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African American Cultural Trauma Perspectives in Morrison's *Beloved*

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Abstract:

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* main focus is the representation of the African Americans with their past, the rupture that has been created through the perception of the memory of this past and its impact on the conception of the future. The novel functions as more than a repository of remembering the stories of the past. The protagonist, Beloved, figures the persistent nightmares common to survivors of trauma. This attempt to know the incomprehensible trauma done to them is a step towards healing (Barnett 1997). African American cultural trauma "derives not so much from the experience but from the experiential meditation of slavery" (Eyerman 2001). Morrison's novel does not only entail a mechanical appropriation of trauma through the imitation of reality or *mimesis*, it also shows a complicated approximation of voicing or *catharsis*.

The novelist modeling of her novel on the slave narrative is one way of giving African Americans back their voices. She contributes in reconceptualizing American history and history making becomes a healing process for the characters, the author and the reader (Krumholz 1992). This linking of trauma, narrative and psychology can help in reconciling personal and collective memory. This paper examines the move from trauma analysis to trauma healing through reviving the past in *Beloved*. Accordingly, the main aim of this paper is the attempt to widen the scope of literature and links it to the epistemology of history, and hermeneutics of forgetting. It seeks to explore how the contemplation of African American culture can be broadened by the move from trauma on the narrative terrain to generate a new vision towards the past and history. It will also investigate how change and "apocalypse are not necessarily at opposite poles: an apocalypse—that lifting of the veil on whatever lies beyond—can stimulate change"¹ (Bowers 2000).

¹ Bowers, Susan. "Beloved and the New Apocalypse." *Toni Morrison Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*. David L. Middleton, ed. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000: 213.

I. African American Trauma Survivors

As a novelist Morrison perceived the gap between the black Americans life experience and the representation of that experience. Morrison's *Beloved* shows how the cultural trauma "derives not so much from the experience but from the experiential meditation of slavery" (Eyerman 2001: 11). The author has felt responsible to delineate characters that she has read about and has known "as if she was the receiver of all this information (...) of the fragmented stories of some extraordinary women"². *Beloved*, for instance is inspired from Margret Garner's true story of 1851; a black woman who had killed her children and declared that: "I will not let those children live how I lived"³. Therefore, Morrison's original plan for *Beloved* was to cement this true story she had read about with the same topics pivot around the sufferance of black Americans life experience. Her novel is an epitome of the concern with a woman's extraordinary capacity for love and sacrifice.

Sethe, the main protagonist in *Beloved*, kills her two year old daughter, and she does attempt to kill the other three children before she is stopped. She wants to place them "where no one could hurt them (...) where they would be safe."⁴ In his study, "Remembering the Disremembered", Yan Furman, contends that: "Morrison's queries in *Beloved* are not about what Sethe does or why", claiming that "these answers are viable to anyone with knowledge of slavery. Morrison asks who is the woman capable of making such a choice? Who is the woman with such audacity?" (Furman, 1996: 98). Morrison's protagonist, therefore, is presented through some flashes of insights stirred by a bitter past experience: she is the kind of woman who loves her children more than herself, she "loved something other than herself so much, she has placed all of the value of her in something outside herself" (Naylor, 1985: 584). Like many slave children, Sethe had not known her mother. She was raised communally by the plantation's nurse. At Sweet Home, Sethe's children had fared better; the Garners had created the illusion of security for their slaves, and through diligence and persistence Sethe managed to mother her children and protect them from environmental dangers.

When Garner dies and Schoolteacher takes over, the illusion is shattered, and Sethe is forced to face a brutal reality of slavery: her children do not belong to her. As slaves, they are

²Furman, Jan. *Toni Morrison's Fiction: "Remembering the Disremembered"*, University of South Carolina, 1996, p. 68.

³Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison: "A conversation," *Southern Review* 21 (1985): 5834.

⁴Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, p. 163.

property subject to be sold, traded, raped, beaten and disposed of. In order to make them safe, she would have to escape with them. Escape is Sethe's emphatic rejection of slavery's power to circumscribe her motherhood. Barefoot, bleeding, hungry, exhausted, disoriented, she struggles to reach Ohio, not so much to save her own life, but "the life of her children's mother" (*Beloved*30). Once in Ohio, under the expert care of her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, Sethe begins to claim herself and her children's safety. For twenty-eight days, the cycle preparation of woman's body needs to begin a new life, Sethe's motherlove is unrestrained.

She remembers that her love felt "good and right... and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to love" (*Beloved*162). When Schoolteacher, his nephew, and the sheriff enter Baby Suggs's yard to reclaim Sethe and, worse, to take her children back into slavery, Sethe revolts. Stirred by her memories, Sethe resolves that "nobody will ever get my milk no more except my children" (*Beloved*200). Threatened by Schoolteacher's arrival, she carries them to the woodshed. Finally, they would all be "over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe" (*Beloved*163).⁵ Sethe would not see her children returned to slavery: "Whites might dirty her all night, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing—the part of her that was clean" (*Beloved*251).

It would be accurate to say that Sethe's community is haunted by the history and memory of rape, specifically. Morrison depicts myriad abuses of slavery like brutal beatings and depictions or allusions to rape. The novel functions as more than a receptacle of the remembered stories of rape. The protagonist re-enacts sexual violence and figures the persistent nightmares to survivors of trauma. Memories of rape figure prominently in the novel. The narrator refers several times to the incident in which "Two mossytoothed" boys (70) hold Sethe down and suck her breast milk (*Beloved*6/16/17/31/68/70/200/228). Another protagonist, Ella, is locked up and repeatedly raped by a father and son she calls: "the lowest yet" (*Beloved*119/256). Sethe's mother-in-law, Baby Suggs is compelled to have sex with a strong boss who later breaks his coercive promise not to sell her child (*Beloved*23).

⁵ Morrison is expressing the African principle of death as transition and liberation. According to this eschatology "death is not a destruction of the individual. Life goes beyond the grave," a view that effectively undermines the slaveholder's power over his slave by dissolving the fear of death. See John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1970, p. 113.

Sethe's mother is "taken up many times by the crew" during the Middle Passage (*Beloved*62) as are many enslaved women (*Beloved*180). These incidents of rape frame Sethe's leitmotif and explanation for killing her baby daughter. Later, she tries to tell the furious Beloved that death actually protected the baby from the deep despair that killed Baby Suggs, "from what Ella knew, what Stamp saw and what made Paul D tremble" (*Beloved*251).

These horrid experiences and memories of rape, Sethe tells Beloved: "dirty you so bad you [can't] like yourself anymore" (*Beloved* 251). Accordingly, Sethe is traumatized both by the past and by the present task of surviving it. Sethe had survived what she tries to prevent her daughter from surviving. For Cathy Caruth, the core of trauma stories is the "oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life: between the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (Caruth1996:7).

Another main characteristic of the trauma survivors which is depicted through the latent tension in the novel and remains unresolved until the final pages, is that trauma is floating the community destiny and is reflected through the characters' traits. Sethe's individual struggle is in conflict with the Ohio community. She is placed outside the community prerogatives and they fear her determination. They can "understand Sethe's rage...but not her reaction to it..." (*Beloved*256). Contrary to the community members, Sethe does not express her love in the same way. She refutes any compromise of her maternity and she would not see them returned to slavery. Before her arrival to Ohio, the community maintains the integrity of its purpose with Baby Suggs at its moral core and her house was the community centre. These people have failed Baby Suggs to warn what they instinctively know is trouble when white men come to town asking questions, the community fails to raise their voices in the customary unifying ceremony of song when Sethe is taken to jail. Morrison does not judge the community for its treatment of Sethe. Most crimes in her fictional world are redeemable.

Sethe is impenitent and tough. She refuses to seek the community's approval, and each act of their disapproval evokes a corresponding defiance from Sethe. Nearly a month of fellowship is followed by nearly twenty years of alienation: "The uncommunal action of holding back begets an unbroken pattern of mutual spurns. The community erred, Sethe rebuked it, and neither will relent" (Furman 1996: 73). Morrison calls attention to the magnitude of Sethe's defiance by accenting her aloneness. All the men at Sweet Home who were supposed to run away together and take Sethe and the children are either dead or in

chains. “I did it. (...) I did that.(..) it was me doing that; me saying. *Go on*, and *now*. Me having to look out.Me using my own head” (162). She proves to stake her claim as a mother who is capable of defending her children’s lives. She will not tolerate any reduction of her selfhood. She rebuffs all attempts to minimize her victories as a woman, as a mother.

As a black woman and student of American history, Morrison is familiar with slaves’ lives as those lives are presented in memoir. These narratives recount the cruelty and inhumanity of slavery. Morrison notes, however, that in their efforts to be objective, to not “offend the reader by being too angry, or by showing too much outrage, or by calling the reader names,”⁶ slave narrators pulled the veil over “proceedings too terrible to relate.” Morrison aims to remove that veil and recreate “the interior life”.

Morrison’s relationship to her subject and characters is not entirely explained by the art of fiction. She does acknowledge that her work is fictional, but more important, it is also factual. This does not mean recounting true details of specific events, places, and people but simply an absolute fidelity to the subject. In *Beloved* it means fidelity to the slaves’ experiences. The truth of slavery is its contamination of humanity, its agency of evil, and that truth lies beyond the specific details of suffering of any individual. Truth transcends time, place, and audience, and it gives universal insight. It is more spiritual than intellectual. It is the difference between Margret Garner’s personal truth and humanity’s personal truth. Morrison arrives at this truth through her own memory—not particular memories of slavery, of course—but a personal (and seemingly unrelated) memory that gives her almost clairvoyant access to the interior lives of characters. For Morrison, then, writing Paul D, Sethe, and the community of Beloved was more than a mental exercise acted upon by the imagination to turn thoughts into art. It was, through of her memories, an act of writing a part of herself into the narrative. The result is a view of slavery not undertaken before. As she says, “they [the characters] are my entrance into my own interior life” (*Ibid*).

Unveiling these interior lives of her characters carries with it titanic responsibility of Morrison. She is continuing an unfinished script of slavery begun over two centuries ago by the first slave narrative, and she must do it truthfully and with integrity. Morrison’s characters stand in for all those slaves and former slaves who were “unceremoniously buried” without tribute or recognition. She feels chosen by them to attend to their burial “properly,

⁶Morrison, Toni. “The Site of Memory,” *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, ed. William Zinsser (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987) 106.

artistically.”⁷Beloved is her effort to do that. It is an act of recovering the past in narrative, to insert this memory that was unbearable and unspeakable into the literature. Only then, Morrison believes, for black people, for society, to move on. This need to remember before moving on, is reflected in the epilogue, where after having passed on Beloved’s story, Morrison writes in contradiction that “this is not a story to pass on” (*Beloved*275). It threatens peace of mind and must be resisted.

To protect themselves, the community forgot Beloved: “Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don’t know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed” (*Beloved*274). This is not a story to pass on, and yet Morrison acknowledges that ironically ‘it is not a story to pass by’. Only by remembering the past can there be liberation from its burden. This baby ghost, figures the persistent nightmares common to survivors of trauma. She intrudes on the present, forcing the other characters to remember what they tried unsuccessfully to forget.

II. Voicing the Unspeakable and ‘Rememorying’ the Past

Like a traumatic nightmare, Morrison’s protagonist, Beloved, claims the need for voicing the traumatic voices of African Americans. When she arrives, she is hungry for more than her mother’s love and attention. She has an insatiable appetite, “a thirst for hearing” the “rememoried” stories that animate her ghostly frame, a hunger for voicing the unspeakable. As Sethe explains, “everything” in her past is “painful and lost” and she and Baby Suggs have tacitly agreed “that it [is] unspeakable” (*Beloved*58). Sethe, for example, has never told the stories to Denver or Paul D, but she willingly shares them with Beloved, who feeds on a diet of Sethe’s memory. Beloved stands for the collective memory of African American history as much as does Sethe’s and Paul’s individual memory.

Morrison suggest that this character represents not only the particular individual but also for the community that both mourns and celebrates individuals and community life. Through Beloved the community members confront their memories and wounded histories. This attempt to know the incomprehensible trauma done to them is a step toward healing which requires conscious meaning making about what is inherently incomprehensible. The insistent crisis of trauma is “truly gone. Disappeared, some say exploded right before their

⁷Naylor and Morrison, 585.

eyes”, (*Beloved*263) but Beloved is more than its manifestation. She represents, is always there to be survived. Significantly, she seems to disappear at the end of the novel and the community people forget her “like an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep” (*Beloved*275). Before the community forgets Beloved, near the end of the novel, she visits Paul D and he that there is “nothing he [is] able to do about it though he trie[s]” (126). There was a sort of desire that drowned him in the cold house and forced him to struggle up, like she was the clear air at the top of the sea... It was more like a brainless urge to stay alive”. He had no more control over it” (*Beloved*264). Her reanimated body of Sethe’s murdered baby is metaphorically draining Sethe’s and Paul’s vitality. By the end of the novel, Beloved has “taken the shape of a pregnant woman” (*Beloved*261). The trauma experienced by the Afro-American women because of slavery, is an inescapable psychological legacy and inherited from one generation to another.

The self-consciousness of these women is fulfilled through the struggle to revive the personal and collective memories. Although the setting and scope of *Beloved* is primarily slavery in the American South, Morrison wants to recover all facets of the slave’s story—from Africa to America. Morrison captures the heartbreak of the middle passage, the slave route from Africa to the West Indies, during which many perished in cargo holds or jumped from ships to death in the sea. This, Morrison thinks, is the least examined aspect of slavery. “No one praised them, nobody knows their names, nobody can remember them, not in the United States, nor in Africa. Millions of people disappeared without a trace, and there is not one monument anywhere to pay homage to them, because they never arrived safely on shore. So it’s like a whole nation that is under the sea” (qtd. in Furman 80). *Beloved* inhabits this place under blue water before she is reincarnated at 124, and as Karla Holloway contends, she is “not only Sethe’s dead daughter returned, but the return[ed] of all the faces, all the drowned, but remembered, faces of mothers and their children who have lost their being because of the force of that Euro-American slave history.”⁸

Recovering the truth is intense for Morrison. It frequently falls in the minds of people in the form of a fictional realm that is fantastic, mythical, magical and unbelievable. But Morrison represents this aspect from an enchanted perspective and uses it simply because that’s the way the world was for her and for the black people that she was in touch with very closely. *Beloved* gives a context to these comments. This realistic style can be pointed to as an

⁸ Holloway, Karla. “*Beloved* : A Spiritual.” *Callaloo* 13 (1990): 522.

example of Morrison's use of verisimilitude in an artistically credible tone in reviving African Americans bitter past experiences. As Morrison does to the slave history, Sethe sends her daughter not to death and nothingness, but to another life which she returns "of her own free will" (*Beloved* 200). This scenario saves the novel from becoming a melodramatic tale of murder and pathos. Sethe transcends the limitations placed upon her in slavery. The love that gives Sethe courage in the woodshed and bitter triumph over Schoolteacher and slavery makes her vulnerable to the manipulations of a ghost child. When the novel closes, she is on the verge of new understanding. Her children are free, and finally it is possible for Sethe to learn that, as Paul D tells her, she is her best thing.

III. Trauma Testimony Representation

In the process of testimonial representations, body can be considered as the pivotal figure which is to represent the absence in trauma. A strong bond can be created between those bodies that are brutally demolished in disasters and their representations through testimonies and monuments. Text, like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, is an example of testimonial representations that establish a bond between voice and body. In this context, Douglas and Vogler point to the fact that trauma discourse, while still primarily concerned with the psychological implications of trauma "is anchored in the conviction that special truths can manifest themselves in traumatized bodies"⁹ All the incidents overwhelmed by memories, which are neither composed into cognition nor constructed as knowledge, form the core of testimony. The concept of testimony is described as a discursive practice where language is in process and trial to dig deep and uncover the latent truth. The main hurdle in testimony is the rupture that has been created in the memory and perception due to the event. These memories stored in the nonverbal part of the brain have to be accessed to the verbal part, since verbalizing of the event is the core element in testimony: "This linking of trauma, narrative, history and testimony can help in reconciling personal and collective memory."¹⁰

The reader, although separate from the victim's experience, turns into witness by having the event, narrated by the victim, take place and shape in his/her mind. Thus, there is a duality between the individual psychological recovery and a historical or collective process. Sethe's process of healing in *Beloved* or her learning to live with her past, is a model for the

⁹ Douglas Ana and Vogler Thomas A. *Witness and Memory: The Discourse of Trauma*, Psychology Press, 2003, p. 12. Print.

¹⁰ Gayathri Menon. K., « Voicing Trauma through Testimonial Representations and its Impact », *IJELLH*. Volume II, Issue X, February 2015 ISSN 23217065, pp. 4849.

readers who must confront her past as part of their own past, a collective past: “Morrison invests the novel with the potential to construct and transform individual consciousness as well as social relations”.¹¹ Morrison adapts techniques from modernist novels, such as the fragmentation of the plot and a shifting narrative voice, to compel the reader to actively construct an interpretive framework. The reader’s process to of reconstructing the fragmented story parallels Sethe’s psychological recovery.

These repressed fragments of the fictional tone are reflecting the personal and historical past in retrieved and reconstructed allegorical images. The central aspect of Sethe’s healing or her ‘rememory’ of and confrontation with the past is paralleled with the reader’s healing that corresponds to the three sections in the novel. First, the arrival of Paul D and then of Beloved, forces Sethe to confront her past. The second phase is a period of atonement during which Sethe is enveloped by the past, isolated in her house with Beloved, who forces her to suffer over and over again all the pain and shame of the past. Finally, the last phase depicts how Sethe’s ‘clearing’, in which the women of the community aid her in casting out the voracious Beloved, and Sethe experiences repetition of her scene of trauma with a difference—this time she aims her murderous hand at the white man who threatens her child.

These three phases are paralleled to the reader’s healing process. In part one, stories of slavery are accumulated through fragmented recollections, culminating in the revelation of Sethe’s murder of her child. In part two, the reader is immersed into the voices of despair. The last part of the novel is the reader’s purification, achieved through Denver’s emergence as the new teacher, providing the reader with a model with a new pedagogy and the opportunity for the reconstruction of slave history from a black woman’s perspective. Linda Krumholz claims that Morrison through the image of the Schoolteacher “condemns the educational system in the US and demonstrates that discourse, definitions, and historical methods are neither arbitrary nor objective; they are tools in a system of power relations” (Krumholz 399) The spirit of the past has been reversed in the novel and Morrison makes the writing of history a resurrection of ancestral spirits, the spirit of the long buried past. The trauma experience offers both, the author and the reader, the possibility to go through the process of recovery *of* history and *from* history. Testimony, therefore, plays an indispensable role in voicing trauma and thereby in its release too. The documentary knowledge of the event for people changes its colour with the inclusion of personal experiences by the witness.

¹¹ Linda Krumholz, « The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* », *African American Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Fiction Issue (Autumn, 1992), pp. 396.

In a perspective study of *Beloved*, “You who never was the’: Slavery and the New Historicism, Deconstruction and the Holocaust”, Walter Benn Michaels observes that the intervention of the spectral figures in contemporary women’s writing, such as Morrison’s, compels us to transform forgotten history into memory, which is a culturally charged endeavour to “imagine a history that will give people an identity”. From a Derridian perspective, “to be (...) means (...) to inherit,” and “inheritance” is never a given, it is always a task”.¹² Given that, Derrida assumes that our inheritance defines our identities. Derrida is not specifically speaking of the cultural legacies of any specific ethnic group; instead the inheritance needs to be understood as a political and ethical driving force that is impatiently working to bring out a future so that we can answer the fulfilled desires of the dead.

III. African Americans Cultural Trauma Recovery and the Rise of the New Apocalypse

The novel does not only suggest a mechanical appropriation of trauma through the imitation of reality or *mimesis*, it also shows a complicated approximation of voicing or *catharsis*. The novel widens the scope of literature as it “proclaims that apocalypse and change are necessarily at opposite poles: an apocalypse –that lifting of the veil on whatever lies beyond—can stimulate change. Its catharsis can be the beginning of transformation; apocalypse can thus become a bridge to the future, passage to freedom” (Bowers 2000: 208). For Susan Bowers, the long tradition of African American apocalyptic writing urges writers to believe that America, after periods of overwhelming darkness, would lift the veil and eternal sunshine would prevail. Then, by the Harlem Renaissance, African American writers began to doubt a messianic age: “Morrison’s novel maps a direction for the African American apocalyptic tradition which is both more instructive and potentially more powerful than the end-of-the-world versions of the sixties (Bowers, 2000: 209).

Apocalypses can be read: “as investigations into the edge, the boundary, the interface between radically different realms. If the apocalypse is an unveiling (*apo* [from or away], then clearly the veil is the eschaton, that which stands between the familiar and whatever lies beyond. In this sense the apocalypse becomes largely a matter of *seeing*” (Douglas Robinson, qtd., in *Toni Morrison’s Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*: 210). According to Bowers, the veil in *Beloved* is forgetting. The characters and by implication African Americans have lost touch with those who have died from slavery and even with their

¹²Derrida, Jack. *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 54.

own pasts. As a result, they have lost part of themselves, their own interior lives. Their struggle is the list the veil to reveal the truth of their personal and collective histories. Again, for Bowers, Morrison fuses Christian notions of apocalypse with West African beliefs to create a revised apocalyptic that principally looks backward not forward and concentrates on the psychological devastation which began with the horrors of slavery and continued when African Americans had to let the horrors of the Middle Passage and slavery disappear.

The novel's focus on the past may seem contrary to the foreshadowing of and the new vision of apocalypse, especially in American literature, where the apocalyptic vision is founded on the premise that America is the New World, land of rebirth and new life, as opposed to Europe, the Old World of decadence, decay and death. It may be inferred here that, in *Beloved*, only when characters can recover the past do they begin to imagine a future. Moreover, Morrison views the New World regarding the West African philosophy, including the notion of cyclical time. This philosophy views the world as living subject to the law of becoming of old age and death, wherein this culture, the apocalypse is repeatable and survivable. Thus, the constant circling of the narrative in *Beloved* from present to past and back again enacts the West African perspective and reinforces the importance of the past for both the individual and collective psyche.

Beloved combines the personal quest theme with the collective memory of racial brutality, for although apocalyptic literature features the destiny of the individual and personal salvation, its overall perspective is still that of the community. *Beloved*'s stream of consciousness reveals that she had waited "on the bridge" (*Beloved* 212). She herself becomes a bridge between the 'other side' and the living, the apocalyptic manifestation of the world beyond the veil. Like a bridge, *Beloved* enables passage to knowledge of the other side that otherwise would be impossible. This is reminiscent of the medieval chapels which were constructed in the middle of bridges so that passengers could contemplate passage from one state of being to another. *Beloved*'s very being enforces such contemplation.

The incipit in Morrison's novel introduces a reversed image of the Christian apocalypse where the four horsemen are agents of divine wrath; Morrison four horsemen: School teacher, his nephew, the slave catcher, and the sheriff are only emblems of evil. Her revision of the classical apocalyptic image suggests that she does not share with many apocalyptic writers the same moral beliefs. *Beloved* infers that if change is possible, it will happen only when individuals are integrated with the natural world and each other. The only

moral agency which is human, represented in *Beloved* incarnated by Denver. Born in a boat floating with the “river of freedom,” she represents the generation born outside slavery: the future. She is the redemptive figure in this novel. When her mother murdered Beloved she was a few days old. Sethe’s nipple was covered with her sister’s blood when she nursed. She took her “mother’s milk right along with the blood of her sister” (*Beloved* 152).

This image can be read as an allusion to apocalyptic literature which is very like Greek tragedy in arousing emotion and creating the conditions for *catharsis*. Morrison’s novel is a purgation of all kinds of emotion: pain, grief, remorse, anger, fear, and purges it once these sensations are intensified and given detached expression. The community has been healed from the traumatic experience and at this apocalyptic moment has finally turned to loving themselves but also to feeling compassion for those who have died.

“Apocalypse”, Bowers argues, is more diffuse experience in *Beloved* than traditionally conceived, and it is presented as something which can be survived, not as an event at the end of linear time. She opines that it is an attempt to free African Americans from guilt and past suffering. What *Beloved* suggests is that the suffering of the “black and angry dead” is inescapable psychological legacy of all African Americans” who “can rescue themselves from the trauma of that legacy by directly confronting it” (Bowers, 227). *Beloved* incorporates a redemptive community of women and epitomizes the object of salvation in a biblical apocalyptic literature as an endeavour to: “the creation of a new society” (*Ibid*).

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