
Abstracts

James Berger, Ghosts of Liberalism: Morrison's *Beloved* and the Moynihan Report 408

In focusing the novel *Beloved* on Sethe's forced infanticide, Toni Morrison places social and familial trauma at the center of American discourses on race. This emphasis opposes two forms of the denial of trauma that have characterized American politics since the late 1960s—neoconservative denial of the continuing effects of institutional racism and the New Left and black-nationalist denial of violence within African American communities. *Beloved* invokes an essentially liberal position of the sort that culminated and largely ended in the Moynihan report of 1965. But Morrison corrects the errors of this form of liberalism by insisting on the agency and autonomy of African American culture and on the positive roles of women. (JB)

Catherine Ciepiela, The Demanding Woman Poet: On Resisting Marina Tsvetaeva 421

Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry, like Sylvia Plath's, dramatizes issues of primary psychological and sexual experience, issues that many critics have taken to be purely biographical. The openly apostrophic character of Tsvetaeva's writing has generated critical judgments about her character. Tsvetaeva's address, in both her lyrics and her letters, is embarrassing—not, as Jonathan Culler maintains, because apostrophe never fulfills its claims but, as Barbara Johnson argues, because it is a naked expression of need. Johnson's Lacanian conception of apostrophe as the child's demand illuminates Tsvetaeva's writing and helps to explain why Tsvetaeva has been charged with being a bad mother. However, Tsvetaeva's practice suggests that far from being contradictory impulses, demanding and giving can hardly be distinguished—a confusion that is reflected in the ambivalent responses her work has inspired. (CC)

Peter A. Dorsey, Becoming the Other: The Mimesis of Metaphor in Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* 435

In his *Narrative* (1845), Frederick Douglass constructs a self based on conversion rhetoric and binary logic. In the greatly expanded *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), he complicates this textual self by both imitating and criticizing tropes conventionally used in the slavery debate, such as metaphors related to animals, Christianity, and manhood. Emphasizing the constructed nature of mimesis and metaphor, Douglass demonstrates his ability to escape the bondage of reductionist language even as he claims the power associated with linguistic mastery. This revision of self emerges from his experience of northern racism, manifested in his limited role in William Lloyd Garrison's organization. Douglass's renunciation of Garrisonian dogma and his entry into political action—including his striking textual reinterpretation of the United States Constitution—coincide with the stylistically "modernist" self of the second autobiography. (PAD)

Allen J. Frantzen, The Disclosure of Sodomy in *Cleanness* 451

Cleanness, an alliterative Middle English poem attributed to the author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, contains a graphic account of the destruction of Sodom. Elaborating the theme of cleanness, the poet advocates not only sexual purity but also right conduct and respect for God's will. Exhortations to clean behavior are conventional; less expected are the poem's bold censure of "unclean" sexual acts, especially sodomy, and insistence that the clergy maintain vigilant surveillance of sexual wrongdoing. A poem with a salacious cast, *Cleanness* takes unusual risks in describing sodomy while denouncing it. Using Foucault's "rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses," I analyze *Cleanness* in relation to contemporary manuals of confession, which avoid mentioning sodomy for fear that the word might encourage the act. The poem's description of Sodom concludes with a construction of the feminine that serves as a corrective to the sins of male lust. (AJF)