SKIN DEEP, 
SPIRIT STRONG

The Black Female Body in American Culture

Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, Editor

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS

Ann Arbor
Dedicated to my students,
who manage to get under my skin and
next to my heart in the most surprising ways.

And to my son, Isaiah Anthony Wallace Sanders,
who taught me that the body must be
loved from the inside out.
Acknowledgments

There were many torchbearers on this journey. The kind words and actions of friends, family members, colleagues, and students helped me to navigate my way through terrain that was far more challenging than I ever expected. There are moments in academic study that cause some subtle yet profound shifts in thinking. Most often these are quiet moments that occur between you and the page. If you are fortunate they also occur between you and your colleagues. I am indebted to Jeanne Bergman and Siobhan Somerville for directing me to new ways of imagining the ante-bellum plantation as the body politic and to Karla Holloway, Hazel Carby, bell hooks, and Susan Bordo for igniting my fierce interest in the Black female body.

The major work on this book was made possible by a Rockefeller funded grant to the Womanist Studies Consortium at the University of Georgia in 1997. Their associated faculty, Layli Phillips, Barbara McCaskill, and Velma Murray were helpful to me during my leave from Spelman College. The New York University Faculty Resource Network also supported this work; special thanks go to Phillip Michael Harper and Tricia Rose for patiently listening to my thoughts and offering much needed advice.

My editor, LeAnn Fields, has a wonderfully rare combination of wit and wisdom; she, Laurie Clark-Klavins, and Abigail Potter provided invaluable assistance to me. All of the contributors to this volume constitute an impressive group of scholars and writers; I am proud to be affiliated with them.

My Atlanta colleagues Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Francis Smith Foster, Rudolph Byrd, and Johnnetta B. Cole sustained me with generous mentoring and an unwavering faith in my abilities. Darlene Clark Hine and Ann duCille also provided tremendous encouragement to me at crucial stages of this work; both scholars continue to raise the bar of excellence so that it is never out of sight and just barely out of reach. Rosemarie Garland Thomson read and made valuable contributions to my introduction.

I extend my deep gratitude to Audree Irons and the student staff at the Spelman College Women’s Research and Resource Center, especially...
Acknowledgments

Shanell McGoy, who made a wonderful contribution to one of these essays simply by asking the right question. I am delighted to commend outstanding Emory graduate students Michelle Wilkinson, Jennifer Steadman, Ariel Browne, Abigail Blankner, and Andy Lowry, who made valuable contributions to the completion of this work: each has the makings of an exceptional scholar.

My true sisters of the spirit—Suzette Garland, Leslie Harris, Vanessa Jackson, Kathryn Naylor, Bethany Poindexter, and Claire Sanders—extended themselves to me in the most important ways throughout the duration of this project. Robyn Thurston Guy, Phyllis Rose, and Estelle Vaughn have sustained me with unwavering friendship since our Oberlin days. Atlanta artist Mary Logan bolstered my confidence when I almost gave up. Elizabeth Alexander, Nikki Finney, and Opal Moore threw lifelines of poetry to me when I needed them most.

I am grateful to my parents, Rose Hardman Wallace and Raymond Wallace, who taught me my very first lesson about my own body: that it is one small measure of who I am as a human being. Their emotional and financial support over the years has sustained my body, mind, and spirit. My brothers, Chris and Greg Wallace, have given me enormous boosts of confidence over the years. (Thanks, Greg, for leading me to a crucial insight that allowed me to take the manuscript to the post office and just walk away.) My grandmother Adeline Hardman let me sit on her lap long after it was appropriate, teaching me a significant life lesson about the female body and comfort. My mother and my mother-in-law, Arthrell Sanders, rescued me with unlimited child-care and last-minute proofreading, thus allowing the book to go to press on time.

I extend my most affectionate gratitude to my partner in life, Mark A. Sanders, who listened to endless discussions about this work and still managed to smile and nod encouragingly at all the right times. He is, quite simply, an extraordinary human being who makes my life richer in every moment.

I stand on this path in the footsteps of my elders and in the light of my ancestors. I want to honor the memory of my late grandfather, Henry Hardman, who was fond of telling the women in my family that we had hourglass figures, with all of the sand at the bottom.

Grateful acknowledgment is given to the following publishers for permission to use copyrighted material.


"Gender, Race, and Nation," by Anne Fausto-Sterling, in Jennifer Terry and
Acknowledgments


Every effort has been made to trace the ownership of all copyrighted material in this book and to obtain permission for its use.
Contents

List of Illustrations  xiii

Introduction  1
   Kimberly Wallace-Sanders

The Body Politic: Black Female Sexuality and the Nineteenth-Century Euro-American Imagination  13
   Beverly Guy-Sheftall

“Some Could Suckle over Their Shoulder”: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500–1770  37
   Jennifer L. Morgan

Gender, Race, and Nation: The Comparative Anatomy of “Hottentot” Women in Europe, 1815–17  66
   Anne Fausto-Sterling

Economies of the Flesh: Representing the Black Female Body in Art  99
   Lisa Collins

Faith Ringgold's Slave Rape Series  128
   Lisa E. Farrington

The Black Look and “the Spectacle of Whitefolks”: Wildness in Toni Morrison's Beloved  153
   Rachel Adams
Contents

Naked, Neutered, or Noble: The Black Female Body in America and the Problem of Photographic History 182

Carla Williams

“The Prettiest Specimen of Boyhood”: Cross-Gender and Racial Disguise in Pauline E. Hopkins’s Winona 201

Siobhan B. Somerville

“Coming Out Blackened and Whole”: Fragmentation and Reintegration in Audre Lorde’s Zami and The Cancer Journals 218

Elizabeth Alexander


What (N)ever Happened to Aunt Jemima: Eating Disorders, Fetal Rights, and Black Female Appetite in Contemporary American Culture 239

Doris Witt

Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction 263

Terri Kapsalis

Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality 301

Evelynn Hammonds

Conclusion

Directing the Gaze: An Inside Look at Making Naked Acts 323

Bridgett Davis

List of Contributors 335

Index 339
Illustrations

Fig. 1. Édouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863  
Fig. 2. Marie-Guilhelmine Benois, *Portrait d'une nègresse*, 1800  
Fig. 3. Nicolas Huet le Jeune, Saartjie Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus," 1815  
Fig. 4. Léon de Wailley, Saartjie Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus," 1815  
Fig. 5. The preserved genitalia of the "Hottentot Venus"  
Fig. 6. An engraving of a "Hottentot Venus" at the Ball of the Duchess du Barry, 1829  
Fig. 7. The "Hottentot Venus," a German caricature from the beginning of the nineteenth century  
Fig. 8. Paul Gauguin, *Manoa Tupapau* (Spirit of the Dead Watching), 1892  
Fig. 9. Judy Chicago, *The Dinner Party*, Sojourner Truth plate, 1979  
Fig. 10. Young virgin covering her breast, from *A brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 1590  
Fig. 11. Woman suckling child, from *Eorum Quae in Florida . . .*, 1591  
Fig. 12. Woman holding leg, from *Memorabili Provinciae Brasilae . . .*, 1592  
Fig. 13. Women on the map of Tierra del Fuego, from *Vera et Accurate Descriptio eorum omnius Quae Acciderunt Quinque navibus, Anno 1598, 1602*  
Fig. 14. Woman breastfeeding over her shoulder, from *Verum et Historiam Descriptionem Avriferi Regni Guineae*, 1604  
Fig. 15. Women in Africa, from *Verum et Historiam Descriptionem Avriferi Regni Guineae*, 1604  
Fig. 16. Native American woman with her child, from *A brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, 1590
Illustrations

Fig. 17. Wedgwood cameo, Am I Not a Man and a Brother?, nineteenth century 102
Fig. 18. Token, Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?, 1838 102
Fig. 19. Jules-Robert Auguste, Les amies, ca. 1820–30 104
Fig. 20. Giacomo Ginotti, Abolition of Slavery, 1877 106
Fig. 21. Frank Buchser, Black Girl in a Stream, ca. 1867–70 107
Fig. 22. Edmonia Lewis, Forever Free (originally titled The Morning of Liberty), 1867 108
Fig. 23. Jean Isy de Botton, Portrait of Josephine Baker, 1929 111
Fig. 24. Emma Amos, Creatures of the Night, 1985 113
Fig. 25. Alison Saar, Si j’étais blanc, 1981 115
Fig. 26. Alison Saar, Untitled, from Crossroads, 1989 117
Fig. 27. Renée Stout, Fetish #2, 1988 121
Fig. 28. Faith Ringgold, The Flag Is Bleeding, 1967 129
Fig. 29. Faith Ringgold, Help: Slave Rape Series #15, 1973 131
Fig. 30. Jeff Donaldson, Aunt Jemima (and the Pillsbury Doughboy) ’64, 1963–64 134
Fig. 31. Joe Overstreet, The New Jemima, 1964 135
Fig. 32. Betye Saar, The Liberation of Aunt Jemima, 1972 136
Fig. 33. Faith Ringgold, Fight: Slave Rape Series #13, 1973 138
Fig. 34. Faith Ringgold, Fight: To Save Your Life, 1972 141
Fig. 35. Faith Ringgold, Help: Slave Rape Series #16, 1973 146
Fig. 36. James VanDerZee, Nude by the Fireplace, 1923 184
Fig. 37. J. T. Zealy, Drana, 1850 186
Fig. 38. J. T. Zealy, Delia, 1850 186
Fig. 39. Anonymous, Zulu Bride and Bridegroom, ca. 1896 188
Fig. 40. Sims’s speculum 270
Fig. 41. Norplant advertisement, 1992 283
Fig. 42. Norplant advertisement, 1992 284
Fig. 43. Norplant advertisement, 1992 286
Fig. 44. LoEstrin advertisement, 1989 287