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“That I should always listen to my body and love it”: Finding the Mind-Body Connection in
Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Slave Texts

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Richmond, Virginia
April, 2011

Acknowledgement

The author wishes to thank several people. I would like to thank my closest friends for letting me think out loud for hours on end and for always encouraging my intellectual endeavors, especially: Jacob Elliott, Camille Beckman, Rebecca Conners, Lia Dangelico, and Sarah Weaning. I would like to thank my parents and brother for their unending love and support. I would also like to thank Dr. Bassard for her generous encouragement and direction throughout this process. Last but not least, I would like to thank my dance instructor Rose Beauchamp for introducing me to Bartenieff Fundamentals and forever changing my life and thinking process.

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Abstract

“THAT I SHOULD ALWAYS LISTEN TO MY BODY AND LOVE IT”: FINDING THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION IN NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURY SLAVE TEXTS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2011

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This thesis explores the presence of the movement theories of Irmgard Bartenieff, Peggy Hackney, and Rudolf Von Laban in the following texts: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself* (1845), *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave* (1831), *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, Linda Brent (1861), Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose* (1986) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). The terms and phrases of movement theory will be introduced to the contemporary critical discussion already surrounding the texts, both furthering and challenging existing arguments.

Introduction

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Denver repeats the lessons her grandmother Baby Suggs taught her, including that she should "always listen to her body and love it" (247). The truth behind this lesson is wrapped up in her experience as a slave. For too long, Baby Suggs and "sixty million and more"¹ were told that their bodies did not belong to them, or that they were less than human. At a time when disciplines such as phrenology, ethnology, and craniometry² were forming, the inferiority of the black body was stamped onto the public sphere. Grandma Baby's lesson reclaims the body and the self in an effort to understand her own human capacity. In many ways, this reclaiming served as a mode of healing—a process that is central to texts dealing with slavery—and gets at a basic connection in humans.

If we turn our eyes from the contemporary novels—*Beloved* and Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose*—back to Frederick Douglass's 1845 *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave. Written by Himself* and other nineteenth century texts, including Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), Baby Suggs's lesson rings true throughout the texts. At the core of listening to the body is the idea of a mind-body connection—one so strong that the two cannot be separated. This is a basic human capacity exemplified in its purest form in these texts. As Jennifer Putzi reminds us, "These texts can still be fruitfully mined for what they reveal about black self-representation and ownership of the marked body" (105). So often for slaves,

their physical and intellectual properties were posed in opposition to each other; slaves were thought of as bodies only and were rejected as thinkers. The history of violence and utter disrespect for the slave body shaped a space for slave narrators to reestablish the worth of both their minds and bodies, to listen to their bodies and love them.

As evident by the current critical dialogue, the body is important in criticism concerning slave literature, and with this consideration of the body comes the term “embodiment.” Critics examining nineteenth century slave culture, as well as those discussing the contemporary slave novel, often consider embodiment a negative state—a state of chattel. Early on, I will push most rigorously against Jeannine DeLombard’s embrace of “embodied subjectivity,”³ as well as other critics’ negative or unclear use of the term. DeLombard relies on an Emersonian separation of mind and body, insisting that embodiment for Douglass (and others) is a burden and that he sheds his body in order to become truly free.⁴ This thesis will work to consider embodiment in Douglass, Prince, Jacobs, Williams, and Morrison in the terms set forth by dance and movement theorists. For movement specialists, in order to be fully embodied the mind and body must support each other. Though we are often unaware of the opportunities of a connected mind and body—or “mody”⁵ as I will refer to it—it is an essential function of our lives. Often as a coping mechanism, slave narrators return to an internal connection, one fully involving the mody, in order to separate themselves from the system of slavery and reach out to the world.

In his 2003 article discussing physical cruelty in modern literature, Mark McWilliams points out that “the increasing critical focus on the enslaved body generally seeks to explore the implications of the intertwined nature of physical and mental violence” and citing a (then) recent introduction to an issue *American Literature*, points out how the authors of the introduction “join other critics in insisting that physical violence is never only physical; the signs of brutality

become the visual markers of deeper, but unseen wounds, whether in the nation or the individual” (355-56). As McWilliams points out, scars are in fact a marker of the brutality to the psyche, and as he points out and many others argue, scars such as these were another visual marker that allowed for the construction of the “other.” McWilliams insinuates that this contemporary critical dialogue is lacking in some way, that the focus is wrong. I agree that the dialogue is lacking but not because we should not be thinking of the connections between physical and psychological distress. I will challenge McWilliams’s preoccupation with the visual cues of “the other” and begin to explore how these characters cope with them.

The narrators and characters in these and other slave texts react to their subjugation with a need to reconnect on their own terms. It is through this awareness of themselves that they restore their minds and bodies to their rightful owners—themselves. This restoration and connection to the internal not only allowed characters to listen to their bodies and love them but to connect with an audience and propagate a fully supported abolitionist message. When discussing Frederick Douglass and Austin Steward, Jennifer Putzi comments, “The fact remains that Douglass and Steward offer their *own* bodies up as text, something they could not do unless they were already in possession of them” (106). Their condition as chattel—a *disembodied* state where the body is only a body—goes by the wayside, sometimes even while they are still captive.

The best example of this separation from the system of slavery is found in Frederick Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*. The mody allows him to declare, “I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact” (395). Douglass demonstrates that at times he passed through periods of disembodiment,⁶ but it is through a fully connected and embodied state that he is able to fight and eventually overcome.

Once he reached the North, it is through a connected mind and body that Douglass is able to create a supported message to connect with audiences and maintain an active role in abolition.

Douglass's *Narrative* is not only a foundational text in the canon of African American literature but a wonderful example of how the body is present and essential in the history of slave texts. As such, it is an important starting point for entering this literature. As I move through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I will attempt to answer the following questions for each text: How have previous readings of the body in this text fallen short? Where do examples of the mind-body connection exist? What function or purpose do these examples serve? How do these examples work to correct the commodification seen in the past? What do we gain or learn by rereading the "embodiment" in terms of the connected internal? And finally, how do these embodied experiences relate across the history or canon of slave literature? My intent is to answer these questions in order to tease out the preoccupations of movement and body so often found in literature. Contributions of movement analysts will take this interdisciplinary investigation into the deeper premises at the heart of each subject—a basic human need for connection and community.

Chapter One will focus on defining and explaining terms of embodiment as seen by movement analysts. It will be a brief lesson but will lay the groundwork for recasting how we understand critical treatment of the body. The theories in Chapter One are much more involved than I will have time to handle. However, brief attention is necessary in order to introduce movement theory vocabulary into the existing critical dialogue surrounding the texts. Chapter Two will move directly into Frederick Douglass's 1845 *Narrative*, capturing how his movement from slavery to freedom relied heavily and outspokenly on a body connection. From there, I will consider Harriet Jacobs and Mary Prince for their similarly autobiographical handling of the

mody. Chapter Three will address Sherley Anne Williams's 1986 novel *Dessa Rose*, focusing not only on Dessa's mody connection, but the evolution of mind-body awareness for other characters in the novel. In many ways, the mody in *Dessa Rose* provides a basis for characters to begin communicating effectively with one another. When discussing *Dessa Rose*, it will be necessary to discuss the weaving of the mody with narrative-making. Chapter 4 will examine Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved*, specifically through the notions of family and community. As with *Dessa Rose*, the examination will look at several characters' relationship to and awareness of the mody. Mody function in *Beloved* is complicated, even tortured at times, but in its most essential nature centers on communication and healing—both among characters and among the past, present, and future.

The list of primary texts for this thesis suggests that there will be a focus on the female experience. However, what is most central to the discussion of the mody its basic *human* capacity. I understand that the male and female experiences of the mody are different and that conditions such as sexual abuse and childbirth in the slave system complicate the female experience. Though I will comment when appropriate, I aim to show examples of the mody in both males and females across the body and history of this literature. Even in female-authored texts, male characters serve as examples of a mody connection. The crossing of gender lines further suggests that these female authors were able to see the mody not as a gendered trait but as a human one.

My choice to include so many texts was both deliberate and specific. The most striking aspect of the mody in this literature is the way it continues to appear both in the non-fiction nineteenth century texts and in the contemporary novels. This suggests to me that a mind-body connection is central to the narrative of slavery, and both Sherley Anne Williams and Toni

Morrison picked up on this connection and carried on the tradition in the description and actions of their own characters. In order to see this arc across the history of the text, it is essential to look not only at more than one text but texts across time.

Chapter One—The Mody: A Path to Embodiment

It is difficult to say where the concept of mind-body connection originated, but it is featured often in movement theory, which includes disciplines such as dance, theatre arts, and physical therapy. Irmgard Bartenieff, a physical therapist and expert mover, spent her life developing a system of total body connectivity and was acutely aware of the psychological implications of movement (Hackney 4). Her studies contributed immensely to the understanding of the body. Bartenieff was a student of Rudolf von Laban, who created a system to “describe *how* human beings express themselves through movement” (Hackney 1, my emphasis). Laban’s studies were calculated and well documented, with graphs and symbols to represent the types of movements humans make. He created a set of vocabulary words and phrases to help make movement clearly describable. The system is made up of four elements: Body, Effort, Shape and Space.⁷ The Effort component is a combination of space, time, weight, and flow. Each of these is broken down into two elements. For example, time is made up of quick or sustained. Laban was aware, however, that not all actions are clearly defined by these four efforts, that “human beings are not automatons but are subject to all sorts of tiny emotional influences” (Newlove 187). Between Body, Effort, Shape, and Space, Laban was able to explicate the complex relationship between the way we move and what that says about our inner life.⁸ Some human idiosyncrasies do not neatly fall into Laban’s categories. However, by making an infrastructure of categories, we are able to describe those movements as existing within the rubric he constructed.

Irmgard Bartenieff took his study of expression to another level, focusing on “the importance of *internal body connectivity* in making movement come alive both within the individual and out in the world” (Hackney 1). Bartenieff’s focus was almost exclusively on the body element and allowed movers and students of movement to look more carefully at how those “tiny emotional influences” manifested themselves, inside and out. Bartenieff created her own system and set of vocabulary in order to clearly envision the anatomic chains inside of our bodies and thus better understand how our minds and bodies can best support one another. It is important to note that these concepts were developed not on paper but through physical workshops on real movers. It may prove difficult sometimes to accurately render such physical notions in a text; however, that is precisely why these texts are enticing. In Douglass, Prince, and Jacobs, we can begin to mine the texts for body principles at the sentence level, finding metaphor that suggests a cooperation of the *whole* being. Turning to the contemporary texts, we find the language essential in both *Dessa Rose* and *Beloved*. Physical notions are most clearly captured in those concrete examples, though each text transcends a purely physical environment to provide essential examples of how the mind-body connection permeates human function.

In her preface to *Making Connections: Total Body Integration Through Bartenieff Fundamentals*,⁹ Peggy Hackney (a student and protégé of Bartenieff’s) declares quite simply the need for and value of the body:

As human beings, we want to be fully present, embodied, as we live our lives. We want to communicate who we are and what we stand for in action, so that our message reaches out to others. As we move, whether in dance, theater, sports or simply being with others, *we want to connect*. In order to do this we need to find means to connect inwardly, both to what we want to say, and how all parts of the body relate to each other to support our statement and purpose... This ability to make connections, to create relationships, is a skill which begins “at home,” within our own bodies. (vii)¹⁰

Hackney's statement assumes (appropriately) that the mind is an essential part of the body—responsible for the creation of “our statement and purpose.” It is only through the body's support of that statement that we become fully embodied. Or, as Katya Bloom defines in the preface to her book on embodiment and psychoanalysis, “embodiment is another way of describing the integration of parts—mind, body, feelings, internal and external worlds” (xvi). From these two basic statements we can begin to see how the system of slavery is diametrically opposed to full embodiment: unwilling to recognize slaves as humans, propagators of slavery would reject an investigation of humane qualities. In literature, as Mark McWilliams points out, much of the focus is on the connections between physical and psychological. However, without engaging in the discourse and vocabulary of movement theory, critics fail to grasp the full extent of embodiment.

Because expression and thus communication is at the heart of these movement studies, it is easy for the discussion of the body to turn to language, especially in the context of slave texts and narrative-making. Jean Newlove and John Dalby, in their book *Laban for All*, describe the ways in which movement is necessary in sound and voice—the physics and biology behind speaking and hearing. They remind us: “the acquisition of any skill depends on the right muscles being used in the right order and at the right time. For vocal mechanism to function efficiently, it is necessary for the whole body to be in a harmonious state” (173). The efficiency of speaking muscles is essential in considering how Douglass was “moved to speak” on the anti-slavery lecture circuit.¹¹ He mentions his anxiety about speaking, but eventually he “said what [he] desired with considerable ease” (429). In order to achieve such ease, Douglass must have confidence that his body will be grounded and coordinated in order for him to deliver his message. Students of movement do not often analyze the relationship between body and written

language, though it will be necessary to examine that relationship when considering these texts. In this relationship, we return to the basic underlying principle of communication and how the histories of the authorial bodies have informed their textual products.

We can begin our consideration of text and movement studies by turning to contemporary dance-makers, those who rely on embodied performance to communicate and sustain a message. Alvin Ailey, a contemporary African American choreographer, wrote and choreographed from what he called his “blood memories...memories about Texas, the blues, spirituals, gospel, work songs, all those things going on in Texas in the 1930s...” (Ailey 12). The concept of the mind-body connection is rife in Ailey’s term. The language here exposes that the remembrance in his brain is also in his body. Ailey expressed these memories through his choreography, referring often in his autobiography to images that make it into his ballets. In the introduction to his autobiography *Revelations*,¹² A. Peter Bailey tells us “Alvin could tell a story verbally as superbly as he could choreographically” (13). We may begin then to see choreographic works as texts also, those that rely on the mind-body connection, of both the maker and the mover. When Ailey first pursued dance, he studied with Lester Horton and was intrigued by “strange movements that thrilled [him], movements with the torso falling forward. They were incredibly expressive” (44). Horton “had stylized a wide range of emotions” (45). Expressivity and emotion are what drove Ailey’s dance making. He chose “dancers who are temperamental, who are expressive, who show their feelings, who are open and out, not hidden, who want to show themselves to the audience.” He chose dancers who “had history” to help tell his narrative (126).

In his book on Ailey, Thomas F. DeFrantz “[proposes] that Ailey encoded aspects of African American life and culture in concert dance...[and] explores particular examples of how Ailey captured black experience in terms of concert dance” (xiii). By turning to Ailey, we are

able to see an explication of his African American experience through the eyes of a movement analyst. In focusing on Ailey's *Revelations*, DeFrantz writes "Ailey's dance confirmed that folk materials, carefully mediated by principles of modern dance composition, could retain the immediacy of their sources in the transformation to concert dance" (3). The concept of sources that DeFrantz presents is essential to the context of narrative-making. In the dance world, these sources are essential for full embodiment. As DeFrantz suggests, sources aid both dancers and choreographers in fully expressing the concept or image at hand. DeFrantz's comment also helps us to see choreographers as authors, clinging to experience and culture, to "folk materials" in order to communicate. In *Revelations*, Ailey's dancers moved to traditional spirituals and performed "ecstatic improvisations" with "rhythmic precision" (15). Not only was their mode of capturing the music and images convincing, but "the corporeal fact of dancers demonstrating physical mastery offers unimpeachable evidence of embodied knowledge" (15). In this context, DeFrantz's use of "embodied" is astoundingly appropriate. These dancers communicated so clearly because they knew the sources, the folk materials in their minds and their bodies.

Like Ailey, Bill T. Jones is a contemporary choreographer devoted to embodied knowledge. Jones is also a writer, authoring or contributing to four books in his career thus far. Also like Ailey, Jones has memories from his childhood that fully inform his creative process.

He told *The Village Voice* in 1981:

I come from a violent place...I think one of the first things I ever heard was screaming. People moving around. 'Get out of the way. Be quiet.' Standing when I was very young next to a state-trooper who seemed seven-feet tall—just the monolithic form in gray cloth, a gun at his side and white skin, standing in a room of black faces. And this first awareness I ever had of a white person was an authority presence which changed the chemistry of the whole room. Even my mother and father began to behave differently. So these feelings exist in me. And when I make work, I try to reflect back all of those things, as purely as possible. And put them in a larger context. (qtd. in Jones 14)

As he indicates here, memories like this fueled his drive for narrative-making; he made work that was personal. His partner Arnie Zane noticed, “people were incredibly attracted by this personal story” (qtd. in Jones 56). Later, in his memoir *Last Night on Earth*, he recalls beginning to dance. Jones introduces the way his body functioned in dance: “At that time, dance was about this body and what it wanted to taste, what it wanted to say. Who knew that a body could talk?” (65).

These two comments by Jones reveal the importance of the mind-body connection in his work.

Like Ailey and his dancers, Jones had history that he wanted to talk about, to dance about.

Another example of the body comes later in his memoir as he reflects on running track in high school:

There is a spot behind my solarplexus, connecting my pelvis and legs to the place where tears come from and beauty is perceived. It says “Now” and I pull ahead of him... When I was a seventeen-year-old sprinter, the cable connecting the “Now” to my heart and legs was strength and sinew. These days, “Now” is anchored in my body by a complex latticework of memory, ambition, and fear” (69-70).

Jones’s words explicate a clear connection between the mind and body, body and language; his rumination on memory, ambition, and fear connect the body to the process of narrative-making.

Though these contemporary choreographers are not theorists like Bartenieff, Hackney, and Laban, they are movement authors who consciously use the mind-body connection for expression and communication. In many ways, Ailey and Jones can be considered next to Douglass, Williams, and Morrison as authors who returned to the mind-body connection to explicate their experiences as African Americans.¹³

Chapter Two—Reading *The Classic Slave Narratives* for the mind-body connection: Frederick Douglass, Mary Prince, and Harriet Jacobs

In his introduction to *The Classic Slave Narratives*, Henry Louis Gates explains the fundamental nature of the included texts: “the narratives of ex-slaves are, for the literary critic, the very foundation upon which most subsequent Afro-American fictional and non-fictional narrative forms are based” (5). The 1845 version of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, he writes, is “the most famous of them all” (6). Douglass’s text provides an indispensable example of slave life in America not only through relating his own experiences, but through the circumstances he merely hears about. Douglass’s desire to stand up for the abolitionist cause gives his *Narrative* a tone of universality, making it applicable to “the collective black slave community” (6). In discussing the outstanding features of Douglass’s work, Gates notes, “Douglass’s language is made to signify the presence and absence of some quality—in this case humanity” (7). Douglass’s sensibility to humanity comes through his ability to connect his mind and body internally. This connection not only shapes how he processes his condition as a slave but also ultimately gives him the strength and endurance to escape bondage and propagate an abolitionist message. Acknowledging the mind-body connection in Douglass and other slave texts allows readers an avenue through which we can begin to unpack the complicated ties between physical and mental trauma, and finally how those may (in the cases of these texts) translate to narrative-making.

Examples of the mind-body connection in Douglass begin as early as his childhood memories. In remembering the first beating he witnessed, that of his Aunt Hester,¹⁴ Douglass writes, “I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I shall never forget it whilst I remember anything. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with an awful force” (343). This last sentence marks an early establishment of the body. The word “struck” is decidedly physical, and Douglass is no doubt using the context of the whippings to make that sentence resonate. However, we know from his statements about memory that this “outrage” is also a mental one. This physical experience, though not his own, will shape his awareness throughout his life. Douglass tells us that this was his first introduction to the conditions of slavery; as Jenny Franchot reminds us in this scene, “[Hester’s] degradation signals his loss of identity” (142). By witnessing this horrific event, Douglass is forced to reconsider his place in life and the system of slavery. As a privileged child, Douglass “was spared slavery’s burdens rather than being crushed by them, [and] he remained sensitive to the damning effect of abuse on others” (qtd. in Franchot 147). Douglass’s sensitivity to abuse is apparent in his use of the word “struck.” He is forced to consider his own body in order to understand Hester’s whipping. He is also forced (as Franchot indicates) to consider how such abuse affects him mentally. Douglass concludes his memory of Hester’s beating by saying, “I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it” (343). This statement verbalizes the complicated relationship between trauma and narrative-making—between knowing something with the whole body and taking the risk to represent it accurately for others. We must notice that Douglass chooses to use “feelings” and not “thoughts.” The sense of touch is often considered limited to the body. However, Douglass makes clear that he felt Hester’s

abuse in his whole being. By admitting his shortcomings with words in this moment, Douglass trusts that the reader understands the power of feelings—both mental and physical.

Though we are not reading about Douglass's own body as we will later, his observation of Hester's trauma still holds a place in the narrative as a testament to the effects of slavery on the captive. The pain was not merely local but sustained through the experiences of others.¹⁵ In terms of the construction of narrative, Hester's punishment serves a specific function as it "provides him a temporary membership in the suffering body whose final function is to afford him a permanent escape from it"¹⁶ (148). Douglass's experience with Hester's beating gives him early access to the components of mind and body. The "temporary membership" Franchot refers to is found in his awareness of the dangers his own body presents. We must think of his experience with Hester's beating as some rite of passage crossing a threshold into a reality where the condition of his body is always at stake. As indicated in Douglass's reflection on the incident, this reality undoubtedly weighs on his mind.

As Douglass proceeds through his "career"¹⁷ as a slave, the dangers of the body stay with him, and he observes it also in other slaves. When discussing the commonality of slaveholders sending spies into their slaves to inquire about "their condition and the characters of their masters," Douglass calculates that, "the frequency of this has had the effect to establish among slaves the maxim, that a still tongue makes a wise head" (353). In this instance, the tongue is used as a metonym for words or speech, but the metonym is a clear example of how the voice (often considered "thought") is inextricably linked to the body—that speech and voice depend on the coordination and cooperation of both the brain and the body. Beyond that, the maxim serves as an example of the mind-body connection. Though this maxim is meant to have a slightly

jocular tone, we see that the life of a slave relies on a cooperative mody in order to preserve the condition of their bodies and to avoid further trauma to their physical well-being and their spirits.

This maxim is also an instance that utilizes vocabulary that is suggestive of their captive condition. Often in Douglass we find reference to the condition of chattel littered with references to movement. Here, it is summed up in the adjective “still.” Later in the *Narrative*, as Douglass looks out over the ships in Baltimore harbor, we see another example of the vocabulary of restraint. Speaking to the ships, Douglass says,

You are loosed from your moorings, and are free; I am fast in my chains, and am a slave!
You move merrily before the gentle gale, and I sadly before the bloody whip! You are
freedom’s swift-winged angels, that fly around the world; I am confined in the bands of
iron! (388)

Previously, “still” was used to indicate a quiet slave but is indicative of the larger oppression. A slave is expected to be quiet and well regulated in his behavior. The larger oppression is seen more easily in the scene in Baltimore, as Douglass is clear about how his condition compares to freedom. Here and throughout, the condition of freedom depends on the ability to move—something kept away from slaves.¹⁸ Douglass inserts emotions in order to better contrast his condition, using “merrily” to describe the ship’s movement, and “sadly” to describe his. The relationship between stillness and movement is complex and intricate for the slave. A slave’s avoidance of beatings hinges on his or her ability to work, to move relentlessly. Slaves who are still are considered lazy or infirm are at risk of beatings, trading, or extermination. However, images of slavery are permeated with physical restraint: chains, ropes, coffles, and other devices used to prohibit movement. In this particular scene, Douglass is not chained to the tree or other slaves. He is physically without his chains, though he carries the weight of them in his language and throughout his time as a slave.

It is important to note that the vocabulary here can be considered referent of something called “bound-flow” in Laban Movement Analysis (LMA). Flow is classified under the effort component of LMA and is used to examine the way a mover transitions, or “the continuity of movement” (NYU Movement Lab). Newlove and Dalby write: “Laban considered the motion factor of flow as playing an important part in all movement expression, and that through its inward and outward streaming it establishes relationships and communication” (127). Bound-flow, as indicated by the name, is considered highly controlled and careful movement. Bound-flow does not necessarily have to do with the size of the movement. For example, a large leap can still be considered bound. Boundedness is more concerned, however, with the apparent emotional restriction going on behind the movement, or a maintenance of the boundaries, inside and out. A bound-flow mover does not indicate by any means disembodiment, but rather a fierce awareness of constraint, of specific paths.¹⁹ Douglass’s passages indicate the bound-flow forced on them by the system of slavery. In movement, bodies have natural tendencies for all parts of Laban’s system, and we often oscillate between bound and free flow as we navigate the tasks and emotions of daily life. The condition of slavery forces a constant bound flow, often against the will of the natural tendencies of a body. To Laban, bound flow is indicative of a containment of emotion, as seen in the maxim of the still tongue. Slaves are forced to contain their bodies and their emotions in front of slaveholders or even in front of other slaves in fear of spies.²⁰

Mark K. Burns’s article on the rhetoric of irony in Douglass examines the possibility that “things in this narrative world really are quite different than they seem, and there exists the possibility of another narrative reality besides the discourse that appears to dominate the text” (87). He focuses on the way Douglass uses contradictory sentences or tones to create an ironic structure to the narrative. Burns’s comments also seem applicable to the disconnect between

what Douglass is experiencing in the text and how it appears on the page. That is, the cathartic act of writing for Douglass is an outpouring of emotion and thereby a decidedly free-flow act.²¹

Douglass is writing his *Narrative* once he is free, once he is able to fully communicate his emotions. This relationship between freedom and dexterity with language is apparent in Douglass in the scene where Mr. and Mrs. Auld refuse to let Douglass learn to read and write. In response to his master's refusal of language for Douglass, he writes,

These words sank deep into my heart, stirred up sentiments within that lay slumbering, and called into existence an entirely new train of thought...I now understood what had been to me a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave a black man. It was a grand achievement and I prized it highly. From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. (364)

To Douglass, language and the negotiation of wit is the pathway to freedom. The creation of his *Narrative*²² is a kind of ultimate freedom—not only a freedom to use writing skills at all, but also the freedom to dive deeply into making his narrative.²³ In choosing to delve into writing, Douglass relies on his body.

The quotation also provides an important example of how the mind-body connection is present in effective expression. As he processes the words that he hears from the Aulds, his body reacts as we see in the first sentence of this passage. It seems easy to write Douglass's phrases off as clichés or simple figures of speech. However, these metaphors still get at the heart of the argument. We use combinations of cerebral and physical elements in order to express ourselves more clearly. On the most basic level, we understand that the bodily and psychological harm inflicted on Douglass has had a profound effect on his drive to write. He introduces a clear correlation between his wounds and his writing when he tells us, "My feet have been so cracked with the frost, that the pen with which I am writing might be laid in the gashes" (359). Douglass

not only gives us a clear understanding of the damage done to his feet, but an insightful image of him dipping his pen in the ink-well of his scars.

In true Douglass fashion, these scars are both physical and mental. As Douglass reflects on his time with the slave-handler Covey, we see the psychological effects of the brutality as Douglass describes to us what may be his most disembodied moment:

Mr. Covey succeeded in breaking me. I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute! (387)

As with the layering of bound and free flow in Douglass's writing, there seems to be a layering of embodiment and disembodiment present in this passage. Douglass implies a disconnect between his mind and body when he describes the demise of his "natural elasticity" and his "intellect" in corresponding phrases. The body connection also seems broken when he insinuates that his emotion leaves his face. However, it seems that Douglass's reflection on this time is fully embodied, his descriptions robust, and both his intellect and body are present in order for Douglass to give us this image of himself.

Perhaps the most famous scene in Douglass's 1845 *Narrative*, Douglass's altercation with Covey is rife with complex examples of the body and the opportunities it provides to its owners. The scene also provides critics with fertile ground to dissect a crucial moment in Douglass's history and consciousness. It is useful to press against Jeannine DeLombard's tendency to separate the mind and body. DeLombard points out the ways Douglass changes throughout the course of his narrative, concluding: "Douglass, in a series of witnessing events, gradually shifts the metonym of authorship from the vulnerable, corporeal eyeball to the unassailable, immaterial voice"²⁴(248). While I agree that Douglass shifts his sensibility, I am uncomfortable with DeLombard's reliance on the Emersonian principle of "transparent eye-ball"

or as DeLombard calls it, “universal subjectivity” (247). She contrasts universal subjectivity with “embodied subjectivity” or Douglass’s condition as an American slave. Not only does DeLombard locate Douglass’s shift much too late in the *Narrative*, but her terms depend on the separation of the mind and body and thus undermine the power and resonance of Douglass’s development.

DeLombard assumes that Douglass’s transition to an activist and author comes once he has reached the North and begins his involvement with the abolitionist movement. In a time when the nature of eyewitness was being questioned, Douglass dislodges the troubling questions “in the narrative shift from the South and slavery to the North and freedom—and ultimately from vision to voice” (267). However, Douglass declares his own separation from the system of slavery much earlier—in the instance of his brawl with Mr. Covey, the slave handler. To introduce the incidents with Mr. Covey, Douglass says, “The circumstances leading to the change in Mr. Covey’s course toward me form an epoch in my humble history. You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see how a slave was made a man” (389). Douglass uses past and then future tense to help frame the pivotal moment. Douglass alerts readers that we are on the eve of his reinstatement to the human race. His statement is backed with action: Mr. Covey’s attack on Douglass, and Douglass’s retaliation the following day. The gravity and outcome of Douglass’s retaliations are clearly and eloquently described by Douglass:

The battle with Mr. Covey was the turning-point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired me again with the determination to be free...I felt as I never felt before. It was a glorious resurrection, from the tomb of slavery to the heaven of freedom...and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact. (394-395)

Douglass’s reflection on the effects of resistance to Mr. Covey seems to serve DeLombard’s article better than she may realize. Douglass himself refers to the incident as the “turning-point”

and the “resurrection.” It is at precisely this point that he commands his life to freedom, that he transitions from slave to author. He has now asserted control of his life, his story.

His narrative-making relies on more than a simplified moment of transition; the complexity of the body is the inherent impetus and supporter of the change, both before and after declaration. DeLombard asserts that this turning point allows Douglass “to be released from the constraints of physical embodiment” (248). However, her insistence on shedding the body weakens the powerful example of Douglass’s mind-body connection. In describing the events, Douglass asserts that his “resistance was so entirely unexpected, that Covey seemed taken all aback. He trembled like a leaf. This gave me assurance, and I held him uneasy, causing the blood to run where I touched him with the ends of my fingers” (393-394). Douglass features the body in his description of this scene, not in the form of chattel but in terms of visceral reaction. Douglass is bolstered by Mr. Covey’s bodily response, thus prompting Douglass’s own body to support his statement. It is worth noting that in Douglass’s description of his “resurrection,” his language focuses on the emotion inside his body, indicating his sense of Hackney’s “home”—a connection within that drives him.

Not only does Douglass’s language exhibit understanding of his inner connectedness, but his bold actions against Mr. Covey exhibit his ability to use the interaction of the mind and body to obtain freedom. Douglass declares that he can separate himself in form and fact—thus, he is able to understand himself as Mr. Covey sees him (chattel) and as he sees himself (free, activist). As chattel to Mr. Covey, he is *disembodied*—only a body with no statement. As the freeman and activist, he is able to reestablish the emotional and intellectual worth of his body. Because Douglass is able to distinguish himself in form and fact, he is able to employ his mind and body *together* to come to Mr. Covey on terms that Mr. Covey expects of him: physical might.

Douglass's resistance runs the risk of aligning him to the stereotype of the violent, militant slave. However, his thoughts and reflections make it clear that Douglass is operating above the sphere of Mr. Covey's understanding. Douglass understands that Mr. Covey will never acknowledge his mind, and so he "resolved to fight." He employs his mind through his body (393).

Establishing Douglass's awareness and use of the body complicates DeLombard's argument on many levels. She claims that "in order to accomplish [his] final transformation, he needed first to dissociate himself from the visual and identify himself with the verbal"—that he must dissociate himself from his body and identify with his mind (253). However, his body must be present with his mind in order for him to reach his full potential. As indicated in Hackney's statement, we can be embodied only when our bodies support our purpose. Thus, DeLombard's term "embodied subjectivity" would imply that the institution of slavery is commodifying the body. However, we know that the perpetrators of Douglass's discrimination (both South and North) will not acknowledge his mind, much less his mind-body connection. The application of movement theory and total connectivity insists that DeLombard reassess the negative connotation of embodiment. A term such as the "subjugated body" for the slave condition may serve DeLombard's purpose better, as it indicates domination of the body and only the body. Because Douglass shapes his own story, the *Narrative* supports and promotes Douglass's embodiment—his full engagement with purpose and action.

Looking at Douglass's craft this way also complicates DeLombard's use of "voice." DeLombard claims that Douglass's realization that the North also has a racial hierarchy "leads Douglass...to replace the metonym of authorship from the eye to the voice" and that:

As a voice "pleading the cause" of his brethren, Douglass, like his white antislavery activists who traditionally played the role of advocate for the slave, could at last shed the embodied subjectivity associated with his former role as an eye witness to Southern

slaveholding violence and attain “a degree of freedom” in a universal subjectivity unencumbered by the body. (269)

DeLombard’s use of the word “voice” here explicitly separates the voice from the body. It seems as though she wishes to talk not about the voice such as it is, but the intellectual symbol that it provides: Douglass’s control of his own narrative. Even so, applying the concept of full embodiment, we see that Douglass’s voice (and thus his activism) is very much an artifact of his body. His body (quite literally his voice box, tongue, and his own ears) supports his intellectual reach. Or, as Robert Pinsky puts it: “the medium of poetry is the human body: the column of air inside the chest, shaped into signifying sounds in the larynx and mouth” (8). We can easily substitute “poetry” with any exercise of the spoken word. DeLombard herself locates the voice in terms of the body later in the article, when she argues that “his white contemporaries’ depiction of him consistently call attention to his body” citing an abolitionist contemporary who describes Douglass in “manly attitude, with erect form, and glistening eye, and deep-toned voice” (271). Throughout the article, DeLombard uses “voice” to escape or transcend the body, but here she suggests that voice is in fact a term *of* the body.²⁵

Because voice is critical to Douglass’s full embodiment, a new term must be applied to his time in the North that accounts for both his voice and its message. It seems as though “activist” is appropriate for Douglass, possibly even more so than “author.” “Activist” rightfully implies a sense of movement, as we have seen in the scene just before Douglass makes his first escape attempt. He explains that he was “active” in explaining the plan to the other fleers, and that “if [they] did not intend to move now, [they] had as well fold [their] arms, sit down, and acknowledge [themselves] fit only to be slaves” (406). Douglass employs “move” two other times in the paragraph, driving home the essential nature of movement in freedom. His reflection on movement here and throughout the *Narrative* indicates Douglass was committed to freedom

both physically and intellectually. Using the term “activist” to describe Douglass’s role better indicates the positive and fully embodied dedication Douglass had for the abolitionist cause. As we will see later, Douglass allows his success to be judged not solely on his words, but on his “labors” (429). He is active in the creation of his narrative, and he is active in the propagation of his message.

Returning to Hackney’s claims, we see that Douglass’s mind and body both support his voice, and it is precisely the harnessing of this power that allows him to connect the internal and external. His message begins in his mind, but cannot reach the minds of others without the support of his throat and their ears; or put in terms of writing, his hands and their eyes. In the incident with Mr. Covey, Douglass turns his life around by using his body in terms of physical might, and in the North Douglass uses his body to craft a rational message. In both cases, the message cannot survive without the critical juncture between the mind and body.

Douglass’s closing suggests a strong body presence in the legacy of his work. In regard to anti-slavery reform, he says: “I could do but little; but what I could, I did with a joy-ful heart... I have been engaged in pleading the cause of my brethren—with what success, and with what devotion, I leave those acquainted with my labors to decide” (429). His mention of both heart and labor again insist that we read him as more than an author; we must read him as a connected and supported activist. Because he leaves the measure of his success to “those acquainted with his labors,” he is relying on his body to sustain his message.

The result of this embodied and supported narrative is linked to Martha J. Cutter’s notion of “critical literacy.” Though Cutter’s article focuses on Harriet Jacobs, she begins by making Douglass’s *Narrative* an example of critical literacy that is never achieved. She centers her use of “critical literacy” on the educational theorists Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo who claim that

critical literacy allows individuals to “[transform] the social and political structures that imprison them in their ‘culture of silence’” (qtd in Cutter, 209-210). Cutter goes on to say that “literacy in this sense is not simply reading the word, but reading the *world*” (210, my emphasis). It is plausible, I suggest, that if Douglass is able to separate himself in form and fact, and understand the essential nature of the body, then he is able to read the world in these terms; body and body, or chattel and activism. Knowing that Mr. Covey expects physical might demonstrates Douglass’s ability to read his environment. If, as Cutter states, literacy is not just the act of reading the word, then Douglass has entered literacy through his ability to communicate on more than one level.

Cutter expands her definition by insisting that reading the world allows the oppressed to “reappropriate their history, culture, and language practices” (qtd. in Cutter, 210). Douglass participates in this process by establishing his body. He reappropriates his body, which is in many ways his “history, culture, and language.” He sees the worth of his body in the act of communication and thus removes it from the context of chattel when he declares that he will no longer be a slave, despite enslavement. This act of reappropriating is inextricably linked to Audre Lorde’s discussion of “the master’s tools.” Douglass’s relationship to the master’s tools in the incident with Mr. Covey is complicated. He resists Mr. Covey in a way that Mr. Covey expects, and thus could be mistaken for using the master’s tools. However, Douglass transcends the concept of being just a body by claiming his body in tandem with his mind. In essence, he is using the master’s tools (everyone has a body, everyone has a brain); however, he uses them in a way that the master is either unwilling or unable to understand. Moments that clearly exhibit the mind-body connection are related to doubling, or providing contrast and perspective that aids Douglass in his journey to freedom. If we allow this perspective to be defined as Cutter’s critical

literacy, we see the ways in which the examination of the body becomes more than movement theory and allows us as readers and critics to access another level of consciousness in these characters.²⁶

In an effort to consider the place of the mind-body connection in other nineteenth century texts, we can look to both *The History of Mary Prince* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.²⁷ As indicated by their inclusion in Henry Louis Gates's *The Classic Slave Narratives*, these female texts are essential to the canon of slave literature. Like Douglass, these women use their texts to wrestle with the horrific circumstances their minds and bodies were subject to. Mary Prince's story is much shorter than Douglass's or Jacobs's, and her narrative often relies on the role of God in her life. Stylistically, her work is more committed to relaying exactly what happened at each stage of her life and less on her own reflection and analysis of the events.²⁸ Without that reflection, it can be more difficult at times to locate textual evidence of the body. While Prince's examples do not provide as many opportunities for exploring the mind-body connection, those opportunities are present nonetheless.

In the first few pages of Prince's narrative she relates the experience of being put up for auction. As her mother lines them up for sale, Prince "pressed [her] hands quite tightly across [her] breast, but [she] could not keep it still, and it continued to leap as though it would burst out of [her] body" (257). Prince's concern with stillness is similar to Douglass's "still tongue." Much of Douglass's stillness has to do with the way movement (in his case of the tongue) would convey something to others around him. Similarly, Prince goes on to ask: "Did one of the many by-standers, who were looking at us so carelessly, think of the pain that wrung the hearts of the negro woman and her young ones? No, no!" (257-258). Here too, Prince acknowledges that the

“leap” of her chest communicates emotion. Also, as we will see many times in the metaphor of pain and trauma, Prince refers to what her “heart” endures. Prince conveys a connection between her mother, herself, and her siblings by speaking for all of their hearts.

Prince, openly dedicated to God and the church, often defers to religion in her moments of self-reflection. Commenting on being sold from the Williams household, Prince relates, “The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave’s heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separations as these” (256-257). Though Prince places the glory in God, her expression insinuates a connection between the thoughts in her mind and the heart in her body. What is also important in Prince’s sentiment is the notion that the thoughts are steeped inside, kept private and accessible only by God. Prince’s concealment also resembles Douglass’s maxim of a still tongue. The body is an indelible resource in the external manifestation of thoughts though it has a place in reserving expression as well. Whether or not Prince is able to express herself at the time, her comments indicate an awareness of the body and its role in her experience as a slave.

Later in the context of being threatened by Mrs. Wood, Prince writes, “she gave me the threatening so strong of what she would have done to me, that I thought I should have fallen down at her feet, I was so vexed and hurt by her words” (274-275). Here, words processed in the mind result in a physical reaction of weakness. This weakness is also tied to the pain that Prince feels at her mistress’s dissatisfaction. Her emotions about the threat manifest themselves both mentally and physically. Just after this, speaking out to her mistress, the mind and body support Prince in a quick moment of expression. After heavy scolding that Prince “bore in silence,” her “heart was quite full” and she spoke truthfully to her mistress about her treatment. Prince could have kept the causality of her expression strictly related to her anger; however, in order to better

express herself to the reader and in the moment, she relates how the scolding affected her internal connection.

As Prince closes her narrative, she asks a series of rhetorical questions in reflection on her time as a slave. Her efforts rile the reader and give them a charge to go forth from this story with abolition in mind. She writes:

How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? And are disgraced and thought nor more of than beasts?—and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner?—women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women and children are exposed alike. (287)

As with Douglass, the relationship between movement and happiness is critical to Prince. In the opening question here, the mental state is impeded by the physical state—not only by the pain but the restriction of movement.²⁹ As Prince progresses through her questions, she moves from comments about the movement performed on slaves to the movement performed by slaves, both equally arresting. In any case, whether being whipped or performing the horrible task of whipping loved ones, a negotiation with movement undoubtedly impacts emotion and the pursuit of happiness.

In contrast to Prince, Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is both expansive and reflective. Approaching this text through the lens of movement studies, I am inclined to focus on the chapters in which Jacobs is confined to the garret. Jacobs's life is an interesting contrast to the lives of Prince and Douglass, as she claims that she "had always been kindly treated, and tenderly cared for" until she became the property of Dr. Flint (568). Dr. Flint subjected her to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as his obsession with her became severe and gripping. In the garret, her restriction is the most literal of the other nineteenth-century texts

but somehow the farthest from the hand of the slaveholder. There is no doubt, however, that Dr. Flint and the system of slavery at large are to blame for the torture Jacobs endures in the garret. She resigned herself from one prison to another. Jacobs refers to her confinement in her chapter “The Loophole of Retreat,” telling us:

A small shed had been added to my grandmother’s house years ago. Some boards were laid across the joists at the top, and between these boards and the rood was a very small garret, never occupied by anything but rats and mice. It was a pent roof, covered with nothing but shingles, according to the southern custom for such buildings. The garret was only nine feet long and seven wide. The highest part was three feet high, and sloped down abruptly to the loose board floor. There was no admission for either light or air. (567)

Opening the chapter with a straightforward, claustrophobic description, makes us aware that space will affect Jacobs’s body. Jacobs endures this prison, however, on the small morsel of hearing and eventually seeing her children through a small hole. Reflecting on the conditions of the garret, she writes, “I suffered for air even more than for light. But I was not comfortless. I heard the voices of my children. There was joy and there was sadness in the sound. It made my tears flow” (568). Not only does she have a visceral and emotional reaction to the sound of her children, but it also provides her with the sustenance for life that her conditions cannot provide. In spite of hardly being able to breathe in the garret, Jacobs’s connection with her children helps her mind and body to survive.

When Jacobs sees her daughter the night before Ellen’s departure, the body is ever-present in their interaction: “I hugged her close to my throbbing heart; and tears, too sad for such young eyes to shed, flowed down her cheeks...” (597). Jacobs’s reflection calls attention to not only her own body, but her observance of it in Ellen. Jacobs describes her pain in a physical manner, though we understand her insinuation of emotional, mental pain. In observing her daughter, she focuses on her eyes—a body part—as affected by sadness, a mental or emotional

state. In focusing on her heart, and subsequently her daughter's eyes, the reader sees a correlation of metaphor making through body parts and consequently a connection between Jacobs and her daughter. Jacobs knows that her daughter is suffering from the same combination of mental and physical pain. This moment speaks to not only the bond between mother and daughter, or even solely between slaves, but rather between humans. In thinking about the connection between two suffering beings, Mary Prince says quite plainly, "In telling my own sorrows, I can not pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs"³⁰ (270). By resonating metaphors between herself and her daughter, Jacobs hints at the necessity of the body in connecting with others.

Jacobs eventually escapes from the garret and in her reflections upon leaving she writes, "But it is a fact; and to me a sad one, even now; for my body still suffers from the effects of that long imprisonment, to say nothing of my soul" (605). In this sentiment we find the impetus for narrative-making in all of these writers and activists. Their experiences have made an undying and lasting impression on the way they perceive the world. Just as Douglass dipped his pen in the ink well of his scars, Jacobs turns inward to a connected internal, to Hackney's "home," in order to express her experience. By adding "even now" to her comment, Jacobs sets herself temporally apart from her captivity and allows the reader to see how she carried her wounds across the years and to the page. This distance in time coupled with the precise commitment to explicating the horrors of slavery makes the presence of the body in contemporary texts all the more validating. That is, the contemporary authors I will examine take part in dipping their own pens in the ink-well of Douglass's *Narrative* and carry the suffering bodies of Jacobs and Prince into their own characters.

Chapter Three—"From our own lips": Embodiment and Narrative-making in Sherley Anne Williams's *Dessa Rose*

In many ways, the main character's journey in Sherley Anne Williams's 1986 novel *Dessa Rose* operates like Frederick Douglass's journey in his 1845 *Narrative*. Though the circumstances surrounding her rebellion and eventual escape differ greatly from Douglass's, the prototype of their transition to an embodied message is marked by a certain proclamation. In each case, the declaration is supported by the body and is closely tied to their drive to reclaim their own narratives. Dessa articulates her conversion much later in pagination than Douglass, though it serves a similar purpose. In the third section of the novel, "The Negress," the text is largely focalized and narrated through Dessa. She has begun to write her own narrative, one that will be of use to her children and grandchildren. As declarative as Douglass, Dessa tells the reader: "This is where I began another part of my education" (197). As readers of her narrative, we are now poised for insight, just as we were with Douglass's "you have seen how a man was made a slave..."³¹

The section that follows is critical to Dessa's development as a woman and as a freed person looking back on her experience. She says:

When I come to myself in that bed, I accepted that everyone I loved was gone. That life was dead to me; I'd held the wake for it in that cellar. Yet and still, I was alive. At first I couldn't put no dependence on what I was seeing—a *white* woman nursing a *negro*; negroes acting good as *free*. I wasn't even posed to be there. I didn't have no words to make sense of what my eyes was seeing, much less what I'd been doing. I was someone I

knowered and didn't know, living in a world I hadn't even knowed was out there. So that bed was a grave and birthing place to me. (197)

Several aspects of this passage are central to the conversations about Douglass's *Narrative* and about embodiment. We cannot ignore Dessa's construction of the first sentence here. The notion of coming to oneself resonates with Hackney's concept of home—the connected internal.

Though there is no overtly explicit mention of the physical body here, Dessa is demonstrating that she crafts her beliefs and her message from within. Dessa's "coming to [herself]" is similar to Douglass's "revived within me" as they both imply a certain interior awareness that embraces the body.

Also of interest in this passage is Dessa's explanation of perception. She "didn't have words to make sense of what [her] eyes was seeing." This mention of the eyes is central to Jeannine DeLombard's case concerning slaves being "eye-witness to the cruelty" (257).³² Dessa's comments here illuminate how the slave eyewitness and her own experiences are connected to the critical and most basic nature of the mind-body connection. The words reside in the mind, the impetus in the eyes, the body. It is through basic examples such as this that we can begin to see the pervasive nature of the body. Virtually all of our actions as human beings rely on the cooperation of the body. In the introduction to her book on race, gender, and politics in American literature for the years 1833-1879, Carolyn Sorisio asserts that she "[believes] our bodies influence us in both comprehensible and unknowable ways. Therefore it is important to make tentative leaps between what we can surmise about authors' embodied experiences and their representations of corporeality" (3). With Douglass's *Narrative* published in 1845, his embodied experiences clearly fit into the scope of Sorisio's study. In this introduction however, it seems that Sorisio is asking us to consider the influence of the body (and mind together, as I argue) beyond the date range covered in the book. As we examine the nature of the mind-body

connection found in these narratives, it is important to follow Sorisio's lead, taking the "tentative leap" to conclude that the text is indicative of a body power actually experienced. Nineteenth-century autobiographers such as Douglass can serve as a model for the embodied experience and narrative-making process that we see in contemporary characters like Dessa.

Also like Douglass, Dessa clearly possesses this internal support since the opening of the novel—rather, it does not bloom only in a moment of resurrection.³³ In the Author's Note, Sherley Anne Williams reveals that the inspiration for her book was historical—based on accounts of a slave woman from Kentucky and a white woman from North Carolina. She writes, "How sad, I thought then, that these two women never met" (5). Williams is not only imagining a possible history but giving the characters a chance to establish their own narratives within the text. The narratives are established through an intense focus on the development of interpersonal relationships. In the first section, "The Darky," Dessa's character development is predicated on her relationship with Adam Nehemiah. Considering the section with knowledge of the mind-body connection allows readers to better understand Dessa's perseverance in the face of opposition. Narrative-making (in many ways in the nineteenth-century sense) is at the forefront of her struggle. However, Williams constructs a world where we see both sides of the struggle—Dessa's drive to narrate, and her heavy-handed opposition. Allison E. Francis reminds us of many nineteenth-century African American female authors: "Even this new body of words, this 'new' nineteenth-century text they created, is still subject to sexual and editorial threats by its very public circulation in the literary marketplace, but these women exerted better control over its movement than they did their physical bodies" (79). It seems that Dessa does not have the luxury that these nineteenth-century female authors had. Her narrative under Nehemiah is not her own; it is recapitulated for his purpose. Likewise, she does not have freedom of movement in the

cellar, either. Thus, as a captive both physically and intellectually, Dessa must work to facilitate her message through any means possible while she is confined.

Unlike Douglass's *Narrative*, the first two sections of Dessa's story are dominated by skeptical or oppositional viewpoints. Enumerating Dessa's body power is necessary to understanding how the body operates outside of a self-referential context.³⁴ Set against the narrator (or editor in some respects) of Adam Nehemiah, we see Dessa's ability to understand nuanced communication vastly outshines his. His complicity in the system of slavery—the commodification and disembodiment of the body—excludes him from achieving this form of understanding and communication, despite his claims otherwise. Nehemiah's journal excerpts presume that he has a deeper understanding of his subject. This is particularly apparent in his comment that “Truly, the female of the species is as deadly as the male” (43). However, it is precisely this supposedly scientific lens that prevents him from relating to Dessa at all. As Carol E. Henderson articulates: “Willams's staging of Dessa's personal story as the countertext to Nehemiah's historically based narrative allows her to construct, for all intents and purposes, an authentic “speakerly” slave text within the framework of the novel, one that is centered around Dessa's body and voice” (68).³⁵ Henderson's choice of “authentic” is a reaction to the actions of Nehemiah and his historical predecessors. What is most important to Henderson's claim is the notion of “countertext” or contrast between the perspectives, and how it is reflected not only in the framework but the details of the novel.

This contrast is of critical importance during the interviews between Nehemiah and Dessa. In the passage that follows, Dessa, equipped with her body awareness, can read Nehemiah's behavior, creating contrast between his assumed ability to “know” her and her actual thoughts:

She had kept a careful expression on her face, now and then cutting her eyes at him to see if he required some response...once she had looked up and seen his face contorted with

the violence of some unexpressed feeling. She had shrunk from him, her chains clanking about her, and he had hit her in the face. She had not taken the full force of the blow; she had been warned by that one startling glance. Her nose has bled some and she now kept her face vacant (better to appear stupid than sassy); but her mind continued to roam. (56)

Clearly, this passage is not focalized through Nehemiah himself but rather through Dessa. This passage encompasses a complicated oscillation between interior and exterior, reflecting largely on the notion of body language. Dessa's meticulous awareness of the power of body language comes through in the connection between thought and bodily reaction. In this particular case, this attention allows her to be saved from some of the blow of Nehemiah's violence. Dessa gauges her own bodily response by his. This awareness is reminiscent of the moment in Douglass's *Narrative* when he feels Covey "tremble like a leaf" which in turn gives him the confidence to move forward. In the last sentence of the passage, we see the importance of Dessa's awareness. The parenthetical interruption of her free indirect discourse displays, on a sentence level, the oscillation between internal and external. Her ability to keep her face vacant though not offensive and let her mind wander keeps her from feeling the wrath of Nehemiah again.³⁶

Dessa's bodily awareness in the face of opposition suggests a certain kind of performance. Dessa *plays* one version of herself to Nehemiah and keeps her true sentiments concealed. A fully supported and connected internal is essential to performers of all kind. Dancers and actors, for example, undergo extensive training to keep themselves in tune with the ways their mind and body are speaking to one other. As Peggy Hackney reminds us, "Irmgard Bartenieff has said 'the whole body participates in any movement: different parts either serving as movers or supporters of movement'...By keeping this principle of Total Body Connectivity in mind, we can make a major difference in our training process for dancers and other skilled movers" (40-41). Often, the most successful performers are those that allow themselves to be fully embodied and sense

the actions of others. If we think of Dessa as a performer in this passage, she is still more successful than Nehemiah, who is bewildered and irrational in the face of her composure.³⁷

Nehemiah's denial of the body is complicated in several places by moments in which his instincts seem to reach out to Dessa. The clearest example of this occurs when he is conducting interviews with Dessa, and he "fancied he could smell her, not the rank feral stink of the cellar, but a pungent musky odor that reminded him of sun-warmed currants and freshly turned earth. His skin prickled and he shook himself, cursing" (39). This passage clearly demonstrates a mind-body connection in Nehemiah himself. His brain and physical senses are interacting in a way that causes him to enter sensory memory. As such, this moment suggests the core of the mind-body notion—it is inherent to human nature. As human beings, both Nehemiah and Covey possess a basic mind-body connection. However, in the moment that "he shook himself," Nehemiah denies the usefulness of that connection, thus precluding himself from harnessing the opportunities it provides.

A discussion of the mind-body connection and the "opposition"³⁸ harkens back to Audre Lorde's comment that "the master's tool will never dismantle the master's house" (qtd. in Cutter, 209). We all have minds and we all have bodies. However, it is precisely the condition of commodification and subjugation that produces an environment for these characters to embrace the power of both. As we have seen in Douglass, it is not only helpful to embrace the body, but absolutely necessary. It is the *way* these enslaved characters use "the tools" that dismantles the master's house.

Certain sections of the first chapter are focalized through Dessa rather than Nehemiah, almost as if a third person narrator were recording her thoughts. The "transcribed" passages of Dessa's narrative are equally as important as her interactions with Nehemiah. They allow us to

get to know bits of Dessa's story without reading it through Nehemiah's eyes. As Dessa's talking breaks, the narrator inserts, "[her] mouth filled with the remembered bitterness" (46). Because we can identify this narrator as inside of Dessa's head, we can assume that the body experience portrayed in the sentence is in fact Dessa's. This sentence explicates the relationship between memory and body for her. She has a present physical reaction to her mind's escape into the past.

In the same passage, Dessa and Kaine discuss going north:

"North" she whispered. She'd never heard anyone talk about *going* north. North has been no more to her than a dim shadowed land across a river, as mythic and mysterious as heaven: rest, when the body could bear no more. But, and she had understood this even as she breathed the word, if there was rest for the body, there must be peace for the heart. (47)

Though the majority of this passage is not presented with the first person pronoun, we must trust the internal focalization. In processing Dessa's memory, the narrator gives us a sense of her body awareness. The thought of going north is inexplicably tied to an awareness of how the conditions of the body would change—rest being the most important aspect. As in Douglass, this notion has an interesting paradox. Though Dessa is considered caught—still or restrained in her current state—she can only hope for the freedom to be still by her own volition. The other half of Dessa's thought on the North is "peace for the heart." While the "heart" also refers to the body, it is clear that the sentiment implies the inclusion of the mind.³⁹ Dessa understands the North as a place for recuperation of body and mind; she does so through "[breathing] the word." That is, the physical act of breathing helps her to completely commit to her sentiments about the North.

The narrator stays with Dessa for several pages, giving us more insight on the effects of memory on her present-day body. She sits across from Nehemiah, enveloped in thoughts of Kaine, and the "[memory] of that fierce loving, muffled by the dense blackness before dawn, flooded her, bringing quick heat to her face" (48). Just a few moments later, she is slammed back

into reality as “[she] opened her eyes wide against a rush of tears, conscious now of the white man, willing them not to fall, yet unable to halt the memory of Kaine’s voice bitter, beloved, and right...” (48). As we travel with the narrator through Dessa’s memory, we are constantly reminded that her memory affects her whole being, not just her psyche. The moments when her cheeks and tear ducts react to the thought of Kaine give us an uncomplicated and effective example of Dessa’s body connection. She is so lost in her memory that she has removed herself from the reality of Nehemiah’s questioning. However, she does not shed her body.

While she is remembering her time on the coffle, Dessa gives another important example of her body connection:

The pain and tiredness of her body numbed her mind; she was content to leave it that way. Even when others spoke around the campfire, during the days of their freedom, about their trials under slavery, Dessa was silent. Their telling awoke no echoes in her mind. That part of the past lay sealed in the scars between her thighs. (59-60)

Again, this passage gives us a clear sense of the connection between Dessa’s mental and physical trauma. Dessa’s comment that she was “content to leave it that way” reveals her body awareness. She wills herself not to speak to the others, hoping that because her wounds have healed, so will her emotions. As in Douglass’s *Narrative*, “talk among the slaves was discouraged” (59). Though Dessa seems to be following the rules by being silent, her silence also comes with a sense of rebellion. Her unwillingness to keep a still tongue (and bound behavior) is what got her sold away in the first place. By recognizing the numbing effect of her internal connection and staying silent on the coffle, she is defying what they expect of her. Her resistance to participating in the coffle culture of fireside talks is reminiscent of Douglass’s separation between form and fact. She tells herself that her trials under slavery, though made visible on her body, are no longer a part of her present identity.⁴⁰

Back in the cellar, Dessa wakes and hears “the people assembling for work, a mumbled word here, the chink of a hoe...A warbled call soared briefly above the dawn noise” (63). As she identifies the singers in the call and response by their tones,

On impulse, she moved to the window, her chain rattling behind her, and standing on tiptoe looked out. She could see nothing except the dusty yard that sloped away from the cellar, but she sang anyway, her raspy contralto gathering strength as her call unfolded... (64)

By giving us the aural cue of Dessa’s chain, Williams is reminding us of Dessa’s bondage. The image of Dessa rising on her toes to look out the window hints at her efforts to rise above her chains. Finally, as her voice gathers strength, Williams has given us a connection from Dessa’s mouth all the way to her toes. In this moment, Dessa is fully supported by her rising motion and her interest in connecting with her fellow slaves. She asks, “Tell me, oh, please tell me, / When I be free?” and they respond “Oh, it won’t be long” (64-5). Immediately, we get another signal to her body as “the words vibrated along her nerves” (65). When Dessa processes the thought of escape, her whole body responds. By lifting her body against the weight of her bondage to communicate with her fellow slaves, Dessa gets an ultimate reward: an escape plan. The role of body is two-fold in this case; the mind and body connected and supported her in her first efforts to communicate with those outside the cellar and then was also necessary in the concrete planning and execution of the escape. She and the other slaves needed to trust their intelligence to make a plan and trust their bodies to endure.⁴¹

Williams leaves the details of the escape to the imagination, but picks up the next section—“The Wench”—with Dessa struggling to recover from her journey.⁴² As she drifts in and out of a dream-like state marked by italicized passages, her body drives her communication, even though she is not yet fully lucid. Dessa reacts to her uncomfortable surroundings and screams for Harker and “the name she screamed was dredged up from a place she didn’t know

existed but she felt safety in the same and she screamed it again and again...” (81). The notion of dredging up this scream is indicative of a body connection. Because Dessa is still severely confused, the passage suggests that she did not willfully scream, but rather, her subconscious relied on her body to react to the uncomfortable situation. Much like the uncomfortable situation of the cellar, the time she spends recovering in Rufel’s house allows Dessa to mediate (intentionally or not) body-rich moments. Soon after the first screaming scene, Dessa drifts in and out of memories, and as she wakes she attempts to piece together her escape. She remembers:

They had walked for a long time...It had taken a while for her feet to remember the gliding shuffle that, slow as it appeared, ate up the ground...She learned quickly after the first few hours of hobbling along with the manacle rubbing her ankle raw...Her feet were remembering: The muscles of her calves and thighs protested some and it took all of her concentration to keep their protests from drowning out the remembrance of her feet. She didn’t speak. She didn’t think either. She was free; maybe not as free as she would ever be but she knew, she was now striding, sometimes stumbling toward a place she’d never seen and didn’t know one word about. (87)

We find the body connection here in both the idea of muscle memory and in the power of Dessa’s concentration. Her body remembers the movement, the strain of walking long hours, and her brain wills her limbs to move past the pain. Because Dessa “didn’t think” when she was “drowning out the remembrance of her feet,” I am inclined to return to Peggy Hackney’s idea of “home”—or the connected internal. By concentrating but not thinking, Dessa relinquishes her success to an intimate consciousness that Dessa is tapped into. We know she trusts this force with her freedom because she allows it to teach her about something “she’d never seen and didn’t know one word about.”

Though we have seen examples of Dessa’s body connection earlier in the novel, there is a way that she allows it to flourish in this moment. Out from under the harsh eye of Nehemiah and her captors, Dessa connects with the concept of freedom through movement. Though making

a narrative becomes an important part of Dessa's freedom later on, she begins the process not with words but with muscle memory. The moment at the end of the passage when Dessa strides and stumbles toward freedom begins her process of reappropriating and reexamining her body.

Dessa's understanding of her body in freedom is both encouraged and complicated by the awkward space that Rufel occupies. Because Rufel's farm is under the radar, Dessa and the others are able to recover freely without the impending danger of being recaptured. However, the intimate space that Dessa and Rufel share is difficult to get used to. Dessa and Rufel hold racial prejudices against one another, though they share the same bed and Rufel nurses Dessa's newborn child. Because they share this strange bodily connection, Dessa not only is learning about body function in freedom, but doing so in close relationship to body function of a white woman. As she wakes next to Rufel:

She almost suffocated in her terror for she knew the white woman held her and they were together in the big feather bed. And, really, it was the white woman's breathing that saved her, brought her to her senses; its calm regularity imposing order on her own wildly beating heart. That breathing, punctuated by a drawn-out sigh of utter satisfaction and the small fragile bundle that nestled at her spine. (114)

In Bartenieff fundamentals, breath is considered the first pattern of movement. Peggy Hackney considers it "the key to life, movement and rhythm" (51). Dessa's admission that Rufel's breath brings her to her senses is subtle, but essential to the development of their relationship. Instances of major confrontation overshadow moments like this, just as with movement, large movement can often overshadow the necessity to tune into breath. Peggy Hackney also observes "[conscious] cultivation of breath is recognized in many cultures to be an important part of attuning to a spiritual connection between the individual and the universe" (52). As Dessa keys into Rufel's breathing, she goes from suffocation to calming her heart. At first, Dessa's suffocation is imposed by the terror of knowing that Rufel is there with her. By rejecting her own

breathing process, Dessa is prohibiting herself from connecting with the environment in the bedroom. However, once she allows Rufel's respiration to calm her, she adjusts to her surroundings. Hackney also argues "[healing] of the Body-Mind is directly connected with restoring full functioning respiration" (52). Thus, as Dessa lets go of the terror and allows Rufel's breathing to influence her own bodily function, she encourages her healing process. We know by the end of the novel that Rufel and Dessa have had a profound effect on each other's healing, despite their initial resistance. Scenes such as this are indicative of how essential mody is in the formation of relationships and development of effective communication.

In Douglass's *Narrative*, his body is still subject to being read once he gets to the North. Dessa never reaches the North, though her body is still subject to being "read" by those both for and against her cause. This is most evident in the meditation on Dessa's scars. Scarring has played a large role in the context of narrative-making—both for those bearing the scars and for those viewing them. Kristine Holmes reflects on the questions that face all of us as we read these characters: "Is her body another voice? Does it cry, does it bear witness, does it suffer in silence? Or is it a slate to be inscribed by the slaveholder's whip, later to be decoded by lovers, daughters, and other readers?" (133).⁴³ Dessa's scars are "read" by both sexes in the novel—Nehemiah, Harker, Aunt Chole, and in an intimate moment, Rufel. In many ways, the scene in which Rufel sees Dessa's scars demonstrates how the mody becomes a connecting tool for these two women. After opening the door and seeing Dessa, Rufel "barely [manages] to suppress the quick gasp of sympathy surprised from her by that glimpse of the dark body..." (154). Immediately, we see that Rufel has a visceral reaction, much like Dessa did when she found Rufel nursing her baby, and a "scream rushed out of her on an explosion of breath. She saw the glass-colored eyes buck before her own squeezed tight. The covers weighed her arms and legs..." (89). As we will see

with Rufel, Dessa's body immediately experiences the same confusion that her mind does. What follows Rufel's visceral reaction allows these characters to connect: "Rufel leaned weakly against the door, regretting what she had seen. The wench had a right to hide her scars, her pain, Rufel thought, almost in tears herself" (154). We can imagine that by "reading" Dessa's scars, Rufel has imagined how that pain may have been inflicted on her own body.⁴⁴ Immediately after, Rufel opens the bedroom door, and "sensed the smoldering hostility beneath the girl's obvious embarrassment" (154). For all intents and purposes, outward embarrassment is a manifestation of the mind-body connection and here, Rufel has not only momentarily imagined Dessa's physical pain but is also now attuned to Dessa's body language. In a discussion of images from the nineteenth-century of scarred slaves, Jennifer Putzi notes that:

Gordon fascinates audiences because [his] liminality is inscribed on [his body]. Although the dominant culture attempts (sometimes quite successfully) to dictate the ways in which these marks are read, the scar and the tattoo contain the potential for multiple meanings depending on the observer's individual politics, prejudices and personality. (100)

The idea of multiple meanings in these scars seems particularly applicable to *Dessa Rose*, as Dessa's scars mean something different to each person who "reads" them. For Rufel, they serve as a way to call on her own mind-body connection, to understand the process of trauma and recovery.

It seems obvious that through the act of being scarred, these slave bodies are turned into "texts" that can be further handled and violated by their onlookers. In many ways, the argument of body as text is plausible precisely because of the mind-body connection. Dessa does not choose (nor any other slave) to have these scars, though they have permanently become part of her life's story, a physical reminder of her mental and physical anguish. In this moment we must turn to Deborah McDowell's distinction that these novels dramatize "not what was *done* to slave

women, but what they *did* with what was done to them”(146). As we have seen here with Rufel (and at another point in the intimate scene with Harker), Dessa is still embarrassed by her scars. She is still negotiating how they may be read. Thus, by allowing her to be embarrassed, the mody is putting forth the message that Dessa is still healing.⁴⁵

The scene between Rufel and Dessa is largely a demonstration of Rufel’s mind-body connection, as much as it is an example of Dessa’s. This scene differs quite a lot from those with Nehemiah, whose position precludes him from acknowledging the mody and thus squashes his chances to connect to Dessa. Here, Rufel is open to discovering something about these human beings, and thus is able to help negotiate Dessa’s healing and eventually become part of Dessa’s story.

In the last paragraph of the novel, Dessa tells us that she has “met some good white men...But none the equal of Ruth...” and that she “will never forget Nemi trying to read [her] knowing [she] had put [herself] in his hands” (236). In these final lines, there is a way that the creation of this story has depended on the mind-body connection. Ruth, who has recognized the power of both Dessa’s mind and body, will stay forever with Dessa; Nehemiah’s story must go. When looking to the future, Dessa corrects Nehemiah’s efforts as she specifies, “Well, *this* the children’s have heard from our own lips” (236). The survival of the history depends on her lips. Though the children are writing the story down for Dessa and thus will be reading off a page in the future, there is a sense that they will still be hearing *her voice*. The survival of her story depends on the strength and power of the mody showing through and carrying on.

As we have seen in Douglass and *Dessa Rose*, the conversation about the mind-body connection is essential to the discussion of this literature. These characters are utilizing a basic human trait that allows them not only to cope with or escape their conditions, but to connect and

communicate with a world that seeks to make them alien. What we have seen so far (and what we will continue to see) forces me to undermine Mark McWilliams's suggestion that the conversation about psychosomatics should be finished. Utilizing movement theory combines the psychological thread with McWilliams's concerns about the "the other," taking contemporary critical discussion of these texts deeper than the exterior visual markers, and beginning to unpack how these characters function in spite of them.

Chapter Four—“The rest of what her heart had to say”: Mody Inheritance in *Beloved*

In her 1992 article concerned with the role of Baby Suggs in *Beloved*, Linda Krumholz argues: “Morrison points the way to a reconstruction of history, both national and personal, to combat the persistent intellectual and spiritual oppression of African-Americans and other Americans and bring about a freedom of the heart and imagination, as Baby Suggs dreamed” (405). This argument is included in the conclusion of her article and gets at some of the most important aspects of the role of the mody in *Beloved*. Throughout this novel, Morrison negotiates the space between cultural and intimate (or “national and personal”) pain experienced during slavery. The mody, too, negotiates the space between universal and intimate. The mind-body connection is, at its most basic, an indiscriminate human trait. It is also (as discussed in previous chapters) an intensely personal power—something that must be engaged by an individual in order to harness the full potential.

Krumholz also points to Baby Suggs as a key player in the “freedom of heart and imagination” that this novel searches for; she is perhaps the most crucial character to my cause. Morrison features the mody prominently as a part of Baby’s experience of freedom. As she is being taken to freedom, she asks herself: “What for? What does a sixty-odd-year-old slavewoman who walks like a three-legged dog need freedom for?”⁴⁶ The narrator answers:

And when she stepped foot on free ground she could not believe that Halle knew what she didn’t; that Halle, who had never drawn one free breath, knew that there was nothing like it in the world. It scared her.

Something's the matter. What's the matter? What's the matter? she asked herself. She didn't know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, "These hands belong to me. These *my* hands. Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along? This pounding thing? She felt like a fool and began to laugh out loud...

She couldn't stop laughing. "My heart's beating," she said.
And it was true. (166)

Baby Suggs's immediate change of demeanor suggests the power that her new situation has over her. Morrison not only tells us what Baby Suggs is thinking, but how her body is affected. This scene does more than mention the body and mind together; it directly relates her functions to her concept of her self, her ownership over her hands, heart, and thoughts. Morrison allows her to say "*my* hands" and "my heart's beating." Immediate discovery of owning (rather than being owned) puts her in a key position to begin her healing process. Baby Suggs is learning what it means to have a free body; this renegotiation is essential to her story of her freedom and her role in the novel.

The passage begins by clearing echoing between Frederick Douglass and Halle. By telling us that though Halle had never been free, he "knew that there was nothing like it in this world," we are reminded of Douglass's separation in form and fact. Like Douglass, Halle is able to separate himself from the system of slavery enough to feel freedom. The notion that Halle knows freedom does not get expounded, but having read Douglass, we can infer that Halle must have had similar thoughts and experiences. Morrison appropriately uses "breath" in the discussion of Halle, as it is the first, most basic pattern of connectivity—allowing the internal and external to be integrated.⁴⁷ As we recall from the discussion of Dessa's breathing, Hackney asserts that "[healing] of the Body-Mind is directly connected with restoring full functioning respiration" (52). Morrison begins Baby's healing properly by placing breath so early in her experience of freedom. Though Halle is not allowed the ease of connecting to the free world

through breath, he uses his mind to project what that may feel like. He can imagine it well enough to give his mother the opportunity over his own. By planting the concept of “free breath” and going on to show Baby’s ownership of herself, Morrison starts Baby Suggs from the beginning. Once Baby Suggs grasps the first, life-giving pattern of connectivity, she can then learn the expressive power of her heart and hands.

The inclusion of Halle in Baby Suggs’s freedom experience allows mody awareness to take on a familial aspect. Halle shares his affinity for mody awareness with his mother. The sense of sharing appears also as Sethe remembers her arrival to 124. She arrived at the house:

and felt for the first time the wide arms of her mother-in-law who had made it to Cincinnati. Who decided that, because slave life had “busted her legs, back, head, eyes, kidneys, womb and tongue,” she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart—which she put to work at once. (102)

The proximity of Sethe’s hug to the explanation of Baby’s mody suggests that Sethe could feel Baby’s exquisite heart when she entered those wide arms. The sentences suggest that transference of mody awareness takes place in that hug—that Sethe, like Baby, will begin to realize the importance of her own beating heart.⁴⁸ The narration of Sethe’s arrival slides easily from Sethe to Baby Suggs, catching the reader off guard. Before we know it, Sethe’s arrival has turned into an explanation of Baby’s preaching in the Clearing.

From beginning to end, the scene in the Clearing is perhaps the most sustained embrace of mody awareness in the novel. As Linda Krumholz notes, “Baby Suggs creates a ritual, out of her own heart and imagination, to heal former slaves and enable them to seek a reconciliation with their memories, whose scars survive long (even generations) after the experience of slavery”(397). This “ritual” is an exercise in turning inward to find Hackney’s “home,” to find the internal connection that will aid this community in healing. The ritual is frenzied as:

Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart. (103)

All of the participants take part in a series of actions that get their minds and bodies involved together. They are able to use and feel with their whole modies as they dance, cry, and laugh.

Once the movement aspect of the exercise has been completed, Baby Suggs begins to instruct the community in the Clearing, in a way debriefing them from their present experience as well as their experience in captivity. In *Laban for All*, Newlove and Dalby claim:

Bodily movement can be very helpful in freeing the voice from unnecessary tensions, after which the body needs to be comparatively still in order to let the voice move...However, in its 'stillness' the body must in no way be fixed; it is a breathing, flexible stillness where certain muscles need to be used and others not. (173)

As apparent in the Clearing, Baby Suggs is attuned to the fact that moving first will help her guide the others through their healing. Baby Suggs and the others get in touch with what it feels like for their modies to move, allowing them to find freedom of movement even in the "stillness" of exhaustion. The exhaustion that Baby Suggs induces is decidedly different from the exhaustion they experienced as slaves. As Baby Suggs begins her speech, she knows that the commitment to movement will not only free her voice but also help the participants connect with her words:

...in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they's just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! Love them...(103)

Baby Suggs continues her speech well into the next page, moving through several other body parts. By referencing each body part in relationship to its abuse, Baby Suggs points out the necessity to renegotiate the mody in freedom. As she learned when she reached Cincinnati, she

had a new perspective on her own basic functions. In her article on rituals that reclaim the body (or mody) Carol E. Henderson remarks that “the fixing ‘ceremonies’ in the Clearing did more than provide space for collective exhortations; they allowed formerly enslaved persons the opportunity to reclaim themselves ‘bit by bit’ in a gesture of self-reflexivity” (154). Without using the terms, much of what Henderson points out is a conversation of mody awareness. Henderson’s point connects this scene to Baby Suggs’s use of *my* when she reaches freedom. The renegotiation of the mody in freedom is inherently coupled with the reclaiming of the mody. The self-reflexivity that Henderson names begets full embodiment. These characters learn what it means to be free because they turn inward and stake ownership in their whole being. Much of what Baby Suggs does here is also related to the concept of critical literacy, to “reading the world.” By identifying with the trauma of the community, Baby Suggs is reading her world in order to renegotiate the histories and the futures of her loved ones, friends, and neighbors.

At the end of her speech, “[Baby] stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say...”(104). This last action by Baby both continues her instruction and consummates the expression of her mody.⁴⁹ She is replacing her words with movement because she knows that her message will reach the other participants. By including her twisted hip, Morrison is making reference to Baby loving her body despite its imperfections. Baby Suggs’s concern for others is reminiscent of Mary Prince’s comment that “In telling my own sorrows, I can not pass by those of my fellow-slaves—for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs”⁵⁰ (270). By dancing with her twisted hip, Baby Suggs is telling the sorrows of her own body and the sorrows of the other bodies in the Clearing. There is hope in this passage that the others present will learn from Baby’s examples, that they will love their bodies by learning their

full potential for a positive embodiment—including clear and effective communication with others.

Henderson continues to align with total connectivity when she discusses the instruction that Baby Suggs provides in the Clearing:

In re-membering the body one part at a time, Baby Suggs calls forth a complete being that counters the dismembered self created in chattel bondage. In this way, she creates a shared experience for the healing of personal pain, whether self-inflicted or genealogically begotten. (158)

Henderson points directly to the body by referencing a “complete being,” and she also makes use of the balance between individual and community. When the bodies are exhausted in the Clearing, the narrator refers to “all and each.” What happens in the Clearing is experienced by the community but must also rely on the individual. As humans with varying physiological and psychological compositions, each of these characters experienced slavery in their own way, making the healing process deeply personal. Baby’s ritual in the Clearing reminds us that:

We want to communicate who we are and what we stand for in action, so that our message reaches out to others... This ability to make connections, to create relationships, is a skill which begins “at home,” within our own bodies. (Hackney vii)

The men and women participating in the Clearing ritual want to create relationships, connect to Baby Suggs and each other as a mode of healing.

Henderson’s assertion that pain can be genealogically begotten gestures toward the suffering (not just the healing) we see passed through this family in the course of the novel. The negotiation of family in *Beloved* is not only important but also continually complicated. The genealogical pain most easily pointed to is the relationship between Sethe and Beloved, and by circumstance, Denver. As we have seen, Sethe is unable to heal the way Baby Suggs did. The morning after Paul D arrives, the narrator spends some time inside of Sethe’s head, revealing to us that: “... all her effort was directed not on avoiding pain but on getting through it as quickly

as possible.” Lying next to Paul D she asks, “Would it be alright to go ahead and feel?” (46). We are reminded in the scene that Sethe has been rushing through her pain and prohibiting her feelings for eighteen years. Placing these thoughts next to Baby Suggs in the Clearing creates a stark contrast between the ways the two women operate. When we see Baby’s healing process fully, we are forced to question the narrator’s explanation of Sethe’s pain. Baby Suggs spends time on the torture in each body part and then spends time healing it. By keeping herself from feeling during the last eighteen years, Sethe is unable to turn inward and face the mody trauma she has sustained. Without turning inward, without feeling, she is unable to tap into the connected internal, the “home,” that will help her find her identity as a free person. The schism in her recovery process is transferred both back a generation and forward a generation. Sethe’s incomplete healing leaves Baby Suggs compromised at the end of her life, unwilling and unable to move. Baby Suggs was “Suspended between the nastiness of life and the meanness of the dead, she couldn’t get interested in leaving life or living it...” (4). Sethe’s inability to turn inward as Baby Suggs had corrupts the notion of the hug and mody inheritance that takes place when Sethe arrives at 124.

In bed with Paul D, “[Sethe] couldn’t think clearly, lying next to him listening to his breathing, so carefully, carefully, she had left the bed” (46). This scene is reminiscent of Dessa and Rufel in bed in *Dessa Rose*.⁵¹ While Dessa is calmed by Rufel’s breathing (a hint that Dessa is allowing herself to connect with Rufel), Sethe is distracted and upset by breath. Paul D himself has trouble staying open and connected, with a “tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be. Its lid rusted shut” (86). Morrison’s choice of this image firmly places him opposite Baby Suggs and her big open heart. Paul D no longer even allows himself to have a heart, and the object that keeps the contents of his heart is closed for good. We can see from these passages

that Sethe and Paul D find themselves aligned, closed off from the past and the pain they have felt. Citing the same image of the tobacco tin, Krumholz argues that “Baby Suggs is already dead when the novel begins, but her ritual in the Clearing is a model of the process of healing that Paul D and Sethe must undergo to free their hearts from the pain and shame of the past” (400). The model Krumholz writes about is based on body awareness and the ability to communicate. The events of this novel hit a stumbling block when we realize that Sethe and Paul D are unwilling and unable to express their emotional baggage. The reader knows healing because of the Clearing, and Sethe and Paul D are placed firmly in opposition to the image of Baby Suggs’s legacy.

The “pain and shame” Sethe must combat is that which she bestows genealogically—the infanticide of Beloved. The discussion of Sethe’s pain and shame points us directly to the materialization of Beloved. Beloved’s role is disturbingly complicated. As Krumholz declares, “Beloved is both the pain and the cure” (400). Before and during Beloved’s appearance, Sethe is overcome with guilt. She attempts to rectify her guilt by refusing to separate herself from Beloved (both her memory and then her being); Beloved’s pain is her pain. Her guilt is evident in the way Beloved’s ghost reigns over the house, and when Beloved arrives, “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes” (68). They share pain in the Clearing when Beloved chokes Sethe, inflicting pain on her neck, the same as the site of Beloved’s deadly wound.

The narrator describes Sethe’s brain as “loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day” (83). The hunger in Sethe’s brain is not unlike the hunger Beloved displays, eating them out of house and home. Denver tells us “it was Beloved who made the demands. Anything she wanted she got, and when Sethe ran out of things

to give her, Beloved invented desire” (283). Sethe is willing to forego her own human needs for Beloved’s as:

Denver watched her mother go without—pick-eating around the edges of the table and stove: the hominy that stuck on the bottom; the crusts and rinds and peelings of things. Once she saw her run her longest finger deep in an empty jam jar before rinsing and putting it away...Denver saw the flesh between her mother’s forefinger and thumb fade. Saw Sethe’s eyes bright by dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about Beloved...(285).

The collapse of Sethe and Beloved signals the unhealthy atmosphere, the ruining of the principles of the Clearing. Beloved’s presence shows that Sethe’s body is deprived because of the avoidance in her mind. Beloved had to appear in the novel, become a caustic physical presence, to demonstrate the damage Sethe (and Paul D) were doing to their bodies. This development exemplifies the place of the body in making metaphor. As we have seen throughout these five texts, authors are again and again turning to an appropriate conflation of the mind and body in order to most accurately and effectively portray the states of their characters. Like these characters, non-fiction or fiction, readers too possess the human traits of intimate consciousness and total connectivity. Morrison makes those metaphors not only on the sentence level (as with Paul D’s heart) but also in the bigger picture—the physical destruction that permeates this novel is a symptom of the minds of these characters.

Sethe runs into trouble in her healing process when she is unable to separate herself from Beloved. Despite the body’s universal qualities, total consumption with someone else is not a behavior it affords. As Paul D reflects on Sethe’s changes, he tells us “this here new Sethe didn’t know where the world stopped and she began” (193). Though Hackney and other movement analysts speak about the integration of internal and external, close attention must be paid to the limits of both. Sethe’s condition is the antithesis of critical literacy; she is unable to read the world because her world is clouded and damaged. Paul D’s comment is reinforced shortly

thereafter, in a chapter largely recognized as Sethe's monologue. She begins by staking her ownership, her motherhood of Beloved: "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine." Her sentiments deepen when she reflects on the circumstances of her escape. Sethe calls Beloved "the one I managed to have milk for and to get it to her even after they stole it..." (237). By recalling Sethe's anxiety over her body's ability to provide milk for her child, we can begin to understand the motive behind her current sacrifice to feed Beloved. Sethe is attempting to return to the mody she possessed before Beloved was killed. However, Sethe is no longer a nursing mother; her body and mind have changed significantly since Beloved's death. Sethe's mody is invoked again when she addresses Beloved: "I would have known at once when my water broke. The minute I saw you sitting on the stump, it broke" (239). This is an odd comment given that Sethe is not pregnant when Beloved appears. However, her pelvis responds to the presence of Beloved before her. This response signals that Sethe (like all humans) has a mody connection. However, Sethe's focus stays on Beloved. She relives the moment when labor begins, the moment when she gives herself wholly over to Beloved. In order for Sethe to recover, she must recognize her mody as separate from Beloved's, a strong and capable entity on its own.

Like Sethe, Denver has a monologue in which she discusses Beloved's role in the current situation. She begins: "Beloved is my sister" (242). Unlike Sethe's opening, Denver does not repeat the phrase, does not push the boundaries of herself and Beloved. As Denver's monologue develops, we see her skepticism of Beloved and Sethe both. In the first page, she says: "I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I'm scared of her because of it" (242). Soon after her skepticism of her mother, Denver turns to Beloved. She says: "Don't love her too much. Don't." Before long, Grandma Baby becomes an important part of Denver's thoughts. She says that the "only place [Beloved] can't get to [her] in

the night is Grandma Baby's room" (244). Baby Suggs and Beloved have opposite effects on these characters. Because Denver anchors herself in Baby Suggs's refuge, we have a clue that she will find a different path than Sethe. Though Baby Suggs is dead, she still upholds a model of healing; Denver's comments remind us that she is still present:

Grandma Baby said people look down on her because she had eight children with different men...Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that...She said for me not to listen to all that. That I should listen to my body and love it. (247)

When it seems that Baby Suggs has dropped out of the novel and 124, she returns as an instructor or guide. Before she died and still, she is intent on passing on body awareness to future generations. By working to help others heal themselves through a connected internal, Baby Suggs becomes the key to body success in this novel.⁵² If, as Henderson argues, pain can be genealogically begotten, so too can healing.

Denver's body strengths are apparent at critical places earlier in the text. In the first section, we come to know Denver through the story of her birth. As Kristine Holmes points out in her article on embodiment in this novel, Denver expects the story of her birth to be a communal event, she expects Sethe to be committed to participating in the telling. However, she must take over the story herself:

Easily she stepped into the told story that lay before her eyes on the path she followed away from the window...And to get to the part she liked best, she had to start way back: hear the thick woods, the crunch of the leaves underfoot...(36)

Like Dessa, "[Denver] must experience [the story] corporeally, must walk in the place of the story, in order to feel the pleasure it gives" (Holmes 141). With this description, we see Denver's affinity toward body awareness; she goes beyond the body coordination that hearing requires and allows the rest of her corporeal being to be involved. In this way, she actively seeks to feel the past—something Sethe resists.

Returning to her monologue, Denver comments that she “[had] to read faces and learn how to figure out what people were thinking, so [she] didn’t need to hear what they said” (243). This immediately brings to mind Dessa’s ability to gauge Nehemiah in the cellar interviews.⁵³ Denver’s understanding of body language and embodiment makes her a prime candidate to carry on Baby Suggs’ healing powers. Amidst this, we must note that Denver’s chapter takes an interesting turn. She says “that what [Grandma Baby] thought about what the heart and the body could do was wrong” (247). With Grandma Baby gone, all Denver has is Sethe who is amassing more grief by the day. It seems as though Denver is looking for an explanation of Grandma Baby’s death, and her fallibility is an easy target for a child. At the end of the chapter, Denver resembles her mother, saying: “She’s mine, Beloved. She’s mine” (247).⁵⁴ Soon after this, the three voices collapse into one another, and the narration shifts into a poem closing with “You are mine / You are mine / You are mine” (256).⁵⁵ It seems as though these passages would hinder Denver’s ability to separate herself from Beloved and Sethe and to turn the course of events in the novel. However, regardless of her consumption by the situation, Denver is armed with the wisdom Baby Suggs instilled in her.

Despite the collapse of these characters, in the final chapters Denver is able to remain an observer in the deteriorating relationship of Beloved and Sethe. Though she is affected by the circumstances, she stays on the edges—always watching her mother. The narrator says: “as Denver’s outside life improved, her home life deteriorated” (294). The fact that Denver *has* an outside life stands alone. From there, the narrator continues to focalize through her, relaying to us what Denver sees. As the relationship between Sethe and Beloved reaches its peak of destruction, Denver “came to realize that her presence in that house has no influence on what either woman did. She kept them alive and they ignored her” (296). By realizing that she is not

caught up in the other two characters, she finds strength through her mody. Unable to coexist with her mother and sister, she realizes that “somebody had to be saved, but unless Denver got to work, there would be not one to save, no one to come home to, and no Denver either. It was a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve” (297). This mature statement signals that Denver understands that not saving her family will lead to the destruction of self. Like Baby Suggs (but unlike Sethe), Denver displays a sense of critical literacy. She is able to read her world and understand her place in that world, knowing that she must act in order to change the path of their lives. This balance that Denver finds places her directly in the lineage of Baby Suggs as an inheritor of mody awareness and the magic of the Clearing.

In the end, Denver is the key to her mother’s survival. As her life outside of 124 grows, Denver is able to forge connections with the community. When Ella gets word of what is going on, she draws on the roots of the neighborhood for help. When the women arrive at 124 to save Sethe, “all thirty... the first thing they saw was not Denver sitting on the steps, but themselves. Younger, stronger, and even as little girls lying in the grass asleep” (304). These women find new strength in the process of collaborating; they cast themselves back into a happier time when “Baby Suggs laughed and skipped among them, urging more” (304). The invocation of Baby Suggs is absolutely crucial here. The narrator again refers to the space as “Baby Suggs’ yard,” forcing the reader to feel Baby Suggs presiding over the events. Finally, as Sethe steps outside to see the crowd,

...it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and shimmering leaves where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash. (308)

This scene brings Sethe full circle, back to the wide arms of Baby Suggs and back to the Clearing. As expected in the Clearing, there is a profound sense of mody in this passage, both for Sethe and for the women. The women incite Sethe's mody awareness with their singing. Like Douglass, Dessa, and Baby Suggs, they rely on the cooperation of their minds and bodies to find their voices. As they search for "the key, the code," I cannot help but think of the connected internal, the key that Baby Suggs passed on to them and to Denver, and the key that saves Sethe. By relying on their voices and on each other, their message can effectively reach Sethe. Sethe's physical reaction to their song suggests that she is finally allowing her mody its due attention. The inclusion of baptism brings positive light to what Sethe is experiencing; there is a promise of renewal and support.⁵⁶

When the scene comes to a head, Sethe is overwhelmed by the women and shaken to the core by the image of the white man in the carriage. Her instinct when "she flies" is to protect herself or her child from the white man. However, she finds herself "running into the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving Beloved behind" and "Denver, running too. Away from [Beloved] to the pile of people out there. They make a hill. A hill of black people, falling" (309). We see that Sethe and Denver both are running toward their community. The image of the hill gives all of the women—Sethe and Denver now included—a sense of solidarity; Sethe and Denver have effectively re-entered the community. The notion of these bodies falling together echoes the original scene in the Clearing as the people exhausted themselves through expression.

An essential part of the first Clearing scene is Baby Suggs's guided visualization of each body part that rests on a complete being. When Paul D finds Sethe after the reprise of the Clearing, Sethe tells herself that there is nothing left of her for Paul D to care for. However, she thinks of "her face, then her hands, her thighs, her feet, her back... her exhausted breasts" (321).

In the same way that Baby Suggs guided people through regional attention to reach total connectivity, Sethe finds herself by thinking of each part of her body. It is after she lists these bodily elements that she is able to say “Me? Me?” (322). Her assertion of the personal pronoun is reminiscent of Baby Suggs saying “*my hands*” and “*my heart is beating.*” The reenactment of the Clearing allows for Sethe’s full interaction with her community and full connectivity for her self. It is as if Baby Suggs has returned to place Sethe and Denver where they need to be in order to heal. Perhaps ironically, as her community envelops her, Sethe is able to find her body. It is this negotiation of individual and group that Baby Suggs promotes and passes on.

The epilogue cautions against passing on, repeating the phrase “not a story to pass on” (323,324) three times when discussing what became of the community after *Beloved*. The sentences are ambiguous, beginning first with “It was...” and adjusting to “This is...” Part of the appeal of these sentences is that the reader is left to fill in the specifics of what exactly we should not pass on. In an interview, Morrison said: “in African folktale, the people often say, “You end it,” “What do you think?” It’s a more communal response” (Brown 464). Angeletta Gourdine claims: “the narrative that constantly folds into and onto itself, requires the reader to do the same. At critical moments, the reader is drawn into the telling of the story, implicated in the narrative itself, and called to self-reflection” (15). Pairing these two comments brings back to light the negotiation of individual and community at stake here. By asking us what we think, the ambiguous statements in the epilogue fold the reader into the community of the novel, and force us to tap into our connected internal to find the answers. This communal yet self-reflective move suggests Morrison as a Baby Suggs figure for the reader, trusting that our participation will rely on an honest awareness of our own bodies.

Conclusion

Each text discussed here contains endless examples of the mody in specific terms. We find it in the authors' language, rhetoric, and metaphor and in the characters' visceral and psychosomatic reactions. From this specificity, the mody centers itself on a certain mission for each text. As discussed in Chapter 2, when Frederick Douglass rises from "the tomb of slavery to the heaven of freedom," the mody comes forward as an essential mechanism in the separation of the self from the system of slavery. This coping mechanism appears again and again in the other texts, providing a base from which these characters progress. Douglass moves on from his past as a slave and harnesses his mody awareness to support and sustain his message on the abolitionist lecture circuit. Harriet Jacobs and Mary Prince offer other early examples of mody-rich moments, both in connecting with other humans and in reference to their own coping and healing.

In *Dessa Rose*, Sherley Anne Williams takes the work Douglass has done and reflects it in a female character. Dessa relies heavily on her mody awareness while she is in captivity. Once Dessa is free to assert ownership of her mody, it becomes an integral force in allowing her relationship with Rufel to form, as well as her project of making her own narrative. Williams, and therefore Dessa, build on the standards of connectivity that Douglass has set. While Dessa shows many similarities to Douglass in her captivity and her impulse to make narrative, Williams allows the mody both to inform and to permeate all other aspects of Dessa's life. With

a female main character, Williams uses the building blocks of Douglass's body awareness to round out Dessa's role as a wife, mother, and lover. Williams also uses those building blocks to shape Dessa's friendship with Rufel, relying on principles of connectivity for the relationship to establish and sustain itself. A fully realized, fully described friendship is missing from Douglass's *Narrative*, though Dessa and Rufel are indebted to the crucial body awareness Douglass established.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, we see echoes of Douglass not in the memories of captivity—of Sweet Home, but in the premium placed on Baby Suggs's message. Her body knowledge is presented as a genealogical replacement to the suffering of slavery. Baby Suggs preaches about loving the body the same way that Douglass lectures about abolition—from a position of full, positive embodiment. Body awareness endures the weight of a critical metaphor, however, as we see Sethe and Denver crumbling under the painful reminder of *Beloved*. Morrison turns to the tradition of communities to help heal this suffering. Similarly, true and full embodiment must integrate and connect the internal and external in order to be successful. Because the body is able to negotiate the space between community and individual, so too can Morrison's characters and metaphors.

In her book *The Embodied Self*, Katya Bloom claims that “the more a therapist is anchored in his body, aware of sensations and feelings, the breathing, the relationship between time and space, the more likely he may be to consciously introject patients' anxiety rather than react to it” (66). Bloom's comments about therapist and patient are applicable here to author and subject. Searching for the “author-therapist” in Douglass, Jacobs, and Prince might lead us into a complex debate in narrative theory. However, I posit very simply that the influence of these autobiographers allowed later fiction writers to assume the role of “author-therapist” to their

subjects. That is, Douglass and other non-fiction nineteenth-century slave narratives taught Williams and Morrison (among others) how to be “anchored in [their] bodies,” how to better connect with their characters’ (patients’) anxieties. We must return, then, to Henry Louis Gates’s comment that “the narratives of ex-slaves are, for the literary critic, the very foundation upon which most subsequent Afro-American fictional and non-fictional narrative forms are based” (5). Coming from the groundwork that Douglass, Prince, and Jacobs laid; Williams and Morrison are able to negotiate the trauma of their ancestors and of the history of our nation. Looking across these works, we can see that all of the characters possess many of the same basic features. However, mody awareness takes on different facets for each text. By investigating the nuances, we can begin to establish the mody as a hard and fast tradition in this literature and therefore reconsider DeLombard’s “embodied subjectivity.” Further research could expand this concept beyond the literature of captivity, pain, torture, and trauma, and begin to mine any literature for the role of mody in effective metaphor, character, and narrative making. The critical discussion of these and other texts may take more seriously the use of the word embodiment, remembering the commitment and dedication it takes to be truly, fully, capably embodied.

Notes

¹ This phrase is used by Morrison as the epigraph to *Beloved*.

² Sorisio, Carolyn. *Fleshing Out America: Race, Gender and the Politics of the Body in American Literature, 1833-1979*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2002. 15. Print

³ DeLombard, Jeannine. “‘Eye-Witness to the Cruelty’: Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*.” *American Literature* 73.2 (2001): 245-275. Print.

⁴ I recognize DeLombard’s embrace of Emerson’s principles, though I have chosen not to take on Emerson myself in order to keep the critical discussion close to the texts.

⁵ I am indebted to Julie Mayo—choreographer, Skinner Release specialist, and artistic director of Dim Sum Dance—for the use of this word.

⁶ Disembodiment, in movement theory, portrays a certain disconnectedness with the world. This notion will become apparent when Douglass’s *Narrative* is discussed in depth.

⁷ The element of Body considers how the parts of the body relate to one another and to the environment. This is the element that Irmgard Bartenieff built her own fundamentals on. Effort will be described in the body of the thesis. Shape considers the forms the body makes and how those shapes change. Some terms used to describe the shape-changing process are: Widening-Narrowing, Lengthening-Shortening, and Bulging-Hollowing. Lastly, the Space component is used to describe the relationship between the body and the three-dimensional matrix it inhabits.

⁸ Several institutions around the world offer certifications in Laban Movement Analysis and Bartenieff fundamentals through an intensive program that usually consists of 40 hours per week in the classroom for approximately two years.

⁹ Bartenieff fundamentals follow the developments humans make as they grow from infancy. Moving through each set of patterns helps students of movement to understand how parts of the body relate. The patterns in order are: Breath, Core-Distal connectivity, Head-Tail connectivity, Upper-Lower connectivity, Body-Half connectivity and finally the most complex, Cross-Lateral connectivity. The specifics of these patterns are beyond the scope of this thesis, though some mention may be made if necessary.

¹⁰ My use of “message” throughout this thesis will be closely aligned with Hackney’s concept. Though a “message” may be political at times, I am most concerned with the essential nature of what we communicate and the aggregate of verbal and non-verbal signals.

¹¹ Closer attention will be paid to the textual representation of these experiences in the chapter on Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*.

¹² *Revelations* is also the title of Alvin Ailey’s most critically acclaimed dance piece.

¹³ It is important to note that the history and conversation about the Africanist movement tradition is much larger than Ailey and Jones. Many choreographers and dancers have engaged with this history, bringing to light questions of culture, race, history, memories, and body (see: *Urban Bush Women*). This is a fundamental component to my discussion as I make the leap from movement theory to these texts; however, my page constraints don't allow a full examination.

¹⁴ Jenny Franchot's article refers to Aunt Hester as "Esther."

¹⁵ The recognition of pain between humans (in this case, between slaves) is important to Elaine Scarry's work in her book *The Body in Pain*. She begins by introducing the claim: "To have pain is to have *certainty*; to hear about pain is to have *doubt*" (13). At first, the slave experience seems to clash with this. However, she expands her argument to say, "if the felt-attributes of pain are (through one means of verbal objectification or another) lifted into the visible world, *and if the referent for these now objectified attributes is understood to be the human body*, then the sentient fact of the person's suffering will become knowable to a second person" (13). In the case of these slave narratives, the pain they witness in others is not just through verbal references to the body, but menacing eyewitness.

¹⁶ In the broader stroke of Franchot's article, she seems to suggest that Douglass is using Hester to further his narrative, or that "the struggles of his writing subordinate her punishment to his authoring" (148). Her comments about providing membership, however, are pertinent to my own argument.

¹⁷ Douglass will use this word sarcastically in Chapter Ten.

¹⁸ The concern with stillness imposed on slaves is not only physical stillness, but of course social stillness. The threat to slave owners comes when slaves become free and have money or own property. Upward motion on the social ladder is not only strictly prohibited, but feared. For a compelling consideration of upward motion of free blacks in the South, see Edward P. Jones's *The Known World*.

¹⁹ To turn the situation around, if a dancer were asked to dance the slave condition, bound may be one of the descriptors— tense, controlled movement that suggests ghost restraints would be an easy choice. However, it's important to keep in mind that movement profiles are developed from a complex web of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space components that make up Laban Movement Analysis. Dancing the slave condition successfully comes from a precise embodiment of all of these elements, not just the effort component of bound flow.

²⁰ This is often called "masking."

²¹ To return to the punishment of Hester, I should clarify that Douglass's statement about his lack of words is not a restraint or a bound-flow manifestation, rather a free-flow admission of the shortcomings of language, the near impossibility to completely represent such an incident strictly on the page.

²² Later writing endeavors can be considered in the realm of this ultimate freedom; however, examination of those texts is beyond the scope of this argument.

²³ I am aware that arguments exist concerning the molding of Douglass's work by the abolitionist movement. However, his efforts in his *Narrative* should still be considered a high-register expression of his freedom, especially compared to the turmoil he endured in attempting to obtain the most basic of writing skills.

²⁴ I will later argue against her use of the word "voice" for Douglass's tenure as an activist—however for the sake of summarization, this sentence represents the major thread of DeLombard's argument.

²⁵ In no way do I disagree with DeLombard on the fact that Douglass's body was subjugated even in the North; this is quite apparent in the *Narrative*. However, I do wish to point out the extent to which the voice is a manifestation of the body.

²⁶ I realize that a discussion of Cutter's "critical literacy" in this context merits more extensive consideration. However, this brief conversation with her work is meant to gesture towards the ways in which the discussion of mody awareness can continue to grow.

²⁷ The examination of these texts will be much shorter than the consideration of Douglass. However, their inclusion is critical in order to establish the history of the mind-body connection in the genre.

²⁸ The report-like nature of Prince's *History* is only amplified by the editor's remarks both in the footnotes and the appendix. The pagination of the "supporting documents" out numbers the actual text and the text itself shows the heavy hand of the editor. It is plausible, then, to consider that most of Prince's self reflection was not permitted in the published text.

²⁹ Prince is also restricted geographically. At the end of her narrative, she is stuck in limbo in England, trying to get back to the Caribbean.

³⁰ See note 2.

³¹ It is worth noting that this quotation from Douglass serves as the epigraph for the first section of the novel "The Darky." Williams's reference to Douglass sets us up for a similar journey of narrative-making, and with this specific quote, insists that the reader see Dessa's critical literacy.

³² For a more complete discussion of DeLombard's argument, refer to Chapter Two.

³³ Frederick Douglass also possesses mody awareness before he declares his resurrection. It is this awareness that allowed for and supported his fight with Covey. However, because *Dessa Rose* operates under a different narrative structure, Dessa's mody awareness in the context of the other narrators is essential to her process.

³⁴ Until now, examples of the mody have come from first person narration. In many ways, a first person context makes it much easier for the mody to show through. However, the other perspectives do not necessarily exclude examples of this connection.

³⁵ The separation of body and voice here seems to be similar to DeLombard's, placing voice solely as a function of the mind.

³⁶ Though there is a disconnection present between Dessa's vacant exterior and her riled interior, her mody is still very much at work. Similar to the tradition of masking as seen in Douglass and in many of the slave songs, movement theory sometimes refers to this as disaffinity; the exterior is used as a way to deflect from the reality of emotion. That is, the mind-body connection is at work to produce a very intentional but unexpected response. Choreographers use this often to explore new options for gestures or movement clichés.

³⁷ Dessa's management of her mody in the company of Nehemiah can also be largely be connected her to her critical literacy. Dessa, like Douglass, is able to read the context of their meetings and act accordingly. As Martha Cutter predicates, critical literacy is an ability to read the *world*. By keeping herself tuned into the vibe in the cellar, Dessa reads her environment.

³⁸ This does not necessarily have to be whites, as we have seen in Edward P. Jones's *The Known World* and the discussion of black overseers in William Randolph's "Sketches of Slave Life."

³⁹ Quite literally, if she were wishing for total peace in her heart, she would be implying her own death. Dessa's countenance, however desperate, has not yet suggested her own death.

⁴⁰ I believe that these experiences are always a part of their lives, as they drive them to get out of their situations. However, both Dessa and Douglass have a point where they must reconcile memories with the future. By identifying with the power of their modies, the characters are able to move on more effectively. It is important to note that this turning point is not, as some would suggest, a shedding of the body, rather a reappropriation—a look at its power rather than its weaknesses.

⁴¹ Dessa's endurance in this case is marked in a different way than the others because of her pregnancy. It not only makes her distinctly female, but makes her captors think they will be able to find remnants of her birth to track her (as we see later in Nehemiah's journal entries). In some ways, it may be appropriate to analyze Dessa's experience here as gendered, however, Williams leaves out details of the birth, and barely reminds us that Dessa is even pregnant at the time of the escape. It seems as though the focus here is human rather than a female.

⁴² By leaving out escape details, Williams is gesturing towards the Classic Slave Narratives. Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs both make comments about the necessity of protecting the people who aided in their flight.

⁴³ Holmes's article treats only *Dessa Rose* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, though her questions would be largely appropriate for male narrators as well.

⁴⁴ We should return here to Elaine Scarry's work. Because the referent for pain is the human body, Rufel is better able to sympathize with Dessa. See note 2 of Douglass chapter for more discussion.

⁴⁵ When these scars must be read again in the jail, I could argue that Dessa's relationship to them has changed. She tells Aunt Chole: "I was scarred as a child; girl watching me dropped me in the fire. I'm much ashamed of them scars" (231). However, we know that this is not how Dessa received her scars. Thus, she is ashamed of her fictitious scars, though not of those—the marks or *story*—she actually bears.

⁴⁶ This phrase suggests that Baby Suggs did not know her exact age, a distinct possibility for most slaves. Rather than giving us a specific number, she identifies her "age" through her physical condition.

⁴⁷ For a fuller discussion of Hackney's breath, see Chapter 3 (pg. 47).

⁴⁸ I realize that this considers the passages out of the order that they appear in the novel. However, not only does Baby's scene happen first in "real" time, but the two arrivals are so important that they must be considered close to one another.

⁴⁹ The basic structure of the Clearing scene is not unlike something that may happen in a movement workshop or movement therapy session. That is, a combination of full movement exploration and visualization of specific regions (often in conversation with emotion).

⁵⁰ See note 2.

⁵¹ See Chapter 3.

⁵² Baby Suggs and Beloved are again posed opposite from one another in their "earthly" positions. While Baby Suggs is alive, Beloved's ghost haunts 124. After Baby Suggs dies, Beloved comes to life and Baby Suggs is then working from the grave.

⁵³ See discussion in Chapter 3.

⁵⁴ The phrase here is ambiguous. Denver could either be claiming ownership of Beloved or Sethe.

⁵⁵ Because of repetition three times, there is a triangulation that occurs, with each character asserting her ownership or dependence on the other two.

⁵⁶ The religious language used in tandem with mody metaphor sends us back to Douglass's invocation of the "resurrection from the tomb of slavery"

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