

The Time That is Not Time: Slavery, Repetition, and the Unclaimed Experience in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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Abstract

To highlight Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987), this paper adapts Cathy Caruth's psychoanalytically inflected trauma theory. Accordingly, the researcher contends that the playwright's employment of fragmented language, the storytelling and thematic structures of the novel, and the nostalgia for the cruel past act as a literary manifestation of the horrible experience as enunciated by Caruth. Take Caruth's notion of the "unclaimed experience," which suggests that trauma constantly happens in the future, into consideration, the analysis vividly reveals how the character of *Beloved* portrays the compulsive repetition of the psychological impact resulting from slavery. The theoretical section reveals Caruth's purpose to uncover the moot point between fright and fear and the aftermath consequences. In the same vein, she struggles to explain the negative impact of slavery on the psyche's "protective shield." Polemical reading of the novel and sheds light on its characters represented by Sethe, Paul D, and Denver, the current research shows how Morrison's narrative compels the reader into the ethical standpoint of a witness, forcing a battle with a history that "arises where immediate understanding may not". The discussion further incorporates the opinions of other prominent trauma theorists, such as Dominick LaCapra, to emphasize the novel's crucial function in expressing the paradox of historical and trans-generational trauma and the need for group work to survive.

Keywords:

Beloved, Trauma, unclaimed experience, Toni Morrison.



1. Introduction

The historical impact of repulsive slavery in America symbolizes an opaque and unrivaled challenge memory and language alike. As an institution created to systematically divest human beings of humanity, linguistic unity, and the continuity of time, this violation needs narrative forms that do not depend on traditional historical realism or linear storytelling. In this respect, Toni Morrison's 1987 novel *Beloved* faces this defiance by converting the historical truth of the Margaret Garner situation—a formerly enslaved woman who murdered her child to stop her rebound to bondage—into a ghostly, living presence. After eighteen years of liberation, Morrison's novel focuses on Sethe, who psychologically undergoes a severe trauma due to the murder of her infant. In a similar vein, Gurleen Grewal claims that considering Sethe's act as a heroic deed of resistance that uncovered in it the entire notion behind slavery, "If the master could subject the slave children in bondage to a slow 'social death,' the mother could release them through physical death." (*Circles of Sorrow* 97- 101). The house is haunted by Sethe's memories. The major issue of the novel is the failure of survivors to exceed caused by the institution itself. In addition, the survivors' other permanent concern is to break the yokes of slavery to enjoy the taste of liberty.

The novel's narrative structure, marked by its non-linear time and changing viewpoints, is a literary reflection of the fragmented and deferred process of traumatic memory. The current article asserts that Morrison's novel is constructed by trauma, and it is not merely a novel that tackles the issue of trauma. Accordingly, it is easy to understand the structure of *Beloved* since Caruth skillfully traces the major theoretical concerns related to trauma and its horrific consequences on individuals. Indeed, the process of establishing a prominent analysis for the different pivots of Morrison's novel relies mainly on Sigmund Freud's most complex Meta psychological concepts. On the other hand, Caruth's concept of the "unclaimed experience," supplies the required tools to illustrate the spectral figures in Morrison's novel. Caruth's concept, moreover, provides the reason behind the use of fractured testimony and its circular chronology. Caruth reinterprets trauma from a discrete occurrence that occurred in the past to an experience characterized by belatedness: an encounter that is fundamentally missed in the present but compulsively repeated later (*Trauma* 4). The present theoretical situation immediately reveals the haunting at 124 Bluestone Road, where it is impossible to erase the past. Instead, this past comes back as a vindictive entity to control the lives of Sethe and her family.



Morrison's narrative rejection of presenting a direct chronology—a literary technique she skillfully coined “rememory”—vividly unveils the psychic curve of trauma. That is to say, instead of moving forward, the narrative retreats. In this way, the narrative repeats and layers fractured of memory to force the reader to experience the confusing experience of the past. The analysis will tackle four key Caruthian concepts: the differentiation between fright and fear, the significance of repetition compulsion, the resulting crisis of reference, and the notion of trauma as an unattainable history. This comprehensive theoretical basis will then be applied to the characters of Sethe, Paul D, and Denver. Eventually, the essay will delve into the ethical request of the novel: the critical function of the community in attaining the testimony and communal working-through integral to exceeding beyond the "unclaimed experience" of slavery. By meticulously utilizing this psychoanalytic lens, this study aims to unveil *Beloved's* formal proficiency in forming an impossible history. In other words, it creates a history that clings to its reality despite challenging the typical modes of comprehension and assimilation. These reading modes are important, for they recommend that the factual atrocity of slavery lies in its immortal capacity to disrupt the mind's comprehension of time and self.

2. Theoretical Framework: The Caruthian Paradigm of Trauma

To understand *Beloved* as a text that delves into trauma, it is necessary to comprehend the temporal paradox inherent in Caruth's addressing trauma. This framework, evolved originally in *Unclaimed Experience and Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, denies the familiar notion that trauma is simply a terrible memory that can be forgotten easily. On the contrary, trauma can be viewed as an elementary disruption in consciousness that hinders the recording of events immaculately. Accordingly, this process may result in an exceptional mixture of historical relations.

2.1 Latency, the Defensive Shield, and the Unclaimed Experience

It can be seen that Freud's remarks in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* form the essential pillars of Caruth's theory. In his observations, Freud spares no effort to illustrate the substantial notion of the concept of traumatic dream, a dream that compels the individual to remember pain. The major psychoanalytic perception is the function of the "protective shield." In other words, this shield empowers the psyche's ability to defend itself against being staggered by foreign stimuli. Freud and Caruth argue that the realistic explanation of



the phenomenon of trauma is the moment of the violation of the shield by a disastrous shock, but not by an anticipated danger.

Due to this catastrophic shock, the experience is recorded later, but not at the exact time of its occurrence. Actually, the mind is truly incapable of fully comprehending the event because it has a tremendous impact. Thus, the experience remains "unclaimed" by consciousness. Caruth outlines this critical mechanism of latency:

The traumatic event, therefore, is not an event that has passed but an event that is repeatedly relived, a return of the repressed that comes with a startling, incomprehensible literality, one that appears to resist integration into the narrative of the life. (*Trauma* 4)

In *Beloved*, the whole entity of slavery represents the massive force that frequently breaches the Defensive shield. Sethe's "rememory"—the notion that the past "stays" and remains in the present—is the novel's counterpart of this latency. Sethe is constantly re-experiencing the unclaimed moment of the painful death of her daughter, not as a recalled memory, but as a real psychic Immanence that she is compelled to assimilate.

B. Fright vs. Fear and the additional Wound

Theoretically, a key concept critical to Caruth's framework is the differentiation between fear (Angst) and fright (Schreck). Fear is a state of psychological readiness for a familiar danger; fright, on the other hand, is a state of utter unpreparedness, which smooth the process of breaching the protective shield. In a similar vein, Caruth believes that the traumatic event is often not the essential violent event itself, but the fact that it was undergone as a fright. That is to say, the traumatic event itself is a moment where the full ramifications of the violence could not be comprehended. Eventually, this process leads to a second wound—the wound of late comprehension.

What causes trauma, then, is an encounter that is not directly perceived as a threat to the life of the organism but that occurs, rather, as a breach in the mind's experience of time... It is not the direct perception of danger, that is, that constitutes the threat for the psyche, but the fact that the danger is recognized as such one moment too late. (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 62)

In Morrison's novel, the infanticide has a passive impact on the community: it is not the incident of the murder that subjugates the town with trauma, but the terrifying cognizance



that slavery could oblige a mother to perform a horrible act like murder. Undoubtedly, Sethe's catastrophe is epitomized in the late comprehension of her act. In other words, Sethe believes that her act of murder springs from a motive of love, but others have interpreted it as monstrous behavior. This interpretation forces her to isolate herself in 124 Bluestone Road.

C. Repetition Compulsion and the Necessity of Acting-Out

Since there was no real comprehension of the traumatic event, the psyche, driven by a repetition impulse, fights to retrospectively control the stimulus by deterministically re-performing the event. Therefore, the distinction between acting-out and working-through, as elaborated by Dominick LaCapra, forms a fundamental request. Arguably, it is obvious that the repetition compulsion may be seen as a pathological acting-out, where the memories occupy the survivor and obliges him to perform it unconsciously.

LaCapra illustrates the dynamic:

[t]here has been an important tendency in modern culture and thought to convert trauma into the occasion for sublimity, to transvalue it into a test of the self or the group and an entry into the extraordinary. In the sublime, the excess of trauma becomes an uncanny source of elation or ecstasy. (23)

Sethe's untamed behavior is an Inevitable result of Beloved's return. Ostensibly, Sethe's disappointed endeavor to offer the ghost most of the time and attention she was unjustly denied is a pathological repetition of the compulsive impulse that originally drove her to infanticide.

Therefore, this case is not accounted as a memory, but possession—Sethe is forced to reiterate the painful relationship until it endangers her entirely.

D. Trauma as "Impossible History" and the Crisis of Reference

Finally, Caruth contends that the intrinsic difficulty of trauma is individual and also historical, referring to it as an "impossible history." Thus, this indicates the contradictory nature of the traumatic past, which is "urgently demands historical awareness," but "denies our usual modes of access to it" (*Trauma* 154).

The factual history of slavery- its enormous scale, its legitimate and moral atrociousness—forms an event that overcomes conventional language and historical frameworks. This fact needs a crisis of reference in the narrative, where ordinary, direct reporting is insufficient.



The language of the trauma text must be indirect and fractured, tracing the inassimilable fact without alleging to fully assimilate it. As Caruth writes:

Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding, that is, at precisely permitting history to arise where immediate understanding may not. (*Unclaimed Experience* 11)

Indeed, Morrison's non-linear, fragmented manner and the presence of the ghost-like Beloved represent this moral and narrative demand. In other words, it permits the horrible history of slavery to appear through the symptom of the ghost, instead of presenting a linear historical narrative.

3. Discussion and Analysis: Trauma in *Beloved*

3.1 Beloved: The Hyper-Literal Repetition of the Unclaimed

As far as Morrison's novel is concerned, *Beloved*, as a character, acts as the novel's hyper-literal depiction of the Caruthian reappearance in her physical incarnation. That is to say, she indulges in the narrative exactly the moment that Sethe and Paul D set out to initiate a fragile, healthy future. Thus, Beloved smashes the brittle union of 124, forcing Sethe into an acute cycle of repetition. The barrier between past and present is defeated when Sethe fully understands Beloved: "The future was a show; the past was a weight. All that saved them was not having one" (Morrison 13). Eventually, Beloved retrieves the past with awful gravity. Arguably, the novel narrates a story about, "these people who don't know they are in an era of historical interest. They just know they have to get through the day ... and they are trying desperately to be parents, husbands and a mother with children" (Horn 75).

Beloved's arrival compels Paul D to face his deep trauma, kept conscientiously in the "tin box" of his heart (Morrison 113). As an act to taste a feeling of control, Paul D's repression, the restoration of the memory of the bit and the chain gang. Unfortunately, Beloved's ghostly appearance, though, disturbs his peaceful world, compelling him to reveal the atrocities he had kept a long time ago. On the contrary, Sethe does not hide her trauma; she does not simply comprehend it yet. The appearance of Beloved guides Sethe's whole concentration on the retrospective affection for the child she did not succeed in saving. This is a real example of acting-out: Sethe's attempts to calm, feed, and please Beloved are merely some ways to treat the original, intolerable wound of ending her child's life. In this regard, Lynda Koolish states that "Sethe is haunted by the knowledge that her mother was



hanged” (183). Sethe is deeply influenced by her genetic trauma since she is familiar of her mother's act of hanging. This horrible memory serves as a reminder of the awful facts of slavery and the psychological problems it causes to the whole generations.

This addiction to repeat is utterly exhausting. Whenever Sethe seeks to restore Beloved, the latter begins to deteriorate physically and psychologically. Since those women—Sethe, Denver, and Beloved—reunite into a horrible psychic unit, their limitations vanish, culminating in the united voice of the chorus chapter. Indeed, Sethe's physical degradation, as she withers feeding the ghost, indicates the destructive power of the uncomprehend past when left untreated.

Critic Ashraf Rushdy foregrounds the significance of this spectral presence for the reader's involvement with the *impossible history*:

Morrison's literalization of the trauma through Beloved is the only way to make the 'impossible history' of slavery comprehensible to an audience. The ghost provides a *figure* for the psychic injury that defies mere historical documentation and forces the reader to confront a living, breathing symptom of atrocity. (122)

In this context, *Beloved* is not portrayed as a figure of supernatural terror. That is to say, *Beloved* can be seen as the sign of an authentic wound that needs to be checked and exorcised through communal testimony, depicting the past that must be admitted to be exceeded.

B. Fragmentation and the Unspeakable Word

Slaves' systematized dehumanization involved the effacement of the enslaved persons' language, history, and their legal right to narrate their stories. The resultant feeling of the unexplainable is why *Beloved's* narrative is entirely fragmented, mirroring the fractured consciousness of the traumatized one. The trauma challenges what Caruth regards as a "simple model of experience and reference" (*Unclaimed Experience* 11).

The key evidence of this fractured consciousness is the novel's significant reliance on ellipses and delayed decoding. In other words, Paul D's recollection of the incident is primarily shown through his inability to sing and his deep shame (Morrison 40). The incident of the murder of the infant is not exposed consecutively, through Sethe's recollection of memory, Paul D's indirect knowledge, and Denver's careful perspective. Through these delays and gaps within the narrative itself, the reader is compelled to feel



sympathy for the traumatized subject. Arguably, this type of narration forbids the reader from experiencing a linear chronology to make him initially aware of the suffering and pain of the real characters in the novel. As Caruth states, "The traumatic narrative thus repeatedly turns to indirection and detour, to the reality of a history that in its crises can only be perceived in unassimilable forms" (Trauma 5).

The utilization of indirection is obvious in the chapter where the Chorus take a role. To be clear, the indirection is pronounced when the voices of the three women integrate into a unified voice, a horrible flow of consciousness, a passage that is difficult to systemize, transcribe, or put into a chronological system. The integration of "I am Beloved" and "I am Sethe's" indicates the frightening loss of Individuation that trauma imposes. The women are helpless to avoid the consequences of the trauma, and this fact is clearly shown in the novel. The reader is deprived of prominent speakers and obvious chronological signs. Accordingly, the reader is exposed to a state of disorientation, achieving the Caruthian mandate for the trauma text to be a literary re-representation of the psychic condition.

Moreover, one of the pieces of factual evidence of trauma is the physical scars found on the characters' bodies. For instance, the "tree" drawing on Sethe's back, and Paul D's "tin box" are real evidence of trauma. Therefore, the scars, whether visible or invisible, serve as indications of a history that cannot be fully seen, replacing physical memory with linguistic narrative.

C. The Ethics of Witnessing and the Necessity of Collective Testimony

If trauma is fundamentally regarded as an "unclaimed experience," then the process of healing starts when this experience is finally acknowledged and adopted by a sympathetic listener. This transfer from private suffering to collective therapy is the motivating force of Beloved's solution.

At first, the characters experience their traumatic sense in isolation. In this context, Denver suffers the trauma alone by trapping herself in the house as if she were a victim of Intergenerational trauma and silence. Actually, it is Denver, who has settled her whole life in the shade of the traumatic incident, who executes the ethical breach. She breaks the restrictions of her sixteen-year-long silence, traversing the threshold of 124, looking for help from society. Denver's external journey can be seen as the ethical necessity of the novel: the testimony is waiting for the survivors, a concept which needs a speaker and a listener.



The community of Cincinnati, which had once refused to welcome Sethe because of her "uncalled-for pride" and the ugliness of her act, must decide to face the traumatic history she embodies. The motive that has driven thirty women arrive at 124 by the power of the collective spirit is not initially an act of a good will; it is a deep act of communal witnessing on one hand. On the other hand, those women intend to show that Sethe's experience is a fundamental element of their collective history of slavery. This moment of joint exorcism authorizes the muted history to finally begin healing. As the women sing, the ghost disappears, signaling the time the communal consciousness comprehends the burden that was ruining the individual.

The obscure concluding lines of the novel—"It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison 275)—do not indicate forgetting or easy closure. On the contrary, critics argue that they shed light on the moral difficulty of testimony. Arguably, the story is not simply "passed on" like folklore or bare history because it keeps its traumatic charge. Yet, the story must be precisely and carefully blended. The novel places the reader, too, in a position of moral challenge, behaving as a witness, in charge of the very slow, continuous process of restoring the rigorous history. The novel concludes not in a positive ending, but in Paul D's return and his word to "put his story next to hers," indicating the actual recovery through the relational act of collective testimony.

D. The Architecture of Memory: 124 as a Traumatic Vessel (Page 24–25)

Since the former analysis sheds light on the characters, the concrete site of 124 represents an initial factor of trauma. According to Caruth, 124 is not simply a setting; it is a literalized "unclaimed experience" in architectural design. Thus, the house is depicted as "spiteful," "loud," and finally "quiet," having a personality that portrays the psychological condition of its inhabitants.

The silence of 124 suggests the specialization of trauma. Since Sethe is unable to comprehend her traumatic past, the past invades her physical space. Actually, Morrison utilizes the house to reveal how trauma denies the distinction between the "internal" mind and the "external" world. The surrounding environment embodies the memory of the infant's murder through the vibrating of floorboards or the turning of the light into a red beam. A memory that Sethe herself cannot yet forget.

Moreover, the "rememory" concept—where a place keeps a memory like a tangible substance—coincides with Caruth's notion that trauma is an event that is "not fully known"



at the same time and thus recurs to chase the survivor later. Sethe's anxiety springs from the fact that her children might "bump into" her old past at Sweet Home, suggesting that trauma can be seen as an endless geographic trait. By analyzing the house's transformation from a site of isolation to a site of collective intervention, we suggest that the familial sphere must be "purged" of its physical ghosts before it can be a home for the living.

E. The Maternal Paradox: Infanticide as a "Mercy"

A profound exploration into the moral paradox of Sethe's act is required to comprehend the "impossible history" Rushdy mentions. According to traditions and law, Sethe's deed can be regarded as a pure crime. Nonetheless, within the trauma of the slave system, this act can be seen as a radical—if destroying—to restore rights.

Sethe's trauma lies in the loss of her sense of motherhood—particularly, the "taking of her milk" by the nephews of the schoolteacher. This breach is considered a physical trauma that comes before the murder of the child. In this context, Michèle Bonnet argues that the impact of slavery system harms both the mothers and their children. She states "The robbing of Sethe's milk is the materialization of the fundamental perversity of the institution which kills the slaves' selves by severing the bonds between mother and child" (49). Sethe believes that the best way to keep her daughter safe from a system that commodify her body is to kill her. This is the ultimate traumatic repetition: to end the trauma of slavery, she imposes the trauma of death.

This section should reveal the "thickness" of Sethe's love for her daughter, which Paul D actually illustrates as "too thick." According to trauma theory, this "thickness" is an indication of hyper-vigilance. Indeed, Sethe enmeshes with her children to an extent that led to the dissolution of boundaries due to her great loss of control over her own body. The return of Beloved is the somatic manifestation of this boundary-less love. Therefore, the current analysis sheds light on how the "working-through" procedure makes Sethe recognize her children as separate entities. This procedure only starts when Denver departs the yard, and Paul D returns to inform Sethe, "You your best thing, Sethe. You are" (Morrison 321-322)

F. Somatic Testimony: The "Chokecherry Tree" and the Tin Box

Finally, the analysis must trace the physical side of trauma. Caruth argues that the body often undergoes the feeling of trauma the moment that the mind fails to record the event. In Beloved, the bodies of the characters' act as archives of the "unspeakable."



Sethe's Back: In fact, the "chokecherry tree" of scars is a non-alive, insensitive spot of skin. It is a "literalization" of the process of trauma—a place where the nerves have become numb, showing her emotional drought. This tree becomes alive only through the touch of Amy Denver, and later Paul D.

Paul D's "Tin Box": Actually, the trauma of Paul D is found in his chest, a somatic sensation of coldness and rust. His journey can be viewed as "thawing." The moment Beloved decided to "move" Paul D's spirit, she was obliged to open a somatic seal.

The "Bit": The trauma lies behind the bit in the memory of the metal and the "wildness" it created in Paul D's eyes. Paul D's trauma is indeed a trauma of dehumanization that exceeds language entirely.

In a nutshell, the current paper concludes that *Beloved* proposes that healing is somatic reclamation. In other words, healing cannot be seen as a linguistic or collective act, but it is a physical recovery. The novel ends with the "laying on of hands," believing that for the subject who suffers from a trauma, the body must be restored before the tale can be "passed on." This notion assures the Caruthian idea that the survivor must exceed the "belatedness" of their somatic existence.

Conclusion

Arguably, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* can be viewed as a masterpiece of trauma fiction, scrupulously portraying the physical and psychological consequences of slavery on the narrative form. By utilizing the structural logic of the unclaimed experience—illustrated through the concepts of fright, latency, and repetition compulsion outlined by Caruth—Morrison expresses the historical truth of the murder of children, the language of the haunting re-experience, showing the past as the ghostly figure of Beloved. Accordingly, the non-linear, fractured style is not simply empirical, but a significant technique for transferring a history that damages the subjects' ability for linear acknowledgement and expression, achieving the moral authorization to submit the impossible history. Marsha Jean Darling believes that, "Beloved, in its entirety, challenges us to visualize, contemplate, empathize, and comprehend the reality of 19th-century Black men and women" (6).

The novel portrays the sheltered, self-consuming nature of human trauma and concludes with the transmuted power of communal witnessing. According to the novel, it is impossible for the traumatic effect to heal aloof from other factors. This fact is obvious through Denver's moral courage and the community's sympathetic return. Indeed, survivors'



traumatic wound is hard to heal only if the community take into consideration that survivors' past should be integrated with their present since history crafting is the responsibility of any community. Eventually, *Beloved* confirms Caruth's basic insight: that history itself reveals our profound connections in relation to traumatic wounds, and that the responsibility of the living is to be witnesses to the incomprehensible events, ensuring that the time that is not real time can, finally, come to an end.

The Pedagogical and Social Weight of the "Unclaimed"

What distinguishes *Beloved* is its denial of giving the reader a "clean" catharsis. While the novel ends with an optimistic tone that includes the exorcism of the ghost and the possibility of Sethe's recovery, it intentionally involves the reader in a productive discomfort condition. This uncovers what Caruth names the "crisis of witnessing." By obliging the reader to undergo the exact fragmentation, silence, and "rememory" as the characters, Morrison guarantees that the trauma of slavery is not only tackled as a distant historical data point, but is examined as a living, psychological reality.

Morrison's narrative style indicates that the "impossible history" of the Middle Passage and American chattel slavery can never be totally "cured" or neglected. This history, therefore, can be treated by integration. Accordingly, it can be seen that the repetitive, haunting nature of the text acts as an alert against social and cultural amnesia. In the modern context, *Beloved* can be viewed as a structural sample for how a society might treat its unexplored wounds. It suggests that social unity is imperceptible without first comprehending the "spectral" presence of those the official record has tried to eradicate.

The Ethics of "The Story to Pass On"

The sore dichotomy of the ending pages—the rhythmic alternation between "It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison 323) and "This is not a story to pass on" (ibid 324)—acts as the Caruthian announcement on the nature of traumatic transferring. To "pass on" a certain tale can mean to transfer it to others, but it can also mean to neglect it. Morrison's manipulation of this phrase embodies the moral dilemma of the survivor: the trauma is too catastrophic to be announced, yet it is too important to be concealed.

By concluding with this linguistic ambiguity, Morrison handles the responsibility of traumatic memory to the reader. There should be a communal collaboration from the audience to keep the "working-through" that starts with the thirty women in Cincinnati. Actually, *Beloved* is not just a mere novel, but it can be seen as an act of justice. The novel,



therefore, re-humanizes the "Sixty Million and more" that Morrison has dedicated the current book to. She restores their voices that have been restricted by traditions and society.

Final Synthesis: From Pathology to Presence

Eventually, the mixture of Caruth's concepts alongside Morrison's narrative uncovers the fact that trauma is not only a psychological problem that should be cured, but it is a result of the negative consequences of wars. *Beloved* gives us a pure lesson that even when the heart shuts its doors on pain, the act of "putting one's story next to" another's is the only way to a realistic future.

The title of the novel does not merely indicate the murder of an infant, but a signal to reclaim oneself. Morrison attempts to convey the fact that the past is something that any survivor should claim to be able to live their future. The "time that is not time" finally gives a present where Sethe, Paul D, and Denver can survive not as burdens of the past, but as ones who build new lives. Angelo Bonnie states that:

The book was not about the institution slavery with a capital S. It was about those anonymous people called slaves What they do to keep on, how they make a life, what they are willing to risk, however long it lasts, in order to relate to one another - that was incredible to me (48).

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