

Narrative Properties in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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ABSTRACT: This essay places Toni Morrison's *Beloved* into conversation with John Locke's labor theory of property and Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. I argue that Morrison adapts the Enlightenment tropes often found in slave narratives to her own postmodern project, creating a novel that not only refigures the Enlightenment tradition, but also searches for ways to reconcile African-American literary history with African Americans' historical exclusion from the rights and protections, including that of self-ownership, championed by liberal philosophy. As Morrison examines the implications of locating a seminal component of her own literary tradition within an historically adverse intellectual framework, she demonstrates the capacity of narrative to synthesise competing ideological paradigms and fashion visionary imaginings of the future.

KEYWORDS: Morrison, Locke, Jacobs, African-American literary history

The paradoxes of the Enlightenment are by now axiomatic, none more so than the coinciding expansions of liberty and slavery in North America. This binary has figured prominently in the history of African-American letters going back to the slave narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Toni Morrison implies in her

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own analysis of the genre. “One has to remember,” Morrison urges, recalling the circumstances that motivated such writers as Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs, and Frederick Douglass, “that the climate in which they wrote reflected not only the Age of Enlightenment but its twin, born at the same time, the Age of Scientific Racism.”¹ She goes on to summarise in a sentence the ease with which Enlightenment thinkers reconciled their conflicting ideas about liberty and race: “David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson, to mention only a few,” Morrison writes, “had documented their conclusions that blacks were incapable of intelligence.”² As a rejoinder, Morrison presents the literary accomplishments of early African-American writers, pointing out that “no slave society in the history of the world wrote more—or more thoughtfully—about its own enslavement.”³

The thoughtfulness of these narratives can be attributed, as much as anything else, to the skill with which their authors dramatise the contradiction between American slavery and American liberalism. Frederick Douglass evokes this very dissonance in *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), noting the flawed logic used to validate slavery in the American South:

The plantation is a little nation of its own, having its own language, its own rules, regulations and customs. The laws and institutions of the state, apparently touch it nowhere. The troubles arising here, are not settled by the civil power of the state. The overseer is generally accuser, judge, jury, advocate executioner. ... There are no conflicting rights of property, for all the people are owned by one man; and they can themselves own no property.⁴ (160)

Douglass returns to this disparity in his *Life and Times* (1881, 1882), conveying the position of many northerners who argued that the founders of the United States “neither intended the extension nor the perpetuity of slavery” because “liberty is national and slavery is sectional.”⁵ What follows is a description of John Brown’s trial, which Douglass infuses with an implied tension between provincial laws that permit slavery and the American founding principles that would seem to prohibit the institution.

Building on the example set by her predecessors, Morrison explores, in both her fiction and her non-fiction, the subject of a nation founded politically on universal natural rights and economically on slave labour. As Tessa Roynon observes,

Morrison's canon reflects a "lifelong project of skepticism about the Enlightenment, of recasting that hallowed movement as the 'enlightenment of a few based on the dark oppression of many.'" ⁶ Morrison probes this historical incongruity most directly in *Beloved* (1987), a novel that, in the words of Loverie King, centres on "a community of enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals whose experiences made them acutely aware of the difference between free people who owned property and enslaved people who were themselves property." ⁷ Still, Morrison's novels deal far less with the peculiarities of American slavery itself than with the lasting social and economic consequences of the institution, beginning with the commodification of the body in *The Bluest Eye* (1970). Whether exploring the ownership of land in *Song of Solomon* (1977) or ownership of the past in *Jazz* (1992), Morrison remains focused on African Americans' historically complicated relationship with Enlightenment conceptions of property and selfhood, often in ways that echo and adapt W. E. B. Du Bois's goal of "mak[ing] it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American." ⁸ By extending Du Bois's celebration of "African-American epistemology," Justine Baillie argues, Morrison "dramatizes group and individual consciousness struggling for self-determination and psychological freedom," ⁹ a project that seems to require the harmonising of black identity and history with the broader American culture. Just as Du Bois would neither "Africanize America" nor "bleach his Negro soul," ¹⁰ Morrison neither overlooks her African ancestry nor disregards her American heritage. Milkman's "flight" at the close of *Song of Solomon*—which blends African mythology with African-American folklore and American experience—illustrates this very convergence of pasts and identities.

A similar convergence plays out at the level of form in *Beloved* as Morrison commingles the linearity of western narrative structures with the circularity characteristic of African storytelling. More than mere stylistic play, this manoeuvre gestures toward the ideological underpinnings of narrative practices and, by extension, represents a formal expression of African Americans' historically fraught, yet evolving, relationship with the Enlightenment tradition. One of the central matters explored in *Beloved* is the question of how African Americans can integrate into a supposedly free socio-political system that had once regarded them as sub-human property, a conundrum that seems to draw Morrison back to the United

States' ideological origins. Traditionally regarded as central to the American Revolution, John Locke's theories of property and selfhood therefore take on special significance in Morrison's critique of American slavery.¹¹ Like Hume, Kant, and Jefferson, Locke exemplifies the common failure of Enlightenment thinkers to universalize their own principles, perhaps most notably in his theory of self-ownership. In *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), Locke famously insists that one's property includes oneself, professing that "Man being born ... with a title to perfect freedom ... hath by nature a power ... to preserve his property, that is, his life, liberty and estate."¹² Yet Locke, "the great enemy of all absolute and arbitrary power," as David Brion Davis puts it, was also "the last major philosopher to seek justification for absolute and perpetual slavery,"¹³ in part by developing a philosophical model that aligns his defence of human bondage with his teleological conceits. By establishing parameters within which slavery can exist, Locke's broadly progressive, linear paradigm strikes modern readers, even those familiar with the philosopher's reasoning, as inherently contradictory. More to the point, however, Locke's thinking, especially as it relates to a person's movement from the private state of nature into the public realm of civic organisation, creates an understanding of the self that, in permitting slavery, becomes inescapably suspect. In *Beloved*, the ideological and historical implications of Locke's system play out in Morrison's search—represented in her characters' existential tumult—for a means of harmonising African-American selfhood with a broader national identity based in part on the historically adverse intellectual framework bequeathed by such thinkers as John Locke.

Morrison dramatises this search by revisiting not only the ideological foundations of the United States, but also her own literary forebears, whose narratives are absorbed into *Beloved* in a simultaneous display of historical continuity and historical change. While juxtaposing her postmodern moment with the Enlightenment-Age origins of African-American slave narratives, Morrison follows such writers as Harriet Jacobs in adapting Enlightenment conceits to her own narrative, thus exposing the pretence of Early-American egalitarianism. Yet she also reveals the status of African-American slave narratives as, themselves, Enlightenment documents no less susceptible to scrutiny than the works of John Locke.¹⁴ Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) serves as perhaps the most noteworthy of

Morrison's sources in that it shares with *Beloved* a critical emphasis on maternity—or, more specifically, the relationship between self-ownership and maternal rights. This thematic link, central to each author's broader treatment of slavery, connects *Beloved* to *Incidents* even as it manifests the separation between them, generating a literary dialogue comprised of related, but also temporally and ideologically discrete, responses to the liberal tradition and its implications for the African-American experience. In particular, Locke's understanding of self-ownership finds expression both in *Incidents*, and in Morrison's novelistic response to *Incidents*, as these narratives explore and test varying definitions of freedom. It is through this intertextual exchange that Morrison advances the trans-generational process of integrating African-American selfhood into the socio-political mainstream of the United States, which is itself revised and enlarged by Morrison's visionary imagining of the powerful role that narrative can play in reconciling, however tentatively or incompletely, the tensions between historically dissociated voices.

Locke's conception of self-ownership reflects the principles outlined in his complementary treatments of property and selfhood. Private property, he argues in *Two Treatises*, derives from combining labour with goods that have been removed from a state of nature. Because "every man has a property in his own person," Locke reasons, "the labour of his body, and the work of his hands, ... are properly his. Whatsoever he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, ... he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own," thereby claiming ownership of the product.¹⁵ This labour theory of property is integral to the definition of selfhood presented in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), wherein Locke proposes that the immaterial self, as opposed to one's physical "substance," consists of memory and consciousness. Because "consciousness always accompanies thinking," Locke writes, "and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e. the sameness of a rational being." He goes on to state that "as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done."¹⁶

Locke's emphasis on the act of reflecting establishes the critical link between his theories of property and selfhood. Quoting from Locke, Adam Seagrave clarifies the manner in which mental labour produces self-ownership:

One's property in one's own person or self stems ... from the appropriating or "joining" ability of self-consciousness described in the Essay. The appropriating, extending, and joining activity or "labor" of self-consciousness thus makes the individual human being "master of himself, and proprietor of his own person, and the actions or labour of it."¹⁷

Simply put, thinking is the labour that produces the self and that consequently makes a human being into a self-owner.

As Locke has it, however, the self cannot exist without the initial labour of God, whose creative work produces the "substance" of the human being. Locke's argument, which Seagrave characterises as a "concurrent and univocal nesting property," in fact posits an analogy between God's ownership of substance and a human being's ownership of him/herself, suggesting not that self-ownership is simply gifted to humanity by God, but rather that "God creates the humanity of the individual in such a way that the human individual shares in His creative activity by making, in turn, the unique self." Consistent with the principle of natural rights, this self is the property of the human being just as, consistent with natural law, the human being is, in a "more noble or higher way," the property of God. As Seagrave shows, Locke's hierarchical system places a limit on self-ownership in that it requires every person to "exist under the cause of his being and humanity": that is, to live "in accordance with the given hierarchical arrangement of his natural powers or faculties."¹⁸ Locke assumed that humanity has no need for universal principles because God had provided, in the highest faculty of reason, everything that a person needs to fulfil the divine plan.¹⁹ Human beings are therefore obligated to exercise reason by conducting themselves in ways that harm neither the collective nor the individual. Complying in this way with the divine authority of natural law, each person helps to preserve God's property, which constitutes the underlying objective of human self-ownership.

Janet Coleman builds on these premises by describing the internalising process that, for Locke, results from the mental and physical appropriation of

property. While our thoughts originate outside us, Coleman explains, “when things are grasped or mentally appropriated or laboured on by each individual, they become ... our own inalienable and subjective thoughts.”²⁰ What Locke envisioned, in other words, is a process of folding into the self that which originates outside the self, and thus a deeply private and subjective—or, in Coleman’s words, a “radically interiorized”—self-consciousness.²¹ Although Locke argued that human beings are “created ‘social’ by God,” he defined this social quality in the rather narrow terms of universal obligation to natural law, an obligation “that each self-consciousness was to deduce, on the basis of his own self-constructed identity from unique experiences.”²² Similarly, Margaret Davies explains that just as self-ownership represents a “natural and pre-social principle,” the self is a “pre-social, pre-legal, and pre-political entity.”²³ In Locke’s view, the only reason for human beings to abandon the state of nature in favour of a political collective is, as Gerald Cohen notes, “to secure their lives and their possessions,”²⁴ thus enabling them to perform their individual roles in advancing God’s design. Accordingly, Locke’s thinking reveals what Alan Sell describes as “a teleology rooted in the idea of natural law,”²⁵ one in which the perpetuation of the self into the future, and thus the fulfilment of God’s design, is supported by the movement of the private self into the public realm, wherein legal codes secure the individual’s property, including the self, and thus facilitate its continued perpetuation into the future.

This movement from privacy to publicity carries well documented implications for people who are deprived of the self-ownership that the private-public binary is intended to safeguard. One tendency among Locke’s critics has been to point out that his notion of a linear, teleological progression does not apply to women, who remain confined to the private realm and are therefore denied the autonomy that stems from the Lockean interplay between privacy and publicity. In analysing the Early American “literary public sphere,” Elizabeth Maddock Dillon begins with the recognition that “women have historically been understood to lack the independence necessary to function as liberal subjects.”²⁶ Although Dillon acknowledges that the idea of womanhood has often stood in opposition to “the autonomous, white male liberal subject,” she maintains that liberalism “does not exclude women so much as it creates and reserves a discrete position for women within its structure.”²⁷ Yet the

limited social role described by Dillon belongs only to white women. Even if feminist critics have, as Dillon suggests, overstated the matter by insisting that liberalism altogether excludes women, “black women historically do not have the social-symbolic function of ‘woman’” and “are not similarly identified as private.”²⁸ As objects rather than subjects of the American political and economic systems, African-American slaves, men and women alike, existed outside Locke’s private-public binary and, thus, outside liberal subjectivity. In Locke’s most familiar defence of slavery, one’s exclusion from subjectivity entails the indefinite cessation of his/her movement from the state of nature into civic organisation. For Locke, enslavement is a justifiable consequence for someone who, by threatening others, departs from reason and creates a “state of war,” thus surrendering his/her rights under natural law until the state of war concludes. Slavery, as Locke defines it, is “nothing else but ‘the state of war continued, between lawful conqueror and a captive.’”²⁹ This perpetual warfare, in effect, stalls the teleological trajectory from privacy to publicity that Locke regarded as critical to preserving the rights implicit in self-ownership. It also disrupts, if only abstractly or figuratively, the perpetuation of the self into the future.

Morrison departs from Locke not by rejecting the idea that such a thing as reasonable behaviour exists, but instead by challenging the logic of Locke’s individualist philosophy. What *Beloved* makes clear is that Sethe’s departures from reason—most notably, her act of infanticide—cannot be understood as having precipitated a state of war. Her unreasonable behaviour must instead be understood as a consequence of her enslavement. This inversion of cause and effect, though rather obvious on one level, undermines Locke’s spurious assumption that people’s unreasonable behaviour originates always and only within themselves, and under circumstances in which they enjoy total control over their experiences and choices. If, alternatively, people cannot help but be affected by exterior forces, and therefore cannot be pre-social, they cannot be comprised entirely of memory and consciousness. Put another way, Locke’s notion of a radically interiorised self seems not to account for the extent to which external influences, particularly those of a traumatic nature, can trigger actions and behaviours that may otherwise not occur. Consequently, Locke’s vision of limited self-ownership—that is, self-ownership that remains contingent not only upon arbitrary assumptions about God’s will, but also

upon an oversimplified understanding of the self and its relationship to the public realm—becomes a significant touchpoint in Morrison's critique of Enlightenment principles.

Given Morrison's scepticism toward the Enlightenment, it might seem odd that Sethe's torment reflects, in at least one significant way, the condition of slavery described by Locke. Even after Emancipation, Sethe remains fixed in a "timeless present" renewed,³⁰ or perhaps exacerbated, by the arrival of *Beloved*, who represents both the tyrannical past made present and, just as importantly, a hopeful future made inaccessible. Morrison's narrative strategy may plausibly involve a demonstration of the extent to which Sethe remains afflicted not only by slavery itself, but also by the persistence of Locke's stultifying intellectual influence. Indeed, many of Sethe's most enduring lessons are taught by Schoolteacher, whose "scientific" exercises prioritise empiricism, hierarchy, and quantification, prompting Roynon to label him a parody of the "prototypical Enlightenment scientist."³¹ Yet Paul D, in a passage devoid of irony, seems to endorse the temporal linearity associated with Enlightenment thought, telling Sethe, "we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow."³² That is not to say that Morrison approves Locke's definitions of selfhood and self-ownership while simply rejecting his defence of slavery. Rather, she seems to acknowledge not only that freedom in a social setting depends upon a constructive interplay between privacy and publicity, but also that freedom derives in part from one's ability to inhabit a purpose-driven narrative that differentiates appropriately among past, present, and future.

Morrison herself articulated a comparable sentiment when, speaking as a Jefferson Lecturer in the Humanities, she lamented the banishing of "infinity" to the "domain of the past." Time, now lacking any future, she continued, had "narrow[ed]" to a vanishing point beyond which humanity neither exists nor wants to." Left with "this diminished, already withered desire for a future," the modern world had been redirected from "a history that was believed to be a trajectory" into a past that "has been getting longer and longer."³³ For fresh guidance, Morrison turned to her chosen art form, asking, "What does narrative tell about this crisis in diminished expectations?" Faulkner, she recalled, displays the human capacity for endurance

while James Baldwin draws on his “intense honesty coupled with abiding faith” to sustain his conviction that “the ticket had been paid in full and the ride begun.” And Ralph Ellison imparts hope by “posing a question in the present tense,” thus “signaling a sly and smiling promise of a newly sighted future.” The force of these stories, Morrison concluded, derives from “the places and voices where the journey into the cellar of time does not end with a resounding slam of a door, but where the journey is a rescue of sorts, an excavation for the purposes of building, discovering, envisioning a future,” one as “durable and far-reaching as the past.”³⁴

Morrison’s insistence upon the value of futurity takes a central position in her formal and thematic representations of slavery as an institution capable of disrupting temporal progression. Sethe’s own journey into the cellar of time intensifies her enclosure within the stasis of 124, where “neither Beloved nor Sethe seemed to care what the next day might bring.”³⁵ Earlier in the novel, the dissolution of sequence and purpose takes on linguistic implications when Stamp Paid overhears the voices emanating from 124: “The speech wasn’t nonsensical, exactly,” Morrison writes, but “something was wrong with the order of the words.”³⁶ This syntactic jumble extends to the structure of the novel, the early chapters of *Beloved* encircling Sethe’s act of infanticide, evading it even as they close in, just as Sethe circles through her thoughts while trying to explain her conduct to Paul D.³⁷ Only at the close of the novel, with Beloved having vanished, does the apparent disorder of the story’s plot give way to something resembling Ellison’s newly sighted future. Reflecting upon the complexity of Sethe’s character and history, Paul D recalls Sixo’s description of his feelings for the thirty-mile woman: “The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order.”³⁸ As Rafael Pérez-Torres explains, Sixo’s desire for order comes to reflect Sethe and Paul D’s aspiration for “a story different from the suffering of Beloved’s story and from the tyranny of history that her story represents.”³⁹ Although a paragon of defiance, Sixo nonetheless idealises the aspirational progressivism associated with his oppressor and executioner, an irony critical to his function in the novel. Schoolteacher, who had once beaten the intransigent slave to remind him that “definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined,”⁴⁰ later burns Sixo alive following an attempted escape, a sequence of events that illustrates neither the invalidity of desiring freedom nor the impertinence of imagining a future, but rather

the exclusivity of access to a legally recognised selfhood that makes these activities productive. Even if the execution of Sixo joins the killing of Sethe's daughter in contributing to the paralysis that later dominates 124, it also draws out the longing for linearity that even Sethe herself had felt prior to her act of infanticide.

As linear narrative elements seep into Morrison's largely circular narrative structure, *Beloved* comes to look decreasingly like an assault on every pillar of Enlightenment thought and increasingly like a tentative reconciliation between opposing ideological systems. Many readers of *Beloved* have rightly described Morrison's application of non-linear narrative as a celebratory, if not subversive, adaptation of African storytelling practices. La Vinia Delois Jennings, for instance, argues that "Morrison implements the Africanist conception of traditional time" in which past and present unite, thus rejecting "the imposition of Western time."⁴¹ Similarly, Nancy Peterson observes that Morrison "takes up the traditional function of oral tales and mythic legends," dispensing with the "linear plot and progressivist teleology" that mark traditional novelistic discourse as a product of "European culture and values."⁴² Sixo's and Paul D's aspirational search for linearity indeed seems antithetical to the novel's postmodern and Africanist tropes, including what Kathleen Marks calls the "privileging of cyclical time over linear."⁴³ As DoVeanna Fulton points out, however, African-American novels offer more than "circularity and multiplicity." They contain "a complex fusion of linguistic and literary techniques from African and Western cultures,"⁴⁴ as evidenced in *Beloved*, wherein Morrison blends "mythic or cosmic time with ... linear or chronological time."⁴⁵ The combination of the western and the African, apparent in both the structure of the novel and the ideological conflicts that it explores, illuminates *Beloved*'s status as a representation of the challenges implicit in reconciling historical tensions between white-American and African-American history.

Beloved herself dramatises this tension, propelling and disrupting Sethe's narrative just as she propels and disrupts Morrison's narrative. Stalling Sethe's perpetuation of herself into the future, that is, *Beloved* also catalyses the events that come to offer Sethe at least a vaguely defined chance at recovery and, ultimately, futurity. The novel's climax and dénouement specify the particular merits of narrative linearity by contrasting a false, treacherous version of futurity with a more promising

form of hope. When, in the novel's climactic moment, a group of townswomen process to the still-haunted 124, they note that the "devil-child was clever. ... It had taken the shape of a pregnant woman."⁴⁶ *Beloved's* alignment with procreation is illusory and deceptive, offering only the endless rebirth of violence and trauma. Morrison sets up this detail earlier in the novel when Denver observes that "Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child."⁴⁷ This corrupted, if not perverse, circularity merges with the equally corrupt linearity represented in *Beloved's* pregnancy, furnishing a counterpoint to the novel's final chapter in which the narrator stresses that the story of *Beloved* "was not a story to pass on." "They forgot her like a bad dream," the narrator continues, because "remembering seemed unwise."⁴⁸ Rather than discounting the memory that so much of *Beloved* is devoted to retaining, the novel's conclusion leaves readers not with a clear image of what to remember and what to forget, but rather with a developing sense of how to remember, return to, and use the past.

Morrison replicates this didactic feature of *Beloved* in her appropriation and adaptation of literary history. More than a century before the publication of *Beloved*, Harriet Jacobs narrated in fictionalised and romanticised form her own search for a place in the United States' cultural and ideological tradition. Evoking the opposition between American slavery and American liberty, Jacobs often turns to the rhetoric of revolutionary Enlightenment idealism, declaring at one point that "liberty is more valuable than life." She later takes as her motto Patrick Henry's famous rallying cry, "Give me liberty, or give me death."⁴⁹ Yet even as the narrative's pseudonymous heroine, Linda Brent, repeatedly wishes for the liberation that would come with death, she balances her emotions with perseverance and aspiration, as when announcing Uncle Benjamin's escape to New York: "life was worth something now," Benjamin had discovered, "and it would be hard to die."⁵⁰ Alternating between hope and despair, Linda embodies the tension between a living narrative and the death-like, story-less condition of slavery. Attached to both of Linda's competing sensations, moreover, are the concepts of property and self-ownership that recur throughout the narrative. The "worth" that Benjamin comes to find in himself is a kind very different from the value signified in the narrative's references to bills of sale for slaves.⁵¹

Whereas Benjamin's owner finds value in his human property only so long as the slave remains in bondage, Uncle Benjamin sees no value in himself until he is liberated and, therefore, capable of imagining and cultivating a future.

Morrison's focus on "the different history of black women," as she describes it in the Foreword to *Beloved*, only heightens the relevance of Jacobs's narrative. In contemplating the escape offered by death, Jacobs expands the theme of self-ownership to include Linda's children, whom she regards as an extension of herself: "but now I would not want to die," she claims in one passage, "unless my child could die too."⁵² This sentiment evokes the distortion of parental rights and obligations that results from the precipitating distortion of norms implicit in slavery. As Locke has it, "paternal power [is given] to parents, for the benefit of their children during their minority, to supply their want of ability and understanding of how to manage their property."⁵³ In this formulation, the parent assumes control over the child's liberty until that child becomes, through the acquisition of reason, competent to manage it independently. It is worth pointing out that although Locke typically defaults to masculine pronouns, he also declares that, having consulted our reason, "we shall find that [the mother] hath an equal title."⁵⁴ More than a curiosity, this detail of Locke's thinking helps to explain his claim that parents, even in a social organisation built on natural rights, hold absolute authority over their children. Because God "made the parents instruments in His great design of continuing the race of mankind," Locke reasons, mothers and fathers are accountable to God for their children, and therefore "have as much right to their subjection as those who are in the state of nature."⁵⁵ The parent takes on "monarchial power"⁵⁶ in the isolation of the private, domestic realm where women can exercise authority without interfering in the public life of the state. In short, Locke intimates that the conventions of the public sphere should safeguard, not intrude upon or govern, the private, familial sphere.

Slavery, however, reverses Locke's conception of the private-public dynamic. Linda lacks ownership of her children because of a system that violates conventional Enlightenment ideas' natural law by distorting the appropriate relationship between privacy and publicity. As a result, Linda develops an ambivalent perspective on her children's lives:

The little vine was taking deep root in [her] existence, though its clinging fondness excited a mixture of love and pain. ... I could never forget that he was a slave. ... Sometimes I wished he would die in infancy. God tried me. My darling became very ill. ... I had prayed for his death, but never so earnestly as I now prayed for his life.⁵⁷

Despite her compunction, Linda later announces that she “would rather see [her children] killed than have them given up to [Dr. Flint’s] power.” For Dr. Flint never missed a chance to remind her that “these brats will bring a handsome sum of money one of these days.”⁵⁸ Yet Linda also finds in her children a reason to live. “Had it not been for these ties to life,” she admits, “I should have been glad to be released by death.”⁵⁹ Progressing through these vicissitudes, the narrative illustrates that Linda’s attitude toward life and liberty remains contingent upon the circumstances of her maternity, her expressions of hopelessness and desire for death routinely coinciding with moments at which the proscriptions imposed on her motherhood are most apparent. Linda comes to realize that “to protect [her] children, it was necessary that [she] should own [her]self,”⁶⁰ a recognition that compels her to seek a public identity that would reinforce and preserve her selfhood. Linda’s desire for entry into the public sphere not only indicates “the extent to which existing political institutions fail to give full expression to liberal values and ideas,”⁶¹ but also extols, at least rhetorically, the Lockean progression of the self from the state of nature into civil society.

Throughout *Incidents*, Linda remains focused on her public identity as she pursues membership in what she calls “the human brotherhood.”⁶² Focusing initially on the community offered by religion, Jacobs appears to channel Phyllis Wheatley as she assumes for herself an equal station in the Christian community, in part by subverting the racist propaganda of the “sanctimonious Mr. Pike.”⁶³ After escaping to the North, and developing a sense of her right to full legal equality, Linda lays claim to a collective identity that takes on national and philosophical dimensions as she comes to resent even the “trepidation” that she feels when stepping outside “to breathe God’s free air.”⁶⁴ Having once been willing to pay nearly any price, monetary or otherwise, to save her children, Linda would now, as her friend conveys to Mr. Dodge, “go to any end of the earth, rather than pay any man or woman for her freedom, because she thinks she has a right to it.”⁶⁵ Her hoped-for place in the political, ideological

mainstream of the United States becomes a measure of her inherent value, and a signifier of selfhood. As the narrative proceeds, Linda begins to fulfil her obligation of self-maintenance by asserting her rights as a participant in the labour activities and everyday commerce of the nation. Although she had performed her slave labours without “a willing mind,”⁶⁶ Linda, after arriving in New York, grows “impatient to go to work and earn money” so that she might “change the uncertain position of [her] children,”⁶⁷ thus implying a desire to appropriate into herself the property earned by her labour. Just as her emerging sense of selfhood had provided Linda with confidence that her labour would be her own, she finds in labour the potential for perpetuating herself and her children into the future. “The more my mind had become enlightened,” Linda declares in a suggestive passage, “the more difficult it was for me to consider myself an article of property.”⁶⁸

Incidents lays a foundation for *Beloved* in part by identifying the merits of a political ideology even as it challenges an institution protected by that ideology. Although Jacobs appears to celebrate not only the conceptual importance of the public sphere itself, but also the particular advantages of a civic organisation that reinforces and protects the self-ownership of liberal subjects, she also balances her idealisation of public life with a critique of the public corruption implicit in slavery. Sethe's instantaneous transition from a loving mother into a killer of her own child serves as a grittier version of Linda's vacillations between hope and despair, which themselves often result from the unusual measures that Linda feels compelled by her circumstances to take. Insisting that “the slave woman ought not to be judged by the same standards as others,” Jacobs depicts a socio-economic institution that “deadens the moral sense” and “confuses all principles of morality.” It makes “feminine virtue”—for the slave woman—into a crime, an abdication of her sexual duties, and it motivates the oppressed to participate in the immoral devices used by their oppressors, as Morrison herself poignantly displays.⁶⁹ Just as Schoolteacher had used corporal punishment to dispose of an unmanageable and thus defunct slave, Sethe's infanticidal act is intended to spare her child from what Jacobs calls “living death.”⁷⁰ Paul D conveys exactly this point when he explains that Sethe was simply “trying to out-hurt the hurter.”⁷¹ As Molly Abel Travis puts it, Sethe's killing of her daughter reflects “a ‘logic’ that bears an uncanny relationship to that of the slave owner, for

whom the loss of a slave is the loss of property.”⁷² Like Jacobs, Morrison presents readers with an image of a social organisation so self-contradictory that it turns liberty and morality into opposing forces while preventing the enslaved and formerly enslaved from developing a collective identity based on inclusion in—rather than exclusion from, or objectification by—the political and economic mainstream.

More critically, Morrison’s selective review of African-American literary history constitutes a productive remembering that results not in mere thematic repetition, nor in one last commemoration of an antiquated form in need of erasure. In Morrison’s hands, the memory of *Incidents* becomes a stimulus for reimagining the African-American future, a project that, like Sethe’s exposure to *Beloved*, involves remembering for the sake of moving beyond. *Beloved* therefore resuscitates some of Jacobs’s most prominent themes and devices by applying them to the creation of a new narrative that, while inevitably shaped by its literary antecedents, also situates those antecedents firmly in the past, thus fostering an intertextual conversation that revises and complicates Jacobs’s broadly Lockean delineation of the relationship between privacy and publicity.

Much like *Incidents*, *Beloved* emphasises the importance of accessing and participating in the public sphere. From Baby Suggs’s services at the clearing to the communal exorcism of *Beloved*, Morrison makes apparent the agency and security that public identity can provide. While Linda Brent appears to enact Locke’s progression from privacy to publicity, however, thus fortifying her perceived entitlement to the freedoms inherent in natural law, Sethe forsakes whatever remains of her public status when *Beloved* assumes absolute power in 124, demanding so much attention that Sethe loses her job, takes to pilfering, and begins to regard herself as superior to her African-American neighbours. The breakdown of Sethe’s public identity, replete with economic implications, is distilled in the unsettling possessiveness of the chorus that emanates from 124: “Beloved, she my daughter. She mine”; “I am Beloved and she is mine.”⁷³ If Sethe’s claim of maternal ownership seems a perverse exaggeration of Lockean principles, *Beloved*’s inverts those principles. This departure from Jacobs’s “human brotherhood” epitomises the novel’s fracturing of narrative linearity, halting the progression of time with the seductive yet repetitive and anti-social poetry of “too-thick” love. Lacking any identity separate from familial

claims of ownership, Sethe nearly disappears from *Beloved*, her story all but lost in narrative detours through the Sweet Home days, through a conversation between Paul D and Stamp Paid, and through Denver's walking out of 124 in search of help for her withering family. In each case, Sethe appears merely as a character in the background of someone else's story, devoid of a public identity and consequently unable to maintain the self-possession that she had cultivated at the Clearing where, "along with the others, she claimed herself."⁷⁴ Not until Denver re-enters society—seeking work, learning to read, and accepting help from others—does self-ownership, which Locke regards as an *a priori* condition, become a possibility for Sethe.

The contrast between Linda's entry into public life and Sethe's need for communal rescue marks a significant ideological shift. Rather than reversing the Lockean movement from privacy to publicity, and thereby establishing public life as a prerequisite for private selfhood, Morrison obfuscates and problematises the relationship between public and private identity. For Linda, arriving in the free North and reuniting with her children activates a rapidly developing sense of intrinsic self-ownership that inspires her participation in the public sphere, the threats to her freedom, though a source of anxiety, remaining distant and abstract, if not at times comically impotent. Sethe's own escape from bondage, however, leaves her lying in bed with numb feet as the lash wounds on her back bleed onto the sheets. "It was not real yet," Morrison writes, "but when [Sethe's] sleepy boys and crawling-already? girl were brought in, it didn't matter whether it was real."⁷⁵ Not only does *Beloved* intensify the legal and existential vulnerability that remains understated in *Incidents*, and thus amplify the precariousness of Sethe's relationship to the public world; it also identifies Sethe's adoring motherhood as itself a peril, serving only to confine her in a milder version of the inimical privacy that *Beloved* later exacerbates. This escape from the hazards of reality into the false security of illusion dominates the events leading up to Sethe's infanticidal act. As Baby Suggs's plan to bake three or four celebratory pies evolves into "goodwill and food for ninety," the same community that partakes in the feast also regards it as a display of "reckless generosity" that "made them angry" and "offended them by excess."⁷⁶ Resentful of the false security that their own experiences with slavery make anathema, these feasters are later among those who fail to signal Schoolteacher's approach, a narrative detail that not only illustrates their potential

complicity in the death of Sethe's child, as many have averred, but also destabilises the Lockean notion of a public sphere that preserves the liberty of its constituents. Just as Baby Suggs's "holy" standing in the community fails to garner any sense of obligation from her neighbours, Sethe's retraction into the unstable fantasy of a private maternal sphere in no way verifies *a priori* self-ownership. In exposing the fallacy of each assumption, *Beloved* demonstrates that Linda Brent's idealised projection of her inherent self-ownership into the public world, her overriding faith in the idea of liberty and its seemingly inevitable triumph, even in a society not fully committed to it, largely bypasses the nuanced implications of a social reality in which self-ownership may have less to do with the protections offered by public life, or with the inalienable rights affirmed by natural law, than with the value arbitrarily ascribed to a self by others.

Morrison develops this theoretical quandary by underscoring the contrast between Baby Suggs's and Sethe's opposing, yet equally incomplete, definitions of self-ownership. During the services at the Clearing, Baby Suggs stresses to her congregation that "their flesh needs to be loved," and their hearts above all else. Her preaching, with its emphasis on the physical dimension of self-ownership, follows from the epiphany that she had experienced upon gaining her freedom: "These hands belong to me. These *my* hands."⁷⁷ The realisation that she now owns her body comes to Baby Suggs as she learns that her former owner calls her Jenny, the name printed on her sales ticket. Baby Suggs responds to this information by admitting, "I don't call myself nothing."⁷⁸ The tension in this passage derives from Baby Suggs's over-developed sense of material self-possession and her under-developed sense of conceptual self-possession, her lack of a self-applied name intimating her emphasis on externality over internality, a motif that Morrison examines in the numerous critiques of materialism, empiricism, and physicalism strewn throughout her canon. As counterpoint, Sethe's retreat into 124 represents her withdrawal from both the linear progression of time and the system that has failed to protect her. Although Sethe attempts to create for herself something akin to Locke's pre-social state of nature, *Beloved's* presence—or, more specifically, her function as the embodiment of Sethe's psychic torment—finally strips 124 of the reason and moral obligation that, for Locke, are to govern people's interactions in the absence of a legitimate political authority.

Sethe's afflicted subjectivity therefore becomes her primary source of perception, leaving her once again vulnerable to self-delusion and dependent upon others for her salvation. Just as Morrison reveals in *Baby Suggs* the insecurity of a hyper-externalised self, the same insecurity that *Baby Suggs* comes to recognise when the four horsemen caused her "big old heart ... to collapse,"⁷⁹ so too does she convey the instability of a hyper-internalised self. Taken together, the declines of *Baby Suggs* and *Sethe* illustrate that one's social and physical existence cannot safeguard a self any more than a deeply interiorised self can participate meaningfully and productively in public life.

In exploring the relationship between privacy and publicity, *Beloved* identifies both the threat posed by civil institutions and the security offered by community, both the importance of selfhood and the danger of isolation. That is to say that Morrison dramatises neither the Lockean progression from privacy to publicity nor the fundamentally autonomous nature of the self. Nor does she simply evince the manner in which public circumstances shape, often disastrously, a person's consciousness. Instead, her novel posits a circular interplay between private and public identity, nowhere more poignantly than in its representation of *Sethe's* traumas. If, as Locke proposes, memory and consciousness comprise the self, and if *Sethe's* memory and consciousness represent the source of her torment, she in effect chooses to act as her own tyrant and persecutor, a contention that seems at least dubious given the lasting effects of her enslavement. Indeed, *Sethe's* act of infanticide, and particularly her refusal to claim that act, precipitates her withdrawal into the hyper-subjectivity that comes to dominate 124, leaving her paradoxically "excited to giddiness by the things she no longer had to remember."⁸⁰ Yet, to separate the trauma induced by *Sethe's* act of infanticide from the trauma induced by Schoolteacher would be to diminish the causal relationship between them. The novel appears to suggest as much when—in *Sethe's* most direct, if still somewhat evasive, articulation of her guilt—the story once again returns to Sweet Home: "I made the ink," *Sethe* tells Paul D, recalling the moment when Schoolteacher instructed his nephews to list her human and animal characteristics; "he couldn't have done it if I hadn't made the ink."⁸¹ Dissociating *Sethe's* traumas would also, by extension, bypass the public aspect of her resultant isolation. Just as the private torment endured by *Sethe* derives in part

from the world outside her consciousness, Sethe's isolation from her community, both before and after the appearance of *Beloved*, implicitly designates the public world as an always-operative force that acts on isolated persons whether by alienating them or by motivating their self-alienation. Sethe's alienated self could not even exist in the absence of a communal world from which that self is estranged. A far more promising, if inverted, illustration of this definitional inter-dependency appears at the novel's climax, in which Sethe's ability to reclaim her private self from *Beloved* depends upon the communal act of rescue that restores, as well, her potential for creating a public identity.

This revision of the public-private dynamic underlies Morrison's literary enactment of productive remembering in that it imprints the legacy of *Incidents* upon *Beloved* even as it transitions away from Jacobs's fundamentally Lockean intellectual basis. Liberating herself from the ideological constraints that shaped Jacobs's narrative, Morrison finds in *Incidents* not simply a thematic foundation on which to build, but also, and more importantly, an historical starting point for the decades of socio-political progress that allowed her to compose a slave narrative so unlike *Incidents* in its content and structure. The circular paradigm dramatised in *Beloved*, and represented in its narrative design, performs the annular temporality and form of both African and postmodern storytelling, thus coupling the novel's movement from Enlightenment linearity to postmodern circularity with a new and more favourable passage from Africa to the United States—this one literary in nature.

Although *Beloved* never effaces Morrison's African heritage or abandons contemporary intellectual trends in favour of a return to the sequential, universalising temporality of eighteenth-century empiricism, it accommodates the teleology of Jacobs and Locke by mapping a trajectory from Enlightenment progressivism to postmodern circularity, a project that carries both literary and socio-political implications. Perhaps the most important difference between Linda and Sethe lies not in a distinction between degrees of self-corruption, nor even in a distinction between the death-laden rhetoric of despair and an historically based act of infanticide. It lies instead in how Jacobs and Morrison deal with narrative and form in writing about slavery. As Morrison explains in "The Site of Memory," narratives such as *Incidents* often sanitise the experience of slavery to "make it palatable to those who were in a

position to alleviate it.” Morrison therefore invests *Beloved* with the “interior life” often omitted from traditional slave narratives, a task with which “only the act of the imagination can help.”⁸² This imaginative act achieves thematic status in *Beloved* as Morrison “track[s] an image from picture to meaning to text,” revealing that “the act of imagination is bound up in memory.”⁸³ For Morrison, memory inspires creation and animates the projection of one’s interiority into the world. Jacobs, however, constrained by the politics of her day, was compelled to undertake a similar transition from privacy to publicity while wrapping her most personal experiences in sentimental tropes, her renderings of emotion serving primarily to highlight the manner in which slavery corrupts the contemporary ideals associated with “feminine virtue.” *Incidents* rarely, if ever, exceeds demonstrations of Linda’s most basic humanity, thus reducing her inner being to a rhetorical exercise, a political argument featuring themes—withheld liberty, sexual exploitation, maternal love—that were already familiar to Jacobs’s audience. Rather than “binding” her narrative in memory, that is, Jacobs curtails memory and therefore stifles imagination. In response to the creative and political constraints imposed on Jacobs, Morrison’s revision of the slave-narrative genre unshackles memory and imagination, not only by refusing to sublimate the experience of enslavement, but also by celebrating the author’s African origins in a way that aligns them with the literary innovations of her own American present. This simultaneous return to, and alteration of, the past serves to connect African Americans’ expanding creative agency to their expanding socio-political agency and, by extension, allows both Morrison herself and her work to represent the progressing realisation of her characters’ frustrated desire for a place in the communal, progressive narrative of American life.

In the early stages of *Beloved*, Morrison’s distortions of chronology signify her characters’ victimisation. In the closing chapters of the novel, however, Morrison no longer meanders among points in time so much as she alternates between the past and present tenses. These tense shifts, rather than suggesting the inability of Morrison’s characters to move beyond their history, formally short-circuit the oppressive pastness of the novel, thus gesturing toward the power of narrative, both literary and social, to guide the process of historical development. In other words, Morrison builds

a gap into the novel's dénouement, a space between its past tense narration and an implied future tense that recalls Ralph Ellison's "newly sighted future."⁸⁴ The evidence of that future tense, all but absent from the pages of the novel itself, appears in the evolutions—historical, political, and literary—that are manifest in the progression from Jacobs to Morrison.

Less a novel about reclaiming the past than a novel about claiming a self in the present, *Beloved*, in working toward an understanding of modern African-American identity, explores the possibilities made available by acts of creative synthesis. Just as African-American self-ownership, as Du Bois might have it, cannot rely on any hope of replacing whiteness with blackness any more than it can withstand replacing blackness with whiteness, the process of self-claiming cannot entail one's radical interiorisation any more than it can demand one's totalising inculcation in social norms and axioms. The concept of a mutually reinforcing dynamic between privacy and publicity has in fact found a home in the liberalism of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As Susan Hekman has argued, "what is wrong with the liberal individual ... is that it is based on a denial of the social nature of identity." People are not, she continues, the "autonomous, rational choosers" or the "neutral and disembodied subjects" envisioned by the liberal tradition. Salvaging liberalism in the postmodern world therefore requires our recognition of an "embodied, particular and social citizen."⁸⁵

In *The Ethics of Identity* (2005), Kwame Appiah revises the liberal tradition along the lines suggested by Hekman, most notably in his rather postmodern assessment of identity. Contrary to Locke, Appiah begins with the premise that "individuality presupposes sociability."⁸⁶ The difficulty comes in determining how the notion of socially constructed identity may be incorporated into the tradition of liberal individualism. Appiah responds to this challenge by juxtaposing "life plans," or sets of constantly evolving projects and goals that reflect one's autonomy and constantly changing individuality, with "social scripts," or sets of loose norms associated with particular collective identities. Rather than imagining a binary opposition between privacy and publicity, between autonomy and heteronomy, Appiah proposes that the "logic of agency" and the "logic of structure" perform different functions and should therefore be applied in different situations.⁸⁷ For

Appiah, individuality consists neither in absolute autonomy nor in unwavering deference to the often contradictory expectations associated with a person's various identity groups. "To create a life," he suggests, "is to interpret the materials that history has given you": that is, to make choices about how to shape a self out of your public and private identities.⁸⁸

For Sethe, making a life out of the materials provided by history seems impossible so long as *Beloved* remains in 124. If, following from Appiah, Sethe's creation of an "ethical self" requires that she possess an adequate range of choices and remain free from undue coercion, Sethe's experiences with slavery and its aftermath demonstrate how an unjust institution can confuse all ethical standards. This confusion extends to the lack of a clear moral binary in Sethe's act of infanticide. What prevails in that episode is instead a formal demonstration of narrative power. Having dedicated nearly the whole of Book I to detailing her characters' humanity, Morrison now transitions to the ideological perspective of the "four horsemen"—Schoolteacher, his nephew, a sheriff, and a slave-catcher. Assuming authorial power over the text, the perspective of four horsemen transforms Morrison's black characters into the sub-human property that Schoolteacher has come to retrieve. Stamp Paid, now deprived of the name he had given himself, appears as a "crazy old nigger ... standing in the woodpile with an ax." "You tell could tell he was crazy right off," the narrator continues, "because he was grunting—making low, cat noises," presumably a warning that the slave-catcher regards as nonsense. Seeing only dehumanised caricatures, the narrator enacts the deficit of understanding and identification that *Beloved* works to reduce by impelling readers to see beyond the "nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest."⁸⁹ With this brief shift in perspective, Morrison accentuates, by omission, what Sethe and her children stand to lose, but what readers must know is there: the interior life that is ripped from Sethe, as from the narrative, the moment that the four horsemen, as Baby Suggs repeats in a conversation with Stamp Paid, "came in my yard."⁹⁰ For J. Hillis Miller, "the central question of the novel is: Did Sethe do the right thing?"⁹¹ Yet the second half of *Beloved* seems focused on another question: what must Sethe do now? Inquiries into the ethicality and reasonableness of Sethe's conduct might serve only to distract the reader from Morrison's examination of narrative, and perhaps even to diminish

Sethe's humanity. As Mae Henderson argues, Sethe must learn to "narrativize" her own life by "formulating her past into a coherent story" and thereby creating a "private self."⁹² The story of Sethe's life, in short, hinges not on her moral standing in the universe, but rather on the kind of self that she might still construct out of the traumatising materials of her existence.

Morrison's amoral treatment of infanticide registers a transition away from the universalism of the Enlightenment and toward what Appiah calls "a form of universalism that is sensitive to ... historical context." This sensitivity, Appiah argues, does not originate in "a common understanding of our common human nature." It derives from a shared capacity for "narrative imagination" that, despite the diversity of human experience, allows people to find points of agreement on a "sequence of particulars."⁹³ "What we find in the epic or novel, which is always a message from some other position," Appiah posits, stems from "an invitation to respond in imagination to narratively constructed situations." The fundamental human ability "to grasp stories, even strange stories," Appiah insists, "is also what links us, powerfully, to others, even strange others."⁹⁴

The empathetic act described by Appiah looks in many ways like the imaginative process of understanding narrated in the buildup to the climactic moment of *Beloved*. When a number of townswomen gather to discuss the rumoured haunting of 124, their differing opinions about Beloved's identity—along with their personal shames and traumas, including Ella's own act of infanticide—stand apart from one another even as they converge, much like the "earnest syllables of agreement" in their prayers and the harmony of their singing voices that "searched for the right combination, ... the sound that broke the back of words."⁹⁵ Far from implying that narrative must be abolished, this passage signals Morrison's break from the classifying tendencies of the Enlightenment and her elevation of pre-linguistic imaginative processes capable of revising traditional western thought. More specifically, Morrison supplants Locke's conception of a teleological private-public binary based on the association of human beings with property, proposing instead an updated formula based on the association of human beings with stories. This alternative releases the liberal subject from Locke's endless process of internalisation and expands the definition of the self beyond a person's memory and consciousness.

During the exorcism of *Beloved*, Sethe's afflicted mind, possessing room only for the memory of slavery, conflates Edward Bodwin with Schoolteacher, making him into "the man without skin," an embodiment of the "bad luck" that Baby Suggs had associated with all white people.⁹⁶ In trying to attack the only person in the crowd who can be easily categorised as white, Sethe acts on her specious association of a racial category with a particular behaviour or condition, much like Schoolteacher once did to her. Yet Bodwin takes on a twofold identity in this passage. While his racialised identity underscores Sethe's enclosure within the bondage of her past as she runs from one incarnation of slavery (*Beloved*) to another (a white man), his personal identity, which distinguishes him from Schoolteacher, evokes the difference between the death of Sethe's child and the disappearance of *Beloved*. In this second episode, the violence of Sethe's history is not repeated. Instead, a "hill of black people" intercepts Sethe and absorbs her story into theirs,⁹⁷ thus uniting privacy and publicity in a shared narrative capable of supporting a self-possessed identity.

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NOTES

¹ Toni Morrison, *What Moves at the Margins*, ed. Carolyn C. Denard (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 69.

² *Ibid.*, 69.

³ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (Auburn, NY: Miller, Orton & Mulligan, 1855), 64.

⁵ Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (London: Christian Age, 1882), 265.

⁶ Tessa Roynon, *Toni Morrison and the Classical Tradition: Transforming American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7.

⁷ Lovalerie King, "Property and American Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Toni*

Morrison: Memory and Meaning, ed. Adrienne Lanier Seward and Justine Tally (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014), 160.

⁸ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Bedford, 1997), 39. See King's "Property and American Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" for an expanded discussion of the historical relationship between property and identity in the United States.

⁹ Justine Baillie, *Toni Morrison and Literary Tradition: The Invention of an Aesthetic* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 13–14.

¹⁰ Du Bois, *Souls*, 39.

¹¹ In a departure from convention, historians in the 1960s and 70s began to challenge and revise the long-held assumption that Lockean liberalism served as the ideological foundation of the American Revolution, arguing that republicanism was equally, or even more, influential in shaping the intellectual and political climate of the early United States. See Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967), Gordon S. Wood's *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787* (1969), and J. G. A. Popock's *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (1975). Locke's centrality to American political theory has been reaffirmed in studies such as Steven M. Dworetz's *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (1989) and Isaac Kramnick's *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (1990). More recently, historians have begun to analyse the historical and ideological points of connection between republicanism and liberalism in Europe and North America. See Richard A. Barney's *Plots of Enlightenment: Education and the Novel in the Eighteenth-Century England* (1999) and Jürgen Hiedeking and James A. Henretta's introduction to *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German State, 1750–1850* (2004).

¹² John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 2.87.

¹³ David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution: 1770–1823* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 45.

¹⁴ Similarly, Teresa Heffernan reads *Beloved* as a novel that examines "the limits of [slave] narratives which, in their necessary acceptance of Enlightenment notions about literacy and freedom, rejected an oral culture and an African heritage." *Post-Apocalyptic Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 80.

¹⁵ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 2.27.

¹⁶ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch. Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), 2.27.9.

¹⁷ Adam Seagrave, "Locke on the Law of Nature and Natural Rights," in *A Companion to Locke*, ed. Matthew Stuart (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), 385–386.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 386–387.

¹⁹ Ian Harris. *The Mind of John Locke: A Study of Political Theory in Its Intellectual Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 150.

²⁰ Janet Coleman, "Pre-Modern Property and Self-Ownership Before and After Locke: Or, When did Common Decency Become a Private Rather a Public Virtue?" *European Journal of Political Theory* 4, no. 2 (2005): 135.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 139.

²² *Ibid.*, 140.

²³ Margaret Davies, *Property: Meanings, Histories, Theories* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 92.

²⁴ Gerald Allan Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 193.

²⁵ Alan P. F. Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006), 135.

²⁶ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. Dillon's principle departure from conventional feminist critiques of the liberal tradition lies in her insistence upon a circular or reciprocal, rather than linear, relationship between privacy and publicity. (See pages 21–23 and 35.)

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 2.17–20, 2.24.

³⁰ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 217.

³¹ Roynon, *Toni Morrison and the Classical Tradition*, 67.

³² Morrison, *Beloved*, 322.

³³ Morrison, *WMM*, 170–171.

³⁴ Morrison, *WMM*, 181, 186.

³⁵ Morrison, *Beloved*, 286.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

³⁸ Ibid., 321.

³⁹ Rafael Pérez-Torres, "Between Presence and Absence: *Beloved*, Postmodernism, and Blackness," in *Toni Morrison Beloved: A Casebook*, ed. William L. Andrews and Nellie Y. McKay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 192.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 225.

⁴¹ La Vinia Delois Jennings, *Toni Morrison and the Idea of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 90, 91.

⁴² Nancy J. Peterson, *Against Amnesia: Contemporary Women Writers and the Crises of Historical Memory* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 62.

⁴³ Kathleen Marks, *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 95.

⁴⁴ DoVeanna S. Fulton, *Speaking Power: Black Feminist Orality in Women's Narratives of Slavery* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 13.

⁴⁵ L. Martina Young, "Beloved Bodies: Gesture toward Wholeness," in *Toni Morrison: Forty Years in the Clearing*, ed. Carmen Gillespie (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2012), 333.

⁴⁶ Morrison, *Beloved*, 308.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 294.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 323–324.

⁴⁹ Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 65, 151.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 41.

⁵¹ Ibid., 21, 41, 261, 272.

⁵² Ibid., 94.

⁵³ Locke, *Two Treatises*, 2.173.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.52.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.56, 2.66, 2.71.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.74.

⁵⁷ Jacobs, *Incidents*, 96.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 122.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 120.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 253.

⁶¹ Anne Bradford Warner, "Harriet Jacobs, Henry Thoreau, and the Character of

Disobedience," in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays*, ed. Deborah M. Garfield, Rafia Zafar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 237.

⁶² Jacobs, *Incidents*, 284.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 297.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁶⁹ Jacobs, *Incidents*, 86, 57, 85, 49. See Amy Dru Stanley for a discussion of the link between sexual freedom and self-ownership in *Incidents*. "The Right to Possess All the Faculties that God Has Given': Possessive Individualism, Slave Women, and Abolitionist Thought," in *Republicanism and Liberalism in America and the German States: 1750–1850*, ed. Jürgen Heideking and James A. Henretta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 270–271.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷¹ Morrison, *Beloved*, 276.

⁷² Molly Abel Travis, "Beyond Empathy: Narrative Distancing and Ethics in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Journal of Narrative Theory* 40, no. 2 (2010): 235.

⁷³ Morrison, *Beloved*, 236, 253.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 161, 162, 163.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 166. (Morrison's italics.)

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 320.

⁸² Morrison, *WMM*, 70, 71.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁸⁴ Rimmon-Kenan makes a similar point, arguing that Morrison's narrative strategies "create a double movement of problematization and rehabilitation," which are ultimately "the same thing." "Narration, Doubt, Retrieval: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Narrative* 4, no. 2 (1996): 109.

⁸⁵ Susan. J. Hekman, *Private Selves, Public Identities: Reconsidering Identity Politics* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 115–116.

⁸⁶ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 163.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁹¹ Miller, J. Hillis, “Boundaries in *Beloved*,” *Symploke* 52, no. 2 (2007): 29.

⁹² Mae Henderson, *Speaking in Tongues and Dancing Diaspora: Black Women Writing and Performing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 88, 86.

⁹³ Appiah, *Ethics*, 256.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁹⁵ Morrison, *Beloved*, 304, 308.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 309, 105.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 309.