

The Inner Child Motif in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

by

Barbara A. Olive

The character of Beloved at the heart of Toni Morrison's novel of the same name implies the psychological dimension of Morrison's novel. Morrison's definition of the quality and location of the psychological dimension in this story about the unspeakable effects on human life of slavery and oppression remains ambiguous throughout the novel, for Beloved is both person and ghost, real child but unnamed. Morrison teases the reader with a possible literal explanation of Beloved's existence—that Beloved didn't actually die but was taken up and kept captive by a white man, upon whose death Beloved sets off to find the mother who attempted to kill her. However, Beloved is also the baby whose life literally runs out in Sethe's arms and for whose murder Sethe is imprisoned.

The novel, moreover, though given the name that Sethe puts on her daughter's tombstone, is not about Beloved but about Sethe. And although about Sethe, the story is also about Baby Suggs and Sethe's mother and Halle and Sixo and Stamp Paid and the Pauls—Sethe's story is told among their stories and the implied stories of many others, whose meanings give Sethe's life coherence and significant admidst the seemingly unstable "unmemory" of her own life. These histories of many others help fill in for the reader the origin of the empty wells that are Sethe's eyes.

If Sethe's story is made comprehensible by the conjoining of many stories, it is Beloved who makes possible the way into Sethe's story. She evokes the motivation to reveal and express the story that "was not a story to pass on" (274). The psychic space that Morrison is identifying in the novel, then, is not unique to Sethe—Sethe's story is the story of an oppressed people,—yet it is Sethe, through Beloved, who manifests this space.

Beloved, finally, is more answer than enigma, for her presence is key to defining the psychological space in Sethe that Morrison captures in the novel. Beloved is real but, before her physical appearance in Sethe's life, also invisible, as if she is from a place before or beyond. As Paul puzzles, "she reminds me of something. Something, look like, I'm supposed to remember" (234). In this place between the real child and the ghost, between the young woman who is seducing Paul and the spirit who is pushing him out of Sethe's house, lies the motif of the "inner child." This currently popular concept in counseling literature has a long and rich history and can open for the reader of Beloved ways to understand the nature of the simultaneously visible and invisible space in Sethe's story that Beloved occupies.

The Motif of the Inner Child

C.G. Jung is often credited with the rediscovery and articulation in our century of the ancient idea that in every adult "lurks an eternal child," a child that "is always becoming, is never completed" (*Works*, 17: 169-70). This eternal child is "not only something that existed in the distant past" but "a system functioning in the present" (*Psyche & Symbol* 125). Jung described the child as "the part of the human personality that wants to develop and become whole" (*Works*, 17:170). Psychologists since Jung have interpreted the inner child to hold meanings, among others, of one's identity, one's life force, one's divine being.

The metaphor of child for this core identity refers to its source in early childhood: "the infant's inner sensations remain the central, the crystallization point of the 'feeling of self' around which a 'sense of identity' will become established" (Mahler 11). Like other archetypes, the inner child is not, as Jung points out, the "empirical" child but "the means . . . by which to express a psychic fact that cannot be formulated more exactly" (*Works*, 9.1: 161 n.).

Lying closely behind the conception of the inner child is that of the divine child, who is both human and spirit. Jung connects the inner child with religious observations, noting that religious rituals bring child images to consciousness (*Psyche & Symbol* 125). The child motif, Jung explains, is characterized by "potential future" in that it unites the conscious and unconscious into a single personality, an act that brings healing or wholeness (*Psyche & Symbol* 127-28). The "child" is also characterized by her persistence of being. Although continually imperiled by life's threatening forces, she "is endowed with superior powers and, despite all dangers, will unexpectedly pull through" (*Psyche & Symbol* 135).

In its recent form in popular counseling literature and practice, the inner child is defined as the child place that has been wounded and/or frozen in a certain stage of development due to trauma. Jung anticipates the counseling technique of deliberately contacting this child place when he recognizes "psychological experiences which show that certain phases in an individual's life can become autonomous, can personify themselves to such an extent that they result in a vision of oneself—for instance, one sees oneself as a child" (*Psyche & Symbol* 124-25). Jung attributes the experience of this phenomenon to earlier experiences of disassociation (*Psyche & Symbol* 125), often a result of unprocessed trauma.

The more wounded the child, the more hidden from the person's consciousness the inner child can become, having taken refuge from danger in the recesses of the person's psyche in order to avoid further hurt. When the hurt has been severe, disassociation can occur, resulting in division within the psyche. Jung notes that such "fragmenting of the personality" is often manifested in the appearance of pluralities, for examples in "numerous homunculi, dwarfs, boys, etc." who possess "no individual characteristics at all" (*Psyche & Symbol* 128) (one might think here of Morrison's deweys, or

of her repetition of names in the Sampsons or Pauls). In such a condition of fragmentation, according to Jung, one cannot experience "wholeness" within one's individual personality (*Psyche & Symbol* 129), for one's identity and one's divine potential appear dead. The child, however, is not dead, only buried, and the signs of it, though often unrecognized, abound. With the recovery of connection to one's child place comes the reemergence of the life-bearing potentials it holds. Although the "child," in all these manifestations, is a positive phenomenon, it can also manifest destructive behavior, the latter occurring as one form of response to hurt or abandonment. Thus, the "child's" actions, as Jung notes, can be "miraculous or monstrous" (*Works*, 9.1: 161).

Morrison plays out both these potentials—redemptive and destructive—in her character of Beloved, having prepared for the motif of traumatized child place in her preceding novels, each of which explores some dimension of the motif, ranging from the source of the traumatization and the resulting division within the psyche to the miraculous possibilities that the child holds. These several dimensions of the inner child motif that Morrison explores in her major fiction come together in bold form in *Beloved*, whose title carries reference both to spiritual hope and to a state of inner psychic connection that Morrison posits as necessary to help resurrect and heal the identity and life force of a people whose "child" or life force has suffered under unspeakable oppression.

Morrison's Earlier Fiction

Morrison's novels are about the condition of fracture and on-going separation that begins in divisions of race and class, moves through families fragmented by economic and social oppression (Paul D finds himself fascinated as if in a foreign land when he encounters an intact family), and ends up residing deep in the individual psyche. The novels' central characters and the communities surrounding them show clear signs of this latter psychological separation. Their child centers, which contain their identity, their futurity, their attraction to wholeness, have been seemingly killed and buried.

With these several elements in Morrison's world brutally fractured, her characters and plots do not fulfill conventional expectations. Morrison commented indirectly on this quality in her characters when she described how the behavior of people who are seeking new forms of psychological nourishment often "looks erratic . . . but isn't" (Jones and Vinson 143-44). Morrison's plots are similarly disturbing, for a number of them do not move towards reconciliation but exist in and around fractures in people's lives and psyches, providing compelling insights into the nature and effects of internal division that is a permanent condition.

Because this condition of psychical fracture dominates Morrison's plots and characters, discussions of her fiction using conventional moral measures lead the reader away from, rather than into, the novels' centers. In the instance of Sethe's killing of her child, for example, Morrison signals in a

number of ways, including the community's wrong-minded response in their rejection and isolation of Sethe, that discussions attempting to determine the moral quality of Sethe's action are not fruitful. For Sethe's action is not primarily a moral choice but an act of psychological defense against an overwhelming traumatic event. Sethe defends her children with the only resource she has available in the circumstance where the only other options, fighting and flight, are not possible. Her response is instantaneous; what she has to do is without question, without conscious thought: she protects her children in the same way she protects her inner child when the trauma is too much to comprehend or bear—by killing them, burying them so they do not have to feel the pain. Her response in this instance captures the act she commits simultaneously upon her exterior and interior child(ren).

In her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison offers her most literal depiction of the victimizing of the inner child. At the novel's opening, Pecola as literal child has already substituted for her own identity or "child" center an exterior, one-dimensional picture of a white child. By the novel's end, Pecola's already precarious identity becomes irreversibly fractured when her father, whose own inner child lies buried in humiliation and anger, can find expression of his feeling only in raping his daughter.

It is only the children, Claudia and Frieda, who observe with some understanding Pecola's plight. They wait in vain for the words from adults that recognize the damage to Pecola's child center: "We listened for the one who would say 'Poor little girl' or 'Poor baby,' but there was only head-wagging where those words should have been" (149). That the adults do not respond to Pecola, whose primary fault lies in her inner child remaining too long alive and thus vulnerable, points to their fear of acknowledging their own abandoned child centers. The community cannot afford to show more than indifference to a person who carries their own victim state, their socially defined mark of ugliness, their lack of access to life's abundance: "When the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live" (164). That their own child centers must remain hidden for protection is clear in Pecola's psychological condition at the novel's end: her experiences have led to psychical disassociation, limiting her to communicating only among the fragmented parts of her psyche.

Morrison includes a literal child in *Tar Baby* as well, with Michael's absence from the novel except in the form of brief flashbacks implying subtly the psychological presence of the "child." As both literal and psychological child of Margaret and Valerin, Michael hides in a small place, never emerging to tell his sadness. His is a condition of perpetual alienation, for neither his father nor mother can recognize him, Valerin blocked by his unknowing ("he was guilty . . . of innocence"), Margaret by her guilt. Valerin responds out of his unknowing by forgetting—not expecting—Michael, Margaret out of her guilt by obsessively expecting Michael to return. Both responses determine that Michael will not return, for both deny the truth of his existence, and thus Valerin and Margaret live in a condition of stasis, of continual abandoning and abandonment. Nor does Michael, as the "child," have a

literal or psychological place to reside without this reintegration. Thus his condition as wanderer from place to place in order to feel for others those sorrows they "were embarrassed to feel for themselves" (145).

If the child submits quietly in *The Bluest Eye* and *Tar Baby* to a state of detachment, *Sula* captures the extravagant way the "child" can make its presence felt when it has been violently cut off and abandoned. *Sula*'s childhood context contains literal representations of such violence, actions whose goal, ironically, is to protect children. Eva cuts off her own leg in order to insure her children's physical survival; she kills her children to rescue them from psychological misery. Both actions are physical manifestations, as in *Beloved*, of the process of killing one's "child," or life force, out of necessity.

Rather than diminishing *Sula* through the violation of her life center, the acts of violence against the "child" that *Sula* inherits exaggerate the child in her. *Sula* is the child run rampant. Unpredictable, uncontrolled, seemingly destructive, *Sula* damages relationships (Nel's marriage) and people (she turns Eva out of her house), and even herself (*Sula*'s early death seems a result of her extravagant behavior). Although *Sula*'s actions appear destructive, they are an expression of a life force, however distorted, that only *Sula*, of the people of Bottom, possesses. The community denies and fears what they see in *Sula*, but this response awakens feelings and rouses the Bottom out of its deadness, out of the stasis of the dead inner child. Their own buried life centers appear in magnified form in *Sula*: if *Sula*'s heart appears cold, theirs have long been cut off from feeling. The people of the Bottom are impelled finally to act in an outrageous gesture, similar to *Sula*'s actions out of her dominant child place, a gesture that leads them simultaneously to life and destruction. The creative/destructive nature of this act by the Bottom community is forecast early in the novel in a single motion of *Sula*'s, as she swings Chicken Little with the joyful spinning movement of a child in play to his death.

Nel, who was a child with *Sula*, comes to recognize that *Sula* offers, though in negative form, what she and the people of Bottom most desperately need, the center/heart that has been taken out of them. At Nel's invoking of *Sula*'s name in the novel's final scene, the image of the fish, all killed by the river, shifts to a stirring, a shifting, "the smell of overripe green things," a "scatter[ing] like dandelion spores in the breeze." The key, Nel discovers, is in the girl or "child" *Sula*: "We was girls together," [Nel] said as though explaining something. 'O Lord, *Sula*,' she cried, 'girl, girl, girl girl girl' "(174).

Song of Solomon is the first of Morrison's novels that, by its end, moves away from the stasis of the dead or deformed innerchild. The central character, Milkman, inherits, like *Sula*, a negative, violently divided existence: the "Dead" family live on "Not Doctor Street"; Guitar's father is literally sawed into pieces. The latter image is manifested in Guitar's external actions that marry love and death and, more centrally, in Milkman's internal psychological division. Milkman, as the source of his name implies, displays a perverse form of childbeing, a form that signals division from his real child. Milkman's

lack of will, his chronic boredom, his "eagerness for death" constitute the reversed, negative image of the life force and divine being that characterize the inner child. Only when Milkman begins to search for the "gold" at his center does he experience exhilaration and laughter, the righted emotions of a child.

Images of children abound in Milkman's journey to his center. His literal search for his origins is facilitated by the children's song/game and by Circe, at whose house he sees the eyes of a child that "must be myself" (240). Pilate, who "had brought him into the world when only a miracle could have," is the embodiment of child. Pilate eats like a child, chews things like a baby; she sings and looks into people's eyes as allowed only "among children" (150). She is the strong defender of children, protecting Reba with violence as "the only child I got" (94) and saving Milkman's life at both its physical and emotional beginnings, the originating domain of the child. Because Pilate knows the eternal inner child ("you can't get rid of nobody by killing them" 208) and has learned to defend that "child" at all costs, she lives fully in its presence ("peace was there, energy, singing"), a presence that Milkman's search brings into his "own remembrance" (304). Pilate's living of this presence makes it possible, as her childsong repeats, to "touch the sun." The final secret of her being, as Milkman discovers, is her ability to fly "without ever leaving the ground" (340), a quality unique to the child spirit.

Beloved

In *Beloved* Morrison undertakes her most complete examination of the inner child motif. At the heart of the story is the killing of the literal and psychological child Beloved, and the novel's whole task is to unravel and explicate this experience. Morrison's use of the inner child motif in *Beloved* is also her boldest. Not only is the child's death at the heart of the plot, but it occurs through an extreme of violence and abandonment, with the resulting sadness at the center of the novel and of Sethe's existence, shaking houses and defying the boundaries between life and death. For Beloved is Sethe's daughter, but also, in a familiar form of the "child's" manifestation as a person's son or daughter (*Psyche and Symbol* 122), also the abandoned, suffering center of Sethe herself.

Morrison also explores further than in her earlier novels the possibility of reconciliation—of moving through the necessary emotional journey for the "child" to move from its condition of death or negative domination of a personality to a positive integration into the adult personality. Morrison prepares early in the novel for this latter possibility by having Sethe poised to meet her "child" Beloved. Although Sethe, like Margaret, appears entrenched behind barriers of resistance—"No moving. No leaving. It's all right the way it is" (15)—Sethe's response to the disturbances of the ghost—"if she'd only come, I could make it clear to her" (4)—implies that Sethe, unlike Margaret, recognizes her deed against the child and thus its real nature and presence.

It is no coincidence that Beloved is first evoked in Sethe's life through Paul D. Paul D brings intimate connection, a quality, according to James

Hillman, that often summons the child archetype (82). Paul D also brings Sethe's past, calling forth in Sethe a memory first of the context of her connection to Beloved and then of the child Beloved herself. And Paul D brings Sethe the support necessary to do the remembering. Beloved appears at the end of a day of play and connection for Sethe that Paul D has arranged, a day that allows Sethe to let down her guard for a moment, to relax that considerable life energy that she has used to keep at bay her "rememory." The redundant prefix implies that the past and Beloved are living, powerful, because unprocessed, forces in Sethe's life; that the experience of trauma and grief literally reoccurs when one allows the memory to return. For to *remember*, etymologically, as Gilda Frantz notes, is to mourn (70). That Sethe is at the point of this powerful experience of *re-memory*, an internal journey that parallels in its pain her physical journey to freedom, is made explicit by Paul D's offer to "go as far inside as you need to. I'll hold your ankles" (46).

Even with this permission, Sethe is able to remember (and thus to *remember* her life) only in stages. At her first sight of Beloved, her body remembers, as apparent in Sethe's rush to let out massive waters. Later, Sethe takes more deliberate steps to re-call her life, as apparent in her choice to focus on an interior journey of connection and integration with Beloved: "Whatever is going on outside my door ain't for me. The world is in this room. This here's all there is and all there needs to be" (183). Finally, Sethe is able to *re-collect* the scene of violence against her child, as the elements of the original scene—the yard, the gathering of people, the man wearing the white hat—appear together, offering Sethe the opportunity to relive the experience that killed her child. With the strength of her newly acquired integration with Beloved, Sethe is able to relive the scene in righted form, to aim the violent act in defense of her child at the external threat rather than at her own "child."

To capture the image of Sethe's gradual reattaching to her inner child, Morrison blends the several characters of Sethe and Beloved and Denver in a variety of literal and figurative configurations. In reflecting on the "hand-holding shadows" of the day that begins Sethe's "rememory," Sethe realizes that they were not "Paul D, Denver and herself, but 'us three'" (182). And it is "three women" who gather in the Clearing, where "Baby Suggs, holy, had loved" (97) to begin Sethe's healing journey. By the end of the novel, the voices of the three blend in lyric until the speaker and spoken to are indistinguishable:

She is the laugh; I am the laughter.

.....

Beloved

You are my sister

You are my daughter

You are my face; you are me.

.....

You are my face; I am you. (216)

Although the primary psychological merging occurs between Sethe and Beloved (it becomes increasingly "difficult to feel who was who" 241), Denver plays a significant role in mediating the connection, and becomes herself part of the blending of characters. As she assumes the role of mediator and link to outside reality for Sethe and Beloved, Denver realizes that "whatever was happening, it only worked with three—not two" (243). Using a Jungian definition, if Sethe and Beloved are a form of parable, with the meaning lying not in their separate identities but in the combination of the two, it is Denver who assumes the form and knowledge of both, the "unknown third thing that finds . . . expression in . . . these similes" (*Psyche & Symbol* 119). Denver mediates the meaning of the merged identities: she is the child, who knows Beloved intimately even before she appears, and she is the adult who nurtures and protects and supports the child.

Morrison bridges between the psychic and physical not only in Sethe's story but in those Sethe has inherited and that surround her own. These stories in Sethe's heritage contain the common theme of the abandonment or killing of children. Sethe's mother threw away her children conceived by white men's rape. She holds emotional life back from Sethe by not looking at or acknowledging her connection to her except to reveal to Sethe her mark of pain and lack of self-ownership. Similarly, Baby Suggs has no memory of eight children, "every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil" (5). Through these images of abandoned and lost children, Morrison is suggesting the psychological condition that occurs when there is too much feeling to dare to feel and the consequent abandonment or numbing of the realm of the "child." Thus, even with the living memory of a child she has murdered—"124 was . . . full of strong feeling"—Sethe is "oblivious to the loss of anything at all" (39). The severing of Beloved's head from her body or heart provides a literal sign of the pervasive condition of such psychic separation, a condition characterized by the "killing" or denying of feeling and life.

Despite this heritage of stories of murdered and lost children, the "child," in its miraculous way, endures: "Life rolled over dead. Or so he [Paul D] thought" (109). Paul D doesn't understand, as does Stamp Paid, that the "child," like "people who die bad," shares with the divine child, Jesus, the inability to "stay in the ground" (188). The character in the novel who manifests this miracle of endurance, Baby Suggs, implies through her name this persisting child spirit. With most parts of her dead, the knowledge and being of the child spirit remains alive in Baby Suggs far beyond the point that should have ended its life. She employs this part of herself to help others reconnect to their "child," as she practices her ritual of calling forth the children—"Let the children come!"—so that the adults can smile and dance (87). It is in the same sacred grove in which Baby Suggs called forth the children that Sethe begins her work of connection with Beloved. The damaged Beloved responds through both giving and taking life from Sethe. For the child is not impervious to life's affronts, and even Baby Suggs finally stops her efforts to help bridge in others' lives their irreparable separations from their wounded "children." By the end of her own life, a scrap of color

is the only remnant of Baby Suggs' child spirit: "They don't know when to stop," she said, and returned to her bed, pulled up the quilt and left them to hold that thought forever" (104).

This state of resignation that Baby Suggs withstands so long is Sethe's condition as the novel begins, her eyes showing "what emptiness held" (9). With the death of her child, Sethe has died: "the hot sun dried Sethe's dress, stiff, like rigor mortis" (153). This condition of annihilation of the self is the child Beloved's fear, as obvious in her two recurring dreams--of exploding and being swallowed. Sethe, after Beloved's death, experiences a psychological form of this annihilation—she can survive only by ceasing altogether to dream. In "killing" her "child," Sethe has shut herself off from life, locking even the small part of herself that continues to live, as symbolized in her child Denver, securely away from the world, from the past and the future, leaving her isolated and without life spirit, without "children willing to circle her in a game" (12).

That the "child" still lives on, though mechanically, in Sethe's broken spirit is evidence of the divine capacity of this child who is to all appearances destroyed. Despite the absence of a likely literal explanation for Beloved's appearance in the novel, she comes, like the third child in the Genesis 2 account, out of necessity for continued life, the first and second children having slayed and been slain. Sethe, who is herself both the slayer and the slain, is born, in her reconnection with Beloved, as the third child in the story, whose name, Seth, she bears. Jung describes this capacity of the "child" to live on in inhospitable circumstances by noting that at the same time as the "child" is "delivered helpless into the power of terrible enemies and in continual danger of extinction," she also "possesses powers far exceeding those of ordinary humanity" (*Psyche & Symbol* 135). Although the "child" is violated, overlooked, even fought off (as in Paul D's reaction to Beloved), she continues to tap the power of her divine essence in order to maintain life. Sethe carries a physical statement of this seeming opposition in the "tree" on her back. The tree marks Sethe's pain and near physical and emotional extinction, but, as Emily-Rose Rothenberg points out, the image of a tree also represents an "eternal spirit that sheds its leaves, dying in order to live" (88). The tree's divine essence is indeed implied in that Sethe cannot see the tree but only hear it described.

Morrison plays out this contradiction within the child motif in Sethe's relation to Beloved, who at one moment tries to cut off Sethe's life as her own has been cut off and in the next saves and nurtures Sethe. Beloved brings her own pain to Sethe, pain that ultimately is healing: "anything dead coming back to life hurts" (35). By submitting willingly to suffering in her abandonment to Beloved's pain, Sethe moves through a process that Frantz describes as a "dissolution of the personality in tears and despair" in order to "begin building" (67). Sethe moves imperceptibly (with frozen tears) from the deliberate child play of skating, her form of entering into relationship with her child Beloved, to crying: "but when her laughter died, the tears did not and it was some time before Beloved or Denver knew the difference"

(175). The emotion that Sethe is expressing at this point may be explained "as the descent into the unconscious for the purpose of beginning the journey." From this place, one's tears, now unfrozen, as Franz explains, turn into invincible diamonds of "Self" (68).

Despite the exaggerated way in which Beloved manifests herself, she, the one who has suffered, is the (divine) center of Sethe's being. She is, as Marion Woodman describes the inner child, the neglected part of the psyche that "the Self will attempt to push . . . forward for recognition" and that contains "energy of the highest value" (23). Sethe's giving herself over to this energy, of bonding fully to Beloved, moves Sethe through a series of stages, from adult to child to infant state and finally to a pre-conscious, pre-verbal state where the "vital meaning" of myth lies (*Psyche & Symbol* 117). In this new place, Sethe is able to realize a revised response to the threat against her child that forced her in the original circumstances to do "violence against the very object of her love" (82). Sethe's fierce defense of her child, aimed by necessity at her own being in the first instance ("If I hadn't killed her, she would have died" 200) can now, through reconnection with the very child she killed, be aimed at the source of the threat. At the moment when she defends Beloved in righted way, she and Beloved become fully integrated—Beloved is no longer visible as separate person. Imagery suggests that the two, in this blending, have given birth/life to one another; they are experiencing the integration of child with inner nurturing mother and of adult with the inner abandoned child, thus fulfilling the quest or "fate," as Frantz calls it, of the abandoned child within her lifetime (65).

Despite Sethe's emaciated physical condition at the end of *Beloved*, the novel's resolution contains an optimism, however severely shadowed. Although Sethe's condition implies her nearly severed ties to life, she is not resigned to death, only exhausted from an emotional journey that has opened wounds even deeper than those physical wounds from her first journey. Each experience is too much for Sethe—had she known the results, she would not have entered upon either journey. Yet both carry with them the only hope for release, whether from the physical restraints of slavery or the related, deeper psychic restraints that have kept Sethe cut off from life around and within. The unspeakable difficulty of the two journeys—of Sethe's story that is "not a story to pass on"—summarizes the condition of life for the characters and communities in Morrison's fiction and implies the extent of the trauma that Morrison is describing in her construction of the Black American experience.

Toni Morrison has acknowledged that she attempts in her fiction to examine archetypes (Jones and Vinson 138). That this particular archetype of the inner child takes on exceptional power in Morrison's works lies in part in the power of archetypes: "Archetypes were, and still are, living psychic forces that demand to be taken seriously" (*Psyche & Symbol* 119). It lies in the power of a psychological experience with a rediscovered "child," as is apparent in Jung's description of his own personal encounter with the "child" ("the small

boy is still around"), to whom he had to give himself over by doing what the "child" wanted even though Jung found it "painfully humiliating . . . to realize that there was nothing to be done except play childish games" (*Memories* 174). Finally, the power of this archetype in Morrison's novels lies in Morrison's intimate understanding of the inner child. Morrison gives the "child" room to play out its meaning and feeling in the creative and disturbing turns of her fiction. The conjunction in her novels of the childlike and disturbing, seemingly contradictory impulses, points relentlessly to the painful degree of separation in Morrison's characters and communities between the divine potential of the "child," and its suffering and sadness. Morrison knows the latter most of all and the social and psychological violence that has caused it ("she had to be safe and I put her [by killing her] where she would be" *Beloved* 200).

Adding to the depth and seemingly endless sadness of the lost inner child that Morrison depicts is the long delay in expressing its outrage and consequent underlying grief, a state of continuing trauma that composes the very condition of life in Morrison's fiction. That the grief cannot be expressed in standard patterns—often not in words beyond the simple, barely articulated pleadings of a child—reveals something of its depth. Its nature can be defined only in signs, as in the disturbances and undulations of red light of 124, or sounds, as in that of Nel's long-delayed cry that captures the condition of the "child" in Morrison's world: "It was a fine cry—loud and long—but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow" (*Sula* 174).

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