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THE TRAUMA OF CHATTEL SLAVERY: A WOMANIST PERSPECTIVE WOMEN ON GEORGIA IN EARLY AMERICAN TIMES

by

DIONNE BLASINGAME

Under the Direction of Carol P. Marsh-Lockett

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the psycho-socio-cultural dynamics that surrounded black womanhood in antebellum Georgia. The goal is twofold: first, to examine how slave narratives, testimonies, and interviews depicted the plight of enslaved black women through a womanist lens and second, to discover what political and socio-cultural constructions enabled the severe slave institution that was endemic to Georgia. Womanist theory, psychoanalytic theory, and trauma theory are addressed in this study to focus on antebellum or pre-Civil War Georgia.

INDEX WORDS: Olaudah Equiano, Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckley, Margaret Walker, Alice Walker, Fannie Kemble, Georgia, Black women, Trauma, Trauma theory, Womanism, Black womanism, Africana womanism, Exploitation, Psychoanalytics

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INTRODUCTION: WOMANISM, TRAUMA, AND ENSLAVED BLACK WOMEN IN GEORGIA

Trauma has long played a vital role in literature and testimony. From classical nineteenth-century Freudian psychoanalytics to twentieth-century womanist theoretical perspectives to twenty-first century Caruthian trauma theory, people's experience with trauma remains a significant literary consideration. Perhaps nowhere has the literary connection to trauma surfaced as strongly as in the slave narratives and the slave testimonies of Georgia. In *Women, Violence, and Testimony in the Works of Zora Neale Hurston*, Diana Miles argues that "there is an inextricable link between trauma, survival and the ethical imperative to give testimony [to slavery]" (48). As we consider the South in the context of "trauma, survival and the ethical imperative" that gave testimony to slavery, the scholar and reader must remain aware that the South underwent two pivotal transitions during early American times.

In general, the two major shifts in the South were socio-cultural and politico-legislative, and these shifts cemented this connection between trauma, testimony, and slavery in literature. Socio-cultural events refer to the social and cultural factors and/or structures that evolved over time during chattel slavery. Politico-legislative occurrences address the political and legislative laws that governed and affected human liberties over time within the system of slavery. The first set of circumstances occurred on the plantation when the slave-driven Southern economy depended increasingly upon cotton, rice, tobacco, and indigo production. Small agricultural farms turned into large expansive plantations, and cotton and rice soon overtook many of the staple crops of the American South. As the plantation economy developed, the need for slave labor increased exponentially, and the subjugation of enslaved Africans in America became endemic. In *Africans in America*, historians Charles Johnson, Patricia Smith, and the WGBH Series Research

Team state that once the "powerful Virginia landowners began to realize that enslaving Africans made good economic sense [,]…in 1641… English colon[ies] in North America [began] to recognize slavery as a legal institution" (41). These Southern planters viewed slavery and trauma in a fundamentally different manner than did the colonists before them, and many of these plantation slave owners invariably prioritized wealth-building practices over human relationships. In *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871), the English naturalist Charles Darwin traces human evolution and details the differences among human races. According to Darwin, blacks were inferior to whites. Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, provided another interpretation, later known as eugenics, between 1865 and 1869. Galton argued that physical traits and mental qualities (genius and talent) were inherited among generations (races) of people. According to Galton, blacks were inherently inferior to whites. Coupled with a eugenic and Darwinistic view of African descendants, this socio-cultural occurrence culminated in the marginalization of enslaved persons and the subsequent trauma inflicted upon them in the South. Thus, the institution of slavery underscored the contrast between the socio-cultural landscapes of black communities and those of white communities in the American South.

By the end of the eighteenth century, a second wave of racial delineations had occurred, this time from a politico-legislative perspective, as much of the South's race-related laws centered on infringement of basic human and civil rights of enslaved and free-born blacks. In the *General Index to Papers and Annual Reports of the American Historical Association, 1884-1914*, David Matteson argues nowhere was this encroachment as strongly exhibited as in the state of Georgia (184-185). By establishing the Slave Codes of Georgia in 1848, early Georgia settlers ignored the anti-slavery statues on the importation of slaves, held open slave auctions despite the anti-slavery laws, banned manumission of black slaves, tried free blacks under the

same tenets as slaves, banned the education of all blacks, and prohibited communication between free blacks and enslaved blacks (152-153). The politico-legislative shift allowed for a stricter, more subjugated slave environment in Georgia. In the seminal text *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America*, Ira Berlin, a prominent historian of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American slavery, states that, in Georgia, "slavery grew as never before, and few slaves gained their freedom" (12). In 1780, Virginia had sanctioned Georgian slaveholders by exempting the States' prohibition on imported slaves (466). Georgia planters and slaveholders seemed "stark Mad after Negroes" and began importing slaves in vast numbers, especially in the coastal regions of Georgia (144). Often blacks had the demographic majority, and, in many ways, coastal Georgia and its large rice-cultivating plantations closely resembled the slave practices and demographics of the West Indies. Moreover, Georgia preferred African slaves above all others: "By the 1760s, Georgia planters…imported their slaves directly from Africa, and most slaves were 'African born'" (422). According to Berlin, Georgia's slaves had changed not only in number but also in kind during the 1770s, and "some 4,000 African slaves arrived annually in the low country" (144). According to *Georgia Encyclopedia*, Georgia's "slaveholders controlled not only the best land and the vast majority of personal property in the State but also the State political system. In 1850 and 1860 more than two-thirds of all State legislators were slaveholders.…[A]lmost a third of the State legislators were planters.…[E]ven without the cooperation of nonslaveholding white male voters, Georgia slaveholders could dictate the State's political [or legislative] path."[1] The results of these politico-legislative conditions marginalized enslaved individuals, and all of these occurrences culminated into a unique enslaved experience in Georgia as a whole.

[1] See http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1019.

This thesis situates enslaved black women as marginalized and exploited subjects whose experiences bear witness to racism and classism and whose gendered testimonies of trauma and exploitation are explicit and recurrent throughout slave narratives and slave testimonies. The experiences of slavery were not collective ones, and the degrees of subjugation were dictated by gender. I propose that the enslavement experiences for black women in Georgia were particularly (to an exceptional degree) and peculiarly (uncommonly) convoluted. This thesis entails a two-part approach: first, an exploration of literature, trauma, testimony, and slavery throughout the transatlantic slave trade and second, an investigation of the journals, diaries, slave narratives, and slave testimonies—whether written by whites or blacks—concerning the socio-cultural and politico-legislative landscapes of early Georgia that resulted in severe slave conditions.

The first chapter, "Assessing for Trauma in the Lives of Enslaved Women in Early America," provides an overview of the transatlantic slave trade and explains the context of the thesis within the transatlantic slave trade. Enslaved Africans in North America suffered innumerable atrocities. In assessing the early slave narratives, journals, testimonies, and interviews, readers can comprehend the pervasive effects of slavery and trauma upon black women's bodies. Two widely published and well-known narratives give credence to the levels of trauma that existed during chattel slavery, and I contextualize the broad and unique circumstances surrounding black womanhood and African enslavement in North America while, later, situating the evidence of trauma by way of Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, The African*, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and other sources.

Olaudah Equiano's *Narrative*, published in 1789, describes the conditions of enslaved black women in the pre-American Revolution transatlantic slave trade.[2] Equiano addresses the cruelties and the lawlessness of slavery. Prominent scholars, such as Vincent Carretta, James Walvin, and others, claim that Equiano's text highlights the international slave trade and the diversity of slave life within the transatlantic slave system; however, Equiano's narrative does much more. Equiano's account situates the psychological, political, social, cultural, economic, and historical positions of enslaved black women from the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade, and his narrative illuminates the atrocities within the Georgian system of slavery.[3]

Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents*, published in 1861, describes the enslaved black female condition within the United States of America prior to the initial draft of the Emancipation Proclamation on 22 September 1862.[4] Regarding Harriet Jacobs's narrative, the community in which she published her narrative questioned her character as a writer and as a woman. Interestingly, Harriett Beecher Stowe, an abolitionist and author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, desired to narrate Jacobs's story in her book; however, Jacobs decided to write her own story.[1] After publication, the memoir became popular among the abolitionists, and Jacobs received greater reception in England. It is important to note that all the comments were not positive. In *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays*, Deborah Garfield and Rafia Zafar state, "Frances Smith Foster tells us, 'Jacobs has more than once been accused of having omitted or distorted details of her

[2] Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* is the first published slave narrative.

[3] See texts such as Chima J. Korieh, *Olaudah Equiano and the Igbo World: History, Society, and Diaspora Connections* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2009), 50-51. Vincent Carretta, *Equiano, the African: Biography of a Self-made Man* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 236-238. Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould, *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 117, 200. James Walvin, *An African's Life: The Life and Times of Olaudah Equiano, 1745-1797* (New York: Wellington, 2000), 144-148. James Walvin, *The Trader, The Owner, The Slave: Parallel Lives in the Age of Slavery* (London: Vintage Books, 2007). Many of these scholars (above) address important issues regarding the authenticity and the criticism that surrounds Equiano's narrative.

[4] See Garfield and Zafar 3.

own life in order to enhance her personal reputation…[In addition, Jean Fagan] Yellin notes that at the time of its first edition, *Incidents* was received politely…[,]but[,]…with the coming of the Civil War[,] the appearance of 'another' slave narrative may have 'seemed of minor importance[3].'"

Until well into the twentieth century, the reception of *Incidents* attested to the continuing difficulty of Jacobs, or any black woman writer, gaining an audience. She was faced with the "double negative" of being a member of the black race and a member of the female gender. Collectively, these two slave narratives, along with other slave narratives, testimonies, interviews, journals, and diaries, are important in the evaluation of slavery in general and aid in understanding Georgia's peculiar institution of slavery.

Chapter two "Womanizing the Black Female Condition: The Concepts of Womanism" defines the concept of womanism. Womanist analysis is essential because it addresses the unique experiences of enslaved black women. Womanists look at the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. Exploring the methods of womanism, Freudian literary psychoanalytic theory, and trauma theory are necessary to help elucidate the intersections of literature, trauma, testimony, and slavery in the American South and Georgia.

These interdisciplinary studies emerged independently of each other. Womanist theory emerged in 1974 with the publication of Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: The Creativity of Black Women in the South," and, by the 1990s, womanism had become firmly established as a system of study for triangulated oppressions imposed on black women. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett defines womanism as a discourse designed to address the "triple impact of sex, race, and class on African American women and to compensate for the traditional shortcomings of feminist and African American liberation discourse that have routinely excluded the peculiar

needs of African American women" (Andrews, Foster, and Harris 785).

Freudian psychoanalytic theory and trauma theory are complementary to womanism in elucidating the plight of enslaved black women. In the nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist, founded psychoanalysis. Freud was a prolific essayist and therapist who used psychoanalysis to elucidate history, literature, and culture. He argued that the compulsory nature of trauma forced individuals to repeat traumatic events over and over again in the human psyche.

Trauma theory gained significant recognition with seminal works like Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). By the early 2000s, trauma theory had become firmly established as a theoretical framework devoted to the "experience of trauma" as it "repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor and against h[er] very will" (*Unclaimed Experience* 2). Caruth argues that

> trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our actions and our language….Trauma cannot simply be consigned to the past: it is relived endlessly in the present…The past intrudes insistently on the present, demanding, yet resisting, articulation wreaking devastating effects on the survivor's memory and identity…It is only when the seemingly unspeakable traumatic experience can be transformed into a narrative that the traumatic event can be put in the past and

> survivors can begin to recreate an identity shattered by trauma. (*Unclaimed Experience* 11)

Chapter three "Analyzing the Types of Trauma Intrinsic within the Legal System of Georgia: The Socio-Cultural and Politico-Legislative Differences of Enslaved Black Female Subjugation" explores the occurrences of trauma inflicted upon black women in Georgia. I put forward various narratives that illuminate the manifestations of trauma within the slave system in Georgia. I make a distinction between abuse and the psychological trauma inflicted on black women's bodies. The chapter is important in situating the intersectionality of trauma, race, class, and gender in Georgia as opposed to other geographical regions.

I utilize these interdisciplinary approaches to offer insight into the intersection of black womanhood and slavery in the socio-cultural and politico-legislative paradigms of early Georgia, and I illuminate the relationship between literature, trauma, testimony, and slavery. In addition, the thesis is shaped by literary studies, women's studies, and American and African American studies. The thesis is relevant to contemporary scholarship because it explores an area of study that has been neglected in academic studies, namely the interconnectedness of trauma with the peculiarity of slavery in Georgia.

1 ASSESSING FOR TRAUMA IN THE LIVES OF ENSLAVED WOMEN IN EARLY AMERICA

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? -- Sojourner Truth, Women's Convention in Akron, Ohio, 1851, The Life of Celia

1.1 Overview of Transatlantic Slave Trade

Prior to addressing the fundamental issues surrounding enslaved black women within the political and socio-cultural constructions of Georgia's slave system, it becomes important to understand the history of slavery. Unlike the prevailing propaganda or the stereotypical images that envelop the continent, Africa was not a monolithic, homogeneous space; in fact, the *continent* of Africa still is one of the most multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic communities in the world.[5] In order to fully comprehend the complexity of this thesis, it becomes important to understand the psychological, historical, political, social, and cultural contexts of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their juxtapositions to the trading of enslaved Africans in America, the notions of European whiteness, and the concepts of black identity and transnational blackness during the transatlantic slave trade.

In *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900*, Nancy Woloch argues that the nineteenth century presented more expansive and more traumatic enslavement practices among white slave traders toward enslaved Africans: "In the early nineteenth century, slavery became a larger, more severe institution.…[N]atural growth plus illegal arrivals swelled the slave

[5] See *Ethnologue Languages of the World*, s.v. "peoples of Africa," accessed May 10, 2011, http://www.ethnologue.com/country_index.asp?place=africa.

population to more than three million by 1860….Overall, slavery became more permanent, entrenched, and intransigent" (209). The institution of slavery was pervasive and traumatic.

Moreover, in order for readers to fully grasp the argument within the thesis I have proposed, it becomes important for me to give a brief, generalized background of the transatlantic slave trade. These backdrops are needed in order to explicate the circumstances that surrounded black womanhood in America during the transatlantic slave trade, and this background is needed to situate the presence of trauma.

The transatlantic slave trade was an occurrence like no other in the history of the world; the number of Africans transported to the Americas during the forced migration is unparalleled in human history. It is estimated that sixty to two hundred million enslaved Africans labored and died within the transatlantic slave system at large.[6] David Eltis's *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* provides a scholarly overview of the transatlantic slave trade:

> The trans-Atlantic slave trade was the largest long-distanced coerced movement of people in history and, prior to the mid-nineteenth centuries, formed the major demographic well-spring for the re-peopling of the Americas…Nearly four Africans had crossed the Atlantic for every European [and]… about four out of every five females that traversed the Atlantic were from Africa.[7]

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[6] See Bonnie Angelo, "Pain of Being Black," *Time*, May 22, 1989, http://www.time.com/time/community/pulitzerinterview.html.

[7] The database "comprises nearly 35,000 individual slaving expeditions between 1514 and 1866. Records of the voyages have been found in archives and libraries throughout the Atlantic world. They provide information about vessels, enslaved peoples, slave traders and owners, and trading routes. A variable (Source) cites the records for each voyage in the database. Other variables enable users to search for information about a particular voyage or group of voyages. The website provides full interactive capability to analyze the data and report results in the form of statistical tables, graphs, maps, or on a timeline." http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces

Slavery in America lasted for four hundred and four years. Enslaved Africans were forcibly migrating across the Atlantic. The imposed movement of enslaved Africans outnumbered the voluntary resettlement of their European counterparts, and "four out of every five females" that journeyed to the Americas were enslaved African women.

Europeans traded with Africans long before the transatlantic slave trade began. There was extensive trading of both gold and salt across the Sahara desert. In the 1400s, Prince Henry of Portugal sought out a more direct route to the West African coast. Even though the Portuguese quest began as a search for a direct trade route for African gold, it became a highly demanding exportation of African slaves, which continued for more than four hundred years.[8] Before long, the Dutch, French, Spanish, and British began exporting African as well as Portuguese slaves.

The trading of African slaves continued well into the nineteenth century; however, social, cultural, and political concerns were being raised. The trading of human cargo and the institution of slavery were being questioned. Many factors contributed to the demise of the transatlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century. Many people throughout the African Diaspora became revulsed against the slave system, and Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative* played a pivotal role: "One important person in bringing about this change [in the transatlantic slave trade] was Olaudah Equiano…. His writing had a profound effect on the public opinion of the slave trade."[9]

Moreover, between 1801 and 1803, Haiti had a successful slave revolt. According to Eltis's *Database*, people throughout the African Diaspora were shaken "to realize that…slavery

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[8] The information was found on the website located at http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m7b/activity1.phn.

[9] Ibid.

could be challenged and overthrown." This combination of events (and others) led to the termination of the transatlantic slave trade.

Even though the transatlantic slave trade started in the fifteenth century and lasted until the nineteenth century, the slave trade within the Americas was most pervasive during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[10] For this reason, this study will not focus on the detailed historical facts of the fifteenth, sixteenth, or seventeenth centuries that preceded the acceleration of slave trading in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, nor will it focus on the demographic profiles of those preceding eras any further within this thesis. However, it is necessary to mention the importance of history, demographics, and identity in the paradigms that surrounded the enslavement of Africans in the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Thus, a focus on this specific timeframe between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries better situates the historical, political, social, and cultural contexts of this thesis.

According to Eltis's *Database*, "Slaves on documented voyages represent four-fifths of the number who were actually transported." A reported 1,381,404 enslaved Africans entered the United States of America from 1626 to 1866. The total number of enslaved Africans throughout the African Diaspora was 12,521,336 from 1501 to 1866. Michael Angelo Gomez's *Exchanging Our Country Marks* provides additional data:

> The various regions of [African] origin differed in their contributions to the North American market, resulting in huge and consistent numbers coming from West Central Africa and the Bight of Biafra. At the same time, the North American market was distinguished by its relatively balanced sex ratios and high importa-

[10] It is important for readers to understand the escalating and differentiating dynamics that were heterogeneous at different phases of the transatlantic slave trade.

> tion of children.…Research…substantiates [that]…the total number of Africans imported into the Americas is somewhere between 9.6 and 10.8 million, while the total export figure is about 11.9. (18)

In Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, there is another variation of percentages that pertain to Africans in the Americas:

> Brazil received perhaps two-thirds of African captives from Angola, one-quarter from the Bight of Benin…and smaller numbers from Mozambique and the region around the Bijagós Islands off West Africa….Most African captives arrived in British North America and the United States from the Congo River area, Senegambia, the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast, and the Sierra Leone region. (1876)

Appiah and Gates imply that American rice plantation owners sought Africans from West Africa for their rice cultivating expertise. Africans from Angola were often avoided in North America because of their high instances of slave rebellion and insurrection; yet, in Brazil, Angolans were sought for their endurance of the harsh labors on the sugar plantations.

Even though the exact numbers are not precisely known, it is evident that millions of people(s) of African descent were forced into slavery. The overall history and demographics of the transatlantic slave trade needs to be understood in order to contextualize this thesis. The exact numbers become less important when the reader recognizes the sheer impact of slavery on the population within the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade.

The purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader of the massive scale on which enslaved Africans were dislocated from continental Africa for the Americas. In addition, it is important to note how Europeans positioned enslaved Africans as non-whites, and it is equally im-

portant to understand why the non-human status of enslaved blacks was needed in order to justify slavery and rationalize its traumatic practices. George Frederickson makes this clear in *Racism: A Short History*:

> When Europeans of the late medieval and early modern periods invoked the will of God to support the view that [the] differences…between Europeans and Africans were ineradicable, they were embracing a racist doctrine [that]…could serve as [the] supernaturalist equivalents of biological determinism for those seeking to deny humanity to [blacks]….As a set of folk beliefs or popular myths, they could create distance enough to dull the sensibilities of slave traders….The theory of polygenesis, or multiple human origins, challenged the orthodox doctrine of a single creation and 'one blood' for all of humanity and could be applied in an extremely racist fashion….The modern concept of races as basic human types classified by physical characteristics (primarily skin color) was not invented until the eighteenth century….The notion that there was a single pan-European or 'white' race was slow to develop and did not crystallize until the eighteenth century. Direct encounters with Africans had of course made Europeans aware of their own light pigmentation. (51-54)

Whites justified the institution of slavery by othering enslaved Africans throughout the transatlantic slave trade, throughout the Americas during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[11]

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[11] Europeans or whites othered blacks according to racial differences—the blackness associated with African skin. Othering can be defined in the following manner: "The category of the Other is as primordial as consciousness itself. …One finds the expression of a duality—that of the self and the Other." *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (New York : Penguin, 1976), 16. Likewise, othering can be defined in the following manner: "Who and what Others are…is intimately related to 'our' notion of whom and what 'we' are. 'We' use other to define ourselves: 'we' understand ourselves in relation to what we are not." *Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reading*, Celia Kitzinger and Sue Wilkinson (London: Sage, 1996), 8.

Through the process of othering, blacks were demoted to a non-human status while whites emerged as supremely, uniquely human within the cultural and social paradigms of the age. The proposed subclasses within humanity served to promote the subjugation and marginalization of blacks based upon skin color alone; in addition, through the identification that blackness did not equal whiteness (and blackness did not equate to humanness), slavery persisted within the Americas for centuries.

At the turn of the twentieth century, black writers such as Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins challenged these racist ideologies within her novel *Of One Blood* where she connects the humanity of all peoples and all races—particularly blacks and whites—to a shared origin. Her work rejected racist doctrine that promoted biological determinism. Specifically, Hopkins's *Of One Blood* directly challenged "the theory of polygenesis or multiple human origins," and through her fiction, she claimed "a single creation and 'one blood' for all of humanity."

In the second chapter of *Racism* "The Rise of Modern Racism(s): White Supremacy and Antisemitism in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," Fredrickson contends, "The efforts to demote Africans from human to ape or half-ape status…revealed how a purely naturalistic chain of being could be employed to deny full humanity to non-Caucasians" (57). Every effort was employed to denounce the full humanity of enslaved Africans in America by the hegemonic, white cultural superstructures during the transatlantic slave trade. Blacks were no longer identified according to their ethnicities (i.e., Angolas, Mende, Igbo, Yoruba, etc.). Instead, Europeans recognized Africans according to their non-whiteness, which added to the dehumanization of blacks in America. Again, according to Appiah and Gates *Africana*, Europeans *themselves* knew cultural differences within continental Africa:

> During the history of the transatlantic slave trade, conditions of slave supply in Africa, the demand of planters for slaves of certain gender, ages, or broadly understood African "ethnicities"…shaped the movement of slaves from African to American markets. (1876)

Despite their knowledge of the cultural and ethnic differences within continental Africa, Europeans collectively identified enslaved Africans according to their race (or blackness) alone. Even though Europeans unified Africans in terms of blackness, Africans *themselves* did not initially make such classifications.

A unified and cohesive identity for Africans did not exist. Africans identified themselves through religious and cultural traditions, ethnicities, and languages. According to Eltis's *Database*, Africans, unlike the cohesive Anglo-Saxon or European identity of whiteness, did not identify themselves in terms or classifications of blackness; instead, Africans envisioned themselves as uniquely and culturally different or "un-like" people(s) living in close proximity to one another. The lack of a cohesive black identity allowed Africans to capture and sell other Africans into slavery both before and during the transatlantic slave trade. In fact, Africans maintained a limited concept of blackness when compared to the cohesive white identity found among Europeans.

Africans had the skills to cultivate the New World; yet, Africans did not have a cohesive continental black identity that prevented them from warring against and selling each other into slavery. The combination of these variables aided in the exploitation of white European slave traders against black Africans. The concept of being "African" or black emerged later from the shared traumatic experiences and the shared base social and classed conditions that pertained to blackness (race) and othering in the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade.

Slavery was an incident upon humanity that was propagated by Africans, Europeans, Native Americans, and early American colonists, and the idea of identity is an important notion that underscores the how and the why in the escalation of trading enslaved Africans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Americas. The transatlantic slave trade promoted unique ideologies that shaped the racial, social, and cultural interactions between blacks and whites, and, in order to better understand the hypothesis presented in this thesis, it is important to have a general knowledge of this historical period.

These are basic facts concerning the forced migration of Africans to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century timeframe. The intent here is to showcase the pervasiveness of the slave system throughout the Americas and to supply a small, focused amount of background information for an increased understanding within the overall thesis.[12] A thorough summary of the transatlantic slave trade cannot be accomplished within the few pages that I presented here; however, I believe this information is crucial to the overall comprehension of my argument.

This overview contextualizes the prevalence and commonplace nature of slavery within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries throughout the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade, and, in subsequent chapters, the overview will help to illuminate the frequency of traumas inflicted upon black bodies that were enslaved within the Americas. Last, this synopsis will help to situate the traumatized state of black womanhood within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries during the transatlantic slave trade.

[12] The term *American* refers to the North, Central, and South America.

1.2 The Plight of Enslaved Black Women: The Traumatic Landscape

Slavery fostered gendered paradigms within the socio-cultural and politico-legislative landscapes of the American South. Cumulatively, these paradigms constructed the limitations endemic to the lives of enslaved black women in Georgia. One fundamental question arises: how does the slave narrative, slave testimony, or slave interview depict the unique conditions of enslaved black women within America at large and specifically within Georgia's cultural landscapes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? Exploring geographical regions for differences in the presentation and severity of trauma on black women's bodies is essential in order to understand the enslaved women's reality.

Slavery was not a uniform experience for enslaved men and enslaved women. In *Ar'n't I a Woman: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, Deborah Gray White asserts "the images of African American women that grew out of the slavery era reflect that black males and females did not experience slavery the same way" (40). Slavery was gendered and not a shared or homogeneous event in history. Men were rarely sodomized by their owners, whereas women were routinely raped and impregnated. The slave culture encouraged such behavior, and it was profitable to the slave owners for female slaves to procreate.

The images of black womanhood were products of the rhetoric surrounding their sexuality. In 1714, a slave trader on a slave voyage, Daniel Beeckman, writes, "You may see the *Dutch* Sailors frequently go in and out to the Slave women, and are very acceptable to them, who are *Negroes*, and are very proud when their children prove whiter than themselves" (180). Beeckman's comment minimizes the trauma of rape, and such rhetoric pacified moral objections to the sexual exploitation of enslaved black women. As a result of this socio-cultural rhetoric, the bodies of black women became alienated from the sanctity of white womanhood. White women

were represented throughout society as chaste and pure while black women were thus positioned as sexually aggressive and animalistic.

Likewise, this socially constructed animalistic nature of black women allowed for greater exploitation in experimental medicine. In *Medical Apartheid*, Harriet Washington recounts that in 1813, James Marion Sims, in Alabama, "conducted years of nightmarishly painful and degrading experiments, without anesthesia or consent, on a group of slave women" (61). Washington states:

> Sims, working with enslaved blacks…made the women undress completely, then kneel on hands and knees while he and several physicians took turns inserting a special speculum he had devised to open the women's vaginas fully to view…. The surgeries themselves were terribly painful….Several male doctors had initially assisted Sims by holding down the enslaved women … but…could [not] bear…the bone-chilling shrieks of the women… [and] they left, leaving the women to take turns restraining one another. (65)

In *African American Women's Rhetoric*, Deborah F. Atwater argues that the trauma inflicted by Sims on black women's bodies was frequent. She, too, recounts the brutality that passed as medical practice and science:

> This is exemplified specifically in the founding of gynecology, as antebellum physician J. Marion Sims invented the speculum while practicing surgical experiments on enslaved black women in Alabama from 1845 to 1849. One [enslaved woman] named Anarcha would be operated on thirty times without anesthesia. (17)

The medical practices on enslaved black women's bodies continued throughout enslavement, and the evidence of the traumas inflicted upon enslaved black female bodies have resurfaced during modern times. In Washington's *Medical Apartheid*, she recollects a horrendous finding that occurred in Georgia. In 1989, under the 154-year-old Greek Revival building that once housed the Medical College of Georgia, construction workers "stumbled upon a nightmare cached beneath the building. Strewn beneath its concrete floor lay a chaos of desiccated body parts and nearly *ten thousand* human bones and skulls, many bearing the marks of nineteenth-century anatomy tools or numbered with India ink….The angle of pelvic bones and bone thickness and ratios revealed gender" (120-121). The stories of these enslaved women and men will never be told; accounts of their suffering are lost forever in American history.[13]

However, slave narratives, slave testimonies, and slave interviews (written by both men and women) provide insight into the socio-cultural conditions of enslaved black women. These slave recollections highlight the intersections of race, class, and gender. In *Behind the Scenes*, Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave in Virginia and seamstress for Mary Todd Lincoln, attests to trauma within the paradigms of American slavery. Though she is not from Georgia, Keckley positions the black woman in the system of slavery and describes how William J. Bingham, the neighbor of her mistress, ordered her to undress in order to beat her, subdue her "stubborn pride," and "break her" independent spirit (14).[14] She also recounts the sexual abuse and exploitation she suffered with the conditions of slavery:

> I was regarded as fair-looking for one of my race, and for four years a white man —I spare the world his name—had base designs upon me. I do not care to dwell

[13] Many scholars argue that most of the bodies were of dead blacks—the bodies of blacks robbed from local graves; however, Dr. Sims medical acts are a testament to such unrealistic assertions that *most* were dead blacks.
[14] Mary Todd Lincoln was the wife of President Abraham Lincoln.

> upon this subject, for it is one that is fraught with pain. Suffice it to say, that he persecuted me for four years, and I—I became a mother. (38-39)

For Keckley, the trauma seems too discordant. Keckley attempts to give testimony to the trauma. In "Speaking the Body's Pain: Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig*," Cynthia J. Davis highlights the plight of Wilson's main character Frado, a young girl essentially enslaved in the American North, and explains that "it is pain…which delineates [the body]; pain…which threatens to ruin [the body]; and pain…which eventually compels [the enslaved person] to speak out on [their] own behalf" (392). Wilson's *Our Nig* exemplifies the trauma experienced by black women in early American times.

Keckley is unable to speak on these more traumatic experiences in detail; in fact, the inability to speak of traumatic experiences is highly significant. Explicating Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, in *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*, Kathleen Brogan argues that "slave narratives…[acknowledge] 'proceedings too terrible to relate' [and] indicate the authors…repulsive details of their experience…a self-censorship rendering…[the] abuse unspeakable" (62-63). Keckley depicts the "base" subjections toward her body and attempts to outline an experience "fraught with pain." Keckley's recollection of her plight with the unnamed white man also exhibits a self-censuring unspeakability and is indicative of the psychological trauma she incurred from the traumatic event.

Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* posits, "Trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (11). Keckley's account illuminates her trauma in her relationship

lasting “for four years” with a resulting pregnancy. Her experience extends beyond the actual sexual event. She attempts to give testimony to her life experiences.

In *Incidents*, Jacobs reports the frequent mental duress placed upon enslaved black women: “I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction block.…I met that mother in the street, [with] her wild, haggard face.…Instances of this kind are of daily, yea, hourly occurrence” (41). Jacobs continues, “Another time I saw a[n] [enslaved] woman rush wildly by.…She rushed to the river, jumped in, and ended her wrongs in death” (141). Moreover, she describes her own episodes of mental illness instigated by trauma. Betty, an enslaved woman in one of the homes that sheltered Jacobs during her seven years of hiding, attempts to calm Jacobs: “Lor[d] chil[d]…you’s got [th]e high-sterics [hysterics]” (129). Enslaved women appear to have suffered openly from instances of trauma.

Like Keckley, Jacobs’s recollections highlight the sexual trauma and sexual exploitation of black women: “[My master] told me that I was made for his use, made to obey his command in *everything*; that I was nothing but a slave, whose will must and should surrender to his” and “[he] began to whisper foul words in my ear” (42, 52). In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Sigmund Freud argues that “pain…falls into line with disgust and shame as a force that stands in opposition and resistance to the libido” (Gay 252). Jacobs resists the inappropriate comments and is shamed by the experience.

Jacobs understands the intersectionality of trauma, race, class, and gender upon black women’s body and laments the fate of her female child: “I knew the doom that awaited my fair baby in slavery, and I determined to save her from it, or perish in the attempt” (113). She desires to protect her daughter from the trauma of slavery; yet, she is aware of her own vulnerability and limitations within the slave system. Jacobs asserts that “slavery is terrible for men; but it is far

more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (101).

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth purports that Jacobs elucidates trauma within her narrative:

> Jacobs explains in her narrative that she tries to tell her grandmother about these experiences of violation: 'My lips moved to make confession, but the words stuck in my throat. I sat down in the shade of a tree at her door and began to sew….[She continues,] he came every day; and I was subjected to such insults as no pen can describe. I would not describe them if I could; they are too low, too revolting.' When Jacobs writes that she cannot describe the physical and sexual abuse[,]…she is [indicating]…trauma….Trauma that…is 'speechless terror.' (159)

Likewise, in *The Body in Pain*, Elaine Scarry argues that trauma affects language: "Intense pain is…language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and subject" (35). Therefore, when Jacobs's "lips moved to make confession, but the words stuck in [her] throat [and she could] not describe," she indirectly articulates her trauma. Even though Jacobs cannot explain her situation to her grandmother, she is able to convey her experiences within *Incidents*. Jacobs's account is emblematic of a "narrative of physical suffering in that, rather than allowing trauma to silence her, it is precisely her trauma which compels [her] to speak" (Davis 393).

Addressing the particular and peculiar institution of slavery, Jacobs, while in North Carolina, mentions Georgia twice. She acknowledges the consequences of a mulatto child being born

under a cruel mistress; after a "mistress" saw an enslaved woman's "baby for the first time, and in the lineaments of its fair face she saw a likeness to her husband. She turned the bondwoman and her child out of doors, and told him [her husband] what had happened.…The next day she [the enslaved woman] and her baby [the mulatto child] were sold to a Georgia trader" (141). From the quotation, two issues are apparent; it was a contentious matter to have an interracial child around the plantation and within the domestic sphere. Moreover, in order to impart more severe punishment upon a slave, the slaveholder decidedly sold the enslaved individual into Georgia's institution of slavery; therefore, the slaveholder could ensure a harsher experience for the enslaved person within Georgia's system of slavery.

Harriet Jacobs implies *something* peculiarly cruel with slavery in Georgia, and she repeatedly refers to slavery in Georgia in a derogatory manner. After an enslaved woman retaliates and punches her dead mistress' corpse, the enslaved woman was sold to Georgia: "She [the enslaved woman] confessed [that she punched her dead mistress; thus she] was sold to Georgia" (73). In another passage, Jacobs recalls a black man attempting to conceal his children and protect them from the auction block; the father "was put in jail, and the two oldest boys sold to Georgia" (75). Seemingly, when slave-holders perceived slaves as behaving badly, the enslaved persons were sold to Georgia for punishment.

Like Jacobs, Equiano conveys a sense of slavery in Georgia. Equiano's narrative is important because it situates the psychological, political, social, cultural, economic, and historical positions of enslaved black women from the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade. Equiano depicts a horrific scene when he recalls the gendered conditions of slavery. Situating the severity of slavery in Georgia, Equiano's *Narrative* depicts the pre-American Revolution transatlantic

slave trade as well as his peculiar experiences as a slave working in Georgia.[15] He is disturbed by the "shrieks of women" being raped aboard the slave ships while under the authority of slave traders (41). In Virginia, Equiano anguishes over the appearance of "a black slave woman…cooking dinner" and laments that "the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines; she had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak; and could not eat nor drink" (44). Metaphorically, the iron muzzle symbolizes the silencing of black women during chattel slavery.

Equiano's recollection is important because his account situates the enslaved black female condition within the American domestic sphere and abroad. According to James Walvin's *The Trader, The Owner, The Slave: Parallel Lives in the Age of Slavery*, Walvin claims that Equiano "belonged to a small band of Africans whose displacement was even more spectacular: it had taken [him] from Africa to the Americas and thence to Europe" (180). Thus Equiano's narrative gives readers a comprehensive glance into the lives of enslaved black women.

The sexual exploitation of enslaved black women supersedes all other accounts of abuses toward enslaved blacks within Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative*. Equiano seems preoccupied with the unique characteristics of trauma imposed on enslaved black women's bodies. Recalling his sister's fate within the slave system, Equiano laments:

> The wretchedness of the situation was redoubled by my anxiety after her fate, and my apprehensions lest her suffering should be greater than mine.…[T]houghts of your suffering have damped my prosperity, they have mingled with adversity and increased bitterness. To that Heaven which protects the weak from the strong. I commit the care of your innocence and virtues, if they have not already received their full reward, and if your youth and delicacy have not long since fallen victim

[15] See previous notes on Equiano.

> to the violence of the African trader, the pestilential stench of a Guinea ship, the seasoning in the European colonies, or the lash and lust of a brutal and unrelenting overseer. (36)

Here Equiano considers his sister's fate within the transatlantic slave trade. Equiano's sympathy does not lie only within the familial ties of his dear sister, but he is aware of his sister's inevitable hardships based upon her gender.

> I used frequently to have different cargoes of new negroes in my care for sale; and it was almost a constant practice with our clerks, and other whites, to commit violent depredations on the chastity of the female slaves; and these I was, though with reluctance, obliged to submit to at all times, being unable to help them. When we have had some of these slaves on board my master's vessels to carry them to other islands, or to America, I have known our mates to commit these acts most shamefully, to the disgrace, not of Christians only, but of men. I have even known them to gratify their brutal passion with females not ten years old; and these abominations some of them practiced to such scandalous excess, that one of our captains discharged the mate and others on that account. (77)

Attesting to Equiano's assessment of the vulnerability of enslaved black women, Alexander Falconbridge records similar atrocities in his 1788 memoir: "On board some ships the common sailors are allowed to have intercourse with…the black women.…The officers are permitted to indulge their passions among them at pleasure and sometimes are guilty of such excesses as disgrace human nature."[16] Equiano relives the traumas of enslaved black women by repeating the occurrences of trauma over and over again within his narrative.

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[16] Alexander Falconbridge, *Black Voyage–Eyewitness Accounts of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1788).

Through Equiano's memories and accounts of the trauma imposed upon enslaved black female bodies, he attempts to heal the wounds trauma has created within his own psyche. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Sigmund Freud asserts that the repetition of traumatic events is a "compulsion" wherein the person gains the ability to master or recover from trauma (22). Likewise, in "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," Michelle Balaev argues that "the Freudian concept of trauma and memory emphasizes the necessity to recreate [trauma]…through narrative recall of the experience" (153).

Equiano recounts the exploitation and trauma imposed on black women's reproductive abilities as well. The abundance of mulatto children was a manifestation of the forced sexual duties and requirements imposed upon enslaved black women. Equiano recounts "many mulattoes working in the fields like beasts of burden; and [a French planter] told Mr. Tobin these were all the produce of his own loins! And I myself have known similar instances" (81). Slave owners sought mulatto women as concubines and mistresses but rarely protected them from socio-cultural and politico-legislative retaliations of their spouses.

In his seminal work *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery*, James Walvin states the "female slave could be a valuable worker in the fields…produce new generations of slaves…[and] provide…sexual services for the slave owner and his coterie…All slaves were exploited people, but female slaves endured extra dimensions of exploitation" (120). Equiano recognizes the peculiarities exacted upon the black female slave position in society, and he highlights the traumatic violence inflicted upon the bodies of enslaved black women. Moreover, Equiano notes the emotional abuse and trauma meted out on enslaved black women. He reflects upon the emotional instability of enslaved black women who suffered from trauma "on the islands." He writes:

> And not only so, but too often also, to my knowledge, our clerks, and many others, at the same time have committed acts of violence on the poor, wretched, and helpless females; whom I have seen for hours stand crying to no purpose, and get no redress or pay of any kind. (80)

The incident gives credence to the positionality of enslaved black women within slave societies and highlights the invisibility of enslaved black women's suffering within such environments.

Particularly interesting in Equiano's account is that he watched "for hours" and did not respond to her emotional distress either. Equiano implies the emasculation of enslaved black men; black men are powerless to act against the brutality imposed upon enslaved black women's bodies. Equiano's account situates the trauma experienced by black men during slavery. His inability to act is indicative of the trauma he has repeatedly experienced within the slave system. He notes a distinction between the traumas exacted upon enslaved black men and the traumas inflicted upon enslaved black women.

Like Jacobs, Equiano emphasizes the political and social paradigms that existed within the cultural landscapes of Georgia. He reports on the injustices that he experienced as he "took a load of new slaves for Georgia" (92). On his first *visit* to the State of Georgia, Equiano was struck by the lawlessness and cruelty that he witnessed and suffered in Georgia: "We soon came to Georgia…and here worse fate than ever attended me…in the town of Savannah.…They beat and mangled me in a shameful manner, leaving me near dead" (96). Georgia is the only geographic location for which Equiano consistently articulates a particular aversion.

According to Betty Wood's *Slavery in Colonial America 1619-1776*, Georgia "was unwavering in its commitment to the institution of slavery as an economic regime and as a means of trying to impose racial and social control" (85). Equiano's narrative verbalizes the unique

condition of enslaved individuals in Georgia: “But, as soon as our vessel arrives there, my master came on board, and gave for us to go to…Georgia. I was much disappointed at this…” (102). In his final voyage from Georgia, Equiano laments his encounters with the citizens of Georgia and rejoices in his departure from the State: “I thus took a final leave of Georgia; for the treatment I had received in it disgusted me very much against the place; and when I left it…I determined never more to revisit it” (120-122). Being a free man during his stopovers to Georgia, Equiano exposes the unique experiences of enslaved blacks living within Georgia. Georgia maintained strict laws upon enslaved and free blacks within the state. Free blacks were prohibited from socializing with enslaved blacks.

The collection *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938* contains slave interviews conducted in the 1930s by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). From this collection, Norman R. Yetman’s *When I was a Slave: Memoirs from the Slave Narrative Collection* explores the experiences of former black slaves in their own words. W. L. Bost recounts, “Plenty of the colored woman have children by the white men. She know better than to not do what he say” (17). Julia Brown, an ex-slave interviewed in Atlanta, Georgia, remembers, “They sold one [a male slave] ‘cause the other slaves said they would kill him ‘cause he had a baby by his own daughter” (66). The stories of traumatic violence, rape, and abuse are widespread throughout the slave experience. Delia Garlic recounts, “I nursed for her [the white female slave owner] and one day…she whirl on me, pick up a hot iron and run it all down my arm and hand. It took off de flesh when she done it” (66). David George, a slave in Virginia in 1742, recounted the brutish treatment of women during the eighteenth century. George states, “My older sister was called Patty; I have seen her several times so whipped that her back has been all corrupted, as though it would rot…[The] greatest grief I then had was to see them whip

my mother, and to hear her, on her knees, begging for mercy" (140). Ms. Garlic's recollections continue, "She [another female slave owner] was powerful mad and yelled: 'You black devil, I'll show you to mock your betters.' Den she pick up a stick of stovewood and flails it against my head…I heard de mistis say to one of de girls: 'I thought her thick skull and cap of wool could take it better than that'" (44). The abusive and traumatic events of slavery occurred frequently.

Documented in *Africans in America*, one particular event in coastal Georgia involves a large number of enslaved persons on Butler Island, Georgia, and a subsequent slave auction in Savannah, Georgia. An observer of the event, Sidney George Fisher, a Philadelphia socialite, notes in his diary:

> In March of 1857, the largest sale of human beings in the history of the United States took place at a racetrack in Savannah, Georgia. During the two days of the sale, raindrops fell unceasingly on the racetrack. It was almost as though the heavens were crying. So, too, fell teardrops from many of the 436 men, women, and children who were auctioned off during the two days. The sale would thereafter be known as "the weeping time"… Of the auction, Fisher wrote: It is a dreadful affair, however, selling these hereditary Negroes. . . . Brothers and sisters of mature age, parents and children of mature age, all other relations and the ties of home and long association will be violently severed. It will be a hard thing for Butler to witness and it is a monstrous thing to do. Yet it is done every day in the South. It is one among the many frightful consequences of slavery and contradicts our civilization, our Christianity, our Republicanism.[17]

[17] The information is contained in the PBS documentary *Africans in America*. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2918.html

The selected statements convey the frequency of trauma and help to answer a fundamental question: how does the slave narrative, slave testimony, or slave interview depict the unique plight of enslaved black women within America and Georgia? Slave narratives are important records that depict the trauma inflicted upon black women during enslavement.

Although some scholars continue to dismiss slave narratives as being too rhetorical and sentimental for real value, readers must always ask: who is asserting the claim and what rhetorical objective does the accuser have? Jean Fagin Yellin's groundbreaking research on Harriet Jacobs is still questioned in some quarters in academia. The personal accounts and recollections of slave narratives, slave testimonies, and slave interviews indicate that trauma frequently occurred and suggest that the trauma inflicted upon black women's bodies helped to shape American discourses. The revelations regarding trauma and enslavement will be examined in the third chapter in order to illustrate how the bodies of black women in Georgia suffered horrific traumas that still have literary consequences; however, first, it is important to define womanism.

2 WOMANIZING THE BLACK FEMALE CONDITION: THE CONCEPTS OF WOMANISM

Before examining the cemented political, social, and cultural constructions that have an impact on the lives of enslaved black women in Georgia, one must understand the importance of a womanist analysis based on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. Womanism is a heuristic theoretical approach that contemplates the complexities of the black female condition throughout the African Diaspora, and womanists satisfy multiple postmodern intellectual objectives simultaneously. First, womanists situate the political, socio-cultural, and historical oppressions based upon the intersectionality of race, class, and gender on black women and their bodies; womanists observe, analyze, and explicate the *peculiar* phenomenon of being black, being female, and being oppressed. In addition, womanists place black women at the center of the discourse, not displacing them into the margins or outskirts; thus, womanists draw attention to the ways in which society and culture displace black women within psycho-politico-socio-historico-cultural paradigms. Even though, during the transatlantic slave trade, the experiences of enslaved black women were not monolithic or homogenous in nature, womanists assert that one commonality subsists—the oppression of black women was psychologically, politically, socio-culturally, historically, and sexually steeped within the traumatic paradigm of slavery and this marginalization was intrinsically based upon the triangulation of race, class, and gender.

Womanism has been categorized into three schools of thought. “Womanism,” the term coined by Alice Walker, argues the intersectionality of race, class, and gender on the black woman. African womanism and Africana womanism are considerations as well; however, they are not considered in this thesis. Despite the effectiveness of womanism in the investigation of black female enslavement and the legacial effects of slavery on black women’s positionality, it is

important to note the limitations of womanism. When a school of literary theory—such as womanism—is still evolving, the attempt of womanists to posit a finite definition is a risky undertaking. In fact, womanism remains difficult to define because it has not yet been regulated into a single critical or theoretical perspective. The configurations and directions of womanism may vary slightly from one theorist to another. Furthermore, there has not been a definitive decision among womanists on which variable—race, class, or gender—supersedes the other in the definition of womanism. Questions remain: does race supplant gender and class or vice versa?

Alice Walker, a Pulitzer Prize winner, American author, poet, and activist, coined the term *womanism* in her essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: The Creativity of Black Women in the South" in 1974. She examines the ways in which texts or situations reinforced the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of black women within a patriarchy. Womanism focuses on the conditions and concerns of black women. Womanism addresses the triple oppression of black women as well—classism, sexism, and racism. Walker revisited womanism in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1983). According to Walker, womanist theory explicates the ways in which society inflicts racial, gender-based, and class oppression—an experience unique to black women. Akin to the womanist premises of Equiano, Walker asserts that womanism highlights the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender by illuminating the subalternity and the identity of marginalized, oppressed communities of black women.

In addition, Alice Walker's womanism conveys the trauma of chattel slavery through the efforts and the words of black women and woman-centered men. The term *woman-centered men* refers to men who strive to understand the conditions surrounding black womanhood and who

resist the subjugations and marginalizations placed upon black women. The black woman's plight is unlike the dilemmas faced by other ethnic women. Black women are often the subalterns in society, and their condition cannot be fully depicted or articulated by black men. Women lack agency in a patriarchal society. Agency is connected to the identity. Thus, to lack agency is to possess a fragmented identity. In addition, as it relates to subalternity, it was originally a Gramscian term for the subordinated consciousness or subjectivity of non-elite social groups. The concept was developed by Ranajit Guha in the South Asian journal *Subaltern Studies*. However, postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak utilized the term as well. Particularly, Spivak addresses the 'subaltern' woman and the way she is positioned, constructed or spoken for as lacking credibility, absent, silent, or erased in a variety of ways. [18]

In her speech "Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race" (1892), which was published in her book *A Voice from the South: By a Black Woman of the South*, Anna Julia Cooper was one of the most prominent African American scholars in nineteenth-century American history. Cooper also argues that "only the Black Woman can say 'when and where I enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of [our] womanhood'" (Appiah and Gates 518). Contextualizing the quote, Cooper contends that black women must speak for themselves because they bear witness and provide an invaluable perspective to the multiple and intersecting oppressions that affect black women, black men, and America at large. Similarly, Alice Walker's womanism stresses the importance of black women in the intellectual discourse on racial, classed, sexualized, and gendered female subjugation—an oppression not fully addressed within feminism; moreover, Walker claims that womanism does not fail to address the

[18] The *Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory* was referenced for the information. (p. 216).

oppressions of black men or other ethnicities. She aims for "survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (xi). Walker also makes the case that anyone can be a womanist—all ethnicities—as long as the individual is concerned with the intersectionality of race, class, and gender. Walker defines and furnishes an etymology for the term:

> **Womanist 1.** From *womanish.* (Opp. of "girlish", i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *willful* behavior. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. *Serious.*
> **2.** *Also:* A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."
> **3.** Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.*
> **4.** Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender. (xi-xii)

In the first definition, Walker situates the origins of womanism within the black community and specifically among black women–from black mother to black female child. Thus, she directly addresses race and gender and indirectly addresses class within the black community. Yet, in the same definition, she defines a womanist as "a black feminist or feminist of color," which includes every ethnicity and both genders. Second, Walker honors the relationships between women and among women; yet, she also defines a womanist as a female leader who is concerned with the issues surrounding all people—male and female—black, brown, white, pink, and yellow. She locates womanist leadership within the institution of chattel slavery; in fact, slavery

was the catalyst for womanist ideology because it emerged out of the trauma of slavery. In the third definition, Walker addresses the love and spirit of black women with nature and culture. This implies the natural tendencies of black women to persevere regardless. Last, Walker contends that womanism is not feminism. Womanism is more intense, more inclusive than feminist ideologies. In essence, Walker asserts that womanism is multifaceted and accomplishes many tasks. The overall goal of Alice Walker's womanism speaks to the lives of all black women first while simultaneously tackling the issues of all ethnic peoples (both male and female).

On the other hand, African or black Nigerian womanism is the form of womanism proposed by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, an African womanist and author from Nigeria. Ogunyemi embraces womanism as an analytical tool and argues that she arrived at the term womanism *independently* from Alice Walker and asserts that like Pecola in Toni Morrison's *Bluest Eye* "the young girl inherits womanism after a traumatic event such as…racism, rape" (Phillips 28). Ogunyemi is lesser known within the scholarship of modern womanism; her premises are based upon inherent African traditions and the African positionality of black women within society. Ogunyemi argues that "Black womanism …celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womanhood. It concerns itself as much with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks" (Phillips 28). In essence, according to Ogunyemi, the intersectionality of race, class, and gender is endemic to the larger superstructure of the marginalization and subjugation of black people in general.

In addition, Ogunyemi stresses that African or black Nigerian womanism situates African women's engagement in social activism more than in feminism or feminist activities. Similar to Equiano's narrative, African or black womanism "incorporates racial, cultural, national,

economic, and political considerations" (Phillips 30). Ogunyemi argues that feminism and womanism are inherently different in nature and relevance within the black community. While feminism locates the oppression of women (and, particularly, women with the ability to speak for themselves), African or black Nigerian womanism rallies for the cohesive community—men, women, and children—to unite and struggle against "racial, cultural, national, and political" infrastructures that subjugate blacks.

Moreover, Ogunyemi maintains that lesbianism has no place in womanist principles, and the concept of gender must be evaluated within the peculiar contexts of the black female condition. In this manner, Ogunyemi elevates racial oppression above gender oppression. According to Ogunyemi, the collective experiences of race—throughout the African Diaspora—supersede the variable of gender. Ogunyemi emphasizes that racial equality is often not gendered equality.

In *Africana Womanism*, Clenora Hudson-Weems declares that Africana womanism is designed by and for women of African descent and Afrocentric culture. The principles of Africana womanism are based on the struggles, needs, experiences, and desires of women throughout the African Diaspora. According to Hudson-Weems, Africana womanism is not feminism or Alice Walker's womanism. Hudson-Weems argues that the Africana womanist names herself and her movement; she is the self-definer, not defined by others. However, as exemplified by Equiano's womanist concerns, Africana womanists declare a strong bond with black males and the black family in the united struggle for human rights for all people of African descent.

Hudson-Weems argues that black men are not in a position to act freely on the black women's predicament because of psycho-politico-socio-economic and cultural restraints within

the superstructures of Western patriarchy and white societal domination. Likewise, Equiano illuminates the constraint upon black males when he recounts his inability to prevent the sexual exploitation of the female slaves in his care. Unlike Walker's acceptance of homosocial, heterosexual, or homosexual relationships, Hudson-Weems privileges black male and female relationships that concertedly act for the betterment of black family life in America and abroad.

Having considered the three main schools of womanism in contemporary thought—Walker, Ogunyemi, and Hudson-Weems—we should, before going forward, consider the experiences of enslaved black males. The oppression of black men cannot be negated; however, black men suffered uniquely different fates than black women in the psycho-politico-historico-socio-economic and cultural landscapes within the early African Diaspora. In her seminal work *Sexual Politics*, Kate Millet, asserts that "gender is the primary source of oppression in society," and this thesis highlights the physical and sexual differences associated with gender that allowed for a traumatic oppression of black women—a marginalization and subjugation that exceeded the traumatic experiences of enslaved black men.[19] Womanism arose from the trauma imposed upon black women's bodies, not black male bodies. Womanism emerges from the traumatic and triangulated oppression inflicted upon black women during chattel slavery—trauma that is derived from the intersectionality of race, class, and gender oppression. In fact, womanism is the overarching theory that includes trauma theory and psychoanalytic theory. The revelations regarding womanism, trauma, and enslavement (and its interconnectedness) will be examined in the third chapter in order to illustrate how the bodies of black women in Georgia suffered horrific traumas that still have literary consequences.

[19] The phrase was quoted by Nancy A. Hewitt's "Beyond the Search for Sisterhood: American Women's History in the 1980's". In Ellen C. Dubois/ Vicky L. Ruiz, ed. *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*. New York and London: Routledge. 1-14. Kate Millet is an American lesbian feminist writer and activist. She is best known for her seminal work *Sexual Politics* in 1970.

3 ANALYZING THE TYPES OF TRAUMA INTRINSIC WITHIN THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF GEORGIA: THE SOCIO-CULTURAL AND POLITICO-LEGISLATIVE DIFFERENCES OF ENSLAVED BLACK FEMALE SUBJUGATION

3.1 Early Georgia Laws on Slavery

The laws in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Georgia played a crucial role in the plight of enslaved black women throughout the state. Early Georgia settlers ignored the anti-slavery statues on the importation of slaves, held open slave auctions despite the anti-slavery laws, banned manumission of black slaves, tried free blacks under the same tenets as slaves, banned the education of all blacks, and prohibited communication between free blacks and enslaved blacks. According to *Georgia Encyclopedia*, Georgia's

> slaveholders controlled not only the best land and the vast majority of personal property in the State but also the State political system. In 1850 and 1860 more than two-thirds of all State legislators were slaveholders….[A]lmost a third of the State legislators were planters.…[E]ven without the cooperation of nonslaveholding white male voters, Georgia slaveholders could dictate the State's political [or legislative] path.[20]

Georgia delegated instability to any person of color. Free and enslaved blacks were beaten at the liberty and will of Georgia whites. The rights of all blacks were nullified.

Differing from those in other states, many Georgia laws were instituted to maintain severe slave oppression. According to Glenn McNair's *Criminal Injustice: Slaves and Free Blacks*

[20] See http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/nge/Article.jsp?id=h-1019.

in Georgia's Criminal Justice System, Georgia's laws were racially constructed, and the punishments for blacks were usually more severe and more public than other slave states:

> [Georgia lawmakers] created a unique culture of mastery. Georgia masters had to fight to get and keep their slaves; therefore, they were jealous and protective of them in ways perhaps that slave owners in other colonies—where slavery had been introduced gradually and with comparatively little difficulty—were not. The consequences are apparent in the system of justice, or injustice, which evolved for slaves and free blacks in the late colonial and antebellum Georgia. (32)

According to McNair, Georgia masters "preferred to dispense justice themselves" and "when it came to the 'civil rights of the master,' slaves had 'none whatever'" (46, 55). Thus, the laws in the state of Georgia allowed for a more distinctively severe form of slavery.

When we compare Georgia laws to other slave states, the differences in Georgia become more apparent. For instance, Virginia was the only state in the Union that housed more slaves than Georgia; however, the slave laws of Virginia were distinctly different.[21] From 1640 to 1660, the status of an African indentured servant was changed to "Servant for Life." By 1642, black women were counted as tithables (taxable). In essence, black women were considered as assets due to their ability to reproduce offspring. Between 1660 and 1680, Virginia legislators moved to restrict the freedom of blacks opposed to whites. In 1669, Virginia law that was created addressed the "casual killing of slaves" and established that "if any slave resisted his master and by the extremity of the correction should chance to die, that his death not be accompted Felony." In the 1680s, Virginia created laws that rendered punishment for enslaved blacks who left their master's property, hid, or resisted capture. In 1705, the state of Virginia legally allowed physical

[21] See http://www.history.org/history/teaching/slavelaw.cfm

dismemberment of any slave deemed unruly. The slave laws in Virginia were harsh and oppressive; however, the legislative laws imposed on enslaved and free blacks in Georgia were the worst.

The Slave Codes of Georgia in 1848 further reflect severe oppression.[22] For instance, in Article 1, Section 1 on Capital Offences, it states that all capital crimes were punishable by death. The codes then indicate these acts that constitute capital crimes:

> The following shall be considered as capital offences, when committed by a slave or free person of color: insurrection, or an attempt to excite it; committing a rape, or attempting it on a free white female; murder of a free white person, or murder of a slave or free person of color, or poisoning of a human being; every and each of these offences shall, on conviction, be punished with death.

The laws of Georgia were more stringent than those in other Slave States. The laws did not protect the rights of blacks but protected only whites. Murdering another black person was a crime in that the act took personal property and wealth away from the white owner.

The punishments were severe for other capital crimes as well. In the case of manslaughter, blacks were whipped and branded: "And in case a verdict of manslaughter shall be found by the jury, the punishment shall be by whipping, at the discretion of the court, and branded on the cheek with the letter M." If slaves were accused of striking a white person, the slave would be punished at the "discretion [that the white person] think fit, not extending to life or limb; and for the second offence, suffer death." The judgment for burning or attempting to burn houses was punished with death. If free blacks were accused of "inveigling slaves," they would be confined

[22] See http://academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/slavelaw.htm

in the penitentiary at hard labor," and if blacks were found "circulating incendiary documents" they would be punished with death.

Georgia slave laws were severe for minor offences as well. For instance, the punishment for teaching slaves or free persons of color to read was a "fine and whipping, or fine or whipping, at the discretion of the court." Whipping, maiming, and fines were acceptable punishments for minor offences. However, the relevance of Georgia slave laws lies in their relation to the slave laws of other states (such as Virginia). Georgia slave laws were severe.

3.2 Enslavement in Georgia

There is a permeating silence within Georgia history, literature, and culture pertaining to black enslavement in Georgia society—particularly the lives of enslaved black women. Georgia initially prohibited slavery.[23] In 1735, Francis Moore, a trustee of Georgia, reports that "no slavery is allowed, nor Negroes" (11). Yet, in 1733, Peter Gordon, an Englishman who was appointed as the bailiff of Savannah, recounts an incident with a "maid" who was "accused of a loose disorderly behavior and endeavoring to seduce other young women in the colony," and was in turn ordered to be whipped: "Tuesday, the 20th, a warrant from Captain Scott came directed to me to see the sentence executed on the servant maid who some days before was ordered to [be] whipped…a Negro being appointed to whip her" (6). From the quotation and despite the illegal nature of enslaved blacks in Georgia before 1750, Gordon's account establishes the presence of blacks and their subjugation within the state of Georgia in the 1730s—two decades before slavery was *legal*. From the quotation, it is evident that Gordon had the power to appoint "a Negro" to "whip her."

[23] Slavery was prohibited in Georgia until 1750.

Slavery and its accompanying trauma lasted more than four hundred years. It is estimated that sixty to two hundred million enslaved Africans labored and died within the slave system at large.[24] In *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900*, Nancy Woloch comments that the nineteenth century presented more expansive and more traumatic enslavement practices: "In the early nineteenth century, slavery became a larger, more severe institution…[N]atural growth plus illegal arrivals swelled the slave population to more than three million by 1860….Overall, slavery became more permanent, entrenched, and intransigent" (209).

In *Slave Life in Coastal Georgia: Remember Me*, Charles Joyner states that "almost all of the adult slaves along the Georgia coast had come either directly from Africa or from the Caribbean" (1). It is important to establish further the slave demographics of Georgia. By 1860 on the North American continent, the slave law maps depict Georgia's enslaved population was almost half the total population of Georgia—about 43.72 percent. In Mills Lane's *Georgia: History Written By Those Who Lived It*, he reports:

> There were still only 16,000 slaves in Georgia at the time of the Revolution…[however] Georgia's slave population swelled from 59,000 in 1790, to 140,000 in 1820, to 281,000 in 1840 and 462,000 in 1860. By that time, of the fifteen slaveholding states, Georgia was second only to Virginia in the number of slaves and slave owners. (99)

Lane argues that "slavery was not an inhuman, inflexible system of laws but a human, flexible system" (100). He states:

> Most Georgians owned no slaves at all. In 1860, of the 53,887 farm-owning families in Georgia only 901 cultivated more than 1,000 acres with 60-500 slaves, while 2,692 families cultivated 500-1,000 acres with 30-60 slaves, 18,821 fami-

[24] Toni Morrison. "Pain of Being Black." *Time Magazine*

> lies cultivated 100-500 acres with 6-30 slaves, 14,129 families cultivated 50-100 acres with 2-6 slaves, and 13,644 families cultivated 20-50 acres with one slave. The portrait of an average Georgia "planter" that emerges from these statistics is a white family who works alongside a black family on a hundred acres and shares a simple, hard-working and rather difficult life…Slavery was sometimes benevolent paternalism and, most certainly, sometimes cruelty endured, but slavery was not an inhuman, inflexible system of laws but a human, flexible system. (100)

Lane negates the relevance of slavery within American culture; in fact, Lane's *Georgia* is an example of the modern propaganda purported on the legacy of enslaved blacks and their descendants in Georgia. Like Lane, some Americans engage in unfaltering denunciations and overt rejections regarding the trauma of slavery and its inherent social and cultural conditions. In fact, some Americans may promote concepts of mutual hardships and egalitarianism; however, the testimonies, narratives, and interviews of those enslaved depict a different reality. Over and over again, enslaved blacks and sympathetic whites expose horrific and traumatic accounts of Georgia's enslavement practices. In Ann Short Chirhart and Betty Wood's *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times*, Frances Anne Kemble, in her nineteenth-century writings, states:

> Scorn, derision, insult, menace—the handcuff, the lash—the tearing away of children from parents, of husbands from wives—the weary trudging in droves along the common highways, the labor of body, the despair of mind, the sickness of heart—these are the realities which belong to the system, and form the rule, rather than the exception, in the slave's experience. (10)

According to Kemble, the wife of Pierce Butler who was the slave owner on Georgia's Butler Island, enslaved Africans were not working side by side with whites in social equality; instead,

they were given all the tasks of domestic and manual labor—both black males and black females.[25] Whites, overseers, and slave drivers supervised and forced the manual labor of enslaved blacks. Georgia was the second-largest slave-holding state in America; furthermore, Georgian slave owners enslaved nearly one-half-million persons of African descent (Lane 99).

Georgia, as a result of Eli Whitney's invention of the cotton gin and its installation throughout Georgia, played a significant role in the history of American slavery and the political and socio-cultural condition of enslaved black women. In fact, the invention of the cotton gin led to an explosion of cotton as a cash crop and led to the revitalization of African slavery within the southern United States. Georgia helped to place a stronghold on institutionalized slavery within the United States and helped to exploit and traumatize enslaved Africans.

It would be an overstatement to claim that all Southern or Georgian whites were cruel and horrible to enslaved blacks; however, the actions of many slave owners and the inactions of other slave holders regarding the prevailing mental and physical conditions of enslaved individuals cannot be brushed neatly under a rug—out of sight. Thus, scholars and readers must acknowledge the overwhelmingly oppressive circumstances and conditions of enslaved blacks in Georgia.

In James Mellon's *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember*, Mary Reynolds, a formerly enslaved woman from Georgia, argues:

> Slavery was the worst days that was ever seed in the world…It was de fourth day of June in 1865 [when] I begins to live…No, bless God. I ain't nebver seen no more black boys bleeding all up and down de back…and I never go by no cabin and hear no poor nigger groaning….(18, 32).

[25] Francis Kemble was a white woman, and she was the wife of Pierce Butler. Butler owned more than 400 slaves on Butler Island, Georgia. *See Africans in America* documentary.

Again, in "Trends in Literary Trauma Theory," Balaev argues that "the primacy of place in the representations of trauma anchors the individual experience within a larger cultural context, and, in fact, organizes the memory and meaning of trauma" (149-151). Reynolds situates slavery in Georgia as the "worst days that was ever seed in the world," and she contextualizes the larger cultural paradigms within the state of Georgia and organizing the memory of trauma by recalling the "black boys bleeding all up and down de back" and the "poor nigger groaning" in the cabin.

3.3 Slavery, Trauma, and Enslaved Black Women

Slavery affected the lives of enslaved persons. Slavery inflicts a trauma that affects the psychology, physicality, and positionality of slaves and their descendents. Trauma transcends the physical embodiment of Mary Reynolds (as we see in her comments from the previous section). Even though her back may not have bled in the manner that the black boys' did, she was still traumatized by their experience. In essence, enslaved black women suffered a double injury because their trauma constituted a wound inflicted upon the body and the mind in a unique and peculiar manner.

In *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth states that "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past but rather in the way its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—[yet] returns to haunt the survivor later on" (4). It is important for readers to note that the abuse and trauma endured by both black men and black women is undeniable; however, the focus here is on the lives of oppressed and enslaved black women. In Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents*, she asserts that "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women. Superadded to the burden common to all, *they* have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortifications peculiarly their own" (101).

In *American Slavery As It Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses*, originally published in 1839, Theodore Weld, a writer and a leading figure in the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement, argues that "such scenes of horror as above described are so common in Georgia that they attract no attention. To threaten them with death, with breaking in their teeth or jaws, or cracking their heads, is common talk, when scolding at the slaves" (20). Thus, we conclude that the prevalence of trauma inflicted upon enslaved beings creates an emotional and psychological vacuum or dissociation from the trauma. Thus, the inabilities of white Georgians to recognize, acknowledge, or perceive trauma is emblematic of traumatic effects on the human psyche.

Again, Frances Kemble argues in her *Journal* that slavery for women was far worse: "But these are natural results, inevitable and irremediable ones, of improper treatment of the female frame" (Chirhart and Wood 30). Kemble states that "almost every planter…admitt[ed] one or several of his female slaves to the still closer intimacy of his bed" (Chirhart and Wood 23). Kemble continues, "I have been having a long talk…about Ben and Daphne, those two young mulatto children…In any of the Southern cities the girl would be pretty sure to be reserved for a worse fate; but even here, death seems to me a thousand times preferable to the life that is before her" (Chirhart and Wood 240). Kemble, as a mistress of the plantation, is fully aware of the plight of Daphne. Akin to Equiano and Jacobs's concern for enslaved female children, Kemble understands the future exploitation and trauma that awaits enslaved black women.

Again, in *Early American Women*, Woloch records Sarah Haynesworth Gayle, a diarist in the neighboring state of Alabama: "Many mistresses pointed to the detrimental impact of slavery on the morals of white men…These fathers [white slave owners who fathered children with their slave women] whose beastly passions hurry to the bed of the slave do they feel no compunction when they see their blood sold, basely bartered like horses?" (200). Even though Gayle recounts

the sexual exploitation of enslaved women in Alabama, enslaved women in Georgia suffered grimmer fates. Weld's *American Slavery As It Is* recalls the Georgia narrative of Mr. Caulkins:

> This same planter had a female slave who was a member of the Methodist Church; for a slave she was intelligent and conscientious. He proposed a criminal intercourse with her. She would not comply. He left her and sent for the overseer, and told him to have her flogged. It was done. Not long after, he renewed his proposal. She again refused. She was again whipped. He then told her why she had been twice flogged, and told her he intended to whip her till she should yield. The girl, seeing that her case was hopeless, her back smarting with the scourging she had received, and dreading a repetition, gave herself up to be the victim of his brutal lusts. (15)

In addition to Caulkins's account, Hiram White of Georgia states that "amalgamation [miscegenation] was common. There was scarce a family of slaves that had females of mature age where there were not some mulatto children" (Weld 51). Jacob Manson in Warren County, Georgia recalls:

> Marster had no chillums by white women. He had his sweethearts 'mong his slave women. I ain't no man for tellin' false stories. I tells de truth, an' dat is de truth. At dat time it wus a hard job to find a marster dat didn't have women 'mong his slaves. Dat wus a ginerel thing 'mong de slave owners. (Weld 220)

Like Equiano in his account of the abundance of mulatto children and his recollection of the reproductive and sexual exploitation of black women, Manson speaks to the general sightings of mulatto children in Georgia as well as the sexual abuses placed upon black women in Georgia.

Moreover, in James Mellon's *Bullwhip Days: The Slaves Remember*, Jack Maddox of Georgia remembers:

> [Being] born in Georgia on a farm… [and Judge Maddox's cook was his] half-sister [and a] sister-in-law to [Jack's] mama….Judge Maddox…brought home a pretty mulatto gal…When Judge Maddox was away from home [the mistress] got the scissors and cropped that gal's head to the skull…but one thing I do know was that white men got plenty chillums by the nigger women. They didn't ask them. They took them. I heard plenty 'bout that." (115-116, 121)

Jack's wife, Rosa Maddox recalls: "I can tell you that a white man laid a nigger gal whenever he wanted her. Seems like some of them had a plumb craving for the other color…There was some redheaded neighbors of the Andrews that had a whole crop of redheaded nigger slaves" (122). In order to give the reader a sense of the overwhelming prevalence of abuse and trauma, I demonstrate in account after account and quote after quote without explication that trauma was consistent.

Whether the trauma was experienced, observed, or revisited, all of these slave accounts attest to psychological trauma. All these slave accounts attest to the enormity of incidences of trauma that occurred within Georgia during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. These are the voices, the experiences, and the traumas that cannot be ignored and must be remembered. The slave testimonies attempt to atone for the emotional, physical, psychological, and sexual traumas of slavery. They are traumatized blacks who lived to tell and testify to their experiences of trauma. The formerly enslaved persons seem compelled to speak for those who could not speak for themselves. Readers should note that few of the accounts mentioned above actually recount per-

sonal experiences of rape; yet, all the comments of formerly enslaved individuals are obliged to speak on the unspeakable acts of slavery—an indicator of psychological trauma.

Again, in *Georgia Women*, Chirhart and Wood narrate the trauma of slavery:

> One day in the middle of February 1849, a wealthy man named David Dickson rode across his fallow fields. As he rode he spotted a young female slave…playing in the field…Deliberately, he rode up beside her, reached down, and swung her up behind him on his saddle. As one of her descendants remarked years later, 'that was the end of that.' The enslaved girl's childhood ended as Amanda America Dickson's life began, on the day when her forty-year-old father raped her thirteen-year-old mother. (173)

Amanda American Dickson was born in Hancock County, Georgia. After Dickson's birth, she was taken from her mother, which was "another act of violence…as tragic as the rape itself" (Chirhart and Wood 178).

Similarly, Ellen Craft, born in Macon, Georgia describes traumatic acts of violence. Fleeing from "punishments like imprisonment in the sugar house, where black women would be subject to rape as well as floggings and other tortures," Craft became a fugitive slave from Georgia (Chirhart and Wood 86). In the socio-cultural dynamics of slavery, rape was a commonplace activity within plantation culture. Barbara McCaskill reports that Craft "did encounter the inevitable barbs and stings that 'the greatest indignity' of slavery—rape—imposed upon slave women and their bodies" (Chirhart and Wood 83).

The testimonies give credence to the endemic sexual exploitation of enslaved women in Georgia. In Deborah Gray White's *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South*, White argues that because black women were more vulnerable to sexual assault than black men,

some manipulated such relationships for personal gain (23). Even though White proposes that black women "manipulated" their social and cultural situation, it is important that critics not twist the paradigm surrounding black women and the autonomy of their bodies. In many instances, the black female body was traumatically compromised by the master, by the mistress, by the overseer, by the slave driver, and by black men within the slave community. The physical and psychological manifestations of slavery are real and cannot be manipulated. Any attempt to negate the trauma is unjust.

Outside the physical and sexual abuse and trauma, psychological disorders were prevalent within the cultural landscapes of slavery. Again, in her *Journal*, Kemble recalls a woman in the infirmary on Butler Island in coastal Georgia:

> In the next ward, stretched upon the ground, apparently either asleep or so overcome with sickness as to be incapable of moving, lay an immense woman…She was wrapped in filthy rags, and lay with her face on the floor. As I approached, and stooped to see what ailed her, she suddenly threw out her arms, and seized with violent convulsions, rolled over and over upon the floor, beating her head violently upon the ground, and throwing her enormous limbs about in a horrible manner…I spoke to our physician.…He seemed to attribute them [her actions] to nervous disorder, brought on by frequent childbearing. This woman is young, I suppose at the outside not thirty, and her sister informed me that she had had ten children—ten children. (Chirhart and Wood 38-39)

Kemble gives validity to reports of the forced breeding practices of chattel slavery on black gendered bodies. The bodies of black women are not allowed to recover or heal from previous pregnancies. In fact, black women are no longer in possession of their own bodies. The ownership of

enslaved black female bodies belongs to another. Trauma results from the inability to mother one's own child or govern one's own body. Motherhood is disrupted, commodified, and objectified. From the quotation, the reader senses psychological fatigue and mental disturbances as well. The "nervous disorder" is an effect of forced breeding. Trauma also results from the physical, social, and cultural mandates of dominant white culture on the enslaved black female body. Mental illness incurs from the trauma.

Again, in Weld's *American Slavery As It Is*, Mr. F. C. Macy recalls:

> I went to Savannah in 1820…I saw several women whipped, some of whom were in very delicate circumstances. The case of one I will relate. She had been purchased in Charleston, and separated from her husband. On her passage to Savannah, or rather to the island, she was delivered of a child; and in about three weeks after this, she appeared to be deranged. She would leave her work, go into the woods, and sing. (106)

Psychological disorders are often rendered in physical manifestations of trauma upon black women's minds and bodies. The unnamed enslaved woman has detached from society. She is no longer able to function normally. Moreover, there appears to be a triangulation of physical abuse, emotional trauma, and psychological breakdown that results in the complete incapacitation of the black women's psyche. This case was not unique; there were widespread occurrences of mental illness among enslaved black women. In Weld's *American Slavery*, he records a case in North Carolina:

> One of my neighbors sold to a speculator a Negro boy, about 14 years old. It was more than his poor mother could bear. Her reason fled, and she became a perfect maniac, and had to be kept in close confinement. She would occasionally get out

> and run off to the neighbors. On one of these occasions she came to my house. She was indeed a pitiable object. With tears rolling down her cheeks, and her frame shaking with agony, she would cry out, 'don't you hear him--they are whipping him now, and he is calling for me!' (97)

Trauma ensues from the repeated severing of a child from the mother. Psychological damage occurs. Fragmentation strikes the psyche, and the enslaved woman becomes incapable of coping with reality. The enslaved mother is unable to insulate herself from the resulting psychological trauma. The traumatic injury manifests itself in her inability to continue her life in a normal fashion. The traumas are so severe that she becomes fixated on the trauma, and she must relive or remember the traumatic event. The enslaved woman continually hears her child calling out for her.

In *Writing Wounds: The Inscription of Trauma in Post-1968 French Women's Life Writing*, Kathryn Robson writes, "[Trauma] demands to be heard and understood…." (13). She delivers valuable insight into the effects of trauma on the human psyche; she quotes and summarizes arguments posed by Cathy Caruth:

> Trauma seems to be much more than a pathology, or the simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our actions and our language….Trauma cannot simply be consigned to the past: it is relived endlessly in the present…The past intrudes insistently on the present, demanding, yet resisting, articulation wreaking devastating effects on the survivor's memory and

> identity…It is only when the seemingly unspeakable traumatic experience can be transformed into a narrative that the traumatic event can be put in the past and survivors can begin to recreate an identity shattered by trauma. (11)

The revisiting of trauma is a manifestation of inherent psychological trauma. Trauma becomes. These black gendered bodies remember the trauma.

According to Van der Kolk's *Psychological Trauma*, victims have "profound personality changes…[which include the] loss of capacity to use community supports, chronic recurrent depression with feelings of despair, psychosomatic symptoms, emotional 'anesthesia' or blocked ability to react effectively…the result is a robot-like existence" (5). Susie Taylor lived outside of enslavement for most of her life; yet, she suffers from the traumatic impacts of slavery.[26] In *Psychological Trauma*, Van der Kolk states, "The alternation of re-living and reexperiencing has been noticed not only following combat trauma, but also after rape…incest…and child abuse…Trauma dominates the mental life of the victim long after the original experience" (4-5). Trauma are more than an immediate consequence.

In *The Ego and the Id*, akin to Van der Kolk's efforts in explicating trauma, Sigmund Freud situates the effects of trauma:

> Psycho-physiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world's perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body. (Gay 636)

[26] Susie King Taylor escaped, with her uncle, to freedom at the age of fourteen.

Freud argues that trauma allows the individual to perceive the world—a perception of self by way of pain. Through trauma, enslaved black women negotiated their social and cultural positionality within paradigmic slavery.

What does all this mean for readers? Early American narratives, testimonies, diaries, journals, and interviews help to depict the unique plight of enslaved black women throughout the African Diaspora and in Georgia. These eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sources give insight into the political, social, cultural, psychological, and historical trauma inflicted upon black women's bodies. Without the advent of slavery, these questions would not be pertinent. In fact, these questions would not have been formulated without the severity of trauma that was imposed on black women during American enslavement.

The truth of the matter is that slavery in Georgia was different from slavery throughout the United States. Due to the sheer number of enslaved individuals in Georgia (demographics) and the geographical isolation of Georgia (coastal Georgia), the subsequent frequency of trauma was disproportionate when compared to other states within the Unites States of America. In essence, the sheer population of enslaved blacks within the State of Georgia and the conditions of slavery within Georgia allowed for an unusually high degree of trauma within Georgia's borders.

CONCLUSION: FINALIZING THE LEGACIAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN WOMANISM, TRAUMA, AND ENSLAVED BLACK WOMEN IN GEORGIA

Even though both capitalist economics and racially motivated laws were endemic to the enslavement of Africans in America during the transatlantic slave trade throughout its longevity from 1514 to 1866, trauma, and its psychological effects were other notable aspects of African enslavement in America that were highly prevalent during the transatlantic slave trade during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[27] The scholarly consideration here is the pertinence of the relationship between trauma and enslaved black women in Georgia. How does the slave narrative, slave testimony, or slave interview depict the unique conditions of enslaved black women within America at large and within Georgian cultural landscapes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? How are the political, social, cultural, psychological, and historical traumas inflicted upon enslaved black women and the positionality of enslaved black women in America? The prevalence of trauma during African enslavement in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its subsequent remnants are posited in this thesis—not the question of capitalism during the transatlantic slave trade.[28]

In addition, this thesis is the outcome of womanist thoughts that are centered upon the psychological, political, historical, social, economic, and cultural injustices imposed upon black women throughout the African Diaspora in America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I analyze the marginalization and subjugation of black women throughout the transatlantic slave trade and situate the peculiarities surrounding the intersectionality of trauma, sexism, rac-

[27] *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database: Voyages*, s.v. "List of voyages: The full extent of time from the first to the last voyage is 1514–1866," accessed July 06, 2011.

[28] Womanism is a theoretical approach that considers the triangulation of racism, classism, and sexism upon women of color. For further discussions and definitions of womanism, Phillips, *The Womanist Reader*.

ism, and classism during chattel enslavement within America and specifically chattel enslavement in Georgia.

Slavery in North America lasted for 404 years with the arrival of the first Africans as enslaved chattel in Virginia in 1619.[29] Georgia became a colony in 1733. Initially, black enslavement was prohibited in Georgia in 1735; however, in 1750, chattel slavery became legalized in Georgia. Slavery officially ended on 22 September 1862 with the first passing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was 142 years ago—a blink in history. Enslaved human beings in America were not freed until after the American Civil War in 1865.

Slavery shaped the psychology, physical condition, representation, identity, and sexuality of black women. The institution of slavery must be assessed as the main contributor of observable psychological effects in the enslaved female psyche that resulted from trauma. Through the prisms of womanism, psychoanalytics, and trauma theory, we can examine the unique plights of enslaved black women within the paradigms of slavery.

It is important to remember the importance of womanist analysis when we consider the condition of the slave woman in Georgia. Womanism—a term coined by Alice Walker in the 1970s—involves a heterogeneous perspective that examines the history, literature, and culture of oppressed black women within the Western patriarchal superstructure. Womanist theory explicates the paradigms of race, gender, and class subjugations. The theoretical attributions to womanism lie within the interconnectedness and the intersectionality of race, class and gender; moreover, womanism illuminates the subalternity and identity of marginalized and oppressed communities.

[29] In Betty Wood's *Slavery in Colonial America 1619-1776*, she states that "Johns Rolfe reports the arrival of 'twenty Negars' in Virginia [in 1619]" (xiii).

Womanist practices assist in unpacking the condition of black womanhood within America by drawing attention to socially constructed and culturally imposed stereotypes and caricatures that informed black female identity during and after the transatlantic slave trade. By doing so, womanists place the experiences of black women at the center of analysis, and they investigate the unique marginalization and subjugation of black women. Likewise, the objectives of contemporary womanism include surveying the trauma inflicted upon black female bodies.

In response to the naysayers of womanist theory, I posit that womanism is no less a limited theoretical insight than Marxist thought, Hegelian thought, or Kantian thought. Indeed, womanism resists relegation to a single critical perspective. Womanist theory is shaped by several points of view; furthermore, the theoretical directions of womanism vary from one geographical perspective to another, even from one critic to another. In essence, womanism is a heuristic theory. However, womanism continues to offer an effective investigation of black female marginalization and subjugation—an oppression based on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender.

Womanism remains at the forefront in the consideration of triangulated race, class, and gender frameworks. Womanism is crucial to the modern understanding of gendered impacts that surround transnational blackness and black female identity construction. Moreover, in this thesis, I extend womanism in the contemplation of trauma within the experience of black womanhood in America.

Trauma theory has also been useful for the study. The indisputable cases for abuse are well established in the historical records; however, some scholars cease assessing slavery beyond its abusive practices. Some scholars do not contemplate the trauma that ensue and linger into the present consciousness of blacks and other Americans. Again, Balaev's "Trends in Literary

Trauma Theory" argues that trauma is an emotional manifestation from an overwhelming event or circumstance that displaces the individual's sense of self and the individual's perception of society (149). For the purposes of my thesis, trauma represents wounds that are unhealed but recognizable to the black consciousness; moreover, trauma is manifested in the pain experienced by enslaved blacks in America.

Trauma is viewed within the context of a triangulated oppression that encompasses the convergence of race, class, and gender upon the black female body during enslavement. I argue that the trauma of slavery permeated and infected the American consciousness regarding black female positionality and identity. From the advent of slavery, black women were traumatically affected.

This study is by no means complete and could yield up a career devoted to the study of cultural and literary manifestations of ongoing trauma in the memories and lived experiences of contemporary African Americans. The twentieth-century neo-slave narrative continues to revisit "the peculiar institution." Such texts are grounded in research into the actualities of slavery. Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for instance, is based on a newspaper account of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman on trial for murdering her infant. Her personhood and that of her child were negated, for the *real crime* was against her owner and his property. More germane to this study, however, is Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, set for the most part in Georgia, the story of her own grandmother, Vyry Brown whose life bears witness to the conditions indicated in this study.

The main purpose of the thesis, however, has been to identify the trauma and the psychic elements within the system of slavery and compare the general conditions of enslavement to those specific to Georgia's institution of slavery. I postulate that because of the heightened cul-

tural awareness of the harsher slave conditions in Georgia, the trauma and injustice inflicted upon enslaved blacks and particularly enslaved black women in Georgia has yet to be told.

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