mother, sacrificing her life in service to motherhood,<sup>460</sup> and in this way she also takes over from Eva to speak as the voice of tradition against the New Seeing presented by Sula. Nel must remind her that being black and being a woman means she "can't act like a man" (142) presumably because unlike a man she is required to sacrifice herself. Sula, turns around this argument by using those same markers to frame a rhetorical question: "[a]in't that the same as being

a man?”” Morrison has chosen Sula to present an important new perspective for the benefit of her black women readers; they, too, must be made aware that by sacrificing every bit of themselves in marriage and motherhood they will “get nothing for it” (145). The language used by Sula resembles that which Morrison has used when speaking about her own experiences. She states that in being ‘somebody’s parent, somebody’s this, somebody’s that, [...] there was no me in this world’.<sup>461</sup> It is important for a woman to find balance that will allow her to care for others but also nurture her own self, as did Morrison by becoming a creative writer whilst also being a mother; in this way she declares, ‘I fell in love with myself’ and ‘reclaimed myself in the world’.<sup>462</sup> If a balanced life is what Morrison is promoting as the ultimate goal to her reader then it is clear Sula falls short.

Upon her return home Sula is, indeed, a changed woman. Previously, just like Eva, she resorted to self harm as a means of protecting another (54), but now she focuses entirely on her desires—“mak[ing] myself” (92)—and will not consider her own self in relation to another. Sula is independent, but she is also selfish and this point of ambivalence supports Morrison’s claims about what she calls the Black feminist ‘thing’. Sula’s failure is that she has abandoned Eva, meaning she denies responsibility for her ancestor. Sudarkasa identifies seven African family values that were traditionally passed down generations, including a rule that ‘adult sons and daughters returned the sacrifice [made for them] by putting the needs of their elderly parents before [their] own desires’.<sup>463</sup> Despite the problematic elements of this model, which required complete sacrifice from the parents and then their children, this value did promote a reciprocal cycle of care similar to what is endorsed by Morrison both within and outside of her fiction. In *Sula* there is the indication that Hannah intends to observe this Africanist value upon her return home ‘to take care of [...] her mother forever’ (41). However, Hannah’s debt remains unpaid for her life is cut short and so the responsibility must be taken on by her daughter. Morrison makes it clear that failure to maintain circles of care shall result in there being ‘just circles and circles of sorrow’ (174) in an individual’s life. Sula’s failure results in her dying alone without either Eva or Nel by her side. The missing element here is sisterhood which, if it were still present, would have supported Sula; this would also have allowed for a more positive conclusion to Morrison’s narrative.

We can see then how Morrison uses her narrative space to define her own black feminist standpoint, advocating the importance of experiencing oneself in relation to another; this shall ensure a balance in the lives of black women so that they are not entirely selfless or selfish. Eva is shown to be more successful than Pilate in achieving this aim. Her mothering of Plum combines elements of motherlove with self-love, thereby qualifying as a black feminist action. However, her relationship with Hannah reveals a slippage because this daughter experiences mother-hunger that makes her question her mother's love. Eva is certain that in ensuring Hannah survived poverty she has demonstrated her love. Hannah believes she also needed emotional nurturance, which Eva could not offer due to circumstances beyond her control. Here, Morrison identifies another strand of her black feminist standpoint; when focusing on their children mothers must strike a balance between the physical and emotional care they shall offer. Similarities can be drawn between the mother-daughter relationships of Eva with Hannah and Hannah with Sula. Morrison allows narrative space for honest appraisals of mothering and by adding her voice Hannah confirms her ability for feminist mothering that need not be all consuming. In this way black mothering is shown as an ambivalent experience; there is motherlove even in anger, or alongside feelings of dislike. These daughters fail to identify the motherlove offered to them and in order to satisfy their mother-hunger they shall make use of the inheritance passed down their matrilineal line. Manlove transforms to become fleeting moments of motherlove, meaning that intimacy with men allows for pleasure that shall somehow connect them with their mothers for however long each liaison will last. Morrison uses symbolism to show how the pantry and cellar become womblike spaces in which this activity is conducted. In the same way we can unpick Sula's complex ritual for satisfying her mother-hunger. In the equally ambivalent language of daughterlove she attacks the earth so as to demonstrate the injury she wishes to cause her mother, but it also signifies a womblike space that she wishes to re-enter. Finally, the hole she has created is refilled in an act of reparation for this symbolic rage-filled revenge against her mother.

Anger is another inheritance that is passed down the matrilineal line and it can also be passed back up. Sula's anger is no longer aimed at Hannah, but it is carried on her behalf. This shift occurs at the moment of Hannah's death. In watching both her mother's suffering and her grandmother's rescue efforts, Sula realises her grandmother

has been the cause of much of her mother's discontent. Whereas Sula's anger against her mother turns into mourning, a new anger takes its place and it is directed at Eva. Death is yet another inheritance and it allows for that final fantasy of oneness with the mother for Plum, Hannah, and Sula. However, it is not death that marks the end of the Peace matriarchy, but the fact that its eldest and youngest members separate to become opposing forces. Along the way Eva has lost her sense of self and now promotes a life of unquestioning service and sacrifice for mothers. Sula, however, insists upon making her own rules. She is able to do this as a result of the feminist mothering she received, having become an independent woman because she followed the examples set by her mentors. However, the death of her mother, and now the patriarchal conformity of her grandmother, brings these model-mentor relationships to an abrupt end and Sula must find her own path. Sula emerges as the voice of New Seeing and through her Morrison informs black women readers that by sacrificing every bit of themselves in marriage and motherhood they will get nothing in return. However, Sula does not represent the balanced life that Morrison promotes; she has always been independent, but now she has turned selfish. Sula's failure is her abandonment of Eva meaning a reciprocal cycle of care cannot continue in the Peace home. Undoubtedly, she would have survived with the support of female comradeship and black sisterhood. Alice Walker identifies sisterhood as an integral part of the mother-daughter relationship. She believes, '[w]e are together, my child and I. Mother and child, yes, but *sisters* really, against whatever denies us all that we are'.<sup>464</sup> This definition has its origins in the bloodlines of female family relations; however, it is also possible to trace sisterhood in alternative formations of family. Morrison conveys the positive qualities of sisterhood in kinships without bloodlines that are formed by women in *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise*. The final section of this chapter shall identify and then briefly examine the strengths of black sisterhood in *Bluest Eye*, which offer points of comparison for the failed sisterhoods in *Sula* and *Song*.

### 3. Sisterhoods of Love

The non-biological sisterhood that Morrison presents can be viewed as a patchwork process that eventually comes together and creates a whole. As such, her fiction echoes

the concept that has been employed by a sisterhood of black women writers, including Collins and Walker. Collins uses a quilting metaphor in her assessment of beauty ideals defined by racial markers. She asserts a white standard of beauty has influenced the minds of a significant proportion of African-American women. Of particular concern are those who were not born with fair skin, light coloured eyes, or straight hair, yet they search for ways to artificially achieve these physical features. Having stated the need for a black feminist deconstruction of these standards Collins goes on to suggest that quilting could provide an alternative point of reference since it promotes an ‘Afrocentric feminist aesthetic’.<sup>465</sup> She observes:

African American women quiltmakers do not seem interested in uniform color scheme but use several methods of playing with colors to create unpredictability and movement[.] [...] Overall, the symmetry in African American quilts does not come from uniformity [...]. Rather, symmetry comes through diversity.<sup>466</sup>

In the African-American community, the practice of quilt-making is identified as an interesting patchwork process that allows for diversity and no one can predict the shape it will take. Collins believes physical beauty should be understood in the same context; the black female body, much like a patchwork quilt, must take shape freely and in doing so it shall offer a unique depiction of beauty. Walker offers her own understanding of the quilting metaphor and she identifies two kinds of quilts. Firstly, there is the patchwork quilt that ‘is exactly what the name implies—a quilt made of patches’; and secondly, there is the crazy quilt which, Walker warns, ‘only *looks* crazy. It is not “patched”; it is planned’<sup>467</sup> The idea of a crazy quilt resembling a well planned process is certainly identifiable in Walker’s novel, *The Color Purple*.<sup>468</sup> A patchwork quilt is put together by Celie, the leading protagonist, and she is joined by Sofia, her step-daughter-in-law. Shug Avery, the mistress of Celie’s husband, also contributes something by offering her dress for the project.

Celie reveals the quilt pattern is called ‘Sister’s Choice’ (56). Although it is pieced together from old material, on a symbolic level it communicates female unity as well as a carefully organised plan of action. In essence, these black women are piecing together new identities from the scraps that represent their existing lives. Each one of them is offering a part of herself to the new Sisterhood of Choice, which, in turn, offers her a sense of protection against the hardships and injustices of life and also helps find



an appropriate outlet for her repressed anger. Prior to this critical moment in the text, Celie appears to be lost in a world of conventionality that is also marked by a spate of tragedies. A letter from her sister, Nettie, insists Celie must, 'fight' (22), but she believes this is not possible; she reveals to the reader, 'I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive' (18). Eventually, Celie does learn to fight and comes to rely on support from 'crazy' Sofia whom she claims, 'feels like my sister' (47). Sofia is a woman of strength who has been a fighter all her life and so she becomes a mentor for Celie (39). Furthermore, Shug guides Celie by teaching her survival skills and encouraging her self-development, and she also protects Celie from a violent husband named Albert (72). In the company of these women, who become like sisters, Celie grows and her development is marked by Albert's observation that she, too, is now 'talking crazy' (181). This statement offers confirmation of Celie's anger which, at times, is coupled with violent thoughts about her husband (110). The sisterhood that Walker presents in this novel is nurtured by one woman's love for another, rather than anger. Mary Agnes—or Squeak—also enters the sisterhood, but she must first rid herself of the anger she feels for Sofia, who is the wife of her lover; as Celie learns for herself, 'what good being mad gon do?' (91). There is the suggestion then that love must win out over anger because, as Shug asserts, '[e]verything want to be loved' (177). Indeed, the sisterhood of black experience promotes love for oneself as well as another; it proves to be a more fruitful emotion than anger because it is mutually beneficial.

In *Sula* and *Song*, hierarchically structured matriarchies fail to develop into effective sisterhoods. In the Peace family, angry women turn on each other rather than express anger at those sources that are actually responsible for their suffering, including racism, sexism, war, poverty, unemployment, and absconding male partners. Pilate does achieve a sense of sisterhood with her sister-in-law, Ruth, by protecting her unborn child from its father's assaults, yet Pilate fails to achieve the same success under her own roof. In the Dead matriarchy, black sisterhood is impeded by the effects of excessive love. Pilate and Reba are guilty of having spoiled Hagar (312). She has been immersed in her grandmother's saccharin love and so now Hagar is too weak to accept rejection from a man; the result is that she disintegrates into an emotional and physical wreck. She does have the potential to become a black feminist figure, since she possesses that familiar quality of 'craziness' (301), meaning that she would need to focus her anger upon the man who has caused her pain. However, Hagar turns on her

own self and those physical features that represent her African ancestral heritage. She pays to have her hair straightened, (312), and also applies the ‘peachy powders and milky lotions’ (311) that catch her eye at a shop makeup counter. These actions demonstrate Hagar has fallen in love with white beauty as it appears on the posters advertising makeup brands; with this being the case we must assume she has fallen out of love with herself and so her chances of survival are slim. The death of black sisterhood precedes Hagar’s actual death. It occurs in that moment when the youngest member of this matrilineal line, who represents its future, declares on behalf of all women, “‘we are weak’” (95). The crazy women belonging to the Peace and Dead matriarchies fail to create ‘crazy quilts’ that would signify their sisterhood. However, Morrison is closer to achieving this objective in two of her other novels.

In *Bluest Eye*, a sense of sisterhood is achieved by the three prostitutes living above the Breedloves’ house in Lorain, Ohio. China, Poland, and Miss Marie are described in insulting terms, such as the ‘[t]hree merry gargoyles’ or ‘three merry harridans’ (42), but note how they are also being referred to as a collective of equals. According to Allen Alexander their ‘lives [...] have meaning because [...] they] define themselves rather than relying on the judgments of outsiders’.<sup>469</sup> The ability of these women for self-definition confirms their sisterhood has developed as a black feminist framework. In this sense the trio remind us of Pilate, the woman who has birthed herself, carries her name in a box as if it were a prize, and for a significant part of her life defines her own simple rules that go against social norms. Pilate’s way of life and her home reflect simplicity (54) and, likewise, the prostitutes choose simplicity in their lives by remaining ‘whores in whores’ clothing’ (43). They create reciprocal circles of care through sharing stories (41), engaging in light teasing of one another, and letting laughter fill their home (40). Just like Pilate, Poland also likes to sing; her voice, which is both ‘sweet and hard’ (38), has a soothing effect on everyone living in the house. Whereas the power of song is able to bring together the women in Pilate’s home in a chorus of ‘Sugarman’ (49), still, Hagar remains ‘hungry’ (48) for something else and is in danger of breaking away from the group. Conversely, in *Bluest Eye*, Marie’s hunger is satisfied by belonging to this sisterhood. Although she experiences ‘a mild lonesomeness’ (60) because she is separated from her children, sisterlove is able to satiate her maternal cravings as is confirmed by her ‘belch[ing], softly, purringly, [and] lovingly’ (44).

Food references are associated with Marie, featuring heavily in her stories about the past and they also form a part of her general vocabulary. She affectionately refers to Pecola as “dumpling” (38), “[c]hittlin” (39), “[c]hicken” (42), and “honey”.

When speaking to Pecola she appears to take on the role of a mother, showing concern for her would-be daughter’s welfare. On a chilly autumnal day Marie repeatedly asks her, “[w]here your socks? [...] You as bare-legged as a yard dog” (38). From these women Pecola receives love and it can be identified as both motherlove and sisterlove.<sup>470</sup> The ‘three magnificent whores’<sup>471</sup> are capable of grand gestures, including their displays of affection for a raggedy girl with whom they have no blood ties, and whose own mother appears distant. In reaching out to Pecola, these women are able to do what Eva herself has failed to do in the fragile relationship she shares with her orphaned granddaughter. Following a long absence, when Sula returns to the Peace house she receives no welcome or even a hint of affection; instead, Eva refers to her as being one of the “folks” (91) of the community thereby immediately creating a distance between these two women. Certainly, the grandmother loves her granddaughter and for this reason she refuses to attend her funeral; retrospectively, the reader is informed Eva could not bring herself ‘to see the swallowing of her own flesh into the dirt’ because she was certain her ‘heart could not hold’ (171) in the grief or love she felt. It is Eva’s silence that results in the failure of her matriarchy and prevents it from becoming a potential sisterhood. Doreatha Drummond Mbalia confirms, ‘[s]isterhoods are needed in the African [American] community, and through them, communication, not silence, will forge the way toward a healthy, wholesome future for all people [...] and] especially women’.<sup>472</sup>

In *Bluest Eye*, moments of silence also feature as Marie holds back on revealing certain details about her past, indicating this sisterhood is still a work in progress. However, in comparison to Eva’s incapacity for outward displays of affection the whores, who are described as being ‘friendly’ (39) women, are able to communicate their fondness for Pecola and they welcome her into their familial fold. Reciprocal circles of care allow for the women to be ‘with Pecola [...] just] as free as they [are] with each other’ (43), showing her love and also receiving it from her (38). Pecola demonstrates her solidarity with the sisterhood by defending these condemned women in a conversation with friends, Claudia and Frieda. For her, “[t]hey all nice” (82), and because they are not entirely driven by materialistic gains they are willing to share

clothes, footwear, food, and money with her (83). Furthermore, whether taking trips to the cinema or local carnival they go ““everywhere together””. Here, we are reminded of a significant image that forms in Morrison’s later novel, *Beloved*; on their visit to the local carnival Paul D, Sethe, and Denver become a part of the community. Upon seeing ‘their hand-holding shadows’ (56) sweeping the ground a new feeling takes over Sethe as she considers the possibility of ‘a life’ (56) of togetherness. Later, she comes to believe the hand-holding shadows were, in fact, ““us three”” (214) in reference to the bond that has been formed by herself, Denver, and the new arrival, Beloved; however, this sisterhood shall not thrive because it chooses to close itself off from the rest of the community. Likewise, in *Bluest Eye*, the sisterhood created by the trio of women and their newest member does not progress much further since they absolutely refuse to integrate with the larger community, because they are certain it would reject them. Since they are fully focused on their anger towards the men and women of Lorain (42:43), the whores fail to recognise Pecola’s suffering outside of the sisterhood.

It is clear to see then how the examples of non-biological sisterhood presented by Morrison are much like a patchwork process that comes together and creates a whole, allowing for diversity and freedom. In this way Morrison adds her voice to the black feminist position that sisterhood must act as a protective cell thereby nurturing each member’s development and helping to find an appropriate outlet for her repressed anger. Sisterhood communicates unity as well as some form of organised plan of action that shall ensure equality and for those multiple voices of experience to be heard. The black matriarchies that we see in *Song* and *Sula* fail to become forms of black sisterhood because of a number of factors. They are thriving communities, but they are also hierarchies of power leaving no room for equality amongst family members and so circles of care becomes circles of suffocation. The eldest member of the Dead matriarchy dominates over other family members and in this way she does not do enough to encourage them to realise their own strength. We see the consequence of Pilate’s excessive love for her granddaughter leaves this young woman too weak to defend herself outside the home. Instead, Hagar turns on her own self and this puts the matriarchy and its future at risk. The Peace matriarchy is more successful in encouraging strength amongst its family members but anger turned inwards corrodes its very structure and eventually it causes separation. The strength of black sisterhood depends upon commitment from all of its members and Hagar’s proclamation—that all

women are weak—confirms her inability for building and sustaining sisterhood. In comparison, Morrison showcases the sisterhood that has been achieved by the three whores; they become a family of equals through reciprocal care and shared experience. They rely on the simplest things in life that will allow them to demonstrate their care without complicating their lives, including food, song, and being able to talk to one another freely. The strength of this sisterhood is its ability to work against silence, but it does not progress much further because its members refuse to integrate with the larger community; the consequence of this self-imposed state of isolation is that the women are ignorant of events going on the outside and so they fail the outsider who has come into their circle. Morrison recognises that the strength of an effective sisterhood depends upon integration, equality, and effective communication.



Morrison writes in anger, but also love, to challenge aspects of Africanist tradition and propose changes so as to create a positive role model for the black women of today for whom she writes. Her reevaluation of the term matriarchy identifies it as an ambivalent status that is at once enriching and burdensome. In a post-emancipation era matriarchs have taken the place of ancestor mother figures and are expected to be committed to a group consciousness in which there is no recognition of their own sense of self. In contrast, Morrison explores the lives of these black mother figures as individuals and also considers the options they could create for themselves if they were to realise their potential for anger and use it to (re)discover their own needs and desires. Morrison creates a point of New Seeing into the traditional role of the matriarch and it is informed by her black feminist standpoint; she advocates reciprocal care as a way of transforming the matriarchal experience because it would allow for recognition of oneself in relation to another. This concept also becomes a form of inheritance that Morrison is passing on to her black women readers. Morrison compares and contrasts matriarchal spaces against forms of supportive sisterhood that offer the blueprint for experiencing oneself in relation to another to experience unity and diversity. The following chapter shall further develop my argument in relation to Morrison's vision of sisterhood through an examination of her later works of fiction. I suggest that with the turn of the new century

her black feminist thought has also found new direction; we see how anger no longer serves a positive function in her fiction, but love continues to be an important feature and now she also draws attention to the value of the spoken word.

## Chapter Four

### The Value of Love in Sisterhood

“Don’t let her speak!”<sup>473</sup> were the words that were used to attack black women’s rights campaigner and Abolitionist Sojourner Truth as she took to the stage at an anti-slavery rally in 1852. Furthermore, amongst the assembled crowd of white men and women one voice questioned whether Truth was actually a woman. Having been denied the right to use her voice, but needing to respond to the doubters, she would use the only currency available to her with which to communicate a defence; she revealed her bare breasts to speak her truth in silence.<sup>474</sup> This noted figure was ‘one of the first feminists’<sup>475</sup> to work against an imposed silence and campaign for the rights of black women, and over the years black feminism has established its platform upon which multiple voices of experience have been heard. Furthermore, it has promoted the need for open channels of communication so that not only can black women speak up,<sup>476</sup> but they can also hear why they have been subjected to forms of oppression by various sources. Audre Lorde, for instance, has declared ‘Black men [...] must] speak up and tell us why and how their manhood is so threatened that Black women should be the prime target of their [...] rage’.<sup>477</sup> In response to the anger of such oppressors black women have been encouraged by black feminists to realise their own anger because it proves ‘useful against [...] oppressions, personal and institutional’, and when ‘[f]ocused with precision it can become a powerful source of energy serving progress and change’.<sup>478</sup> With the release of her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*, in 1970, Toni Morrison introduced her black feminist voice and it, too, spoke of how ‘[t]here is a sense of being in anger. A reality and presence. An awareness of worth’ (37:38). In this narrative space, alongside anger she presented love in its various forms, recognising that ‘[w]icked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, [and] stupid people love stupidly’ (163). From this point forward Morrison’s fiction would promote both anger and love as equally empowering forces in the lives of especially black women. However, I claim the key focus in her later novels, *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), and *Love* (2003), communicates Morrison’s changing perspective that is reflective of a shift in black feminist politics of the twenty-first century.

Throughout her study, *all about love: New Visions* (2000),<sup>479</sup> the noted black feminist, bell hooks, employs plural pronouns to speak for the global community, thereby negating the differentiating markers of race, gender, class, and sexuality. She is concerned with love that here represents something quite unlike those trite experiences of intimacy or short bursts of passion that eventually fizzle out; love is now identified as an important ‘movement’<sup>480</sup> that needs to grow and the responsibility for this lies with every one of us. hooks asserts that ‘[n]o matter what has happened in our past, when we open our hearts to love we can live as if born again, not forgetting the past but seeing it in a new way’.<sup>481</sup> The suggestion that whilst not forgetting events from the past our future must now become the focus, particularly when it is considered in relation to a difficult African-American history, becomes a message of hope and a plea for new thinking that shall be possible if individuals choose love in their lives. In another one of her studies, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (2004),<sup>482</sup> hooks promotes her message to those men of the world who adhere to patriarchal rules which have damaged their relationships with women by manipulating them into showing their anger but hiding their love. She makes it clear that for the anger to stop a process of ‘[h]ealing’ is required, but it ‘[can]not take place in isolation’.<sup>483</sup> Once again, in relation to the black experience, this statement endorses the important role of community in enabling the recovery of all that has been corrupted or damaged in the lives of individuals, whether they are men or women. There are notable points of comparison in the language and content revealing Lorde’s black feminist standpoint, which she stated during the late seventies and early eighties, and the position taken by hooks two decades later. Lorde aligned anger with ‘progress and change’, advocating it as the movement black women would need to choose so as to empower themselves and respond to the anger of their oppressors. hooks, whose thought process began ‘MOVING [...] BEYOND FEMINISM’<sup>484</sup> at the close of the last century, has arrived at the idea of love and believes it must be embraced by all of us irrespective of biological, cultural, or social differences; she is certain the love movement allows for healing as a ‘new way’ of achieving progress.

The trio of novels that are under discussion in this chapter were written by Morrison during the crossover period between the previous and current centuries. These works indicate a number of changes in the author’s approach to the subject of black experience; firstly, she is resting her angry black feminist voice and moving away from



it to consider the value of love. In *Jazz*, her singing narrator echoes hooks' position by celebrating all that is 'new' (7) as individuals move forward from 'the sad stuff' and 'bad stuff' of the past. As the novel draws to a close the narrator speaks of love and the desire to finally hear people 'say out loud what [they think] they have no need to say at all' (229). In *Paradise*, Morrison suggests further definitions of what love could mean, thereby adding to what she originally stated in *Bluest Eye*. She proposes "[l]ove is not a gift. It is a diploma" (141) and hard work is required for it to be achieved; furthermore, love is "unmotivated respect" (146) for oneself and for another and so it becomes a reciprocal transaction. Love can no longer be a self-interested experience because it requires partnership or community; love is also, quite simply, the ability to "[j]ust ... talk" (216) and listen (262). Finally, in *Love*, Morrison creates narrative space for love itself to be heard. Interestingly, although this voice is identified as being female it is without a racial profile, which indicates a second change in Morrison's work; she is actively promoting a diversity of experience and the idea of community without the need for race labels.<sup>485</sup> Since love is referenced as a single letter, *L*, there is a sense of incompleteness from which we understand Morrison expects us to add our own ideas and flesh out this definition. *L*'s otherworldly voice hums seductively so as to stop us in our tracks and reintroduce us to what silence is because, as she goes on to say, '*most of my race[—that is, the human race—]has forgotten the beauty of meaning much by saying little*' (3). In light of this announcement, it is clear to see Morrison is staging an intervention; there is no longer an oppressive silence to hold any of us back and yet when we speak the words do not reflect thought or care. She takes us back to silence and from this point forward we must practise thinking about what we want to say, and when speaking we must also be prepared to listen to others out of respect that is also a gesture of our love for them. Evidently, the third change in Morrison's approach relates to the need for open dialogue.

In her earlier fiction the author broke an uncomfortable silence surrounding the black experience by giving voice to dead ancestors, broken men and women, and abused children, but her later fiction indicates the time has come for individuals to tell their own stories; after all, she states, 'one of the goals [...] of liberation was to make it possible for us not to be silenced'.<sup>486</sup> In *Jazz*, her narrator admits to being 'unreliable' (160) and here Morrison is pointing out the risks of handing over responsibility for one's story to another; this borrowed voice might not reveal the entire narrative, or

could make grave errors in retelling it, or even lose control of it altogether. In previous chapters attention has been drawn to Morrison's presentation of "'new perspectives" on "old" reality'.<sup>487</sup> She has written her fiction for the black women of today,<sup>488</sup> forcing them into the practice of '[N]ew [S]eeing',<sup>489</sup> so that they can draw important meanings from the silence surrounding a forgotten black women's history. In this later fiction, there is every indication that Morrison is still committed to her black women readers whose learning continues. They are now being asked to consider the lasting power of love over anger, of oneself in relation to the larger community; and having realised their ability for New Seeing they are now being encouraged to engage in New Speaking that is language no longer inhibited by silence, and so it can be experimented with.<sup>490</sup> It is also possible to consider how forms of community and New Speaking allow for the children of missing mothers to experience love in *Jazz*, *Paradise*, and *Love*. In this context, sisterhood can be examined as a form of community that Morrison is keen to promote because it relies on 'communication, not silence, [... to] forge the way toward a healthy, wholesome future for all people [... and] especially women'.<sup>491</sup> The following section will study why forms of sisterhood are needed to break the silence that consumes children suffering from 'mother-hunger' (*Jazz*: 108). Those that do attempt to satisfy their lack by searching for love from another source can only arrive at love if, with the support of that chosen surrogate, they can discover their ability for New Speaking that will then allow for New Seeing into those lost relationships; this is because Morrison continues to believe events of the past must be understood before they are laid to rest and only then can one move forward. I shall begin by drawing attention to the failures of existing language that Morrison presents in these works, which allow us to understand why New Speaking is urgently required.

### 1. New Seeing, New Speaking

Speaking from a black feminist perspective, Barbara Christian recognises language as offering a 'way to express what one knows/feels even when one doesn't know one knows it'.<sup>492</sup> Whereas language does enable the inner voice to find its outlet it is also the case that language bound by rules might suppress what is outwardly revealed as a representation of what is inwardly felt. In *Jazz*, language fails Violet Trace since the

words that come out of her mouth do not aptly convey her deep love for husband, Joe. It translates to become the language of ownership as she talks of Joe being ‘mine’ (95) because ‘I chose, picked out and determined to have and hold on to’ him. Soon after, we see the narrator reproducing this unbecoming language by stating that Violet did, indeed, ‘claim’ (105) Joe in the same way a person might claim a piece of property. Violet, however, is very much aware of how her love for Joe is being corrupted through language, and so when she screams out ‘NO!’(95) mid-sentence it is to deny her association with the words she has uttered and the incorrect meaning that shall be produced in the reader’s mind. Furthermore, this becomes one of the reasons for Violet splitting into two personalities or two voices; now she chooses an altogether different kind of language to tell us ‘*that* [other] Violet is me’ (96), thereby disassociating herself with the voice that spoke moments earlier. If, as Christian suggests, language can accommodate the expression of a person’s conscious thoughts as well as their unconscious ones, then it is necessary for language to become a free form that can be played around with; the speaker needs autonomy so they can find the right words to accommodate their thoughts and feelings, or even create their own language. The narrator in this novel, who is capable of double-speak, is able to subtly send out a warning about the power of language and our relationship with it: ‘if you don’t know how [to take control], you can end up out of control or controlled by [... that] outside thing’ (9).

The narrator in this particular novel intends to reveal her thoughts and offer opinions on the narrative action; however, her tendency to frequently state phrases like, ‘as far as I know’ (17), or ‘I don’t know’ (9/59/141), or ‘I don’t think’ (16), at the beginning or close of sentences confirms her inability to take responsibility for her words and those spoken by Morrison’s characters. Carolyn Denard attests that Morrison is ‘a careful wordsmith [... who has been] widely praised for her deft use of language’ but, at the same time, ‘she does not write to engage a private indulgence of her imagination. Hers is not art for art’s sake’.<sup>493</sup> Indeed, Morrison’s authorship allows her to not only create fiction, but also use language for the purpose of pointing out its power as well as its inadequacies. Through the narrator, in *Jazz*, Morrison is speaking to her black women readers to explain they must find the language that can best convey what they are thinking as she cannot take responsibility for communicating it. In *Love*, whereas the third-person narrator is simply guessing that Christine Cosey looks ‘as

though [she were] searching for a new language to make herself understood' (94), Morrison's reader is certain this is the case. As it turns out, rather than needing to find a new language, Christine wants to rediscover the language she created with her childhood friend, Heed of the Night, all those years ago. Words like "'Ou-yidagay a ave-sligaday!'" (129) come from the private language of Idigay (192), which is spoken by one friend and understood by the other. It is their language of love that works to counter silence and convey an array of feelings, including hurt, sympathy, and desires. Several decades pass before this pair reunite and the '[l]anguage, when finally it comes, has [...] vigor [... and appears as if it were] raw, stripped to its underwear' (184).

In *Paradise*, Consolata—or Connie—Sosa loses her ability to speak the language of love that she was capable of communicating in childhood; although it has no name it is identifiable as the repetitious sound of 'Sha sha sha. Sha sha sha' (226), swimming through her thoughts.<sup>494</sup> Her surrogate mother, Mary Magna, attempts to help Connie but the "'Sh sh sh. Sh sh sh'" (241) sound she creates is merely a partial reconstruction of that lost language and only Connie can find it once again. She remains stuck at 'that in-between place' of thoughts disconnected from words, until she rediscovers her ability for creating language. In the company of a woman called Lone, Connie redefines what we would ordinarily identify as witchcraft. The two women create their own definitions of what bringing back a loved one from death might be known as, with Lone calling it "'stepping in'" (247) and Connie believing it is about "'seeing in'". The narrator confirms that, ultimately, it comes down to 'a question of language'. Morrison writes primarily for and about black women, but she is also keen for male characters to discover their ability for New Speaking. Joe, when he is able to talk freely reworks existing language to declare that in his relationship with girlfriend, Dorcas, "'I didn't fall in love, I rose in it'" (135). In the examples Morrison offers her readers she is communicating the need for a new language and redefinitions of love, for these have the power to reenergise relationships and even an entire community of people. As *Jazz* draws to a close we see Joe and Violet have reunited as a couple having rediscovered their love. Felice, as a young black woman, here representing any one of Morrison's chosen readers, observes that the simple words Joe uses to communicate his thanks to Violet for the dinner she has cooked are not so simple after all. Felice explains there was '[s]omething about the way he said it. As though he appreciated it. When my father says thanks, it's just a word' (207). Whereas Felice is beginning to recognise the

possibility of there being an alternative language of love, we see other characters across these three novels being incapable of New Speaking because they choose silence over language whether willingly or by coercion. Silence is associated with children of absent mothers and for as long as it remains so shall their mother-hunger.

In *Jazz*, life for Morrison's ironically named character, Rose Dear, fails to bloom because she is certain she could never be her mother's dearest and for this reason she has missed out on motherlove. It is up to the reader to connect the fragmented parts of this story that is largely marked by Rose's silence. The account of her life lists a series of personal losses that begin in childhood. Aged ten, she loses her mother to a cruel slave regime that demands True Belle's mothering skills for its own service. Later, Rose's unnamed husband, who is also father to her five children, becomes a creature of flight (88), leaving her to explain to people the reasons for his departure. As if staging a well-rehearsed performance Rose almost sings the words; he went because he was 'fed up / tired / hungry / furious' (138). However, she comes unstuck at the point of repeating a series of alliterative words and suddenly there is an anticipation that she might angrily reveal why her partner 'just quit. Got up and quit. Gone off somewhere to sit and think about it or sit and not think about it'.<sup>495</sup> This does not happen because, as the narrator confirms, Rose prefers 'to make up talk than to let out what she kn[ows]' or feels. One final pivotal event causes further loss for Rose as she is evicted from her home (138); once again, she remains silent as a group of unidentified men arrive to remove her belongings. The empty white china cup that she clutches onto comes to signify the emptiness in her life, and also the wordlessness that is associated with it. In 'nursing' (98) the cup she is also nursing the wounds of the fragile girl within, whose desire for motherlove, husband-love, and belonging, have never been truly satisfied. At the same time, the nursing hands go some way towards communicating a rage that is building within her but without words it remains contained in the cup and Rose enters a trancelike state that is unbroken until the very end of her life when she commits suicide.

Although Gurleen Grewal states that True Belle did abandon her daughter this is simply not the case,<sup>496</sup> but the mother's inability or refusal to speak her truth results in the tragic events that ensue. At the same time, as I shall go on to demonstrate, Morrison's narrator adds to the tension by offering provocative opinions on True Belle's personal history that might or might not be the truth; in this way the author is showing that one of the consequences of choosing silence is that you lose the agency of

your story. True Belle's story is one of dedicated service and care for others; firstly, she is mother to Rose Dear and May, and then an 'othermother' to her white charge, and finally, a grandmother to at least five grandchildren. Patricia Hill Collins explains that othermothers are surrogate figures who work alongside birth mothers to care for children within families, and across the African and African-American communities.<sup>497</sup> During the period of slavery, the importance of the othermother was acknowledged by not only the enslaved people, but also white masters who referred to her as mammy. Dorothy Smith Ruiz explains that often the mammy's mothering duties would be divided between service to the master's family and caring for her own children.<sup>498</sup> With regards to True Belle's story, she did not have the option of dividing her time in this way; at first, the narrator informs us of the 'choiceless' (142) decision she has to make in leaving behind her husband and daughters to go work in Baltimore, as a mammy for her mistress' child. The narrator then contradicts that original claim by asking, 'when would she ever get to see a great big city otherwise?' Her difficult life is being portrayed as that of a young African-American woman having disconnected herself from loved ones to enjoy an adventure in the City.

The narrator further problematizes True Belle's unspoken story with the opinion that, 'if she worried [about the family she'd left behind], the blond baby helped soothe her, and kept her entertained for eighteen years' (142). The heart-rending element of True Belle's history is here being re-voiced using offensive language, suggesting whilst separated from her children she found a surrogate who would 'soothe' and 'entertain' her to alleviate her maternal anguish and perhaps even kill off memories of Rose and May. The flippant use of phrases like 'it wasn't so hard', do harm to True Belle's story. Even if there is truth in the narrator's words, meaning that Morrison's character refused to be a victim of her circumstance, and whilst thinking practically about the needs of her children she also considered the opportunity of realising a personal desire, it is important for us to hear her speak and take ownership of her story. Most importantly, there is the need for her to communicate with Rose so as to make her realise she was a responsible mother because she did not completely abandon her daughters. In fact, she relied upon her own sister to act as an othermother in her absence (142), and this key point has been ignored by Grewal in her criticism of True Belle's mothering. Looking back, perhaps Rose does have some understanding of her mother's difficult past and for this reason she asks True Belle to join her family and take charge of it as if this were

being offered to her as a second chance at mothering (142); now True Belle's othermother duties shall extend to become a part of her role as a grandmother.<sup>499</sup> Speaking outside of her fiction Morrison has acknowledged that her own grandmother 'was [a] really powerful'<sup>500</sup> woman. Likewise, the majority of grandmother figures that feature in her fiction can also be regarded as powerful and nurturing women; True Belle earns her status alongside Baby Suggs (*Beloved*), Ondine Childs (*Tar Baby*), Vida Gibbons (*Love*), and Eva Peace (*Sula*), who are all grandmothers turned othermothers.<sup>501</sup>

Without hesitation True Belle quits what the narrator sarcastically, or perhaps ironically, refers to as 'her cushy job in Baltimore' (98), rushing back to 'rescue' (137) Rose and her children. The success of True Belle's second chance to mother her own family is confirmed by the narrator who is compelled to speak on behalf of a silent Rose to state she now felt 'her daughters were in good hands, better than her own, at last' (102). Although the grandchildren benefit greatly from her presence in their lives True Belle's silence remains a problem. If it is the case that elderly African-American women are embodiments of African values, and they have 'truths to reveal and lessons to teach',<sup>502</sup> True Belle's silence means her truth shall be suppressed. There is a lack of communication between True Belle and Rose but she does offer her granddaughter, Violet, what she believes to be relatively safe stories of her time in Baltimore; however, according to Denise Heinze, through these accounts she has 'taught Violet how to despise her own skin color'.<sup>503</sup> Years later, Violet also appears to confirm this point when revealing to Felice, "[m]y grandmother fed me stories about a little blond child" (208). However, she questions her own version of events when asking, '[i]s that what happened?' (97). This boy becomes her secret obsession in life not because he represents ideal markers of whiteness and beauty that she wishes to emulate, but because he has experienced the love of two mother figures. As for True Belle she offers stories of her time with Golden Gray as partial evidence of the love she continued to feel for her daughters and how it manifested itself as care for this other child.<sup>504</sup> The fact that Golden Gray grew up to become 'clever' and 'perfect' (142) reflects True Belle's success as an othermother and this is the message she hopes to convey to her granddaughters for whom she is now responsible. However, the only message that Violet appears to learn from her grandmother and mother is that silence is of great value

when, in fact, it is a curse. Violet's relationship with silence, and her potential for New Speaking in relation to New Seeing, shall be considered at a later stage in this chapter.

In *Paradise*, Patricia Best is identified by her neighbours as being a woman who is "hard to talk to" (118), but the reader recognises that Pat herself wishes to work against the silence which has consumed her life. Her written history project concerning a mystery that occurred in the town of Ruby, where she lives, is a failure because it requires the spoken testimonies of her fellow residents, which they refuse to offer (187). Even Pat's father, Roger, 'refuse[s] to talk' (188) on the matter. In her desperation Pat resorts to communicating with her father using the written word, but the journal entries she produces are never passed on to him; the callus on her finger confirms Pat has plenty to say and she also has many questions to ask (196/198). The mystery she is working to uncover relates to her mother, the 'sunlight skin[ned]' (203) Delia, who died in childbirth because the racial politics playing out in Ruby were, and still are, designed to deny care to non-blacks and outsiders (203). Pat also writes to Delia as a way of satiating her mother-hunger, and fantasises about the way it could have been if her sister, Faustine, had lived. "We'd be a team" she writes whilst in melancholic thought that also indicates the need for sisterhood in her life; if Pat had this support she would no longer feel isolated and could also find the language that is needed to communicate her love for daughter, Billie Delia. Pat possesses a "soft [yet] cold voice" (118) that is reflective of her motherlove being held back by fear. Despite her best efforts to work against it she still 'passe[s] the [forbidden lighter] skin [colour] on to [her] daughter' (196), and so from the moment of Billie Delia's birth an apprehensive Pat dedicates her own life to ensuring her child does not become isolated just as she has been. This mother's love is constrained by fear and, later, violent rage.<sup>505</sup> At three years old, Billie Delia receives from her mother 'an unintelligible whipping' (151) for having made the innocent mistake of removing her underwear in public view.

Unlike Pat, Billie Delia does not understand the beating as being protective motherlove caught up in a violent anger. It is unsurprising then that as an adult she fights back against Pat. During one incident they both became animal-like and the mother, who the narrator confirms 'love[s] children and protect[s] them [in her role as a Schoolteacher ... now] lunge[s] after her own daughter' (203) and sends her fleeing from the home-turned-into-a-battleground. Two weeks later, Billie Delia returns briefly and although the two of them engage in a battle of 'ugly, hateful words' (202) there is



no need for violence on this occasion. As it is later revealed, Billie Delia's time away is spent at a former Convent taken over by a sisterhood of women. In their company she gradually comes to understand Pat's dangerous motherlove and for this reason she returns home; however, Billie Delia's decision to leave once again can be understood as her protest against, and rejection of, Pat's inadequately expressed motherlove. Pat's desire to experience sisterhood—an embracing community—shall not become a reality because in violence she positions herself against Billie Delia. In an isolated state once again Pat silently contemplates whether she has spent years 'defend[ing] Billie Delia or sacrifice[ing] her' (203) to the injustices of 8-rock rules created by the men of Ruby. Although she struggles to find the right words to articulate and justify her actions the image of this hardened mother figure is somewhat alleviated by the narrator's description of her suddenly tearful state (204). Soon after, Pat makes personal progress when engaging in conversation with Reverend Misner; he is an outsider who is equally troubled by the operational ways of the Ruby community. In his company she (re)discovers the value of being able to "[j]ust ... talk" (216), to engage, to discuss, and even to argue. Having gathered her thoughts in silence, and having realised the power that goes with being able to talk freely, Pat returns home to burn the written documents she has produced (217), thereby signalling her readiness to finally talk to Billie Delia provided she can hold back that lingering fear for long enough.

Jean is another mother who appears in *Paradise*, but since she chooses not to break her silence her story becomes lost in the pages of this text. She gives birth at the age of fourteen and by the time her daughter, Seneca, has turned five (126), Jean walks out on her perhaps with the intention of returning some time later, or determined not to at all. The narrator reveals that she goes on to experience marriage and motherhood and so questions are raised in our minds concerning this character and the events relating to her teenage years. Jean's silence on the matter means that she shall not reveal her truth to us and, more importantly, her method of informing Seneca also fails to serve its purpose. This particular story is set in 1958 and the location is 'a brand-new government housing' (126) complex. A. Scott Henderson explains that American social housing in the 1950s created new schemes which allocated places for 'school drop-outs, [...] and unwed mothers'.<sup>506</sup> In the absence of Jean's testimony we must assume that she is also unmarried and has not completed her basic education. Furthermore, during this post-war period Jean's life as a single mother would be one of poverty and struggle.

The mother and daughter live an isolated life in the sterile environment of their apartment block where there is no sense of community, and no othermother on hand to take care of either one of these children. Hence, none of the neighbours notice Seneca has been abandoned until she approaches them after having spent several days and nights alone in the apartment (126). Interestingly, Seneca has never known Jean as her mother. She knocks on neighbours' doors to enquire if they have seen her 'sister' (126) and, years later, when Jean meets a lady who she thinks might know where her daughter is she introduces herself as a concerned 'cousin' (316). Once again, in the absence of other evidence we must work with the scant information available; here, there is the suggestion Jean is denying her mothering role in an attempt to cover up a personal shame that must remain unspoken.

If Jean is, in fact, Seneca's sister *and* her cousin at the same time then her story becomes one of incest and rape.<sup>507</sup> Seneca may well have been born in such tragic circumstances and, if so, this information would somewhat justify Jean's silence. However, before fleeing she does leave a letter written in red lipstick by a biscuit box. We are told that as a five-year-old child Seneca recognises only her name and the rest of those words are recognised a year later, when she learns to read, but how much of the letter does she actually understand? Although the content of it is never revealed we must assume the 'loud red marks' (128) speak of a mother's anger at the injustices she has suffered, and as time goes by the written word becomes lost in what is now a 'smeared firecracker red' lipstick mess. From a point of New Seeing we can interpret the red marks as a showering of kisses that Jean is offering her daughter. Furthermore, she places her name next to Seneca's as a way of confirming their lives shall be forever linked by this privately noted sisterhood. Perhaps the letter also details Jean's plan or a plea that the perfect family be found for her daughter so she can be loved and her every need taken care of. In keeping with the new approach to her fiction, Morrison refrains from speaking on behalf of this vulnerable child-turned-mother but, interestingly, she is obliged to speak up for another silent mother, in *Jazz*. Wild is Joe's mother and she is also Beloved who Morrison removed from the narrative action in the closing moments of her previous novel so as to focus on Sethe Garner's story and her future.<sup>508</sup> It is out of a sense of indebtedness then that Morrison must bring back Beloved, to continue her story and also give voice to the silence she has opted for this time round. In *Beloved*, she was the '[t]hunderblack' naked and pregnant young woman (261), with 'breath

sugary from fingerfuls of molasses' (121). In *Jazz*, she returns as the 'naked berry-black woman' (144) with 'a rippling movement in her stomach' (145). She continues to satisfy her cravings by now living amongst 'the cane' (37). It must be noted, however, that in choosing a black male character to give voice to Beloved's mothering experience Morrison continues to explore new ground; here, she is promoting a community not divided by gender by showing that a man without selfish motives is willing to claim her forgotten female character. His name is Henry Lestroy, but also Hunters Hunter, and this doubling of names also allows Morrison to offer doubling voices, one of which is her own.

Against Joe's criticism of the 'crazy' (176) woman who birthed him, Morrison and Henry insist '[c]razy people got reasons' (175), and in relation to this character her reasons have already been uncovered in the narrative space of *Beloved*. Henry now (re)names her Wild because 'that was the word he thought of' when first tending to her (166). Despite her muteness and agitated state, she effectively communicates with him through 'the touch of her fingertips' and a 'bite' of his skin. He sees beyond the violence that marks Wild (153), for he realises she is conveying something significant through her silence. Henry bears witness to Wild's pregnant body fighting itself and refusing, at first, to release the newborn, and this is the first sign of her motherlove. When finally her son appears she herself disappears into the woods leaving him behind, and this is more likely to be out of fear of forming an attachment rather than absolute rejection (170). Years later, upon realising the woman living out there is his mother Joe's reaction is an ambivalent mix of anger, curiosity, and yearning. His rage is in response to Wild's continued silence and for this reason he calls her an 'indecent speechless lurking insanity' (179).<sup>509</sup> Conversely, in honour of Wild's importance as a returning character and an ancestral presence, Morrison reworks her silence using symbolic references that can be understood as her language of motherlove for Joe. It relates to the natural elements that are associated with Wild's preferred environment; we know that she wears a green dress which becomes her camouflage cloak outdoors (162/172), and in this way she becomes an 'absent presence'<sup>510</sup> in Joe's life. There are traces of Wild all over and her son is able to pick up on them each time he goes in search of her. As a young man he sleeps in a tree (103), which embraces him and protects him through the night, just as a mother would. Wild becomes this tree that is both '[d]efiant and against logic' (182) in its growth and freedom. It is surrounded by a

striking scene of 'carpet grass, wild hibiscus and wood sorrel' that offers further evidence of the absent mother's presence. Wild is everywhere and nowhere all at once.

Joe's final search for his mother takes him to her home, which is 'the safe space of her cave'.<sup>511</sup> In a previous scene that describes Joe's difficult birth, his mother's womb is referred to as the 'foamy cave' (170) that he clung onto. Now, as a young man, he regresses to infantile behaviour that sees him return once more to that space of safety. Whereas, on a previous occasion Joe 'crawled' (177) towards his mother, this time he makes his way directly back to her womb that is 'a private place, with an opening closed to the public, [but] once inside you [can] do what you please' (184). Inside this cavity, Joe's attention is drawn to a green dress that is lying next to a folded silk shirt. Having entered this 'pre-Oedipal maternal space',<sup>512</sup> Joe now retreats in an Oedipal-like moment, believing his mother belongs with another in reference to the owner of that shirt lying beside her dress. This item of clothing belongs to Golden Gray, the man who once rescued Wild, and who has since been rescued by her. As a consequence of the responsibility for Wild's story having been handed over to another source many questions are left unanswered. We shall never know the true nature of Wild's relationship with Gray; it might be one of sexual attraction on his part,<sup>513</sup> or it could be that this young man's search for his lost father has led him, instead, to yet another surrogate 'mother figure'<sup>514</sup> in the form of Wild. Nonetheless, in this space, where there is privacy and freedom, Wild's disguises have been removed and she is able to expend her motherlove. The reader is left wondering if Joe has retreated too quickly; had he stayed a little longer perhaps he would have finally met his mother in person and spoken with her. Wild continues to change shapes and form with each return to her son. She is the tree that protected him, the womblike cave that swallowed him up, and she is also one of those 'blue-black birds with the bolt of red on their wings' (176) that he sees on occasion. Hunters affirms that whenever the redwings appear, it 'always mean[s] she [is] close'. These signs are able to draw Joe's attention but, ultimately, he needs to hear Wild's voice and a definite declaration of her motherlove for him and it never comes.

It is clear to see Morrison considers breaking silence to be an important step for progress within and outside of the African-American community. Furthermore, this must be followed by a discovery of language that can faithfully communicate one's thoughts and, most importantly, express their feelings of love for another. For this to occur, language must become a free form that can be played around with to reflect the

speaker's autonomy. At the same time, by pointing out the power of language as well as its inadequacies Morrison is indicating that individuals must take responsibility for their chosen words. It is possible to create new language or rework existing forms and she encourages this exercise by offering examples in her fiction, including *Idigay*, which is a language of love created by two childhood friends. Morrison is keen for every one of us, irrespective of gender or race distinctions, to discover our ability for New Speaking and so she shows Joe as being equally capable of reworking familiar language to create his own meaning of love. Such redefinitions have the power to reenergise relationships and communities; where there is silence rather than New Speaking love is invisible and this reflects the experiences of children of absent mothers across these three texts. *Rose Dear's* silence leaves her story fragmented and it is linked to losses that begin in childhood, with her mother leaving home to fulfil her duties as a slave-time mammy. Rose's silence adds to that of her mother's since *True Belle* cannot find the words, or refuses to voice them, so as to reveal her truth and prove she did not abandon her children; as a consequence of choosing silence one loses agency over their story and Morrison shows this to be the case for *True Belle*. Furthermore, as a grandmother she represents an elder of the community and a guiding figure to younger members, but her silence on certain matters limits her ability for this important role. By also embracing silence in her life *Violet* follows the path chosen by her mother and grandmother.

Morrison also explores the story of a daughter whose desire to work against the silence consuming her life is never fully realised. The deaths of her mother and unborn sister further constrict *Pat's* isolated existence, leaving her without a sense of supportive sisterhood. She has many questions relating to that double tragedy, but since there is no one willing to answer them she must commit her thoughts to paper and then hide them away. This exercise does serve a therapeutic purpose in that it allows *Pat* to form an imagined connection with her mother to whom she also writes, but she is yet to find the right language that would allow her to communicate her motherlove for *Billie Delia*; part of the reason she holds back is out of fear for her daughter's future and that fear manifests itself as violence. *Pat* might experience a uniting sisterhood if she did not use violence since it only serves to position her against *Billie Delia*. The story of *Jean* gets less attention and becomes lost in the pages of the same novel because this young mother remains committed to her silence that is born out of shame. She also favours the written word and uses it to communicate her story—featuring her anger and her

motherlove—in a letter that is left behind for her daughter as Jean disappears from her life. There is uncertainty as to whether or not Seneca has understood the words she eventually comes to read. Another significant aspect to this story is that the life shared by mother and daughter prior to this pivotal event is an isolating one without a sense of community, or an othermother on hand to offer support. Morrison is equally interested in exploring the mother-hunger that is experienced by sons as is revealed through the story of Joe and the searches that he conducts for his mother. Wild is everywhere and nowhere all at once; her motherlove operates at a symbolic level that is not fully comprehended by Joe because, ultimately, it is a silent form. He needs to hear Wild's voice and a definite declaration of her motherlove for him, but it never comes.

In the absence of a supportive sisterhood or any other form of accommodating community these suffering, silent, mothers turn on their children or away from them; and the mother-hunger of those children remains unless they can find surrogate figures to help fulfil their lack. In *Love, Heed* and *Christine* find each other just like Sula and Nel did in Morrison's previous novel, *Sula*. They, too, are the daughters of emotionally distant, yet physically present mothers within the home. We know little about Heed's mother, but details of Christine's widowed mother emerge throughout the text. Kadidia Sy is wrong to suggest May Cosey's neglect of her daughter is as a result of her being selfishly focused upon 'making money [...] to secure [a] high-class status'.<sup>515</sup> Sy accepts the account of an intermittently 'misleading'<sup>516</sup> third-person narrator above the monologues that are offered by L; she is the omniscient voice of love, but also a former employee of the Cosey hotel empire and therefore, a credible witness to crucial events that have taken place. L recognises May as being concerned about the changing political landscape of 1960s America and the effect that desegregation might have on her family's business interests (9). She is equally concerned about her daughter's right to the Cosey inheritance following the demise of her father-in-law, Bill, and his young widow staking her claim. May's growing fears are expressed as anger that sounds like 'crazy' (82) talk when everyone else, except for L, hears it; and having been ridiculed for so long, finally, she quietens down (81). The fact that May even found her voice is a surprising occurrence since her history is that of a 'poor hungry preacher's child' (96) who would marry into a rich family only to take on the role of a 'slave' (102) to the Cosey men. Her dedicated service would be in silence further compounded by her inability to respond emotionally upon the death of her husband, Billy Boy (140). Out of

a sense of duty to her remaining family May dedicates herself to rescuing the hotel from neglect, with it also being her daughter's inheritance, and for this to happen she must step back from her role as a mother. May entrusts L to act as an othermother to care for young Christine (137), and although this surrogate figure recognises motherlove as being the motivating factor for the decision that has been taken, the child herself rejects this notion, thus marking the beginnings of a complex mother-daughter relationship.

According to Sarah Appleton Aguiar 'silence is a form of death',<sup>517</sup> and since May opts for it in her life it can be said that her daughter is grieving for both her parents. Christine turns from mourning to resentment in response to May's silence, especially when she does not say anything to defend her against Heed who, as Bill's wife, is now Christine's volatile step-grandmother. When Heed sets Christine's empty bed alight May moves her daughter into a smaller room with the intention of protecting her, but Christine fails to see this motive and stages her own silent protest by running away. The comforting smell of oranges that lines her path along this journey also draws her back home to her mother (96); the sweet yet sour orange itself serves as a fitting symbol for this ambivalent mother-daughter relationship. Finally, Christine's removal from the home sees her largely excluded from secrets within it; the focus of her anger becomes her mother who she believes failed to speak up against her grandfather's decision (184) to have her sent away to boarding School. This relationship is now reduced to exchanges of the written word with Christine being able to 'destroy' (96) letters that become convenient substitutes for the mother who has hurt her and must now be punished just as she was in the Cosey home. It is also the case that this separated mother-daughter duo is at times reunited by the spoken word; May is 'relieved to hear her [daughter's] voice' (162) on the other end of a phone even if their conversations shall turn into arguments (141). Nonetheless, Christine views herself as an 'unwanted nuisance daughter' (164), and whilst being tormented by the fractured state of this motherlove she is also mourning the loss of what I term as her otherlove. It sustained Christine through those earlier childhood years until just before Heed married her grandfather, when something secretive and shocking occurred which 'the girls could not talk about' (192) then or for many years afterwards. Looking back, L recognises that Heed and Christine were friends but also like sisters (136), and in this way they formed a mutually supportive community of their own. Many years later, when Christine returns home she stages an actual '*break-in*' (141) as a way of communicating her

desire to also break into the silence that has separated her for so long from her mother's love and also this otherlove.

Upon Christine's return an elderly May becomes fearful once again, but this time it is not out of the need to protect Christine, and L's suggestion that May fears for her own life must also be disregarded because it offers no supporting evidence (141); rather, this fear is of talking about the past as May is still not ready to engage with her daughter in this way. Christine is aware of her mother's anxiety and whilst accepting her need for the silence to continue she herself works within this boundary to care for May through the final year of her life, offering her generous, muted daughterlove with every meal she prepares. Even as May goes to her death her lips remain sealed, but are now smiling as if communicating a private message of gratitude to Christine, which not even L is able to fully understand. With the death of May Christine's mother-hunger continues and so she begins to mother herself in a delicate fashion, taking food 'with a tiny, coffee spoon' (22) so as 'to hold close the child' within her. At the same time, Christine also prepares meals for Heed and whereas food serves as a metaphor for otherlove it is rejected by Heed (28); she is hungry for words that would allow the two of them to break through what seems like an 'unsmashable silence' (156). Christine struggles to find the right words with which she could communicate with Heed; equally, she finds her own self lost within language that has proved to be burdensome rather than freeing, and so the words fuse together as she refers to herself as a 'street-worker-baby-sitter-cook-mimeographing-marching-nut-and-raisin-carrying woman' (167). Finally, the two friends move away from 'wordlessness' (184) and towards New Speaking in what proves to be a cathartic moment; through shifting pronouns "'you'" and "'I'" unite to become "'us'" and begin placing their separated selves and individual stories of mother-hunger next to each other. With Heed beside her and now free to talk Christine revisits history to discover her ability for New Seeing; her anger against May finally softens and so she is no longer addressed as "'mother'", but "'mama'". The friends also return to Idigay that is the language of their otherlove. Although Christine is still keen to talk following the death of Heed she finds herself enveloped by silence once more. Perhaps she will now introduce her fellow lodger, Junior Viviane, to New Speaking so that this young girl who is also in need of 'a caring hand' (200) can satiate her mother-hunger (116) with Christine's support.



In *Love*, food becomes an important motif and Morrison recognises it as a dual signifier, of satiation and seduction; it has the power to entice individuals into recovering their lost voices and also (re)discovering love. In *Jazz*, Morrison honours the music form that has ‘mourned and championed’ (x) love, and which is driven by what she calls an ‘unreasonable optimism’. This narrative space creates an equally seductive and satiating jazz and blues rhythm to work against the silence that is in danger of consuming the lives of children still pining for their missing mothers. The coming together of Violet and Joe is able to temporarily alleviate the silence (30). That first meeting under the southern night sky allows them to experience the freedom of ‘complaining, teasing, explaining, but talking’ (105) all the while, and together they go on to create a beautiful riff that celebrates their love for one another. Twenty years later, their marriage is at breaking point due to the silence that has taken over (36); they have lost their shared rhythm because the overbearing tempo of City life has drowned it out and so each forgets ‘what loving [the] other’ (33) is all about.<sup>518</sup> Violet has ‘never forgot[ten] Rose Dear’ (101-2), and as for Joe, ‘Wild [is] always on his mind’ (176). Their unrelenting mother-hunger is expressed in reference to their relationship with food and drink. Violet obsesses over ‘malted milkshakes’ but they ‘alone [don’t] seem to be doing any good’ (93) because she is wasting away just as an infant lacking nourishment from its mother would (197). Whereas Violet develops a taste for ‘vanilla malt’ (223), Joe’s preference is ‘cherry smash’. Violet also obsesses over her caged birds and the talking parrot amongst them that regularly sings to her, “‘I love you’” (24). She prefers to talk to these winged creatures rather than her husband and then, one day, quite suddenly she empties the birdcage as an indication of her readiness to talk to someone—rather than something—who shall be willing to talk back and show her love in this way.

Joe reaches this point in his life long before Violet does and he openly declares “‘I can’t take the quiet’” (49) anymore. Whilst his wife still refuses to engage with him in conversation he finds a surrogate in the form of his teenage lover, Dorcas. She becomes his mistress, but does not fully embody the traits of a sexual siren or a woman oozing with confidence because she is still a child, and so her ability for equal partnership and being able to rescue Joe is questionable from the outset of their relationship. Upon the deaths of her parents Dorcas ‘never said a word’ (57), but in the company of Joe she finds her voice once again. When recollecting her past she cries and

he is there to comfort her (38), but in return all she has to offer him is sex which is ‘*the clown of love*’ (*Love*: 63). In *Love*, Morrison speaks as the voice of love so that it can reach her black women readers and those amongst them who think like Dorcas; she is telling them there are ‘*better kinds*’ of love to be explored that have a lasting impact whereby ‘*everybody benefits*’. In this way Morrison is pointing to the need for reciprocity that can allow for a process of healing to progress and, in *Jazz*, Joe is yet to reach this understanding. The death of Dorcas leaves him devastated because he is certain she was the only one he could talk to and this allowed him to become “‘fresh, new again”” (123). Whereas Joe does realise his ability for New Speaking—claiming to have “‘r[i]se[n]” rather than “‘fall[en] in love”” (135)—in the company of Dorcas, he does not progress to the point of New Seeing. As for Violet, she chooses her dead love rival’s aunt, Alice Manfred, to become her surrogate and this relationship is much more successful than that of Joe and Dorcas. Prior to meeting Violet Alice’s life is consumed by a fear of talking and the truths she might discover upon doing so. Instead, she prefers the written word, allowing speculative newspaper articles to become her truth (73).

Upon their first meeting Alice’s fear holds her back; Violet begins to talk but is forced into silence once again upon Alice declaring she does not “‘want to hear”” (82) anymore. So as to avoid further discussion Alice demands Violet remove and hand over her unravelled clothing so that she can fix it but, as K. Zauditu-Selassie observes, Alice is suddenly aware that ‘Violet is in need of repairing’ and this equates with a need for ‘healing’.<sup>519</sup> At the same time, with each stitch applied to the cuff on her dress (82), and the lining of her coat (110), Alice begins adding something of her own self next to Violet’s story. Out of the silence words begin to flow and meetings between these two women become frequent events. Violet wants to legitimise this new relationship and comes to award it a dual status; since they “‘were both born around the same time”” (110) they are like sisters,<sup>520</sup> and because Alice reminds her of True Belle Violet is also identifying her as an othermother (112). ‘The calming effect of [...] tea’ (89) plus talk is felt by Violet temporarily and so she must return to Alice each time for more (114); conversely, following a visit to Alice’s home, Violet finds she cannot drink a malt milkshake just purchased from a drugstore, for she is bursting with otherlove. This reciprocal relationship allows Violet to also satiate Alice’s mother-hunger. Upon talking with Violet she realises ‘something [has] opened up’ (83) within her own self and it is linked to her mother, whose old basket now has a place in Alice’s house (75). Both

women remember their mothers and their thoughts suddenly become words. ““Oh, Mama”” (110) Alice sings out thereby creating a new melody, and Violet adds to it with her own lyrics; ““Mama. Mama? Is this where you got to and couldn’t do it no more’. In the safety of this supportive sisterhood, Violet discovers New Speaking and it allows her to progress to the point of New Seeing, allowing for at least a partial understanding as to why her mother committed suicide. Violet and Alice reach a point in their relationship where ‘talk [isn’t] always necessary’ (112), but there is now a shared laughter to hold back the silence and maintain the musical beat, or otherlove, they have created together (113). However, there is one other matter that Violet must be helped with; echoing Alice’s earlier words she insists ““I don’t want to ask him. I don’t want to hear what he has to say”” (110) in relation to her husband. This refusal threatens to unravel Violet’s progress, but Alice is able to draw her back once more using the simplest words that have the power to jolt Violet into realising she and Joe must ““make it”” (113) together.

We can see then how a supportive sisterhood allows for the children of missing mothers to recover from their loss. Morrison promotes the healing partnerships of Heed with Christine and Violet with Alice, which are achieved by them overcoming a fear of silence and working against it to talk about the past. The written word proves to be a poor substitute because its source cannot always be verified and so questions are raised about the truth it has to offer; furthermore, it does not do enough to break the suffocating silence that these children continue to experience into adulthood. In comparison, one can take ownership of the words they have spoken that also then become their truth. Talking allows for individuals to exchange thoughts and ideas; in this way they are supported as they begin to understand why their mothers chose silence—whether out of fear, a sense of dejectedness, or a form of protest—and there is even the possibility of recognising their motherlove or, at the very least, being able to lay to rest the past once it has been acknowledged. One progresses to this point of New Seeing, of understanding their past, only upon discovering their ability for New Speaking. Finally, their mother-hunger is satiated and they can now move forward also having experienced otherlove from their supporting partner. There is, of course, a reciprocal element to this process and the end result is that one story can be placed next to the other. There is also the potential for this skill of New Speaking to be carried over into new partnerships of experience, as does Violet with Joe, and so might Christine

with Junior. The following section shall consider how partnered sisterhoods can expand to become larger forms of community. In *Paradise*, Morrison explores this concept in relation to the group of women that reside at an ex-Convent, and Connie is able to recreate the therapeutic model of healing that she was introduced to by her adoptive mother, Sister Mary Magna. This section shall also consider how Morrison is reworking the concept of sisterhood in light of her altered black feminist perspective on unity, community, and equality.

## 2. Unifying Sisterhoods

According to Audre Lorde, ‘for women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is discovered’.<sup>521</sup> Lorde’s black feminist voice is speaking in terms that are not race-specific, but all-inclusive. This sentiment is echoed by Morrison in her portrayals of the individual women that visit the Convent, and find themselves wanting to permanently become a part of this community that it is slowly being formed. Morrison links redemption to the spoken word with it becoming part of a reciprocal transaction, and she is conveying to her black women readers that they, too, can discover their power in this way. Over the years, the Convent welcomes ‘crying women, staring women, scowling, lip-biting women or women just plain lost’ (270), all of whom display their mother-hunger; these descriptions also hint at the silence that is associated with them whether it is because of fear, nervousness, shock, or anger. A number of women arrive from Ruby, including Sweetie, Soane, Arnette, and Billie Delia, and come to view the Convent as a temporary “‘haven’”<sup>522</sup> away from the rules of patriarchy governing their lives. The men in charge of Ruby value the barrenness of ‘silent conversation’ (135), believing it allows for certain secrets to be kept and it also insulates their private community against outsider influences and threats of harm. These women have also taken to silence and somehow equate it with survival, and so they fear voices. Sweetie, for instance, prefers to be an observer rather than a speaker, with her every waking moment spent watching over her sick children but never talking to them or about them (129). She arrives at the Convent with a voice that is perhaps ‘chuckling’ or ‘sobbing’ (128), but somehow it communicates to her host, Connie, a need to rest here and to be

left alone. It is the fear of hearing those many other voices that sends Sweetie fleeing the very next day. As for Soane, she never stays but relies on Connie for help with matters of a secretive nature. When speaking to anyone else Soane has 'very little' (44) to say. Connie is relied upon by others to become a surrogate figure and help them through their ordeals, but she is also a lost daughter in need of her own supportive network and it comes from four other women.

A starting point for Connie's history is the year, 1925, when aged nine, she is rescued in Brazil by a nun, and brought to America. The narrator recalls how this orphaned child 'clung to Mary Magna's hand' (249), and through the years she continues to be attached to this othermother figure. Sister Mary's gift is to be able to work against the silence to draw out words from pursed lips. She takes on the role of an interlocutor who shall ask important questions and listen when responses are given, but she cannot take over another person's story and make it her own. The one occasion on which Sister Mary attempts to help draw Connie out of 'that in-between place' (241), by giving her the words she is looking for in the silence, represents a failed attempt. A second failure occurs when Connie attempts to rescue Sister Mary from death, by 'rais[ing] up the feathery body and [holding] it in her arms and between her legs' so that this 'death [becomes] like a birthing' (223). This process of acting out a symbolic birthing is a gesture on Connie's part to establish some kind of biological link to her othermother, and it represents the ultimate act of daughter-love. However, this is also a desperate effort to hold on to her surrogate other so that their conversations can continue in silence; others observe how following the death Connie appears to be talking to herself and 'answering questions no one ha[s] asked' (259). Since Morrison now actively promotes the need for words to be heard loud and clear, in the form of a call and response transaction, she shows Connie's isolating practice as being a failure. Connie attempts to feed her mother-hunger by consuming alcohol as if it were mother's milk (70), and it simply tricks her into believing she is 'removed of appetites' (221). She has taken to living in the womblike spaces of a wine cellar (167), or pantry (225), where there is also silence. Instead of the silence Connie needs a supportive community which is slowly forming around her; she, too, is required to support it and so, finally, she steps into the space that has been left by Sister Mary, to become the 'new and revised Reverend Mother' (265). From her predecessor, Connie has learnt that mother-

hunger must be fed with words and she goes on to introduce four other women to this point of New Seeing.

Mavis Albright is introduced as ‘a negligent and abandoning mother’.<sup>523</sup> She appears to be on trial for the deaths of her infant twins, Merle and Pearl, even if the setting is her living room rather than a courtroom, and the voice of authority belongs to the media rather than the law. A woman journalist, working for the *Courier* newspaper (25), bombards Mavis with questions, but the answers are not forthcoming (22). The words struggle to exit from her mouth and when they do emerge there is uncertainty in what she is saying, but there is also a sense that this is not her truth and so, when she states “‘I can’t / I don’t / I couldn’t’” (22:23), she is also working to undermine this official account. We hear the patriarchal voice of her husband when she speaks to offer the reason for having ventured out on that fateful day with the children: “[y]ou can’t expect a man to come home from that kind of work and have to watch over babies while I go get something decent to put in front of him. I know that ain’t right” (23). In the final part of this announcement Mavis begins to speak for herself, thus introducing an interesting moment in the story; she is aware of the gendered codes of behaviour in operation here and declares that patriarchy’s expectations of her just ‘ain’t right’. At first glance, the marriage of Mavis and Frank represents a neo-slavery, with him having secured his position as the master of the house whilst she silently serves his every need. However, it is within this silence that she is plotting to execute her plan of action. Mavis is used to telling lies to protect the reality of Frank’s failures as a husband—as she proves when confirming to the journalist that he returns home every evening, even though this is not the case (24)—but she has become equally capable of telling lies in order to protect herself. In this way she secures a set of keys for Frank’s Cadillac and finally, she makes her escape in the night (25).

Mavis leaves behind not only her volatile husband, but also her three remaining children who she believes are being controlled by him and following in his footsteps (31). She is especially fearful of her daughter, Sal, who has for a long time subjected her to a series of indiscernible assaults. Even when Mavis is being interviewed by the journalist, Sal is quietly clawing into her mother’s skin (22), and even aims a swinging foot at her leg (24). The reason for this violence is finally understood in the closing moments of the text, when Sal and Mavis meet up after several years apart and discover their ability for talking to one another. We learn alongside Mavis that an ambivalent

mix of fear and love drove Sal to violence, with it offering her a way of communicating with her mother and, perhaps, also desperately wanting a reaction out of her so that she would find her voice and set about rescuing not only herself but also her daughter from Frank's violence and incestuous ways (314). Returning to the moment of Mavis' escape, she exits the home wearing Sal's galoshes (27), and in this way she steps into the role of a daughter thereby abdicating her positions as mother and wife. She must leave this place behind because it has failed to become a supportive community as is indicated by the fact that her neighbours were 'pleased' (21) upon hearing of the deaths of Merle and Pearl. Now, she chooses her mother to become her supporting other, and is certain Birdie shall help alleviate her hunger for conversation, to be able to think out aloud and register her protest against the injustices she has suffered. However, Birdie is intent on keeping Mavis quiet. She feeds her daughter not so much out of motherlove, but the need to keep her quiet for long enough to explain that a mother must not ever run away from her responsibilities. Mavis' declaration that no one has the "right to kill me" (31)—whether physically or psychologically—is opposed by Birdie's counternarrative, purporting the idea that women have no rights, only responsibilities. Birdie rejects Mavis' truth by forcing her into silence once again and so her search for a supportive community continues until she arrives at the Convent; in this place the truth holds importance above all else and Connie is insistent it has to come from "telling it face-to-face" (41). Mavis is suddenly overwhelmed by this prospect and in response to Connie's questions she finds herself unable to speak at first.

Gigi appears to own her voice and Connie tests her with a number of questions to which she can offer answers without hesitation. She reaches out to Connie with her politeness that is read as a sign of care and to which Connie responds with trust. She asks this stranger to "[j]ust watch" (70) over her as she sleeps for a while since she cannot bear to be alone. Gigi agrees to this request and helps Connie to hold off the loneliness of having just lost Mary Magna. Although she has no intention of staying at the Convent on a permanent basis Gigi settles in and ends up making it her home. It is only in private moments that we discover her sense of loneliness, anger, and self-hatred for not being tough enough. In a short, sharp whisper she refers to herself as a "stupid, stupid bitch" (257); these words are not her own but they are able to reflect the hatred of others that she has internalised over the years. As for Pallas, upon her arrival at the Convent her voice is incapable of anything above a whisper (162). Connie is able to

draw Pallas out of the silence with questions about who has hurt her, and she also claims the lost child out of love rather than ownership, referring to her as “my poor little one” (173). Connie’s repetitious words create a rhythm much like a lullaby and have a calming effect on Pallas, beginning with the release of her tears and then her voice. Seneca is the fifth member of the newly formed Convent family. She was forced into silence by a foster mother who demanded she “[n]ever say that again” (261) in response to the abuse she had reported. In place of words Seneca self-harms as a way of communicating her truth in silence. She creates yet another razor line along her arm that looks like the ‘intersection’ (262) of a road, and it also represents the important crossroad at which she has arrived with there suddenly being options available to her within the safety of this Convent.

Connie comes to realise the value of talking in accordance with the teachings of Sister Mary; now she guides her own self and these four other women into forming a sisterhood of experience that is based upon that very principle. At first this seems like an impossible task; she observes that apart from Mavis the three others—all young girls—are hard to tell apart because they have no sense of individuality (221). Here, Morrison is promoting the importance of diversity which allows an individual to stand apart whilst also being able to stand shoulder to shoulder with others within a community. Connie also observes these women have ‘no plans to do anything’ (222). This statement must be read in relation to Alice Walker’s quilting metaphor, which underscores the importance of plans within a strong sisterhood that is much like a patchwork quilt. She makes it clear ‘[i]t is not “patched”; it is planned’,<sup>524</sup> meaning it has purpose and direction, and that it belongs to them all. With the support of Connie the women of the Convent must come to realise their own plans. In contrast, their progress is noted by the reader in moments where they consider their own self in relation to another, thereby creating circles of care. When Gigi’s former lover, K.D., arrives at the Convent to beat her up Gigi, Mavis, and Seneca, unite to fight him off (256); and here the sisterhood begins to form. On a separate occasion, whilst satiated by food and drink and music, the women begin swaying, ‘[f]irst apart, imagining partners. Then partnered, imagining each other’ (179). Although the women are still only capable of ‘whispers of love’ (222) for one another, they are beginning to recognise the importance of fighting against silence and so when celebrating the entry of Pallas into their sisterhood they are also keen to celebrate the moment of her having found her



voice (178). Upon seeing their progress Connie feels love for them all and, finally, she gathers them in the cellar for an important event. First there is silence and then Connie speaks; she is followed by each of them entering into a state of 'loud dreaming' (264) to offer their own stories and place them next to each other. They ask questions of each other and the answers are forthcoming, with Connie standing back to listen just as Sister Mary would.

We can see then how Morrison promotes redemptive sisterhood in relation to the spoken word. It must be experienced as a reciprocal transaction, and herein lies an important power that Morrison is keen to draw to the attention of her black women readers. Through the stories that are offered there is recognition on Morrison's part of the different ways in which women will arrive at the point of silence. In contrast she shows how it can be used as a form of control that isolates individuals, and so she is not prepared to accept that silence is synonymous with survival. Morrison creates the Convent community in order to show the importance of a supportive environment in which one should be able to speak and be heard. In turn, they must be able to reciprocate by listening to the testimonies offered by others that speak their truths. Morrison indicates that each person must take responsibility for their own truth and it should not be taken over by another. We see how mother-hunger can be fed with words and the Convent sisterhood enables this practice. It is a place of freedom and options, where one can stand apart as an individual whilst also being a part of a community. Diversity is an important aspect of the sisterhood and so we hear multiple voices of experience as well as definitions of what love is; they are all valid and can be placed next to each other. A sisterhood shall grow only if the individuals within it prove themselves as being capable of not just listening, but also caring for another. Here, Morrison is once again promoting her black feminist standpoint, presenting reciprocal care as the foundation upon which love must be experienced. Having understood and engaged with this concept Mavis is able to recreate it in her conversation with Sal and, interestingly, Gigi is able to do the same when meeting her father. Just as how Morrison supports the freedom to create new definitions of love, she also favours new definitions of sisterhood and here she is actively reworking its recognised meaning by removing the associated gender marker.

The Convent is celebrated by Morrison for its racial diversity; within this space the image of Connie and Sister Mary coming together, with 'the brown fingers gentling

the white ones' (48), creates a picture perfect image of sisterhood that can be endorsed as a model of racial unity. Conversely, the sisterhood advocates a different kind of discriminatory practice by continuing to be an 'all-female society';<sup>525</sup> it does not include any men, and there is even a rejoicing of the 'blessed malelessness' (177) in this place. There is a sense of incompleteness about this concept of community especially when we look back to Morrison's previous novel, *Jazz*, which was published five years before the release of *Paradise*. Violet recreates her experience of partnered sisterhood with Alice in her relationship with Joe; they have reconnected through the spoken word and are now able to share 'those little personal stories' (223) that have been important to their histories. This couple represent Morrison's vision of a sisterhood that allows for the stories of women to be placed alongside those of men. In legitimising this model she is practising New Speaking and New Seeing at the same time.<sup>526</sup> Furthermore, the inclusion of Felice allows this sisterhood to expand. At the same time, Felice is able 'to reconnect Violet and Joe to a [sense of] community'<sup>527</sup> once more so that they are not isolated. Of Violet she observes "[n]othing she says is a lie" (205) in recognition of the fact that she is finally able to tell her truth. As a result, Violet is certain about all that makes her "'me'" (209),<sup>528</sup> having created someone who she can count on, but also someone that Joe can count on from now on. Felice is also able to help Joe by delivering to him the final words of Dorcas that only he is able to understand (213). In return, Felice is offered a meal by Violet and Joe offers her his hand as a gesture of his love, which she accepts (214). Within this sisterhood care is reciprocated; it becomes a community of equals and each has earned his or her place within it. As the novel draws to a close members of this sisterhood, having come together like a patchwork process, are making plans for their future starting with the simple things, including money, food, and music. If 'jazz [music] emphasizes individualism',<sup>529</sup> then it can be said that Morrison's *Jazz* composes an entirely new score that promotes unity, community, and equality.



In Morrison's later fiction she maintains her ambivalent stance by moving forward to consider new thoughts, but also turning back in time to honour an important tradition. In promoting the need for New Speaking in relation to New Seeing she is, of course, reminding her black women readers of the power of voice, which in the African and African-American communities has carried and conveyed important stories from one generation to the next.<sup>530</sup> They must now (re)claim the oral tradition and the history it has to offer by adding their own voices to it and thereby confirming an understanding of its significance in their own lives. At the same time, Morrison is simultaneously revisiting and reworking the idea of camaraderie.<sup>531</sup> Looking back in time she acknowledges the strong comradeship that existed within the African-American community, but she believes that sense of community has become lost in times of freedom because of the anger that has silenced love. Now, Morrison is reshaping the concept of comradeship by removing anger and focusing on love which is the healthier option as it allows for a more wholesome experience of partnership, of experiencing oneself in relation to another without the need for silence. I have stated that Morrison's changing perspective reflects a shift in the black feminist politics of the twenty-first century, and I have also linked her standpoint to that of the noted black feminist, bell hooks. Morrison's desire to now separate love from anger can also be linked to hooks' work and her statement that '[m]uch of the anger and rage we feel about emotional lack is released when we forgive ourselves and others. Forgiveness opens us up and prepares us to receive love. It prepares the way for us to give wholeheartedly'.<sup>532</sup> Morrison and hooks are speaking their truths independently of one another and yet they are in unison to convey the renewed vision that ultimately, '[l]ove redeems'.<sup>533</sup>

## Conclusion

This thesis has examined the complex relationship between anger and motherlove across seven of Morrison's novels. She promotes love and anger as empowering experiences that are especially vital to black women's progress both within and outside of the African-American community. Against forms of oppression anger and love allow for resistance and this important message is communicated by Morrison to not only black women, but also men. Love and anger can also help sustain the black feminist standpoint that Morrison endorses: recognition of oneself is vital and equally important is the ability to be able to experience that sense of self in relation to another, and this balance must be attained whether through love or an anger-filled protest. I have studied how love and anger have defined experiences of mothering in slavery. In relation to the post-emancipation era I have explored mothering experiences within the contrasting environments of nuclear family homes where there is patriarchal influence, and matriarchal networks that are all-female forms of family. The thesis has then found a new direction that reflects Morrison's changing black feminist perspective. She continues to work with notions of love, but her later fiction indicates that the time has come to rest her angry black feminist voice because in the end love must be valued as the stronger and preferred option for oneself and in relation to another.

'Kujichagulia (self-determination)<sup>534</sup> is a significant accomplishment for African and African-American women. For a black woman to have achieved self-determination means she has also experienced self-love and is equally capable of demonstrating her love for another, including her daughter and her mother. Audre Lorde identifies self-love as the act of 'mothering' oneself. She asserts that:

As we fear each other less and value each other more, we will come to value recognition within each other's eyes as well as within our own, and seek a balance between these visions. Mothering. Claiming some power over who we chose to be, and knowing that such power is relative within the realities of our lives. Yet knowing that only through the use of that power can we effectively change those realities. Mothering means the laying to rest of what is weak, timid, and damaged—without despisal—the protection and support of what is useful for survival and change, and our joint explorations of the difference.<sup>535</sup>

Lorde identifies fear as the source of disunity amongst African-American women within the home and in the community. The same comment is applicable to an understanding of the divisions that have formed between black men and women. Fear has resulted in individuals failing to value others as well as themselves, and in fear there is the danger of becoming silent. In anger, one can attempt to conquer that fear but, as Lorde notes, individuals must recognise both the ‘usefulness’ and ‘limitations’<sup>536</sup> of their anger. In her fiction, Toni Morrison also promotes lessons of self-love, which she believes is of necessity in the lives of black women and the shaping of their experiences. She identifies (intra)racial racism, sexism, poverty, and violence, as having caused the fear that has destabilised marital and maternal relationships. Morrison, too, accepts that anger has fortifying qualities, but it is also restrictive and must be viewed as a temporary measure. As Sethe realises in *Beloved*, there comes a time when, finally, one must lay down the ‘sword and shield’ (203).

According to Denise Heinze, ‘[w]hile Morrison makes it clear that black women and men must find answers [to the problems they are faced with], she also suggests they cannot do it alone’.<sup>537</sup> In *Beloved*, Amy Denver declares that, “[c]an’t nothing heal without pain” (92), and whilst Morrison focuses on the pain that has been experienced by African-American women as well as African-American men, she is also keen to explore what might happen once the healing process begins. The families that are eventually formed by Sethe, Paul D, and Denver, in *Beloved*, as well as Joe, Violet, and Felice, in *Jazz*, present the possibilities of what can be achieved once the anger disappears and individuals—both men and women—are able to experience self-love whilst also giving and receiving gifts of love. For Morrison, ‘[w]riting is discovery; it’s talking deep within myself, “deep talking” as you say’.<sup>538</sup> At the same time, she has commented:

I think novels are necessary now for black people. I don’t think we needed them before, because we had something else. We had a way to talk to one another in the music, in the rites, in the ceremonies, in the churches, and that kind of communication is either dissolved or dissolving. It doesn’t belong to us exclusively any more. So, the only other place, at the moment, that we can do that is in the novel. I wanted to make the novel reflective of the culture, to make it oral as well as something that could lie there on the page quietly for people who don’t hear.<sup>539</sup>

Morrison believes the written word allows her to keep open a channel of communication with the people in her community, and especially the women for whom she writes. The lessons of love that Morrison promotes are tucked away in the pages of her fiction, awaiting discovery just as she awaits the angry rebellion of black women so that they can achieve progress within their homes and community. In *Jazz*, she speaks through her narrator, telling her reader, '[t]alking to you and hearing you answer—that's the kick' (229).



In her Nobel Lecture, Morrison narrates the universal folkloric tale of 'an old woman. Blind. Wise'.<sup>540</sup> The story unfolds as a group of young children visit her home one day, with the intention of challenging her claims of supernatural powers and knowledge. They present her with a bird demanding that she confirm whether it is alive or dead. After a lengthy silence, the woman responds to the children, "it is in your hands. It is in your hands". Morrison now tells her audience that:

[The old woman's] answer can be taken to mean: if it is dead you have either found it in that way or you have killed it. If it is alive, you can still kill it. Whether it is to stay alive, is in your decision. Whatever the case, it is your responsibility.<sup>541</sup>

Offering one possible interpretation of this story, Morrison states, 'I choose to read the bird as language and the woman as a practiced writer'.<sup>542</sup> This thesis concludes by offering an alternative reading of the same story. The bird represents an African-American maternal inheritance that has been passed down history and now rests with the present generation. It is in their hands and they must keep it alive in the same way that black women writers of past and present generations have done. Morrison is an African-American daughter who has inherited a maternal history and made it her own. At the same time, she is now also fulfilling the role of the wise woman who is telling 'you', her black female reader, to make this story your own and add your voice to it, so that she may say, "[l]ook. How lovely it is, this thing we have done—together".<sup>543</sup>

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## Notes for Introduction

- <sup>1</sup> In an interview with Charles Ruas Morrison has confirmed, 'I'm trying to get at all kinds of definitions of love'. Morrison speaking to Charles Ruas, 'Toni Morrison', in *Conversations With Toni Morrison*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) pp. 93-118 (p. 106).
- <sup>2</sup> Morrison speaking to Bill Moyers, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 262-274 (p. 267).
- <sup>3</sup> bell hooks, *all about love: New Visions* (New York: Perennial, 2000), p. 6.
- <sup>4</sup> Morrison speaking to Christopher Bigsby, *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Christopher Bigsby (Kings Lynn: Biddles, 2000) p. 282.
- <sup>5</sup> Morrison speaking to Jane Bakerman, 'The Seams Can't Show: An Interview with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie pp. 30-42 (p. 41).
- <sup>6</sup> See note 4.
- <sup>7</sup> Toni Morrison quoted in an interview essay by Sandi Russell, 'It's Ok to Say Ok', *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46 (p. 46). Emphasis added.
- <sup>8</sup> Barbara Lounsberry and Grace Ann Hovet, 'Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison's *Sula*', *Black American Literature Forum*, 13, No. 4 (1979), pp. 126-129 (p. 128). I borrow this term from Lounsberry and Hovet whose own study of Morrison's fiction suggests that she offers "new perspectives" on "old" reality'. Although they are referring specifically to *Sula*, their comment is equally applicable to Morrison's other texts.
- <sup>9</sup> See Zia Jaffrey and Toni Morrison, 'The Nobel Prize-Winning Author Talks About Her New Book, *Paradise*, What She Learned From Her Marriage and Why O.J. Simpson is Innocent', *The Salon Interview*, Zia Jaffrey, pp. 1-3 (p. 1). <[http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov\\_si\\_02int.html](http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html)> [accessed 12 December, 2009]
- <sup>10</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Unwin Hyman & Routledge, 1990), p. 7.
- <sup>11</sup> Of course, this hegemony has been challenged by those other female communities and their demands for an intersectional approach, out of which grew Black feminism.
- <sup>12</sup> Morrison speaking to Anne Koenen, 'The One Out of Sequence', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie pp. 67-83 (p.73).
- <sup>13</sup> Andrea O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in *Feminist Mothering*, ed. by Andrea O'Reilly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 1-22 (p. 3). Here, Morrison appears to be in agreement with those various feminisms that have unanimously called for the need to separate motherhood from mothering.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. The complete list of rules for good motherhood is as follows: '(1) children can only be properly cared for by the biological mother; (2) this mothering must be provided 24/7; (3) the mother must always put children's needs before her own; (4) mothers must turn to the experts for instruction; (5) the mother must be fully satisfied, fulfilled, completed, and composed in motherhood; (6) mothers must lavish excessive amounts of time, energy, and money in the rearing of their children; (7) the mother has full responsibility, but no power from which to mother; (8) motherwork, and childrearing more

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- specifically, are regarded as personal, private undertakings with no political import’.
- <sup>15</sup> See Toril Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 187. Moi refers to how Kristeva aligns linear time with white male language and history.
- <sup>16</sup> Toni Morrison, ‘The Site of Memory,’ in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (New York: First Mariner, 1998), pp. 183-200 (pp. 190-1).
- <sup>17</sup> Paula Gallant Eckard, *Maternal Body and Voice in Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Lee Smith* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 1.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>20</sup> Eckard also makes a brief reference to the work of black academic, Carolyn Denard, and then immediately shifts to focus on the work of Irigaray.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- <sup>24</sup> Victoria Burrows, *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- <sup>30</sup> Andrea O’Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 27.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148
- <sup>35</sup> Here, I am referring to O’Reilly’s theoretical study, *Feminist Mothering*. See note 13 for a full reference.
- <sup>36</sup> Marilyn Maxwell, *Male Rage Female Fury: Gender and Violence in Contemporary American Fiction* (Lanham; Oxford: University Press of America, 2000), p. xx. Maxwell analyses the fiction of three other authors in her study: Donald Barthelme, Joan Didion, and Thomas Pynchon.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 237.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- <sup>42</sup> O’Reilly, ‘“That Is What Feminism Is—The Acting and Living and Not Just the Told’, in *Feminist Mothering*, ed. by O’Reilly, pp. 191-202 (pp. 193-4, and p. 201). It must be noted that O’Reilly views women who practise feminist mothering as being active feminists, but since she also accepts that ‘not every feminist mother practises each theme of feminist mothering’, I suggest that Eva



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practises feminist mothering without referring to herself as a feminist. See O'Reilly, 'Introduction' pp. 1-20 (p. 20).

- <sup>43</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1999), p. xi. Chodorow's study has been challenged by various feminist groups, including black feminists, for presenting a monolithic account of 'white Western middle class' and the experiences of the 'heterosexual nuclear family' (xi). In the preface to the second addition of her study, Chodorow accepts there is diversity in experience and also argues that she is offering a general model that can be built upon to reflect those multiple perspectives and experiences. I view her socio-psychoanalytic theory as being applicable to the experience of black mothering; she certainly does offer a foundation upon which Morrison's portrayals of the black mothering experience can be further developed.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.198-200. Chodorow makes a number of important statements. She suggests: 'Girls enter adulthood with a complex layering of affective ties and a rich, ongoing inner object world. [...] The mother remains a primary internal object to the girl, so that heterosexual relationships are on the model of a nonexclusive, second relationship for her[...] [...] As a result of being parented by a woman and growing up heterosexual, women have different and more complex relational needs in which an exclusive relationship to a man is not enough. [...] [R]elationships to men are unlikely to provide for women satisfaction of the relational needs that their mothering by women and the social organization of gender have produced. [...] Women try to fulfill their need to be loved, try to complete the relational triangle, and try to reexperience the sense of dual unity they had with their mother[.]'
- <sup>46</sup> Morrison speaking to Betty Jean Parker, 'Complexity: Toni Morrison's Women', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 60-66 (p. 63).
- <sup>47</sup> In *Jazz*, Morrison describes Violet Trace as experiencing 'mother-hunger'. This term can also be used to describe the feelings of other sons and daughters in Morrison's literary canon.
- <sup>48</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 43.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>50</sup> bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 3.
- <sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>52</sup> bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (Oxon: Routledge, 1994), p. 243.
- <sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 251.
- <sup>54</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 127
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- <sup>58</sup> Collins, p. 133. This comment about Black motherhood being a contradictory

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institution, and black mothers responding to their experiences with ambivalence, can be extended to an understanding of all forms of motherhood and mothering experiences.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>60</sup> Morrison speaking to Nellie McKay, 'An Interview with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 138-155 (p. 145).

<sup>61</sup> In another one of Morrison's novels, *Tar Baby* (1981), Margaret Street's motherlove for her son is also marked by violence. The cook, Ondine Childs, accuses her of having "cut him up. You cut your baby up. Made him bleed for you. For fun you did it" (209). In response, Margaret tells Ondine, "[h]e knows I love him, [... and] that I couldn't help it" (240). The maternal ambivalence that is associated with this character makes interesting reading, but it would be difficult to insert her experiences as an angry white mother into this thesis given that its scope is to examine the experiences of African-American women. Morrison's most recent novel, *A Mercy* (2008), does focus on black mother-daughter relationships and goes even further back in history than *Beloved*. The thesis will not include an analysis of this text due to the word limit that has been stipulated, but I do acknowledge that an examination of black motherlove and anger must continue beyond this study, and I hope to have the opportunity of developing my argument further with an analysis of Morrison's latest literary work.

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## Notes for Chapter One

- <sup>62</sup> James C. Morgan, *Slavery in the United States: Four Views* (North Carolina: McFarland, 1985), p. 10.
- <sup>63</sup> Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Vintage, [1965] 1967), p. 13.
- <sup>64</sup> Christopher Morris, 'The Articulation of Two Worlds: The Master-Slave Relationship Reconsidered', *The Journal of American History*, 85, No. 3 (1998), pp. 982-1007, (p. 982).
- <sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 985.
- <sup>66</sup> Ronald, T. Takaki, *A Pro-Slavery Crusade: The Agitation to Reopen the African Slave Trade* (New York: Free Press, 1971), pp. vii-viii.
- <sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii.
- <sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- <sup>69</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Cleveland: Elibron Classics, 2005), p. 67.
- <sup>70</sup> Toni Morrison, 'The Site of Memory,' in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (New York: First Mariner, 1998), pp. 183-200 (pp. 190-1).
- <sup>71</sup> Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Introduction: The Language of Slavery', in *The Slave's Narrative*, eds. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. xi-xxxiv, (p. xxiii).
- <sup>72</sup> James Olney, "'I Was Born": Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature', in *The Slave's Narrative*, eds. Davis and Gates, Jr., pp.148-175, (p. 148).
- <sup>73</sup> Karin Schmidli, *Models and Modifications: Early African-American Women Writers: From the Slave Narrative to the Novel* (Tübingen; Basel: Francke Verlag, 1995), p. 5.
- <sup>74</sup> See note 69 for full reference.
- <sup>75</sup> Admittedly, Douglass has met with many of the important figures that he talks of, including President Lincoln and John Brown, and significant moments in his story are linked to interactions with these men; but he tends to let their stories overshadow his own. For example, he tells us of Brown's ambition to free all slaves, his chosen methods of violence, the battles that he fought, and upon his death, how his body was handed over to his widow and where his ashes scattered. The excessive detail diverts attention away from Douglass's experience. See pp. 357-61.
- <sup>76</sup> Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the life of a Slave Girl*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 2001).
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6. These are the words of L Maria Childs.
- <sup>78</sup> P. Gabrielle Foreman, 'The Spoken and The Silenced in Incidents in *The Life of a Slave Girl* and *Our Nig*', *Callaloo*, 13, No. 2 (1990), pp. 313-324, (p. 316).
- <sup>79</sup> Childs in Jacobs' narrative, p. 6.
- <sup>80</sup> Jean M. Humez, 'Reading *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* as a Collaborative Text', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 16, No. 1 (1996), pp. 29-52, (p. 29).
- <sup>81</sup> Sojourner Truth, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Cosimo, 2007), pp.

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26 & 42. This account is narrated by Olive Gilbert.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>83</sup> Humez, p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> Truth, p. 17.

<sup>85</sup> Robert B. Stepto, 'Narration, Authentication, and Authorial Control in Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of 1845*', in *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. by William L. Andrews (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1993), pp. 26-35 (p. 26).

<sup>86</sup> Douglass, p. 29.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>90</sup> This opening adheres to the formula that was set for slave narratives. William L. Andrews offers further details about the formula in his introduction to *John Thompson: The Life of John Thompson, a Fugitive Slave*, ed. by William L. Andrews (London: Penguin, [1856] 2011), pp. xvii-xxxii (p. xviii).

<sup>91</sup> Truth, p. 10.

<sup>92</sup> See bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 29. With religion being the foundation stone of the white experience at this point in history, it was used to defend the practice of slavery, but also to condemn it. hooks asserts that in promoting slavery in the name of religion white men in America, and elsewhere, became the self-professed 'agents of God'. At the same time, in reference to the 'white women reformers' who supported Abolitionist activities, hooks asserts 'they were [equally] motivated by religious sentiment'. See p. 125.

<sup>93</sup> John Edgar Wideman, 'Charles Chesnutt and the WPA Narratives: The Oral and Literate Roots of Afro-American Literature', in *The Slave's Narrative*, eds. Davis and Gates, Jr., 59-78 (p. 60).

<sup>94</sup> Douglass, pp. 43, 88, 349.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, p. 177.

<sup>96</sup> Valerie Babb, "'The Joyous Circle": The Vernacular Presence in Frederick Douglass's Narratives', *College English*, 67, No. 4 (2005), pp. 365-377, (p. 374).

<sup>97</sup> Douglass., p. 177.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., pp. 53 & 55.

<sup>100</sup> There are rare moments in the text where Douglass' mask slips to reveal emotions. On p.37 he recalls how he 'sobbed' when separated from his grandmother as a six year old. This emotional moment is shared with the white male reader because it is a childhood memory. In a separate incident, on p. 379 (and p. 381), he mourns the loss of his 'Beloved daughter Annie' and this tragedy is reflected upon in three short sentences. This is yet another example of how slave narratives would pull back from their recall of personal histories.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 227.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

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- <sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 443.
- <sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 443.
- <sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 149.
- <sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 291.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 546.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 550.
- <sup>113</sup> Nellie Y. McKay and Frances Smith Foster, 'Introduction', in *Incidents*, ed. by McKay and Smith, pp. ix-xx-xxiii (p. xxii).
- <sup>114</sup> Jacobs, p. 17.
- <sup>115</sup> See Child's introduction in Jacobs' narrative, p. 6.
- <sup>116</sup> See Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'My Statue, My Self: Autobiographical Writings of Afro-American Women', in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1990), pp. 176-203, (p. 189). It must be noted there is a body of scholarly work that claims Jacobs successfully subverts this limiting genre to her benefit, by reeling in these delicate lady readers and then exposing them to the kinds of atrocities they will never have experienced in their own lives. Nonetheless, the restrictive nature of Jacobs' narrative outweighs those triumphant moments in which she exposes the abuses of slavery against black.
- <sup>117</sup> Michelle Burnham, 'Loopholes of Resistance: Harriet Jacobs' Slave Narrative and the Critique of Agency in Foucault', in *Incidents*, ed. by McKay and Smith, pp. 278-294 (p.290).
- <sup>118</sup> See Schmidli, p. 61.
- <sup>119</sup> Jacobs, p. 9.
- <sup>120</sup> Ibid., 11.
- <sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 43.
- <sup>122</sup> Andrew Levy, 'Dialect and Convention: Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 45, No. 2 (1990), pp. 206-219, (p. 209).
- <sup>123</sup> One such happy moment in Jacobs's life reads as romantic prose; 'Why does the slave ever love?' she asks the reader. However, she also makes reference to romance in relation to violence. 'Why allow the tendrils of the heart to twine around objects which may at any moment be wrenched away by the hand of violence?' See p. 33. In a tactical move, she uses the romantic reference to draw in the readers and then corrupts it with violence to reflect the injustices of slavery against black women.
- <sup>124</sup> Jacobs, p. 11.
- <sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 31.
- <sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 38.
- <sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 28.
- <sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 47.
- <sup>129</sup> See Franny Nudelman, 'Harriet Jacobs and the Sentimental Politics of Female Suffering', *ELH*, 59, No. 4 (1992), pp. 939-964, (p. 952).
- <sup>130</sup> Valerie Smith, 'Form and Ideology in Three Slave Narratives', in *Incidents*, eds. McKay and Smith, pp.222-236, (p. 231).
- <sup>131</sup> Jacobs, p. 46.
- <sup>132</sup> Harryette Mullen, 'Runaway Tongue: Resistant Orality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Our*

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- Nig, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, and Beloved*, in *Incidents*, ed. by McKay and Smith, pp. 253-278, (p. 255).
- <sup>133</sup> Douglass, p. 155.
- <sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- <sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.
- <sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- <sup>139</sup> Kimberly Drake, 'Rewriting the American Self: Race, Gender, and Identity in the Autobiographies of Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs', *MELUS*, 22. No. 4 (1997) pp. 91-108 (p. 106).
- <sup>140</sup> James Matlack, 'The Autobiographies of Fredrick Douglass', *Phylon* (1960-), 40, No. 1 (1979) pp. 15-28 (pp. 24 and 26).
- <sup>141</sup> Ashraf H.A. Rushdy, 'The Neo-slave Narrative' in *The African American Novel* ed. by Maryemma Graham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 87-105 (pp. 92-3).
- <sup>142</sup> See Arlene R. Keizer, *Black Subjects: Identity Formation in the Contemporary Narrative of Slavery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. 47. Keizer refers to Morrison's text as a 'quintessential contemporary narrative of slavery'.
- <sup>143</sup> Truth, p. 26.
- <sup>144</sup> Jan Furman, *Toni Morrison's Fiction* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), p. 80.
- <sup>145</sup> Jacobs, pp. 28 and 44.
- <sup>146</sup> Calvin Hernton, 'The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers', in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*, ed. by Joanne M. Braxton and Andrée Nicola McLaughlin (London: Serpent's Tail, 1990), pp. 195-212, (p. 203).
- <sup>147</sup> The Garner story is one of two or three 'fragments' that influenced Morrison's writing of this text. In an interview with Gloria Naylor, she refers to a pictorial collection that she came across, entitled, *The Harlem Book of the Dead*. The photographs, taken by Van der Zee, show bodies in coffins. Morrison was drawn to the picture of a young girl who was killed by her lover, and yet she wouldn't reveal his name so that he could 'get away'. Morrison has said, 'what made those stories connect, I can't explain, but I do know that, in both instances [...] [a] woman loved something other than herself so much'. Love and sacrifice are the central themes in both these stories; the young girl is brought back to life in *Jazz* and, in *Beloved*, the experiences of Margaret Garner are given a voice. See Morrison speaking to Gloria Naylor, 'A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison', in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 188-217 (p. 207).
- <sup>148</sup> Morrison speaking to Christopher Bigsby, *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Christopher Bigsby (Kings Lynn: Biddles, 2000) pp. 249-289 (p. 257).
- <sup>149</sup> Reverend P.S. Bassett offers Margaret Garner's perspective, featured in a newspaper article entitled, *American Baptist*, in *Toni Morrison: Beloved*, ed. by Carl Plasa, pp. 39-41 (p. 40).
- <sup>150</sup> Morrison speaking to Naylor, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 207.
- <sup>151</sup> Morrison speaking to Bill Moyers, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 262-274 (p. 272).

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- <sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 272.
- <sup>153</sup> Morrison speaking to Bigsby, in *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Bigsby, p. 278.
- <sup>154</sup> Morrison speaking to Marsha Darling, 'In the Realm of Responsibility: A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), pp. 246-254 (p. 252).
- <sup>155</sup> Marilyn Maxwell, *Male Rage Female Fury: Gender and Violence in Contemporary American Fiction* (Lanham; Oxford: University Press of America, 2000), p. 248.
- <sup>156</sup> Gurleen Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p. 100.
- <sup>157</sup> Amongst the white readership of this news article, there would have been, of course, divided opinion; many would use this case to justify their argument that slavery was required to tame black slaves who were often compared to 'cannibal[s]' (177). Conversely, the Abolitionists would use the same story to highlight the tragic consequences of imposed slavery (307). In her novel, Morrison acknowledges divided opinions amongst the white community as well as the black community (pp. 234 & 312); however, these statements are not always presented as direct responses to the central event of the novel, where Sethe kills Beloved.
- <sup>158</sup> Morrison quoted in an interview essay by Sandi Russell, 'It's Ok to Say Ok', *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46 (p. 46).
- <sup>159</sup> Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1999), p. 39.
- <sup>160</sup> Morrison quoted in an essay by Sandi Russell, 'It's Ok to Say Ok', in *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46, (p. 45).
- <sup>161</sup> Susan Bowers, 'Beloved and the New Apocalypse' in *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by David Middleton (New York; London: Garland, 2000), pp. 209-230 (p. 213).
- <sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 212.
- <sup>163</sup> Furman, p. 77.
- <sup>164</sup> A.S. Byatt, 'An American Masterpiece', in *Toni Morrison: Beloved*, ed. by Plasa, pp. 15-18 (p.16).
- <sup>165</sup> Toni Morrison 'Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation', in *Toni Morrison: What Moves at the Margin* ed. by Carolyn C Denard (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2008) pp. 56-64 (p. 59).
- <sup>166</sup> Keizer, p. 37.
- <sup>167</sup> Harriet Goldhor Lerner, *The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Pattern of Intimate Relationships* (London: Pandora, 1990), p. 1.
- <sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 2. Lerner speaks specifically of women here; when angry they may be condemned as being irrational.
- <sup>169</sup> Jacobs, p. 46.
- <sup>170</sup> Truth, p. 10.
- <sup>171</sup> Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 2-3.
- <sup>172</sup> J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet As Its Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of*

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- Toni Morrison* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 148-9.
- <sup>173</sup> La Vinia Delois Jennings, *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 90.
- <sup>174</sup> Morrison, 'Rootedness', in *Toni Morrison*, ed. by Denard, pp. 61-2.
- <sup>175</sup> K. Zauditu-Selassie, *African Spiritual Traditions in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009), p. 198.
- <sup>176</sup> In *Jazz* (London: Vintage, [1992] 2005), Morrison describes Violet Trace as experiencing 'mother-hunger' (108). This term can also be used to describe the feelings of other sons and daughters in Morrison's literary canon.
- <sup>177</sup> Doreen Fowler, "'Nobody Could Make It Alone': Fathers and Boundaries in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *MELUS*, 36; No. 2 (2011), pp 13 - 33, (p. 26).
- <sup>178</sup> Jennifer Fitzgerald, 'Selfhood and Community: Psychoanalysis and Discourse in *Beloved*', in *Toni Morrison*, ed. by Linden Peach (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 110-127 (p. 122).
- <sup>179</sup> In *Paradise* (London: Vintage, [1997] 1999), Morrison once again cuts across the race line as she brings together a group of women who share their experiences and form an understanding of each other's pain.
- <sup>180</sup> hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, p. 39.
- <sup>181</sup> Jacobs, pp. 33-4.
- <sup>182</sup> Truth, p. 40.
- <sup>183</sup> Douglass, p. 106.
- <sup>184</sup> Zora Neal Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago, 2004), p. 34.
- <sup>185</sup> Lucille P. Fultz, *Toni Morrison: Playing With Difference* (Urbana; Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p.34.
- <sup>186</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), p. 84.
- <sup>187</sup> April Lidinsky, 'Propheying Bodies: Calling for a Politics of Collectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', in *Toni Morrison: Beloved*, ed. by Plasa, pp. 99-104 (p.104).
- <sup>188</sup> Paula Gallant Eckard, *Maternal Body and Voice in Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Lee Smith* (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press, 2002), p. 67.
- <sup>189</sup> Marilyn Sanders Mobley, 'A difficult remembering: Memory, History and Meaning in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', in *Toni Morrison*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2005), pp. 66-78 (p. 70).
- <sup>190</sup> See Toril Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 187. Moi refers to how Kristeva aligns linear time with white male language and history.
- <sup>191</sup> See Fultz, p. 66. Fultz states that the novel belongs to the 'several women [who] inscribe their maternal narratives against the patriarchal discourse within the slave system'.
- <sup>192</sup> hooks, pp. 17.
- <sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.
- <sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.
- <sup>195</sup> See Jerry H. Bryant, *Victims and Heroes: Racial Violence in the African American Novel* (Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), p. 13. Bryant's examination of slave narratives concludes that '[a]t center stage in these descriptions is the victim, whose role it is to project not a dominant warrior



- avenger to induce pride in a putative black reader but an example of the deep injustice of slavery to evoke indignation and sympathy in the minds of the slave narratives' many white readers'. In Morrison's slave narrative, however, the black woman reader shall witness the actions of warrior women that are motivated by anger. This further confirms that Morrison is writing from a black feminist position that re-names and re-owns the black female experience.
- <sup>196</sup> Eckard, p. 65. Eckard states that 'Ma'am's refusal to put her arms around her white rapists, the infanticide she commits, and her unwillingness to bestow names on any of her offspring except Sethe, who is given her father's name, are symbolic gestures of defiance. Her actions also demonstrate the few methods slave women had for resisting or retaliating against their white owners'. Furthermore, another method of rebellion that might be chosen by an enslaved woman would be the use of 'herbal remedies' or abortifacients, which terminated pregnancies and denied slave masters their property in the form of her children.
- <sup>197</sup> Eckard, p. 64.
- <sup>198</sup> Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 109.
- <sup>199</sup> Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 198. Chodorow's theory helps us to understand the dynamics of the mother-child relationship in several of Morrison's texts, including *Sula* and *Jazz*. Although she has been criticized for working with a monolithic model of family—that is white and heterosexual and, therefore, not easily applicable to an African-American family model—Chodorow uses the preface in an updated version of her book, to argue that she is offering mothers, or readers, a basic family model and invites us to modify it to suit our own experiences. See p. xvi.
- <sup>200</sup> Just like Sethe's Ma'am and *Beloved*, Baby Suggs, too, lives on beyond death. Sethe visits the Clearing to experience her mother-in-law's 'long-distance love [that] [is] equal to any skin-close love she [has] known' (112). Baby Suggs acts as an advisor to Sethe and is also able to encourage her granddaughter, Denver, to "go out the yard" (283) and seek help for herself and Sethe from the other women in the community.
- <sup>201</sup> Matus, p. 111.
- <sup>202</sup> We can read the colour red as a signifier of life in the sense that it is the colour of blood, and also as a signifier of loss, in economic terms.
- <sup>203</sup> See Exodus.20:3; 20:14.
- <sup>204</sup> In *Beloved*, Morrison's narrator refers to the masters' mission to 'keep [slaves] from the cannibal life they preferred'. See p. 177.
- <sup>205</sup> Bryant, p. 16.
- <sup>206</sup> Caroline Rody, *The Daughter's Return: African-American and Caribbean Women's Fictions of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 20.
- <sup>207</sup> Barbara Lounsberry and Grace Ann Hovet, 'Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison's *Sula*', *Black American Literature Forum*, 13, No. 4 (1979), pp. 126-9 (p. 128).
- <sup>208</sup> Morrison, 'The Site of Memory', in *Toni Morrison*, ed. by C Denard, pp. 65-80 (p. 72).
- <sup>209</sup> Barbara Christian, 'The Highs and the Lows of Black Feminist Criticism', in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist*, ed. by Gates, Jr., pp. 44-51 (pp. 48-9).
- <sup>210</sup> Bryant, p. 9.

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- <sup>211</sup> Fowler, p. 13.
- <sup>212</sup> Roberts, p. 37.
- <sup>213</sup> Linden Peach, *Toni Morrison* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1995), p. 97.
- <sup>214</sup> Nancy Jesser, 'Violence, Home, and Community in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', *African American Review*, 33, No. 2 (1999), pp. 325-345 (p. 327). Baby Suggs now knows why he would not let the slaves he had raised as men 'leave Sweet Home, except in his company'. It 'was not so much because of the law, but the danger of men-bred slaves on the loose' (166). The narrator also conveys Paul D's moment of realisation, telling us that he had 'believed schoolteacher broke into children what Garner had raised into men. [...] Now, [...] he wondered how much difference there really was between before schoolteacher and after' (260).
- <sup>215</sup> See hooks, p. 29; and Keizer, p. 25.
- <sup>216</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 129 and p. 132.
- <sup>217</sup> Bryant, p. 13. Bryant is referring to formulaic representation in slave narratives that present victims rather than heroes/heroines.
- <sup>218</sup> Truth, p.33.
- <sup>219</sup> Rushdy, 'The Neo-slave Narrative', in *The African American Novel*, ed. by Graham, p. 100.
- <sup>220</sup> Michele Mock, 'Spitting out the Seed: Ownership of Mother, Child, Breast, Milk, and Voice in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', *College Literature*, 23, No. 3 (1996), pp. 117-126 (p. 122).
- <sup>221</sup> Colleen Carpenter Cullinan, 'A Maternal Discourse of Redemption: Speech and Suffering in Morrison's *Beloved*', *Religion & Literature*, 34, No. 2 (2002), pp. 77-104 (p. 84).
- <sup>222</sup> Douglass, p. 352.
- <sup>223</sup> Lorde, p.127.
- <sup>224</sup> Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 11.
- <sup>225</sup> Truth's narrative describes how her master, Mr. Dumont, would praise her work skills whilst, at the same time, reducing her personhood to a single body part: "my best hands". See p. 28.
- <sup>226</sup> Barbara Omolade, 'Hearts of Darkness', in *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. by Ann Barr Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (London: Virago, 1984), pp. 350-367 (p. 365).
- <sup>227</sup> Jacobs, p. 53.
- <sup>228</sup> Truth, p. 20.
- <sup>229</sup> Jacobs, p. 16.
- <sup>230</sup> Morrison speaking to Bigsby, in *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Bigsby, p. 257.
- <sup>231</sup> Douglass, p. 151.
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- <sup>233</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- <sup>234</sup> Jacobs, p. 35.
- <sup>235</sup> Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother-Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 197.
- <sup>236</sup> Emma Parker, 'A New Hysteria: History and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*',

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- Twentieth Century Literature*, 1 (2001), pp. 1-19 (pp. 2 and 4). Parker applies Irigaray's psycho-feminist theory on hysteria to Morrison's novel. She claims hysterics are 'subjects haunted by the past, characters who unconsciously express repressed memories of psychic trauma through physical symptoms and use a corporeal discourse to articulate what is otherwise unspeakable'. See p. 1.
- <sup>237</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Cornell University Press 1985), p. 193.
- <sup>238</sup> Morrison speaking to Moyers, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 272. Morrison borrows this phrase from someone who discussed the novel with her.
- <sup>239</sup> Munazzah Rabbani and Shirin Zubair, 'Ambivalent Recuperation: A Study of Mother-Daughter Bonding in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*', *Kashmir Journal of Language Research*, 14, No. 2 (2011), p. 55 (p. 55).
- <sup>240</sup> Morrison speaking to Darling, in *Conversations*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie, p. 252.
- <sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 253-4.
- <sup>242</sup> Jesser, p. 337.
- <sup>243</sup> Eckard, p. 66.
- <sup>244</sup> Matus, p. 115.
- <sup>245</sup> Susan Bowers, pp. 217 & 219.
- <sup>246</sup> Parker, p. 5.
- <sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- <sup>248</sup> I have stated that Schoolteacher resists forming a fatherly connection with his slaves, but it can also be argued that, out of the need to survive their ordeal, slaves would show respect to their masters like children stood before their disciplinarian father.
- <sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- <sup>250</sup> Interestingly, Fowler asserts that Paul D now 'straddles maternal and paternal roles' thereby pointing to another ambivalent aspect of Morrison's narrative. See Fowler p. 26.
- <sup>251</sup> Hirsch, p. 198.

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## Notes for Chapter Two

- <sup>252</sup> Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Cleveland: Elibron Classics, 2005), p. 149.
- <sup>253</sup> Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (London: Penguin, 1965-68; repr. 2001) p. 270.
- <sup>254</sup> Douglass, p. 31 and p. 279. Douglass recalls an example of how his manhood was denied in slavery; despite having entered into adulthood just like the white man stood before him, his status was still seen as that of 'a minor – a mere boy'. See p. 215.
- <sup>255</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* (London: Pluto Press, 1982) p. 47. In the context of slavery, the process of conception was a vital feature of the labour that was expected of black men and women.
- <sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- <sup>257</sup> Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Marrow, 1984), p.57. Giddings refers to Herbert Gutman's findings. Also see bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 4. hooks' cultural study also points to this fact.
- <sup>258</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (London: Virago, 2004), p. 29.
- <sup>259</sup> Hurston, p. 110. Joe's description of women as being like chattel serves as a haunting reminder of history, when all slaves were viewed in this way; yet, in his account, only black women remain in this position whilst the men have 'progressed' in status. It must be noted that Joe's wife, Janie, defends the position of women and, of course, her subsequent actions disprove his offensive theory.
- <sup>260</sup> Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (London: The Women's Press, 2004), p. 35.
- <sup>261</sup> This idiom originates from a biblical passage that would later be reworked in Samuel Butler's narrative poem, *Hudibras*. See the Samuel Butler section in *Dictionary of Quotations*, Eds. Unknown (London: Bloomsbury, 1987) pp. 85-6 (p. 85). Also see the biblical passage, 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes', in Proverbs, 13:24.
- <sup>262</sup> Toni Morrison speaking to Anne Koenen, 'The One Out of Sequence', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 67-83 (p. 72). Although it is not stated which specific period in history Morrison is referring to when she speaks of 'those days', we must assume she is focusing on the pre-Sixties era since the interviewer is probing her on the Black Liberation movement and how it portrayed women.
- <sup>263</sup> Morrison speaking to Gloria Naylor, 'A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 188-217 (p. 196). It is possible to read Morrison's comment in two ways: firstly, she believes that whereas black men wish to rule over black women, equally, black women seek power over black men. Secondly, whilst black men wish to rule over black women, they are met with resistance; these women are prepared to engage in battles to defend themselves against such attempts and, in a retaliatory action, they might even try to take away the power of men.
- <sup>264</sup> Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (London: Vintage, 2000).

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- <sup>265</sup> Ibid., p. 8.
- <sup>266</sup> Ibid., p. 158.
- <sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 159.
- <sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 198.
- <sup>269</sup> Ibid., p. 198.
- <sup>270</sup> Ibid., p. 204.
- <sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 231.
- <sup>272</sup> See note 253 for full reference.
- <sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 13. X is quoted by Alex Healey in his Foreword.
- <sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 275.
- <sup>275</sup> Ibid., p. 354. Here, X adheres to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad and his faith-based teachings.
- <sup>276</sup> Ibid., p. 57.
- <sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp. 278, 357, and 424.
- <sup>278</sup> Ibid., pp. 172, 292-3.
- <sup>279</sup> Ibid., pp. 179-180.
- <sup>280</sup> Ibid., p. 294. X is paraphrasing Elijah Muhammad's vision.
- <sup>281</sup> Ibid., p. 180.
- <sup>282</sup> Ibid., p. 321. This is the teaching of Elijah Muhammad with which X also agrees.
- <sup>283</sup> Ibid., p. 326. X presents this statement as a tenet of Islam.
- <sup>284</sup> Ibid., pp. 483 and 493. The shift in X's perspective relates to his experiences in Mecca and travelling to places on the African continent where he experienced 'true brotherhood', including Accra and Cairo. By 1965, he was also interested in the Black Nationalist views of Marcus Garvey, and he now favoured Humanist principles.
- <sup>285</sup> Ellis Cose, *The Envy of the World: On Being A Black Man in America* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002).
- <sup>286</sup> Ibid., p. 137.
- <sup>287</sup> Ibid., p. 96.
- <sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 97.
- <sup>289</sup> Ibid., p. 127.
- <sup>290</sup> Ibid., pp. 138 and 142.
- <sup>291</sup> Michael Porter, *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women* (Illinois: African American Images, 2001).
- <sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>293</sup> Ibid., p. 1. It must be noted that Porter's reference to men beating women is based on his observations of *all* men—irrespective of their racial profile—in sessions that he has conducted as a therapist.
- <sup>294</sup> Ibid., p. vii.
- <sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 26.
- <sup>296</sup> Ibid., p. 41.
- <sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 128.
- <sup>298</sup> Calvin Hernton, 'The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers', in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*, eds. Joanne M. Braxton and Andrée Nicola McLaughlin (London: Serpent's Tail, 1990), pp.195-212 (p. 202).
- <sup>299</sup> bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria, 2004).

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- <sup>300</sup> Ibid., pp. 44 and 160. It must be noted that in this particular study hooks is discussing her thoughts on all men, irrespective of their racial profile. I believe her work is applicable to my readings of the African-American male who favours patriarchal practice.
- <sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 7.
- <sup>302</sup> Ibid., p. 3.
- <sup>303</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (California: The Crossing Press, 1984).
- <sup>304</sup> Ibid., p. 132.
- <sup>305</sup> Ibid., p. 145.
- <sup>306</sup> Ibid., p. 150.
- <sup>307</sup> Hernton, pp. 202-3.
- <sup>308</sup> Sonia Sanchez speaking in an interview with Zala Chandler, 'Voices Beyond the Veil: An Interview of Toni Cade Bambara and Sonia Sanchez', in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind*, eds. Braxton and McLaughlin, pp. 342-362 (p. 358).
- <sup>309</sup> Ibid., p. 360.
- <sup>310</sup> See Jerry H. Bryant, '*Born in a Mighty Bad Land*': *The Violent Man in African American Folklore and Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 83. Bryant states that the black feminists that would emerge during the Seventies, although they were 'energized by the peaking momentum of the civil rights movement' were equally 'resentful of the exclusive maleness of Black Power'. This movement defined progress in terms of the achievements of black men and also spoke for an entire community from this position.
- <sup>311</sup> See Sanchez interview, 'Voices Beyond the Veil', in *Wild Women*, eds. Braxton and McLaughlin, p. 360. Interestingly, during this decade, Black Mothers' Organizations also grew in numbers.
- <sup>312</sup> Bryant, pp. 282-3.
- <sup>313</sup> See Jan Furman, *Toni Morrison's Fiction* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1996) p. 18.
- <sup>314</sup> Morrison speaking in 'The Site of Memory', in *Toni Morrison: What Moves at the Margin*, ed. by Carolyn C Denard (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2008), pp. 65-80 (p. 80).
- <sup>315</sup> Linda Dittmar, "'Will the Circle Be Unbroken?'" The Politics of Form in *The Bluest Eye*, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 23, No. 2 (1990), pp. 137-155 (pp.140 & 144). In her own words, Dittmar gives an overview of the negative criticism that relates to Morrison's debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*. This criticism might also be considered in relation to Morrison's other novels, as I have done with *Song of Solomon*.
- <sup>316</sup> Morrison speaking to Thomas LeClair, 'The Language Must Not Sweat: A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 119-128 (p.127).
- <sup>317</sup> Barbara Lounsberry and Grace Ann Hovet, 'Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison's *Sula*', *Black American Literature Forum*, 13, No. 4 (1979), pp. 126-9 (p. 128).
- <sup>318</sup> Ibid., p. 128.
- <sup>319</sup> Furman, p.35.
- <sup>320</sup> bell hooks, *All About Love* (New York: Perennial, 2001), p. xxiv.

- <sup>321</sup> Barbara Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 143. Whereas, here, Christian is focusing on *Bluest Eye* and connecting her argument of love to ideas concerning funk and beauty in the African-American community, her analysis is also relevant to an understanding of the love that appears in a distorted form in marital and parental relationships, and so it is applicable to all of Morrison's fiction.
- <sup>322</sup> David E. Magill, 'Masculinity', in *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, ed. by Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu (Westport: Greenwood, 2003), pp. 202-5 (p. 202).
- <sup>323</sup> Gay Wilentz, 'Civilizations Underneath: African Heritage as Cultural Discourse in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*', *African American Review*, 26, No. 1, (1992), pp. 61-76 (p. 64).
- <sup>324</sup> Walker, p. 257. These are the words of Mr., but they are delivered in the voice of his estranged wife, Celie.
- <sup>325</sup> Tracey Owens Patton, 'Hey Girl, Am I More than My Hair', *NWSA Journal*, 18.2 (2006), pp. 24-51 (p. 28). Patton's argument relates to the practices chosen by African-American women to become 'beautiful' like white women. The same statement is applicable to an understanding of the practices that are favoured by African-American men, to become like white men rather than find ways of being equal to them whilst still retaining their black identities.
- <sup>326</sup> hooks, *We Real Cool*, p. 3. hooks gives the model of patriarchal masculinity an important historical reference by stating that, 'a large majority of black men took as their standard the dominator model set by white masters. When slavery ended these black men often used violence to dominate black women, which was a repetition of the strategies of control white slavemasters used. [...] Clearly, by the time slavery ended patriarchal masculinity had become an accepted ideal for most black men, an ideal that would be reinforced by twentieth century norms'. See p. 4.
- <sup>327</sup> In *Bluest Eye*, there is evidence of an intraracial hierarchy that places 'colored' people above the 'niggers' (71) in a single community.
- <sup>328</sup> J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet As It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 35 and 165. Bouson also identifies Guitar, in *Song*, and Son, in *Tar Baby*, as men who fulfil the "'bad nigger'" stereotype. Interestingly, the prominent Civil Rights campaigner, Reverend Jesse Jackson, whilst speaking to members of his community in the 1990s, stated that 'their real enemy was not so much the KKK as the BBB – no longer the Ku Klux Klan but the "'Bad Black Brother"'. Morrison's character appears to be a prototype for the Bad Black Brother since he upsets members of his community and is hated by many. Of course, Morrison intends to counter these views by offering an insight into the painful lives of such character 'types'. See Gavin Esler, *The United States of Anger: The People and the American Dream* (London: Michael Joseph, 1997), pp. 112-113.
- <sup>329</sup> Bouson, p. 35.
- <sup>330</sup> Cynthia A. Davis, 'Self, Society, and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction', *Contemporary Literature*, 23, No. 3 (1982), pp. 323-342 (p. 326).
- <sup>331</sup> Two critics in particular recognise the anger in Cholly. See Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1999), p. 48. Also see Ed Guerrero, 'Tracking "The Look" in the Novels of Toni Morrison' in *Toni*

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- Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by David Middleton (New York: Garland, 2000), pp. 27-41 (p. 31). Ryan believes that '[b]ecause whites have more social power, [Cholly's] humiliation at the hands of two white men while making love to a black girl results not in feelings of anger at the whites but in feelings of *anger* against the girl'. For Guerrero, 'Cholly displaces his *rage* onto the only target within his social grasp, his sexual partner Darlene'. My emphasis.
- <sup>332</sup> Houston A. Baker Jr., *Critical Memory: Public Spheres, African American Writing, and Black Fathers and Sons in America* (Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2001), p. 50.
- <sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
- <sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.
- <sup>335</sup> hooks, *The Will to Change*, p. 121. hooks states '[p]atriarchal masculinity insists that real men must prove their manhood by idealizing aloneness and disconnection. Feminist masculinity tells men that they become more real through the act of connecting with others, through building community'.
- <sup>336</sup> Morrison speaking to Nellie McKay, 'An Interview with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 138-155 (p. 145).
- <sup>337</sup> Lorde, p. 64.
- <sup>338</sup> Jane S. Bakerman, 'Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison', *American Literature*, 52, No. 4 (1981), pp. 541-563 (p. 544).
- <sup>339</sup> Valerie Sweeney Prince, *Burnin' Down the House: Home in African American Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 80. Prince explains that whereas 'teasing and nicknaming' are 'communal practices', in that they allow for the integration of individuals in groups, '[b]eing excluded from these practices leaves Pauline feeling isolated'.
- <sup>340</sup> Bouson, p. 33.
- <sup>341</sup> Lucille P. Fultz, *Playing With Difference* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 16. Fultz contends that Pauline is one of several female characters that Morrison disapproves of. She states that, 'Morrison's ordered, organically structured anger is thematized in form and character. Consider her use of names and behavior to register her graphemes *-ine*, *-ene*, and *-een*: Geraldine, Jadine, Pauline, Helene, and Maureen. The behavior of the women who bear such names provides clues to Morrison's attitudes toward them. [...] The names given these characters represent one method by which Morrison encodes her displeasure with certain characters and nudges her reader toward a collusion'.
- <sup>342</sup> In her Afterword, Morrison acknowledges that 'in the section on Pauline Breedlove, where I resorted to two voices, her and the urging narrator's, both were extremely unsatisfactory to me' (p.172). Perhaps Morrison's dissatisfaction is caused by a sense of not having offered enough of a defence for her character.
- <sup>343</sup> Patton, p. 28.
- <sup>344</sup> Pauline is also displaying her mother-hunger by following in the footsteps of 'Mrs. Williams [who] got a job cleaning and cooking for a white minister'. See p. 87 of *Bluest Eye*.
- <sup>345</sup> See Cat Moses, 'The Blues Aesthetic in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*', *African American Review*, 33, No. 4 (1999), pp. 623-637 (p. 628). In reference to Pauline's obsession with Hollywood cinema and her time spent at the Fisher



- house, Moses asserts that, '[t]he lure of [such] material supplants her memories of community, even though she can never hope to possess what she longs for'.
- <sup>346</sup> Rolland Murray, 'The Long Strut: *Song of Solomon* and the Emancipatory Limits of Black Patriarchy', *Callaloo*, 22, No. 1 (1999), pp. 121-133 (p. 128).
- <sup>347</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), p. 55.
- <sup>348</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.
- <sup>349</sup> Of course, Pilate has an important role to play in helping Ruth ensure the survival of her son, Milkman. Pilate is the antithesis of her sister-in-law, for she is a large woman who requires neither disguise nor cunningness when she challenges Macon's power. She demonstrates her 'obeah powers'—presenting him with a 'male doll with a small painted chicken bone stuck between its legs and a round red circle painted on its belly' (132)—and after that, a fearful Macon 'leaves Ruth alone'. See Wilentz, p. 67.
- <sup>350</sup> Wilentz, pp. 67-8.
- <sup>351</sup> Valérie Loichot, *Orphan Narratives: The Postplantation Literature of Faulkner, Glissant, Morrison, and Saint-John Perse* (Charlottesville; London: University of Virginia Press, 2007), p. 171. Loichot refers to the work of historian Barbara Bush, who has written about the breastfeeding practices that were used on plantations in slavery. This is perhaps Ruth's only link to the South but since southern ways are to be curbed in northern life, her practice of prolonged breastfeeding is frowned upon.
- <sup>352</sup> Murray, p. 128.
- <sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.
- <sup>354</sup> Loichot, p. 171.
- <sup>355</sup> Ashraf H.A. Rushdy reads the name 'Milkman Dead as evidence of this character's connection to both his mother and his father: "'Milkman"' as a testimony to his mother's need for love after the loss of her father, "Dead" as a testimony to his father's need for possessions after the loss of his father'. See "'Rememory": Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels' in *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, ed. by Middleton, pp. 135-161 (p. 153).
- <sup>356</sup> Gary Storhoff, "'Anaconda Love": Parental Enmeshment in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*', *Style* (1997), pp. 1-18, p. 8. This standpoint relates to the work of Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 212. Chodorow's socio-psychological study on motherhood states that for mothers, their 'sons may become substitutes [in an imagined rather than physical sense] for husbands' that occupy the public sphere of work and therefore, remain largely absent from the home. In this way, Milkman proves himself to be an effective substitute for Macon in Ruth's life.
- <sup>357</sup> Morrison speaking to Christina Davis, 'An Interview with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 223-233 (pp. 231-2).
- <sup>358</sup> hooks, *The Will to Change*, p. 30.
- <sup>359</sup> hooks, *All About Love*, p. 6.
- <sup>360</sup> Prince, p. 7.
- <sup>361</sup> Lorde, p. 168.
- <sup>362</sup> See Dorothy H. Lee, 'Song of Solomon: To Ride the Air', *Black American Literature*

- Forum*, 16, No. 2 (1982), pp. 64-70 (p. 66). According to Lee, the shortening of Lena's name is as a result of it being 'truncated by her life's circumstances' and the same might be said of First Corinthians, whose position as the firstborn loses its importance with the arrival of Macon Dead III who is heir to the Dead empire.
- <sup>363</sup> Melvin Dixon, "'If You Surrender to the Air...'", *Callaloo*, 4 (1978), pp. 170-173 (p. 172).
- <sup>364</sup> Jill Matus, *Toni Morrison*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.82.
- <sup>365</sup> See Morrison quote in an interview essay by Sandi Russell, 'It's Ok to Say Ok', *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46 (p. 46). Morrison declares, 'I write for black women'.
- <sup>366</sup> Gurleen Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), p. 74.
- <sup>367</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Knowing Their Names: Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*', in *New Essays on Song of Solomon*, ed. by Valerie Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 69-92 (p. 73).
- <sup>368</sup> Claudine Raynaud, 'Coming of Age in the African American Novel', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel* ed. by Maryemma Graham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 106-121 (p. 114) Raynaud incorrectly states that Pecola 'is hated by her mother'.
- <sup>369</sup> Furman, p. 16.
- <sup>370</sup> Prince, p. 78.
- <sup>371</sup> Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966-1978* (New York: Norton, 1980), p. 197.
- <sup>372</sup> Pauline's care for Pecola is conveyed in practical terms and it becomes visible only with New Seeing. For example, Pecola enters a sweetshop with three pennies in her hand. She lacks the confidence to have stolen the money from someone, and it did not come from her unemployed father; it might have come from the three prostitutes living above the Breedlove home (83), but there is also a chance that Pauline has given Pecola the money since she is in regular employment and brings money into the house. See page 36.
- <sup>373</sup> See *Jazz*, p. 108. 'Mother-hunger' is a term used to describe the feelings of Violet as a result of losing her mother. Mother-hunger is also experienced by children in other stories written by Morrison, including Hannah in *Sula*, Pilate in *Song*, and Christine in *Love*.
- <sup>374</sup> Andrea O'Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), p. 56.
- <sup>375</sup> Ruth Rosenberg, 'Seeds in Hard Ground: Black Girlhood in *The Bluest Eye*', *Black American Literature Forum*, 21, No. 4 (1987), pp. 435-445 (p. 441).
- <sup>376</sup> Ryan, p. 48.
- <sup>377</sup> Grewal, p. 21.
- <sup>378</sup> Felicia Beckmann, 'The Portrayal of Africana Males in Achebe, Marshall, Morrison, and Wideman', *Journal of Black Studies*, 32, No. 4 (2002), pp. 405-421 (p. 416).

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### Notes for Chapter Three

- <sup>379</sup> Denise Heinze, *The Dilemma of “Double-Consciousness”: Toni Morrison’s Novels* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 67.
- <sup>380</sup> Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 90. See pp. 5-6 for reference to the term ‘African Americanism’. In this study Morrison focuses on how the Africanist presence has been constructed in mainstream American literature by predominately white male writers. I claim it is possible to apply these findings to a number of critical readings of *Song of Solomon* and *Sula*, and especially in relation to their statements on black matriarchies. Critics like Heinze display their awareness of this Africanist presence by constructing it as an unconventional form.
- <sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- <sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38. Morrison is stating the choices made by writers of American fiction but this study also becomes a reference point for understanding the everyday cultural practices across America that have effectively Othered the Africanist presence.
- <sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- <sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- <sup>385</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 508.
- <sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 492.
- <sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.
- <sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.
- <sup>389</sup> African-American men who attempt to ‘conk’ or ‘gerri curl’ their hair, and African-American women who choose drastic measures to lighten their skin and change their body shapes will do so in an attempt to deny the physical aspects of their Africanness; clearly, constant attacks against their racial identity and its origins have induced this self-protective measure. See Michael Porter, *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women* (Illinois: African 274 American Images, 2001), p. 37 and p. 80.
- <sup>390</sup> Ellis Cose, *The Envy of the World: On Being A Black Man in America* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2002) pp. 3-4. Of course, Cose also makes the point that these men have the option to accept these roles or to create their own.
- <sup>391</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (London: Unwin Hyman & Routledge, 1990), p. 67. the two other controlling images are the ‘welfare recipients and hot mamas’
- <sup>392</sup> Collins, p. 83. Furthermore, as Collins explains, matriarchies gained prominence during the Sixties, under conditions of racial oppression and in poverty. See p. 82.
- <sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84. The black matriarch’s supposedly unfeminine qualities become visible when her actions are reassessed in the context of the dominant ideology. The cult of true womanhood determines that women must possess ‘four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity’. Women who lead homes rather than occupy a small space within them shall be deemed ambitious and, therefore, unfeminine.

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- <sup>394</sup> Ibid., p. 83.
- <sup>395</sup> Collins believes that ‘labeling these women “matriarchs” erodes their self-confidence and ability to confront oppression’. See p. 85-6.
- <sup>396</sup> Morrison finds value in these so-called controlling images of black womanhood. For example, she recognises mummies as being ‘terrific’ women. See Toni Morrison speaking to Anne Koenen, ‘The One Out of Sequence’, in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1994), pp. 67-83 (p. 82).
- <sup>397</sup> See Morrison quoted in an interview essay by Sandi Russell, ‘It’s Ok to Say Ok’, *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46 (p. 46). Morrison declares, ‘I write for black women’.
- <sup>398</sup> Morrison speaking to Nellie McKay, ‘An Interview with Toni Morrison’, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 138-155 (p. 140).
- <sup>399</sup> Morrison speaking to Claudia Tate, ‘Toni Morrison’, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 156-10 (p. 161).
- <sup>400</sup> Joanne M. Braxton, ‘Ancestral Presence: The Outraged Mother Figure in Contemporary Afro-American Writing’, in *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*, eds. Joanne M. Braxton and Andrée Nicola McLaughlin (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1990) pp. 299-315 (p. 300).
- <sup>401</sup> Barbara Lounsbury and Grace Ann Hovet, ‘Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison’s *Sula*’, *Black American Literature Forum*, 13, No. 4 (1979), pp. 126-9 (p. 128).
- <sup>402</sup> Ibid., p. 128.
- <sup>403</sup> Niara Sudarkasa, *The Strength of Our Mothers: African and African American Women and Families: Essays and Speeches* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1996), p. 179.
- <sup>404</sup> Braxton, *Wild Women*, eds. Braxton and McLaughlin, p. 300.
- <sup>405</sup> Janice M. Sokoloff, ‘Intimations of Matriarchal Age: Notes on the Mythical Eva in Toni Morrison’s *Sula*’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 16, No. 4 (1986), pp. 429-434, (p. 430).
- <sup>406</sup> It must be noted that in *Sula*, these are the observations of Sula on the life of her friend, Nel. However, since Nel also leads a matriarchy and her story resonates with the events that occur in Eva’s life, I suggest the same observation is relevant to an understanding Eva’s life.
- <sup>407</sup> Porter, p. 61. The African Queen is always an elder figure in the community and Eva and Pilate qualify for this status.
- <sup>408</sup> Once again, this reference is linked to Nel’s story, but since events in her life mirror those of Eva before her, I claim the same promises that Jude makes to Nel would also have been made by BoyBoy to Eva.
- <sup>409</sup> Gay Wilentz, ‘Civilizations Underneath: African Heritage as Cultural Discourse in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*’, in *Toni Morrison’s Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by David Middleton (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), pp. 109-133 (p. 118).
- <sup>410</sup> See Heinze, p. 84. Heinze describes Pilate’s home as exhibiting ‘a preindustrial way of life’.
- <sup>411</sup> Sudarkasa, pp. 85 and 114. Sudarkasa’s study reveals that although extended

- families were common across pre-colonial West African nations they were not headed by women. See p. 129. Female-headed households would be created upon American soil during the period of slavery. See p. 51. They often took form when an enslaved woman lost her partner, whereby he was either sold off by the master or died as a result of the abuses he had suffered. See pp. 84 and 134.
- <sup>412</sup> Rita A. Bergenholtz, 'Toni Morrison's *Sula*: A Satire on Binary Thinking', *African American Review*, 30, No. 1 (1996), pp. 89-98 (p. 92). Bergenholtz offers this as the definition of a black woman.
- <sup>413</sup> Morrison speaking to Judith Wilson, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 129-137 (p. 131).
- <sup>414</sup> Morrison speaking to Koenen, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie p. 69.
- <sup>415</sup> Morrison speaking to McKay, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 146.
- <sup>416</sup> Morrison speaking to Bill Moyers, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 262-274 (p. 269).
- <sup>417</sup> Emphasis added. Here, once again, I am connecting Eva's experiences with those of Nel. As a young child, Nel becomes self-aware in discovering 'me-ness'. Morrison's narrator conveys Nel's ambivalent thoughts, suggesting she 'didn't know quite what she meant, but on the other hand she know exactly what she meant'. See pp. 28-29. Nel's ability to connect with her own needs is a potentially empowering moment but it is short-lived as is signalled by the shift from '*me*' in an italicised form that stands off the page, to 'me' that is registered in non-italics and therefore blends into the text; in this way a warning is served regarding what will become of black women if they fail to recognise their sense of self or, upon this discovery, they fail to incorporate it into their lives.
- <sup>418</sup> See Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1999), p. 43. Roberts explains that '[o]ne of the main reasons more men than women fled slavery was that children tied mothers to their children'. I would suggest that, even now, motherhood is able to root down black women, but black men can still choose to become creatures of flight. There is, then, that continued sense of imbalance in these homes and within the community.
- <sup>419</sup> Sudarkasa, p. xxiii. These qualities are associated with African women both collectively and as individuals. The ancestor mother has strong qualities but it is also the case that in carrying others she has little time to address her own needs. On the whole Morrison is full of praise for women like Eva who, upon being abandoned by men, will fight the urge to 'collapse. [...] [W]ith nothing but themselves to rely on they just ha[ve] to carry on. And that, I think, is absolutely extraordinary and marvelous'. See Morrison speaking to Koenen, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie p. 73.
- <sup>420</sup> See *Jazz*, p. 108. 'Mother-hunger' is a term used to describe the feelings of Violet as a result of losing her mother. Mother-hunger is also experienced by children in other stories written by Morrison, including Pilate in *Song*, Hannah in *Sula*, and Christine in *Love*.
- <sup>421</sup> My emphasis.
- <sup>422</sup> See bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (Abingdon; Oxon: Routledge, 1994), p. 243. hooks moves to the centre of the feminist debate to state that 'women of all races and classes who step out on the edge,

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courageously resisting conventional norms for female behavior, are almost always portrayed as *crazy*, out of control, mad. [...] Set apart, captured in a circus of raging representations, women's serious cultural rebellion is mocked, belittled, trivialized. It is frustrating, maddening even, to live in a culture where female creativity and genius are almost always portrayed as inherently flawed, dangerous, problematic'. My emphasis.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

<sup>424</sup> See Patricia Hunt, 'War and Peace: Transfigured Categories and the Politics of *Sula*', *African American Review*, 27, No. 3 (1993), pp. 443-459 (p. 448). Hunt reveals that nearly 400,000 African-American soldiers were drafted during World War I. Furthermore, 'the black 369<sup>th</sup> Infantry [...] won the Croix de Guerre and the honor of leading the victorious Allied armies to the Rhine in 1918'. On European land these soldiers were treated as equals and respected by the natives, but back on American soil this was not the case. Also see Howard Smead, *The AFRO-Americans* (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), pp. 87-9. As stated by Smead, the events that awaited black soldiers on their return home reminded them, once again, of the culture of racism in America. They now experienced the racism and violence of the South, as well as that endorsed by the Ku Klux Klan, up North (p. 89).

<sup>425</sup> Ibid., pp. 448-9. Hunt also reveals that black soldiers were forbidden from communicating with the French natives or attending their homes and social events. The white soldiers could not risk any situations where the so-called black underclass might gain forms of power because this would threaten the racial hierarchy that placed whites at the top and blacks at the bottom.

<sup>426</sup> Morrison speaking to Bessie W. Jones and Audrey Vinson, 'An Interview with Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 171-187 (p. 178).

<sup>427</sup> See Andrea O'Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004) p. 150. O'Reilly also separates the 'big man' from the 'beloved baby boy' by stating, 'Plum's going to war marks his entry into patriarchal culture'. In this sense, Plum becomes an agent of patriarchal culture and his desire to spread Eva's legs adds another dimension to the argument of male ownership of the female body.

<sup>428</sup> Morrison speaking to Christopher Bigsby, *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Christopher Bigsby (Kings Lynn: Biddles, 2000) p. 282.

<sup>429</sup> Barbara Rigney, 'Hagar's Mirror: Self and Identity in Morrison's Fiction', in *Toni Morrison*, ed. by Linden Peach (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 52-69 (p. 62).

<sup>430</sup> See Sonia Sanchez speaking in an interview with Zala Chandler, 'Voices Beyond the Veil: An Interview of Toni Cade Bambara and Sonia Sanchez', in *Wild Women*, eds. Braxton and McLaughlin, pp. 342-362 (p. 360). Interestingly, during this decade, Black Mothers' Organizations also grew in numbers.

<sup>431</sup> See Jerry H. Bryant, *Born in a Mighty Bad Land: The Violent Man in African American Folklore and Fiction* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), p. 83. Bryant states the black feminists that would emerge during the Seventies, although they were 'energized by the peaking momentum of the civil rights movement' were equally 'resentful of the exclusive maleness of Black Power'. This movement defined progress in terms of the achievements of black men and also spoke for an entire community from

- this position. The progress of black women would not be considered because it would interfere with the self-sacrificing role they played in the community. Also see Collins, p. 8. She confirms the black female experience is considered secondary to 'a male-defined ethos that far too often equates racial progress with the acquisition of an ill-defined manhood [and it] has left Black thought with a prominent masculinist bias'.
- <sup>432</sup> Marianne Hirsch, 'Maternal Narratives: "Cruel Enough to Stop the Blood"', in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1990) pp. 415-430 (p. 416). Hirsch states Morrison belongs to a group of black women writers who share a specific aim; '[e]ven though they sometimes choose middle-aged or older protagonists, [...] for the most part, Marshall, Walker, Morrison, West, and Shange, write as daughters'.
- <sup>433</sup> Zia Jaffrey and Toni Morrison, 'The Nobel Prize-Winning Author Talks About Her New Book, *Paradise*, What She Learned From Her Marriage and Why O.J. Simpson is Innocent', *Salon Interview*, (1998) <[http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov\\_si\\_02int.html](http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html)> [accessed 12th December, 2009] pp. 1-3 (1).
- <sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- <sup>435</sup> Collins, p. 7.
- <sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- <sup>437</sup> Of course, this hegemony has been challenged by those other female communities and their demands for an intersectional approach, out of which grew Black feminism.
- <sup>438</sup> Morrison speaking to Koenen, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p.73.
- <sup>439</sup> Victoria Burrows, *Whiteness and Trauma: The Mother-Daughter Knot in the Fiction of Jean Rhys, Jamaica Kincaid and Toni Morrison* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), p. 137. Burrows suggests Eva's 'empire is built not on love, but upon a base of "liquid hatred"'.
- <sup>440</sup> Andrea O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in *Feminist Mothering*, ed. by Andrea O'Reilly (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), pp. 1-22 (p. 3). It must be noted that O'Reilly views women who practise feminist mothering as being active feminists, but since she also accepts that 'not every feminist mother practises each theme of feminist mothering', I suggest that Eva practises feminist mothering without referring to herself as a feminist. See p. 20.
- <sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10. The complete list of rules for good motherhood is as follows: '(1) children can only be properly cared for by the biological mother; (2) this mothering must be provided 24/7; (3) the mother must always put children's needs before her own; (4) mothers must turn to the experts for instruction; (5) the mother must be fully satisfied, fulfilled, completed, and composed in motherhood; (6) mothers must lavish excessive amounts of time, energy, and money in the rearing of their children; (7) the mother has full responsibility, but no power from which to mother; (8) motherwork, and childrearing more specifically, are regarded as personal, private undertakings with no political import'.
- <sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- <sup>443</sup> Collins, p. 118.
- <sup>444</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: The

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Crossing Press, 1984), p. 150.

<sup>445</sup> Morrison speaking to McKay, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 145.

<sup>446</sup> O'Reilly, *Toni Morrison and Motherhood*, p. 32. O'Reilly explains 'preservative love' means survival in practical terms and that in hard times black mothers will choose it over 'nurturance', meaning survival in emotional terms. It is the case that 'mothering for many black women, particularly among the poor, is about ensuring the physical survival of their children'.

<sup>447</sup> It is possible that Hannah's words simply parrot what she has heard the other women state. We know that because of her tendency for conducting affairs with married men Hannah's friendships with women, and especially married women, are 'seldom and short-lived' (44). In light of this fact, it is entirely possible that she is mimicking these women so as to maintain, at the very least, these friendships.

<sup>448</sup> Collins, p. 133. Collins explains 'Black motherhood is fundamentally a contradictory institution' and that '[t]he range of Black women's reactions to motherhood and the ambivalence that many [...] feel about [their] mothering reflect motherhood's contradictory nature'. This statement adds something important to O'Reilly's assessment of mothering as an experience that is in defiance of motherhood as an institution.

<sup>449</sup> I am referring to the work of Nancy Chodorow in *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1999). Chodorow's study has been challenged by various feminist groups, including black feminists, for presenting a monolithic account of 'white Western middle class' and the experiences of the 'heterosexual nuclear family' (xi). In the preface to the second addition of her study, Chodorow accepts there is diversity in experience and also argues that she is offering a general model that can be built upon to reflect those multiple perspectives and experiences. I view her socio-psychoanalytic theory as being applicable to the experience of black mothering; she does offer a foundation upon which Morrison's portrayals of the black mothering experience can be further developed.

<sup>450</sup> *Ibid.*, p. viii. The Freudian view is that this inner world is temporarily occupied by the mother and her non-verbal child for as long as the child needs to develop a sense of self with the support of its mother. This phase in the child's development shall come to an end as it begins to verbalise its thoughts. Although Chodorow's standpoint agrees that mother and son shall break away from this experience, she suggests mother and daughter shall not because they are psychically linked to each other forever.

<sup>451</sup> Chodorow's theory is particularly interested in exploring self-development within mother-daughter relationships. She disagrees with the Freudian model's claim that psychically, girls will reject their phallus-lacking mothers in the same way that boys do at the end of the Oedipal phase in their development. Instead, she claims a lasting object-relational tie binds the daughter to her (primary object, the) mother See p. 198.

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 198-200. In a series of statements Chodorow explains that '[g]irls enter adulthood with a complex layering of affective ties and a rich, ongoing inner object world. [...] The mother remains a primary internal object to the girl[...] [...] As a result of being parented by a woman and growing up heterosexual, women have different and more complex relational needs in which an exclusive relationship to a man is not enough. [...] Nonetheless,] [w]omen try to fulfil their



- need to be loved, try to complete the relational triangle, and try to reexperience the sense of dual unity they had with their mother' through this other relationship.
- <sup>453</sup> Morrison speaking to Koenen, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 69. Morrison agrees that Hannah 'does say something awful [...], but she never wanted to hurt anybody'
- <sup>454</sup> O'Reilly, p. *Toni Morrison and Motherhood*, p. 56.
- <sup>455</sup> Mohamed Larbi Bouguerra, 'Water: Symbolism and Culture', *Les Rapports De L'Institut Veolia Environment*, No. 5 (2005), pp. 1-68 (p. 20).
- <sup>456</sup> Lisa C. Rosen, in *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, ed. by Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu (Westport; Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2003), pp. 218-225 (p. 220).
- <sup>457</sup> Morrison speaking to Gail Caldwell, 'Author Toni Morrison Discusses Her Latest Novel, *Beloved*', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 239-245 (p. 241).
- <sup>458</sup> O'Reilly, "'That Is What Feminism Is": The Acting and Living and Not Just the Told', in *Feminist Mothering*, ed. by O'Reilly, pp. 191-202 (pp. 193-4, and p. 201).
- <sup>459</sup> Morrison speaking to Tate, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, p. 166.
- <sup>460</sup> Nel is abandoned by her husband, Jude, just like Eva was by BoyBoy. She, alone, must take on full responsibility for her family and the home. Looking back on her life, Nel admits she fell into that trap of service and sacrifice in motherhood and even realised at the time 'that would be all' of her life. This imbalance resulted in her motherlove turning into a silent resentment. Now, regret on Nel's part is all the more pronounced by her acknowledgement of the fact that the children for whom she sacrificed everything grew up, left home, and abandoned her. See p. 165.
- <sup>461</sup> Morrison speaking to Gloria Naylor, 'A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 188-217 (p. 198).
- <sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.
- <sup>463</sup> Sudarkasa, pp. 69-70. The African values that Sudarkasa is referring to are known as the Seven Rs: 'respect, responsibility, restraint, reciprocity, reverence, reason, [and] reconciliation'.
- <sup>464</sup> Alice Walker, 'One Child of One's Own: A Meaningful Digression within the Works(s)', in *Mother Reader: Essential Writing on Motherhood*, ed. by Moyra Davey (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), pp. 139-154 (p. 154).
- <sup>465</sup> Collins, p. 88.
- <sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 89.
- <sup>467</sup> Alice Walker, 'Alice Walker', *Black Women Writers At Work*, ed. Claudia Tate, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1983), p. 176.
- <sup>468</sup> Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (London: The Women's Press, 1992).
- <sup>469</sup> Allen Alexander, 'The Fourth Face: The Image of God in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*', *African American Review*, 32. No. 2 (1998), pp. 293-303 (p. 301).
- <sup>470</sup> Ágnes Surányi, '*The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*: Black Female Experience from Childhood to Womanhood', in *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*, ed. by Justine Tally (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 11-25 (p. 15). I would disagree with Surányi's claim that 'the only semblance of love [Pecola] experiences comes from the three prostitutes'. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Two of this thesis, Pecola also experiences motherlove and fatherlove.
- <sup>471</sup> Jane Kuenz, '*The Bluest Eye*: Notes on History, Community, and Black Female

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- Subjectivity', *African American Review*, 27, No. 3 (1993), pp. 421-431 (p. 421).
- <sup>472</sup> Doreatha Drummond Mbalia, 'Women Who Run with Wild: The Need for Sisterhoods in Jazz', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39, Nos. 3&4 (1993), pp. 623-646 (p. 642).

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## Notes for Chapter Four

- <sup>473</sup> bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 159.
- <sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- <sup>475</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- <sup>476</sup> Of course, it must be noted that silence has been, at times, chosen by black women as a way of maintaining their privacy and it also allows them to cope with their experiences of oppression. Hence Patricia Hill Collins asserts, '[s]ilence is not to be interpreted as submission in [the] tradition of a self-defined Black women's consciousness'. See Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. (London: Unwin Hyman & Routledge, 1990), pp. 92-3.
- <sup>477</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: The Crossing Press, 1984), p. 60.
- <sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.
- <sup>479</sup> bell hooks, *all about love: New Visions* (New York: Perennial, 2000).
- <sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xi.
- <sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- <sup>482</sup> bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria, 2004).
- <sup>483</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188. hooks adds, '[t]o heal, men must learn to feel again. They must learn to break the silence, to speak the pain'. See p. 143.
- <sup>484</sup> bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (Abingdon; Oxon: Routledge, 1994), p. 243. This is the title of the penultimate chapter in hooks' study, which is followed by the chapter that is entitled, 'LOVE AS THE PRACTICE OF FREEDOM'. See p. 289.
- <sup>485</sup> There is further evidence of this change in Morrison's later fiction. In *Jazz*, a character whose father is black and mother is white is called Golden Gray (139). This choice of name allows her to play with racial markers so that it cannot be determined whether the character is more white or black; ultimately, Morrison is asking us, should it matter? In *Paradise*, of the five women who reside at the Convent one is white. We shall never know which one of them it is (3); here, Morrison is, perhaps, answering her own question by indicating that race need not be the differentiating factor every time.
- <sup>486</sup> Toni Morrison, 'Talk with Toni Morrison', Elsie B Washington, 1987, in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. by Danille Taylor-Guthrie (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1994), pp. 234-238, (p. 237).
- <sup>487</sup> Barbara Lounsberry and Grace Ann Hovet, 'Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison's *Sula*', *Black American Literature Forum*, 13, No. 4 (1979), pp. 126-9 (p. 128).
- <sup>488</sup> See Morrison quote in an interview essay by Sandi Russell, 'It's Ok to Say Ok', *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*, ed. by Nellie Y. McKay (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1988), pp. 43-46 (p. 46). Morrison declares, 'I write for black women'.
- <sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- <sup>490</sup> As I shall go on to demonstrate Morrison's characters, both men and women, have opportunities to realise their ability for New Speaking. The female narrator in

- Jazz*, by the time we come to the end of the novel, finds she is also capable of New Speaking when she talks of the need for individuals to ‘figure in before they can figure it out’ (228).
- <sup>491</sup> Doreatha Drummond Mbalia, ‘Women Who Run with Wild: The Need for Sisterhoods in *Jazz*’, *Modern Fiction Studies*, 39, Nos. 3&4 (1993), pp. 623-646 (p. 642).
- <sup>492</sup> Barbara Christian, ‘The Highs and the Lows of Black Feminist Criticism’, in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Meridian, 1990), pp. 44-51 (p. 48).
- <sup>493</sup> Carolyn C Denard, ‘Introduction’, in *Toni Morrison: What Moves at the Margin*, ed. by Carolyn C Denard (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2008), pp. ix-xxvi (p. xiii).
- <sup>494</sup> Candice Jenkins suggests this noise is a Brazilian ‘samba rhythm’, and ‘the sound of the ocean, [and] the music of the wind’. See Candice M. Jenkins, ‘Pure Black: Class, Color, and the Intra-racial Politics in Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*’, *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 52.2 (2006), pp. 270-296 (p. 286). I, however, suggest that this is the voice of Connie’s missing mother and so it possesses a pre-linguistic quality, remaining undecipherable in a world of words and the presence of a patriarchal order that is represented by Connie’s lover, Deek Morgan. Connie is trying to remember the significance of this repetitive sound and begins to translate it, but words let her down when she says, ‘he and I are the same’ (241), rather than, *she and I*, or *her and me*.
- <sup>495</sup> Rose Dear’s silence is of benefit to her husband because she is helping to keep his political activities with the ‘Readjuster Party’ (99-100) a secret. He may well prove himself as a man of action in a faraway location, but closer to home he is marked as the man who ‘just quit’ (138) his responsibilities as a husband and a father.
- <sup>496</sup> Gurleen Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), p. 130.
- <sup>497</sup> Collins, p. 120. Collins explains that ‘[o]thermothers are key not only in supporting children but also in helping bloodmothers who, for whatever reason, lack the preparation or desire for motherhood. In confronting racial oppression, maintaining community-based child care and respecting othermothers who assure child-care responsibilities serve a crucial function in African American communities. Children orphaned by sale or death of their parents under slavery, children born into extreme poverty or to alcoholic or drug-addicted mothers, or children who for other reasons cannot remain with their bloodmothers have all been supported by othermothers’.
- <sup>498</sup> Dorothy Smith Ruiz, *Amazing Grace: African American Grandmothers As Caregiver and Conveyors of Traditional Values* (Westport; London: Praeger, 2004), p. 4.
- <sup>499</sup> See Collins, p. 122. Whereas the mammy served a vital role within white households, within black homes, the tasks of othermothering were fulfilled by ‘grandmothers and aunts’, and such figures.
- <sup>500</sup> Morrison speaking to Anne Koenen, ‘The One Out of Sequence’, in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 67-83 (p. 79).
- <sup>501</sup> I would suggest Cholly Breedlove’s great aunt Jimmy, in *The Bluest Eye*, belongs on

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- this list; she is an aged lady who takes in the orphaned boy and mothers him as best she can until, finally, she passes away.
- <sup>502</sup> Michael Porter, *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women* (Illinois: African American Images, 2001), p. 61.
- <sup>503</sup> Denise Heinze, *The Dilemma of "Double Consciousness": Toni Morrison's Novels* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 97. Heinze does concede that True Belle's actions are unintentional but, in her opinion, the accusation stands.
- <sup>504</sup> See note 485 for my comment on Morrison's naming of Golden Gray and how it allows her to play with racial markers.
- <sup>505</sup> See Verena Theile and Marie Drews, 'Introduction: African American and Afro-Caribbean Women Writers: Writing, Remembering and "Being Human in the World"', in *Reclaiming Home, Remembering Motherhood, Rewriting History: African American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Literature in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Verena Theile and Marie Drews (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), vii-xxi (p. ix). Theile and Drews recognise Pat's love as motivating her fear and anger. I suggest that, in turn, fear and anger inhibit this mother's love and so she fails to communicate it to her daughter in a language she would understand.
- <sup>506</sup> A. Scott Henderson, "'Tarred with the Exceptional Image": Public Housing and Popular Discourse, 1950-1990', *American Studies*, 36, No. 1 (1995), pp. 32-52 (p. 31). Henderson goes on to explain that such housing schemes came into existence with the passing of the 1949 Housing Act, which 'called for —a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family', whether black or white. See p. 33. However, as he notes, '[t]he popular press characterized public housing in a number of cities as almost exclusively "black," and virtually every photograph of public housing included African-Americans'. See p. 41. Morrison appears to be playing with this stereotype in her fiction since we are not in a position to determine whether Jean is black or white.
- <sup>507</sup> In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's rape by her father leaves her carrying an unborn child, which would also become her sibling. Similarly, it is possible to consider the idea that, in *Paradise*, Jean's relationship with Seneca is a multi-dimensional one.
- <sup>508</sup> J. Brooks Bouson, *Quiet As It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000) p. 166.
- <sup>509</sup> Also see Andrea O'Reilly, 'In Search of My Mother's Garden, I Found My Own: Mother- Love, Healing, and Identity in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*', *African American Review*, 30, No. 3 (1996), pp. 367-379 (p. 374). O'Reilly reads Wild's lack of coherence as being, in fact, her use of a pre-discursive language that is beyond the control of the symbolic; '[h]er laughter, song, and touch form the language of semiotic discourse'.
- <sup>510</sup> Cathy Moses, *Dissenting Fictions: Identity and Resistance in the Contemporary American Novel* (New York: Garland, 2000), p. 37. I borrow this term from Moses who, in her study, refers to the 'absent presence' of Violet's mother, the deceased Rose Dear.
- <sup>511</sup> Moses, p. 45.
- <sup>512</sup> O'Reilly, p. 374.
- <sup>513</sup> Bouson, p. 177.

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- <sup>514</sup> Moses, p. 47.
- <sup>515</sup> Kadidia Sy, *Women's Relationships: Female Friendship in Toni Morrison's Sula and Love, Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter and Sefi Atta's Everything Good Will Come* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Doctor. Müller, 2009), p. 43.
- <sup>516</sup> Jean Wyatt, 'Love's Time and the Reader: The Effects of *Nachträglichkeit* in Toni Morrison's *Love*', *NARRATIVE*, 16, No. 2 (2008), pp. 193-221, (pp. 202-203). Wyatt contends the third-person narrator focuses on the story of Bill Cosey and appears to offer justifications for his shameful actions. It becomes difficult to explore the stories of the Cosey women from this patriarchal standpoint and thus, L's monologues are able to balance this narrative and the family history that it is investigating. Conversely, Morrison is encouraging her black women readers to approach her fiction independently and so it is possible to disregard what either narrator has stated and find alternative meanings buried within the text that can be uncovered through New Seeing.
- <sup>517</sup> Sarah Appleton Aguiar, "'Passing On' Death": Stealing Life in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*', *African American Review*, 38, No. 3 (2004), pp. 513-519 (p. 517).
- <sup>518</sup> In contrast, in *Love*, L's music is a soft humming that 'is mostly below range'; rather than overwhelming listeners so that they succumb to its sound, it gently 'encourages' them to create their own rhythm of love. See p. 4.
- <sup>519</sup> K. Zauditu-Selassie, *African Spiritual Traditions in the Novels of Toni Morrison* (Florida: University of Florida, 2008), p. 187.
- <sup>520</sup> Deborah H. Barnes, 'Movin' on up: The Madness of Migration in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*', in *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*, ed. by David Middleton (New York; London: Garland, 2000), pp. 283-295, p. 292. Barnes adds to Violet's statement, claiming that she comes to Alice 'because they are "sisters" in age, experience, and loss'.
- <sup>521</sup> Lorde, p.111.
- <sup>522</sup> Aguiar, p. 515.
- <sup>523</sup> Bouson, p. 205.
- <sup>524</sup> Alice Walker, 'Alice Walker', *Black Women Writers At Work*, ed. Claudia Tate, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1983), p. 176.
- <sup>525</sup> Bouson, p. 195.
- <sup>526</sup> It can be said that here, Morrison is continuing her exploration of male-female relationships that experience unity. In *Beloved*, Paul D and Sethe are reunited at the end, and in *Song of Solomon*, Milkman finds Sweet and Porter meets First Corinthians. Crucially, the relationships of these younger couples focus on love and there is no need, and therefore no place, for anger within them. Paul D and Sethe can also move forward together having laid to rest their past along with their anger. Now, Morrison is considering a name for these relationships and I suggest she has chosen to call them sisterhoods.
- <sup>527</sup> Moses, p. 51.
- <sup>528</sup> We are reminded of that crucial moment in *Sula*, when Nel discovered her ability for "'me-ness'" (29). Within the sisterhood that Violet now belongs to there is every indication that she can nurture her sense of me-ness with the support of Joe and Felice, and that she shall find the right balance so that she does not turn selfish.
- <sup>529</sup> Sima Farshid, 'The Composing Mode of Jazz Music in Morrison's *Jazz*', *Journal of African American Studies*, 16: 2 (2012), pp. 363-371 (p. 366).

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- <sup>530</sup> Gurleen Grewal, *Circles of Sorrow, Lines of Struggle: The Novels of Toni Morrison* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), p. 1.
- <sup>531</sup> Toni Morrison speaking to Anne Koenen, 'The One Out of Sequence', in *Conversations*, ed. by Taylor-Guthrie, pp. 67-83 (p. 72). Although it is not stated which specific period in history Morrison is referring to when she speaks of 'those days', we must assume she is focusing on the pre-Sixties era since the interviewer is probing her on the Black Liberation movement and how it portrayed women.
- <sup>532</sup> hooks, *all about love*, p. 163.
- <sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

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## Notes for Conclusion

- <sup>534</sup> Michael Porter, *The Conspiracy to Destroy Black Women* (Illinois: African American Images, 2001), p. 106.
- <sup>535</sup> Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), pp. 173-4.
- <sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131. Lorde is referring to her own experience in this comment, but since she is communicating her ideas to a larger audience and she offers words of advice, it is possible to view this particular statement as a moment of self-reflection and a form of guidance that she is offering others.
- <sup>537</sup> Denise Heinze, *The Dilemma of "Double Consciousness": Toni Morrison's Novels* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1993), p. 101.
- <sup>538</sup> Toni Morrison, *Black Women Writers At Work*, ed. by Claudia Tate (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1983), p. 130.
- <sup>539</sup> Toni Morrison speaking to Christopher Bigsby, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', *Writers in Conversation: Volume One*, by Christopher Bigsby (Kings Lynn: Biddles, 2000), pp. 249-289, (p. 259-60).
- <sup>540</sup> Toni Morrison, 'Nobel Lecture 1993', *World Literature Today*, 68, No. 1 (1994), pp. 4-8 (4).
- <sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- <sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



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