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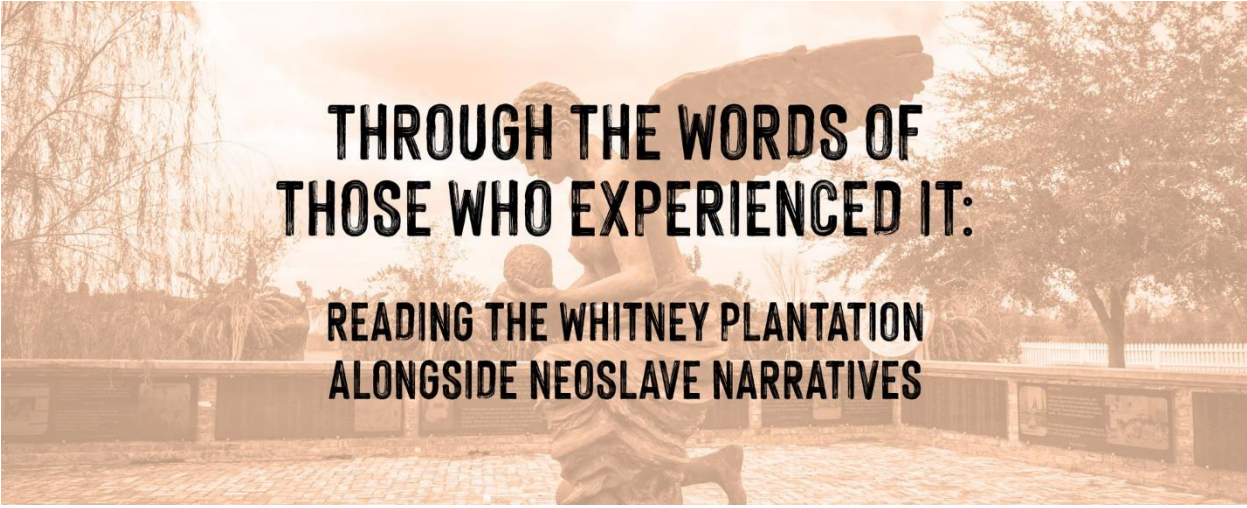


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THROUGH THE WORDS OF THOSE WHO EXPERIENCED IT: READING THE WHITNEY PLANTATION ALONGSIDE NEOSLAVE NARRATIVES

BY SARAH PAYNE

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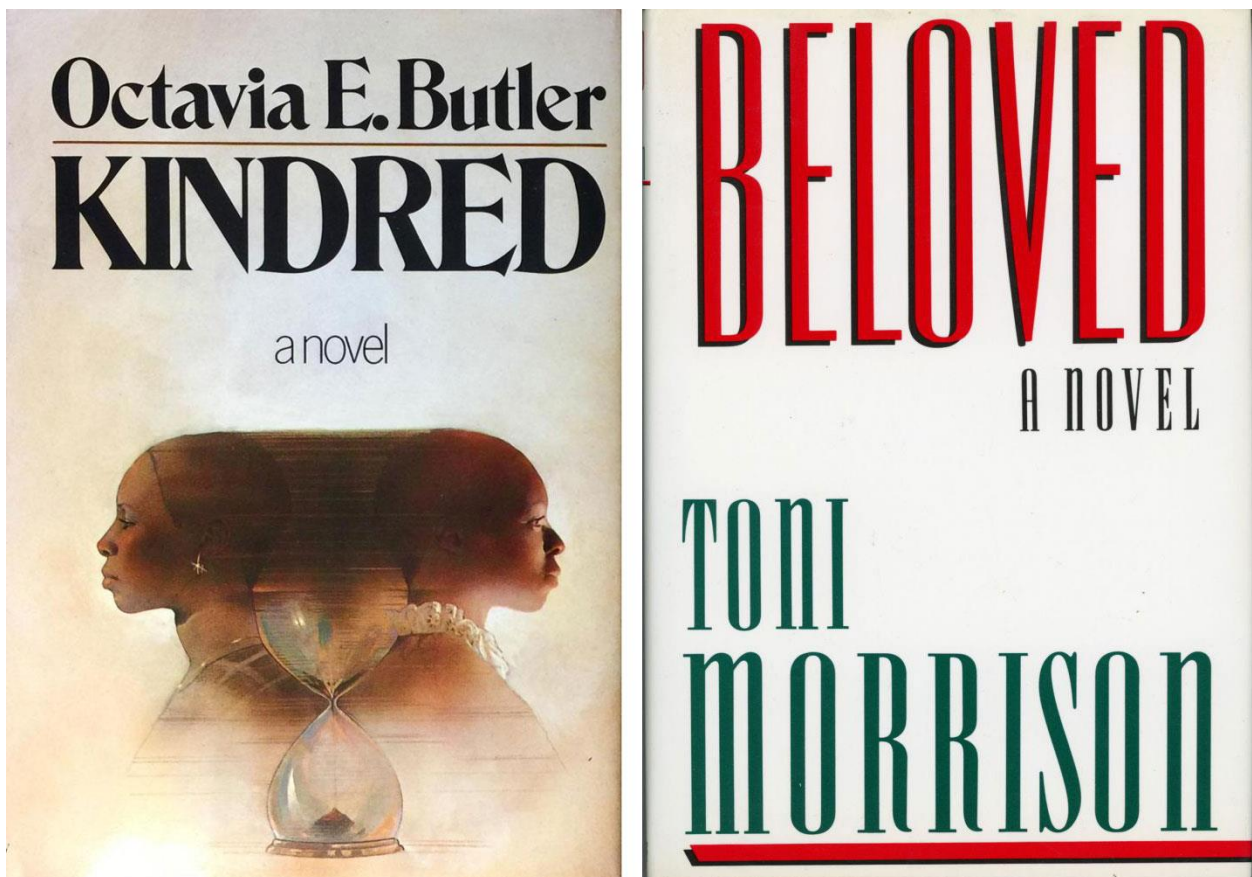
1 INTRODUCTION

At a time in the United States when white supremacy, racial violence, and Confederate iconography have become national talking points, more authentic representations of race relations and the country's legacy of slavery assume a greater sense of urgency. In the last several years, the US has seen a spate of artistic representations and public history projects that attempt to combat whitewashed narratives of slavery. Recent films such as *12 Years a Slave* (2013) and the 2016 remake of *Roots*, as well as Colson Whitehead's novel, *The Underground Railroad* (2016), eschew romanticized visions of slavery in favor of narratives focusing on the enslaved. The opening of the National Museum of African American History in 2016 also participates in recuperating a more authentic understanding of slavery that recovers the humanity slavery sought to destroy.

Recent representations of slavery, however well intentioned, have provoked discussions about who should represent black pain and oppression and what purpose such representations serve.¹ Also evoking such questions are contemporary plantation tours, most of which are white-centered, "moonlight and magnolia" recreations.² There have been efforts to represent slavery more accurately at plantations such as Oak Alley,³ and most notably, the Whitney Plantation, which opened in 2014. Located in Wallace, Louisiana, the Whitney stands out as the only plantation tour in the US dedicated to depicting the antebellum plantation entirely from the perspective of former slaves. The existing scholarly work on the Whitney largely approaches the site through the lens of heritage tourism or dark tourism.⁴ These perspectives are useful in considering both how the Whitney works against whitewashed plantation tours and the

potential for voyeuristic viewing practices among visitors.

The Whitney also has much in common with the textual genres of slave narratives and neoslave narratives, yet the Whitney's connection to literary narratives of slavery remains largely unexamined. This essay asks how our understanding of the Whitney Plantation, as a representation of slavery, a public history project, and an example of dark tourism, might be affected by reading the plantation in connection to both historical and fictional accounts of slavery. Using examples from well-known novels such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979) and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), I demonstrate how the Whitney, like textual narratives of slavery, employs bodily epistemology, sentimentalism, a white authenticating presence, and a focus on authenticity, making neoslave narratives useful lenses through which to read the immersive experience of the Whitney. In what follows, I historicize the Whitney's narrative of slavery within the broader genre of slave narratives in order to highlight the tradition of narrating slavery in which the Whitney participates.



2 NEOSLAVE NARRATIVES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the introduction to the *Oxford Handbook to the African American Slave Narrative*, John

Ernest describes the vastness of the slave narrative genre. Marion Wilson Starling, for example, counted the number of recovered slave narratives at 6,006, noting that the narratives appeared in “judicial records, broadsides, private printings, abolitionist newspapers and volumes, scholarly journals, church records, unpublished collections, and a few regular publications.”⁵ Despite the wide array of materials in which slave narratives have appeared, critical consensus has often formulaically defined the genre to include certain tropes: the presence of a white amanuensis, the slave’s acquisition of literacy, depictions of cruel, often Christian slaveholders, and details of the amount of food and clothing allotted the slaves. Well-known slave narratives such as Solomon Northup’s *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) and Mary Prince’s *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), among others, exemplify the generic conventions of the slave narrative.⁶ I agree with Ernest, however, when he urges us to broaden our understanding of slave narratives: “If we extend our perspective to take in the whole of slave testimony, the story gets even more complicated, and the call for a coherent portrait is both compelling and elusive.”⁷ The elusive and complicated nature of slave narratives also appears in the Whitney’s own attempts to narrate slavery and recapture the past using limited archival evidence.

I want to pause over the white authenticating voice in the slave narrative, as this feature becomes particularly relevant in discussions of the Whitney. The presence of the white amanuensis, often motivated by abolitionist political aims, has sparked debate regarding the authenticity of slave narratives and the ability to locate the slave’s voice within the abolitionist’s writing. In *Understanding Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives*, Sterling Bland examines the generic structure of many slave narratives, concluding the structure leaves little room for the voice of the narrator, the slave. Instead, he argues, the slave’s voice remains subordinated to the political aims of abolitionism.⁸ Scholars such as K. Merinda Simmons, however, are critical of a focus on voice and authenticity, particularly from a feminist and postcolonial standpoint. Writing of Mary Prince’s slave narrative, Simmons notes that criticism has often positioned Prince as having a “true voice” that is accessible. Simmons points to the coercive elements through which Prince’s narrative is filtered, urging readers not to put too much emphasis on the idea of an authentic voice. Instead, Simmons suggests, readers should “investigate the other voices and dynamics at work in Prince’s text rather than classify the *History* simply as ‘autobiographical slave narrative.’”⁹ I want to balance Bland’s focus on authenticity with Simmons’s attention to the “other voices and dynamics at work.”¹⁰ Authenticity is important for the Whitney, particularly given its stark contrast to more romanticized plantation tours. Yet an overemphasis on authenticity can also detract from the multiplicity of voices the Whitney seeks to amplify.

While the slave narrative genre ended with texts written by former slaves after emancipation, fictionalized narratives of slavery persisted into the twentieth, and as I would argue, the twenty-first century. Bernard Bell first described neoslave narratives as “residually oral, modern

narratives of escape from bondage to freedom.”¹¹ Ashraf Rushdy expands on Bell’s work, defining neoslave narratives as “contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of antebellum slave narratives.”¹² By contemporary, Rushdy means texts from the 1960s onwards, whose authors were spurred by the controversy of William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.¹³ While the second half of the twentieth century did see a wave of neoslave narratives, such as Margaret Walker’s *Jubilee* (1966) and Sherley Anne Williams’s *Dessa Rose* (1986), earlier texts such as Arna Bontemps’s *Black Thunder* (1936) also function as neoslave narratives, making 1960 a tenuous demarcation.¹⁴

More recent work on neoslave narratives broadens the genre to include a variety of literary styles and even non-literary representations of slavery. Valerie Smith, for example, refers to this “retrospective literature about slavery” as incorporating a diverse array of perspectives and genres such as speculative fiction, satire, and postmodern experiment (168). Scholars such as Stephanie Li argue for the inclusion of films such as *12 Years a Slave* in the neoslave narrative genre as well. Drawing comparisons to Toni Morrison’s work, Li notes that Morrison’s artistic task is to “speak the unspeakable: to describe both the violence that is sublimated or ignored in slave narratives as well as to articulate the silenced interior life of enslaved men and women.”¹⁵ Morrison’s goal, Li suggests, applies to Steve McQueen, the director of *12 Years a Slave*. Given the understanding of neoslave narratives not only as diversified literary genres, but as encompassing non-textual representations as well, it would be a natural progression to extend some of the questions surrounding neoslave narratives to more embodied representations of slavery, as the Whitney also participates in the effort to “speak the unspeakable” and recover the voices of the enslaved.

While I reference several slave narratives in my analysis of the Whitney, more in-depth comparisons rely on passages from *Kindred* and *Beloved*. Both novels incorporate elements of postmodern experimentation, science fiction, and fantasy in order to recover a black feminist perspective on slavery. *Kindred* follows a woman, Dana, who lives in 1970s California but finds herself repeatedly transported to antebellum Maryland in order to save her white, slave-owning ancestor. Throughout these experiences, Dana comes to know the realities of slavery in much harsher terms than her white husband, Kevin, who also travels through time and space. *Beloved* reworks the historical account of an escaped slave woman who was arrested and tried for murdering her child. When confronted with white men who intend to return her to slavery, Sethe, *Beloved*’s protagonist, would rather kill her child herself than let the institution of slavery do it. I use these novels for two reasons: they both attempt to represent slavery from a greater temporal distance than original slave narratives, much like the Whitney Plantation. More importantly, the texts narrate slavery through a black feminist perspective, combatting the male dominated genre of the slave narrative. Though the Whitney is not explicitly feminist, the tour’s attention to the violence slave women in particular endured, as

well as my own observations regarding slave women's presence in the Whitney's archival materials, make these two black feminist texts particularly fruitful lenses through which to examine the Whitney's representation of slavery.

3 "GO THERE TUH KNOW THERE": TOURING THE WHITNEY PLANTATION ¹⁶

A substantial body of criticism exists on contemporary plantation tours in the US, much of which centers on the ways these sites whitewash history, romanticize slavery, and focus primarily on the planter class rather than the slaves. Scholars such as David Butler and Stephen Litvin, and Joshua Brewer analyze the under-representation and significant omission of slavery on many plantation tours, both in urban environments and more rural plantations. Butler, for example, observes a stark contrast between the number of times tour guides mention slavery and the frequency of language pertaining to slave-owners, architecture, and crops. Echoing the attention to slavery's absence, Litvin and Brewer raise the important question of authenticity in regard to representing slavery and consider how much information can be left out of plantation tours before the absence of slavery becomes problematic.¹⁷

More recent scholarship in public history and heritage tourism also contributes to our understanding of plantation tours. Derek Alderman, David Butler, and Stephen Hanna, for example, argue that heritage tourism plays an increasingly important role in understanding the racialization process in the US, and Marie Tyler-McGraw suggests that monuments and historical sites are a form of civic education.¹⁸ Control of these sites, their forms, and their inscriptions is a control of local history. Attending to the relational process of heritage tourism, scholars have highlighted the significance of tourists' prior knowledge of the sites and their own participation in meaning-making at plantation tours.¹⁹ Regarding the spatial and narrative elements of plantation tours, Azaryahu and Foote are instrumental in understanding the centrality of the physical landscape in the production of meaning at plantations.²⁰ I want to extend the critical attention on plantations and spatial narrative to include literary narratives, particularly as they relate to the Whitney's depiction of slavery.

Situated about an hour outside New Orleans, the Whitney Plantation was founded by Ambroise Heidel, a German immigrant who came to Louisiana in 1721. Heidel bought the plantation, originally named Habitation Haydel, in 1752 where he focused on indigo production. His grandson, Jean Jacques Haydel, took over the plantation in the early nineteenth century where he emphasized sugar over indigo. In 1819, Haydel owned sixty-one slaves. Most were Creoles born in Louisiana, nineteen were born in Africa, one in Jamaica, one in Haiti, and three came from the east coast of the US. Additionally, there were twenty-one women on the plantation and nine children. Records indicate early pregnancies in the women and high child mortality rates as well. The Whitney gained its current name in 1867 after Bradish Johnson bought the

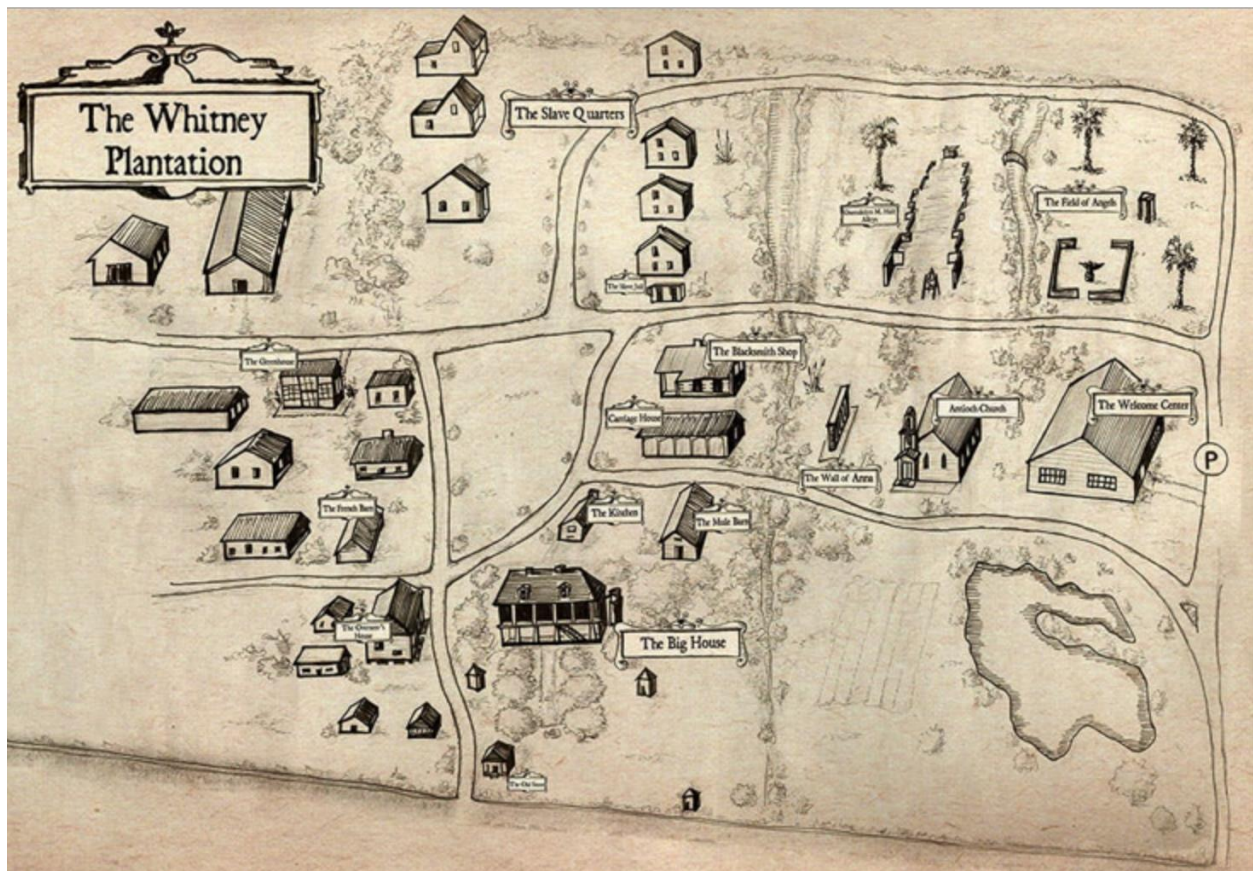
land and named it after his grandson, Harry Whitney.²¹

Located on the historic River Road in Southern Louisiana, the Whitney is in close proximity to other plantations such as Oak Alley, Laura, and Destrehan, yet its mission differs starkly from the other plantations. Oak Alley, for example, markets itself as a plantation, restaurant, and inn that has several cottages available for overnight stay, complete with free Wi-Fi. Additionally, Oak Alley is available to rent out for weddings and the event photos feature smiling white women dancing and clinking champagne glasses.²² The Whitney, however, is the self-described only Louisiana plantation with a focus on slavery and has received significant attention from the popular press.²³ A *New York Times* article by David Amsden refers to the Whitney as the “first slavery museum in America.”²⁴ John Cummings, a New Orleans trial lawyer and the white owner of the Whitney, opened the museum in December 2014 after learning the history of the land he had purchased. The Whitney makes every attempt to represent plantation life from the slaves’ perspectives, from the tour itself to the plantation’s website, which includes information regarding the slaves who lived there, the Atlantic slave trade more broadly, slave resistance, and the slave quarters.

There is also a burgeoning field of scholarship on the Whitney, which often approaches the site through the lens of heritage tourism or public history.²⁵ Thomas Raymen takes one of the more critical stances on the Whitney. Using a criminological approach, Raymen analyzes the Whitney in terms of dark tourism, arguing that touring the Whitney functions as a form of “deviant leisure” with the potential to be both exploitative and voyeuristic.²⁶ Additionally, Raymen argues that the Whitney relegates slavery to the past, and visitors thus lose sight of the ways in which slavery still operates today, albeit in mutated forms.²⁷ While I agree that making an excursion to a site of extreme violence and oppression is unsettling, particularly as a white person, placing the Whitney in conversation with neoslave narratives can provide another dimension to the ethics of touring the site. Michelle Commander suggests that “Cummings and his staff promulgate a quasi-neo slave narrative in which they advance the idea that slavery left its imprint on American society in subtle and devastating ways,” though she doesn’t expand on the connection between the Whitney and literature.²⁸ Extending Commander’s linkage between the Whitney and neoslave narratives, I argue that the Whitney makes use of the contemporary body in order to bridge the gap between slavery’s history and its current manifestations.

The body has long been considered significant in knowing and understanding, particularly in terms of slavery and racial oppression. In Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Janie relates her experiences to her friend Phoeby, ultimately concluding “you got tuh go there tuh know there . . . nobody else can’t tell yuh and show yuh.”²⁹ Janie’s way of knowing relies on bodily experience and physically being there. Likewise, *Kindred*’s protagonist, Dana, finds herself literally transported through time and space to understand the realities of antebellum

slavery. In *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture*, Lisa Woolfork uses the term “bodily epistemology” to consider how the body of a patron, viewer, or reader can locate them in the past. There is a certain premise, Woolfork argues, that “forcing visitors to imagine themselves in the perspective of slaves may offer a more proximate and complex interpretation of the slave past.”³⁰ The bodily epistemology Woolfork references, which appears in Hurston’s and Butler’s novels, plays a significant role in the tour at the Whitney as well. By inverting the typical structure of a plantation tour, the Whitney encourages visitors to know a more accurate depiction of slavery through the physical experience of the tour.



Before commencing the ninety-minute tour, visitors first enter a church, watch an informational video about the plantation, and hear an introductory overview from the tour guide. Throughout the church, life-size statues of slave children surround the visitors. The statues, created by Woodrow Nash, an Ohio-based artist, are meant to symbolize the former slaves that were interviewed as part of the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP). The interviewees would have been children at the time of emancipation. Mary Ann Sternberg, in *River Road Rambler Returns*, recalls her tour of the Whitney: “[T]o me, nothing was more poignant or affecting than the powerfully wrought sculptures of slave children. . . .”³¹ Others echo the evocative power of the statues, calling them “reembodiments”: “Bodies are highly affecting

objects. We relate to bodies because we are embodied.”³² The physical representation of slave children elicits sympathy in visitors, forcing them to acknowledge the influence of slavery on young children before even beginning the tour.



Woodrow Nash sculptures(Image courtesy of Elsa Hahne/Whitney Plantation)

Others, however, are more critical of the Whitney’s emotional appeals. In her review of the Whitney, Randi Lynn Tanglen refers to the “heavy-handed pathos” of the tour, particularly when the tour guide described the grounds as a “crime scene.”³³ By using such language, the tour risks undermining the potential for resistance on the part of slaves, portraying them solely as victims. Michelle Commander also describes what she calls the “sensory excess” of the tour, echoing Tanglen’s critique.³⁴ Yet we might also consider how earlier textual slave narratives used sentimentalism and what one might call “heavy-handed pathos” to appeal to white audiences. Slave narratives of the nineteenth century often employed sentimentalism in order to gain reader sympathy and advance their political aims. Common sentimental tropes include attention to vulnerable womanhood, a focus on the family and domesticity, and the potential for Christian salvation. As Jennifer Williamson notes in *Twentieth Century Sentimentalism: Narrative Appropriation in American Literature*, many abolitionists used “moral suasion,” to focus “rhetorical appeals on the basic goodness of human nature” in order to portray the immorality of slavery.³⁵ Williamson goes on to argue that sentimental tactics have persisted into twentieth century neoslave narratives, such as *Kindred* and *Beloved*. Both novels employ

sentimental themes related to domesticity and familial connections, specifically using children to persuade their readers of slavery's destructiveness, much like the Whitney's use of childlike statues.

A formative moment for Dana is when she has been transported back to antebellum Maryland and witnesses several slave children pretending to hold a slave auction. While the children think they are playing a game, Dana recognizes the unsettling implications of the children's actions. Tired and disgusted, she tells her husband, Kevin, that the "games [the children] are playing are preparing them for their future."³⁶ While Kevin thinks Dana is reading too much into the children's game, Dana thinks he is reading too little into it. The moment incites an argument between the two, and we understand just how differently Kevin and Dana perceive their antebellum environment. Kevin's status as a white man affords him the privilege of viewing a mock slave auction as only a game. Dana, however, has witnessed slave whippings and is acutely aware of her role as a slave on the plantation. She cannot separate the children's actions from the world of violence and oppression they inhabit. Butler uses children specifically to demonstrate the psychic and physical destruction of slavery, as Dana informs Kevin that even if the children live to see emancipation, they will have "slaved away their best years."³⁷

Similarly, the climactic moment of *Beloved* is when Sethe kills her own child rather than see her enslaved. Williamson refers to this moment as "an extreme expression of sentimental motherhood."³⁸ Morrison carries sentimentalism to its furthest end, demonstrating how slavery perverts the concepts of motherhood and familial connections. The Whitney accomplishes a similar goal through its use of child-sized statues and affective language. There is a didactic element to the tour, much like sentimental literature. The tour is not meant to incite a variety of interpretations; rather, its goal is to demonstrate the immorality of slavery. By materially representing enslaved children and deploying "heavy-handed" language, the Whitney implicitly tells visitors how to view slavery. Before commencing the official tour, visitors must confront the brutal realities of slavery, particularly as experienced by vulnerable children.

Rather than begin the tour at the "big house," as most tours do, the Whitney leads visitors out behind the house, to the fields and slave quarters. Visitors first encounter two separate memorials dedicated to former slaves: The Wall of Honor and the Field of Angels. The Wall of Honor is reminiscent of the Memorial Wall of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC, with the names of former slaves at the Whitney engraved on granite slabs. Additional details gleaned from archival materials such as age, relevant skills, and country of origin appear as well. The descriptions on the Wall of Honor demonstrate the complexity of recovering and honoring people whose lives and archival traces appear mediated through their oppressors. Listing the relevant skills and country of origin for each slave echoes the language used by slave-owners and traders on ledgers. In a sense, the rhetorical representation of the former slaves reinscribes the violence of slavery by calling on the slave ledger. Yet the Whitney

reappropriates these details, using the scant information about the slaves to honor what little we do know about their lives rather than reduce them to human chattel.

The Field of Angels represents a more general homage to former slaves, as it is dedicated to the 2,200 slave children who died in St. John the Baptist Parish between the 1820s and 1860s. Both memorials textually inform visitors of the identities of the Whitney's former slaves while physically requiring visitors to traverse the grounds. Visitors read the slave narratives both literally and in a more embodied sense.



Field of Angels(*Image courtesy of Elsa Hahne/Whitney Plantation*)

Visitors then proceed to the slave quarters where the tour guide details the material conditions of those who lived in these cramped spaces. The original slave cabins were torn down in the 1970s; those currently at the Whitney have been moved from other nearby plantations.³⁹ Visitors then enter the cabins, crowding into the sparsely furnished homes. A tour group has little room to simply stand inside and observe the cabins; the implicit understanding is that it must have been even more difficult to actually live in these spaces. While neither a spatial nor a temporal progression, the movement to the slave quarters reiterates the thematic focus on the slave experience; visitors traverse the plantation as a slave might have and are

encouraged to view each location through a slave's perspective rather than the slave owner's.

Before heading indoors, the tour guide makes one last stop: a fully enclosed metal box that likely served as a slave jail. The slave jail is not an original structure, but was brought to the Whitney and placed in the middle of the grounds with no respite from the Louisiana heat.⁴⁰ The tour guide points out the visual perspective of a slave trapped in the jail: the jail is in full view of the slave-owner's house, further cementing the difference in physical and material comfort between the planter class and the slaves. The representation of racial oppression aligns with the tour's emphasis on the lives of slaves and the realities of antebellum life. Viewing the big house from the vantage point of the jail induces a perspectival identification between the visitors and the former slaves. Additionally, the jail is notably behind the big house, which prevents the image of torture from marring the grandeur of the plantation façade, replete with columns and tree-lined walkways. The suffering of the slaves remains out of sight from a public perspective, much as the realities of slavery remain unacknowledged in the national public consciousness.

Descriptions of slave abuse in recent representations of slavery have prompted much debate regarding the purpose of witnessing these violent depictions. Multiple critics objected to the violence shown in *12 Years a Slave*, arguing that scenes of rape and whipping operated as torture porn, devalued the black body, and reinscribed the violence of slavery.⁴¹ Similarly, though not in existence during my own tour, the Whitney has since installed a memorial to the failed 1811 German Coast slave revolt in southern Louisiana. After the rebellion, scores of slaves were decapitated and their heads placed on spikes along River Road. Woodrow Nash has recreated this scene by designing over sixty ceramic skulls on rods, which are installed on site. There is also a plaque with each slave's name on it.⁴² Given that plantation tours often fall under the rubric of dark tourism, we might find the Whitney's focus on the jail and descriptions of slave torture particularly voyeuristic. Commander, for example, warns that the memorial to the slave revolt in particular enacts a "kind of hypervisibility of violence."⁴³ Quoting Saidiya Hartman, Commander suggests the Whitney's narrative minimizes "the very terror it sets out to represent through these mundane' representations."⁴⁴

Given the participatory nature of the plantation tour, it is difficult to control entirely how such depictions of black pain and suffering will be received, making such depictions even more prone to negative interpretations.

So, do the Whitney's tactics reopen wounds for black tourists? Serve as opportunities for fetishistic voyeurism on the part of white tourists? Again, it is useful to consider how the same questions have been applied to textual neoslave narratives in order to understand the implications of representing racialized violence. Robin Winks, for example, characterizes slave

narratives as the “pious pornography of their day”⁴⁵ while Karen Halttunen describes abolitionist representations of slavery as “voyeuristic pornography of pain” that is “obscenely titillating.”⁴⁶ Well-known slave narratives, such as Frederick Douglass’ *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Harriet Jacob’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), feature vivid depictions of whippings and sexual violence enacted on slaves. These moments certainly hold the potential for voyeuristic reading practices that fetishize destruction of the black body, yet these textual moments are also widely recognized in literary studies as seminal moments in the depiction of slavery’s violence. I do not mean to clear the way for any and all depictions of racialized violence, but rather by historicizing the Whitney’s narrative of slavery within the broader genre of slave narratives, I aim to highlight the tradition of narrating slavery in which the Whitney participates.

Given the participatory nature of the plantation tour, it is difficult to control entirely how such depictions of black pain and suffering will be received, making such depictions even more prone to negative interpretations. Much like neoslave narratives, the Whitney draws on bodily epistemology in order to try and control how the depiction of slave torture is interpreted. On our tour, for example, the tour guide paused to ask if anyone needed water or a break, as she didn’t want anyone to faint during the blistering, unshaded tour of the fields and slave quarters. She was quick to remind all of us, however, that such a reprieve would have been unavailable to slaves on the plantation. The tour guide used our physical discomfort, albeit slight in comparison to former slaves’, to emphasize the physical duress under which slaves labored. During the tour, the Whitney incorporates the body, the landscape, and physical objects, connecting contemporary materiality to the materiality of slavery, in the hopes that visitors will know more about slavery than they did when they first arrived.

4 “I HEARD YOU WEREN’T TELLING IT”: THE “TRUE” STORY OF SLAVERY

The Whitney’s narrative of slavery is not limited to the tour; in interviews and museum materials, we also witness various attempts to educate the public about the realities of slavery. In David Amsden’s *New York Times* article, John Cummings asks Amsden, “Don’t you think the story of slavery is important? . . . Well, I checked into it, and I heard you weren’t telling it . . . so I figured I might as well get started.”⁴⁷ Cummings’s statement echoes a theme in textual slave narratives to tell the “true” story of slavery as opposed to the narrative put forth by white slave owners. Cummings’s language also reveals a belief in a singular story of slavery, as he refers to “the story” and “it.” Rather than acknowledging the multiplicity of slave stories, Cummings simply inverts the more common whitewashing of plantation tours, referring to his particular version as the correct one. In a 2015 article for the *Washington Post*, Cummings echoes the focus on factuality, stating that the Whitney “presents the facts of slavery through the words of those who experienced it” and that the museum provides a “meaningful and factually accurate

education about slavery.”⁴⁸

Cummings’s emphasis on the accuracy of the Whitney could be due to the plantation’s self-proclaimed status as the only museum dedicated to telling the story of slavery. Given that the Whitney does not represent the common experience of plantation tours, Cummings might feel pressure to assure skeptics and critics of the validity of this oft-untold story. If so, it is curious that Cummings does not mention Ibrahima Seck in the *Washington Post* article. Seck, a Senegalese scholar, works as the Director of Research for the Whitney and was responsible for much of the historical research that informed the Whitney’s representation of slavery. His book, *Bouki Fait Gombo: A History of the Slave Community of Habitation Haydel (Whitney Plantation) Louisiana, 1750–1860*, details the lives of the slaves who lived at the Whitney. Amsden’s *NYT* article features multiple images of Seck and Cummings, noting the “alliance between the two men has been an auspicious one, with Seck’s patience and expertise serving as a counterbalance to the instinctual eccentricity of Cummings.” Seck also describes Cummings as making “real reparations. He feels there is something to be done in this country to make changes.”⁴⁹ Seck’s expertise and involvement with the Whitney authenticates Cummings’s motivations when we might otherwise question a wealthy white man who purchased a former plantation in order to represent slavery.

Yet Cummings also serves as an authenticating presence himself, particularly for white audiences. His reiteration of the facts in the *Washington Post* article echoes the various forms of front matter that accompanied written slave narratives in which the (often white) amanuensis verified the narrative and assured the (mostly white) readership that the following account was neither tall tale nor racial propaganda, but a true accounting of the slave’s experience. Such authentication was required, as white audiences would otherwise doubt the veracity of a black narrator. In his article, Cummings operates as the amanuensis for the Whitney and serves as an authenticating presence for whites because of his race and financial means. Cummings’s omission of Seck’s involvement, whether intentional or not, reifies the ways in which narratives regarding slavery often still require white authentication for white audiences.

We might ask the same question about slavery—if anyone is allowed to speak with authority on slavery, do we not risk subordinating slave voices, particularly when we consider the role of whites in contemporary plantation tours?

Cummings’s whiteness does not preclude him from attempting to retell the history of slavery from the slaves’ perspectives, though the role of his whiteness should not be dismissed either. In *Inauthentic: The Anxiety over Culture and Identity*, Vincent Cheng examines the tension

surrounding who is “allowed” to speak for subaltern groups and who we consider an authentic author. Cheng himself is an Irish Studies scholar, though he is not Irish, and questions whether or not he is authorized to speak for the Irish as postcolonial subjects: “If, however, anyone can potentially speak about Irishness, do we not risk robbing the colonial subaltern (once again) of his/her own voice?” We might ask the same question about slavery—if anyone is allowed to speak with authority on slavery, do we not risk subordinating slave voices, particularly when we consider the role of whites in contemporary plantation tours? Yet Cheng goes on to question the very notion of authenticity, noting that contemporary cultural and poststructuralist theories “endorse the deconstruction of supposedly authentic or originary identities.”⁵⁰ I agree that determining an “authentic” voice, particularly in the case of slavery where we remain limited by archival evidence, is a tenuous concept. Yet I do not mean to equate various representations of slavery or suggest Cummings’s motivations go unquestioned.

Though tenuous, authenticity is still a pertinent issue for the Whitney because of its notably distinct mission. While we could likely find links between textual neoslave narratives and more whitewashed plantation tours, I want to stress that taking slavery as the subject of representation does not necessarily lead to an ethical or accurate depiction. I find Cheng’s assertion that “we must ask where the ‘speaking for’ goes and what it does and whether it enables or disables the empowerment of those spoken for”⁵¹ useful in distinguishing the Whitney from the more common plantation tour experience as well as for interrogating the Whitney itself. As noted, Seck conducted much of the historical research that informs the plantation. Though Cummings may provide the financial foundation for the Whitney, knowledge production regarding slavery does not begin and end with Cummings; rather, scholars invested in the history of slavery also participate in the Whitney’s representations of antebellum life.

Questions of authenticity not only apply to Cummings’s role at the Whitney, but in the historical materials from which the Whitney builds its narrative. For example, the slave narratives recorded through the Federal Writers’ Project are the basis for the “history shared at the Whitney Plantation through memorials, statues, slave cabins and artwork on the grounds.”⁵² While no doubt useful in understanding slavery through the eyes of those who labored under it, the FWP narratives are not specific to the former slaves at the Whitney, revealing the ways in which the Whitney’s narrative does not exist in a discrete form, but is cobbled together from various sources. Tanglen highlights what she calls the “imprecise use” of historical documents such as the FWP narratives in recreating the realities of slavery, implying that the Whitney’s desire to tell the true story of slavery is undermined by its reliance on historical documents not specific to the Whitney. Commander makes a similar critique about the use of the FWP narratives, citing the “well-documented and cogently argued critiques about the dubious nature of many of the accounts.”⁵³ Instead, Commander suggests, Cummings and his employees could better acknowledge the controversial nature of the FWP narratives “to

underscore the magnitude of the Whitney Plantation's production of historical counter-narratives."⁵⁴ While I agree with Commander's suggestion, it's also worth noting the FWP narratives are not the sole source of information regarding slavery; in addition to Seck's *Bouki Fait Gombo*, the Whitney also utilizes Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's work on slavery in Louisiana, particularly her online Louisiana Slave Database.⁵⁵ An overemphasis on the FWP narratives risks minimizing the influence of historically grounded research by scholars invested in slavery's legacy.

We should also consider the vast array of historical documents that do apply to the former slaves at the Whitney. Included on the museum's website are photocopies of previous owners' slave inventories. For example, the inventory of Mathias Roussel Pere, taken in October 1818, lists the names, origins, qualifications, and any observations regarding the slaves Pere owned. A slave named Justin is listed as being from Bambara, born in 1778, and epileptic. A female from Acadienne, Marie, is listed as a domestic and a spinner with a three-year-old daughter, Marie Eve. The vast majority of the slaves listed, however, lack any qualifications or observations. They are instead known by their name, origin, and year of birth, which serve as the only record of their existence, at least for the Whitney. One can't help but wonder how to read the blank spaces in the inventory. This slim evidence of human existence and lack of subjectivity casts a critical eye on the notion of authenticity, particularly as Tanglen uses it. While the inventories might be more historically precise than the FWP narratives, they lack the first-person accounts of the FWP. Instead, the inventories represent the slaves as commodities; their identities are made manifest through the violence of the slave ledger. Though less specific to the Whitney, the FWP narratives are valuable to the Whitney's effort to restore subjectivity to former slaves, even if those slaves did not actually live at the Whitney.

Emphasizing historically precise documents should also be viewed skeptically because historical documents surrounding slavery, no matter how accurate, inevitably leave space for readers to impose their own interpretations. In the inventory of Jacques and Nicholas Haydel Jr., for example, there appears a young "Negresse," age fourteen. Of the nine slaves listed on the inventory, she is the only unnamed person. Under "observations" she is also listed as mutilated. Given the sexual abuse slave women endured at the hands of their white masters and overseers, and the tour's own emphasis on sexual violence, one cannot help but wonder if the unnamed girl was sexually abused and if this is related to her mutilation. Yet the exact fate of the girl is unknown and to impose sexual abuse on her would only reenact the oppressive conditions of slavery. Though a historically precise document, the gaps and silences in the slave ledger enable imprecise interpretations.

Our inability to know the identities and fates of the Whitney's former slaves also elicits epistemological questions, which have been raised by scholars such as Saidiya Hartman and Gayatri Spivak.⁵⁶ In Hartman's seminal essay, "Venus in Two Acts," she describes the presence,

or lack thereof, of slave women in the archive: “Hers is the same fate as every other Black Venus: no one remembered her name or recorded the things she said, or observed that she refused to say anything at all. Her is an untimely story told by a failed witness.”⁵⁷ Hartman goes on to reflect on her own recuperative work as a scholar and the ways she is limited by the available archival evidence, noting that she wishes to avoid simply re-enacting the violence of slavery, but also wishes to respect what she cannot know. Viewing the Whitney through Hartman’s lens, the emphasis on facticity, both by Tanglen and Cummings, seems to lack an acknowledgement of our own epistemological limits, particularly when our knowledge depends on an incomplete archive that denies some their subjectivity. While I understand Cummings’s motivations for emphasizing the Whitney’s factuality, I would also caution against this insistence because it opens the Whitney up to critiques such as Tanglen’s. Instead, Cummings might temper his focus on the facts with some attention to the value of having a multiplicity of sources and voices in representing slavery.

Stephen P. Hanna, Derek H. Alderman, and Candace Forbes Bright also emphasize the value in the Whitney’s varied source materials, despite the sources not being historically specific to the Whitney. Observing that several of the current structures on the plantation, such as the slave quarters and Antioch Baptist Church, are not original to the Whitney, the authors note that relocating these buildings is “antithetical to more conservative historic preservation practices.”⁵⁸ However, the authors go on to praise the relocation of these structures: “this approach provided the material elements necessary to anchor the stories of the enslaved in the landscape, even if these disparate elements did not fit squarely with each other in terms of era or geographic origin.”⁵⁹ Indeed, in the absence of the original slave quarters, for example, we might ask if it is better to maintain the slave quarters’ absence or restore these dwellings with some type of surrogate. Hanna, Alderman, and Bright take a similar approach to the Whitney’s more textual resources, such as the FWP interviews. Rather than view the use of these documents as imprecise, the authors describe the amount of material as transcendent. Acknowledging the FWP narratives are not specific to the Whitney, the authors cite the FWP narratives’ value “because they allow for the voices of the formerly enslaved—regardless of where they were enslaved—to make present their own lived experiences.”⁶⁰ Much as Simmons urges an attention to the multiplicity of voices in Mary Prince’s slave narrative, Hanna, Alderman, and Bright also encourage us to attend to the diversity of slave experiences represented at the Whitney rather than overemphasize historical accuracy.



Slave cabins(Image courtesy of Elsa Hahne/Whitney Plantation)

Toni Morrison's postmodern experimentation in *Beloved* is also useful in analyzing the multiplicity of voices at the Whitney and the collectivity of slaves represented at the plantation. In the second section of *Beloved*, we witness fragments of communication between Beloved and Sethe:

Tell me the truth. Didn't you come from the other side?

Yes. I was on the other side.

You came back because of me?

Yes.

You rememory me?

Yes. I remember you.⁶¹

Critics interpret "rememory" in an active sense to mean "inhabitation of past experiences"⁶² and the act of using "one's imaginative power to realize a latent, abiding connection to the past."⁶³ As nouns, rememories "exist not only outside the agent's mind but are available to anyone who enters the sphere of action."⁶⁴ Drawing from an array of source material, the Whitney imaginatively recreates antebellum slave life, encouraging visitors to inhabit the space of the plantation in order to gain some understanding of former slaves' experiences. Importantly, rememories are not limited to the one who actually experienced an event and who holds the memory. Rememories exist in the world to be "bumped into."⁶⁵ It's worth noting that in Rushdy's definition, rememories are available to anyone in the "sphere of

action,” but not necessarily noticed or interacted with. Likewise, the opportunity for engagement with the past is available to anyone who visits the Whitney, but may not necessarily be acted upon whether because of preconceived biases, the potential trauma of engaging with slavery, or simply being distracted on the tour. As opposed to a rigid focus on factuality, the concept of rememory, as a type of collective memory that has the potential to transcend time and space, serves as a possible method of understanding the Whitney’s more encompassing, imaginative use of source materials that might otherwise be deemed historically imprecise.

5 “FEEL A LITTLE OF WHAT IT WAS LIKE:” CONNECTING PAST AND PRESENT

In 2010, Joseph McGill Jr., a Civil War re-enactor from South Carolina, founded a nonprofit organization called The Slave Dwelling Project. McGill, a descendant of slaves, began by traveling to various former slave dwellings and sleeping in them to gain people’s attention. His goal was not only to encourage preservation of the dwellings themselves, but also to remind the public of slavery’s significance in the nation’s history. McGill observed that we “tell the story of our country through the buildings we decide to preserve, and we tend to focus on the happy parts. . . . There was a void in this part of history, a lack of buildings that recognized the enslaved.”⁶⁶ McGill soon began bringing others to sleep with him in the dwellings; one man slept with his wrists shackled to “honor the ancestors who came over in the middle passage . . . and to feel a little of what it was like to be bound.”⁶⁷ According to the Slave Dwelling Project website, McGill has now stayed in over ninety different slave dwellings in over eighteen states. The project now holds an annual conference, and the organization allows people to sign up for overnight stays, which include educational lectures.

I admit the prospect of sleeping over in a slave dwelling evokes discomfort; as a white person, what purpose would such an experience serve? Would sleeping over in a slave dwelling be a voyeuristic glimpse at an oppression neither my ancestors nor I experienced? The Slave Dwelling Project, like the Whitney Plantation, produces complicated questions regarding how slavery should be represented and how, or even if, one can ethically participate in these representations. I do not claim to have the perfect litmus test for determining whether current engagements with slavery are “good” or “bad.” However, I do think it is critical to remember that current representations of slavery, whether films, plantation tours, or other immersive experiences such as the Slave Dwelling Project, do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, these depictions draw on long histories of narrating slavery and encouraging others to know the true violence of slavery. Much as the Whitney seeks to connect the past with the present, our understanding of the Whitney would be well served by connecting past representations of slavery with current ones. Examining how neoslave narratives like Butler’s *Kindred* and Morrison’s *Beloved* have elicited, and attempted to answer, the same questions the Whitney

now faces can help us navigate questions of authenticity, voyeurism, and public history regarding more immersive representations of slavery.

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¹ See Roxane Gay, "I Don't Want to Watch Slavery Fan Fiction," *New York Times*, July 25, 2017, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/25/opinion/hbo-confederate-slavery-civil-war.html>; Alex Greenberger, "'The Painting Must Go': Hannah Black Pens Open Letter to the Whitney About Controversial Biennial Work," *ARTNews*, March 21, 2017, accessed October 3, 2019, <http://www.artnews.com/2017/03/21/the-painting-must-go-hannah-black-pens-open-letter-to-the-whitney-about-controversial-biennial-work/>.

² Earl F. Bargainnier describes "moonlight and magnolias" as "the myth of an antebellum Golden Age, a myth created in the postbellum world of the 1880s and 1890s, and a part of the larger myths of the plantation and the Lost Cause." See Earl F. Bargainnier, "'Moonlight and Magnolias' Myth" in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, vol. 4, *Myth, Manners, and Memory*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 246.

³ See Stephen P. Hanna, "Placing the Enslaved at Oak Alley Plantation: Narratives, Spatial Contexts, and the Limits of Surrogation," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 11, no. 3 (2015), 219–34.

⁴ In "Encountering Engineered and Orchestrated Remembrance: A Situational Model of Dark Tourism and Its History" (P. R. Stone, R. Hartmann, T. Seaton, R. Sharpley, and L. White, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies* [London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018]), Tony Seaton describes dark tourism, also known as thanatourism, as tourism "motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death" (13).

⁵ John Ernest, *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4.

⁶ Other well-known slave narratives include *Olaudah Equiano, The Interesting Narrative and the Life of "Olaudah Equiano" or Gustavas Vassa, the African* (1789); William Wells

Brown, *Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive Slave* (1847); Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery* (1901).

⁷ Ernest, *The Oxford Handbook of the African American Slave Narrative*, 7.

⁸ Sterling Lecater Bland, *Understanding Nineteenth-Century Slave Narratives* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2016), 11.

⁹ K. Merinda Simmons, "Beyond 'Authenticity': Migration and the Epistemology of 'Voice' in Mary Prince's *History of Mary Prince* and Maryse Condé's *I, Tituba*," *College Literature* 36, no. 4 (2009): 77.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Bernard W. Bell, *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 289.

¹² Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, *Neo-slave Narratives Studies in the Social Logic of a Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

¹³ For an understanding of the critique Styron's novel received, see John Henrik Clarke's edited collection, *William Styron's Nat Turner: Ten Black Writers Respond* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

¹⁴ In "Ideologies of Black Folk: The Historical Novel of Slavery," Hazel Carby also discusses *Black Thunder* in relation to late-twentieth century neoslave narratives.

¹⁵ Stephanie Li, "12 Years a Slave as a Neoslave Narrative," *American Literary History* 26, no. 2 (2014): 327.

¹⁶ I toured the Whitney Plantation in 2015, and my experience of the tour aligns with others who have published on the topic, such as Randi Lynn Tanglen, "Review: The Whitney Plantation." *Public Historian* 37, no. 4 (2015), 146; and Stephen P. Hanna, Derek H. Alderman, Candace Forbes Bright, "From Celebratory Landscapes to Dark Tourism Sites? Exploring the Design of Southern Plantation Museums," *The Palgrave Handbook of Dark Tourism Studies*, ed. P. R. Stone, R. Hartmann, T. Seaton, R. Sharpley, and L. White (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 399–421.

¹⁷ See Stephen Litvin and Joshua Brewer, "Charleston, South Carolina, Tourism and the Presentation of Urban Slavery in an Historic Southern City," *International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration* 9, no. 1 (2008): 71–84.

¹⁸ Derek H. Alderman, David L. Butler, and Stephen P. Hanna, "Memory, Slavery, and Plantation Museums: The River Road Project," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 11, no. 3: 209–18; Marie Tyler-McGraw, "Southern Comfort Levels: Race, Heritage Tourism, and the Civil War in Richmond," in *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory*, ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 157.

¹⁹ See Derek H. Alderman and E. Arnold Modlin, "On the Political Utterances of Plantation Tourists: Vocalizing the Memory of Slavery on River Road," *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 11, no. 3 (2016): 275–89, and Christine N. Buzinde and Carla Almeida Santos, "Interpreting Slavery Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research* 36, no. 3 (2009): 439–58.

²⁰ Maoz Azaryahu and Kenneth Foote, "Historical Space as Narrative Medium: On the Configuration of Spatial Narratives of Time at Historical Sites," *GeoJournal* 73, no. 3 (2008): 179–94.

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- ²² “Wedding Receptions,” Oak Alley Plantation Restaurant and Inn, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.oakalleyplantation.com/host-event/wedding-receptions>.
- ²³ For example, see Jared Keller, “Inside America’s Auschwitz,” *Smithsonian*, April 4, 2016, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/inside-americas-auschwitz-180958647/>; Kalim Armstrong, “Telling the Story of Slavery,” *New Yorker*, February 17, 2016, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/telling-the-story-of-slavery>.
- ²⁴ David Amsden, “Building the First Slavery Museum in America,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/magazine/building-the-first-slave-museum-in-america.html>.
- ²⁵ See Candace Forbes Bright and Perry Carter, “Social Representational Communities and the Imagined Antebellum South,” (2018); Matthew R. Cook, “Counter-narratives of slavery in the Deep South: the politics of empathy along and beyond River Road” (2015); and Randi Lynn Tanglen, “Review: The Whitney Plantation” (2015).
- ²⁶ Thomas Raymen, “Slavery, Dark Tourism, and Deviant Leisure at the American Society of Criminology in New Orleans,” *Plymouth Law and Criminal Justice Review* 9 (2017): 17–18.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ²⁸ Michelle D. Commander, “Plantation Counternarratives: Disrupting Master Accounts in Contemporary Cultural Production,” *Journal of American Culture* 41, no. 1 (2018): 34.
- ²⁹ Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1937), 285.
- ³⁰ Lisa Woolfork, *Embodying American Slavery in Contemporary Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 9.
- ³¹ Mary Ann Sternberg, *River Road Rambler Returns: More Curiosities along Louisiana’s Historic Byway* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2018).
- ³² E. Arnold Modlin, Stephen P. Hanna, Perry L. Carter, Amy E. Potter, Candace Forbes Bright, and Derek H. Alderman. “Can Plantation Museums Do Full Justice to the Story of the Enslaved? A Discussion of Problems, Possibilities, and the Place of Memory,” *GeoHumanities* 4, no. 2 (2018), 9.
- ³³ Randi Lynn Tanglen, “Review: The Whitney Plantation,” 146.
- ³⁴ Commander, “Plantation Counternarratives,” 37.
- ³⁵ Jennifer Williamson, *Twentieth-Century Sentimentalism: Narrative Appropriation in American Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 14.
- ³⁶ Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979), 100.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Random House, 1987), 22.
- ³⁹ “The Slave Quarters,” Whitney Plantation, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.whitneyplantation.com/education/louisiana-history/the-big-house-and-the-outbuildings/the-slave-quarters/>.

⁴⁰ Speaking to Michael Patrick Welch in a 2015 article for *Vice*, Seck says the slave jail was found in Gonzales, Louisiana, and was likely used to imprison slaves before they were sold at the New Orleans slave market.

⁴¹ See Armond White, "Can't Trust It," *City Arts*, October 16, 2013, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140326115927/http://cityarts.info/2013/10/16/cant-trust-it/>; Dana Stevens, "My problem with *12 Years a Slave*," *Slate*, January 17, 2014, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://slate.com/culture/2014/01/12-years-a-slave-my-problem-with-steve-mcqueens-harrowing-film.html>; Richard Brody, "Should A Film Try to Depict Slavery?" *New Yorker*, 2013, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/should-a-film-try-to-depict-slavery>.

⁴² Commander, "Plantation Counternarratives," 40–41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Robin Winks, et al., *Four Fugitive Slave Narratives*. (Boston: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1969), vi.

⁴⁶ Karen Halttunen, "Humanitarianism and the Pornography of Pain in Anglo-American Culture," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 2 (1995): 318–19.

⁴⁷ Amsden, "Building the First Slavery Museum in America."

⁴⁸ John J. Cummings, III, "The US Has 35,000 Museums. Why Is Only One about Slavery?" *Washington Post*, August 13, 2015, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/08/13/the-u-s-has-35000-museums-why-is-only-one-about-slavery/>.

⁴⁹ Amsden, "Building the First Slavery Museum in America."

⁵⁰ Vincent J. Cheng, *Inauthentic: The Anxiety over Culture and Identity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 14.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵² Cummings, "The US Has 35,000 Museums."

⁵³ Commander, "Plantation Counternarratives," 36; in terms of the FWP narratives, Commander points to "controversies over their transcription, the racialized power dynamics that existed between the untrained interviewers and their interviewees, and the fact that many African Americans were skeptical of the mostly white interviewers and likely covertly resisted by fabricating their recollections for safety reasons and/or to maintain control over their own stories" (36). Commander states in an endnote that the Whitney has recently installed a banner near the gift shop, which acknowledges the FWP narratives might only reflect what interviewees thought their interviewers wanted to hear (43).

⁵⁴ Commander, "Plantation Counternarratives," 36.

⁵⁵ Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, *Afro-Louisiana History and Genealogy, 1719–1820*, accessed October 3, 2019, <https://www.ibiblio.org/laslave/>

⁵⁶ See Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

⁵⁷ Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 2.

⁵⁸ Stephen P. Hanna, Derek H. Alderman, Candace Forbes Bright, "From Celebratory Landscapes to Dark Tourism Sites?" 416.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Morrison, *Beloved*, 254.

⁶² James McCorkle, "Narrating Memory: Rayda Jacobs, Yvette Christianse and Andre Brink and the New Slave Narrative." *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 10 no. 1 (2016): 20.

⁶³ Caroline Rody, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: History, 'Rememory,' and a 'Clamor for a Kiss.'" *American Literary History*, 7, no. 1 (1995): 101.

⁶⁴ Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, "'Rememory': Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels." *Contemporary Literature*, 31, no. 3 (1990): 303.

⁶⁵ Early in the novel, Sethe tells Denver: "Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. . . . It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else" (43). Rememories physically exist in the world, open to encounters with various people.

⁶⁶ Patrick Sisson, "The Slave Dwelling Project: Preserving the Structures and Stories of Slavery," *Curbed*, November 13, 2015, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.curbed.com/2015/11/13/9900156/slave-dwelling-project-joseph-mcgill>.

⁶⁷ Tony Horwitz, "One Man's Epic Quest to Visit Every Former Slave Dwelling in the United States," *Smithsonian*, October 2013, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/one-mans-epic-quest-to-visit-every-former-slave-dwelling-in-the-united-states-12080/>.