

In my essay I am going to consider *Beloved* as a force that affects three of the main characters of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in different ways. The outcome for all the characters is however basically the same, the ability to live in the present. The characters of interest are Sethe, Denver and Paul D. My thesis will regard *Beloved* as a "power" that embodies and eventually liberates the characters from their past and gives life and aid to their dreams and needs of the present. David Lawrence implies that, "*Beloved* brings into daylight the "ghosts" that are harboured by memory and hold their "hosts" in thrall, tyrannically dictating thought, emotion, and action." (231). The fact that all these characters have been deeply affected by slavery is as present as the present allows it to be in their recollections. Even though they have a mutual past, they are restrained from having a mutual present, due to the ghostly memories that do not fade away. Consequently, these characters all have their own ways of coping with this dilemma. Sethe who lost her husband to "unknown" powers and a child because of her own, tries to go on living, but she actually does not care to take pleasure in her life outside the captivity of slavery. Her memory of what went before has left her with no spark of life, and this absence gradually colours the lives of her three living children. The two sons run away, and left with all the absence of life is Denver. She is not haunted by memories of slavery, but of her mother's joyless state of mind. So she is left with her imagination, with which she creates a colourful world of her own. Finally, there is Paul D, who has experienced the death of friends and family to many times. He has become a bitter man who tries to survive the present through being a lone wolf. This has made him a wandering man, always on the road, escaping memories he cannot feel any longer; until he reaches 124, where the "pasts" and the "presents" of these three characters come together, creating the major part of the novel *Beloved*.

In the book *TONI MORRISON'S Beloved – A CASEBOOK* edited by William L. Andrews and Nellie Y. McKay, there is a passage that tells a short story about how Toni Morrison started thinking about the book that she would come to call *Beloved*, they write:

ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK ON Sunday, 27<sup>th</sup> January, 1856, a party of eight slaves – two men, two women, and four children – belonging to Archibald K Gaines and John Marshall (...) escaped from their owners. They were missed a few hours after their flight, and Mr. Gaines, springing on a horse, followed in pursuit. (...) Arriving at the premises, word was sent to the fugitives to surrender. (...) On looking around, horrible was the sight which met the officer's eyes. In one corner of the room was a nearly white child, bleeding to death. Her throat was cut from ear to ear, and the blood was spouting out profusely, showing that the deed was but recently committed. (...) A glance into the apartment revealed a Negro woman holding in her hand a knife literary dripping with gore, over the heads of two Negro children (...) The woman avowed herself the mother of the children, and said that she had killed one and would like to kill three others, rather than see them again reduced to slavery! (25-26)

This passage shows in a good way the historical and real event that took place and at the same time it is a good presentation of the fictional book. While Toni Morrison did not exactly write the story of Margaret Garner, she found it to be a source of inspiration. After some time of being acquainted with this story, the characters and events started taking shape in her head, and she allowed them to tell their own stories, although indirectly based upon the destiny of Margaret Garner. (Century, 74). As a result, Morrison started writing her fifth novel which was published in 1987 (98), *Beloved*, in which she tells the story of the house at 124 Bluestone Road. A second

statement that can be found in David Lawrence's essay says that, "In *Beloved*, Morrison suggests a way through the door of memory, even if that way entails a precarious balancing act between the danger of forgetting a past that should not be forgotten and of remembering a past that threatens to engulf the present." (244). Bearing this in mind, one can comprehend the complexity of the character's memories, and their confusion towards the present to a greater extent. In the essay "Critical Essays on Toni Morrison", McKay argues the importance of the past: "Thus the past is given a crucial role to play-context and motivation for action in present time. The character's actions cannot be fully comprehended without it" (183-4). This brings forth the actual need to see the past and the present in combination in relation to these characters and also discover their fears "easier".

Sethe is the former slave woman who ran away from a prison called Sweet Home, leaving behind a husband she never would see again and coming to 124 with four young children. When her slave owner was on the verge of taking her children, she consequently tries to kill her them, and succeeds in killing one of the children she would later name Beloved. She is left with the haunting memories of Sweet Home and the physical as well as the psychological maltreatment she endured during that period of her life. In addition to this, she can never forget the daughter she called Beloved, who she killed to save from slavery. Arlene R. Keizer suggests: "She [Sethe] also identifies her children as "parts" of herself—the only parts she wants to claim (...)." (108). Sethe's action can partly be justified, however, it cannot bring forgiveness to Sethe. Furthermore, Sethe is a woman living a lifeless life, unable to forget a painful past and feeling guilty about killing her baby daughter. These feelings and thoughts result in a distance to the daughter she actually has, Denver (who I will

discuss later), leaving them as strangers to each other. Moreover, Seth is left a stranger to life.

The discussion (for Sethe's character) will now circulate around the fact that Sethe cannot move on and take her mind of her past. Before the arrival of Beloved, Sethe does not live. She sees her life through a pair of dirty glasses, behind which not one stray of sun gets through. She has a job (works in a kitchen), which she goes to everyday, but she does that just to be able to have something to eat. She does not really enjoy her job, although she does not have any other job opportunities either. Sethe is a tired woman, tired of working, of living, of the baby ghost in her, and tired of remembering her past. More correctly, she is tired *because* of her past. She can never really take her mind of what happened before - at Sweet Home. Most of her daily duties, and her thoughts during the long hours of the day, are somehow connected to her past. When she was a "real" slave, she was not allowed to be her own. She did not even have the permission to see herself as a human being. Now that she is free from slavery she has become a slave under her own paralysing memories. Sethe thinks about her husband, who she has not seen for about eighteen years, and about how things would be if they were a family.

The thought of having her baby daughter back in ways penetrates her whole being. The problem is that as a result of this she cannot see what she has, her daughter Denver, a job, a house to live in, a few people who care about them. Even when Paul D, one of the last men at Sweet Home, comes to her, and they start some kind of relationship, Sethe still cannot find the total colour and joy in her life. As Susan Bowers argue: "Sethe and Paul D are able to help each other to a point, but until they have intimate contact with the original pain and the feelings it created that had to be

suppressed, they cannot be purged of its paralysing effect.” (216). This indicates that even though Paul D actually can be supportive, Sethe cannot be fully recovered from her past without the presence of Beloved. One observation by Paul D states that: “But her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day.” (Morrison, 83). Paul D can help Sethe reconcile with the dreadful memories they share from Sweet Home but he cannot make her forget, or at least move on.

Sethe often remembers the days when she was running away to an ever absent and not to mention an uncertain future. And she often thinks about the child she killed in order to save its life: “When I put that headstone up I wanted to lay there with you (...) and keep you warm (...) and I would have if Buglar, Howard and Denver didn’t need me, because my mind was homeless then.” (Morrison, 214). Sethe’s mind stayed homeless for a long time, until Beloved came back to her.

Beloved’s arrival is illustrated as the following:

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 (...) Nobody saw her emerge or come accidentally by. If they had chances are they would have hesitated before approaching her. (...) Exhausted again, she sat down on the first handy place—a stump not far from the steps of 124. (Morrison, 60)

As is shown in this passage, Beloved rises from the waters and eventually returns to the waters. Beloved’s arrival can thus be that she comes from the source of life, the water, to simply give life. This also supports my claim being that she comes to 124 and gives life to the lives of Sethe, Denver and Paul D. It is after this unusual entrance that the interlacing narratives of 124 begin their show.

After the arrival of Beloved Sethe starts seeing things differently. This is, however, an unhurried process which culminates itself as Sethe one day “realises” that Beloved is actually the daughter she could not find anywhere but in her own mind, and who is now embodied in the young woman who calls herself Beloved. This is shown by Sethe’s observation: “She [Sethe] simply turned her head and looked at Beloved’s profile: the chin, mouth, nose, forehead, copied and exaggerated in the huge shadow the fire threw on the wall behind her.”(Morrison,207). Due to the arrival of Beloved, Sethe is almost forced to deal with another part of her past, the part that Paul D could not help her with. Beloved is Sethe’s assumed lost daughter who has come back, captivating Sethe’s painful associations of being guilty for the death of her own child.

This is an important element that Sethe finds in the presence of Beloved, which is the fact that she truly might be forgiven for the murder. When Sethe has incorporated the thought of Beloved being her daughter, she begins to feel that burdens stored in years are taken off her shoulders: “I don’t have to remember nothing. I don’t even have to explain. She understands it all.” (Morrison, 216). After this sensation, Sethe starts seeing brightness in her life. She is able to live again, without the culpable feeling of murdering her baby some eighteen years earlier.

A question rises though considering Beloved, and Beloved forgiving Sethe for her desperate action. That is if Beloved in actuality forgives Sethe, or if she is merely famished for all the possessions she has been depraved of, and thus demanding these of Sethe. After the reincarnated Beloved (in the eyes of Sethe) has come back, Sethe starts to live in the present, but still not in the real present world. The first sign that demonstrate changing conditions is when Sethe is late for work, for the first time in sixteen years. (Morrison, 217). Sethe has never been late for work before, but now she

starts feeling so happy that she almost doesn't care. This happiness however, is not long-lasting. It is now that Sethe starts to "pay off" for what she did to Beloved.

This "pay-off" is however something Sethe takes as a sign of being a real mother to her daughter after eighteen years of being apart. Sethe's past and present are not important anymore, as her psychological need of replacing the dead child, which now is in the shape of Beloved has been fulfilled. Sethe starts to forget about Paul D, seeing him as superfluous in her world since she now has Beloved to care for: "Obviously the hand-holding shadows she had seen on the road were not Paul D, Denver, and herself, but 'us three'." (Morrison, 214). Now that Sethe's lost daughter is back, she has the chance of being the mother she never was and thus does anything for Beloved, maybe even too much: "Beloved didn't move; said, "Do it," and Sethe complied. She [Beloved] took the best of everything." Denver, the actual daughter that was increasingly becoming transparent notices what Beloved wants and who Sethe tries to be: "(...) Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it." (Morrison, 295). What Sethe does not see at this point is how famished she herself was for being forgotten that she allows Beloved to nearly extract the essence out of her. In the essay *Looking into the Self that is no Self...*, this is explained as, "Each woman's desire can be read as a demand for recognition from the other." (423). Both Beloved and Sethe are trying to fill gaps in their lives through each other and this develops to a bizarre game of giving and demanding.

Beloved frees Sethe from her haunting memories, leaving in her in a state of mind that Sethe finds close to mesmerizing. After Beloved has arrived, Sethe is made to deal with her past in an odd way. Beloved likes to hear about Sethe's past, which to her are fascinating stories, and Sethe who by no means liked the thought of talking on the

subject of her past, finds herself being surprised: “It amazed Sethe (...) because every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost.”(Morrison, 69). Accordingly Sethe begins to look at herself through another perspective, stating that she is not as horrible as she always imagined herself to be and also that she has a right to enjoy herself. Because of this happy state of mind, Sethe starts to consider the world outside 124 as unimportant: “Paul D convinced me there was a world out there and that I could live in it. Should have known better. (...) The world is in this room.”(Morrison, 215). Although Sethe starts to feel free, she starts to think that she does not have to live in the outside world, where people still have not forgotten the murder. She soon forgets Paul D’s convincing words of how they could create a life together, and live in the community again. Sethe can live in her house, with a daughter she always wanted to live with, thus creating a closed world where there is only room for her and Beloved.

The issue that in all this excitement “slips” Sethe’s mind, though, is that she has another daughter to care for. She is Denver, the daughter who suffers from her mother’s inability to live. Denver does not have any painful memories from slavery and Sweet Home, because she was born during the period when Sethe was escaping from them, and she has no memory of the child called Beloved, or the attempted murder on her and her other siblings. What Denver remembers are her two brothers always holding hands when sleeping, because of their fear for Seth (although, this was not anything Denver understood), and when they finally ran from home, she was left more or less invisible to Sethe. Even though Denver became an only child because her brothers ran away from home, there was always the ghost of Beloved, who occupied Seth’s mind. Denver is thereby left on her own. As a result, she grows inwards,



creating a world of her own, feeling incapable and insufficient. She never asks for a friend, or even a mother.

Denver, the forgotten child, is in this manner alone, and does not have any real contact with anyone outside 124, which is also due to Sethe's displeasure after society turned its back on her after the murder of Beloved. While discussing the character Denver, there is a second aspect to bear in mind when thinking of her life before the arrival of Beloved. There is the arrival of Paul D as well, being her mother's friend from Sweet Home, who affects Denver's life before Beloved enters the scene. The first issue that strikes Denver is the fact that no one actually had visited 124 for years: "It had been a long time since anybody (...) sat at their table (...). For twelve years, long before Grandma Baby died, there had been no visitors of any sort and certainly no friends." (Morrison, 14). When Paul D arrives at 124 he changes Denver's life, maybe not purposely, to a still further lonesome world.

Since Denver does not have anyone else beside Sethe to rely on, she is not especially fond of Paul D being there. She has never met her father (named Halle), and what is more is that Denver no longer has a grandmother (called Baby Suggs) to talk and listen to: "All that leaving: first her brothers, then her grandmother-serious losses since there were no children willing to circle her in a game" (Morrison, 14-15). Consequently, Denver creates a world of her own, with secrets only she has access to, and a place in the forest no one knows is hers:

First a playroom (where silence was softer), then a refuge (from her brothers' fright), soon the place became the point. In that bower, closed off from the hurt of the hurt world, Denver's imagination produced its own food, which she baldly needed because loneliness wore her out. (Morrison, 35)

Just for this reason, being her loneliness, Denver withdraws even further in to her world in the forest when Paul D arrives, stirring up memories in Sethe. This makes Sethe forget her responsibility as a mother towards Denver, even before the arrival of Beloved: “She missed her brothers. (...) Now her mother was upstairs with the man who had gotten rid of the only company she had.” (Morrison, 23). As Paul D and Sethe occupy each other with old memories, and new desires, Denver has to cope with her new situation consisting of not having the right to claim even the slight attention she once was capable of maintaining.

The loneliness Denver is left with, is not mainly due to the actual presence of Paul D, but to the memories Sethe and Paul D share from Sweet Home. Denver does not know much about her history and occasionally she does not even desire to recognize it. Denver does not know her father for instance, simply because she has never met him and also for the reason that Sethe or Baby Suggs has never been fond of telling her, for reasons they would not share with Denver. At the arrival of Paul D, Denver realizes that he has known her father, but is saddened at the discovery of being left out of a past she has a right to: “They were a twosome, saying “Your daddy” and “Sweet Home” in a way that made it clear both belonged to them and not to her. That her own father’s absence was not hers.” (Morrison, 15). Denver is left with no roots, and with the feeling of not belonging to the world, or even her past.

For the reason that she is alone, and has no knowledge of her past, she is left in the company of rootlessness. This absence of certainty and ignorance of her own background has created in Denver a taste for the baby ghost living in 124: “None of them knew the downright pleasure of enchantment, of not suspecting but *knowing* the things behind things.” (Morrison, 45). The ghost of the baby allows Denver to have a

partial predictability in her life, which she cannot find in another way. This is also mentioned by Carol E. Schmutte who writes that, “Denver identifies with her dead sister; the ghost becomes her only playmate in a lonely childhood. She feels safest in the company of the ghost (...)” (413). That is, there is something in her life, which she knows the origins of, and which she is a part of. For this lonely and “past-less” young girl, the presence of the ghost is a promise of consistency and logicity.

Before Beloved enters Denver’s life – in an unexpected way - Denver only lives because she breathes. Besides her secret forest, she does not have anything or anyone in the world that makes her feel good about herself. Moreover, Denver does not have the feeling of belonging somewhere, which makes her feel even gloomier about herself. This additionally leaves her with a lack of self-awareness. As Denver does not know how the world around her perceives her, she does not have a real picture of herself either. The lack of self-representation creates a girl who does not know what she can achieve in her life, or even *that* she can accomplish anything. Denver, before the arrival of Beloved, does not know that she actually has the power to step outside 124, and discover as well as create a new life, leaving behind her emptiness for good.

However, when Beloved knocks on the door to 124, a new life begins for Denver, along with new discoveries of herself. What attracts Denver to Beloved is at first the opportunity to establish a friendship with a young girl like herself. Because Denver at the time has not thought on the subject of looking outside 124 for a friend, her reaction to Beloved’s arrival is very positive. At last Denver has found someone she can care for, and someone who will care for and need her in return: “Denver tended her, watched her sound sleep, listened to her laboured breathing and, out of love and a breakneck possessiveness that changed her, hid like a personal blemish Beloved’s

incontinence.” (Morrison, 64). In the beginning of Beloved’s arrival, Denver finds a good opportunity to care for the sick strange girl who seemingly came from nowhere but simultaneously could not have come at a better time. The opening of this new “friendship” is one of the most important events in Denver’s life, and she is prepared to defend and fight for it in ways that she has never done before, which is illustrated in the fact that she hides Beloved’s incontinence, due to Beloved’s sickness at her arrival.

Denver *creates* the feeling in her that Beloved needs her; because Denver has finally found someone she can look after for the first time in her life. Denver has never been able to do this for Sethe, because Sethe has always been the, “(...) quiet, queenly woman Denver know all her life. The one who never looked away (...)” (Morrison, 14). So after a long time Denver “finds” someone who needs her. However, after a while the situation is the opposite and Denver discovers that *she* is the one who in fact “desires” Beloved and would rather have her for herself, than to share her with Sethe and thankfully catches anything that Beloved randomly throws at her.

Denver is however prepared to patiently capture and bring Beloved into her own world: “Patience, something Denver never had known, overtook her.” (Morrison, 65). Even though Denver tolerantly tries to carry through a one-sided friendship, she is in flames inside: “Denver had worried herself sick trying to think of a way to get Beloved to share her room.” (Morrison, 79), but the nerve-racking expectations come true and Denver can have Beloved to her self, at least for a little while.

This “having Beloved to herself” is one of the most important elements in the development of Denver, this piece of evidence she receives through her somewhat odd friendship with Beloved, stating that Denver is sufficient and worth noticing,

because Beloved actually talks to Denver and recognises her presence. Another important feature that Beloved provides Denver and her character with is the notion of being seen and listened to, that is being recognized as a valuable individual, or as Susan Bowers simply states: “Beloved’s gift to Denver is attention.” (217). After succeeding in inviting Beloved to share her world, new discoveries were to be made for Denver. Consequently, Denver realizes that she can actually like herself, “Denver grew ice-cold as she rose from the bed. She knew she was twice Beloved’s size but she floated up, cold and light as a snowflake.” (Morrison, 87). This illustrates Beloved’s positive perception of herself and her taking Denver for who she is which encourages Denver to appreciate herself more instead of holding on to an unfair view of herself. Thus Beloved works as a mirror for Denver, proving her that she is as good as her best dreams and that Denver has a life waiting to be lived. Denver slowly grows as a character, giving herself the advantage of being courageous, even when she understands that Beloved truly only cares about being with Sethe. As Beloved tells Denver: “She [Sethe] is the one. She is the only one I need. You [Denver] can go but she is the only one I have to have.” (Morrison, 89). As the acquaintance with Beloved becomes peripheral in Denver’s life, she takes a further step in developing as a character, although unknowingly. Taking Jennifer L. Holden-Kirwan’s point into consideration: “She [Denver] acknowledges her own self and requires neither the look of her mother nor Beloved to attain Subjectivity.” (426) one can observe how Denver grows stronger in herself, and starts to move towards a life where she is the central and important part.

Ultimately, as the relationship between Sethe and Beloved becomes increasingly absurd in the closed world of 124, Denver understands that in order to save her self and her mother’s life, from the ever life consuming Beloved, she has to face her fears

and step outside 124: “Neither Sethe nor Beloved knew or cared about it one way or another. (...) So it was she [Denver] who had to step off the edge of the world and die because if she didn’t, they all would.” (Morrison, 281). Beloved not only creates a tough Denver, she also strengthens the connection between Sethe and Denver as mother and daughter: “The job she started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved.” (Morrison, 286). For Denver Beloved becomes the liberator who through her actions pushes her forward into an existence where Denver has faith in herself. This also allows Denver to rediscover the world outside 124 that she was a part of as a young child. Unfortunately she was only a part of it until Beloved’s murder became too self-assertive and forced Denver to “retreat” to 124. This is one of the most important occurrences in the novel, as in agreement with Susan Bower’s statement who suggests: “(...) she [Denver] represents the generation born outside slavery: the future. (...) Denver not only represents the future; she brings in into being.” (221-2). As a result the future is possible through Denver with Beloved’s help.

The third main character Paul D is somewhat different from the characters Sethe and Denver. Paul D is a character who equally helps Sethe (nevertheless, Sethe helps him also), and who is helped by Beloved. He is, like Sethe, a former slave from Sweet Home. Paul D survives by being a lone wolf and by being a constantly walking man, going from place to place, never staying more than necessary in one spot. However, there is more to be learnt about Paul D. As Paul D reaches 124 and Sethe, in his own words, he has found his final destination: “I told you, I’m a wandering man, but I been heading in this direction for seven years.” (Morrison, 55). Paul D’s wandering days are over when he reached 124, but it is also after reaching 124 that he begins to uncover what memories and feelings he has buried through his walking.

In addition to the loneliness in Paul D, which he essentially uses to fill up the real hurt inside, there is an extension in the shape of not having feelings. Since he has lost friends and brothers at Sweet Home, Paul D has come to the conclusion of putting away feelings, in order to be able to in fact live a fairly controllable emotional life: “The best thing, he knew, was to love just a little bit; everything, just a little bit, so when they broke its back, or shoved it in a croaker sack, well, maybe you’d have a little love left over for the next one.” (Morrison, 54). In this way, Paul D has learnt to cope with the rest of his life, his life after slavery and with restrained memories from the past, that is. Of course, this is an approach that is destined to be dissolved.

Prior to the discussion of Paul D’s “survival approach”, the issue of women can be mentioned. As I stated in the previous paragraphs, Paul D has rescued himself from additional hurt by preventing himself from emotions. This evidently causes difficulties considering relations to women since Paul D knows that he cannot live with any woman: “(...) because he didn’t believe he could live with a woman-any woman-for over two out of three months.” (Morrison, 49). Nevertheless, when reaching 124, he tells Sethe: “But when I got here and sat out there on the porch, waiting for you, well I knew it wasn’t the place I was heading toward; it was you. We can make a life, girl. A life.” (Morrison, 55). The question that arises at this point is how prepared Paul D in reality is in order to create a life with Sethe, since at this point in his life his “tobacco tin” (Morrison, 133), which he has renamed his heart, was still shut and unbreakable. The source of his contradictory statement can probably be found in the bond he has with Sethe due to common pasts and understanding of life after Sweet Home.

Life in the eyes of Paul D (and also Sethe in her own way) has no actual purpose any longer. There is no joyfulness in his eyes, and there are not many things he takes pleasure in which is also indicated in how Denver perceives the presence of Paul D: “Emotions sped to the surface in his company. Things became what they were: drabness looked drab; heat was hot.” (Morrison, 48). Seeing that the reality is so palpable in Paul D’s life, and in the same extension shines outside him, the understanding of his behaviour, choosing to relieve the heart from emotions, is not as incomprehensible.

When Beloved arrives at 124, the resolving of many hidden puzzles begin (this being the dissolving of the survival approach mentioned earlier), not least the resolving of Paul D’s well secreted problems that are triggered through the dislike he feels towards Beloved. This is partly because Paul D is used to women being attracted to him, which is also the very thing that annoys him in Beloved: “But if her shining was not for him, who then? He had never known a woman who lit up for nobody in particular, who just did it as a general announcement.” (Morrison, 78). As seen from this, the resolution starts to work on the surface of Paul D’s character. Since he has relieved himself from feeling, Paul D is not deeply affected by Beloved at first. What Beloved does for him is that she affects him on his surface with the matter that is most evident to him on the facade-women. To him the fact that Beloved does not pay him, in his eyes, the deserved attention insults him in the direction of infuriation towards Beloved. There is however another dimension to this problem. Mentioning Bowers statement in her essay *Beloved and the New Apocalypse*, she writes: “When Beloved seduces Paul D, making love with her breaks open the tobacco tin in his chest to release his heart.” (217). After some time Beloved and Paul D start a intimate



relationship, which results in opening up Paul D's heart, setting off the rest of his healing process.

While the unawareness of Beloved is a source of annoyance for Paul D, a greater irritation arises towards her due to her terrible timing: "She had appeared and been taken in on the very day Sethe and he had patched up their quarrel, gone out in public and had a right good time-like a family." (Morrison, 79). The real setback for Paul D is, as can be observed the fact that he has just given in to the thought of having some sort of family again and staying in one place, when Beloved intervenes the scene. At the same time as the resolution of Paul D's problems start, Beloved enters 124 and pushes Paul D to an even deeper resolution and reconciliation with himself, concerning his faithfulness both to life and to love, which means that he starts to believe that he once more can see meaning in his life and slowly find the courage to love.

The greatest and hardest reconciliation for Paul D comes not only due to Beloved's presence but also once Stamp Paid, a former slave acquainted with Sethe through Baby Suggs, reveals the true story of the murdered Beloved. Initially Paul D cannot believe what Stamp Paid retells by showing him a newspaper clip of the event: "I been knowing her a long time. And I can tell you for sure: this aint her mouth." (Morrison, 185). Suddenly, Paul D's conception of Sethe is shattered, but simultaneously he cannot deny the love he has started to feel for Sethe, which makes things harder as Sethe "admits" the event: "The roaring in Paul D's head did not prevent him from hearing the pat she gave to the last word (...). This here Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw." (Morrison, 193). After Sethe's confession, Paul D leaves 124, hurt, angry and confused. This is also indicated by Rafael Pérez-Torres who suggest that, "(...) Paul D is both surprised and scared that this Sweet Home girl

can so effectively tear down the walls of social and family structures (...)” (103). In leaving Sethe and Denver in the consuming hands of Beloved and for himself starting the longest and the most complicated reconciliation within.

Living outside 124, Paul D’s thoughts are constantly occupied with Sethe: “Wanting to live his life with a whole woman was new, and losing the feeling of it made him want to cry and think deep thoughts that struck nothing solid.” (Morrison, 261). He has reached the point where he can no longer walk away in order to forget, and where he cannot fool himself with riddles or a “tobacco tin” (Morrison, 133). Paul D begins to search for answers, not only about Sethe, but also for all the memories that go through his mind on a daily basis. He recognizes the life at Sweet Home as well as the history he left behind in that place and suddenly after years of denying feelings everything he has tried to hide from pours out: “His tobacco tin, blown open, spilled contents that floated freely and made him their play and grey.” (Morrison, 258). Paul D is thus ready to move on, to put the memories beside the other experiences and create a new life with Sethe.

At the same time as Paul D is trying to deal with his emotions, the situation in the house 124 is growing worse. The “solution” to the situation comes in the shape of the black women in the community, who through Denver, have learnt about the condition in 124. Thus we have reached the last part of Beloved’s existence in the house. Morrison demonstrates the so-called exorcism of Beloved as the following:

When the women assembled outside 124, Sethe was breaking a lump of ice into chunks. (...) When the music entered the window she was wringing a cool cloth on Beloved’s forehead. (...) The singing women recognized Sethe at once and surprised themselves by their absence of fear when they saw what stood next to her. The devil-

child was clever, they thought. (...) Standing alone on the porch, Beloved is smiling.

Now she [Sethe] is running (...) leaving Beloved behind. Alone. Again. (309)

However, the exorcism of Beloved by the black woman in the community clearly shows that Sethe has paid enough, and has been forgiven. L. Gregory Jones suggests that, "These communities represent not timeless spaces, but redemptive relationships in which people refuse to abandon those who have suffered and are suffering. These communities offer an tomorrow." (24). The community came to Sethe's rescue, and Paul D came to set their future's freedom in motion.

Since Paul D has been away from the house for a while, it is he who notices the tangible change that has taken place in the house, both the change in its atmosphere (quiet and desolate) and Sethe (who seems to be very sick<sup>9</sup>). So when Paul D draws closer to 124, which is, after the exorcism of Beloved where society actually comes to Sethe's rescue, the notion of the house grows inside him, and he realises that something has changed: "Something is missing from 124. Something larger than the people who lived there. (...), but it seems, for a moment, that just beyond his knowing is the glare of an outside thing that embraces while it accuses." (Morrison, 319). What Paul D demonstrates in his thoughts is probably the change that has taken place after Beloved is gone which are the unity of the world inside 124 and the outside world, the unity of the past and the present, and the unity of the subconscious and the conscious. In the end, Paul D in his own words enlightens Sethe: " 'Sethe', he says, 'me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.' " (Morrison, 320). The unity enables the future for Paul D as he wishes to share it with Sethe. It also enables a new life for both Sethe and Denver, where the present is closer than the past.

The effect of Beloved on Sethe, Paul D and Denver is by way of conclusion that she gives them what they each have long desired, which are forgiveness for Sethe, ability to feel for Paul D and acceptance and friendship for Denver. Each character is faced with its fears and desires which enables its personal story to deepen and progress into the future. Beloved's "departure" can thus be considered as a completed mission, where she returns to the waters that she came from. Thinking of water as a life giving force, one might discuss the character of Beloved as coming from the source of life, being water, and thus providing the dried up lives of Sethe, Paul D and Denver with new life, and afterwards returning to "her" source. It is also important to recognize the fact that in order for the lives of the above mentioned characters to exist in the present with a future in sight, the presence of Beloved would only keep the characters in the past. Since Beloved is the force freeing Sethe, Paul D and Denver from their haunting pasts, her departure is necessary.

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