Race, Colonialism, and Cultural Trauma in Transnational Literature: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, and Yaa Gyasi’s *Homegoing*

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This project explores how cultural traumas are narrativized in three novels, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Joy Kogawa’s *Obasan*, and Yaa Gyasi’s *Homegoing*, focusing specifically on the (im)possibility of recognition and redress for historical injuries. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as a “wound inflicted not upon the body, but upon the mind,” whose power “is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (Caruth 3, 17). This project expands on Caruth’s understanding of personal trauma, by examining the impact of cultural traumas on both the individual and on the collective. Specifically, this project will explore cultural trauma by analyzing the role of the lost mother, a figure associated with both personal identity and connection to history, geography (mother country), and language (mother tongue). In each novel, the loss and disconnection associated with the figure of the mother creates conditions for cultural trauma as it represents a cleaving from prescribed identity. By examining this process of self-making post trauma, I assess the role of trauma literature in reconstructing national history and memory.