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Silhouettes of a Silent Female's Authority: A Psychoanalytic and Feminist Perspective on the Art of Kara Walker

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Cover Page Footnote

Footnotes i Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the unspeakable: the art of Kara Walker* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). ii Ibid, 12. 3 Ibid, 13. iv Ibid, 20. v Sander L.Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007). vi Walker, Kara Elizabeth, Annette Dixon, Robert Pharr, and Thelma Golden. *Kara Walker: pictures from another time*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002. vii Anne D'Alleva, *Methods & theories of art history* (London: Laurence King, 2005). viii Ibid, 98. ix Sander L.Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007). x "Definition of Intersectionality in English:." *Intersectionality: Definition of Intersectionality in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)*. Accessed November 4, 2015. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intersectionality. xi Sander L.Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007). Bibliography Alleva, Anne. *Methods & theories of art history*. London: Laurence King, 2005 Bennett, Andrew. *The author*. London: Routledge, 2005 "Definition of Intersectionality in English:." *Intersectionality: Definition of Intersectionality in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US)*. Accessed November 4, 2015. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intersectionality Gilman, Sander L., Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker. *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007 Lavin, Maud. *Push Comes to Shove New Images of Aggressive Women*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010 Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. *Seeing the unspeakable: the art of Kara Walker*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004 Walker, Kara Elizabeth, Annette Dixon, Robert Pharr, and Thelma Golden. *Kara Walker: pictures from another time*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002 Walker, Kara Elizabeth, and Ian Berry. *Kara Walker: narratives of a negress*. Saratoga Springs, NY: Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College ;, 2003

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ABSTRACT

The focus of my research centers on the contemporary work of Georgia-based artist, Kara Elizabeth Walker. In conducting extensive research on the life of the artist as well as three select artworks which recall the antebellum slave era within the south, I argue the explicit presence of the power of the enslaved prepubescent girl and young woman. The three select works that I intend to analyze are *Burn*, a cut-paper silhouette on canvas created in 1998, *The Invisible Beauty*, a mixed media piece made in 2001, and *Cut*, a paper cut-out silhouette made in 1998.

In a time where one's power and freedom were both stripped away upon entering the prison-like confines of a plantation home, the life of a slave (a female slave in this case) was committed to grueling housework, the rearing of her slave master's children in the place of her own, sexual exploitation and merciless beatings, humiliation, submission to her white counterparts, and in many cases, the occasion of rape. Walker's intense, overtly erotic and disturbing life-size (and larger than life size) interpretations of the Antebellum south force a stirred emotion within her viewers, so as to implicate them upon viewing.

Utilizing methodologies such as formal analysis, feminist deconstruction, semiotic analysis, and psychoanalytic theory, I will prove that Walker's work is not only a provocative rendition of the horrors of the slave era, but also a way to deconstruct the notion of the female slave as a powerless individual and counter that thought process with a more powerful, authoritative, aggressive, and sexually autonomous image of a female slave, as well as the authority reflected in herself as a contemporary African American artist.

*As a disclaimer and out of personal respect to my readers, I caution that there are phrases in my article that may be considered offensive, given their racial nature. The artist has used these terms as a way to describe the figures in her works of art. While they may be offensive, I feel they are necessary to bolster my arguments of racial stereotypes of enslaved females, which over time have been socially constructed and historically situated.

Keywords: Art History, Feminist Deconstruction, Semiotic Analysis, Formal Analysis, Pschoanalytic Theory, Feminism, Kara Walker, Contemporary Art, Antebellum Era, History

What encapsulates a woman of power? What is it she is expected to have overcome or achieved to gain power, authority, and a voice worthy of being heard? Is it surviving a black eye and a

bloodied nose from an abusive husband? Is it enduring the insurmountable abuse from her slave master during the era of the Antebellum South? Being strong enough to withstand the working conditions of factories during Pearl Harbor? Making it up

the corporate ladder? Being the first African American woman to reside in the White House and possess the title of “First Lady”? A woman running for President of the United States? What hoops must she leap through to gain validation beyond the confines of a household? When bearing in mind the art of Kara Elizabeth Walker, it is visually evident that she was expressing her own private sense of self through artistic agency, by analyzing the stereotypical and often repugnant notions of what an African American woman was deemed to be during the slave era. The stereotypical and overtly exaggerated gestures, clear representations of female power, and overwhelming sense of melancholy were the main reasons behind my desire to explore her body of work in greater depth. Her installations are abounding in themes of; ostracized African American slave laborers, satirically sexual imagery, power struggle, violence, social class distinctions, clichéd images associated with the antebellum south, and powerful depictions of female slaves, the latter of which will be my concentration (more specifically, the character of young slave girls and what Walker names as the “*Negress*”). Gwendolyn Dubois Shaw agrees, “That characters that fill the narrative are a way of overcoming the power that stereotypes and negative representations of African Americans have had in the artist’s life.”ⁱ Her body of work also recalls Freudian theories of the unconscious regarding suppressed desires, Lacanian concepts on the “thingness” of art and its hypothetical purpose, Saussure’s model of semiotic analysis regarding the meaning of signs within a work of art (*signifier*: what is readily visible vs. *signified*: what the viewer interprets), and above all, feminist iconography that communicates a deconstructed view of the supposedly “weak and obedient” slave woman. Through my examination of select works by Walker, I

intend to prove that not only are Walker’s artistic representations a reflection of her own skirmishes and obstinacy as not only a woman, but African American artist in a “man’s world” in psychoanalytic and semiotic terms, but also a collection of non-conventional feminist imaginings of enslaved women in a “man’s world” during the slave era.

Born in 1969 in Stockton, California, Walker’s aspiration to develop her artistic creativity started at an early age. She was influenced by her father Larry Walker, an artist himself, as well as a painting professor at the University of the Pacific. In the year 1982, Walker and her family moved to Stone Mountain, Georgia when she was just 13 years of age, as her father had accepted a teaching position at Georgia State University. Notorious as the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, the move from the suburbs of California to the southern region of Stone Mountain, Georgia proved difficult for young Walker. Shaw elucidates Kara’s thoughts by stating, “She believed that the other African American children in her new community ostracized her because her California accent was ‘too white’. At the same time, she was deemed to be too dark-skinned to be friends with the European American children.”ⁱⁱⁱ It is not surprising then, that Walker’s artistic efforts powerfully, albeit controversially, communicate her own personal experiences with racial ostracism. It’s vital to note though, that upon pursuing a future in art during her college years that she was discouraged from delving deeper into the subject of racial complexities and juxtaposing those complexities within her work. She did not feel the liberty to express her own artistic identity regarding race at full scale until her move to the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence.³

The media she has employed in the course of her work consist of paintings, drawings, light projections, video, written text, and cut- paper silhouettes, the last of which will be my main concentration. Her selection of the silhouette as a form of representation stemmed from the racial anthropological principles of Swiss German scientist Johann Casper Lavater and his concepts of physiognomy. He alleged that the silhouette, or "shade" profile of an individual conveyed their inherent, natural disposition, and that the silhouette was more revealing about an individual's personality than could be borne through any painting.^{iv} Further impacts on Walker were texts such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, both of which have enchanted American pop culture as southern plantation works of fiction. Walker explained how much these novels enthralled her in such a way that they glossed over the profoundly racial undertones and stereotypical interpretations using romanticized rhetoric, as well as vastly offensive racial imageries and slurs to refer to African American individuals. Sander Gilman perceived that, "Mitchell's mythologized depiction of the period as a genteel and benevolent agrarian society permanently fixed in the American psyche a distorted account of the American South."^v As such, Walker used these two novels as a basis for her interpretations to recount or re-imagine these epic tales in a very explicit mode.

We will begin with *Burn* (Fig.1), a cut-paper silhouette on canvas made in 1998. At first glance, we see what looks to be a prepubescent slave girl with two braids tied in bows, face downcast with her eyes closed. If not for the silhouette, the viewer may perhaps see a bush with pointed leafy foliage surrounding the little girl. However, both her hands are splayed on either side of

her revealing she has just tossed aside a fluid-filled gas can, setting her dress on fire and standing care freely among uprising frames, which lap up her body. To the left of the figure looms a large cloud of smoke. Starting as a narrow point from the bottom of the composition, the smoke slowly trails upward, growing gradually into a largely organic shape. The uppermost part of the cloud shows the silhouette of a tomb-stone filled cemetery accompanied by a Christian cross. Along one side, the smoke cloud depicts a profile view of a black woman whose full lips kiss the open air.



Fig. 1 Kara Walker, *Burn*, 1998, cut paper on canvas, 92 x 48 in. (233.7 x 121.9 cm), The Speyer Family Collection, New York

Upon Saussurean analysis of semiotics, we take as the signifier the image of a young, innocent prepubescent girl enclosed within self-inflicted flame. After further analysis, we come upon the signified

as a stoic representation of a young enslaved girl refuting a lifetime of slavery in favor of suicide. Suicide in the antebellum era reflected a destruction of the white master's possessions, and therefore an assault on his inherent power. What results is the disruption of the power relations existing between master and slave, giving the latter the final say. In Freudian terms of psychoanalytic theory, we take this representation as an unconscious desire reflected in creative form to reveal an insatiable desire on the part of the enslaved to be free from a lifetime of captivity, abuse, and extinction of self. On the part of the artist, we can further understand this work not only as an act of racially stereotypical defiance to views of Negritude which are historically in situ, but also an emancipation of the artistic self, in the hopes of ruffling the feathers of critics and spectators alike. The girl setting her dress on fire and standing almost peacefully among the flames creates an arresting feeling of female power, which was stripped bare upon enslavement. We also must consider the bravery of a girl so young as to accept one final endurance of physical pain to escape the figurative and literal chains upon her as a human being, and leaving this world a woman of power. In dying so young, she escapes her predestined role as what Walker terms the "Negress" (please forgive the term), or the mistress of the slave master. This character was a sort of breeder for her white master, who in engaging in physical intimacy could provide the benefit of more children, and ultimately, more slave hands. As disturbing a concept as it is, the *Negress* also wielded a certain level of power in the sexual favors she afforded her master, whilst functioning as a source of competition for the wife of the master. Annette Dixon explains this concept further by stating,

"The Negress is the ambiguous figure of the slave mistress, who rivals the master's wife for his affections... In an economic system in which one race "owned" the other for gain, the greater the number of workers, the more that could be produced. The black woman, relegated to the role of breeder for the white slave master so as to increase the plantation's production, could be elevated to be his mistress, taken out of her own slave household and the fields, and given a role in the master's household."^{vi}

The profile of the black woman within the cloud of smoke may be a satirical metaphor for the slave girl as a young woman kissing that predestined fate goodbye upon her suicide. So too does Walker reflect this strong female aura in that she reveals artistically, biting, and controversially to audiences of all walks of life the darker sides of American history which many would hope stay swept under the carpet.

Another work by Walker is *Invisible Beauty* (Fig. 2), made in 2001. In the background, we see what looks to be a coffee brown colored sky with strokes of black watercolor. On the right is a faded image of a tree, shown by a long trunk, and curvy organic forms at the top of each branch, suggesting foliage. In the foreground on both the left and the right are two black cut-out bushes. In the middle, we see the silhouette of a female figure, as depicted by the outline of a form echoing a breast. The top three quarters of her body are just barely seen. Her arms are held extended from either side. The woman materializes in three outlines of color, starting with khaki brown, followed by white, pale pink, and lastly culminating in a large cloud of white which looks to be an

unpainted surface of the canvas. Contrasting with the top of the figure is the lower portion which displays a black paper cut-out showcasing the ragged fringes of a dress, and two bare feet. Due to the tattered and shred-like appearance of the woman's clothing and the exposure of her feet, we can assume what we are seeing is an image of an enslaved woman. A fleeting look gives the viewer the impression that the woman appears to be glowing. However, the uppermost portion of the figure is barely seen.

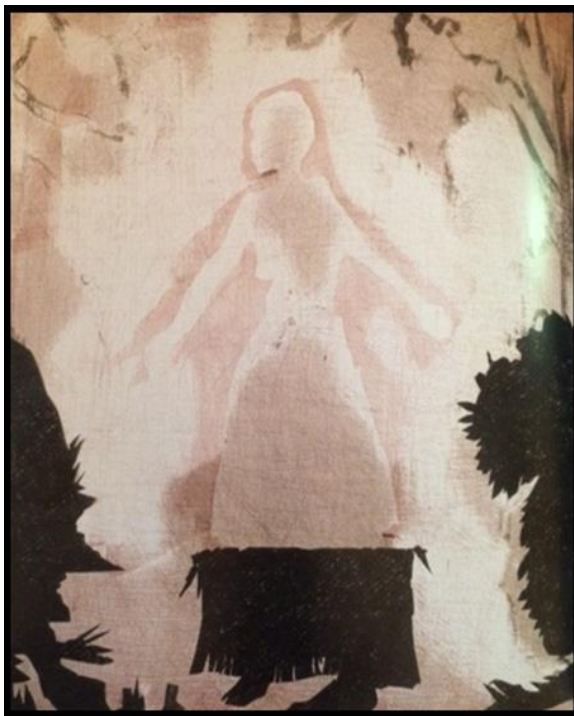


Fig. 2 Kara Walker, *The Invisible Beauty*, 2001, mixed media and paper on wood, 5 5/16 x 5 5/16 in. (15cm x 15cm), Deutsche Bank Art Collection, From: Sander L. Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love*: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love". Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007, pg. 286.

This may parallel the circumstances of African American slave laborers. It is essential to take into consideration that the instant when African American individuals were labeled as a white man's property, they were given the surname of their master. For all intents and purposes, this indicated the

loss of one's individuality. Despite the fact that these persons bore the name of their white counterparts, their presence often went ignored or unnoticed. The sole occupation of a slave was permanent servitude in the form of fieldwork, housework, indescribable moments of mortification, physical and sexual abuse, and on a fateful day, death. The black individual was thought of in white men's eyes, as a means for amusement, sexual gratification or torture (on the part of the slave), for their own psychologically warped pleasure. In the case of the female maid revealed here, there is such an unmoved sense of presence and authority that surfaces from the pale, hazy silhouettes of color that she cannot go overlooked. Her outspread arms make her appear to be declaring: *I will not go unnoticed. My presence exists whether you desire it or not.* This image may be a manifestation of the slave depicted or Walker herself with respect to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of the human psyche. Freud's notions were based on a central belief: that the mind was divided into three parts: the id, the ego, and the super ego. Anne D'Alleva clarifies further, "The id is the part of the self, devoted to the pleasure principle. The ego has a better grasp on the reality principle: it understands that sometimes it's preferable, even safer to delay gratification. The super ego uses guilt...to enforce these rules and repress the id."^{vii} It is my contention that what we see is a portrayal of the id. The presence of the female slave is in and of itself an expression of her commitment to the pleasure principle. By giving this figure a designated position within a work of art, a sense of self does in fact exist. One could reason that in a certain light, Walker was giving white slave owners and their distorted world-views a simultaneously direct yet graceful *Screw you* (pardon the phrase). Walker herself recognized that the nature of her work

teetered on the edge of extremely controversial and racial territory. Something else to think over is a claim made by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. He proposed that a work of art is a representation of that which is lacking in society, in history, in the government, in the life of the artist, etc. Therefore, as told by D'Alleva,

"Art, for Lacan, is about lack: 'A work of art always involves encircling the Thing.' That word 'encircling' is important: art, for Lacan, isn't straightforward, it doesn't simply represent the presence or absence of the object of desire (the Thing). Instead, paradoxically, art represents the Thing's presence as its absence, and helps society bear this void."^{viii}

In layman's terms, this piece is a reflection of the absence of individual identity with respect to slaves in the antebellum south. This image correlates with a deconstruction of the white man's socially constructed notion that a slave was not a human being, nor occupied a personal identity worthy of acknowledgment. Reflecting on Walker's personal life experiences, this work unquestionably communicates her own personal battle with racial identity, by disputing the positionality of African Americans in historic as well as contemporary terms.

Finally, we examine Walker's *Cut* (Fig. 3) made in 1998. For this piece, whose title being clearly related to the "cut" silhouette process of the artist, Walker herself dressed in the appearance of a slave girl and posed for a photograph, taken by Noe DeWitt. The resulting self-portrait we are confronted with here is the foundation for this work. What we see is the character of an enslaved woman in midair. She is presented wearing two braids, a maid's dress

with her skirt billowing upward to showcase a pair of ankle-high boots which she is shown clicking together in an almost jovial manner. Her arms are also revealed stretched high above her head in a gesture of ecstasy.

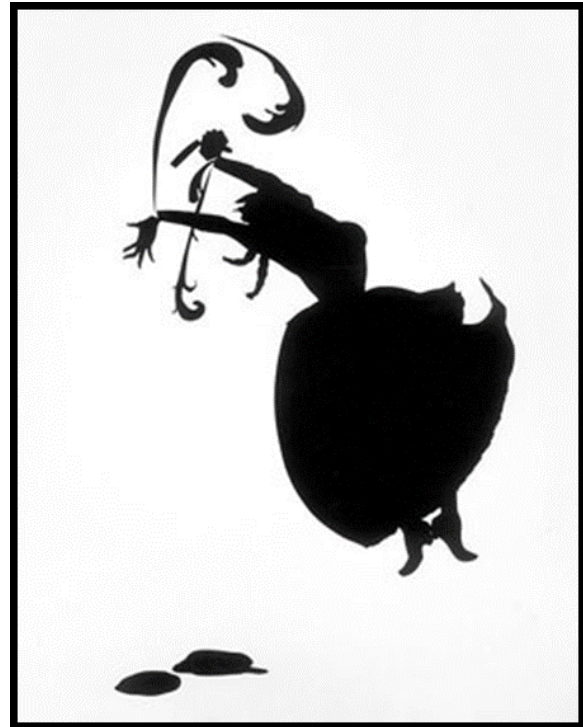


Fig. 3 Kara Walker, *Cut*, 1998, cut paper and adhesive on wall, 88 X 54 in., Collection of Donna and Cargill Mac Millan, From: Kara Elizabeth Walker and Ian Berry, *Kara Walker: narratives of a negress*. Saratoga Springs, NY: Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, 2003, pg.144.

Looking more closely, the spectator is shocked upon realizing that the figure is wielding a razor blade in her clenched left hand, and that she has just cut both her wrists. spurts of blood shoot out from both wrists in curlicue shapes, and we see what appear to be two puddles of blood in the forefront, just to the left of the young woman. This grisly act of revolt and personal liberation corresponds to the lives of the enslaved in conjunction with the artist herself. During the slave era, the likelihood of fleeing slave life was highly improbable.

When reflecting on this act of personal freedom, it arouses at once both moods of sadness and bliss, in that it was a certain ultimate act of defiance upon the enslaved woman's white owner. Suicide inevitably meant she had the final word: *I belong to no one*. Furthermore, in accordance with Saussure's model of semiotic analysis, the *signifier* is the silhouetted image itself. Upon further consideration and visual readings of all the intricate symbols that construct the silhouette, what we take as the *signified* is not merely a young female leaping in airborne bliss, but a young female slave committing a final blow of suicide to her white slave master, giving him the proverbial finger. Yasmil Raymond proposes his insight to Walker's piece, combined with the act of suicide amid slaves:

"Walker directs our attention to the woman's shameless gesture of bliss and defiance, which suggests that her suicide stands as an act of transgression and empowerment... there is a refusal of ethics in their calculated acts of rebellion, as the ownership of their death is their main concern."^{ix}

It therefore goes without saying, that this cut-out silhouette is not merely a representation of female power and autonomy, but an examination of Walker's role as a female African American artist (what's considered unfortunately, a double whammy) in the public sphere, or what Kimberlé Crenshaw, a renowned professor of law and analytical race studies has termed *intersectionality*, or "The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage."^x Given the

disapproving critical responses to her work from several individuals, both critics and spectators, Walker appears to communicate to her audience with this image: *My opinions will not go ignored. I will speak my mind. I will make my presence known, make you see me, and you will feel SOMETHING.*

From the time when Kara Walker step foot into the territory of the art domain, she has remained true to her aspiration to produce controversial imaginings of plantation life in the Antebellum South. Her motifs of race, power relations, sexuality, gender, and misplaced racial identity challenge the often glossed-over features of historic recollection, and our own collective unconsciousness of the lives of the enslaved. By understanding her silhouettes through the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, and the symbolic meaning taken from Saussure's model of semiotic analysis, it is visibly apparent that Walker's work is not always black and white. The forms in her body of work have left a lasting impression on her viewers, with regards to character, loss, death, and female authority. While many characteristics of her life-sized black paper cut-outs seem excessively inflated, they are highly effective in reminding the observer of the socially constructed belief systems set in place during the slave era, concerning the passivity of women. Indeed, "Walker's silhouettes seem to scream in the face of the viewer, 'How ya like me now?'"^{xi}

FOOTNOTES

i Gwendolyn DuBois Shaw, *Seeing the unspeakable: the art of Kara Walker* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

ii Ibid, 12.

3 Ibid, 13.

iv Ibid, 20.

v Sander L. Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007).

vi Walker, Kara Elizabeth, Annette Dixon, Robert Pharr, and Thelma Golden. *Kara Walker: pictures from another time*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002.

vii Anne D'Alleva, *Methods & theories of art history* (London: Laurence King, 2005).

viii Ibid, 98.

ix Sander L. Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007).

x "Definition of Intersectionality in English:." Intersectionality: Definition of Intersectionality in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US). Accessed November 4, 2015. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intersectionality.

xi Sander L. Gilman, Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker, *Kara Walker - My*

complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love", Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007).

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Alleva, Anne. *Methods & theories of art history*. London: Laurence King, 2005. This source was helpful in providing me with information regarding the theories of Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and Jacques Lacan, and how their respective theories related my select images of Kara Walker's artwork.

Bennett, Andrew. *The author*. London: Routledge, 2005. This source provided me with a quote from Roland Barthes with respect to how one views and interprets a work of art, more specifically, Kara Walker's body of work.

"Definition of Intersectionality in English:." Intersectionality: Definition of Intersectionality in Oxford Dictionary (American English) (US). Accessed November 4, 2015. http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/intersectionality.

Gilman, Sander L., Philippe Vergne, and Kara Walker. *Kara Walker - My complement, my enemy, my oppressor, my love: published on the occasion of the Exhibition "Kara Walker - My complement, My enemy, My oppressor, My love"*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 17 - May 13, 2007; Whitney Museum. 1. ed. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007. This resource gave a wealth of information on how history texts have glossed over the horrific side of the slave

era, and how Walker brings forward the darker sides of the Antebellum South within her work. It also gave me insight on the artist's personal artistic background, and the desire to represent the uglier side of the Antebellum south in a more provocative and controversial manner.

Lavin, Maud. *Push Comes to Shove New Images of Aggressive Women*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010. In this book, particularly in chapter 4: Unbuttoning Sexuality, I was better equipped with the overly sexualized nature of Walker's work and the reasons behind which she chose to portray the slave era in this way. U.S. culture's romanticized and often racially stereotypical view of the slave era are components which Walker seeks to counter and re-imagine in her work. By inserting innovative traditions in the place of stereotypical ones, Walker forces her viewers to reflect on the slave era, and the slant views we have been fed not only in contemporary society, but in literature of the past, most especially Uncle Tom's Cabin and Gone with the Wind.

Shaw, Gwendolyn DuBois. *Seeing the unspeakable: the art of Kara Walker*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. This book was an excellent source that gave me information on how society views concepts of race and how it relates to idea brought forth by Walker in her cut-out silhouettes.

Walker, Kara Elizabeth, Annette Dixon, Robert Pharr, and Thelma Golden. *Kara Walker: pictures from another time*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002. This source provided me with interpretations of Walker's *The End of Uncle Tom*.. with regards to the scene of the mutually nursing women, and the symbols that can be drawn from that image.

Walker, Kara Elizabeth, and Ian Berry. *Kara Walker: narratives of a negress*. Saratoga Springs, NY: Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College :, 2003. This text made me consider the ways in which I have been taught to perceive race in visual, as well as social terms. It made me reflect on when and where I came to deem individuals and their respective physical traits, mannerisms, accents, and cultural practices as *white, black, Asian, Hispanic*, etc., and how my mindset reflects the ways in which I read Walker's body of work.