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FUNCTIONS OF MAGIC REALISM IN TONI MORRISON’S
BELOVED

MA THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present paper is to analyse the implication of magic realism as a literary mode in Toni Morrison’s book *Beloved*. To serve this purpose three objectives were stated: to define magic realism as a literary mode, to analyse elements of magic realism in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, to analyse the functions of the magical character of the story. The content/textual analysis as well as descriptive method were employed in order to perform the investigation. The research demonstrated that magic realism not only exists in this literary work but holds a significant role as well. The results showed that magic realism is used to exaggerate the physical and psychological traumas that African Americans experienced in that historical period. Likewise, the elements of magic realism highly contribute to the creation of the atmosphere and carries a strong impact to the reader’s feelings. Nevertheless, the magical character appeared to convey a significant implication towards the novel by helping the living ones to reconcile with their past, heal and set themselves free.
INTRODUCTION

The concept magic realism appeared in 1920s and was introduced by Franz Roh. The term could be described an oxymoron thus it is built of two words which have completely opposing meanings – “realism” describes the real events in life, while “magic” consist of mystical, magical events and imagination. The term “magical realism” firstly was introduced in painting and later it appeared in literature. Nowadays people introduced this term in lives quite widely – magical realism is used everywhere, even in cinema. In Roh’s opinion magic realism is “a way to uncover the mystery hidden in everyday reality”. However, some scholars have been arguing whether magic realism is a literary mode or could be considered as a separate genre of literature. There is still no universal treatment about it, some scholars even employ both terms identically, without any clear distinction of the meaning. Although, the phenomenon does not have a standard meaning, the vast majority of the scholars suggest that it should be treated as a literary mode and this research would also take this term into consideration.

According to Soukhanov taking into consideration the features of magic realism, it is believed that magic realist texts braids logically unexplainable mystic elements with reality (1992), at the same time the events which we consider as realistic are combined with the unrealistic and unexplainable, that could consist of dreams or mythology (Drabble 2000). Magic realist texts has a tendency to trigger the reader’s curiosity by intentionally not providing the clarity they should consider magic as real or reality as magic. According to Baldick magic realist narration also has a tendency of triggering the reader’s and tend to use symbols. These kind of texts could provide the cause and effect relations, which a character in a story may face even before a tragic event takes place. Magic realist narratives circles around folk tales and myths (Baldick, 2004) and are capable of incorporation of folklore and even myths, which denies the principle of the reality as well as changes the fundamentals of the concept of the art (Harmon 1992, 113).

As an outstanding author, Toni Morrison was chosen for this research. She is widely known for her unusual writing style rich of literary modes and elements. She won a Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award and a Nobel Prize, and her book Beloved is regularly considered one of the best works of English literature in the 20th century. Toni Morrison itself does not consider herself as a magic realist, she states “my own use of enchantment simply comes because that’s the way the world was for me and for the black people I knew….there was this other knowledge or perception, always discredited but nevertheless there, which
informed their sensibilities and clarified their activities. It formed a kind of cosmology that was perceptive as well as enchanting, and so it seemed impossible for me to write about black people and eliminate that simply because it was “unbelievable”. So, I have become indifferent, I suppose, to the phrase magic realism (Guthrie, 1986). This leads to the problem of this research which encourages to prove that magic realism truly exist in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. There are a number of speculations, that Toni Morrison’s works definitely contains a significant number of magical and mysterious elements, as well as to a majority of her works are full of fantastic elements which could not be explained by real life events. Nevertheless, these elements are interlaced with reality and the writer treats it as natural, everyday events. Whatever the author considers these literary devices to be, the literary critics and the readers consider *Beloved* as one of the most popular examples of the works of magic realism which plays a significant role in the novel and adds to the gloomy atmosphere and traumatic experiences. On the account of this, the following research question was formed: how the functions of magic realism contribute to salvation and creation of the atmosphere?

**The aim of the research** is to analyse the implication of magic realism as a literary mode in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.

To serve this purpose, the following objectives of the research were set:

1) to define magic realism as a literary mode.

2) to analyse elements of magic realism in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.

3) to analyse the functions of the magical character of the story.

**Scope and methods**

As an object of the research, the novel “Beloved” (1987) by Toni Morrison was selected for analysing the elements of magic realism. This book was chosen because of its tendency to describe the events through magical, supernatural and mysterious elements. Descriptive analysis was applied for presenting the concept of magic realism and to determine the influencing factors for the writer to use magic realism in this book. Furthermore, Content (textual) analysis was performed on the purpose to interpret the cases of magic realism and state the implication they hold in the novel. For the selection of the elements of magic realism
from the text Chanaddy (2003) theories were used, as well as Faris (1995) insights were chosen for determining the magical features for the elements found in the novel.

The relevance and significance of the research is verified by the fact that the results of the analysis of Toni Morrison’s “Beloved” will reveal the functions magic realism performs in the novel and what makes the critics and the readers consider it as this particular literary mode. The findings of this research will contribute by applying it into teaching of American literature. This research will also provide possible implications for further investigations in Toni Morrison’s Beloved by employing the different yet relative aspects (African-American mythology).
1. MAGIC REALISM

Magical realism is recognized as a Latin American phenomenon, with the most significant work written by Gabriel García Márquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. However, the mode is relatively difficult to crack, it appeared almost a 100 years ago, in 1920s and had three stages which had an impact of spreading magic realism all over the world and fell in the centre of attention to not only Latin American but also European writers. The foundations of this literary mode lie not only in Latin America but in other cultures as well, holding various aspects that vary from different approaches towards the notion of magic. For this reason, magical realism may contain as many different shapes of magic as the number of various cultural contexts exist: “it can develop as a mystery, an extraordinary happening, or the supernatural formed by our belief and can be influenced by European Christianity as much as by Native American indigenous beliefs” (Bowers, 2004, 4). Mystical, miraculous elements are considered as a main part of magical realism as they are capable of reflecting specific culture’s diverse worldview which enables the characters of blocking their disbeliefs and deal with supernatural like it is a part of their reality.

The first rise of magical realism appeared in Germany in 1920s. However, significant to note that magical realism as a technique was firstly used in painting. Most critics accept the fact that founder of the term was Franz Roh, German art critic, who presented the concept to depict a new shape of post-expressionist painting. The book *Post-expressionism, Magic Realism: Problems of the Most Recent European Painting* (1925) introduced the concept Magischer Realismus in order to discuss about the modern genre of painting that was quite different from the previous one - expressionist art, due to its specific, photograph-like portrayals of the space dwelling of mystical lights of reality (Bowers, 2004, 2). Thou, Roh himself neglected the term *magic realism* and took a new term introduced by G.F.Hartlaub, into priority. The original term slowly consigned to oblivion (Crockett, 2004, 9).

Roh believed that magic realism contains some similarities with surrealism, thus both movements were influenced by expressionism and the events of post-war, moreover, they both contain fantastic, mystical elements (Bowers 2004, 10). Yet, the most significant discrepancy between these movements is that surrealism evolved around the expressions, the unconsciousness and its capabilities, particularly dreams. Through creating unrealistic and unnatural imagery, surrealists were involved in the discussions of triggering and asserting
subconscious in their works. On the contrary to surrealism, magic realism concentrated on natural objects in the space, in which magic originates from every day, ordinary things, existing within the field of the real. Therefore, magic in this term was justified in the world’s rational organization draw a strong opposition to surrealism’s concern in psychological reality, in that Amaryl Chanady stated: “While magic realism is based on an ordered, even if irrational, perspective, surrealism brings about “artificial” combinations” (1985, 23). There also exists one more essential difference between these movements, it is based on the fact that magical realism completely opposite from to surrealism still lacks a concrete definition or guidelines on which majority of scholars would agree on as well as on the distinction from other movements.

The confusion among art movements becomes even more striking when magical realism roots in America. Roh’s statements about magic realism influenced some diplomats and writers - Alejo Carpentier and Arturo Uslar-Pietri, whose visits in Europe influenced the magic realism’s spread into Latin America where it flourishes in literature putting the painting into second plan. In addition, Carpentier introduced the concept lo realismo maravilloso (marvellous realism) and adapted it to Latin American literature (Bowers 2004, 13).

From the Carpentier’s position, Latin America is already originally magical, it is rich of folklore and mystical elements, based on prejudices and supernatural beliefs. As an Carpentier assumed that marvellous literature’s origins sticks Europe, nevertheless, Latin America, in his opinion, appeared to contain more magic in real life than in literature (1975, 3). In addition, Carpentier proposed the idea that the way to introduce magical American reality into literature would be successful only if the writer would strongly believe that America was magically real. The authors who applies magic realism in their works should really have faith in it, otherwise it would only trigger a “literary gimmick” (ibid.) The illustrative example could be the novel Les Chants de Maldoror (The Songs of Maldoror), where one of the characters managed to escape from danger by using shape-shifting and capability to teleport into another place. Carpentier pointed out that despite the fact that this novel is really “marvellous”, Latin America tends to outplace it with a real-life character, a slave named François Mackandal, who had the ability to shift his shape and had other magical powers (ibid.). However, Imbert denied Carpentier’s statements, declaring that the thought of the magically real could be separated from the modern considerations on magical realism thus the magical literature, in Carpentier’s opinion originated from belief and prejudices. The literature critic, Orlando Gómez-Gil, seems to agree with Carpentier and assumed that the theory of Latin American magic is grounded on
myth and legend. Imbert strongly believes that, while reviewing magic realism the reality should be presented as magical instead of magic presented as real: “Things do exist, and what a pleasure we get from seeing them emerge from fantasy’s flow; but now we enter into them, and in their depths we again touch upon the enigma” (1975, 4).

Literary critic Angel Flores as well expresses some doubts about the introduction of magic realism in Latin America’s fiction, in addition, she in her essay she presents slightly diversing theory. Taking into consideration Flores ideas, Jorge Louis really was the founder of magic realism in this region, however Franz Kafka bears a significant impact for it (1955, 188). Flores agrees with the fact that magical realism should be considered as of European origin, however, it was forced to change some aspects by emerging into Latin America. The features of magic realism which are universal despite the country it exists at, also was presented by Flores. He believes that there is a timeless space in which magical realist narratives could be obtained but it is necessary that the fact where the story begins would be unclear. For instance, in one of his stories the character starts speaking by: “Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can’t be sure” (1942, 4). Later story evolves as an ordinary story, but the beginning already triggered reader’s curiosity and process of thinking. Imbert explains this type of narration used in magic realist literature: “as the narrator proposes to provoke feelings of strangeness he disregards what he sees and abstains from rational explanations” (1975, 4). The strange beginning influences the sharpness of reader’s mind, which forces him to leave his beliefs aside and dive into magical world (Flores, 1955, 191).

One more issue that appears to be a real headache for literary critics is the term magical realism itself. If they could agree on certain aspects of what is called “reality”, the concept of “magic” is still in need of some clarification. In diverse versions of magical realism, “magic” is interpreted from different angles. Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) claims that: “each of the versions of magic(al) realism have differing meanings for the term “magic”; in magic realism “magic” refers to the mystery of life: in marvellous and magical realism “magic” refers to any extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science” (19). In magic realist works, magic is not described as magic in its literal meaning, it is believed to be true, for the characters of the magic realist stories it is the only reality they know. Accordingly, remarkable things in magical realism are not revealed as a dream or an imagination, thus that would take the readers further from the real world, the world we live in, into the space of pure fantasy (ibid., 22).
The confusion between magic and fantastical elements have raised a lot of discussions among scholars and it is significant to draw the essential discrepancy between them. For that reason, Chanady (2003) explained the main differences of those terms. In her opinion, the fantastic, at least in Western rational paradigms, appears as “something terrifying and logically impossible, a threat to reason and personal safety, an intrusion from another world” (430). Ghosts, vampires, and other non-realistic creatures plays an essential role and their acts bases on mythical or religious rules yet are still viewed as unnatural and unexplainable phenomena in a world based on reasons. Opposingly, magic realist texts and these creatures as completely natural and they often even play the main roles in fiction. Magic realism as well has a tendency to invite the reader to forget their believes and attempts to explain everything that is happening around. Even if something seems abnormal at first sight, e.g. the tree growing on the woman’s back, it is there for a reason that naturally has some broader sense and at the end it seems completely normal and even significant. According to Chanady magic realism usually serves a higher purpose: “magical realism is not just for one’s aesthetic pleasure, it plays a more crucial role in building allegories about our world and criticizing the society, as well as building a collective imagery of the oppressed and marginal cultures” (ibid., 434). The conclusion could be drawn that magical realism tends to transform from superstitious world rules into political, historical or other kinds of writings, in order to put the emphasis on the issues of identity, discrimination, trauma and oppression.

1.1 Literary mode or genre?

Faris (1995) interprets magical realism as a literary mode which adheres to basic techniques, however, not restricted to geographical or thematic framework. It is believed by Faris that there are two codes of magical realism mode. One is realistic - “thematic treatments of connections to spirit worlds,” where narrative magic “encodes the ineffable.” While other code spreads the feeling of mystery and spirit - “the narrative mode of magical realism itself” which includes “the irreducible elements within realism” (74). Sacred space of magical realism is based on interaction of both codes. Critics no longer analyse realist code as an aspect of magical realism because of such prejudgments: “And it is this … that has been the most neglected because it is the most alien to the modern Western critical tradition. … That hostility
dictates that if the presence of a realm of the spirit exists in magical realist fictions, it may often go largely unseen by the conscious writing and reading mind" (Sasser, 2014, 35).

There are different stylistic criteria which have been associated with magic realism, for example, a genre, a mode, a literary movement, trend or form. Amaryll Chanady maintains that magic realism is a literary mode rather than a genre. She states that a literary mode refers to a broader term, while a genre must comply with strict form and conventions (Chanady, 1985, 16). To prove her opinion that magical realism is a literary mode, but not a genre the author reminds about such feature of genre as historical and geographic limitations (ibid.).

David Danow (2004) characterizes magical realism as "narrative, a mode of human communication and an artistic form for reflecting one world (actual) in another (which is fictional)" in his book The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque. (17). According to Zamora and Faris (1995) magical realism is "a mode suited to exploring-and transgressing-boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic". The authors claim that such spaces and worlds as in magical realism would be contradictory in any other mode of fiction (5). As John Burt Foster, Jr. insist that magical realism is an international cultural tendency which is broader than any single art or poetry movement, such as English Vorticism, Russian Acmeism, or Dutch De Stijl. Although the author agrees that magical realism is deficient in the collective cultural scope of categories like modernism, the avant-garde, or postmodernism. Hence, magical realism can be attributed to such intermediate terms as surrealism, expressionism, and futurism as they all were significant movements in several national cultures but did not overwhelm the whole epoch. (ibid. 267)

Maggie Ann Bowers (2004) explains that the intention of magical realism is not simply to mix supernatural and the natural, the mysterious and the real, the determinate and the obscure, but in contrary to combine profusion, hybridity and heterogeneity. One may find the potential in magic realism to be successful expansion in such veteran literary genre as romance, while other may review it as a destruction of hierarchy and multiplicity in postcolonial discourse. It is efficient to investigate the perspectives induced and practiced by literary theorists in order to define magic realism. The author determines magical realism as “a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy, expressed in many postcolonial and non-Western works of contemporary fiction,” (2). As remarked by Stephen Slemon (1995) magic realism is “a concept of resistance to the massive imperial centre and its totalizing systems” (410).
1.2 Functions of magic realism

Although, as mentioned before, there are no universal source in which one can find the actual functions of magic realism due to the fact that its functions vary together with the number of magic realist’s texts. Although, some scholars tried to distinct some of them:

1. Magic realism aims to depict mixtures of history meaningful (Cooper, 1998, 36);

2. Magic realism holds a catalyst function in existing society and history. (Aldea, 2011, 148);

3. Magic realism not only demolishes the suspicions of clarity and impartiality, but also attempts to actualize experience, knowledge and truth of alternative forms over the ones which dominate in realism (ibid., 12);

4. Magic realism helps to entitle existing fictions about historical, cultural or postmemorial past to be approbated and absolute (Rarick, 2009, 141);

5. Magic realism tend to fight unambiguous examples and approaches of slavery discourse proposing constant employment of magic realist texts in different historical and cultural framework (ibid., 143);

6. Magic realism is based on enhancement of possibility to represent the value through magical means, to make something ambiguous become genuine (ibid., 143).
2. TONI MORRISON

Chloe Anthony Wofford who adopted the alias of Toni Morrison was born in Lorain, Ohio in 1931. Her parents are African-American Southerners, who migrated to the North in the early part of this century. Chloe grew up in the close-knit family consisting of three generations. As African-American family they were tend to believe in a mystical objects as it is deeply rooted in their folklore. African-Americans tend to believe that a person could not die as long as the living ones remember him. Toni Morrison’s family used to read and tell her various ghost stories, animal tales, yarns of magical happenings. Reading became Chloe’s passion from childhood and she could read before starting first grade (Andrews, Mckey, 1999, 4).

Many literary critics describes Morrison’s works as challengable for the reader, one phenomenon in her novel can hold a number of meanings. While reading her works it is necessary to suspend personal believes, pay attention to the separate pieces and reread the text for the sake of deeper understanding. Her unique writing style encourages many researches to be done. Much of Toni Morrison's works has a tendency to a musical quality and there are many references to songs and rhythm which also could be explained by her African-American nature (Stein, 2009, 43).

The main themes which could be found in Morrison's novels is slavery and how the enslaved characters responds to that experience and racism which is a sensitive theme for African-American community. Surely, her works contains lots of other philosophical ideas, for instance, African-American experiences in America. She portrays this appearance not from the margins of society but from the center of it. However, it does not mean that black people are described only positively, thus, they lives, feelings and concerns are taken into consideration. Another theme which is widely explored in her novels is mother-child relationship, the desire of belonging and acceptance (ibid. 88).

In one of her interviews, Toni Morrison states that: “I want my writing to reflect the imaginative combination of the real world, the very practical, shrewd, day to day functioning that black people must do, while at the same time they encompass some great supernatural element” (Nellie Mckay, 153). Although she refuses the label of magic realist she states that: “We are very practical people, very down-to-earth, even shrewd people. But within that practicality we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things” (2008, 61).
2.1 Beloved

No one could doubt Toni Morrison’s power as a literary artist. Paradise (1998) once more confirmed her eminence at story-telling and as a prose stylist. The author herself has stated that the proper guidelines for reading and analysing her creation must be found primarily in African-American women writers. Toni Morrison could be compared with Faulkner and Cormac McCarthy taking into consideration the rhetorical techniques their works are rich with. Similar as Virginia Woolf, Morrison is a mythological and historical fantasist. Beloved appears to be a true history of African American slavery (Bloom, 1984, 7).

Before becoming a writer, Toni Morrison was a senior editor at Random House Publishers and was particularly interested in black fiction. While she was editing a project called The Black Book (1974), a collection of memoirs embodying 300 years of black history, Morrison came across the story about Margaret Garner. According to a newspaper article that Morrison had found, in 1851 Margaret Garner, a former slave, escaped from Kentucky to Ohio along with her children. When her owner and the U.S. marshal found her, Garner threatened to kill her children shouting out, “Before any of my children will be taken back into Kentucky, I will kill every one of them.” Before being captivated Garner cut the throat of her three-year-old daughter and eventually returned to Kentucky under the federal Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Inspired by this story, Morrison used Margaret Garner as a starting line for her story and character of Sethe, but she decided not to perform any further researches on the Garner case, allowing Sethe to develop as a fully-fiction character (Page, 1996, 24).

The critic Stanley Crouch (1987), contravened Morrison’s version of history, and called Beloved a soap opera of the Black Holocaust. There are some similarites between those two one of the most tragic events in world history whether of six million Jews or of the “sixty million” African Americans to whom Morrison dedicates Beloved. A vast majority of events described in the novel comprehends rape, a mother cutting her baby’s throat, whippings, dreadful prison treatment on chain gangs, starvation and a lot of other atrocities which a human psychic automatically seeks to ignore. However, concealed by indirect style and the appearance of magic, this abundance of torments may daze any reader’s sensibilities (ibid., 67).

Toni Morrison herself believed that Beloved, her fifth novel, would gain the least attention from the readers of all of her books. She had a reason for believing it called “national amnesia” that surrounds the history and details of slavery which people are tend to forget and not to think of. She felt conflicted to involve herself in the subject, yet she was pressed to finish
the book. To her astound, Beloved appeared on the New York Times bestseller list the same week it appeared in bookshelves (Page, 1996, 58).

2.2 Denying the undeniable?

Even though Toni Morisson is known for applying magic realism to accentuate slavery in her writings she denies this fact in her interview with Christina Davis in 1986 and does not want to be associated with magic realism writer. Toni Morisson describes that she previously understood the label “magical realism” as a disguised reality. Her first recognition of magical realism was when particular kinds of novels written by Latin American men started to be described. “It was a way of not talking about politics…. If you could apply the word “magical” then that dilutes the realism, but it seemed legitimate because there were these supernatural and unrealistic things, surreal things, going on in the text….”. Describing her own use of magic in the writings Toni Morrison affirms that it was how reality appeared for her and the black people she knew. She kept on writing about it because it was genuine perception of the world for black people, but “unblievable” for others. She elaborates “So, I have become indifferent, I suppose, to the phrase magic realism.” (225)

Toni Morisson indicates that Gabriel Garcia Marquez did not have influence on her writing the Song of Solomon as she discovered the author when the work was already in progress. Regardless Toni Morisson’s denial of concious employment of magic realism many critics and scholars assert the instances of this mode in her works and continue to describe her as a magic realist (Page, 1996, 65).

Rigney (1991) justifies the fact that Toni Morrison’s work Beloved is extensively constituted of magic. The main character Sethe as disclosed by Rigney has strong bond with the ancient myths and the African mothers through Baby Suggs in present. Rigney correlates Sethe with a wizard magic, provident but at the same time worldly. Baby Suggs is also considered to be healer with supernatural powers, who can cure Sethe's back and fix her injured breasts. In Beloved Baby Suggs is depicted as a person competing with astonishing powers of the mythic Chrost in her ability to organize a celebration for ninety people just from two buckets of blackberries (69). The “real” element is said to become supernatural when reality is too abdominal and artificial (ibid. 77). According to Rigney the evil and its revelation in the
kingdom of supernatural is inherent part of Morrison’s world and texts which is the actual
evidence of her being a magic realism writer even though she does not allowed to be called so
(ibid. 79).

Erickson (2009) agrees with other scholars in assessment of Toni Morrison’s Beloved
being a representation of magic realism. She even compares it to One Hundred Years of
Solitude. As the ghost is a central theme in Beloved, Erickson refers to it as a strong magic
realism manifestation because other fictional works considered to be “magical realism”, just
episodically include supernatural appearances (16). The function of ghost may be to strengthen
the narrative and its thematic structure, but not to display antirealism. The ghost symbolizes
the past and how the fragments of the past may remain in the present (184).

Sánchez and Manzanas (2009) are also convinced that Toni Morrison’s Beloved
perfectly complies with features of magic realism in the way it adds mythic and folk narratives
into the complex language of the novel where it violates the ordinary (124). The historical
enslavement and deprivation resulted in the appearance of magic in Toni Morrison’s novels
such as the magical flight back to Africa in Song of Solomon, the blue-eyed image in The Bluest
Eye, or the return of the restrained past in Beloved. However, Toni Morrison abandons writing
about constant domination resistant in contemporary novels (134).

Different characterization of Toni Morrison’s works is also used by scholar Beaulieu
(2003). According to her, Toni Morisson makes use of conjure in her literary works. Such
narrative elements as women born without belly buttons, men with ability to fly and dead
babies transforming into alive grown person are interpreted as naturally developing
circumstances. Morrison relies on ancient beliefs and practices of African-rooted conjurers,
hoodoos and witches in her texts. There are three novels of Toni Morrison that undoubtedly
apply conjure as stated by Beaulieu: Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, and, most importantly,
Beloved. Besides, Toni Morrison has written texts not centralizing the idea of spirituality, but
still containing sophisticated referral to conjure: The Bluest Eye, Sula, Jazz and Paradise (2003,
88).

In Beaulieu’s opinion the text with the greatest use of conjure is Beloved. The idea of
a ghost child is borrowed by Morrison from ancient African sources and based on West African
Yoruba culture. The novel Beloved describes both the loss of woman’s child because of
barbarous slavery and deprivation of great number of severely abused mothers and children.
Beloved is an abiku in Yoruba, which involves the meaning of the child whose destiny is to be
stillbord or die early and revive to the same mother in order to torment the parents by returning many times. The parents of abiku used to mark dead child body before burial intending to recognize him/her after return (ibid., 89). Also more characters of Beloved conform to the term conjurers. Those are Baby Suggs healing powers and Sethe’s daughter Denver’s seeing the ghost of her sister long before others recognize her and capable to distinguish true Beloved’s intentions (ibid., 91).

The boundaries between the past and the present, the living and the dead, the topics which were misinterpreted or refused are focused on in Toni Morrison’s novels. The novel Beloved observing “insistent, undead past”, is often referred to as an example of magical realism in the glossaries of gothic works. The illustration of dead in Tony Morrison’s fiction is usually presented more ‘alive’ than the living (Lister, 2009, 21).
3. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEW HISTORICISM

The new historicism which emerged from the old historicism of Gilkey and the German herme-neutiscist is composed of the transfer of how the term imagination is being understood. The new and old historicisms share the power of imagination to transcend constrained boundaries of the present circumstances. Also, both historicism refuse people to obey immediate history. Furthermore, both historicisms review the possibility of fantasies to be epitomized. The different idea of the new historicisms is that realities consulted are past history, while it was considered to be something trans historical in the old historicism. Besides, the new historicism believes that the imagination is free and endowing interpretation of the past, when the old historicism claimed it to be the bright reproduction of transhistorical meanings. Hence, the new historicism insists on interpretive image of the imagination which interacts with the past to introduce and develop, but not just recreate (Dean, 1986, 264).

There is a tendency where the works which intended to represent specific cultural object evolve to be captivating interpretive mystery. History cannot be appealed as a restriction considering that culture is a text and the textual footprints of particular time period are representation and occurrence. In the new historicism history no longer obtained balance and suppressing function which it considered in attempt to proclaim the restraint of the sayable and thinkable. It is noticed that even though there are certain things which are easier to say and think about at a particular time frame and location, the studies of any cultures especially the ones that left intricate testimony of their existence demonstrate that limits were always disregarded. The new historicism disputes the emphasis of determinism on the idea that particular things were beyond understanding and articulation in a given period of time. The individual instance is significantly appreciated by the new historicism (Gallagher, Greenbalt, 2000, 17).

The inspected approach to refer to culture as text has its charm in the serious scoop of accessible works to read and ways to interpret them. Being acknowledged major works of art are still obliged to hustle with other art objects. For example, some of the literary works are diminished or completely eliminated from oeuvre/canon because they got lost between enormous variety of art objects. Whereas other literary works are considered to be non-literary because they are deficient in aesthetic shine, mannered use of rhetorical figures, the atmosphere of aloofness from the contemporary world, the status of fiction (ibid., 10).
Different interpretations of history, the different rememory of the same historical events and divergence of history are significant philosophical themes in Toni Morrison’s novels. Her novel Beloved concentrates on the personal calamities experienced during the slavery and the Reconstruction eras by the former slave woman and her closest family members. The central focus of the novel is to distinguish the influence of slavery on the individuals and culture in general. The novel includes elements of history, ghost story and historical fiction (ibid. 29).

The new historicism is different from orthodox historiography because it focuses on the events where ruling political and diplomatic society dominated over the others. Such theory influenced Morrison’s writing especially because she is a black novelist having clear ethnic awareness. She does not only restore the historical details of African Americans, but also emphasizes useful details from the past that can be used by African Americans to establish adequate present and future. Morrison established alternative approach to restore African American history which led to atypical historicity of Beloved. Historically, blacks were dispossessed of cultural connection by sending them to America where colonialists afflicted them economically and ideologically. In the course of time African’s national consciousness was weakened and they lost subjectivity. As a result African American national culture has been eradicated by colonialist cultural penetration (Xu, 2014, 101).

According to Morrison personal growth and development of a black person is excessively affected by community. The novel Beloved depicts the significance of community, especially for the black women, who in the battle against slavery and its impact needed to cooperate in order to become personality. An individual comprises comprehension of his/her position in the community and ways of interaction with others (ibid. 103).
4. ELEMENTS OF MAGIC REALISM

The fantastical object – the ghost which appeared in Beloved reigns above all the other mystical elements existing in Toni Morrison’s. While the ghost is naturally fearsome enough and naturally could be used to scare the reader, the ghost in Beloved did not appear as a scary ghost from the horror stories, it holds a number of remarkable features. Mystical atmosphere of the novel involves the reader from the very beginning of the by drawing a fragile line between dead and the living ones. This strategy reflects the one of horror in the way it violates limits of natural events. Although the narrative is considerably different from the structure of traditional horror stories. Usually any type of monster from the horror story enters a secure space driven by chaotic force eventually being followed by a detective figure who examines monster’s emergence and approaches to eradicate it. However, the ghost in the novel Beloved infiliates the space that is stable and there is no distinct detective figure tracking the ghost.

The author seeks to tell the story about Sethe, a slave, who gained freedom and cannot bare to live with the fact that she murdered her baby girl that she would not experience life as a slave. Her grief is so powerful that her dead daughter reincarnates into a human being – a woman named Beloved, who appears to be the same age as a dead baby would have been if she was alive. Ghosts usually are central characters in magical realist fiction. However, the ghost in this novel is described as a real human being and it needs deeper familiarization with the story to notice the magical elements which links the character with the story.

4.1 Creation of the atmosphere

The novel is full of the unique, mystical and gloomy atmosphere which involves the reader from the first page of the novel. However, this novel is quite challenging to read not only because of the time overlaps but also because of the tragic events which are described as natural, everyday cases people face every day. Furthermore, from the very beginning of the book the reader tends to feel mostly gloomy and mysterious atmosphere which is created with the help of the elements of magic realism.
One of the objects which has magical abilities and adds to the atmosphere is the house in which most of the action in the novel evolves. It has a specific title, a number to be exact – 124. Throughout the story it is called like that over 80 times but it is rarely called simple a “house”. Considering Toni Morrison’s devote to the symbolic meaning and that almost every element in her novels is there for a reason, this number, however, may also be not picked up randomly. Although, the author did not give her own explanation about it and left space for reader’s imagination to flourish, there are some speculation about the significance of it. According to Nobis (2014) the number 124 could be treated as a sequence of numbers with 3 evidently missing. It could be that the symbolism of this number evolved from the number of Sethe’s children, she had four of them, but her third child Beloved is dead. Furthermore, the sum of the 1+2+4 is equal to 7 which is a number of days God created the Earth (24). Looking from the historical perspective of the novel it is the fact that Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Toni Morrison released Beloved into day light in 1987. The subtraction of these numbers is 124 (47).

Whatever reason the title of the house has, its significance in the novel is revealed by the usage of the elements of magic realism. The house itself is depicted not as inanimate subject, an accommodation for the characters, it is portrayed as a living creature which is capable of human experiences and feelings: “She smiled at him, and like a friend in need, the chimney coughed against the rush of cold shooting into it from the sky. Window sashes shuddered in a blast of winter air” (Morrison, 1987, 130). In this episode Sethe and her love interest Paul D are in an uncomfortable situation, both feeling shy after a fight. It seems that the house adds to their feelings and even attempts to soften the tension between them by releasing cold and hurtful feelings out in the winter air.

While referring to her house Sethe also seems to address it as it would be a human being: “Sethe glanced beyond his shoulder toward the closed door."Oh it's truly meant. I just hope you'll pardon my house. Come on in. Talk to Denver while I cook you something”” (8).

In the process of Beloved’s exorcism 124 comes to life and the narrator as well as the crowd standing outside, experience that it has become suddenly “loud” (199) and is now “roaring” (213). The animal like noises coming from the house adds to the suspicion and make a tense grow, leading to the climax – Beloved’s disappearance. The noises create the background sounds which could be explained by the fact that much of Toni Morrison’s works

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1 The page number in brackets (...) further in this research refers to Toni Morrison's Beloved (1987).
has a tendency to a musical quality and it is a reference to a rhythm. This reference to music helps to create powerful and majestic atmosphere, making the episode ritual of exorcism. This kind of atmosphere triggers reader’s inner emotions in a way that it influences the feelings of excitement together with a small hint of anxiety because of the suspicion and not knowing what will happen afterwards.

Furthermore, the house seems to be identified together with the spirit of Beloved at the time she had the shape of spirit, not a human flesh. Beloved was not described as the kind of ghost that we saw in the movies, she did not scare the habitants of the house by randomly picking furniture or booing to them. There was a reason for every action she made, her purpose seemed to be just living with them as if she was still alive. The house in a way was coincided with her in a way that with her appearance the “white staircase climbed toward the blue-and-white wallpaper of the second floor” (11) and while Paul D sensed that something strange is happening in the house before he knew about Beloved “every sense he had told him the air above the stairwell was charmed and very thin” (11). The house seems to react to the appearance of Beloved. At the very beginning of the novel Sethe and Denver did “what the house permitted, for her. Together they waged a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of that place; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air” (4). The house is portrayed as a force which is capable of acting by itself. The personification of the house builds gloomy and eerie atmosphere which from the very beginning of the novel signals that the novel would contain mystical and even shocking elements, as well as that the novel would not be a sweet love story with embellishments and subtlety running along the edges.

Taking tragic and sorrowful atmosphere into consideration it is created with the help of various images, for instance: the details of Sethes’s appearance: “Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still” (17). The tree actually symbolizes the scar on her back which was made at the time she was enslaved, and it has a symbolic meaning. Sethe herself describes it as “a chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know”. A symbolic meaning of the tree could be explained by the fact that the tree seems to have developed, as well as Sethe’s memories. The detailed portrayal of the tree contributes to the creation of the atmosphere in a way that the reader is able to make a vision of it in his mind, although, it evokes conflicting feelings: the chokecherry tree without any context evokes the hopeful and positive feelings, although, it is the mark of the past which
is deeply rooted into Sethe’s mind by symbolizing the events that is unforgettable. The tree, as well as the brightness of Sethe’s memories could only change or fade but would never be gone. Also if the title of the tree would be taken into consideration, it is a compound noun which consist of choke which is the condition of severe difficulty in breathing because of a constricted or obstructed throat or a lack of air and could be caused by natural or unnatural reasons. It could be compared with Sethe’s past memories which figuratively choking her by not letting her live in the present. The elements of tree add mysterious yet sorrowful atmosphere.

The light and colours as well seems to hold a significant impact on the novel: “Bent low, Denver could crawl into this room, and once there she could stand all the way up in emerald light” (18) as well as the green light: Wore her out. Veiled and protected by the live green walls, she felt ripe and clear, and salvation was as easy as a wish. (19)

Emerald light in this episode is magical and has a figurative meaning. Emerald (which is green), as well as the green colour itself symbolizes compassion, mercy, and universal love. It is believed to be a magical stone which is able to prevent a spiritual balance which would bring harmony and energy into people’s life. Megemont states that “all the green of nature is concentrated within the Emerald.” (2007, 80). It was and still is used to protect oneself from enchantment and black spells. In the ancient times it was devoted to the goddess Venus “for its ability to insure security in love” (Melody, 1995, 257). Emerald light symbolizes Denver’s desire to be loved and to find a courage and a safe place in life. Likewise, it bares the mysterious atmosphere which bears a charming mood and encouragement to appreciate even the smallest things in life.

Although there are not so many episodes that could influence positive feelings and add to the warm and joyful atmosphere, magical Denver’s birth where she is compared with the graceful Savanna’s habitant, could be considered as one of them: “the little antelope rammed her with horns and pawed the ground of her womb with impatient hooves” (30).

The antelope holds a symbolic meaning in the novel. Its symbolism is originated from the Native America’s tribes. It was believed to be the spirit animal which is extremely careful but if it appears to you that probably means that you are away of your spiritual way and you have to find a tribe of like-minded souls. The antelope is considered as an animal with extremely strong surviving instincts by the ability to adapt to harsh condition, similarly to Denver, who survived her mother’s infection which caused a high fever, as well as lack of food
and water. Even being inside her mother’s womb, she already was a fighter and as the story evolved, her fighting spirit was suspended but never defeated.

The episode in which Denver, Sethe and Paul D visiting a festival in town as well distinguishes with positive feelings, although it is transposed with the hint of the negative one, as they were going “they were not holding hands, but their shadows were” (46). The holding-hand shadows inflicts the feeling that in hard times it is important to have someone you can lean on. However, the process where “old roses were dying” (47) and “how rapidly they crawled all over the stake-and-post fence” (47) inflicts the atmosphere of suspension and anxiety. The appealing to human senses: “the closer the roses got to death, the louder their scent” (47) - hearing and smelling, intensifies the negative feelings and grow over the positive ones. However, the holding-hand shadows are used repeatedly, in order to mix up reader’s emotions and force him to stop and overthink the meaning of the episode.

This novel tends to hold a wide range of feelings and different atmospheres the elements of magic realism helps to create. Although, there is a number of episodes where positive feelings are triggered, they are almost immediately interrupted by the negative ones. The author seeks to play with reader’s emotions in order to force him to step into character’s feet and relive everything the characters deal with.
5. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BELOVED

Toni Morrison gave the dead baby the chance of coming back to life, which would be impossible in realist novels, in addition, magic realism technique provided Toni Morrison with the powerful weapon to depict the pain and resentment which was the consequence of colonialism and slavery. As Abdennebi states: “As Memory is but a moment of fear and trembling, a moment that shakes the body, and, like an unexpected storm, shatters its wholeness, disturbs its restless quietness. It is at the difficult moment of training oneself to throw the past behind, that once awakened, hurled back to the past through the ever-persistent pain” (2010, 91). The present chapter attempts to present the possible implications Beloved hold in the novel by performing the contextual analysis.

5.1 Reincarnation

By her appearance, in the novel Beloved is described as a full-grown woman, the author seeks to draw the parallel between her appearance and her behaviour. A greatly detailed description of her appearance is provided the moment she appeared in the story as a real human flesh:

“A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat. <...> Nobody saw her emerge or came accidentally by. If they had, chances are they would have hesitated before approaching her. Not because she was wet, or dozing or had what sounded like asthma. <...> Her neck, its circumference no wider than a parlor-service saucer, kept bending and her chin brushed the bit of lace edging her dress” (Morrison, 50).

On the surface level, at the beginning of the paragraph it does not seem so unnatural that a woman came out of the water, the facts are real, the woman is wet. What is not real – it is the fact that nobody saw her coming into the river, no one saw or knew her at all. The whole episode could be considered as a process of birth of the human being. The baby comes out from the woman uterus which is full of liquids and the baby is wet. The loud sound of her breathing
could be ascribed to the sound of the newborn’s crying. The description of the position of her body draws some similarities with the newborn’s slow movements and shrunken position of the body, as well as the neck and the head which a newborn naturally cannot hold by himself. Mulberry tree symbolizes new beginning – innocent, warm, soft life. There are quite a few hints about this fully-grown woman’s skin condition, which is typical for a baby:

“But their skin is not like that of the woman breathing near the steps of 124. She had new skin, lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hands” (50) as well as, “Sethe saw that her feet were like her hands, soft and new” (53)

“Her skin was flawless except for three vertical scratches on her forehead so fine and thin they seemed at first like hair, baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat” (51).

The examples emphasize the author’s aim to describe her appearance in a controversial state. Nevertheless, her skin was flawless like baby’s there was some scars on her forehead. As the plot reveals, the marks appeared while Sethe was cutting her throat, held Beloved’s forehead with her palm for baby to stay still and her nails left the marks on her forehead. Another explanation about the marks on her forehead could be revealed by the fact that according to African mythology, the parents of abiku used to mark dead child body before burial, intending to recognize him/her after return.

In addition to not typical condition of her skin and hair, there are also other features which allow to doubt that Beloved is a typical adult concerning her smell, her equilibrium and general behaviour: “Bolt upright in the chair, in the middle of Sethe's welcome, Beloved had fallen asleep again” (53). The physical need for sleep is necessary for the adult but the time span for a baby is much more longer. The physical condition of sleep is mentioned a few times throughout the story and it is not typical for a healthy adult.

There are no hints of a health issues or disabilities of Beloved, for that it is a typical state for a baby who needs the help of other people or objects in order to move properly: “A young woman, about nineteen or twenty, and slender, she moved like a heavier one or an older one, holding on to furniture, resting her head in the palm of her hand as though it was too heavy for a neck alone”. (55) and the fact that "She's not strong. She can hardly walk without holding on to something” (55) as well questions her age.
However, Beloved is not depicted as a helpless adult with babies’ abilities throughout all the story. There are some details which tend to reveal the phenomenal and supernatural side of her. In typical ghost stories the spirit gains non-human powers, especially a capability to move things which could not be moved by a human being. The example above illustrates the non-human powers and verge of the real and magic: "She's not strong. She can hardly walk without holding on to something" (56) as well as: “That's what I mean. Can't walk, but I seen her pick up the rocker with one hand." (56). Despite of the fact that it is stated that she is not strong and can barely walk alone, she has the ability to move relatively heavy objects without any significant efforts.

The babies tend to show some standard and typical peculiarities. The tendency to put their fingers into their mouth is not unusual or unexplainable, according to psychologist Haiken, the thumb sucking for babies helps them to calm down and comfort themselves and the fetus performs this action even while being in the womb. This kind of behaviour is also expressed in the novel and it proves the fact of the dead child reincarnation into a grown woman’s body: “Beloved, who had not moved since Sethe and Paul D left the room, sat sucking her forefinger” (133) together with “Beloved, inserting a thumb in her mouth along with the forefinger, pulled out a back tooth. There was hardly any blood, but Denver said, “Ooooh, didn't that hurt you?”” (133)

The significant proves that it is the dead baby who appeared in the flesh, could not only be noticed by the appearance and behaviour of the Beloved herself, it also could be the behaviour of other characters of the novel:

“Four days she slept, waking and sitting up only for water. Denver tended her, watched her sound sleep, listened to her labored breathing and, out of love and a breakneck possessiveness that charged her, hid like a personal blemish Beloved's incontinence. She rinsed the sheets secretly, after Sethe went to the restaurant and Paul D went scrounging for barges to help unload. She boiled the underwear and soaked it in bluing, praying the fever would pass without damage. So intent was her nursing, she forgot to eat or visit the emerald closet” (54).

As story reveals, Denver feels the unexplainable need to take care and nurse Beloved, even if she does not know her and does not had a proper conversation from the time he appeared in the yard of 124. In addition, this kind of taking care of a person would only be suitable for a baby who has not developed the habit for toilet habits:
“Denver had worried herself sick trying to think of a way to get Beloved to share her room. It was hard sleeping above her, wondering if she was going to be sick again, fall asleep and not wake, or (God, please don’t) get up and wander out of the yard just the way she wandered in” (67).

As it is seen from the example above, Denver had a strong connection with her sister and a need to be close to her all the time. Also, she was the only one who knew exactly that this young woman, who appeared in their backyard, is her killed baby sister. Despite the fact that there is no scientific proves for the connection of the siblings, there are a lot of considerations about that unique bond among psychologists: “From the time they are born, our brothers and sisters are our collaborators and co-conspirators, our role models and cautionary tales. They are our scolds, protectors, goads, tormentors, playmates, counsellors, sources of envy, objects of pride” (Kluger, 2012) it could be that Toni Morrison tries to prove the existing connection between close siblings by Denver’s constant behaviour and also Denver could be referred as a conjurer, a woman with special powers to see things others cannot. However, it seems that Beloved does not feel the same way about Denver and it forces to overthink the aim the ghost carries:

““What did you come back for?”

Beloved smiled. "To see her face."

"Ma'am's? Sethe?"

"Yes, Sethe”” (75).

<...>

“"She is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have." Her eyes stretched to the limit, black as the all night sky” (75).

The Beloved’s obsession with her mother explains the unbreakable bond between mother and child which is considerably stronger than the bond between siblings. Scientists have been able to prove that this bond really exists: "A single-cell embryo divides only fifty times to become one hundred trillion cells, which is more than all the stars in the Milky Way galaxy. Once your baby is born, all the cells in both of your bodies act in secret synchronicity to create those simple but incredible connections between the two of you” (Dr. Chopra, 2005).
However, Beloved is not the only one who felt the connection between them, the example below shows unimaginable and unexplainable fact:

“And, for some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment she got close enough to see the face, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity. <...>. Right in front of its door she had to lift her skirts, and the water she voided was endless. Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born. So much water Amy said, "Hold on, Lu. You going to sink us you keep that up." But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now” (51).

The episode when Sethe saw Beloved in her backyard for the first time, even if she did not know who she was, is described as the childbirth. It proves that unconsciously she knew that she was her child and explains the mother-child bond. However, even though the bond is real the magical and unrealistic part here is that a human being gives birth to the baby but not a 20 year old. Beloved’s returning to this world symbolizes a new beginning for Sethe, a chance for atonement and redemption.

All in all, Beloved’s reincarnation from the ghost to a human flesh could be considered as a birth of a new beginning for Sethe and it is overlapped with magical and at the same time real events. However, the character of Beloved also conveys another function which would be analysed in further chapters.

5.2 Trauma and salvation

The novel is full of time overlapping, the present interlace with the past and it makes the reader wander weather it is flowing from the natural sequence of the setting or is it the flashes of the past events which the characters rememorates, the narration is conveyed by details or separate fragments. The memories of the character’s jumps back and forth, suddenly revoking a variety of images as well as associations. One detail in the novel may contain a metatextual nature, due to the fact that it represents the general way in which the pieces of events are conveyed within the whole novel and finally forms a complete narrative. For instance, in the episode where Sethe decides to reveal her story to Paul D:

“She was spinning. Round and round the room. Past the jelly cupboard, past the window, past the front door, another window, the sideboard, the keepingroom door, the dry
sink, the stove – back to the jelly cupboard. Paul D sat at the table watching her drift into view then disappear behind his back, turning like a slow but steady wheel” (159).

While reading the fragments from the narrated story, the reader can almost feel the same feelings as the character Paul D felt while listening to Sethe. Sethe was moving around the room, while she talked, spinning in and out of Paul D’s sight. This could be considered as one more feature of magic realism supported by Faris: “The fragmented, repeating narrative corresponds with another characteristic of magically realist texts, mainly the questioning of received ideas about time, space, and identity” (1995, 173)

The memories of traumatic events in this story is so strong that even the dead baby comes back to life seeking for atonement from her mother. However, even though, Beloved seems to have a selfish purposes, she holds a significant impact to other characters. By trying to find out the reasons why her mother murdered her, she also triggers the memories of the past:

“It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable; to Denver's inquiries Sethe gave short replies or rambling incomplete reveries. Even with Paul D, who had shared some of it and to whom she could talk with at least a measure of calm, the hurt was always there-like a tender place in the corner of her mouth that the bit left” (58).

The extract below shows the very first time when Sethe talked about the painful events without the actual desire to end the conversation as soon as it starts. This expression notifies the beginning of Sethe’s liberation and dealing with the past. As story evolves, the memories becomes more powerful: Beloved’s request "Tell me your earrings" (78) enables Sethe to remember "something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross" (77) – the slave mark on her mother’s skin. When Sethe was five-years-old, she asked if she could have that kind of mark herself, the endless mother’s pain emerged, as it emerged in America at that time.

At the exact moment Sethe slit her child’s throat, she locked her memories deep inside her conscious and left just the fragments and facts of it. The feelings which she felt while these events happened were completely repressed. Re-memory was avoided because it forced the
characters to re-encounter the locked feelings, to consciously admit the state of being named as “others” and being behaved with like animals by refusing their humanity. Mr. Garner (Serhe’s owner) was a highly respected man because he considered his slaves as human beings and in addition to that he treated Sethe equally as man slaves, even though she was the only woman in the “Sweet home”. However, everything changed when schoolteacher took Mr. Garner’s place:

“I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I am still full of that, God damn it, I can't go back and add more” (70).

Sethe repressed this memory not only because she had “other things to do” as she stated herself, but also this act of “taking away her milk” implies that she was treated as an inanimate object, which might be the cause of her psychic fragmentation and haunted her even after she freed herself from slavery. Also, even after she gain her freedom, it took a long time for her to accept the fact that she is an independent human being: “freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (95). The same problem with claiming her freedom and identity had Baby Suggs (Sethe’s mother-in-law):

“Something's the matter. What's the matter? What's the matter? she asked herself. She didn't know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, "These hands belong to me. These my hands." Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along? This pounding thing? She felt like a fool and began to laugh out loud. Mr. Garner looked over his shoulder at her with wide brown eyes and smiled himself” (141).

The freedom that was claimed seemed not real for a former slave Baby Suggs, she worked for Mr. Garner from the day she was grown enough to help, and she did not have a single day in her life of being free. In the colonial context, the status of self-identification, along with the self-knowing and development was prohibited. The psychoanalyst Jesicca Benjamin suggested the theory that the fundamentals of relationship in self-development primarily depends on the relationship with another human being. Taking into consideration Benjamin’s theory, the mother is the vital link of the formation of identity and development of the self-realization in a child. The natural need to identify and to be identified are essential for a human being. The personal boundaries between one and the other should be preserved, yet at the same
time, one and the other should be in alliance (1988, 40). However, in the novel the only one who helped to maintain the recognition of the black identity died and consequently the fact that Mr. Garner’s alone was not capable of changing a deeply rooted attitudes that flourished in post-colonial American society. The problem is that the mother is considered as the most vital other for a child, but she also could not be allowed to have a self-identity. Consequently, a child also has no way to claim her identity through mother-child relationship when the status of both of them is denied by the society. Unnatural relationship between Sethe and Beloved was the same as Sethe’s and her mother’s, her mother did not take care of Sethe due to pressure of her owners and “since she was a baby girl,” she was “cared for by the eight-year-old girl who pointed out her mother to her” (51).

While conveying the traumatic effect this time had on women, Toni Morrison also emphasizes the sexual exploitation woman slaves experienced by white men: “rutting among the headstone with the engraver” (5) in order to get seven letters engraved on her daughter’s tombstone. As the weakest part of the society, black women were treated as the objects by white men.

As well as the women characters of the novel, the story also develops around Paul D, who worked at Mr. Garner’s together with Sethe. The faith for him appeared to be not so favourable as for Sethe, the night they planned to run away, he got caught and after that his life became more tragic than it was before. Even though, both of them wondered how they were living for the past 20 years from the last time they saw each other, no one dared to talk about the past events because it was too painful and already repressed deep inside. However, Beloved’s returning somehow influenced Paul D to take off the heavy lifts from his heart:

“"Well, ah, this is not the, a man can’t, see, but aw listen here, it ain't that, it really ain't, Ole Garner, what I mean is, it ain't a weakness, the kind of weakness I can fight 'cause 'cause something is happening to me, that girl is doing it, I know you think I never liked her nohow, but she is doing it to me. Fixing me. Sethe, she's fixed me and I can't break it”" (127)

Paul D himself admits that he did not know in what way, but Beloved is fixing him, making him to face his fears of past life which haunts him to the present. When Beloved comes to visit him in the shelter he was living, she clearly impersonates Paul D’s past by confronting him: "You have to touch me. On the inside part. And you have to call me my name." (25) By touching Beloved, Paul D comes into contact with his past and this is how his healing starts. When Beloved seduces him, the hood of his rusty tobacco tin loosens as well as the firmly
closed content of the past is spilled out. The sufferings and pain which was kept tightly sealed for so long are finally liberated in his repetitive shouts: “What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "Red heart. Red heart," over and over again. Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D himself. "Red heart. Red heart. Red heart" (117).

The interesting fact is that the characters’ memories tend to repeatedly come back to the most traumatic and hurtful images. The infamy of slavery deforms Baby Suggs’ memories about her children. This reason triggers her to believe that Sethe should deal with the conditions in which she lives, because despite of that, she is able to raise rest of her children and to feel the spiritual presence of the dead one at the same time. When Sethe considers leaving the haunted house, Baby Suggs argues: ““You lucky. You got three left …. Be thankful, why don’t you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. ... My first-born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that’s all I remember”” (5). However, Sethe believes that Baby Suggs’ memory is intentionally selective. She states: “That’s all you let yourself remember” (5). However, she immediately realizes that the memory of positive events and images unconsciously vanishes by the time, opposingly to repeated memories of suffering and trauma. She realizes it due to the fact that she cannot remember the detailed images of her two sons who left the haunted house: “her memory of Buglar was fading fast. Howard at least had a head shape nobody could forget” (5). For the fact, she really seeks to forget her life in slavery but it appears that the pleasant memories fades together with traumatic ones. Despite her huge efforts, the traumatic flashbacks return:

“Unfortunately her brain was devious. She might be hurrying across a field, running practically, to get to the pump quickly and rinse the chamomile sap from her legs. Nothing else would be in her mind ... and suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes” (6).

This is how trauma controls the tortured soul with the realization with the past. The ability to recall and confront the past events is vital for the characters of the story and especially Sethe, because as long as they have not made peace with their past they will not be able to move on. This is the condition of being truly free and living your own life. In addition, if they bring the past into oblivion, they will conceal the fundamental part of black history.
5.3 Destructive love

As mentioned previously, Beloved does not only have a positive effect towards the characters of the story, she also has selfish reasons for coming back to life. As the novel evolves, she becomes vengeful and even possessive creature feeding Sethe’s love:

“"You did it, I saw you," said Denver.

"What?"

"I saw your face. You made her choke."

"I didn't do it."

"You told me you loved her."

"I fixed it, didn't I? Didn't I fix her neck?"

"After. After you choked her neck."

"I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it."

"I saw you." Denver grabbed Beloved's arm.

"Look out, girl," said Beloved and, snatching her arm away, ran ahead as fast as she could along the stream that sang on the other side of the woods” (101).

Sethe’s obsession of serving and pleasing Beloved becomes abnormal, her need to make up to her and express her love becomes destructive: “Denver saw the flesh between her mother's forefinger and thumb fade. Saw Sethe's eyes bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about Beloved--her lineless palms, her forehead, the smile under her jaw, crooked and much too long--everything except her basket-fat stomach” (243).

Beloved’s behaviour became more intensive as the story continues. From the loving and devoted child she transforms into destructive creature and it seems that she would do anything to hurt her mother and get the atonement of her death.

“Beloved sat around, ate, went from bed to bed. Sometimes she screamed, "Rain! Rain!" and clawed her throat until rubies of blood opened there, made brighter by her midnight skin. Then Sethe shouted, "No!" and knocked over chairs to get to her and wipe the jewels away. Other times Beloved curled up on the floor, her wrists between her knees, and stayed
there for hours. Or she would go to the creek, stick her feet in the water and whoosh it up her legs. Afterwards she would go to Sethe, run her fingers over the woman's teeth while tears slid from her wide black eyes” (250).

Magic overlap here is conveyed through the appearances of Sethe and Beloved: “It had taken the shape of a pregnant woman, naked and smiling in the heat of the afternoon sun (261) while Sethe looked “like a little girl beside it” (265). Unconditional Sethe’s love had been feeding Beloved for a long time, Beloved flourished and gain what she had lost – a chance to love and to be loved, however it nearly destroyed Sethe. Beloved’s torture proves Beaulieu’s references of *abiku*, which refers to a child whose destiny is to be stillborn or die early and revive to the same mother in order to torture her by repeatedly returning.

### 5.4 The importance of communal acceptance

The scholars which were especially interested in magical realism also presents the significant impact of community. Faris (1995) claims that magic is communal and magic realist creation “may encode the strengths of communities even more than the struggle of individuals. Societies, rather than personalities, tend to rise and fall in magical realist fiction” (10). Black people are believed to experience the exclusion of the modern society not only personally but also collectively. While the slave owners attempted to isolate and exclude black people from one another in order to avoid the communication that could trigger to rebellion, a resistance in their spirits was growing, motivating a sense of belonging to the black community. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison seems to be defining the powerful collective alliance during slavery and after that. Baby Suggs’ sermons depicted as spiritual union for the people: “*laughing children, dancing men, crying women*” (88). Even though the black community turned away from her because of Sethe, after a few years she is still alive in the memories of the members of the community. The number of women who gathered in front of 124 could be compared to black church, considering the powerful sound of their singing voices. Their voices liberate Sethe and Denver from the supernatural existence of Beloved. Another character of the novel Lady Jones as well has a huge influence towards the community. She was an educated liberal woman who was “*picked for a colored girls' normal school in Pennsylvania*” (247). Because of her liberal views and wide range of intellectual skills she decided that her life purpose would be “*teaching the unpicked. The children who played in dirt until they were old enough for chores*” (247).
These are the possible reasons why Denver decides to ask for her help. Lady Jones effects other community members to help them, and they start to share their food with Denver.

However, the events of the novel forces to state that the community abandoned Sethe, refusing to visit her or even communicate with her due to the infanticide:

“The twenty-eight days of having women friends, a mother in-law, and all her children together; of being part of a neighborhood; of, in fact, having neighbors at all to call her own—all that was long gone and would never come back. No more dancing in the Clearing or happy feeds. No more discussions, stormy or quiet, about the true meaning of the Fugitive Bill, the Settlement Fee, God's Ways and Negro pews; antislavery, manumission, skin voting, Republicans, Dred Scott, book learning, Sojourner's high-wheeled buggy, the Colored Ladies of Delaware, Ohio, and the other weighty issues that held them in chairs, scraping the floorboards or pacing them in agony or exhilaration. No anxious wait for the North Star or news of a beat-off. No sighing at a new betrayal or handclapping at a small victory” (173).

The lack of the belonging for the community could have added to the reasons why Sethe decided that she has no other choice in the time when the school teacher tracked her to her house. Even if Sethe lived in the free black community, she was excluded from it and was not considered a community member. She knew that she would not have any support or assistance from outside her house and she realized that she must save her child herself. The traumatic memories from the past seemed unbearable to her, and the realization that her daughter would be forced to experience the same and will struggle in life due to her black identity, inflicted the most difficult decision – killing her daughter and set her free.

Beloved’s desire for love was so destructive and all-consuming that it can be displaced only by another equally powerful love, and that love which exorcises her at the end of the novel comes in a communal shape. For Sethe this situation is a repetition of the one when she killed her daughter, it evokes similar feelings - the vital need to protect the loved one. However, this time Sethe makes a different decision than eighteen years ago – her target appears to be Edward Bodwin (Denver’s employer), who comes for taking Denver to her new job. Although, Mr. Bodwins’ intentions are positive, in Sethe’s eyes he looks like a schoolteacher. In her opinion, this white man symbolizes the whole society in which the destiny depends from the skin colour. She tried to struggle with this system before, but she ended up by losing self-control which almost triggered her to self-destruction. She could not let herself loose her daughter by the same circumstances again, therefore she decides to attack him and save her, and unexpectedly
Sethe triggers an exorcism and frees her soul from the presence of Beloved as well as her self-destructive quilt. The black women, who represent the community, assist Sethe with a chant which helps to send the spirit away:

“Together they stood in the doorway. For Sethe it was as though the Clearing had come to her with all its heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash” (30).

The belonging to the community seems to be vital for her recovery and the essential part for Sethe’s redemption. The reason why Beloved disappears is that the past she represents has been revealed and accepted. Stated another way, she completed her mission of “rememory”. Sethe finally had the courage to face the past and replay it in her memory, she is finally released into the present. The furious voices of the imprisoned are over and restless, loud 124 is finally calm.

5.5 History revisited

The novel could be considered as a dedication for the history of America due to the truthfulness of the facts Toni Morrison describes by using magical elements. Wilson (1995) states that “In literature one space can contain other spaces” (226). In the novel, It seems that 124 (the house) contains a few spaces. In the episode when Stamp Paid approaches the house, he hears a mumbling coming outside of it, and it seems to be louder than free female characters (Sethe, Beloved and Denver) could produce. That is the voices of people from other, unidentifiable spaces: “What he heard, he didn’t understand. Out on Bluestone Road he thought he heard a conflagration of hasty voices – loud, urgent, all speaking at once so he could not make out what they were talking about or to whom…. All he could make out was the word mine. The rest of it stayed outside his mind’s reach” (172). Later he realizes that “the undecipherable language clamoring around the house was the mumbling of the black and angry dead. Very few had died in bed, like Baby Suggs, and none that he knew of, including Baby, had lived a
livable life” (198). From this the conclusion could be drawn that the voices that he hears could be identified as “Sixty Million and More” which Toni Morrison is believed to devote her novel to. The writer clarifies it by the fact that: “Some historians told me 200 million died. The smallest number I got from anybody was 60 million. There were travel accounts of people who were in the Congo saying, “We could not get the boat through the river, it was choked with bodies.” That’s like a logjam. A lot of people died. Half of them died in those ships” (Taylor 1994, 257).

There a link between author’s inclination to mask the metatextual tendencies of the text and one of magical realist features are explained by Wilson: “Not only do fictional worlds overlap, in some sense, the actual world, but they also overlap each other, each superimposition being radically divergent from the others” (Wilson, 1995, 216).

The interesting fact is that the reincarnation of the ghost in this novel inflicts two different symbols: not only the birth of a child, as analysed and described in the previous chapter, but also another, relatively significant symbolic meaning – she embodies the most tragic historical event for African-Americans – slavery, and by bringing Beloved to life, Morrison tackles the cruel heritage of it. What is more – Beloved’s spirit could be linked to a flesh of a young woman who died on the slave ship in the Middle Passage. In the flashbacks of her memory, Beloved describes the slave ship experience:

“I am always crouching the man on my face is dead . . . in the beginning the women are away from the men and the men are away from the women storms rock us and mix the men into the women and the women into the men that is when I begin to be on the back of the man for a long time I see only his neck and his wide shoulders above me . . . he locks his eyes and dies on my face . . . the others do not know that he is dead.” (211)

When Beloved described the place she came from, she claims that she was in a “Dark” place: “Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in... A lot of people is down there. Some is dead” (92). Although, this description from the first sight could be ascribed to the “Hell” as the place in which according to the rules of Christianity the spirit of the dead goes to after a sinful life, there are some doubts which questions this interpretation. First of all, Beloved died at a young age and she hardly was capable of committing any sins. Furthermore, Beloved states that some of the people is dead, not all of them, and that is not really the definition of the Hell. And finally, Toni Morrison’s creation is full of magical, unbelievable and fantastical things but these elements tend to be expressed for a higher purpose, not just to
describe a place in which sinful people fall after death. This leads to the conclusion that the phenomenon Beloved is referring to can truly be connected to the slave ship during the Middle Passage. The conditions in the slave ships could really be compared with hell: people were crowded, there was no natural or even artificial light. The temperature in these ships was extremely high and the odour was so hideous that it was hard to take a decent air flow. The conditions of the slave ships were terrific. Men, women and even children stuffed into every inch which was left free, they did not have any food or even a decent space for breathing. The amount of water that they get was deplorable: “some water was brought; it was then that the extent of their sufferings was exposed in a fearful manner. They all rushed like maniacs towards it. No entreaties or threats or blows could restrain them; they shrieked and struggled and fought with one another for a drop of this precious liquid, as if they grew rabid at the sight of it” (Rediker, 2007, 248). The lack of water could explain the reasons Beloved was so thirsty when she came out of water: “She said she was thirsty ... the woman gulped water from a speckled tin cup and held it out for more. Four times Denver filled it and four times the woman drank as though she had crossed a desert” (64).

Beloved is depicted as a traumatized victim who is incapable of telling her story fluently without any interruptions and mind jumps. Considering these fragments, it seems that in the text the information she tells to Sethe and Denver and the one they think she conveys is completely different, however, actually they are the same. They interconnect in the episode where Beloved describes her death (during the Middle Passage), Sethe and Denver think that she depicts her own death as an infant: “Beloved closed her eyes. “In the dark my name is Beloved”” (75). They use the same language while speaking of the different circumstances of the death, current experiences overlap and merge due to the death of Beloved and the death of a young woman during the Middle Passage have the same foundation due to slavery, both are interconnected parts of the entire story of slavery and the memorial of the enslaved.

Morrison also focuses on the documented history that is offensive for black people who survived slavery. An example of the documented historical sources restored in Beloved are the discriminating and disgraceful notes written by Mr. Garner’s successor schoolteacher. Another example is the clipping of the newspaper that announces Sethe’s infanticide. Morrison doubts its trustworthiness through the Paul D’s point of view:

“The print meant nothing to him so he didn’t even glance at it. He simply looked at the face, shaking his head no. No. At the mouth, you see. And no at whatever it was those black
scratches said, and no to whatever it was Stamp Paid wanted him to know. Because there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted to hear. A whip of fear broke through the heart chambers as soon as you saw a Negro’s face in a paper, since the face was not there because the person had a healthy baby, or outran a street mob. Nor was it there because the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated, since that could hardly qualify as news in a newspaper. It would have to be something out of the ordinary – something whitepeople would find interesting, truly different, worth a few minutes of teeth sucking if not gasps. And it must have been hard to find news about Negroes worth the breath catch of a white citizen of Cincinnati” (155)

This clipping cannot be confided on as a credible source of historical information because it aims to depict black people as threatening, immoral and dissolute. Moreover, it does not contain any reliable information on the victimization of the enslaved.

The deeper research on the African-American image conveyed in America’s newspapers should be done, however, there are some articles that proves Toni Morrison’s concerns that she wanted to emphasize in her novel. For instance, Rhinehart (1840), as he stated himself, conducted a research and wrote an article in which he compared African-Americans with white people: “Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous” (cited in Knoles, 2006) and also referred to the black people as “an animal whose body is at rest, and who does not reflect, must be disposed to sleep of course” (ibid.) This shows that black people during this historical period were deeply discriminated, they were the objects of experiment whose results were always the same: black people in all aspects are much lower than whites. Sadly, some of these thoughts sometimes are still reflected in nowadays’ society.

The description of historical events through magic realism found in Beloved supports previously mentioned Rarick’s (2009) functions magic realism holds in the text by stating that Magic realism helps to entitle the text about historical past to be proved.
CONCLUSIONS

The problem of the research has been solved by the proves that elements of magic realism truly exists in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. The elements showed the tendency to contribute to the features of magic realism provided by some scholars. Firstly, it contributes to the features presented by Faris which states that repeated narration which jumps back and forth into time is a feature of magic realism. Another feature considers the space (124 in the novel) and identity (lack of identity of the characters of the novel). The third feature takes history into consideration and states that magic realism tends to reveal the high significance of the community even stronger than the issues of individual characters (the significance of the communities’ approval in *Beloved* has been proved to hold a high contribution to characters feelings and even actions). Taking into focus the significance of the history attributed in the novel, Wilson’s statement that not only unreal events overlap with the real ones but they also could overlap each other, as proved in this research, Beloved’s reincarnation could bear two meanings: the birth of a child and the reincarnation of a dead slave.

The results of the research showed that elements of magic realism in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* has a tendency to exaggerate the feelings the characters of the story feel, and author wants to convey to the reader by creating mainly negative - gloomy, eerie, tragic and sorrowful atmosphere. However, there are a number of cases where positive feelings are triggered by creating powerful, majestic, mystical, mysterious, joyful atmosphere. In a number of cases, the positive atmosphere seems to be interrupted by negative one, which leads to the conclusion that author seeks to play with reader’s feelings by confusing him and forcing to step into character’s feet. The mixture of positive and negative feelings also symbolises the natural human’s desire to seek for happiness, however, not letting go of the past negativity does not let one to be completely happy and free.

The main and the most significant case of magic realism is the ghost Beloved. She appears to carry a number of functions in the story. The first one is to force other characters to free the oppressed memories by triggering them and force to remember all the traumatic past experiences (sexual assault, lack of self-identity, violence and torture and even the infanticide) and live in the present without a sorrow in their hearts’ and minds’. The second function of Beloved is to bring the black history to life as she could be considered as dead
and reincarnated woman slave. She is making references of the slave ships by describing the conditions in them.

*Beloved* is a tough nut to crack, due to the fact that to reach a full understanding of the novel, a baggage of historical knowledge is necessary. Also, the author’s African-American roots should be taken into consideration while reading the novel. Although, Toni Morrison resists the label of magic realist, the present research showed the contribution of magic realism in this novel. Considering Toni Morrison’s worldview and origins it may be stated that she used the magical elements in this novel unconsciously, because that is how she sees the world around her. The refusal of magic realist writer’s label proves how independent and exceptional is the author, because she does not want to be putted into any frames that could reduce her freedom as a writer and put a title beside her name.
SANTRAUKA


Tikslas ir uždaviniai

Šiuo tyrimu siekiama įrodyti, kad kitaip, nei teigia pati knygos autorė, joje egzistuoja magiškojo realizmo elementai. Taip pat siekiama išsiaiškinti kokią įtaką magiškasis realizmas turi šios knygos atmosferai ir kokias funkcijas atlieka pagrindinė knygos herojė.

Tikslui pasiekti buvo iškelti šie uždaviniai:

1. Apibūdinti magiškajį realizmą kaip literatūrinį metodą.
2. Išanalizuoti magiškojo realizmo elementus Toni Morrison knygoje Mylima.

Tyrimo metodai

Aprašomoji analizė buvo naudojama magiškojo realizmo apibūdinimui. Tekstinė/turinio analizė buvo naudojama magiškojo realizmo elementams knygoje nustatyti ir interpretuoti. Gauti rezultatai gali būti naudojami tolimesniuose tyrimuose, tiriančiuose Amerikiečių literatūrą, taip pat dėstant Amerikiečių literatūrą. Taip pat gauti rezultatai gali būti naudojami tiriant Toni Morrison kūrybą panašiais aspektais (Afroamerikiečių folkloras, mitologija).
**Tyrimo išvados**

Gauti rezultatai parodė, kad magiškasis realizmas šiame romane naudojamas fizinių ir psichologinių traumų, kurias afroamerikiečių kilmės žmonės patyrė vergovės metais, išryškinimui. Taip pat, magiškiojo realizmo elementai turi didelę reikšmę atmosferos kūrimui ir skaitytojo jausmų įtakojimui. Nustatyta, kad magiškioji romano veikėja ištis turi didelę reikšmę šiame romane, ji tampa susitaikymo su skaudžiais praeities įvykiais įrankiu ir padeda romano veikėjams išsilaisvinti iš slegiančios jų pasąmonės.
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APPENDICES

For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old—as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard) (3).

Sky provided the only drama, and counting on a Cincinnati horizon for life's principal joy was reckless indeed. So Sethe and the girl Denver did what they could, and what the house permitted, for her. Together they waged a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behavior of that place; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air. For they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light (3).

Baby Suggs died shortly after the brothers left, with no interest whatsoever in their leave-taking or hers, and right afterward Sethe and Denver decided to end the persecution by calling forth the ghost that tried them so. Perhaps a conversation, they thought, an exchange of views or something would help. So they held hands and said, "Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on." (4)

Counting on the stillness of her own soul, she had forgotten the other one: the soul of her baby girl. Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage? Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the engraver's son was not enough. Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut, but those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil (5).

"What'd be the point?" asked Baby Suggs. "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband's spirit was to come back in here? or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil." Baby Suggs rubbed her eyebrows. "My first-born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember." (5).

Then something. The plash of water, the sight of her shoes and stockings awry on the path where she had flung them; or Here Boy lapping in the puddle near her feet, and suddenly
there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes, and although there was not a leaf on that farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty (6).

"What did Baby Suggs think?"

"Same, but to listen to her, all her children is dead. Claimed she felt each one go the very day and hour."

Sethe glanced beyond his shoulder toward the closed door. "Oh it's truly meant. I just hope you'll pardon my house. Come on in. Talk to Denver while I cook you something." (8).

"You got company?" he whispered, frowning.

"Off and on," said Sethe.

"Good God." He backed out the door onto the porch. "What kind of evil you got in here?"

"It's not evil, just sad. Come on. Just step through." (8).

Out of the dimness of the room in which they sat, a white staircase climbed toward the blue-and-white wallpaper of the second floor. (11)

The luminous white of the railing and steps kept him glancing toward it. Every sense he had told him the air above the stairwell was charmed and very thin. But the girl who walked down out of that air was round and brown with the face of an alert doll. (11)

The one who never looked away, who when a man got stomped to death by a mare right in front of Sawyer's restaurant did not look away; and when a sow began eating her own litter did not look away then either. And when the baby’s spirit picked up Here Boy and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye, so hard he went into convulsions and chewed up his tongue, still her mother had not looked away. She had taken a hammer, knocked the dog unconscious, wiped away the blood and saliva, pushed his eye back in his head and set his leg bones. He recovered, mute and off-balance, more because of his untrustworthy eye than his bent legs, and winter, summer, drizzle or dry, nothing could persuade him to enter the house again (12).

None of that had mattered as long as her mother did not look away as she was doing now, making Denver long, downright long, for a sign of spite from the baby ghost. (12).
Just as only those who lived in Sweet Home could remember it, whisper it and glance sideways at one another while they did. **Again she wished for the baby ghost-- its anger thrilling her now where it used to wear her out.** Wear her out (13).

"**We have a ghost in here,**" she said, and it worked. They were not a twosome anymore. Her mother left off swinging her feet and being girlish. Memory of Sweet Home dropped away from the eyes of the man she was being girlish for. He looked quickly up the lightning-white stairs behind her.

"**So I hear,**" he said. "**But sad, your mama said. Not evil.**"

"No sir," said Denver, "not evil. But not sad either."

"**What then?**"

"Rebuked. Lonely and rebuked."

"**Is that right?** Paul D turned to Sethe.

"I don't know about lonely," said Denver's mother. "Mad, maybe, but I don't see how it could be lonely spending every minute with us like it does."

"**Must be something you got it wants.**"

Sethe shrugged. "It's just a baby."

"**My sister,**" said Denver. "She died in this house." (13).

"Leaves off, Sethe. It's hard for a young girl living in a **haunted house.** That can't be easy." (15).

"**I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house,** and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running--from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be." (15).

"Who told you that?"

"Whitegirl. That's what she called it. I've never seen it and never will. But that's what she said it looked like. A **chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves.** Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. **Could have cherries too now for all I know.**" (15).
Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still." (17).

Young girls sidled up to him to confess or describe how well-dressed the visitations were that had followed them straight from their dreams (17).

Would there be a little space, she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, to push busyness into the corners of the room and just stand there a minute or two, naked from shoulder blade to waist, relieved of the weight of her breasts, smelling the stolen milk again and the pleasure of baking bread? Maybe this one time she could stop dead still in the middle of a cooking meal--not even leave the stove--and feel the hurt her back ought to. Trust things and remember things because the last of the Sweet Home men was there to catch her if she sank? (18).

The stove didn't shudder as it adjusted to its heat. Denver wasn't stirring in the next room. The pulse of red light hadn't come back and Paul D had not trembled since 1856 and then for eighty-three days in a row. Locked up and chained down, his hands shook so bad he couldn't smoke or even scratch properly. Now he was trembling again but in the legs this time. It took him a while to realize that his legs were not shaking because of worry, but because the floorboards were and the grinding, shoving floor was only part of it. The house itself was pitching. Sethe slid to the floor and struggled to get back into her dress. While down on all fours, as though she were holding her house down on the ground, Denver burst from the keeping room, terror in her eyes, a vague smile on her lips (18).

The quaking slowed to an occasional lurch, but Paul D did not stop whipping the table around until everything was rock quiet. Sweating and breathing hard, he leaned against the wall in the space the sideboard left. Sethe was still crouched next to the stove, clutching her salvaged shoes to her chest. The three of them, Sethe, Denver, and Paul D, breathed to the same beat, like one tired person. Another breathing was just as tired (18).

They ate no potatoes that day, sweet or white. Sprawled near Brother, his flame-red tongue hidden from them, his indigo face closed, Sixo slept through dinner like a corpse. Now there was a man, and that was a tree. Himself lying in the bed and the tree lying next to him didn't compare (21).

Bent low, Denver could crawl into this room, and once there she could stand all the way up in emerald light (18).
Wore her out. **Veiled and protected by the live green walls**, she felt ripe and clear, and salvation was as easy as a wish (19).

When Denver looked in, she saw her mother on her knees in prayer, which was not unusual. What was unusual (even for a girl who had lived all her life in a house peopled by the living activity of the dead) was that a **white dress knelt down next to her mother and had its sleeve around her mother's waist**. And it was the tender embrace of the dress sleeve that made Denver remember the details of her birth—that and the thin, whipping snow she was standing in, like the fruit of common flowers. **The dress and her mother together looked like two friendly grown-up women—**one (the dress) helping out the other. And the magic of her birth, its miracle in fact, testified to that friendliness as did her own name (19).

How Sethe was walking on two feet meant for standing still. How they were so swollen she could not see her arch or feel her ankles. Her leg shaft ended in a loaf of flesh scalloped by five toenails. But she could not, would not, stop, for when she did the **little antelope rammed her with horns and pawed the ground of her womb with impatient hooves** (30).

Oh but when they sang. And oh but when they danced and sometimes they danced **the antelope**. The men as well as the ma'ams, one of whom was certainly her own. **They shifted shapes and became something other**. Some unchained, demanding other whose feet knew her pulse better than she did. Just like this one in her stomach (31).

She told Denver that a **something came up out of the earth into her—like a freezing, but moving too, like jaws inside**. "Look like I was just cold jaws grinding," she said. Suddenly she was eager for his eyes, to bite into them; to gnaw his cheek (31).

Combing her hair with her fingers, she carefully surveyed the landscape once more. Satisfied nothing edible was around, she stood up to go and Sethe's heart stood up too at the thought of being left alone in the grass without a **fang in her head** (32).

"No, miss. I never touched no velvet." Sethe didn't know if it was the voice, or Boston or velvet, but while the whitegirl talked, the baby slept. **Not one butt or kick**, so she guessed her luck had turned (33).

**The sound of that voice**, like a sixteen-year-old boy's, going on and on and on, kept the little antelope quiet and grazing. During the whole hateful crawl to the lean to, it **never bucked once** (34).

A truth for all times, thought Denver. Maybe the white dress holding its arm around her mother's waist was in pain. If so, it could mean the baby ghost had plans. When she opened the door, Sethe was just leaving the keeping room.

"I saw a white dress holding on to you," Denver said.

"Lisle probably. White cotton lisle. You say it was holding on to me. How?"

"Like you. It looked just like you. Kneeling next to you while you were praying. Had its arm around your waist." (35).

"Well, I think the baby got plans," said Denver.

"What plans?"

"I don't know, but the dress holding on to you got to mean something."

"Maybe," said Sethe. "Maybe it does have plans." (37).

Whatever they were or might have been, Paul D messed them up for good. With a table and a loud male voice he had rid 124 of its claim to local fame. Denver had taught herself to take pride in the condemnation Negroes heaped on them; the assumption that the haunting was done by an evil thing looking for more. None of them knew the downright pleasure of enchantment, of not suspecting but knowing the things behind things. Her brothers had known, but it scared them; Grandma Baby knew, but it saddened her. None could appreciate the safety of ghost company. Even Sethe didn't love it. She just took it for granted--like a sudden change in the weather.

But it was gone now. Whooshed away in the blast of a hazelnut man's shout, leaving Denver's world flat, mostly, with the exception of an emerald closet standing seven feet high in the woods (37).

When she woke the house crowded in on her: there was the door where the soda crackers were lined up in a row; the white stairs her baby girl loved to climb; the corner where Baby Suggs mended shoes, a pile of which were still in the cold room; the exact place on the stove where Denver burned her fingers. And of course the spite of the house itself. There was no room for any other thing or body until Paul D arrived and broke up the place, making room, shifting it, moving it over to someplace else, then standing in the place he had made (39).

"Well, whatever it is, she believes I'm interrupting it."
"Don't worry about her. **She's a charmed child.** From the beginning."

"Is that right?"

"Uh huh. **Nothing bad can happen to her.** Look at it. Everybody I knew dead or gone or dead and gone. Not her. Not my Denver. Even when I was carrying her, when it got clear that I wasn't going to make it—which meant she wasn't going to make it either—**she pulled a whitegirl out of the hill.** The last thing you'd expect to help. And when the schoolteacher found us and came busting in here with the law and a shotgun—"

"Oh, no. I wasn't going back there. I don't care who found who. Any life but not that one. I went to jail instead. Denver was just a baby so she went right along with me. **Rats bit everything in there but her.**"

"It means she has to take it if she acts up. You can't protect her every minute. What's going to happen when you die?"

"Nothing! I'll protect her while I'm live and I'll protect her when I ain't." (41).

Denver's bonnet knocked against her shoulder blades; Paul D wore his vest open, no jacket and his shirt sleeves rolled above his elbows. **They were not holding hands, but their shadows were.** Sethe looked to her left and all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands. Maybe he was right. A life. Watching their **hand holding shadows,** she was embarrassed at being dressed for church (46).

Paul D kicked a stone or reached over to meddle a child's face leaning on its mother's shoulder—**all the time the three shadows that shot out of their feet to the left held hands.** Nobody noticed but Sethe and she stopped looking after she decided that it was a good sign. A life. Could be (47).

Paul D made a few acquaintances; spoke to them about what work he might find. Sethe returned the smiles she got. Denver was swaying with delight. And on the way home, although leading them now, **the shadows of three people still held hands** (49).

Up and down the lumberyard fence old **roses were dying.** The Sawyer who had planted them twelve years ago to give his workplace a friendly feel—something to take the sin out of slicing trees for a living—was amazed by their abundance; how rapidly **they crawled all over the stake-and-post fence** that separated the lumberyard from the open field next to it where homeless men slept, children ran and, once a year, carnival people pitched tents. **The closer the roses got to death, the louder their scent, and everybody who attended the carnival associated it with the stench of the rotten roses** (47).

Denver had come around, so to speak; Sethe was laughing; he had a promise of steady work, **124 was cleared up from spirits.** It had begun to look like a life. And damn! a water-drinking woman fell sick, got took in, healed, and hadn't moved a peg since. (66)
He wanted her out, but Sethe had let her in and he couldn't put her out of a house that wasn't his. **It was one thing to beat up a ghost, quite another to throw a helpless colored girl out in territory infected by the Klan.** Desperately thirsty for black blood, without which it could not live, the dragon swam the Ohio at will. (66)

Some of them were running from family that could not support them, some to family; some were **running from dead crops, dead kin**, life threats, and took-over land. (52)

"**It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree.** See, here's the trunk--it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. What God have in mind, I wonder.** I had me some whippings, but I don't remember nothing like this. (79)

Rocketh gently to and fro;
When the night winds softly blow,
And the crickets in the glen
Chirp and chirp and chirp again;
Where "pon the **haunted green**
**Fairies dance around their queen,**
Then from yonder misty skies
Cometh Lady Button Eyes." (81)

The water sucked and swallowed itself beneath them. (85)

Before 124 and everybody in it had closed down, veiled over and shut away; before it had become **the plaything of spirits and the home of the chafed**, 124 had been a cheerful, buzzing house where Baby Suggs, holy, loved, cautioned, fed, chastised and soothed. (86)

At the least to listen to the spaces that the long-ago singing had left behind. At the most **to get a clue from her husband's dead** mother as to what she should do with her sword and shield now, dear Jesus, now nine years after Baby Suggs, holy, proved herself a liar, dismissed her great heart and lay in the keeping-room bed roused once in a while by a craving for color and not for another thing. (89)
The stone had eaten the sun's rays but was nowhere near as hot as she was. (90)

In the Clearing, Sethe found Baby's old preaching rock and remembered the smell of leaves simmering in the sun, thunderous feet and the shouts that ripped pods off the limbs of the chestnuts. With Baby Suggs' heart in charge, the people let go. (94)

Just the fingers, she thought. Just let me feel your fingers again on the back of my neck and I will lay it all down, make a way out of this no way. Sethe bowed her head and sure enough--they were there. Lighter now, no more than the strokes of bird feather, but unmistakably caressing fingers. She had to relax a bit to let them do their work, so light was the touch, childlike almost, more finger kiss than kneading. (95)

Then there was no one, for they would not visit her while the baby ghost filled the house, and she returned their disapproval with the potent pride of the mistreated. But now there was someone to share it, and he had beat the spirit away the very day he entered her house and no sign of it since. (96)

The fingers touching the back of her neck were stronger now-- the strokes bolder as though Baby Suggs were gathering strength. Putting the thumbs at the nape, while the fingers pressed the sides. Harder, harder, the fingers moved slowly around toward her windpipe, making little circles on the way. Sethe was actually more surprised than frightened to find that she was being strangled. Or so it seemed. In any case, Baby Suggs' fingers had a grip on her that would not let her breathe. Tumbling forward from her seat on the rock, she clawed at the hands that were not there. Her feet were thrashing by the time Denver got to her and then Beloved. (96)

"Look." Beloved was pointing at Sethe's neck.

"What is it? What you see?" asked Sethe.

"Bruises," said Denver.

"On my neck?"

"Here," said Beloved. "Here and here, too." She reached out her hand and touched the splotches, gathering color darker than Sethe's dark throat, and her fingers were mighty cool. (96)

"You did it, I saw you," said Denver.

"What?"

"I saw your face. You made her choke."
"I didn't do it."

"You told me you loved her."

"I fixed it, didn't I? Didn't I fix her neck?"

"After. After you choked her neck."

"I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it."

"I saw you." Denver grabbed Beloved's arm.

"Look out, girl," said Beloved and, snatching her arm away, ran ahead as fast as she could along the stream that sang on the other side of the woods. (101)

She had already got through, hadn't she? **With the ghost in 124 she could bear**, do, solve anything. Now a hint of what had happened to Halie and she cut out like a rabbit looking for its mother. (97)

**But for eighteen years she had lived in a house full of touches from the other side.** And the thumbs that pressed her nape were the same. **Maybe that was where it had gone to.**

**After Paul D beat it out of 124, maybe it collected itself in the Clearing.** Reasonable, she thought. (98)

Like a faint smell of burning that disappears when the fire is cut off or the window opened for a breeze, **the suspicion that the girl's touch was also exactly like the baby's ghost dissipated.** (99)

Solitude had made her secretive--self-manipulated. **Years of haunting had dulled her in ways you wouldn't believe and sharpened her in ways you wouldn't believe either.** (99)

The **black nostrils of a sparrow sitting on a branch sixty feet above her head**, for instance. For two years she heard nothing at all and then she heard close **thunder crawling up the stairs.** (103)

"She was trying to get upstairs."

"What?" The cloth she used to handle the stove lid was balled in Sethe's hand.

"The baby," said Denver. "Didn't you hear her crawling?" What to jump on first was the problem: that Denver heard anything at all or that the crawling-already? baby girl was still at it but more so. (103)
The return of Denver's hearing, cut off by an answer she could not hear to hear, cut on by the sound of her dead sister trying to climb the stairs, signaled another shift in the fortunes of the people of 124. (104)

The thing that leapt up had been coiled in just such a place: a darkness, a stone, and some other thing that moved by itself. (104)

They talked through that chain like Sam Morse and, Great God, they all came up. Like the unshriven dead, zombies on the loose, holding the chains in their hands, they trusted the rain and the dark, yes, but mostly Hi Man and each other. (110)

In Ohio seasons are theatrical. Each one enters like a prima donna, convinced its performance is the reason the world has people in it. When Paul D had been forced out of 124 into a shed behind it, summer had been hooted offstage and autumn with its bottles of blood and gold had everybody's attention. Even at night, when there should have been a restful intermission, there was none because the voices of a dying landscape were insistent and loud. (116)

Denver's skin dissolved under that gaze and became soft and bright like the lisle dress that had its arm around her mother's waist. She floated near but outside her own body, feeling vague and intense at the same time. Needing nothing. Being what there was. (118)

She was certain that Beloved was the white dress that had knelt with her mother in the keeping room, the true-to-life presence of the baby that had kept her company most of her life. (119)

It is hard to breathe and even if there were light she wouldn't be able to see anything because she is crying. Just as she thought it might happen, it has. Easy as walking into a room. A magical appearance on a stump, the face wiped out by sunlight, and a magical disappearance in a shed, eaten alive by the dark. (123)

Denver watches as Beloved bends over, curls up and rocks. Her eyes go to no place; her moaning is so small Denver can hardly hear it.

"You all right? Beloved?"

Beloved focuses her eyes. "Over there. Her face."

Denver looks where Beloved's eyes go; there is nothing but darkness there.
"Whose face? Who is it?"

"Me. It's me."

She is smiling again. (124)

"Well, ah, this is not the, a man can't, see, but aw listen here, it ain't that, it really ain't, Ole Garner, what I mean is, it ain't a weakness, the kind of weakness I can fight 'cause 'cause something is happening to me, that girl is doing it, I know you think I never liked her nohow, but she is doing it to me. Fixing me. Sethe, she's fixed me and I can't break it." (127)

"You came by here to ask me that? You are one crazy-headed man. You right; I don't like it. Don't you think I'm too old to start that all over again?" She slipped her fingers in his hand for all the world like the hand-holding shadows on the side of the road. (129)

Sethe closed her eyes. Paul D looked at the black trees lining the roadside, their defending arms raised against attack. (129)

She smiled at him, and like a friend in need, the chimney coughed against the rush of cold shooting into it from the sky. Window sashes shuddered in a blast of winter air. (130)

Right after she saw the shadows holding hands at the side of the road hadn't the picture altered? And the minute she saw the dress and shoes sitting in the front yard, she broke water. Didn't even have to see the face burning in the sunlight. She had been dreaming it for years. (132)

So you protected yourself and loved small. Picked the tiniest stars out of the sky to own; lay down with head twisted in order to see the loved one over the rim of the trench before you slept. (162)

The ghost in her house didn't bother her for the very same reason a room-and-board witch with new shoes was welcome. (164)

Each seemed to be helping the other two stay upright, yet every tumble doubled their delight. The live oak and soughing pine on the banks enclosed them and absorbed their laughter while they fought gravity for each other's hands. Their skirts flew like wings and their skin turned pewter in the cold and dying light. (174)
They took off their shoes, wet stockings, and put on dry woolen ones. **Denver fed the fire.** (175)

She poured them each a bit more of the hot sweet milk. **The stovefire roared.** (175)

Its lock may have rusted or broken away from the clasp. Still you should touch the nail heads, and test its weight. No smashing with an ax head before it is decently exhumed from the grave that has hidden it all this time. No gasp at a miracle that is truly miraculous because the magic lies in the fact that you knew it was there for you all along. (176)

And since that was so—if her daughter could come back home from the timeless place—certainly her sons could, and would, come back from wherever they had gone to. (182)

Whatever is going on outside my door ain't for me. **The world is in this room.** This here's all there is and all there needs to be. (183)

When Sethe wrapped her head and bundled up to go to town, it was already midmorning. And when she left the house she neither saw the prints nor heard the voices that ringed like a noose. (183)

"**Your mind is loaded with spirits.** Everywhere you look you see one."

"You know as well as I do that **people who die bad don't stay in the ground.**"

**He couldn't deny it. Jesus Christ Himself didn't.** so Stamp ate a piece of Ella's head cheese to show there were no bad feelings and set out to find Paul D. (188)

She had taken pains to keep them out, but knew full well that at any moment they could rock her, rip her from her moorings, send the birds twittering back into her hair. (188)

The day Stamp Paid saw the two backs through the window and then hurried down the steps, he believed the undecipherable language clamoring around the house was the mumbling of the black and angry dead. (198)

Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. (198)
The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. (198)

Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (199)

Meantime, the secret spread of this new kind of whitefolks’ jungle was hidden, silent, except once in a while when you could hear its mumbling in places like 124. (199)

History revisited

“What he heard, he didn’t understand. Out on Bluestone Road he thought he heard a conflagration of hasty voices – loud, urgent, all speaking at once so he could not make out what they were talking about or to whom…. All he could make out was the word mine. The rest of it stayed outside his mind’s reach” (172). Later he realizes that “the undecipherable language clamoring around the house was the mumbling of the black and angry dead. Very few had died in bed, like Baby Suggs, and none that he knew of, including Baby, had lived a livable life” (198).

“I am always crouching the man on my face is dead . . . in the beginning the women are away from the men and the men are away from the women storms rock us and mix the men into the women and the women into the men that is when I begin to be on the back of the man for a long time I see only his neck and his wide shoulders above me . . . he locks his eyes and dies on my face . . . the others do not know that he is dead.” (211)

“The print meant nothing to him so he didn’t even glance at it. He simply looked at the face, shaking his head no. No. At the mouth, you see. And no at whatever it was those black scratches said, and no to whatever it was Stamp Paid wanted him to know. Because there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted to hear. A whip of fear broke through the heart chambers as soon as you saw a Negro’s face in a paper, since the face was not there because the person had a healthy baby, or outran a street mob. Nor was it there because the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated, since that could hardly qualify as news in a newspaper. It would have to be something out of the ordinary – something whitepeople would find interesting, truly different, worth a few minutes of teeth sucking if not gasps. And it must have been hard to find news about Negroes worth the breath catch of a white citizen of Cincinnati” (155)
A FULLY DRESSED woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned enough to crack the brim in her straw hat. Everything hurt but her lungs most of all. Sopping wet and breathing shallow she spent those hours trying to negotiate the weight of her eyelids. The day breeze blew her dress dry; the night wind wrinkled it. Nobody saw her emerge or came accidentally by. If they had, chances are they would have hesitated before approaching her. Not because she was wet, or dozing or had what sounded like asthma, but because amid all that she was smiling. It took her the whole of the next morning to lift herself from the ground and make her way through the woods past a giant temple of boxwood to the field and then the yard of the slate-gray house. Exhausted again, she sat down on the first handy place—a stump not far from the steps of 124. By then keeping her eyes open was less of an effort. She could manage it for a full two minutes or more. Her neck, its circumference no wider than a parlor-service saucer, kept bending and her chin brushed the bit of lace edging her dress (50).

But their skin is not like that of the woman breathing near the steps of 124. She had new skin, lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hands (50).

And, for some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment she got close enough to see the face, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity. She said, "Oh, excuse me," and ran around to the back of 124. Not since she was a baby girl, being cared for by the eight year-old girl who pointed out her mother to her, had she had an emergency that unmanageable. She never made the outhouse. Right in front of its door she had to lift her skirts, and the water she voided was endless. Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born. So much water Amy said, "Hold on, Lu. You going to sink us you keep that up." But there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now. She hoped Paul D wouldn't take it upon himself to come looking for her and be obliged to see her squatting in front of her own privy making a mudhole too deep to be witnessed without shame (51).

Her skin was flawless except for three vertical scratches on her forehead so fine and thin they seemed at first like hair, baby hair before it bloomed and roped into the masses of black yarn under her hat (51).

Sethe saw that her feet were like her hands, soft and new. (53)
Four days she slept, waking and sitting up only for water. Denver tended her, watched her sound sleep, listened to her labored breathing and, out of love and a breakneck possessiveness that charged her, hid like a personal blemish Beloved's incontinence. She rinsed the sheets secretly, after Sethe went to the restaurant and Paul D went scrounging for barges to help unload. She boiled the underwear and soaked it in bluing, praying the fever would pass without damage. So intent was her nursing, she forgot to eat or visit the emerald closet. (54)

Bolt upright in the chair, in the middle of Sethe's welcome, Beloved had fallen asleep again. (53)

"What might your name be?" asked Paul D.

"Beloved," she said, and her voice was so low and rough each one looked at the other two. They heard the voice first--later the name. (52)

She didn't mention one, or have much of an idea of what she was doing in that part of the country or where she had been. They believed the fever had caused her memory to fail just as it kept her slow-moving. A young woman, about nineteen or twenty, and slender, she moved like a heavier one or an older one, holding on to furniture, resting her head in the palm of her hand as though it was too heavy for a neck alone. (55)

"Something funny 'bout that gal," Paul D said, mostly to himself.

"Funny how?"

"Acts sick, sounds sick, but she don't look sick. Good skin, bright eyes and strong as a bull."

"She's not strong. She can hardly walk without holding on to something."

"That's what I mean. Can't walk, but I seen her pick up the rocker with one hand." (56)

Stooping to shake the damper, or snapping sticks for kindlin, Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes. Like a familiar, she hovered, never leaving the room Sethe was in unless required and told to. She rose early in the dark to be there, waiting, in the kitchen when Sethe came down to make fast bread before she left for work. In lamplight, and over the flames of the cooking stove, their two shadows clashed and crossed on the ceiling like black swords. She was in the window at two when Sethe returned, or the doorway; then the porch, its steps, the path, the road, till finally, surrendering to the habit, Beloved began inching down Bluestone Road further and further each day to meet Sethe and walk her back to 124. It was as though every afternoon she doubted anew the older woman's return. (57)
Denver noticed how greedy she was to hear Sethe talk. Now she noticed something more. The questions Beloved asked: "Where your diamonds?" "Your woman she never fix up your hair?" And most perplexing: Tell me your earrings. How did she know? (63)

"I asked you who brought you here?"
"You had new shoes. If you walked so long why don't your shoes show it?" (65)

Denver had worried herself sick trying to think of a way to get Beloved to share her room. It was hard sleeping above her, wondering if she was going to be sick again, fall asleep and not wake, or (God, please don't) get up and wander out of the yard just the way she wandered in. (67)

She had felt warm satisfaction radiating from Beloved’s skin when she listened to her mother talk about the old days. But gaiety she had never seen. Not ten minutes had passed since Beloved had fallen backward to the floor, pop-eyed, thrashing and holding her throat. Now, after a few seconds lying in Denver's bed, she was up and dancing. (74)

"Why you call yourself Beloved?"
Beloved closed her eyes. "In the dark my name is Beloved."
Denver scooted a little closer. "What's it like over there, where you were before? Can you tell me?"
"Dark," said Beloved. "I'm small in that place. I'm like this here."
She raised her head off the bed, lay down on her side and curled up. Denver covered her lips with her fingers. "Were you cold?"
Beloved curled tighter and shook her head. "Hot. Nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in."
"You see anybody?"
"Heaps. A lot of people is down there. Some is dead."
"You see Jesus? Baby Suggs?"
"I don't know. I don't know the names." She sat up.
"Tell me, how did you get here?"
"I wait; then I got on the bridge. I stay there in the dark, in the daytime, in the dark, in the daytime. It was a long time."
"All this time you were on a bridge?"

"No. After. When I got out."

"What did you come back for?"

Beloved smiled. "To see her face."

"Ma'am's? Sethe?"

"Yes, Sethe." (75)

"Oh, I was in the water. I saw her diamonds down there. I could touch them."

"What stopped you?"

"She left me behind. By myself," said Beloved. She lifted her eyes to meet Denver's and frowned, perhaps. Perhaps not. The tiny scratches on her forehead may have made it seem so. (75)

"She is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have." Her eyes stretched to the limit, black as the all night sky (76).

She later believed that it was because the girl's breath was exactly like new milk that she said to her, stern and frowning, "You too old for that." (98)

Rushing through the green corridor, cooler now because the sun had moved, it occurred to her that the two were alike as sisters. (99)

Beloved, who had not moved since Sethe and Paul D left the room, sat sucking her forefinger. (133)

Beloved, inserting a thumb in her mouth along with the forefinger, pulled out a back tooth. There was hardly any blood, but Denver said, "Ooooh, didn't that hurt you?" (133)

Beloved looked at the tooth and thought, This is it. Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. Pieces of her would drop maybe one at a time, maybe all at once. Or on one of those mornings before Denver woke and after Sethe left she would fly apart. It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself. Among the things she could not remember was when she first knew that she could wake up any day and find herself in pieces. She had two dreams: exploding, and being swallowed. When her tooth came out--an odd fragment, last in the row--she thought it was starting. (133)

Trauma and salvation
It became a way to feed her. Just as Denver discovered and relied on the delightful effect sweet things had on Beloved, Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling. It amazed Sethe (as much as it pleased Beloved) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable; to Denver's inquiries Sethe gave short replies or rambling incomplete reveries. Even with Paul D, who had shared some of it and to whom she could talk with at least a measure of calm, the hurt was always there-like a tender place in the corner of her mouth that the bit left (58).

But, as she began telling about the earrings, she found herself wanting to, liking it. Perhaps it was Beloved's distance from the events itself, or her thirst for hearing it—in any case it was an unexpected pleasure. Prasideda Sethes issilaisvinimas, prisinimai nebe tokie skaudus. (58)

Something's the matter. What's the matter? What's the matter? she asked herself. She didn't know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, "These hands belong to me. These my hands." Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along? This pounding thing? She felt like a fool and began to laugh out loud. Mr. Garner looked over his shoulder at her with wide brown eyes and smiled himself. "What's funny, Jenny?" (141).

"What happened to her?"

"Hung. By the time they cut her down nobody could tell whether she had a circle and a cross or not, least of all me and I did look." Sethe gathered hair from the comb and leaning back tossed it into the fire. It exploded into stars and the smell infuriated them. "Oh, my Jesus," she said and stood up so suddenly the comb she had parked in Denver's hair fell to the floor. (60)

Sethe walked over to a chair, lifted a sheet and stretched it as wide as her arms would go. Then she folded, refolded and double folded it. She took another. Neither was completely dry but the folding felt too fine to stop. She had to do something with her hands because she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind right behind the slap on her face and the circled cross. (61)

Sethe and Denver looked up at her. After four weeks they still had not got used to the gravelly voice and the song that seemed to lie in it. Just outside music it lay, with a cadence not like theirs. (60)
"What did he say?"
"Nothing."
"Not a word?"
"Not a word."
"Did you speak to him? Didn't you say anything to him? Something!"
"I couldn't, Sethe. I just... couldn't."
"Why!"
"I had a bit in my mouth." (69)

I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I am still full of that, God damn it, I can't go back and add more. (70)

He wants to tell me, she thought. He wants me to ask him about what it was like for him---about how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, had seen it time after time in the place before Sweet Home. Men, boys, little girls, women. The wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back. Days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corners of the mouth but nothing to soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye. (71)

"People I saw as a child," she said, "who'd had the bit always looked wild after that. Whatever they used it on them for, it couldn't have worked, because it put a wildness where before there wasn't any. When I look at you, I don't see it. There ain't no wildness in your eye nowhere." (71)

She began to sweat from a fever she thanked God for since it would certainly keep her baby warm. (90)

The disease they suffered now was a mere inconvenience compared to the devastation they remembered. Still, they protected each other as best they could. The healthy were sent some miles away; the sick stayed behind with the dead--to survive or join them. (111)

It was some time before he could put Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, notebook paper, one by one, into the tobacco tin lodged in his chest. By the time he got to 124 nothing in this world could pry it open. (111)
So when I knew we'd be rendering and smoking and I couldn't see after him, well, I got a rope and tied it round his ankle. Just long enough to play round a little, but not long enough to reach the well or the fire. I didn't like the look of it, but I didn't know what else to do. It's hard, you know what I mean? by yourself and no woman to help you get through. (160)

Simple: she was squatting in the garden and when she saw them coming and recognized schoolteacher's hat, she heard wings. Little hummingbirds stuck their needle beaks right through her headcloth into her hair and beat their wings. And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. (163)

By the time she faced him, looked him dead in the eye, she had something in her arms that stopped him in his tracks. He took a backward step with each jump of the baby heart until finally there were none. "I stopped him," she said, staring at the place where the fence used to be. "I took and put my babies where they'd be safe." (164)

"Your love is too thick," he said, thinking, That bitch is looking at me; she is right over my head looking down through the floor at me. (165)

Later he would wonder what made him say it. The calves of his youth? or the conviction that he was being observed through the ceiling? How fast he had moved from his shame to hers. From his cold-house secret straight to her too-thick love. (165)

Meanwhile the forest was locking the distance between them, giving it shape and heft. (165)

Paul D came to town--worrying Sethe and Denver with a pack of haunts he could hear from the road. Even if Sethe could deal with the return of the spirit, Stamp didn't believe her daughter could. (170)

It was the memory of her and the honor that was her due that made him walk straight-necked into the yard of 124, although he heard its voices from the road. (170)

"You got two feet, Sethe, not four," he said, and right then a forest sprang up between them; trackless and quiet. (165)

The twenty-eight days of having women friends, a mother in-law, and all her children together; of being part of a neighborhood; of, in fact, having neighbors at all to call her own--all that was long gone and would never come back. No more dancing in the Clearing or happy feeds. No more discussions, stormy or quiet, about the true meaning of the Fugitive Bill, the Settlement Fee, God's Ways and Negro pews; antislavery, manumission, skin voting, Republicans, Dred Scott, book learning, Sojourner's high-wheeled buggy, the Colored Ladies of Delaware, Ohio, and the other weighty issues that held them in chairs, scraping the
floorboards or pacing them in agony or exhilaration. No anxious wait for the North Star or news of a beat-off. No sighing at a new betrayal or handclapping at a small victory. **Kaip ji buvo atstumta** 173

Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing. 180

What I had to get through later I got through because of you. Passed right by those boys hanging in the trees. One had **Paul A's shirt on but not his feet or his head**. I walked right on by because only me had your milk, and God do what He would, I was going to get it to you. 198

**Counting on the stillness of her own soul, she had forgotten the other one: the soul of her baby girl.** Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage? Ruttering among the stones under the eyes of the engraver's son was not enough. Not only did she have to **live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut**, but those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil (5).

**Community**

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