

Final Paper

Textual Excerpts

Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, Toni Morrison

The ability of writers to imagine what is not the self, to familiarize the strange and mystify the familiar, is the test of their power. The languages they use and the social historical context in which these languages signify are indirect and direct revelations of that power and its limitations. (15)

Just as the formation of nation necessitated coded language and purposeful restriction to deal with the racial disingenuousness and moral frailty at its heart, so did too the literature, whose founding characteristics extend into the twentieth century, reproduce the necessity for codes and restriction. Through significant and underscored omissions, startling contradictions, heavily nuanced conflicts, through the way writers peopled their work with signs and bodies of their presence—one can see that for a real or fabricated Africanist presence was crucial to their sense of Americanness. And it shows. (6)

This Bridge Called my Back Writings by Radical Women of Color, (Moraga & Anzaldúa)

Still here, in the underbelly of the "first" world, women of color writing is one liberation tool at our disposal. History is always in the making; while women of color and Indigenous peoples remain wordless in the official record. The very act of writing then, conjuring/coming to "see," what has yet to be recorded in history is to bring into consciousness what only the body knows to be true. The body—that site which houses the intuitive, the unspoken, the viscera of our being.—this is the revolutionary promise of theory in the flesh; for it is both the expression of evolving political consciousness and the creator of consciousness, itself. Seldom recorded and hardly honored. Our theory incarnate provides the most reliable roadmap to liberation. "Catching Fire" (preface to the fourth edition) Cherrie Moraga xxiii-xiv)

We are our sisters' and brothers' keepers; no one is an island or has ever been. Every person, animal, plant, stone is interconnected in life-and death-symbiosis. We are each responsible for what is happening down the street, south of the border or across the sea. And those of us who have more of anything—more brains, more physical strength, more political power, more money, or more spiritual energies—must give or exchange with those who don't have these energies but may have other things to give. It is the responsibility of some of us who tap the vast source of spiritual/political energies to help heal others, to put down a drawbridge; at the same time we must depend more and more on our own sources for survival—to help women who still live in cages to take new steps, and to break old barriers. (Gloria Anzaldúa xxviii)

Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* proposes "to examine the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored or altered those notions" (11). *This Bridge Called My Back* centers the artistic and the creative, the poetic and the political texts and voices of Women of Color (WOC) who speak their truths as acts of resistance and liberations. In our semester long discussion of cultural identity in America, we have examined a variety of literary and filmic texts that situate/contemplate the racial/ethnic/indigenous/cultural/classed (etc.) complexities of being a Black/Person of Color in the American society. At the center of this discussion, one's racial or ethnic position is simultaneously connected with class, gender, nation, language, sexuality, culture, labor and community. Your final essay tasks you to further complicate this discussion by considering the implications of bodies in art, literature, and film. How do these bodies represent meanings of race, culture, and home?

Film TV Options

<i>American Violet</i> (2008)	<i>Blackish</i>
<i>Gran Torino</i> (2008)	<i>Dr. Ken</i>
<i>Frankie and Alice</i> (2010)	<i>Fresh off the Boat</i>
<i>Our Family Wedding</i> (2010)	<i>American Crime Season 3</i>
<i>Mosquita y Mari</i> (2012)	<i>Key and Peele</i>
<i>Yelling to the Sky</i> (2011)	<i>Ugly Betty</i>
<i>Real Women Have Curves</i> (2002)	<i>The Last OG</i>
<i>La Mission</i> (2009)	<i>I Feel Bad</i>
<i>Better Luck Tomorrow</i> (2002)	<i>One Day at a Time</i> (2017)
<i>The Namesake</i> (2006)	
<i>Saving Face</i> (2002)	
<i>Water</i> (2005)	
<i>Crazy Rich Asians</i> (2018)	

Art Exhibits

Brooklyn Museum

1. https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/garry_winogrand Garry Winogrand: *Color*
2. <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/stonewall> *Nobody Promised You Tomorrow: Art 50 Years After Stonewall*
3. https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/johnson_artur Liz Johnson Artur: *Dusha*

El Museo del Barrio,

1. <https://www.elmuseo.org/culture-and-the-people> *Culture and The People: El Museo del Barrio, 1969-2019*
2. <https://www.elmuseo.org/permanent-collection/>

Questions-to-Ponder (QTP) Questions #1 and #2 required. Select and additional (#3 or #4)

1. Discuss the film/art exhibit and how it depicts racial/ethnic bodies in the national and or global society. Are the bodies at a disadvantage because of their racial/ethnic and class predicament? How does the piece connect to or respond to meanings of culture, place, and home?
2. Frame how the readings selected situate racial/ethnic/cultural identity—and/or being a person of color? How does the reading represent or present a counter narrative to the depiction of bodies you discussed in QTP#1?
3. Explain how the historical trajectory of race and ethnicity in America impacts Whites, African Americans/People of Color as connected to civil rights, problematic stereotypes, and the political and social landscape of the United States?
4. How does the articulation of race—and its relationship to gender, sexuality, class, labor, culture etc. shift over time, and how is this reflected in the literature and representations of bodies in cultural, literary, and societal spaces?

Your essay must complete the following levels of analysis:

1. Engage a film/tv and or Art exhibit. I do not expect you to provide a detailed summary of the entire film/exhibit. You must decide how to use the film/artwork as text by focusing on specific scenes or characters.
2. Discuss *This Bridge Called My Back* (use a minimum of two (2) readings)/and or discuss *Her Body and Other Parties*.
3. Use a minimum of two (2) secondary articles—Blackboard.

The above steps and the questions should help you frame the larger and the implications of how bodies are framed in the contemporary society. **Please upload a minimum of two (2) pages of your final paper draft on Blackboard by June 2, 2017.**

Writing Workshop: Please bring five copies (5) of two (2) (typed double-spaced pages) of your final paper draft for our in-class writing workshop 5/31/19. This will enable you to get whole group feedback on your paper in order to revise/complete the final draft.

Final Papers are due on Blackboard 6/9/19 and must be a minimum of six (6) typed double-spaced pages.