

# Commodification and Exoticization of Motherhood in Selected African Texts: The fetishization of Motherhood in Slavery Discourses.

Adah Musati Makokha, Marciana Nafula Were

Department of Literature, Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Business, Economics, Arts and Social Sciences, Tom Mboya University, Kenya

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100701020>

Received: 06 August 2026; Accepted: 12 August 2026; Published: 19 August 2026

## ABSTRACT

Motherhood is an identity, an experience, a concept and an institution, a discourse produced by both hegemonic and subversive discursive practices. Therefore, motherhood is an identity constantly negotiated by both normative and non-conforming gender identities. This study proposes that considering the perversion of normative ideas of motherhood that regulate how motherhood is conceptualised and performed, motherhood should be deconstructed to uncover how dominant and hegemonic constructions of motherhood marginalise non-conforming identities. Not only do heteronormative constructions peg maternal identity on heterosexual women, but on patriarchal assumptions that all women must ascend to biological maternity. The objective of this study was to analyse the fetishization of motherhood in slavery discourses. The study will adopt a qualitative research approach. It involved a critical reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) and *Sula* (1973). Secondary data was obtained through library and desktop research of critical texts. The target population was African mothers. Analysis of the data was done by organizing information in a logical sequence and eventually presenting it as themes. These themes were presented and discussed according to the findings from the research question in line with the tenets of Gender, New Historicism and Commodification theories.

**Keywords:** Motherhood, commodification, fetishization, slavery discourses

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on motherhood. It is an identity, an experience, a concept and an institution among others. Formerly, motherhood was considered a private affair. However, in the current society, mothers have made the private public through their performance of motherhood in non-conforming ways. The current trends in motherhood cannot be discussed without taking cognizance of the journey that motherhood has taken over the years. The performance of motherhood has for a long time been policed by the institution of patriarchy. This has been foregrounded by a number of scholars. Avila (2016) notes that motherhood reinforces a woman's gender identity because predominant conceptions on motherhood include the duty of nurturing others, especially children (2). Similarly, Arendell (2000), states that, mothering has largely been associated with women because universally, it is women who do the work of mothering (1192). Further, Yildirim (2013) observes that women's designated place in society as wives and mothers limits their potential outside these patriarchal-defined roles. The subservient role of women expected in patriarchal societies is inherent in Yildirim's view that women were expected to do all they could to be of aid in their households, and to please their husbands. He adds that the good wife was to exhibit "purity and domesticity" and was characterized by "tenderness and simplicity" (118). Notably, ideas that inform the performance of motherhood are socially-constructed, necessitating a research into the nature of these discourses and their impact.

Both Western and African women as well as male critics of patriarchy highlight in their scholarship how patriarchy and other social factors influence conceptualization and performance of motherhood. The Western feminist critic Simone de Beauvoir (1952) echoes Butler's idea that gender is a social construct by observing that being a woman is a social construct by men, which is used to enslave women. It should however be noted that not all men subscribe to patriarchy and not all women are victims of patriarchy. She posits, 'One is not born, but

becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine' (267).

In line with Butler and Simone's view, a woman's role in the society has been prescribed by men. One such role is giving birth and nurturing of children, a biological essentialist role that feminists and other critics consider to be a biased portrayal of womanhood. To this end, Rich (1976) postulates, 'woman's status as child bearer has been made into a major fact of her life. Terms like "barren" or "childless" have been used to negate any further identity' (11). It is evident from Rich's sentiments that the derogatory names given to women are largely tied to their ability to give birth. That women's role is defined by their fecundity is also observed by Wittig (1980) who states that, 'matriarchy holds onto the idea that the ability to give birth is what defines a woman' (2). O' Reilly (2004) concludes that women can only reclaim themselves from patriarchy by redefining motherhood themselves. The valorization of motherhood and conflation of womanhood with motherhood has been so entrenched into the fabric of the society and the female psyche to an extent that any deviant behavior observed in children is attributed to poor upbringing by their mother and some women occasionally experience feelings of guilt for what they consider as a failure to nurture morally upright and socially acceptable individuals. Moreover, the success of a woman has been defined through the lenses of marriage and child bearing, especially a male child.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women have redefined motherhood and by so doing, created a new lens under which motherhood can be studied. The traditional view of motherhood has been contested by women who have deliberately contested their exoticisation and commodification. My study therefore sets out to discuss the commoditization and exoticization of motherhood in slavery discourses and how these women are navigating the residual trauma.

### Research Objective

The research objective was to analyse the fetishization of motherhood as portrayed in slavery discourses.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a qualitative research approach. The research design for the study was discourse analysis. It involved a critical reading of selected female African authored novels. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) and *Sula* (1973). Secondary data was obtained through library and desktop research. Therefore, the study adopted a qualitative research approach which involves the study of things in their natural settings in an attempt to interpret them. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. He further states that the process of qualitative research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data. The target population consisted of the slave mothers in America. The texts, *Beloved* (1997), *Sula* (1973), were purposively selected because the thematic concerns therein are relevant to the current study. Data collection was done through a close critical text analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1997) and *Sula* (1973). Data was also collected through note-making as I interacted with the primary and secondary data sources. The collected data was presented by a logical sequence of discussions. Analysis of the data was done by organizing information in a logical sequence and eventually presenting them as themes. These themes were presented and discussed according to the findings from each research question. The tenets of Gender, Commodification and New Historicism theories were used in the discussion of the objectives of the study.

## RESEARCH STUDY FINDINGS

### The fetishization of motherhood in slavery discourses

This section will explore how the slavery and colonial enterprises appropriated the image of the woman's body as an ideological mechanism for institutionalizing white supremacy. This has been done through commodifying the woman's body as a mechanism of production to produce more slaves for the plantations; in this way, the

subordination of motherhood was institutionalised by disfiguring, disenfranchising and dehumanizing the woman's body. We will also look at mechanisms adopted by maternal figures such as silence, madness and resistance as means of reclaiming agency adopted by mothers. The colonialists viewed Africa as a virgin land which they were going to penetrate. McClintock (1995) posits,

Renaissance travelers found an eager and lascivious audience for their spicy tales, so that, long before the era of high Victorian imperialism, Africa and the Americas had become what can be called a porno-tropics for the European imagination a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears. (22)

This sexualisation of Africa by Europe can be attributed to the sexual exploitation of the female slaves by their masters. They sought to seek adventure by raping the African women as some sort of conquest. McClintock (ibid) states, 'within this porno-tropic tradition, women figured as the epitome of sexual aberration and excess. Folklore saw them, even more than the men, as given to a lascivious venery so promiscuous as to border on the bestial' (22). Such descriptions of the African woman explain why the slave masters viewed the female slaves as sexual objects, as will be discussed.

### **Fetishization of motherhood in nationalist discourses of Trans-Atlantic Slavery in Toni Morrison's novels *Beloved* (1997) and *Sula* (1973)**

Nationalism is constituted from the very beginning as a gendered discourse; in other words, androcentric (read male) ideologies have informed nationalisms worldwide. Eriksen (2002) observes that the female principle of nationhood is expressed through relational statuses like daughter, wife, daughter and sister, who are identified with traits such as being caring and nurturing but at the same time, passive like a fertile field. The male principle is however brought out as active. It is associated with a farmer or soldier. This being the case, women have been accorded subservient roles and their contributions towards nationalism have been downplayed to a very large extent. Nagel (1998) observes that, 'The culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes. Terms like honour, patriotism, cowardice, bravery and duty are hard to distinguish as either nationalistic or masculinist, since they seem so thoroughly tied both to the nation and to manliness' (251-252). These masculine attributes evidently discredit any feminine efforts towards nationalism. Focus is pegged on what the men are thought to have attained towards the success of nationalism in their countries and by so doing, women's contribution, if any, is minimal. Due to this gender discrimination, women are included into nationalist discourses in accordance to their traditionally defined identities like mothers to connote their gender roles such as caregivers and nurturers.

The biological "role" of women as mothers is paradoxical in the sense that therein lies their greatest strength and weakness. Enloe (1990) observes that 'nationalism has typically sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope' (45). Enloe argues that women are relegated to minor, often symbolic, roles in nationalist movements and conflicts, either as icons of nationhood, to be elevated and defended, or as the booty or spoils of war, to be denigrated and disgraced. This assertion depicts the passive roles bestowed to women in national struggles. Prinsloo (1999) further avers that, 'nationalism proposes a hegemonic masculine position, that the inscriptions or representations of citizenship or nationhood are articulated within the terms of powerful or masculinised identities' (45). Nationalism can therefore be said to be gendered, but with a bias towards masculinity.

Nationalist discourses have made reference to the family metaphor when referring to the nation; where there is a head of the family and the other family members who fall under the head. Nagel (1998) affirms this assertion when he observes that many theorists of nationalism have noted the tendency of nationalists to liken the nation to a family as a male-headed household in which both men and women have 'natural' roles to play. The men as the head lead the family while the women and children carry out subordinate roles that aim at supporting the head to achieve the goal. The greatest honour the women have been given as contributors to nationalism is the symbol of the mother of the nation. Yuval-Davis (1993) reminds us thus, 'In France, it was La Patrie, a figure of a woman giving birth which personified the revolution' (627). This description of women, tied to their domestic role as mothers, caregivers and nurturers, summons patriarchal androcentric gender roles that frame public and private spaces. Conversely, the direct involvement of women as mothers in the struggle for independence is ignored once

the country gains her independence. The women are then relegated to their subservient role as mothers.

Nationalisms often have a special interest in the sexuality and sexual behaviour of their women. Koonz (1987) affirms this by observing that as exalted ‘mothers in the fatherland’, the women’s purity must be impeccable. Therefore, women’s contributions towards nationalism are majorly centred on their ability to give birth in accordance with patriarchal expectations of motherhood. The metonymic reference of women as mothers of the nation, coupled with the practice of minimizing their contributions in nationalist movements and struggles to their gender roles as mothers within the domestic sphere is hereafter within the confines of this study referred to as fetishization of motherhood, a discourse that has resultantly formed the basis of ways in which motherhood has been commodified in discourses of the nation.

Fetishism is a concept that has been largely tied to the male obsession towards female sexuality. For centuries, fetishism has had its central reference being the phallic symbol, and as Pietz (2014) avers, ‘Psychological universalists subsume fetishism to an allegedly universal human tendency toward privileging phallic symbolism (2). Bearing this in mind, women thus become the objects of fetishism while men become the subjects. The concept of women being the mothers of the nation in nationalistic discourses is thus a form of fetishism.

## DISCUSSION

*Beloved* (1997) and *Sula* (1973) are novels set during the period when slavery was at its peak in America. The main characters are the Negro slaves, but Morrison deliberately puts more emphasis on the mother slaves, presenting the reader with the myriad challenges that these women encounter in the hands of their white masters. One of the tenets of New Historicism theory that forms the basis of this analysis is that a literary text cannot be separated from its historical period. Therefore, the culture, economics and politics of a particular time greatly inform what an author writes. Toni Morrison sets her novels at a time when slavery was the main economic activity in the history of America. She carefully infuses the challenges that African slave mothers actually went through during this era in her characters as she narrates the story of her protagonists Sethe, Baby Suggs and Eva.

As earlier analysed, fetishization of motherhood can be directly linked to the commodification of motherhood. This absurd obsession with mothers being reproducers is attributed to the slave masters’ indifference towards the black women, treating them as commodities they could exchange with money. The women were also used to reproduce more slaves for their masters. These women, however, invented means of navigating their commodification in order to survive the difficult times. Tyson (2006) opines that a ‘commodity’s value lies not in what it can do (use value) but in the money or other commodities for which it can be traded (exchange value) or in the social status it confers on its owner (sign-exchange value)’ (62). Therefore, for an object to be commodified, it should have an exchange value or sign-exchange value, both of which are determined by the society in which these objects are being exchanged. This is the premise on which the era of slavery in America was founded and it led to the total dehumanization of the slaves who were forcefully drawn from Africa and shipped to go and work in the white farms.

### Slave mothers as a cheap labour source

The slave masters did not take into much consideration one’s gender when it came to assigning roles. Most of the time, both male and female slaves were subjected to hard labour. Only the pregnant female slaves were given chores considered lighter like household chores. Morris (2011) avers that a slave by the name Solomon Northup reported that at some point four slave women were sent to help him and another man to cut down trees. Northup admitted that ‘They were excellent choppers, the largest oak or sycamore standing but a brief season before their heavy and well directed blows. At piling logs, they were equal to any man’ (126). Slave women had adapted to the hard labour as observed, to the point that they mastered the work even better than some men. Frederick Law Olmsted (1860) also posits that when he travelled around, he encountered female slaves who were subjected to physical work just like the men. These women had got accustomed to the work and resultantly, they had gained prowess in the tasks. Olmsted reports, ‘First came... forty of the largest and strongest women I ever saw together. They carried themselves loftily, each having a hoe over the shoulder, and walking with a free, powerful swing, like chasseurs on the march’ (126). As described, these black slave women had even gained muscles and grown unusually strong as compared to other women because of the hard physical labour that they used to do.

As observed above, slaves were commodified and so were their children. Women slaves were therefore valuable because they could produce more slaves for their masters. Wising (2008) quotes Adrienne Rich who explains that rape was even encouraged by white plantation owners and their sons could violate the black women; their bodies, mind and soul in order to produce mulatto slaves as they were ‘considered more valuable’ (5).

### Slave mothers as commercial brooders

Slave mothers were commodified by being used as commercial brooders. Their masters would take advantage of them by using their ability to give birth to ensure that they reproduced as many slaves as possible. Emily (2018) acknowledges that slave women were indeed valued for their fecundity. She avers, ‘Enslaved women’s ability to bear children was central to property holding in persons, because enslaved status was inherited through the maternal line’ (2). The slave women who were of child bearing age thereby became an added advantage to their masters. Sethe in *Beloved* had to run off when she realizes that her master was planning to enslave even her children. Women slaves had more value because they could give birth thereby adding to the number of slaves a master had. Paul acknowledges Sethe’s worth in comparison to himself,

He wasn’t surprised that they had tracked her down in Cincinnati, because, when he thought about it now, her price was greater than his; property that reproduced itself without cost. Remembering his own price, down to the cent, that schoolteacher was able to get for him, he wondered what Sethe’s would have been. (269)

As commercial brooders, slave women had to reproduce to increase their population, even if it meant giving birth with different men. Baby Suggs, Sethe’s mother-in-law, observes that in her life as a slave, men and women were “moved around like checkers.” (28) The slaves did not have any sort of freedom because they had been commodified. They belonged to their masters who would do with or to them whatever they deemed profitable. These difficult circumstances are what lead to Baby Suggs giving birth to eight children with six different fathers.

Moreover, children born of slave mothers were sold off by the masters amidst protests by their mothers. In *Beloved*, Baby Suggs recalls how her master played “checkers game” with her children. She ends up losing all her eight children. Likewise, Eva in *Sula* lives in constant fear of her children being sold off by her master. Eva expresses her frustrations of raising her three children whom she refers to as “three beets” at a time when slave children were equally considered as commodities that could be traded. She has to ensure that they were comfortable and healthy, yet still shield them from the prying eyes of her master, lest they be sold off. She rants about the fear that engulfed her when all her “three beets” contracted tuberculosis.

The slave mothers were not only brooders, but they were also used by their masters to take care of their children. Some masters even made them breastfeed their children. Emily (2018) makes reference to this when she comments that,

Moreover, as well as giving birth to and caring for their own children, enslaved women performed a range of mothering work for children who were not their own. For example, they provided the intimate labour of caring for, and sometimes breastfeeding, slaveholders’ children. They also ‘mothered’ other enslaved women’s children when the conditions of enslavement prevented some women from being able to do so themselves. (4)

As observed above, slave mothers had to forgo their motherly duties to their children for the sake of their masters’ children. In *Beloved*, Sethe explains to Paul D. how her infant’s milk was ‘stolen’ from her, ‘After I left you, those boys came in here and took my milk. That’s what they came in here for’ (20-21).

Slave mothers also had to deal with the trauma of their children being commodified. Their children would be sold off by their masters; some of who were still breastfeeding. In *Beloved*, Baby Suggs keeps experiencing flashbacks of the events that robbed her of her children; the painful separation that led to her children being sold off like commodities when they were just toddlers. She reminisces,

The last of her children, whom she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn’t worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway. Seven times she had done that:

held a little foot, examined the fat fingertips with her own-fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere. (163)

Baby Suggs and Eva are representatives of the many slave mothers who had to live in distress, not knowing the whereabouts of their children. As commercial brooders, they were not expected to think about the “commodities” they produced; their work was to keep producing more for their masters.

### **Children of slavery as producers of national boundaries –Slave mothers’ contestation of their fetishization in national discourses**

Children of slavery were considered as property of the slave owners. The masters thus reserved the right to sell them off, trade them or keep them so that they add to the numbers of slaves in the household. Slave mothers did not support this inhumane treatment and therefore decided to counteract the commodification of their children in various ways. Jennings (1990) avers that among the issues that made slave mothers to rebel against giving birth were the desire not to bring children up as slaves, the fear of the dangers of childbirth, and rebellion against the pressures to reproduce for profit. Slave mothers resultantly exhibited acts of resistance to reproduction.

One act of resistance to their children being turned into slaves was infanticide. This proved to be a better idea rather than seeing their children being mistreated as slaves. Darlene Hine (1990) affirms that the infanticide cases actually happened, because ‘women preferred to kill their children as opposed to letting them grow up under slavery. Death became a higher form of love, and a clearer indication of the living death that slavery was’ (657). Infanticide came with its consequences, which included being whipped and jailed but this did not deter the slave women from practicing it. In *Beloved*, Sethe commits infanticide to protect her children from being commodified by Schoolteacher; she hacks her daughter, Beloved, to death. She plans to kill all of them but Schoolteacher arrives with a sheriff before she could complete her task. Sethe is described by the omniscient narrator as ‘a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels on another’ (175). Sethe swings the baby whose head she had chopped towards the wall planks. In her trance, she seems to have lost her conscience. She is described as though she did not have eyes on her face, ‘Since the whites in them had disappeared and since they were as black as her skin, she looked blind’ (175).

Sethe’s act of killing Beloved earns her a jail term but she is later released after petitions are made on her behalf. However, the incident paints a lot of fear in her sons Howard and Buglar, who witnessed her “crime” of killing their sister. They are very afraid of her when she returns that they decide to run off, never to be seen again. Paul D confronts Sethe admonishing her for killing her child and scaring off the boys. To which she responds, ‘It worked...They ain’t at Sweet Home. Schoolteacher ain’t got ’em...It’s my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that’ (194).

Another act of resistance was running away. Slave mothers would plot their escape plan and execute it at an opportune time. Some were caught, punished and brought back to their masters but others managed to get away. Running off was not an easy task because they had children to tag along, resultantly their speed of escape slowed down and the chances of being caught became higher. Myers (1996) comments that, ‘Running away was almost impossible for the woman who chose to take her children with her, for she increased her risk of capture’ (163). The slave mothers would not also leave their children behind for fear of what their masters might do to them. Running away required both strength and speed. This could only be achieved by women of a certain age group. Myers (ibid) posits that, ‘most women between the ages of 17 and 35 were unable to run away since they were either pregnant or nursing during these “prime” runaway years’ (ibid). In *Beloved*, Sethe plans an escape when she realizes that schoolteacher wants to enslave her children. The omniscient narrator explains,

She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them. (192)

Paul D after some introspection, finally acknowledges the fact that Sethe had to run away because the slave catchers would surely come for her, since ‘...her price was greater than his; property that reproduced itself without cost’ (269). Sethe’s escape ends tragically when she hacks Beloved to death and she is finally jailed, but she achieves her objective of freeing her children once she leaves jail. Wising (2008) opines,

In *Beloved*, Morrison shows the torment of slavery and its memories which affect everything Sethe does and most certainly affects how she raises her children. Moreover, we are shown the importance of history and why it is a vital part of black people's lives. Slavery has left its scars, in particular in the mentality of black mothers. (17)

Sethe learns to live with the scars that slavery has brought upon her and her children. As a slave mother, she tries her best to rescue her children from the life of slavery. Ultimately, she succeeds amidst struggles.

## CONCLUSION

Eva, Baby Sugs and Sethe represent the intersectional nature of African slave mothers' discrimination. Intersectionality acknowledges the interplay between gender and other forms of discrimination, like race, age, class, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, gender or sexual identity, religion, or ethnicity. Basing on Crenshaw's observation, the intersectional nature of the discrimination of the black slaves who were mothers, in the novels *Sula* and *Beloved* can clearly be pointed out. Eva, Baby Suggs and Sethe are a representation of the black slave mothers who were commodified on the basis of their race, gender and ability to "reproduce". In both novels, Morrison presents the reader with mothers who possess the ability to create and destroy lives; Eva burns her son Plum to death while Sethe chops off *Beloved*'s head using a hacksaw. The heritage of slavery has a key role to play in the actions carried out by these slave mothers; left all alone by their husbands, they have to traverse the tumultuous journey of being mothers at a time in history when black motherhood was viewed as a business venture to the slave masters.

## REFERENCES

1. Andrea O'Reilly and Geoffrey J. Golson. Los Angeles: Sage, 2010. 466-469
2. Berry, D. R. (2017). *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to Grave, in the Building of a Nation* Boston: Beacon Press
3. Blassingame, J. W. (1979). *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* New York: Oxford University Press, 7
4. Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. New York, NY: Routledge
5. Collins, P. H. (2000) *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*. 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition. New York: Routledge
6. Crenshaw, Kimberlé (October 2016). *The urgency of intersectionality*. *TED Women* 2016.
7. Enloe, C. (1990) *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press
8. Ernest M. (1975). *Late Capitalism* London: Humanities Press p. 387
9. Ghasemi, P. & Hajizadeh, R. (2012) Demystifying the Myth of Motherhood: Toni Morrison's Revision of African-American Mother Stereotypes. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 2,(6)
10. H. Wahlström Henriksson et al. (eds.), *Narratives of Motherhood and Mothering in Fiction and Life Writing*, Palgrave Macmillan Studies in Family and Intimate Life, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17211-3\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-17211-3_1)
11. Hine, D. C (1990) "Female Slave Resistance: The Economics of Sex," in *Black Women in United States History*, v. 2, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (New York: Carlson Publishing), 657-666.
12. Jameson, F. (1991). *"Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism"*. Duke University Press, United States
13. Jennings, T. (1990) "Us Colored Women Had to Go Through a Plenty': Sexual Exploitation of African-American Slave Women," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (3)
14. Kolchin, P. (1995) *American Slavery*. Canada: Harper Collins, 1995.
15. Koonz, C. (1987). *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family, and Nazi Politics*, New York: St Martin's Press
16. Lowrey, Annie (May 1, 2017). *"Why the Phrase 'Late Capitalism' Is Suddenly Everywhere: An investigation into a term that seems to perfectly capture the indignities and absurdities of the modern economy"*. The Atlantic. Retrieved November 29, 2023
17. Maloney, Lauren. *"The Commodification of Human Beings"*. *Nulawreview.org*. Retrieved 3 February 2023.

18. McClintock, A. (1995). *Imperial Leather Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, New York: London
19. Morris, Caile (2011) "Black Slave Gender Roles: How They Were Changed by Emancipation, "Proceedings of GREAT Day: Vol. 2010, Article 17. Available at: <https://knightscholar.geneseo.edu/proceedings-of-great-day/vol2010/iss1/17>
20. Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. 1987. Great Britain: Vintage, 1997
21. Morrison, Toni. *Sula*. 1973. Great Britain: Vintage, 1998
22. Myers, A. C (1996) "Sisters in Arms": Slave Women's Resistance to Slavery in the United States. *Past Imperfect*, Vol. 5, pp. 141-174
23. Nagel, J. (1998). Masculinity and nationalism: gender and sexuality in the making of nations. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(2), 242–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198798330007>
24. Olmsted, F. L. (1860) *A Journey in the Backcountry*. New York: Mason Bros
25. O'Reilly, C. J., & O'Reilly, A. (2025). *Gone Feral: Unruly Women and the Undoing*. Demeter Press
26. O'Reilly, A. (2010) "Outlaw(ing) Motherhood: A Theory and Politic of Maternal Empowerment for the Twenty- first Century." *Hecate*. F17-29.
27. Veaser, H. A. (1989). *The New Historicism*. Routledge.
28. Walker, A. (1983). *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens. Womanist Prose*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovic
29. Wood, B. (1997). *The Origins of American Slavery*. New York: Hill and Wang
30. Yuval-Davis, N. (1993) 'Gender and nation', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 621–32