

*African
American
Review*

Indiana State University

Circularity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Author(s): Philip Page

Source: *African American Review*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Women Writers Issue (Spring, 1992), pp. 31-39

Published by: [Indiana State University](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3042074>

Accessed: 21/12/2010 22:27

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=isu>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Indiana State University and St. Louis University are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *African American Review*.

Circularity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

In the opening pages of Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia and her sister Frieda overhear the adults talking:

Their conversation is like a gently wicked dance: sound meets sound, curtsies, shimmies, and retires. Another sound enters but is upstaged by still another: the two circle each other and stop. Sometimes their words move in lofty spirals; other times they take strident leaps, and all of it is punctuated with warm-pulsed laughter—like the throb of a heart made of jelly. (16)

Morrison's second novel, *Sula*, ends with another image of circling words. Grieving for her dead friend, Nel cries, "O Lord, Sula, . . . girl, girl, girlgirlgirl." And the narrator defines her words as circles: "It was a fine cry—loud and long—but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow" (174). Morrison herself describes the form of the two novels with the same metaphor:

. . . in the first two [books], the movement, the rhythm is circular, although the circles are broken. If you go back to the beginnings, you get pushed along toward the end. This is particularly so with *The Bluest Eye*. *Sula* is more spiral than circular. (Tate 124)

This image of circularity, particularly of the circularity of conversation, of words as a circular dance, controls the crucial scene of *Beloved* which occurs at the end of part one, in the kitchen of Sethe's house at 124 Bluestone Road, when Sethe tries to explain to Paul D why she had to kill her infant daughter. This shocking act, Sethe's motivations behind it, the memory of it, and Paul D's struggle to understand it form the psychological heart of the novel. As she attempts to tell him, she nervously circles around the kitchen, around Paul D: "She was spinning. Round and round the room. . . . Once in a while she rubbed her hips as she turned, but the wheel never stopped" (159). And as she "wheels," her confession revolves around Paul D, "circling him the way she was circling the subject" (161). Both Paul D and Sethe are aware of her strategy. Paul D thinks, ". . . listening to her was like having a child whisper into your ear so close you could feel its lips form the words you couldn't make out because they were too close. He caught only pieces of what she said—which was fine, because she hadn't gotten to the main part . . ." (161). And Sethe is equally conscious: She "knew that the circle she was making around the room, him, the subject, would remain one. That she could never close in, pin it down for anybody who had to ask. If they didn't get it right off—she could never explain" (163). Gradually, she does close the circle enough to let Paul D know the truth: "I took and put my babies where they'd be safe" (164). As Sethe had feared, the shock is too great for Paul D, and he accuses her of overloving ("Your love is too thick" [164]) and even of being more animal than human ("You got two feet, Sethe, not four")

Philip Page, who received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University, currently teaches in the Department of English at California State University, San Bernardino. His publications include essays on Henry James and Gerald Manley Hopkins.

[165]). As a result, their relationship is nearly destroyed, and they are separated until the end of the novel.

It is significant that this image of circling controls the crucial scene, for circles and circle metaphors dominate the novel. An examination of these explicit and implicit circles and their implications reveals the subtle relationships between the novel's content and its form.

One circle is the black neighborhood around 124 Bluestone. Composed of other refugees of slavery and war, this neighborhood constitutes a community circle whose presence is felt throughout the novel. At times the community acts together, as when it gathers in the circular clearing to hear Baby Suggs's preaching, or when it marches on 124 Bluestone at the novel's end. Stamp Paid, who ferries survivors across the Ohio and who never needs to knock at anyone's house, personifies this united community. On occasion the residents of 124 Bluestone are part of the neighborhood circle—for example, when Denver takes lessons from Lady Jones; when Denver, Paul D, and Sethe go to the carnival; or when everyone comes to the house for a feast. At such times, the interaction with the community appears to be primarily positive and healthy. However, for most of the novel the characters in 124 Bluestone isolate themselves from the community. At their farthest isolation, even Stamp Paid is no longer welcome.

While they are isolated, they are haunted by their past—first by the inanimate ghost of Beloved, which the newcomer Paul D is able to drive away, then by the animate Beloved, whom no one but the residents of 124 Bluestone actually see, and who can only be exorcised by the combined action of Sethe, Denver, and the community—activity which reintegrates 124 Bluestone with the neighborhood. Thus, the problems confronting the characters inside the house are related

to their isolation from the community, to their exclusion from its circle.

However, that community circle is not always helpful or positive. The same people who help Denver when she seeks to rejoin the community had rejected Baby Suggs out of jealousy and spite, and had even failed to warn her and Sethe of schoolteacher's approach with the slave catchers. The community circle is thus two-edged: supportive and necessary, yet divisive and petty. At the very time that it comes together for the feast at 124 Bluestone, its jealousy of Baby Suggs and its anger that she is overreaching contribute to its undoing. This community thus resembles the black neighborhoods of Morrison's other novels, neighborhoods that both nurture her central characters and threaten to constrict them.¹ Always, for Morrison, "There is this turn which is both a support system and a hammer at the same time" (Smith 50).

Families are another circle. Family—the creation of it, the attempt to preserve it, the nostalgia for it—dominates the plot. In the novel's past, Sethe's mother and Baby Suggs lost their families; Paul D envied the families he met on his wanderings; and the family of the Sweet Home men was lost forever. In the novel's present, Sethe's primary desire is to reunite her own family, a desire which makes her murder of her baby all the more difficult to reconcile. Paul D has no hope of regaining his own lost family, but after circling the eastern United States, or as he says, " 'walking all around this place' " (46), he is trying to settle down, to create a new family with Sethe, and thereby to find himself. Denver takes the opposite journey—not from the circumference inward, but from the center outward. Confined by her overprotective mother and her own agoraphobia, she tries to live by means of intimate relationships within the house—with Sethe, with the inanimate ghost, then with Beloved, whom she desperately

tries to keep to herself by encircling, by "construct[ing] out of the strings she had heard all her life a net to hold" (76). Perceiving a threat of exclusion from Sethe and Paul D, then excluded by Sethe and Beloved, Denver is forced, for her physical and psychological survival, to reenter the larger community, to move outward from the incomplete and inadequate family circle to the larger neighborhood circle.

Moreover, the novel's plot involves a series of attempted family circles. It starts with the precarious family of Sethe, Denver, and the inanimate ghost of Beloved. Paul D drives out the ghost, but the potential family of him, Sethe, and Denver is also unstable, primarily because Paul D and Sethe do not yet dare to accept their memories, to acknowledge the horrors of their pasts. Beloved then returns, and the competition for intimacy deepens: Paul D wants Sethe, Beloved wants Sethe, Denver wants Beloved, and Sethe wants her old family. Beloved, symbolizing the power of both Sethe's and Paul D's unaccepted memories, holds the upper hand as long as these memories remain unacknowledged. Therefore, she can drive Paul D out of the house and out of the circle, and then, through her emotional hold on Sethe, she can exclude Denver and draw her circle ever more tightly around herself and Sethe.

As with the community circle, these family groups can be both healthy and destructive.² Clearly, the loss of family is a large part of these characters' tragedy, and their attempts to retain or remake a family reflect their desire to become spiritually and psychologically whole. However, the novel also dramatizes the fact that one potential family may destroy another. After Paul D arrives, Denver laments that Paul D and Sethe "were a twosome" and that Denver and Sethe "were not a twosome anymore" (13). Later, Beloved claims Sethe for herself

by encircling her with a shawl, to the exclusion of Paul D (130). Moreover, these family groupings usually become too intense and self-contained. Too in-grown, the group becomes isolated from the rest of the community. Its members become "hand-holding shadows" (182)—together, but only half-alive, in an insubstantial, unfulfilling reality. While the family of Sethe, Beloved, and Denver is temporarily balanced, they go ice skating, holding hands, "making a circle or a line" (174). But the repeated phrase is *nobody saw them falling* (174-75). Sethe and Denver fall, not just on the ice, but as a group and as psychologically healthy individuals. And nobody sees them, which is both a result of their isolation and a cause of their fall. Because they are isolated, too engrossed in their primary circle, they deny themselves the necessary interaction with the community. Worse, their tightening circle forces them perilously close to a kind of hysteria. The three women's voices inside 124 Bluestone are "a conflagration of hasty voices," which, to Stamp Paid, "wasn't nonsensical, exactly, nor was it tongues. But something was wrong with the order of the words . . ." (172). Sethe, caught up in the ring, "neither saw the prints nor heard the voices that ringed 124 like a noose" (183), like a constricting, life-threatening circle.

The "voices," which the reader finally hears between pages 200 and 217, compose a symphonic trio among Sethe, Denver, and Beloved. On the one hand, their song is a testimony to their intimacy, to their shared sense of family, to their common lives and memories. But, on the other hand, their relationship is draining away their lives. Denver is still unable to function in the outside world; Beloved becomes increasingly tyrannical and infantile; and Sethe loses her physical and emotional strength. In fact, their relationships, for all their love, are increasingly possessive. The one word that Stamp Paid can make

out is *mine* (172), a key word which begins Sethe's monologue ("Beloved, she my daughter. She mine" [200]), ends Denver's ("She's mine, Beloved. She's mine" [209]), and begins Beloved's ("I am Beloved and she is mine" [210]). And the intertwined lines of the trio end with the refrain "You are mine / You are mine / You are mine" (217).

Being "mine" or "yours" is part of the vocabulary of love, but such an emphasis on possession can also be unhealthy. The three characters' insistence on possessing each other underscores the destructive rivalries for affection that plague the various attempted families within 124 Bluestone. Moreover, Sethe, Denver, and Paul D are possessed, in a different sense of the word, by the ghost of Beloved—an ordeal they must pass through but certainly not a healthy condition. In a larger sense, the novel demonstrates that no one can or should belong to anyone else and that, in fact, such possession uncomfortably resembles another form of human possession—slavery (Thurman 180).

The two-edged nature of life in this novel is further implied by other circle images. Denver's circular bower, formed by "five boxwood bushes, planted in a ring" (28), is a safe haven but also a womb—a metaphor, along with her fascination with the story of her birth, for her paralyzing infantilism. Circles are especially ambivalent in Beloved's strange description of her return to life. She sees a "round basket" (210) of flowers, then notices a "circle around [the] neck" (211) of the woman whose face she needs. But this circle becomes "the iron circle . . . around our neck" (212), an evocation of slave collars. Perhaps the most dramatic, and the most contrasting, circle imagery details Sethe's near strangulation in the clearing. As she is feeling strangled, a

circle image itself, she describes the pressure on her neck as "harder, harder, the fingers moved slowly around toward her windpipe, making little circles on the way" (96). But as soon as the spell is broken, Beloved relieves and relaxes Sethe by massaging her bruised neck and throat. Thus,

hands on the throat can either strangle or soothe; a circle can be destructive or constructive, confining or fulfilling.

Like many novels, this one is built on repetition, which is a form of circularity. The generations of women repeat and dove-

tail with each other. Baby Suggs, the grandmother, mothers Sethe in the absence of her own children, as Sethe in turn mothers her children. Sethe then replaces Baby Suggs in the mother's role, which is represented by Sethe's replacing Baby Suggs in "the keeping room" (19). In turn, Sethe as mother is replaced by Denver when Denver learns to cope with the world and to provide for the family. Repetition also structures the novel in the duplication of key events. Mr. Bodwin's arrival at the house parallels the earlier arrival of schoolteacher's posse, and Sethe's attack echoes her earlier action.

Paul D arrives, leaves, and arrives again. Denver goes twice to Lady Jones and interacts significantly twice with Nelson Lord. The ghost of Beloved haunts Sethe and Denver, is chased away by Paul D, but returns more powerfully, and, finally, through the action of Sethe, Denver, and the community, is exorcised for good.

Furthermore, rebirth, a form of repetition and therefore circularity, is a major theme of the novel. The novel reinforces this pattern by locating the characters' rebirths in water. Beloved describes her reincarnation as crossing a body of water in a ship, which invokes both the passage of slaves to America and (minus the ship) the pas-

Circles and circle metaphors dominate the novel.

sage of the fetus into life. Sethe's escape to the North requires two similar voyages: the birth of Denver in the waters of the Ohio River and their perilous crossing of the Ohio with Stamp Paid. In addition, Paul D's most painful memory is his captivity in Alfred, Georgia, where he escaped from a trench by a miraculous passage through the water-logged mud, another rebirth via water.

As interesting as these patterns of circularity in the novel's content are, they become more intriguing when one explores how that context parallels the novel's form.

The telling of the novel replicates Sethe's act of circling her subject in the kitchen with Paul D. Just as she cannot say directly what she did or why, so the narration does not tell the story directly. Just as she says a little, then digresses, then circles back, so does the narration. Just as Paul D only catches fragments, and must wait until she circles closer and closer, so must readers be content with fragments and wait until they are told enough. The narrator knows the whole story, but since the characters have trouble confronting the past, the narration must be presented in bits and pieces (Baker-Fletcher 631).

The principal narrative strategy of the novel is to drop an unexplained fact on the reader, veer away into other matters, then circle back with more information about the initial fact, then veer away again, circle back again, and so on.³ Sometimes the new information comes relatively soon. For example, after the novel's opening words drop one such unexplained fact ("124 was spiteful"), two sentences later we are told that "the women in the house knew it . . ." (3)—which makes us suspect that 124 is the address of a house. We then get a digression, a circling, in the narration of Howard and Bugler's departure, which drops new unexplained facts to be amplified upon in subsequent pages. Fifteen lines pass before we

learn that "it didn't have a number then, because Cincinnati didn't stretch that far" (3)—which lets us conclude that 124 is indeed a house. Sometimes the mystery is not fully explained until many pages later; for example, the three tiny lines on Beloved's forehead are first mentioned on page 51, and although they are referred to several more times, their origin is not disclosed until pages 202-03. The length of the turning may vary, but the same circling or spiraling strategy recurs over and over. It is especially noticeable when the opening words of a chapter introduce a new mysterious detail, often from a point of view that is at first unidentified (examples include "It was time to lay it all down" [86]; "She moved him" [114]; and "That ain't her mouth" [154]).

Like many elements of Morrison's fiction, this narrative strategy has affinities with African folklore and specifically with the traditional structure of oral narratives. Morrison's incorporation of African and Afro-American folklore has been well-documented: for example, the myths of flying and the tar baby; such elements as magic, dreams, omens, and superstitions; and her emphasis on naming and places.⁴ Moreover, in interviews Morrison has articulated the need to bring elements of folktales into written forms like the novel.⁵

Circularity is part of that oral tradition. Stories are usually told to an audience formed in a circle around the storyteller, or the role of storyteller alternates from person to person around a "story circle" (Finnegan 374). More significantly, the circling, spiraling, and digressive narrative pattern of *Beloved* has parallels in African folk narratives, which tend to be built on repetition—of words, phrases, and motifs, but also of stock situations and stock episodes. Commonly, such building blocks are not merely repeated but used in overlapping or interlocking patterns to generate a story. For example, Jones and Carter

identify the four essential features of Tonga narratives as staging, overlapping, repetition, and synonymous expressions. Lee Haring extracts a generic pattern in which stories are composed of traditional sequences of plot elements, such as false friendship, a contract, violation of the contract, deception, and escape. Such elements do not work in isolation but often in pairs or in sequences in which one element (such as false friendship) anticipates another (such as deception). These tales, like *Beloved*, rely upon the gradual accretion of meaning that evolves from the overlapping repetition and variation of such elements.

The typical form of the Xhosa *ntsomi*, or fanciful tale, as described by Harold Scheub, parallels *Beloved* even more closely. Scheub finds that storytellers rely upon a vast stock of "core-clichés"—stock images, characters, and episodes that can be varied to suit a particular story, audience, or occasion. Most stories are built upon one or more "core-images" drawn from the storyteller's repertoire and expanded to form the core of a particular story. The plot is developed through repetition and variation of one or more core-images in overlapping waves, much like the refrain of a song. That *Beloved* is developed through such core-images is evident in the beginning lines of its three main sections: "124 was spiteful" (3), "124 was loud" (169), "124 was quiet" (239). The narrative is developed through the overlapping and accumulating descriptions of such images as Amy's velvet, the tree on Sethe's back, the mating turtles, and Paul D's tobacco tin. And it is developed through the iteration and reiteration of such episodes as the milking of Sethe and Sethe's murder of Beloved, and through the spiraling reiteration of larger, mythical acts such as birth, death, rebirth, quest-journeys, and the formation and disintegration of families.

Sethe and Paul D remember and relate their pasts in the same manner. One word, detail, or image drops into their consciousnesses and reminds them of some part of their buried pasts. Cautiously, they relive the memory, rethinking and sometimes retelling it bit by bit, then dropping it, only to circle back to it later, with or without purpose. The novel must be told this way, we must wait to hear the full story, because this is the only way they can remember their pasts and, therefore, the only way their stories can be told. For example, Sethe initially tells Paul D that her daughter died but does not tell him (or us) how (10). Then, when she first tells him about schoolteacher's arrival at 124 Bluestone (42), she mentions going to jail but not why, a topic to which she will return in the kitchen scene. Until Paul D sees the newspaper clipping with Sethe's photograph on it, not only is Sethe not ready to tell him the whole story, but he is not ready to hear it: "Paul D turned away. He wanted to know more about it, but jail talk put him back in Alfred, Georgia" (42). Since neither the telling nor the listening character can tolerate the whole truth all at once, the reader must wait. Because the characters have to be careful, have to remember their lives in fragments, the narration must be told in fragments. Form follows content, thereby forcing the reader to experience the same difficulty as the characters.⁶

This pattern also creates another two-edged sword, another paradox. Paul D and Sethe must retell, and thereby acknowledge, the past to free themselves from its paralyzing power, symbolized by *Beloved*. However, by telling or hearing that past, they risk losing their precarious sanity as well as their hopes for a new life together. The pattern cuts at least two ways for readers as well. The narrative fragmentation denies readers the expected level of immediate comprehension and forces them to wait for

explanations, to remember previously narrated fragments, and to piece together the narrative's chronology. And yet, partly because of the necessity for readers' active participation, the cumulative effect of the intensive exploration of the characters' memories is profound. In addition, as D. Keith Mano points out, the "allusive, oblique" narrative form enables Morrison to avoid the excessive melodrama that a more straightforward form would have produced (55).

Sethe and Paul D, but especially Sethe, are prisoners of their pasts. For Sethe, who doesn't "'go . . . inside'" (46) herself, "the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay" (42). For her, once a thing happens it always exists, independently of one's having experienced it or one's *choosing* to remember it:

"Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. . . . if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again . . . even though it's all over—over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you."

This is the reason that Beloved, the symbol of her past, has such power over Sethe: If "' . . . nothing ever dies,'" (36), if the past can never cease to exist, the memory always lives, as well as the fear of the reality of that past. Curiously, Sethe's word for this phenomenon is *rememory*, a combination of *memory* and *remember*—which in itself doubles the process. For her, memory is both an actual repetition of real events and a repetition of a memory, a re-memory, a circling back in one's mind to what was previously there both in reality and in its recall.

Even though Beloved is barely part of Paul D's memory, she alone is able to unlock his tobacco tin of repressed memories: ". . . he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made . . . as they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin" (117). Only when Paul D relinquishes himself to

the power of memory, giving himself physically to Beloved, can he release those memories, accept himself for what he is and what he has done—and therefore Sethe for what she is and what she has done—, and thereby become whole.

What Sethe and Paul D eventually find in each other is the trust to remember, and it is only through telling and retelling, circling through their horrible and, for them, shameful past, that healing comes: "Her story was bearable because it was his as well—to tell, to refine and tell again" (99). Eventually they do exorcise Beloved, the past that at first they could neither ignore nor embrace, because finally they do forget "her like a bad dream. . . . Remembering seemed unwise" (274)—and, at last, unnecessary.

They come in fact to the perspective of Ella, the staunch upholder of community values. Although aware of the dangers of memory, she

didn't like the idea of past errors taking possession of the present. . . . The future was sunset; the past something to leave behind. And if it didn't stay behind, well, you might have to stomp it out. Slave life; freed life—every day was a test and a trial. Nothing could be counted on in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem. (256)

Sethe's trial is particularly hard: Her past does not stay behind, she is unable or unwilling to stomp it out, and Paul D's attempt to stomp it out proves ineffective. Perhaps her trial is especially hard because, as Paul D accuses, her love is "'too thick'" (164), her love for her family requires her to hold on too fiercely to her memories. And yet that same fierce family love is her strength, her life.

Just as Sethe and Paul D must warily circle their painful memories, the novel must circle its subject. Just as Sethe's ". . . brain was devious" (6), so the narration must deviate, must, as the word's derivation implies, move away from the road. In its circularity, its deviousness, it uses multiple

points of view—sometimes the narrator's own, but more often the wandering thoughts and recollections of the four major characters as well as many minor ones. Part of the obliqueness is the overlapping of these points of view. Just as the voices of Sethe, Denver, and Beloved intertwine, so the collective memories of the characters are not distinct. For example, the most detailed description of Denver's fabled birth is told *not* by the characters who could actually remember it, Amy Denver and Sethe, but by Denver and Beloved: "Denver spoke, Beloved listened, and the two did the best they could to create what really happened, how it really was, something only Sethe knew because she alone had the mind for it and the time afterward to shape it: the quality of Amy's voice, her breath like burning wood" (78). Denver and Beloved can recreate the story because, as Sethe would say, the events are still really there, but also because the minds and the memories of the characters interpenetrate, because the novel is a collective memory. Moreover, their recreation of the story replicates the recreation that is the novel itself,

Morrison's imagining, her doing the best she can to create what really happened, what historical documents—such as the slave narratives—say and don't say. And just as Beloved, the listener, shares in the creation of Denver's story, so the reader is, or must become, the co-creator of Morrison's novel.

The novel ends with yet another paradox. The characters finally exorcise their frightening pasts and thus survive; since "remembering seemed unwise" (274), eventually "... all trace [of Beloved] is gone ..." (275). The narrator, repeating that "it was not a story to pass on," seems to agree. But by telling the story, the narrator contradicts herself: She *does* pass the story on. She and of course Morrison force readers to relive the country's past horrors and make them participants in the recreation of those horrors. Would it have been better not to pass it on?⁷ It had to be passed on. Just as Sethe and Paul D could not pass on their memories but had to, just as Denver could not enter the world but had to, just as Sethe could not harm her children but had to, so the story could not be passed on, but had to be.

Notes

¹See, for example, Hovet and Lounsbury's analysis of the Bottom's role in *Sula* ("Principles").

²Others have noted the two-edged nature of maternal love as a paradoxical force within the novel's families (see Thurman 176; Huron; and Baker-Fletcher 833).

³Or, as Rosellen Brown puts it, "What Morrison manages is a continual heaving up of images and specific memories like stones, only to have them disappear and resurface again and yet again, each time more deeply embedded in the jagged landscape of relationships" (418-19).

⁴See, for example, Blake; Clark; Hovet and Lounsbury, "Flying"; and Lewis.

⁵See the interviews with Bakerman, LeClair, McKay, and Watkins, as well as Morrison's interview/essay "Rootedness."

⁶In one interview, Morrison expresses her desire for the active participation of her readers: "My writing expects, demands participatory reading, and that I think is what literature is supposed to do. It's not just about telling the story; it's about involving the reader. The reader supplies the emotions. The reader supplies even some of the color, some of the sound. My language has to have holes and spaces so the reader can come into it. He or she can feel something visceral, see something striking. Then we [you, the reader, and I, the author] come together to make this book, to feel this experience" (Tate 125).

⁷Karen Baker-Fletcher asks this question and adds, "Whether or not *Beloved* should have been written is an ethical question in itself" (832).

Works Cited

- Baker-Fletcher, Karen. "Fierce Love Comes to Haunt." Rev. of *Beloved*. *Commonweal* 6 Nov. 1987: 631-33.
- Bakerman, Jane. "The Seams Can't Show: An Interview with Toni Morrison." *Black American Literature Forum* 12 (1978): 56-60.
- Blake, Susan. "Folklore and Community in *Song of Solomon*." *MELUS* 7.3 (1980): 77-82.

- Brown, Rosellen. "The Pleasure of Enchantment." Rev. of *Beloved*. *Nation* 17 Oct. 1987: 418-21.
- Clark, Norris. "Flying Black: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Song of Solomon*." *Minority Voices* 4.2 (1980): 51-63.
- Dorson, Richard M., ed. *African Folklore*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1972.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1970.
- Haring, Lee. "A Characteristic African Folktale Pattern." Dorson 165-79.
- Hovet, Grace Ann, and Barbara Lounsberry. "Flying as Symbol and Legend in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Song of Solomon*." *CLA Journal* 27 (1983): 119-40.
- . "Principles of Perception in Toni Morrison's *Sula*." *Black American Literature Forum* 13 (1979): 126-29.
- Huron, Liz. "It Won't Let Go." Rev. of *Beloved*. *Listener* 29 Oct. 1987: 28.
- Jones, A. M., and H. Carter. "The Styles of a Tonga Historical Narrative." *African Language Studies* 8 (1967): 113-120.
- LeClair, Thomas. "The Language Must Not Sweat: A Conversation with Toni Morrison." *New Republic* 21 Mar. 1981: 25-29.
- Lewis, Vashti Crutcher. "African Tradition in Toni Morrison's *Sula*." *Phylon* 48 (1987): 91-97.
- Mano, D. Keith. "Poignant Instant, Stubborn Evil." Rev. of *Beloved*. *National Review* 4 Dec. 1987: 54-55.
- McKay, Nellie. "An Interview with Toni Morrison." *Contemporary Literature* 24 (1983): 413-29.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Knopf, 1987.
- . *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Holt, 1970.
- . "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation." *Black Women Writers (1950-1980): A Critical Evaluation*. Ed. Mari Evans. Garden City: Anchor, 1984. 339-45.
- . *Sula*. New York: Knopf, 1973.
- Scheub, Harold. "The Art of Nongenile Mazithathu Zenani, A Gcaleka Ntsomi Performer." Dorson 165-79.
- . "The Technique of the Expansive Image in Xhosa Ntsomi-Performances." *Forms of Folklore in Africa*. Ed. Bernth Lindfors. Austin: Texas UP, 1977. 37-63.
- Smith, Amanda. "Toni Morrison." *Publishers Weekly* 21 Aug. 1987: 50-51.
- Tate, Claudia. "Toni Morrison." *Black Women Writers at Work*. New York: Continuum, 1983. 118-31.
- Thurman, Judith. "A House Divided." Rev. of *Beloved*. *New Yorker* 2 Nov. 1987: 175-80.
- Watkins, Mel. "Talk with Toni Morrison." *New York Times Magazine* 11 Sept. 1977: 48+.