

## THE SUBJECT OF ENSLAVEMENT AND QUEST FOR SOCIAL IDENTITY IN TONI MORRISON’S BELOVED

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**Abstract:** *The study focuses on clear disconnection between the American dream and the reality of black people’s life, as seen by their history in America both before and after freedom. The Pulitzer-winning book *Beloved* by Toni Morrison awakens the ghost of slavery in American history, which has been long forgotten. It implies that the boundaries of the American dream life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as originally stated in the Declaration of Independence are part of the darkness. The ideal of showing love to all people that is, supporting and confirming their existence for their own sake as well as the sake of a just society is not included in that formulation. Morrison's novel focuses on the problems of love, as suggested by the study. Morrison's decision to Centre her investigation of love around a mostly forgotten historical event Margarita Garner's murder of her children to prevent their return to slavery is one of the mysteries the novel presents. Margaret Garner is the inspiration for the main character, Sethe's, narrative.*

**Key words:** *Slavery, Racism, Love, Liberty, Mysteries, Spirit.*

### Introduction

Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* (1987) explores the traumatic effects of ‘institutional racism’ (408). In 1988, Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Beloved*. Regarding the narrative of *Beloved*, Toni Morrison says, "It's important to remember the horror, but it's also important to remember it in a way that allows it to be processed and doesn't cause harm to memory." *Beloved* explores the lives of African Americans who were formerly slaves and uses their insightful personal histories to attempt to make a life for themselves. Through the main characters of the novel, namely Sethe and Paul D., Toni Morrison attempts to convey this truth. The enduring effects of each African American's unique journey through American slavery defined them. Sethe and Paul D, the main characters, grapple with the meaning of motherhood and womanhood, as well as what it means to be a man, when these fundamental aspects of humanity and freedom are taken away from them. Through her writing, Morrison addresses such weighty subjects, drawing the reader in and getting him to consider the humanity denied to African Americans.

Though psychologically far more complex, Toni Morrison's sixth novel, *Beloved*, is often viewed as a seminal work about racism and motherhood. Morrison extensively examines identity through *Beloved's* subjugation of Sethe. Since the oppressor is the daughter, *Beloved*, and the victim is the mother, Sethe, the issue of domestic oppression is sometimes overlooked, even though it is evident and occurs throughout the entire novel. Parental abuse is more widespread than one may think, even though this particular situation looks exceptional. According to clinical research, a toddler who was upset with his mother for scolding him pulled her down and started repeatedly kicking her in the face.

Even if the abuse wasn't solely physical, *Beloved* is punishing her mother for wrongdoing, so this behavior example is pertinent to her. Many moms find that "finding a way to protect children from [...] living with [...] violence may not be straightforward," according to a wealth of studies. Sethe went to extreme lengths to shield her kid from a life of cruelty and servitude in order to prevent *Beloved* from

becoming a slave and from suffering abuse herself. Beloved never got the chance to develop her own personality and become her own person because of Sethe's perceived "failure" as a mother.

*Beloved* stays in 124 and has no effect on the outside world, but Sethe's trauma is private and restricted to her family. However, as demonstrated by Beloved's footsteps, which are still mostly discernible throughout the town, we could argue that the community's great embrace of Sethe does not amount to a total triumph over trauma. Beloved's entire figure has been exorcised, but her footprints remain as a symbol of the trauma that the group is yet unable to fully heal. Morrison's work raises concerns about the efficacy of collective trauma treatment, despite the fact that it is a cure for Sethe's condition and society remains essentially incoherent without the ability to heal from such trauma. If the only way to overcome personal pain is to exacerbate its effects on others, isn't that merely a pessimistic perspective of therapy? *Beloved's* footprints reveal the community's acceptance of responsibility for Sethe's predicament in addition to highlighting an incapacity to heal trauma. Anyone can see the footprints of Beloved, regardless of status. From the constantly shifting magnitude of these footprints, it is evident that *Beloved* then horrifies the entire city, not just 124 people.

Though Morrison views the group as a safe sanctuary where people may discuss their issues, his viewpoint on counselling is not pessimistic. As demonstrated by Sethe's dejected vision of her daughter's ghost, trauma that destroys a human could be elevated when shared with others. Collective trauma is easier to deal with than personal anguish, as *Beloved's* footsteps are less traumatic than her lifelike figure. Though it remains a member of a group, the latter's resoluteness makes it manageable enough to keep its members connected. Empathy is not supposed to ease Sethe's burden, even though it may be argued that her trauma is unique from the other group members' trauma and makes it challenging for them to fully comprehend it.

Slave narratives multiply because of this conundrum, which encourages compulsive believability and avoidance. On a personal level, Toni Morrison explores

the potential and limitations of storytelling, even as a person's reaction is further filtered and formalised into the narrative. In *Beloved*, characters narrate and describe their experiences in order to define themselves. As demonstrated when Baby Suggs and Stamp Rewarded shared their origin stories for their names, this relationship may be relatively obvious. Sharing tales is another way that people can improve their social and emotional connections. Sethe wants to share the weight of her knowledge and expertise with Paul D. as a result.

### Conclusion

Throughout the entire novel, historical circumstances have a big impact on the protagonists' decisions about how to express their identities and independence. Therefore, in *Beloved*, self-discovery necessitates confronting one's past and present. This is particularly relevant given that African-Americans continue to be marginalised and lack a sense of self. "Beloved" delves on the limits and possibilities of storytelling as a tool for individuals and society as a whole. The experiment is particularly potent since the slave is such a strongly emotive subject and historical accounts of slavery are so contradicting. The main problem of the novel is how to create a narrative that benefits the victim, the African American community, and the nation as a whole from the reality of unspeakable cruelty.

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