

The representation of slavery in *Stigmata*: An Analysis of Phyllis Alesia Perry's *Stigmata*

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine Phyllis Alesia Perry's neo-slave tales, dubbed *Stigmata*¹. Some of the novel's main themes include the depiction of slavery and its long-term effects, the haunting ancestor and the reincarnated journey, the depiction of trauma, its consequences, the healing process, and the contrast between African and Western values.

Keyword: Slaves, Marginalization, History, Trauma.

Introduction

The first book in Phyllis Alesia Perry's series, *Stigmata*, is mostly set in her childhood hometown of Tuskegee, Alabama, where she was born in 1961. She graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in communications. As a journalist, she won a Pulitzer Prize for her study of the high infant mortality rate in Alabama, together with a team of reporters. Her first book, *Stigmata*, was released in 1998. Published in 2004, *A Sunday in June* is the precursor to *Stigmata*.

A young woman named Lizzie DuBose, who lives in Tuskegee with her parents and siblings, is the protagonist of *Stigmata*. In her fourteenth year, she receives an old trunk with a quilt and a journal. Lizzie's great-great-grandmother had the trunk handed down to her by her grandmother Grace, who died before Lizzie was born. Mary Nell and Eva, Grace's sisters, had been told especially to deliver the trunk to Lizzie. They know when it's time for her to inherit the item. According to the book's subsequent revelations, Lizzie's great-great-grandmother Ayo was enslaved precisely at the age of fourteen. Lizzie's weird haunting experiences begin as she begins to examine her trunk, utilizing the quilt and reading the journal. The history and lives of Lizzie's great-great-grandmother Ayo and her grandmother Grace begin to converge in her mind. Because both women have been reborn in her body, she knows that she can relive their lives through her. Ayo's memories of slavery put her in danger, while Grace's recollections provide the key to comprehending Lizzie's current

predicament, as she was the first to go through what Lizzie is going through. In reality, Lizzie only understands her current predicament through experiencing Grace's history. Lizzie's memories reveal that Grace suffered throughout the reincarnation process of Ayo. Due to her fear of being labeled as mentally ill and consequently harming her family, she separated herself from them. In a chapter, Lizzie herself admits: "You see, I think that Ayo reincarnated as Grace and Grace reincarnated in me. Grace had to leave her home and her family because Ayo's memory became too much for her to handle."(*Stigmata*181)

The reincarnation procedure can only be passed on to female family members, producing a strong matrilineal tradition. The occurrence always skips one generation, leaving Sarah, Grace's daughter, and Lizzie's mother, with no first-hand knowledge. Both the personalities and qualities of the reborn women are revealed in Lizzie's flashbacks, yet they are distinct. Both Ayo and Grace are portrayed as aloof and distant, although Grace seems to be closer and more outspoken: "Grace always speaks loudly, her memories hissing insistently inside my head. And behind her are the dream-like tangles of Ayo's life. More distant but also more painful." (*Stigmata*87-88) In addition, Lizzie's flashbacks to her ancestor's past are not fully disconnected from her current world, and they leave behind tangible evidence of these unsettling occurrences. Every time a flashback involves Ayo's presence, Lizzie receives the identical scarring and marks on her wrists and ankles as Ayo had due to the bondage experience that Ayo went through. During the flashbacks, Lizzie feels as if she has been transported to another time and place, as if she were inside another person's body and experiencing the same experiences she had experienced. Reincarnation flashbacks appear in a portion of the book in which she discusses how she transitions from her current reality to that of another time and place:

As I stare out of the window at the white lines on the asphalt shooting straight and sure down the highway, that creepy feeling begins to sneak up on me again, that feeling of looking back into time at some distant point and feeling more familiar with that place than with where I am now. (*Stigmata* 65)

In addition, she displays the bodily superimposition of her reborn ancestor on her person in another example: "I sit on the bed with old Grace, marveling that I can move her fingers and toes." (*Stigmata*56)

Her parents are concerned about her erratic behavior and the formation of strange scars on her wrists and ankles. Neither of them is aware of the fact that she is reincarnating. Lizzie's parents cannot grasp her experience and consequently deem her mentally disturbed, even if she attempts to explain it to them. That leads to a perception of self-inflicted injuries

as the result of self-harm. As a result, unable to make sense of their daughter's behavior and having exhausted all other options, they seek professional treatment for Lizzie's mental health. She is subsequently admitted to a mental facility for monitoring and treatment by medical professionals who do not accept her account of her experiences there. A medical diagnosis of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and denial is used to treat her issue, which is seen as purely psychological.

On the other hand, doctors explain Lizzie's condition rationally and are unable to comprehend her reality since they do not believe in the supernatural but only in scientific explanations. Doctors take measures to keep Lizzie safe, but the scars on her skin keep reappearing despite their efforts. Even though physicians cannot explain how she might have hurt herself while under their custody, they continue to use the medical and psychological interpretation of the facts. On the other hand, Lizzie can locate others who can relate to her tale within the hospital. As she begins to leave Lizzie's body and enter the body of someone else, another patient, a lady, is there to witness the transfer. Later, when confronted by Lizzie, she confirms her account of events rather than the physicians'. Through Lizzie's own words and the evidence presented by her parents and physicians, the readers who had been skeptical up to this point are now convinced of Lizzie's claim of a supernatural explanation. When Lizzie meets a Christian priest, her account of events is confirmed a second time. Lizzie is different from the rest of the patients and that she is not fit to be detained in mental custody appears to be his impression of her. He's intrigued by her predicament and inquires about why she's a patient, and Lizzie's version convinces him of events. He describes the scars on her wrists and ankles as a form of *Stigmata* that marks the body, remembering the past since he is religious. Aware that physicians would be looking at her, Lizzie starts pretending that she isn't experiencing bizarre flashbacks from a past that she hasn't experienced while under surveillance. She ultimately returns to her parent's house, where she feels she must tell her mother, Sarah, the truth about her condition. Lizzie must rebuild the bond with her mother and daughter since she is the reincarnation of Grace, Sarah's mother, who abandoned her family to protect them from "craziness." She begins a quilting project with her to do this. To help her mother/daughter grasp the truth and reestablish their bond, she sews an appliqué quilt to reflect her tale. After a few minutes of anxiety, Sarah realizes that Lizzie is her mother/daughter and accepts the relationship. The matrilineal line is restored, but the father remains perplexed after the tale. Lizzie's life can be rebuilt now that she controls her condition and has come to terms with her history and background.

The non-linearity of the narrative method is crucial from a structural standpoint. An unorthodox narrative style makes it seem to like Lizzie's identity and appliqué patchwork is both shattered and stitched together in the same manner that the tale is not. That's what Pamela June claims about Lizzie "after all, is a collection of nonlinear events, many of which she never actually lived." (June 54) To begin, Lizzie talks to physicians in a mental hospital right before she returns home, and only later in the text the tale begins to unravel for readers more leisurely. Due to the fragmentation of the text, this message is transmitted.

Stigmata is divided into two alternating strands of narrative, one narrating chronologically from June 1994 to July 1996 (the present-day period following Lizzie's release from the hospitals), and the other chronologically from April 1974 to March 1988 (the period when Lizzie begins experiencing her foremothers and is consequently institutionalized). (June 53)

There is also a diary excerpt following every chapter corresponding to the first narrative thread defined by Pamela June. In the journal, Ayo's daughter, Joy, recounted her mother's bondage experience. Slavery is represented in the narrative via Lizzie's flashbacks and this method. Because the journal details Ayo's captivity and servitude, it reflects the genre of the slave narrative. First-person experiences of slavery are intertwined in Corinne Duboin's novel *Stigmata*.

Joy's notes recall canonical works such as *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (in particular, the description of the Middle Passage from the perspective of a traumatized child) or Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, that gives an inside account of the black female experience of slavery. (Duboin 291)

Another important component of Perry's tale is the variety of voices that emerge from the text. The primary story is Lizzie's, but thanks to the process of reincarnation and excerpts from Ayo's journal, readers may hear the voices of her ancestors as well, learning about Ayo and Grace's history. Duboin also contributes his voice to the chorus, declaring, "In *Stigmata*, many female voices are being heard: Lizzie's, Ayo's, Joy's, and Grace's, not to mention Perry's implicit authorial voice." (Duboin 289)

The novel's storytelling is likewise marked by its recurrence. In reality, the story starts and finishes with Lizzie in a mental institution. The completion of the patchwork quilt project also demonstrates this circularity. Ending this endeavor, Lizzie can now tell her mother/daughter what she has always wanted to tell them. The characters also express their belief that time moves cyclically in the story. Lizzie, for example, discovers the following

passage in the diary: "We are forever. Here at the bottom of heaven we live in the circle. We back and gone and back again."(S 17)

A neo-slave story, *Stigmata* focuses on the issue of slavery and how the pain of bondage affects one's ability to remember one's past. Reincarnation and diary extracts let readers understand the horrors of slavery and, in particular, the plight of African women who were forced into bondage. The Middle Passage, the sale of slaves in the marketplaces, whippings, and other physical assaults are detailed. To add to the story's complexity, Lizzie's memories allow readers to learn more about Ayo as a young black enslaved girl. Thus, they are compelled to consider how slavery's effects may still be felt in the lives of African Americans today since the agony of the past has been passed down the generations just as Lizzie's great-great-grandmothers were passed down via reincarnation.

Considering that it explores the origins and effects of past traumas and how trauma is passed down from generation to generation, this work may be considered a trauma tale. Perry emphasizes this transgenerational transfer via the rebirth process and the theme of scars and wounds. For this reason, scars serve as a powerful metaphor for a life-long trauma that cannot be erased from the skin or the soul. There is an emphasis on Lizzie's experience of self-fragmentation and on the troubled interactions that traumatized persons have with others. As a result, Lizzie's connection with her parents and physicians is tense or, at the very least tenuous at times. Because it might be seen as an analogy of how white people today deny slavery's repercussions, Lizzie's institutionalization emphasizes the lasting effects of her terrible experience. The mainstream in the United States, like the physicians, refuses to acknowledge that the marginalization and oppression of African Americans today is a direct result of decades of slavery and racism.

Finally, *Stigmata* may be classified as speculative fiction since the protagonist transcends time and space due to rebirth. The contrast between the physicians' scientific and reasonable explanation and Lizzie's supernatural explanation emphasizes the relevance of the weird and non-mimetic components in the book. The supernatural components are central to the plot since the reincarnation process is the story's central action. Perry explained her usage of this writing technique by stating that she wanted to express herself "get underneath the facts. To do that, you have to go someplace where the facts don't go. I had to take a speculative route."(Duboin 638) As a result, she turns to the bizarre and the spooky to delve into stories that can't be conveyed in the same manner. An enslaved person's ancestor may speak via the supernatural and the reincarnation process, giving a narrative of slavery beyond the official reports' reporting of the facts and expressing profound sentiments of misery and

frustration under bondage. As Ayo's reincarnation process passes down his memories and scars to his descendant Lizzie, all African Americans carry the memory of their traumatic past. Through using these non-mimetic strategies, she can also point to the fact that the repercussions of slavery continue to affect people today. Ana Nunes, a writer who specializes in magical realism, describes the work thus.

I argue that Perry engages with the magical to rework the narrative model presented by Morrison. Perry's narrative explores the tension between the TzvetanTodorov's notion of the fantastic and the supernatural accepted, or magical realism, and her development of a sense of community in the fantastic and magic realism context.(Nunes 7)

Corinne Duboin's description of Perry's writings and ideas is a good summation.

Mixing the realist mode with the fantastic, both texts deal with the connection to the past, historicity, and memory. Perry also explores the intricacies of painful family relationships, grievous separations, reconciliations, and healing with the restoration of loving bonds.(Duboin 638)

The representation of slavery in *Stigmata*

One of the key topics of Perry's novel is the depiction of slavery, as has been described above. This is made possible by Ayo's journal entry, which MajaMilanovic calls a "slave narrative inside a neo-slave narrative."(Milatovic 210) Ayo's depictions of the slavery process, the Middle Passage and the slave ships, captives sold in marketplaces, and life in bondage, including whippings, are similar to those in classic slave chronicles. Perry adds a personal and emotional component to this slave tale inside a neo-slave narrative and details Ayo's sentiments. Referring to slave tales, she even states that "there was something about them that was too matter-of-fact to me," implying that "the narratives would talk of awful things that transpired."(Duboin 635) The journal only covers the most essential and crucial incidents in Ayo's life. However, it is an important component since it "also gives the tools to develop the personalities of Lizzie's forebears in a manner that is not feasible with merely Lizzie's first-hand and fleeting experiences with the past and these departed relatives," as it "not only informs Lizzie of what is happening to her and provides tales of Ayo's enslavement experience." It's (Passalacqua 80) is The date "December 26, 1898" appears on the first page of an extract taken from the journal. Joy's mother's spontaneous request to write is noted in the diary. She then points out the following:

Bessie is not my name, she said. My name was Ayo. Soon as she said that, her voice fell low. She stops and looks way over my shoulder like she weren't even in the same room with me. Like she saw something off on the edge of the world. And her voice got deep and low, and words rolled off her tongue like water falling from a high place. My name means happiness, she says. Joy. I name you that so I don't forget who I am and what I mean to this world. I come from a long line of forever people. We are forever. Here at the bottom of heaven, we live in the circle. We went back and gone and back again.(S 7)

The description of Ayo's response when he talks about his enslavement experience in this section emphasizes his difficulty in recalling the event. Pain and anguish are shown via her mental separation and alienation. Ayo thinks back to when she was enslaved and given a new name. Her slave name Bessie Ward was the only name she could go by now, and she was no longer permitted to use the name Ayo. When slaves were sold, their names were not uncommon to be changed to conceal their origins, history, and former liberated identities. Imposing one's superiority on a people thought to be insignificant and easily subjugated was a way of enforcing one's authority. The reclaiming of Ayo's original name signifies the distancing from the values imposed on her during her time as a bond girl. MajaMilatovic mentioned this:

Reclaiming her African name and its rejoicing potential and passing the name down to her daughter, Ayo creates precisely the counter-text which challenges the objectifying logic of slavery. For Ayo, naming constitutes her personal history rooted in ancestral Africa and bears witness to survival and the crucial role of storytelling and intergenerational bonding.(Milatovic 214)

Furthermore, Joy continues writing:

I am Ayo. I remember.

This is for those whose bones lay sleeping in the heart of mother ocean, for those who tomorrows I never knew who groaned and died in that dark damp aside me. You rite this daughter for them and me.(S 7)

According to Ayo's actions in this section, he is primarily concerned with remembering and being remembered. Besides her desire to begin the reincarnation process, this urge is shown by how she stalks Lizzie with memories of the past. In addition, Ayo remembers all those who died in the Middle Passage and were thrown into the water from slave ships and never had a proper burial. Since she was unable to do so at their death, this is her way of remembering them.

On the other hand, Lizzie reads these sentences and notices some strange changes: I am Ayo, and I am from Nigeria. Joy. "I'm going to hold on to those memories." To stress Ayo's agency, the term "choose" has been added to her tale and her memories. The word "rite" (which is written the same way in both transcripts) may be taken as a typo of the word "write," but Ayo might have also meant: "'right,' meaning that she wanted the sin of slavery to be 'righted or corrected. If we read it in this light, we understand why Ayo may have come back to haunt her descendants.'" (June 63)

Ayo's abduction is another significant event in Ayo's life documented in the diary. As an inquisitive child, she wandered out from her mother and went into the market independently. In the absence of her mother, the following occurred:

You rite fast, Joy, she says. I'm not gon tell this but once. It's too bad to tell more than once. When the man grabbed me in the market, I kicked him, but he put his hand over my mouth and nose, and I couldn't get any air. So I fall out. Faint right away. And when I come back to myself, Imlyin on some sand, and there are others there. Strangers with iron around the arms and legs. I saw a child walking and crying, so I got up on my knees to go to him, but I couldn't cause my hands, my feet were chained together with iron too! Oh, child! I am chained to the man next to me, and when I look at him, he looks like he is weeping. Over the sweatin shoulder of those chained together people, the ocean rushes and rolls. I remember staring out at that water going on and onto the edge of the earth even while I screamed so hard my nose started to bleed. And this...this ghost with hair like fire and no color eyes comes over and hits me across the head with his hand. (S 72)

Ayo confesses she would only share the tale once since the recollection is so traumatic to her. In retelling this narrative to preserve her childhood memories, even though she is now an adult, she uses her voice and perspective. When she was abducted, she was just fourteen, and she narrates her experience with the naivety and spontaneity of a fourteen-year-old. Her captor is the first white guy she meets in the tunnel. In the beginning, it's harrowing but also enlightening since she'll quickly understand that all the white people she meets will treat her the same way. Toward the text's conclusion, she even states, "I believe that." "Yes, daughter, that was the first white man I ever saw, and though I done met some since who was gentler, I met none any less cruel." (S 73)

Enslaved individuals aboard slave ships are shown in the text as living in appalling circumstances. "the slaves headed for America would traverse the Atlantic in a trip known as the 'Middle Passage,' having been acquired on the African coast." When it comes to (Klein

151), They were all shackled together to keep them under control and prevent any revolt. As a result, they were all crammed onto the ships with little room for movement so that the maximum number of slaves could be transported between the coasts. The profit slavetraders made was directly proportional to the number of captives they carried. This is why they prioritized sheer numbers above the well-being of the enslaved population. As a result, slaves were not considered human beings. Hence they were not entitled to a reasonable standard of living. As a result, many slaves lost their lives at sea due to the horrendous living conditions and diseases that spread quickly in such densely populated environments. Herbert Klein states that

The biggest killers were gastrointestinal disorders and fevers. Bouts of dysentery were common, and the 'bloody flux' as it was called, could break out in epidemic proportions and was the most common gastrointestinal disease. Dysentery was probably the most common disease experienced on all voyages. (Klein 151)

Ayo's inability to rescue and assist the abandoned wailing infant underscores the difficulty of human interactions aboard slave ships. In this circumstance, where she is locked alone with strangers, without her parents to take care of her, the young and terrified Ayo can do nothing except cry out her dread and sorrow. Slave traders had no qualms about tearing families apart when it came to enslaved people. They only cared about the money they could make through the slave trade, and the people they enslaved were not viewed as people at all but rather as simply things to be traded. In addition to using violence to enforce quiet on Ayo, the white man used physical punishments to preserve the slaves' subordination and the slavers' position of authority.

After a seemingly endless journey across the Middle Passage, Ayo finally makes it to shore. Despite the terrible circumstances they endured aboard the ship, she claims she did her best since she knew they would not be able to sail forever. While her aspirations of going home were thwarted, she was able to return to the United States. Joy, she reminds :

Well jest about the time I think them ghost people could live on the water the day come and they led us out and throw sea water on us all and after I clear the water out my eyes I look out and the ship is beside a large wooden thing stuck out in the water. People everywhere but I thought I was going to fall down and die. I wasnt home. They was nothing but white ones far as the eye could see. Wimmin and chillun pointing and starin and lookin like ghosts. That was where they were pointin us to that land of walking ghosts. Oh, Joy, I was dying. (S 97)

The enslavers appear to her as phantoms. Her dread and the escalation of her pain are shown in her perspective of the white capturers' actions. In MajaMilatovic's opinion, this paragraph tells a lot about her.

the impact of racism or the psychological terror of the protagonists' traumatizing encounter with whiteness. In the captured survivors' minds, the stranger's country is colorless and terrifying, contrasted with the warmth, colors, and freedom enjoyed in their home environments.(Milatovic 213)

Immediately after her insightful depiction of how she sees white people as ghosts that haunt her and their land as a location where she would someday fall and die, a violent occurrence occurs:

I was hanging there, both feet over, holding the rail with my hands, trying to figure out how to jump without taking this other poor critter with me, when one of the white men on the ship came and jerked me back. He got hold of the chain hooked to the chains on my wrists and pulled so that I fell back headfirst on the ship. I just lay there for a long time, and the sores on my wrists opened up again, and I watched the blood run down onto the wood planks that soaked it up like the ship was thirsty. Drank it up.Drank it right up.(S 97)

This is another example of how slaves of all ages and genders were subjected to the same brutal and inhumane treatment. Seeing Ayo's blood absorbed by the ship, Camille Passalacqua remarked, is incredibly important since it is the physical record of Ayo's presence and survival over the Middle Passage. Additionally, she explains that "blood simultaneously focuses on the damaged body and its vessel as receptacles for the human degeneration happening there."(Passalacqua 86)Although she was subjected to the inhumane and degrading experience of being a slave on the Middle Passage, Ayo's blood reminds her that she is still alive. On the other side, it depicts the savagery of slavers' aggressive actions on the bodies of their victims. Slave bodies were harmed and scarred as a result of this activity. To remind the slaves of their ordeals and the fact that they survived, these marks remained etched into their skins. For Ayo and Lizzie, blood is a literal metaphor for their closeness since she will inherit the scars and open wounds of her great-great-grandmother, retaining the memories and direct experience of their opening and bleeding.

As soon as they reached shore, slaves were subjected to the heinous act of being sold into slavery. At first, Ayo says she "cannot bear to tell you (Joy) that" she can't or won't speak about the event. Section 80 of the Statutes Later in the book, she describes what happened. "One guy there noticed my arms and legs and the wounds there," is the first thing

she remembers of what got them off the boat. (S109) Slave-owners used to look at the scars on their slaves to get a sense of their personalities, as described in the preceding chapter. The scars and bruises they had received due to their insubordinate or rebellious conduct were evident. Afterward, Ayo explains the specifics of his market experience:

He put his hand in my mouth. Taste like dirt. He pulls my lips back and points to my mouth. My eyes open, and I see all those ghostieslookin and pointing and talkin. I start to cry. Then he lifts the skirt of my dress with the walking stick he is carrying. He lifts it and points. A scream starts creeping up in my throat, and I let it loose. They laughin laughing.(S 132)

Slaves were examined and handled as animals to be sold in marketplaces. Inhuman Bondage captives were segregated by age, gender, and physical condition in marketplaces and “were then paraded stark naked for inspection by potential purchasers, and sold by brokers who dealt with them as livestock, as if they had been horses or cattle” according to David Brion Davis. (Brion 94) One of the potential purchasers examines Ayo’s lips to assess her physical health. This is a typical technique that is often carried out on animals.

Furthermore, the sentence emphasizes the slaves’ utter lack of privacy. The most private regions of their bodies were also viewed and examined. Carol Henderson clarifies:

History bears witness to the very public way the slave body was handled. Women were stripped before an audience of prospective buyers on the auction block; men had their genitalia frisked like cattle to determine their market worth; men and women were herded together irrespective of the mates they had chosen to ‘breed’ more slave property-all. These acts created a social decorum that prohibited the enslaved African Americans from obtaining any privacy at its basic level.(Henderson 41)

Furthermore, this sentence might be seen as a clear reference to the repeated raping of African women under slavery. Lisa Long asserts that the man’s walking staff, which he uses to gesture at Ayo’s private body parts, might be seen as a phallic metaphor, referring to white masters’ corporeal abuse of black women. Long adds, “In *Stigmata*, Perry claims that we know that rape of African American women occurred in the past because African American women experience its presence in their sexual interactions now.” (S 466)She emphasizes that Lizzie interprets her sexual attraction to her boyfriend, Anthony Paul, as a physical attack and bodily violation in her interpretation of the novel.

It’s also worth noting that the ghostly portrayal of the white slavers is employed to communicate Ayo’s anxiety and horror once again. Furthermore, Ayo’s wailing and shouting, which are not only ignored but mocked, emphasize her sense of powerlessness and terror.

Screaming is repeated numerous times in this journal entry to illustrate the savagery of the events and her helplessness to explain the anguish and humiliation she had to bear via words. According to Camille Passalacqua, "Words fail to capture the inhumanity of the situation, and in the context of their failure, Ayo's screams convey the spectacle's bestiality. The traumatic memory embodied in this violation of her female body emphasizes the reason for Ayo's trauma." (Passalacqua 151) Ayo's report of the whippings has another example of her pained cries being used to show the incapacity of words to describe her agony adequately. In one of the journal extracts, she describes being lashed for not being able to grasp her terrible mistress's remarks. This incident highlights the injustice and unfairness of slavery-related violence. They were often unjustly penalized for the slightest of errors or situations beyond their control. Ayo dictates:

I put the bucket down and tried to help Mary get up when she returned with two men. Big muscular hands. And Imscairt, but Ida been even more if Ida knew what she was up to. She is carrying a whip, and the two mens hold my arms while she whips me across the back. Oh, daughter, she was laughing while she has done it, and themmens wouldn't look at me while I buck and try to get away. My dress fell away in big pieces, and the blood ran down in the dirt, and her pink dress was all splattered. Mary whimpered over the water pump, and Im sure my hollering could be heard from here to Afraca.(S 173)

Ayo is publicly humiliated by the whippings in the passage, but her anguish "becomes a solitary and isolated reality, which she receives and experiences in the pain of her battered and bloodied back." (Passalacqua 91) As a result, this episode exemplifies her great lack of speech when confronted with a publicly exposed situation. Ayo's testimony to Joy, typed in the journal, leaves a trace of the event, yet verbally expressing this public and private experience enables Ayo to inject a narrative voice where she was previously denied one.

Furthermore, the mistress's brutality is portrayed by her lashing of her slave, which might be taken as an expression of the villainy and conduct of all-white masters. She has no sympathy or concern for her slaves, preferring to administer punishments to prove her authority. Furthermore, the symbol of blood is employed again to depict Ayo's survival and the trauma she endured. The section pivots around Ayo's screaming, and "once again, the inability of words to portray the inhumanity and brutality of the scenario resulted in her screams that communicate the bestiality of the experience." (Passalacqua 82) Her cries also serve as confirmation and a reminder of her humanity. Despite being treated like an animal or a commodity, she uses her voice in the most fundamental of inclinations to remind readers of

her humanity. According to Passalacqua, "Perry utilizes Ayo's cries to criticize the awful sight of the white enslaver's disregard and disdain of her human dignity."

(Passalacqua 82) Ayo has been completely traumatized due to these aggressive and terrible living circumstances. In the next journal post, she expresses this clearly:

I would ask the spirits to take me home, and Id closes my eyes,thinkin they had come.
But I always wake up in the same place. You know, daughter, I think it was then that I just went plum crazy. I needed to die, and God wouldn't let me. I needed it so bad. I could taste death in the back of my throat, and I did not need food.(S 184)

Ayo sees her mother, who is still clothed in her African clothing since it is the only way she knows her. This apparition is the catalyst for her resuming eating and continuing to live. In this chapter, her final remarks suggest that she was transferred from being a house slave to laboring in the fields. She confesses that this decision "fitted me great" (S 185). Not only enslaved men were forced to work in the fields: "Slave women, especially pregnant women and nursing mothers, were also forced to work in the fields." (Davis 199)

Joy's notification of her mother's death is the diary's last entry. It's an odd time because Ayo, before passing away, prophesies Joy's daughter's birth and gives her a baby blanket she had sewn for the occasion. Later in this paper, the diary will be examined again from the standpoint of its role as a medium for the transmission of transgenerational trauma.

Lizzie, who can embrace her relationship with her foremothers, and hence her history and ancestry, represents the first example in *Stigmata*. She can recover from the horrific memories of slavery in this way, and as a result, she is able to heal from the reincarnation process. Lizzie can manage her disability and reclaim her life after the tale. On the other hand, the second example is personified by her parents and physicians, who, because of their devotion to Western principles of logic and scientificity, are dubious and refuse to accept supernatural interpretations of the facts. The parents have blended into Western culture and have lost touch with their African origin and customs. This is shown by their inability to comprehend or embrace the supernatural aspects of Lizzie's illness, even though in African culture, the supernatural is seen as a normal part of existence.

Furthermore, since they do not trust Lizzie's tales, the physicians might be interpreted as an embodiment of Western ideas of logic and skepticism. This might be regarded as a metaphor for the white mainstream's refusal to realize that the ramifications of slavery continue to harm African Americans today. Their attitude and guidance on what Lizzie should write in her journal, as Ana Nunes suggests, may also be seen as a rejection of black authority over the written material.

To summarize, Perry's goal in creating these books seems to emphasize the value of remembering one's history, ancestry, and customs. She highlights the need to be able to accept and address unpleasant memories to recover from them. Through the quilting projects and Ayo's journal, she emphasizes the significance of traditional customs and storytelling. Perry also emphasizes the importance of female relationships in the African American society by establishing a matrilineal legacy that unifies and collaborates to bring healing and survival from the painful experiences and memories of slavery and all other kinds of oppression.

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