Democratic Narrative:

Founding the Self and State in Magical Realist Novels

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Draft
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I. Introduction

At its core, liberal democracy is about negotiating the relationship between the individual and the collective. But how should we read the two words "liberal" and "democracy" together? On their face, they are, if not contradictory, then competitive: liberalism is a check against democratic power. On another reading, the two are integrated into a distinct concept rather than trading off against each other: liberalism furthers the goals of democracy conceived in a particular way, and vice versa.

This ambiguity is related to a well-known dilemma within liberal theory: a stable liberal state would seem to require liberal citizens, but acting to secure such citizens defeats one of the main purposes of having a liberal state. Indeed, one might usefully group the various brands of liberal democratic theory by which horn of the dilemma they tend to choose (or deny).

Magical realist literature may not be the first place one would think to look for engagement with the problems of liberal democratic theory. However, the genre is rich with sophisticated accounts of the relationship between self and state, particularly surrounding the uniquely important periods of political founding and refounding. Magical realism has grown from an isolated experimental technique into a genre that has produced several of the most important novels of the post-WWII era. In particular, I examine Gunter Grass's The Tin Drum, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude, Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children, and Toni Morrison's Beloved.[1] A

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[1] This version of the paper only contains the discussion of Morrison's Beloved. ***I have appended a character list and plot summary to the end of this paper for those who have not read the book, or would like to refresh their memory of it.***

remarkable number of magical realist novels are set against the founding or refounding of the nation-state in which they take place. I chose these four books because they span four continents (and thus depict a wide variety of contexts for exploring the problem) and because their intrinsic literary quality has won their authors enormous critical acclaim, including three Nobel prizes.

The contradiction inherent in the term "magical realism" parallels the tension inherent in "liberal democracy": these competing ideas combine to form what would seem to be an oxymoron, or at least a zero-sum mixture. However, just as liberal democracy aspires to emerge as a new and distinct form, magical realist fiction reflects not so much the competition between magical and realist elements, but rather their synthesis into a powerful new form.

Indeed, one of the intriguing and distinguishing characteristics of magical realism, as opposed to fantasy, is that the fantastic elements are integrated seamlessly into what is otherwise recognizable as our world in all of its painful detail. Moreover, the characters do not find the fantastic elements strange, and the narration presents them to us matter-of-factly. Nobody thinks to question it when a dead child continues to grow normally over time (Beloved), or when a living child wills himself to stop growing despite the passage of time (The Tin Drum). Only the reader experiences the synthesis of the mundane and the bizarre as jarring, and importantly, it seems decreasingly so as one is drawn into the narrative.

In fact, this "normalizing" of the fantastic explains why magical realism has such an elective affinity for exploring the relationship between the individual and the collective, especially in the aftermath of political trauma. It is obvious that individual

identity and collective identity are mutually constitutive. There is no collective identity without the individuals who make up the collective. However, a necessary part of becoming an individual involves being socialized into various communities, most prominently, in modern times, a political or national community.

As a result, when some traumatic historical event demands a major change in collective identity, the creative tension between individual and collective identity gets thrown into sharp relief. However, we find ourselves in a bind. In the context of political trauma, incrementalism is irresponsible: in the aftermath of the Holocaust, one does not tinker at the margins of German nationalist identity. On the other hand, one cannot create identity *ex nihilo*, so we must try to repair our ship while still sailing on the sea.

The same holds for literary modes of aiding in this process of repair. Retreat into fantasy would be irresponsible, but merely representing the trauma does not help us to move past it nor the narratives of identity that are no longer viable. Magical realism helps to overcome this bind by beginning from what is unmistakably our world, our history, and our identities, but goes further to seamlessly incorporate what, from the outside, looks like bizarre irruptions of creativity. The realist moment roots us in the only authentic place to begin, and thus expresses a kind of fidelity to a painful past, even as the magical elements seek to re-appropriate that past. Doing so creates openings for radical novelty, but the peculiar form of magical realist narrative gradually draws us in and normalizes the changes, so that in the end we have a genuine synthesis that can help us move forward, rather than an arbitrary and unstable mixture of the real and the imagined.

What is more, magical realism, like liberal theory, pursues this theme of reconstituting identity as a dialectic between the individual and the nation-state. The birth and growth pains of the emerging liberal regimes are mirrored in, and interact with, the birth and growth pains of the characters. This connection is at its most literal in Midnight's Children, where the midnight in question is the moment at which the state of India sprang into existence, and the children are those babies born in the same hour of their nation's birth. Their preternatural powers are the tools through which India will try to subsume and surpass the contradictions of identity inherited from a painful colonial past. Similarly, in The Tin Drum, Oscar's birth coincides with a transition, but this time it is the imminent collapse of one liberal regime (Weimar), while his "current" life is set against the refounding of another liberal regime (the Federal Republic). In between, his childhood is interrupted by National Socialism, and his refusal to grow physically incarnates his refusal to accept an identity predicated on Nazi horrors. Finally, the dead baby Beloved's rebirth coincides with the refounding that Lincoln spoke of at the end of the Civil War. In Beloved, nearly all of the characters in the book are struggling toward a new sense of identity after an unrelenting litany of personal traumas, all of which directly flow from the great national traumas of slavery and war.

Contrary to the anti-liberal reading most critics give to these novels, they are best read as exemplars of the seductive elements in Richard Rorty's "post-modern bourgeois liberalism", in particular its reliance on what he calls the "strong poet" – someone who uses art to change our narratives, and thus reshape identity and the terms of discourse. The only irony is that these strong poets use their art to subvert the specifically bourgeois element in Rorty's formulation, broadening it in the context of traumas that a bourgeois

conception cannot adequately comprehend. Indeed, this fusion of magical novelty and unflinching realism is necessary for successfully reconstructing the relationship between individual and collective identity in the aftermath of trauma, and hence for the viability of any liberal narrative that emerges out of it.

II. Passing On Stories: Beloved & the Path to a New American Identity

On the surface, the connection to political re-founding looks unimportant in Beloved – a setting rather than a core thematic element. However, much of the key symbolism in the book echoes the re-founding and the role it plays in the emergence of new experiences of selfhood in relation to community. Indeed, the opening epigraph from the Book of Romans announces this theme:

> *I will call them my people,*
> *which were not my people;*
> *and her beloved,*
> *which was not beloved. (9:25)*

Gasping through its (re)birth pains, America is struggling to speak this verse and mean it. The country's efforts to live up to its more authentic identity is bound up with being able to re-incorporate those it has excluded, without homogenizing them: "I will *call* them my people" not *make* them my people. There is a recognition that the onus is on the nation and not those to be incorporated; collective identity must adapt to them, not primarily vice versa. Nonetheless, the ex-slaves undergo a profound transformation of identity simply by virtue of having received recognition of their political freedom.

Morrison sets up this transformation of selfhood by showing us that living under slavery (or just its legacy) interferes with forming even the most rudimentary sense of identity. When Paul D reflects on his life under Schoolteacher he remarks bitterly:

> "Mister [the rooster] was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you'd still be cooking a rooster named Mister…I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub." p. 72

Schoolteacher has lowered him beneath the bestial. Later, after he is caught trying to escape, his degradation reaches its logical conclusion when he hears the slave catchers assessing his market value. Paul D is more empty than defiant when "He discovers…the dollar value of his weight, his strength, his heart, his brains, his penis, and his future." (p. 227) Commodification renders any sense of self implausible by blocking recognition as a subject, the social precondition of identity formation. If one's essence consists in being a quantifiable object, then subjectivity, paradoxically even to oneself, becomes illusory.

Even in slavery's more benevolent guise, under the Garners' ownership for example, the slaves not only lacked selves, they lacked the ability to imagine true selfhood. After her son Halle has bought Baby Suggs's freedom, she remains skeptical that her life will change fundamentally, but it does:

> "Sweet Home was a marked improvement. No question. And no matter, for the sadness was at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home… What does a sixty-odd-year-old slavewoman who walks like a three-legged dog need freedom for? [But] when she stepped foot on free ground she…knew that there was nothing like it in this world…Suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, 'These hands belong to me. These my hands.'" p. 140

Having experienced no fundamental changes in her life even as the conditions of her slavery improve, Baby Suggs cannot even envision the qualitative, revolutionary change that freedom, and hence selfhood, will bring. That sense of self is spatially dependant in

both a literal and a metaphorical way. All she need do is step onto land where the political jurisdiction recognizes her freedom to feel a transformation. Yet “free ground” is also a metaphor for the space that liberal citizenship creates around the individual so that she can create an identity distinct from the collective. Whites may take liberal self-ownership for granted, but for a freed slave it feels like a second birth.

Unfortunately we also get to see the consequences when that protected space around the self is violated by the state. The free blacks do not fully appreciate the threat to selfhood posed by the Fugitive Slave Act until Schoolteacher comes to retrieve Sethe. After the ensuing bloodbath, Baby Suggs’s newly forged sense of self, predicated as it is on her liberal freedoms, is crushed. Eventually she retires to her bed and gives up on life. Her friend Stamp Paid challenges her:

> “You saying the whitefolks won? That what you saying?”
> “I’m saying they came in my yard.”
> “You saying nothing counts.”
> “I’m saying they came in my yard.”
> …
> “You saying God give up? Nothing left for us but pour out our own blood?”
> “I’m saying they came in my yard.” (p. 179)

Reaching up from Kentucky to Ohio, from southern territory to free, slavery is able to violate the protected space around Baby Suggs as an individual, damaging her sense of self. Now that she knows what it is like to live with one, she cannot go on.

The other characters in Beloved experience similar damage to individual identity. Even minor, unseen characters face this pain. In the opening paragraph we learn that Sethe’s two sons leave their mother’s haunted house “as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it.” (p. 3) The fracture of the mirror symbolizes, on the individual level, the boys’ inability to form an identity under such conditions, just as it symbolizes, on the

national level, the nation's fractured sense of collective identity. The boys want to look themselves in the face, but lack the means; America as a house divided cannot look itself in the mirror. As other characters manifest their damaged or missing identities in various ways, the two-way link between individual and collective identity emerges even more clearly.

In perhaps the clearest case of this linkage, Sethe even becomes reflexively aware of how her struggle to form an individual identity depends upon being situated within a community. In her first twenty-eight days as a free woman, Sethe discovers that the key to forming a self on free terms involves "knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their views, their habits…Bit by bit, at 124 and in the Clearing, along with the others, she had claimed herself. Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another." (p. 95) By sharing with others struggling to construct their own identities, Sethe develops an authentic sense of self; she skips past the falsely free, adolescent identity that defines itself in opposition to others, to a mature identity that defines itself in relation to others. In classical liberal theory, the self is merely protected from the collective. In most modern versions, the goal is to set up a creative tension. Morrison vividly depicts the latter through this community in which the search for individuality is the very basis and mode of commonality.

In a powerful scene that parallels Sethe's experience of how community completes her journey toward freedom, Paul D recounts his escape from a horrifying labor camp in Georgia. A torrential rain triggers a mudslide which drags the white overseers to their deaths. The black workers are in danger too, but they are formed into a chain-gang, which allows them to combine their strength and weight if they can

coordinate: "Some lost direction, and their neighbors, feeling the confused pull of the chain, snatched them around. For one lost, all lost. The chain that held them would save all or none." (p. 111) In a brilliant irony, "the chain that held them", the instrument of their enslavement, will become the instrument of their salvation, but only if they can re-appropriate it in a resolutely collective endeavor. The dramatic action echoes the goals of the magical realist form driving the book: Morrison is re-appropriating and re-imagining the collective legacy of slavery and civil war to alter our guiding narratives in such a way as to push past that legacy. That which united us in suffering will be used to overcome that suffering.

As a character, Beloved plays that same dual role within the book. Her death caused everyone crushing grief, but confronting her brief reincarnation equips the main characters with the means to push past the consequences of that suffering. When Beloved returns, Denver and Sethe feel desperately attached to her. For example, when Denver thinks that Beloved has left her alone again: "She [cries] because she has no self. Death is a skipped meal compared to this. She can feel her thickness thinning, dissolving into nothing." (p. 123) Her mother's desperate love-crime condemned Denver to a childhood completely cut off from any sense of community. With her sister's return, Denver perceives hope for both a meaningful familial identity and for reintegrating into the community of free blacks. Her selfhood, or rather her slowly coalescing selfhood, is dependent on her sister as a magical incarnation of a redemptive collective identity. Ultimately, Beloved is crucial for redemption, though not in the way that Denver anticipates. At this point, however, both for the reader and for Denver, Beloved

embodies the general hope that the traumatic legacy of slavery can be healed, and in particular that her mother's violence can be redeemed.

Ironically, without her sister, Denver could not have solidified the sense of self that ultimately allows her to become independent of her sister and to save her mother. In good magical realist fashion, Beloved's main purpose is to make herself superfluous by helping Denver overcome the wreckage that litters her path from adolescence to a mature identity rooted in community. Just before her sister disappears, Denver muses: "It was a new thought, having a self to look out for and preserve. And it might not have occurred to her if she hadn't met Nelson Lord leaving his grandmother's house…All he did was smile and say, 'Take care of yourself, Denver,' but she heard it as though it were what language was made for." (p. 252) By this time, Denver's internal maturation was complete, but she still needed social validation, the recognition of others, to fully recognize herself. After claiming her identity, Denver rises to the challenge as her mother begins to fade away, to fracture and disintegrate. Their roles reverse as Denver becomes the protector and provider. In the end, rather than Sethe disintegrating, it is Beloved who disappears, as she "erupts into her separate parts." But not before she has helped Denver unite *her* separate parts into a self. Beloved, the character, serves as a fantastic bridge beyond trauma-induced malaise within the story, just as <u>Beloved</u>, the novel, serves that same function for us within the community of readers.

In a way, Morrison's book is an answer to Schoolteacher's book. In his book, Schoolteacher kept notes, descriptions and measurements of the slaves. He used these to educate his white pupils in what he might have called "slave husbandry." Sethe overhears one of his lessons in which he has the students do drawings of the slaves

juxtaposed with drawings of animals, and then has them list the slaves' animal characteristics. Sethe notes ominously: "It was a book about us but we didn't know that right away." (p. 37) In parallel fashion, Morrison's book is about us, and we don't know that right away. She is attempting to re-educate us indirectly by re-appropriating our narrative and language.

Indeed, Morrison thematizes the power of language within the story itself. When confronted with a misdeed, Sixo mounts a clever defense of himself, but "schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers – not the defined." (p. 190) Writing Beloved is Morrison's way to become a benevolent definer, a strong poet, who in a liberal democratic mode defines us as free self-defining selves. The magical realist genre is particularly effective in this context. Not being constrained by strict realism, the genre gives language even greater scope for redefinition than it otherwise would.

We can analyze how Morrison uses this connection between language, definition and identity by examining a key linguistic marker for identity – i.e., names. Nearly all of the characters' names, as well as how they got those names (i.e., who defined them), carry some symbolic significance. Consider the name of the protagonist, Sethe. It is the feminine form of Seth, and given the book's steeping in biblical imagery, we are reminded of Adam and Eve's third son – progeny of the founding couple and he who carried forth in the aftermath of fratricide. The book, of course, is set against a double fratricide issuing from the jealousies and contradictions built into the original founding: the pain and death that whites inflicted on blacks, but also the fratricide, both symbolic and sometimes literal, between the warring armies of the North and the South.

The names that Sethe gives her children are also significant. Beloved gets her name from "the only two words [Sethe] remembers" from her baby's funeral. However, by eschewing a proper noun for a name, Morrison allows her to represent all of those "Sixty Million and More" dearly beloved to whom she dedicates the book. They are all Sethe's children. However, they are the children who do not live, who come back and offer hope, but only end up tormenting and fracturing her. Denver is Sethe's true heir. However, she is named after the white woman who helped deliver her during Sethe's escape from Sweet Home, Miss Amy Denver of Boston. Denver, the character representing the book's hope for the future, is born in an act of cooperation between the races. It is one of the few instances in the book of a white character doing an unequivocally good deed, but it is an important and subtly optimistic detail.

In Beloved, even the names of places are significant, such as the bitterly ironic name of the plantation on which the characters worked. Paul D quips, Sweet Home "wasn't sweet, and it sure wasn't home." (p.14) He and the other two "Pauls" are named by their masters, and so do not even rate fully distinct identities. Both Baby Suggs and Stamp Paid are also named by their masters, but later rename themselves in an act of asserting their free identities. Stamp Paid chooses his name after allowing his "wife" to be raped by his master's son. He feels that he has "paid" for his freedom in suffering, and certifies (stamps) himself with that freedom by claiming an independent identity, symbolized through self-naming. Similarly, when Baby Suggs gains her freedom, Mrs. Garner advises her to stick with the name that her original master had given her (Jenny Whitlow), rather than using her lost "husband's" name. She rejects the advice angrily, wondering how Mrs. Garner thought her husband would find her if she used some "bill-

of-sale name" rather than the name of the man she chose for herself. In each case, rejecting the name (definition) imposed on them by their masters functions as an important step toward reconstructing a meaningful identity for themselves, beyond the formal, political recognition they have won.

These examples of self-definition are important because these two characters stand as the implicit leaders of the free black community, and they urge upon the others similar acts of self-creation. Throughout her Sunday preaching, "[Baby Suggs] did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine." (p. 89) Baby Suggs's message is internal to the novel, but it is also Morrison's message to us, and the book is her offering of grace. The message exemplifies magical realism as a tool of the strong poet in that it does not advocate a retreat into fantasy, but urges self-conscious, imaginative re-appropriation of our painful reality as the only path to grace. If grace comes from us, one should utter "no gasp at a miracle that is truly miraculous because the magic lies in the fact that you knew it was there for you all along." (p. 176) Since part of our reality is that we are imaginative beings who live through the stories that we tell ourselves, we should not be surprised that we can create a new and better reality by incorporating the magical into the real.

In writing the book, Morrison has followed her own advice, the advice she speaks through Baby Suggs's sermon: she has taken a painful, shared reality and transformed it with magical elements in the hope of helping us to reshape our relations with the past and with each other. It is no accident that she chose a real event for the core of her literary reinterpretation of slavery, war, and our continuing efforts to find ourselves in a

refounded American identity. Doing so adds a certain reflexivity to her use of magical realist form as a bridge to a more adequate sense of collective identity. Margaret Garner's choice to murder her child rather than see it returned to slavery is both powerfully symbolic and gruesomely, inescapably real.

Given that the book recounts and recasts a true story, it seems odd that in the closing chapter, the narrator cryptically tells us that "It was not a story to pass on." After another step toward the conclusion, the sentence is repeated. Then finally, the wording is changed slightly: "This is not a story to pass on." The first two instances feel more internal to the narrative, echoing earlier suggestions that as the characters go on they will work to forget the haunting events, not passing them on to children and newcomers. In the final repetition, though, Morrison is addressing us. She seems to be urging us not to pass the story on to our children, or newcomers to America. Yet millions of copies of this book have been sold. Passing on the story is precisely what the novel is doing, and what Morrison must have intended. Notice, though, that there is an ambiguity in the phrase "to pass on." It can mean "to disseminate" but also "to forgo an opportunity." It would seem that both meanings cannot be in play because they are contradictory. Yet, just as with magical realism, the two meanings combine to yield a coherent, deeper message.

Morrison, the strong poet, does not retreat from, does not pass on the painful challenge that a story like Margaret Garner's poses. Forgetting constitutes a betrayal, an infidelity to the victims and our past. But we, the living, do them no honor if that past condemns us to paralyzing pain. Morrison urges us not to cling to our old narrative and the fractured identities that attend it. This is not a story to pass on to our children or to

newcomers to America, but not because we want to forget. Rather, we do not pass on the old narrative, because our passage through Beloved has yielded something more progressive and encompassing to pass on. The book itself is not the crucial thing, but rather what we can hope and imagine after having struggled through it. Morrison, the strong poet, uses the transformative potential of magical realism to empower us with the resources to create a new narrative, one that can help us reintegrate our trauma-damaged identities, while yet remaining faithful to the victims of a painful past. She has conjured the grace to heal us. All we need do is summon the imagination and the will to make that grace our own.

Characters and Plot Summary of Toni Morrison's <u>Beloved</u>

Sethe: Protagonist of the book. An ex-slave.

Denver: Sethe's fourth child. Named after the white woman that helped deliver her when Sethe was on the run, and in extremis.

Beloved: Beloved's identity is mysterious. The novel strongly suggests that she is Sethe's murdered daughter, come back to life.

Paul D: Was a slave with Sethe at Sweet Home during the novel's main "flashback" period. Sethe's lover in the "present" of the novel.

Halle: Another slave at Sweet Home. Sethe's "husband" and father of her children. Goes insane and presumably dies after Sethe is raped.

Baby Suggs: Halle's mother, and Sethe's live-in mother in law. A "preacher" of sorts, and informal female leader of the free black community in Cinncinati.

Stamp Paid: The informal male leader of the free black community.

Mr. and Mrs. Garner: Relatively benevolent owners of Sweet Home.

Schoolteacher: Mrs. Garner's brother, and sadistic overseer of slaves after Mr. Garner dies.

Sixo, Paul A, and Paul F: The other slaves at Sweet Home.

Plot Summary

The novel is narrated in a series of flashbacks and flashforwards. Chronologically, the book proceeds as follows: In 1848, Baby Suggs left Sweet Home plantation in Kentucky and was driven to Cincinnati, Ohio, after her son, Halle, purchased her freedom from Mr. Garner, the plantation owner. Sethe arrived at Sweet Home as Baby Suggs' replacement. A year after her arrival, she married Halle and bore him 3 children, two sons and a daughter, over the next few years at Sweet Home.

Mr. Garner died and his wife became ill; she asked "Schoolteacher" to run Sweet Home. Schoolteacher treated the slaves like animals and abused them, and they all planned to run away. Sethe sent her children to Ohio and stayed to wait for Halle, because he wasn't where they agreed to meet when they planned to run. While waiting for Halle, schoolteacher's nephews raped Sethe, who was six months pregnant with her fourth child, and nursed the milk from her breasts. Sethe was beaten the next day, and that night she ran away alone.

As she tried to walk to Ohio, a whitegirl finds Sethe and helps her to the Ohio River where Sethe has her baby, Denver. The next day, Sethe and Denver make it to Baby Suggs at 124 Bluestone Rd. and are reunited with Sethe's other children. Twenty-eight days after her arrival at 124, schoolteacher shows up to take them back to Sweet Home. Sethe, fearing her children are to be sold into slavery, snaps, killing her first daughter with a saw and injuring her sons before anyone can stop her. (This core dramatic moment is based on the true story of the slave Margret Garner.) Sethe goes to jail and takes Denver with her. When she gets out of jail, she prostitutes herself for a headstone for the baby's grave that reads only, "Beloved." The baby's ghost makes itself a constant presence at 124, and Sethe's sons run away, while Baby Suggs lays in bed waiting to die. No one in the community will have anything more to do with 124 or the people in it, so when Baby Suggs dies in 1865, Sethe and Denver are alone until Paul D shows up in 1873.

Paul D scares away the ghost of 124 and he, Sethe, and Denver begin a new life together, until Beloved shows up at 124. No one has any idea who she is or from where she came. Sethe and Denver take her in. Beloved becomes instantly attached to Sethe. Denver becomes intensely devoted to Beloved because she thinks she is her baby sister's ghost come to life to keep her company. Beloved breaks Paul D down, seducing him against his will. He leaves after Stamp Paid tells him the story of Sethe murdering her daughter. When Paul D leaves, Sethe begins to believe that Beloved is her reincarnated daughter because of connections between Beloved and the baby ghost.

Beloved and Sethe become interested only in one another. Later, they become angry and violent with each other because Beloved thinks Sethe abandoned her; she begins to dominate Sethe with her anger. Sethe starts to waste away as Beloved's pregnant stomach grows, and Denver is forced to seek help for her mother outside of 124. Denver gets a job with the Bodwins, the whitefolks who rented 124 to Baby Suggs. As Denver waits on the porch for Mr. Bodwin to pick her up, a group of coloredwomen come to 124 to rescue Sethe from Beloved, the ghost haunting 124. Beloved and Sethe step onto the porch to see what's going on, and when Sethe sees Mr. Bodwin, she tries to kill him, hallucinating that schoolteacher has returned. Beloved disappears suddenly and mysteriously. With Beloved gone, Sethe gives up on life because she has lost her child, “the best part of herself,” again. Paul D comes back to 124 to help Denver take care of Sethe. Time passes and Beloved is forgotten.