

# Beloved: America's Grammar Book



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—Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 261. Copyright © 1987 by Toni Morrison. Used by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, a division of Random House, Inc. Any third party use of this material, outside of this publication, is prohibited.

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*Legal Fictions: Constituting Race, Composing Literature* (2014), *Private Bodies, Public Texts: Race, Gender, and a Cultural Bioethics* (2011), *BookMarks: Reading in Black and White: A Memoir* (2006).

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*Beloved*,



*Beloved*

1 2

, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness  
and the Literary Imagination.*<sup>3</sup>

*Beloved*

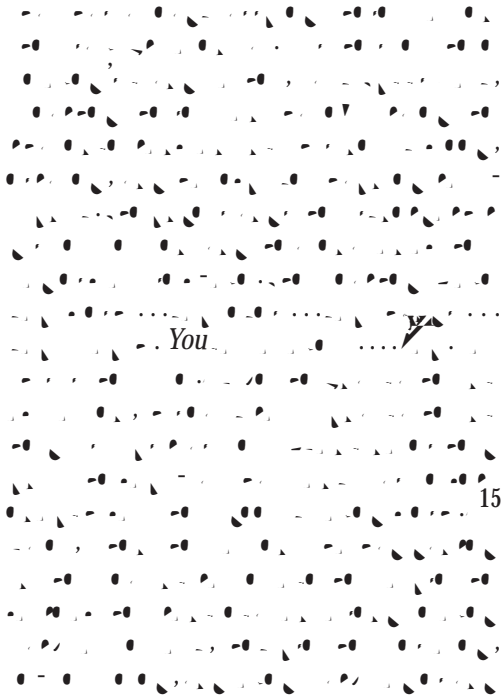
<sup>4</sup> *Beloved*.

*Playing in the Dark.*

<sup>5</sup> *Playing in the Dark,*

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You

Beloved

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it is not a story to be avoided.

it is not a story to share.

Beloved.

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#### ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Article I, section II of the U.S. Constitution, also known as the representation clause, declared that each slave would count as “three- $\frac{1}{2}$ ths of a free person” in matters of congressional representation and taxation. It protected the property of those who held slaves but at the same time quixotically rendered the enslaved to both categories: they were property as well as (partial) persons.
- <sup>2</sup> In 1856, Margaret Garner and her family escaped from Kentucky to Cincinnati. They were found by slave catchers and returned to their owners, but not before Garner killed her daughter with a butcher knife. As tragic and pitiful as this story is by itself, its accompanying legal conundrum marks the case as one that explains the peculiar intersectionality of persons and property. Garner’s defense lawyer, hoping her trial might be in a free state, claimed she was a person who committed murder. But Kentucky argued for federal rule; she was property to be returned to her owner. See Stephen Weisenberger, *Slaves on Trial: A History of Race, Property and Power in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999).
- <sup>3</sup> Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage, 1993).
- <sup>4</sup> Toni Morrison,

- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Morrison, *Beloved*, 35–36.
- 13 As I write “linguistic and literary structures” I recall the title of my 1978 doctoral dissertation, *A Comparative Study of the Narrative Structures of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God**. It is with some satisfaction that I notice this consistency in my vision and interests, and that even then I was focused on the combinations, both “the key [as well as] the codes.”
- 14 I believed then, as I do now, this to be a correct (and decidedly humbling) determination of the reviewer who expressed her disappointment in the execution of *Beloved*. Cheryl Wall suggested that there was more potential in the title than the text of my dissertation-become-book. See Cheryl A. Wall, “Black Women Writers: Journey Along Motherlines,” *Criticism* 39 (Spring 1989): 419–422.
- 15 Morrison, *Beloved*, 88–89.
- 16 The derivation of the word *epigraphy* is from the Greek *ἐπιγραφή* (*epigraphē*), or “art of letters.”
- 17 Karla FC Holloway, “*Beloved*: A Spiritual,” *Criticism* 13 (Summer 1990): 516–525.
- 18 Ibid. The epigraph is the title and first line of a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks, “One Wants a Teller,” in *Beloved* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1994), 132.
- 19 Morrison, *Beloved*, 275.
- 20 Ralph Ellison,