

*an open letter to the white feminists
holding a literary panel on Toni
Morrison*

MATTHEW E. HENRY

look to your left, your right—where
are her sisters? why are they missing?
while there's a shared violence only
your bodies can know, they were never
your breasts from which milk was stolen
or freely given to sons with their own
white teeth. your daughters will never
destroy dolls, scraping skin to find the beauty
beneath. will never see their fathers shot
off fences, or shucking with shirley temples
while they watch from behind grim windows.
you will never slit throats as a slave-act
of salvation, or place a God-tanned pap
between gums with uncertain futures. your backs
are forever clear of chokecherry trees. you—
whose faces adorn the cups, the magazines,
the movies—are married to the master
narratives she subverts. are intrusive
as rusty nails breaking an arch. move
her stilled lips without consulting her face,
her family. forget she still has a voice.