



HEALING SPACES IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

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ABSTRACT

Beloved serves to memorialise the Middle Passage – those who did not make it through and those who endured the physical and emotional pain of slavery. For the latter group, the psychological damage was so intense that they almost lost their sense of self. Even after escaping into freedom, these slaves still had to work the haunting experiences out of their minds for them to attain a certain measure of freedom. The following discussion shows that life under slavery was grueling yet Morrison succeeds in converting pain to purpose amid the agony. This form of transmuting pain heals the trauma of slavery both in the individual and within the larger collectivity of African Americans. It is at the backdrop of this that I will show how slavery created awful circumstances for its victims, and how these same circumstances were reversed to give them psychic healing as they look forward to a liveable life.

Key words: *healing, love, pain, slavery, trauma*

It must have been quite a spectacle for the creatures of the sea, this stream of humanity aloft ships of varying size, surging and heaving, ever straining toward the mark. Had they the capacity, the fish would hold their own conference on the significance of such activity.... In the end, at least 12 million Africans were forcibly removed from the continent of their birth by means of the Atlantic trade (Gomez, 178)

Violence and trauma inform much literature about the lives of African Americans during and even after slavery. The terrible losses during the crossing from Africa to the New World, the everyday loss of life on the slave plantations and the disturbing losses sustained through the psychological and physical brutality of slavery all worked to ensure emotional pain and phobia in the lives of slaves - a pain so excruciating that no amount of mourning or lamentation will ever be

enough to work through. The more the slaves try to forget this gruesome past, the more they lose their sense of self, which makes it very difficult for them to plan a future even after escaping into freedom. Yet at some point, they needed spiritual and psychic liberation to make them feel at home in the place where they have come to be. In the face of these collective losses, coupled with their lives of continuous suffering, fragmentation and the desire for freedom, there was a need for these slaves to rebirth themselves, and this could only be achieved by confronting and coming to terms with the abrasions of history, whether spiritually or physically, individually or collectively. Some of the places and spaces which the characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* inhabit play a crucial role in opening up possibilities of transformation from unliveable to liveable lives through healing. The characters' relationships and interactions in and between these spaces enable them to understand who they are and this recognition of themselves

eventually help provide a kind of psychic healing through personal and communal interconnections. With this healing, they are able to construct both individual and collective identities that define them and give them a sense of self in the place they must call home. Thus their hearts that have been rusted shut due to the dehumanising effects of slavery, closed out on all possibilities of psychic freedom, are greased open, with promises of a new and whole life.

Probably because of its gruesome nature, the institution of slavery was preferably forgotten in both black and white American cultures. In writing a novel that brings back fresh memories of that atrocious past, Morrison argues that there is a necessity to come face to face with the horrors of the past, not so much as to continue its psychological blow, but to digest and be able to overcome it. In an interview with Bonnie Angelo, she attests that the story in *Beloved* "is about something that the characters don't want to remember ... black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember ... it's national amnesia" (Angelo, 257), yet her argument stands that only through remembering can African Americans rescue themselves from, and make peace with the pain of slavery. She therefore chooses to tell a story that many will prefer to avoid; the story of a slave woman who decides to kill her own child instead of giving her up to the horrific and soul-numbing experiences of slavery. The child returns as a ghost in flesh and blood to claim her history by making it known. Morrison's intention then of recounting this tragic event is to "deliver truths that even history fails to convey" (Piotrowska, 4). Most of these truths lie buried with those (like *Beloved*) who are disremembered and unaccounted for, and who had no other option than return in ghostly form to give an account of the people "whose anger and suffering could not be contained in the other world as long as the living neither heard nor remembered them" (Bowers, 222). She therefore could not help dedicating *Beloved* to "Sixty-Million and more" with whom the realities of the Middle Passage stay hidden on the ocean floor. For those who managed to make it through, and lived almost four centuries in slavery, enduring physical torture and emotional anguish, both during and after slavery, their

struggles cannot be over-emphasised. The story of all these people, to Morrison, was not one "to pass on" so she had to pass it on by bringing back *Beloved* from the dead so that her narrative, together with that of the living, can merge to give meaning and understanding to what is left of the existence of the former slaves and their descendants. In an interview with Marsha Darling, Morrison complains that nobody knows the names or even thinks about those who could not make it across. She regrets that their existence never survived even in songs and/or lore. It is believed, in West African mythology, that the spirit of the dead come haunting especially if the individuals died unjustly, and again if their names are forgotten. Barbara Christian also regrets that those who survived the Middle Passage were not able to remember or feed those who passed on thus these living dead were abandoned to the worst possible fate that can befall a West African – complete annihilation (13). This kind of death should be avoided in every possible way so that continuity of tradition can also be ensured. Usually, the dead are remembered through songs of praise and legends of the land and this also is a way of keeping them alive and communing with them. But because nobody cared about the "Sixty Million and more," *Beloved* had to represent them and come raging for that connection to be created for both the living and the dead to have peace.

In *Beloved*, Morrison charts the repressed history of the atrocities of slavery; a history whose knowledge was denied even to its very victims. The slaves' voices that have been silenced for so long resonate in *Sethe*, *Beloved*, *Denver*, *Paul D* and the others as they tell their stories through the process of rememory. Getting to this point of rememory was however difficult because the initial impulse of the slaves was to forget the horror. For a very long time, *Sethe* works "hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe" (6). Suppressing the memory of the past seems to her the best way of freeing herself from its power, but psychologist Laura Brown stresses that confronting the original trauma and re-feeling the pain is very vital and even crucial to the healing. This is why Morrison brings in *Beloved* through whom the characters re-live the pain of slavery, and forcefully remember who they really

are in relation to their African past thereby making it possible to defeat the mortification caused them in the plantations.

Sweet Home under Garner's "enlightened slavery" provided a seemingly utopian condition for the slaves. They had the unusual privilege of leisure time, were allowed to handle guns, choose a husband/wife, buy a mother, learn to read and write, invent and even defy if they cared to. These sound like the slaves are just a step away from freedom but they were Garner's property all the same and could only exercise these privileges within the physical boundaries of his farm. So then what difference does it make? No matter how much of their selfhood or manhood Garner acknowledges, it was of no use if beyond the limits of his farm, they were still "trespassers among the human race" (131). This situation soon proves deceptive when Schoolteacher takes over and maintains that there is no freedom in slavery. Physical and emotional damages replace Garner's privileges; only Garner could have understood Sixo's justification when Sixo explains that he eats the shoat to improve on the property since eating it will give him energy to work harder for more yield. Though Schoolteacher acknowledges Sixo's explanation as "clever," he however "beat him ... to show him that definitions belong to the definers – not the defined" (199). So no matter how authentic the slaves' logic may be, their rationale was always denied.

Under Schoolteacher, Sweet Home became the very opposite of Garner's vision and a true representation of plantation life. Sethe, Halle and the Pauls experience to the brim, the brutalities of slavery and come to better understand their place in the slave system. Sethe's human form, for instance, is used as an object for both scientific and sexual experimentation by Schoolteacher's students and nephews, and she ends up being classified as both animal and human, and perhaps more animal than human. Her response to the implication of this "scientific" classification of her person is one of self-negation as indicated by her backward walk; "didn't even look behind [her] to find out where [she] was headed. ... [her] head itched like ... somebody was sticking fine needles in [her] scalp" (203). The retrogressive march and her inability to concentrate on positive thoughts due to the stinging sensation in

her head point to both physical capture and mental mutilation. The trauma is so acute that she is subsequently unable to conceive of herself as an individual entity or distinct person; mostly referring to herself as her children's mother and finding it difficult to say "I."

In like manner, Paul D degenerates into a physical being when he learns that his person is of commercial value. His response to the knowledge that he is only nine hundred dollars worth is similar to that of Sethe's; it places a huge psychological lesion on him and not knowing from where to begin its healing, he simply "shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, sing. If he could do these things ... he asked for no more ..." (43). This, together with other painful events of his life, is locked away in the tobacco tin that replaces his heart. Whether under Garner or Schoolteacher, there wasn't any much change in the situation of the slaves for though Garner termed them men, his recognition of their humanity did not survive beyond his existence. His initial prospect of a utopian Sweet Home turns out to be a false signal for the place offered neither the comfort of home nor the refuge of exile. Only escape could take the slaves out to a more liveable place.

Her liberty having been paid for, Baby Suggs finds respite in her new-found space of 124 Bluestone Road and settles down to making the house an anchor for blacks. The cheerfulness with which she cautions, feeds and soothes both adults and children gave them an opportunity to experience love and calm that give them inner satisfaction. Baby Suggs' hospitality creates a community in which every black person is a relative. This eventually provides and initiates a space for psychic healing through the transmission of a West African worldview which their enslaved condition did not allow. The house offers a real possibility of home, and gives the impression that freedom and paradise could be nowhere else considering the preceding circumstances. When Sethe successfully escapes to this place, she finds herself in a community of friendly black people who tend the injuries she sustains during the journey. In their company, she can talk freely and loudly, giving her own opinion of their predicament. Most

significantly, she is able to pour out love on her children since back there in Kentucky, they were not hers to love. At this level, 124 seems to provide protection, warmth and sustenance to whatever is left of Baby Suggs' family – a space that holds the promise of a new narrative.

Sethe's experience of freedom however lasts only 28 days as Schoolteacher comes riding in to 124 to reclaim her and her children as his property. Imagining herself and her children again in Schoolteacher's cauldron-like Sweet Home weakens her spirit and without thought, she "just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious ... carried, pushed, dragged them ... out, away, over there where no one could hurt them ... where they would be safe" (171). Sethe commits the "abominable" act of slaying her own daughter rather than let schoolteacher have her. When a mother decides that death of her children by her own hands offers protective healing, then there must be something really dreadful that cripples the zeal to live. The indignities of slavery, the excruciating pain it caused gives Sethe enough reason to come to the (il)logical and (ir)rational conclusion that only death can provide her children the safety that she could never could give, and may never be able to find. Death then becomes a safe and sacred space that facilitates both physical and psychic peace; a form of eternal healing. In as much as universal morality and value judgement will dismiss Sethe's act as void of any perceptible logic and rationality, human circumstances sometimes leave this as the only open alternative. Creating this space in *Beloved* was not a matter of choice; it seemed the only suitable option for the slaves to ensure their children's freedom from oppression.

But in as much as this act appeared the only way out at the time, it merely added to the trauma and frustration that Sethe left Sweet Home with. The same community that welcomes her with an unreserved joy excludes and ostracises her for this one act of defiance against a system that will bereft every one of them of their humanity at the slightest opportunity. That house on Bluestone Road that once was the booming centre of the community shifts to a dull and friendless space. Added to this frustration is the appearance of the ghost of the murdered child, which comes ravaging with spite

and wild fury. Frightened, Howard and Burglar run away, Baby Suggs lies helpless as she awaits death while Sethe and Denver just live on. The house loses its healing attributes and turns into a hardened space. Even Baby Suggs' death does not unite the family she leaves behind with the community so Sethe and Denver continue to live in seclusion, with the baby ghost being their only other companion.

Paul D's aspirations to bring back life to 124, meet with resistance from the ghost as it takes a human body, reappears in the person of Beloved and gradually pushes Paul D out; recovering her space and eventually securing total isolation of 124. Her incessant demands and cruel revenge strategies more or less drain Sethe out of her senses and render the house a traumatising space. Though the demands of this human ghost seem mild and normal for a child like her, they nonetheless have almost the same mental effect that life under Schoolteacher had on Sethe. Like slavery itself, Beloved becomes a severing force that cuts Sethe's and Denver's connections with their community, and more especially tears Sethe away from her very self. Rebecca Ferguson notes among other things that Beloved "contains the effects that slavery had, its profound fragmentation of the self and of the connections the self might have with others" (114).

Even Beloved's language holds Sethe captive. She begins her monologue with "I am Beloved and she is mine" (221). This mark of possession keeps Sethe in a spiritually enslaving position for she too claims that mark of possession when she begins her monologue with "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine" (210). She builds her whole world around Beloved in the pattern of slave and master. The narrator explains:

... whispering, muttering some justification, some bit of clarifying information to Beloved to explain what it had been like and why, and how came. It was as though Sethe didn't want forgiveness given; she wanted it denied. (265)

Sethe does not only acknowledge her guilt but seems contented in it and so stays entrapped in a kind of psychological labyrinth; making excuses rather than spitting out the misery. Claiming Beloved as her own is like accepting the

dehumanisation that resulted from slavery and this does not only make her a permanent mental prisoner within the slave system but also limits the possibility of freeing her soul.

The harbour, calm and healing that the walls of 124 Bluestone Road promised for Sethe and Denver are thwarted by Beloved's story and destructive presence. However, it is this same presence that provides therapy for their healing. Denver, seeing that her mother is slowly dying from trying to please Beloved in every possible way, steps out of 124 to seek help. Taking this decision is very challenging for Denver as she has grown up all her life restricted to the house on Bluestone Road, afraid of her mother and the world outside. But because the situation is both delicate and desperate, "stepping off the edge of the world" seems the only life-saving option. The outcome of this monumental decision she takes actually secures her and her mother's re-admission into the community. First, they are offered gifts of food and second, the women rally and exorcise Beloved out of the house; retransforming it into a restorative space. Before now, Denver's life has been defined by absence and fear, relying on and satisfying herself with her mother's and Beloved's un-relational presence, while at the same time dangerously avoiding an inner exploration of herself. Jeanna Fuston-White observes that Denver secures her own absence and alienation by centring herself in her single history; pulling herself away from the identity which is constructed on the experience of struggle and exile. Stepping out finally frees her from her emerald closet as she becomes aware of "a self" that she obligatorily has to preserve. Her growth in the novel is a sign of hope as she finds a new spirit in the community. This symbolises a break from the painful past into a more promising future of healing and liberation.

For Sethe, the main cause of her anguish is the dispossession of her mothering. Worse than the torture is the fact that she is milked like a cow thus depriving her daughter of the milk that is rightfully hers. So when Beloved returns, she mothers her excessively in compensation with "lullabies, new stitches, the bottom of the cake bowl, the top of the milk" (252). But this alone does not provide healing and maternal fulfillment for Sethe; Beloved prompts

her to relive the physical pain of slavery as she tries to choke her in the Clearing but denies it when accused by Denver and claims, "the circle of iron choked it" (107). Beloved therefore therapeutically re-enacts Sethe's past and keeps her within that circle of pain until she is able, with the help of Paul D and the community to work through it. The return of Paul D opens up positive avenues as he reassures her that she is her "best thing." At this point, Sethe and Denver are finally able to get rid of slavery's hold and them, reclaim themselves as beings in their own right and journey towards the larger communal space where their reintegration will complete their healing. Evidently, their movement towards healing is prompted by Beloved's agency for when she is finally eliminated from 124, it becomes quiet and peaceful again.

The strength of the blacks to manage through the social and psychological pressures lay in the re-activation of the values and rituals of their African past that survived the Middle Passage and filtered into plantation life. Baby Suggs ensures this transition by creating a kind of religious practice based on West African spiritual tradition. These ceremonies take place in the Clearing, described in the text as "a wide open place cut deep in the woods nobody knew for what at the end of a path known only to deer and whoever cleared the land in the first place" (92). Having only her heart left (because slave life had busted her whole body), Baby Suggs takes it to the Clearing and decides to put it to full use. In this open space, she is surrounded by "every black man, woman and child who could make it through" (92). Here, the people release their emotions by dancing, crying, laughing and singing, and in this way, they are able to recognise their own beings that are denied them under slavery. To this congregation of ex-slaves, freed or fugitive, she preaches her gospel of imagined grace and especially of self love and love towards all black people. Amongst other things, she tells her people:

'Here ... in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps.... Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They don't love your eyes; No more do they love the skin on your back ... they do not love your

hands.... Love them. ... hear me now,
love your heart. For this is the prize.'
(93-94)

It is true that the physical and emotional attributes of the slaves were suppressed during slavery but Baby Suggs strongly believes that the slaves have a choice to possess their hearts. This is why she insists on them loving their hearts and by extension, themselves. Engaging in self-love is one of the ways to rectify the wrongs, within themselves, that have been done to them by white oppression and slavery. Loving oneself is therefore necessary for self-reclamation as it instils a sense of self worth in the individual. By the time the curtains are drawn on *Beloved*, Paul D. pries open his rusted tobacco tin while Sethe welcomes his idea and begins to think of herself as her "best thing." Morrison is suggesting here that it is only by loving themselves for who they are that the black community can guarantee its own healing and assert its own values as a distinct cultural group within a conglomeration of people with whom they do not belong and cannot identify yet must accommodate.

Being a space for spiritual healing, the Clearing which replaces a church house can be a symbolic representation of the path and way forward towards self-recovery and self-valorisation of the African American in general. Being a space in nature's original state, it offers a kind of unique calmness, comfort, protection, peace and even escape from the traumatising memories of slavery. It is like paving the way to a new reality; a way out of the range of contact with the cruelties of the slave tradition. Through Suggs' preaching and the people's participation in this space, they are able to revive their black spiritual heritage and creative powers which serve as a source of hope for a life of freedom. Her preachings are really not sermons *per se* but rather an encouragement or infusion of hope, while her doctrine of self-love, as Tina Kluesner puts it, is not necessarily to forget the past but to have the power to subvert it (3). With Suggs' call, therefore, the Clearing stands as a sacred space to the black community of Cincinnati. Within this space, white interference and torture are forgotten, their real selves are revealed and fears of rejection and false judgements are cleared. Technically, they open up to their own beliefs which amounts to

envisaging a possibility of functioning within their own ideological sphere. In a way, they experience themselves physically and spiritually; sharing in Baby Suggs' hope and hanging on to an imagined grace that can change the course of their lives and eventually bring peace to their troubled souls.

The Clearing is considered by Teresa Washington as "the African American equivalent of the sacred spiritual groves where West and Central African initiations and rituals, including sacrifice, take place (4). It is in this space that the people commune with the ancestors, whom they believe, direct and influence the course of events in their lives. This is why, Sethe thinks the Clearing is the best place she can go to get over the news of Halle's death and maybe try to reconcile with her past. Here, she wishes to feel Baby Suggs' loving spirit around her and relive her soft touch and caress once which she believes will soothe her shattering soul. But Baby Suggs' healing hands turn out to be Beloved's suffocating grip which leaves Sethe uncertain whether the future holds healing for her or she will remain choked by that awful past. She is relieved from this dilemma when the group of black women led by Ella, and equipped with a strong spiritual force reminiscent of Africa, march to 124 to get rid of the ghost. Sethe suddenly feels like the Clearing has come to her in ecstatic magic. This space, which promises freedom and self-actualisation fulfils its purpose finally; Sethe learns to love herself more as the painful memories of slavery release their grip on her when Beloved disappears.

124 Bluestone Road and the Clearing are outward representations of Baby Suggs' maternal space. Her maternity, and in general maternal bonding cannot be over-emphasised in the African American's reconciliation with the Middle Passage. Grandmother Baby contributes enormously to Denver's outward move. Though not physically present, her voice as "clear as anything" leads Denver out of the isolation of 124 to face the world:

'You mean I never told you anything about Carolina? ... about how come I walk the way I do and about your mother's feet, not to speak of her back? Is that why you can't walk down the steps? My Jesus, my.'

But you said there was no defence.
 'There ain't.'
 Then what do I do?
 'Know it, and go on out the yard. Go
 on.' (257)

Denver is spurred by these words and she moves on out in determination. Significantly, by telling Denver Sethe's, Halle's and her stories, Baby Suggs equips her with knowledge of the larger collective of the community and history of which she is part. It is her identification with, and acceptance of her family's matrilineal history, and a subsequent understanding of the forces of slavery, that initiate Denver into maturity and integrity. As she follows her grandmother's voice and steps out of the yard, she is welcome into the community and starts functioning as one of its members. It is believed that community provides the individual with a sense of purpose and belonging which gives them the strength to build a strong foundation for resisting external oppression. By taking her story to community, Denver is engaging in a healing that makes possible escape from the past. She begins gaining knowledge of her own self as she confirms her membership into the African American community. Here, Morrison is saying that to affirm one's individuality, one must first belong to a community. For the black community in America especially, they must first of all acknowledge their ancestral lineage to Africa before finding a place in the new society. This will give them psychological wholeness and strength to face the future as a race.

Baby Suggs acknowledges her ancestral heritage and combines it with her experiences as a slave to call to consciousness the entire black community which has internalised the legacy of slavery much to its own detriment. Though she admits that there is no defence against slavery, her religious actions and beliefs are in contrast with those of the oppressors and therefore serve as a means of resistance. Being an untrained and unchurched preacher, with no affiliations to any particular religious denomination, her preaching does not follow the epistemological philosophy of western religion. As a pedagogical theologian would do, Baby Suggs on the contrary:

... did not tell them to clean their lives
 or to go and sin no more. She did not

tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure.

She told them [her people] that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it. (93)

She adds to this her doctrine of self love, which she believes is the only way they can resist the complete psychological emptiness they have been forced to bear. As noted, Baby Suggs' sermon "skilfully deconstructs the dehumanizing and soul-numbing ideology of slavery and inserts in its place a celebration of flesh, black selfhood, love, and spirituality" (Peterson, 33). Her notion of spirituality in itself is not based on rules or moral dictates but on the commitment of a free heart and the imagination. If Baby Suggs openly shows hatred and manifests rejection of the definitions of formal religions, it is because, as Linda Krumholz suggests, these same definitions can be easily manipulated to justify anything, as evident in the history of slavery (398). The rejection of the rules of formal religion and the propagation of a new set of ideas place Baby Suggs as the spiritual and moral backbone of the African American society in *Beloved*. In this position, she stands at the forefront of the fight for self-retrieval which is vital for the mental healing and subsequent freedom of the black community in general.

But again as the novel insists, self-retrieval and freedom can only be obtained when the pain of the past has been forgotten. *Beloved* is all about letting go of pain though the process is in itself painful. What the characters have to wrestle with is this painful past which is even more haunting than the appearance of the ghostly *Beloved*. She comes in as a link with the Middle Passage – that awful past of slavery, and ends up being that past itself that must be gotten rid of. That is why the characters in the novel have to relate with her in one way or the other for them to regain themselves. Though initially her return was meant for Sethe, it ends up restoring the selfhood of the individual as well as the community at large. Apart from Sethe and Denver, Paul D is greatly affected by *Beloved*'s presence. She seduces him and though he feels ashamed at giving

in, the effect turns out positive. He laments that “coupling with her wasn’t even fun” (278), but he nonetheless acknowledges that “it was more like the brainless urge to stay alive” (278). To satisfy this urge, he has to merge with Beloved, whether in repulsion and shame or attraction and desire, and whatever the situation, he is really very thankful “for having been escorted to some ocean-deep place he once belonged to” (278). Making love to Beloved, however shameful, pries open his rusted tobacco tin as it restores his ability to feel love once more. The life hunger that overwhelms him during the act sets the pulse of his red heart beating again. At this point, he is able to humanise Sethe’s infanticide and dispel the horror he first feels at its knowledge. Recalling especially Sethe’s tenderness with the chain on his neck that collared him like a beast, lubricates his heart and terminates with an urge to “put his story next to hers” (287). All those agonising and haunting memories of emasculation, packed away in his tobacco tin, resurface, not to make him feel pain and shame, but this time to reconstruct his inner self and restore to him authorship of his life. With this new perspective of self, he chooses the path of personal desire and freedom – writing his text alongside Sethe’s.

Finally, the characters settle for Baby Suggs’ advice to “lay it all down Sword and shield” (91) because what they are facing “ain’t a battle; it’s a rout” (257). The heavy knives of defence against slavery – the misery, regret and hurt it caused can neither relieve nor free them. They turn to positive rather than painful moments and with their collective spiritual strength, they are able to beat out the ghost of the past. Towards the end of the novel, Morrison states that although Beloved has claim, she is not claimed. Being symbolic of the link to the African American ancestor, she has claim over the black population because it is only through her that they can re-actualise their status as a people. On the other hand, as a symbol of slavery, she cannot be claimed because slavery is not their inheritance and claiming it will mean averring its legacy and staying trapped in its guile. However, by insisting that Beloved’s is not a story to pass on, these slaves show proof of having risen above their dehumanising past - classifying it as just another story. This way, they are able to reaffirm their

humanity in order to extinguish the dangerous legacies of the past.

Morrison writes particularly to remind us of the “necessity of forging and embracing new forms of affinity and recognition across generational and cultural divides” (Chang, 4). She suggests that the history of slavery should not be erased and forgotten too easily but should rather serve as a kind of racial therapy to African Americans for a redefinition of their ethnicity through the voices of the dead. This is why she converges and accumulates the hidden and visible truths of history in the character of Beloved and forces the other characters to relive these truths so as to know and accept themselves for who they really are.

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