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**A Feminist Reading to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*:  
Mothering under the Atrocities of Slavery**

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# *Dedication*

*I want to dedicate this work to:*

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*My dearest sisters and brothers*

*My little nephews Marwan and Imran*

*My best friends Manel and Rayane*

*My partner Djouhaina*

*Merieme*

## *Dedication:*

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*Djouhaina.*

**Abstract:**

The black literature is the treatment of the experiences and the history of the African Americans, especially the Afro-American woman who passed through a lot of obstacles and problems in her life to reach an important position over the world. By the coming of feminism the black woman gets a new image and portrays and becomes a queen, president, teacher and also doctor. In this dissertation we shed a light on the African American literature and more specifically a novel entitled *Beloved* written by the Black or the Afro-American writer Toni Morrison, who takes in his novel a real life story of a former slave, who suffer the pain of slavery and its conditions, which push her to escape and to kill her own daughter in order to save and prevent her from the same slave life under worst conditions. In this work we try to realize the mother-children relationship under slavery and racial and sexual discrimination and how the black mother struggle to protect her children, in addition to her ability to live with the ghost of her murder daughter, also in this research we shed a light on the effects of slavery on the main female characters of the novel mentally, psychologically and physically because under slavery they were mistreated, oppressed and marginalized. Finally we search about the causes of the emergence of the murder daughter who called *Beloved*. The main conclusion drawn from this research is that the ability of the black women to make a balance between several role in a worst society, the roles of the mother, daughter, wife and also the hard worker.

**Key words:** Black literature, Black female, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, sexual discrimination, slavery.

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## **General Introduction:**

Through history and past times, women had always struggled to gain their position in an oppressed, unjust and cruel society where they are marginalized, but instead of being silent and accept that persecution they stood up and fought for their rights and called for equality politically, economically and socially. Thus feminism is “The struggle of women against the oppression they face” (Combahee River Collection.1977.p.210). The term is first appeared in France and Netherlands in 1872 and in Great Britain in the 1890s and in the United States in 1910 (Wikipedia, 2012).And it was Marry Wollstonecraft who considered as the first feminist philosopher with her book “A Vindication of the Rights of Woman” in 1872 (Wikipedia, 2010). To make their voices heard and to show their anger and refusing, women chose to use the power of words through literature. Where they created independent, strong female protagonist, one example is contemporary American Black women which are best characterized as diverse as DANA. A.WILLEAMS stated in her book “*Contemporary African American Women Writers*”, from Toni Morrison’s first novel “*The Bluest Eye*” (1970), to Rita Dove’s award winning collection of poems “*Thomas and Beulah*” (1986), to Suzan Lori Park’s experimental drama “*Tapdog/Underdog*” (2001) (Danna.A. Williams’, p 71) Thus Contemporary Black Feminism is “the outgrowth of countless generations of personal sacrifice, militancy and sisters” (Combahee River Group, p 211). Back to Toni Morrison the major voice among black writers through her emphasis on the life and fate of black women with her imaginative and poetic novels which vividly depicts the extremely important aspects of reality (Huang, N. C, Zhang, and R.W.2018). Morrison is considers one of the most recognizable black writers with her prolific, sophisticated writing style, and she is the first and the only black writer who win the Nobel Laureate for literature in 1993 (Huang, N. C, Zhang, R.W.2018). Besides of other awards as the National Book Award, the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, and the Nobel Prize for literature. One of her recognizable works is *Beloved*; her fifth



novel which considered her masterpiece as Clemons, 1987 stated "I think we have a masterpiece on our hand here"(p.75). Morrison in her novel *Beloved* has given a new perspective to the reading of history from the side of neglected race which is not able to get out from the horrifyingly past of slavery and other traumas. She described a dark reality from the past in the form of racism, slavery, subjugation of women, the destruction of cultural identity of the African Americans (AIJRHASS...13-147, 2013).

The protagonist of the novel, Sethe is a former slave in Sweet Home where she experienced all kinds of oppression and persecution, what led her to commit a horrible crime where she killed her infant in order to prevent her from the terror of slavery which bereaved her from one of her basic needs which was motherhood and the love of her children, especially her murdered daughter Beloved who lived with her as a haunting ghost and then she appeared from the body of water as a young woman and lived with her mother and her sister Denver; a lonely, isolated young girl because of the fear of the ghost of her sister. Sethe, the slave mother had endured and suffered the most pain where she lose her identity under the conditions of slavery but she kept struggling to own her freedom and to live in peace with her daughter Denver.

### **Research Questions:**

- 1-How the theme of motherhood was constructed within the novel?
- 2-How are the major female characters described in *Beloved*?
- 3-What are the aftermaths of slavery on the female characters?
- 4- Why Beloved had emerged?

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The main objective of this study is to focus on a novel entitled *Beloved* which considered one of the trilogy work of Toni Morrison that begin with *Beloved*, *Jazz* and *Paradise*. There are three sub objectives in this study; the first objective is to find the impulse

of motherhood and self- identity of the main female character Sethe, the second one is to analyze how slavery had effect on the major female characters of the novel and the third one is to search about the causes and the effects of the emergence of the murder daughter Beloved.

### **Motivation:**

Our interest on African American's history and our passion in literature which lead us to study Toni Morrison's works and what grasp our attention mostly her novel "*Beloved*" and more why she chooses such a name as the title of her novel, besides my inclination to know more about the feminist movement. Moreover Toni Morrison's unique style and she is the first Afro-American writer to receive the Nobel Prize, the Pulitzer Prize and many other awards besides her detailed description of her characters which serves our research aim.

### **Methodology:**

#### **Feminist Approach:**

In order to do this study, we use the feminist approach which considered as one of the academic approaches to study about the literary work by using feminist information and ideas in the context of preparation and reception to analyze a literary text .According to *A Handbook of Critical Approach to Literature* 6th edition; the feminist criticism explain how the position of women is influenced by literary text, the feminist approach gave us a great support and contribution to do this study, and get better understanding and analyzing feminist idea in order to answer the problem formulation.

#### **Postcolonial Approach:**

In order to do this study we focus on the post- colonial approach which deal with the treats of literary manufactures that are also related to the written literature in settled countries this approach has an important concept which is the independence also was related to reading and written literature in previous colonized countries ,the principal interests of this approach are the experience and realities in colonized culture one of the most writers that use this

approach was Toni Morrison ,the Afro American female writer who use the postcolonial elements in her work such as *Beloved*, *Bluest Eyes* and *Sula*. In *Beloved*, Sethe escaped the county to protect herself and her daughters from slavery, dominance and hegemony, also in the *Bluest Eyes*, Toni Morrison saw that the dream of Pecola for having the *Bluest Eyes* was to escape the racism and slavery in her society. In the next novel *Sula*; the main character was struggling to identify the feminist stream.

### **Psychoanalytic Approach:**

It seems that the psychoanalytical approach is the most suitable method to examine the issues of identity and self in Toni Morrison *Beloved* (1987). For psychologists, “identity is a set of behaviors, emotions and thought patterns that are unique to an individual”. In literature identity is crucial in two ways; first writers have a personal identity which influences the world view from which they write. Second writers develop characters that may or may not their creator’s world view. Writers have always express their identity in their works ,but the development of psychological theories of personality in 20<sup>th</sup> century provided authors with new concepts of how identities are shaped,psychiatrist as Sigmund Freud ,Carl Jung created concepts that changed how modern literature is written and judged. For instance Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* in which female characters dominate. Besides, the sublime task of a female namely motherhood is explored by means of an Afro American woman under the repression of slavery. The main characters are Sethe, Beloved and Denver who are tied to each other with a knot of mother and daughter.

### **Literary review:**

There were numerous studies on Morrison’s works by so many researchers; our analysis hence relies on some references among which a Bachelor thesis entitled *The Feminist Aspects in Toni Morrison work* (Olomouc,2015) as a depiction in Toni Morrison work *Jazz* , *Beloved* and *Paradise* written by Veronica Delvolva,another research dealt with in this section

is for Adriana Zuhlke in her Book “*Toni Morrison’s Novel Beloved Analysis*” claimed that the novel is full of feelings and emotions, such as love ,forgiveness ,and fright all this emotions presented in Sethe’s relation to her daughters also she hate slavery and become afraid when she think that they will be used as slaves to serve whites (Adriana,2003), but this study is different from the previous studies because it focus on the discussion of the feminist idea in the novel through analyzing the major female characters and get deep explanation to how major female characters struggle against slavery and their position in society which are living in.

### **Structure of study:**

This study will be divided into three chapters and each chapter will deal with one of the following points:

- 1-The female voice in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*
- 2- The theme of the motherhood in Toni Morrison’s *beloved*
- 3- The aftermath of slavery of female characters
- 4- Why *beloved* have emerged

The questions asked in this research aimed to find if the main female characters were able to change the image of women and to give her more opportunities to get place in society and to escape slavery or no?, this work divided into three chapters, the first chapter introduce feminism by giving its origin in addition its different types and waves, also try to identify the famous African American writers and their issues and interests .In the second chapter will presents the theme of motherhood in the novel and how the black mother struggle to prevent her children against slavery. While in the third chapter will discuss the effects of slavery on the female characters of novel which were Sethe, Denver and *Beloved* and why this last character had changed.

# *Chapter one:*

*The Afro-American feminism*

**Introduction:**

After an extended suffering and discrimination of women to search out restricted recognized place within society, she is nowadays enjoying a crucial role in society as a political candidate, socialist and economist society. That achievement emerged by feminism granted women's right. "Feminism is a struggle to correct laws and practices that prevent women from achieving full equality with men in all aspects of domestic and public life, but the deeper struggle is against attitudes that sustain discriminatory practices" (Murphy.1995).

This chapter introduces feminism by giving its definition and origin, in addition to its different types, it deals also with different waves of feminism. This chapter also sheds the light on Toni Morrison; the first African American woman who won the Nobel Prize for her literature, and its notable novel *Beloved*.

## **I-Feminism:**

### **1- What is Feminism?**

The real meaning of feminism is a belief in a principles of social ,economic and political equality for women, while according to Oxford Dictionary is a belief that women should have rights as men .Whereas Michelle Paludi define feminism in his book *Feminism and Women's Rights and World Ideas*; “a movement to end sexism racism and sexist exploration and oppression of women to put an end to slavery and dominance toward women” (p 04), while Zara Huda Faris explained this idea as “women need feminism because there are women who suffer injustice”(p 01).

The term feminism had a long history; it represented women's problems and suffering in addition to their inequality in societies supervised by men. As Huda Zara Faris claimed; “women have traditionally been dehumanized by a male dominated society, which they call the patriarchy, and that it has always been better to be a man” (p 01).

### **2. The Origin of Feminism:**

Since feminism is described as a movement of ending sexism and racism and referred to social, political and economic equality between men and women in societies, the first coined of the word is in France in 1880's as *feminism* also it extended over the European countries in 1890's and in North and South America in 1910's. The word feminism combining two sides; the first is the French word “*Femme*” and the second side is “*ism*” which deals with social and political ideology, the word feminism was always polemic on one hand because of its association with extremism and on the other hand because the supporters themselves contradicted about the label. Although socialist feminists become obvious in Europe in 1900, from its origins through the social revolution at the 1960's.

Feminism stayed as scorn term among progressive repaired socialist over the world, even as the women had got the right to vote in 1928 especially in England and in other

countries such France, Japan, Mexico, and China in 1940. While the old feminism called this right as (political equality).

Therefore feminism mainly focused on women's experiences in their daily life and their suffering and pain in patriarchal societies, but women still struggling to remove all the hurdles to get political social and economic opportunities.

### **3. Types of Feminism:**

#### **3.1. Radical Feminism:**

Radical feminism is a movement that emerged in the 1960's, believed that sexism deeply rooted in societies also dealt with lack of political and civil rights caused the oppression of women as Margret Jackson explains in her book *the Real Facts of Life* as; "radical feminism in the late of 1960's was such an uncompromising stand against the tyranny of male sexual demands against to be taken" (p 133). The radical feminism aimed at challenging the patriarchy by disagreeing with the oppression of women and gender roles. In addition to this, radical feminism believes that women's pain and oppression comes from the male psychology and biology; this is why they called for the independence from men and their patriarchy.

#### **3.2. Liberal Feminism:**

Liberal feminism is an approach to achieving a legal equality between men and women; it emphasizes on the power of individual persons to change the discriminatory practice against women, it is considered to be the most important type of feminism which deals with structure of society and individual attitudes and behaviors of women within it. The liberal feminism emphasizes on making the legal and political status of women equal to those of men, while the main belief of it is that "the female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to and success in the so-called public world" (p 08 ). In addition to this, liberal feminism aimed for individuals to use their own abilities and democratic process to help women and men to become more equal in the



eye of law, in society and in the work place. While in the late of 1960's during the civil rights movement the liberal feminists drew parallels between systematic race discrimination and sex discrimination.

### **3.3. Socialist Feminism:**

Also known as Marxist feminism or Materialist feminism it was an important movement of feminism emerged in 1960's and in 1970's as a feminist movement called for the end of patriarchy and capitalism through a socialist reformation as Estelle Freedman claimed; "socialist feminism as a distinct approach that has neither a male nor a female human ideal but rather the vision that women and men will disappear as socially constituted categories" (p 85).

In addition, socialist feminism argued that liberation can only be achieved by working to end both economic and cultural sources of women's oppression also it assert that women were unable to be free due to their financial dependence to males .while the socialist feminism rejected the idea that liberation for women requires to the abolition of child birth .Under the socialist feminism condition, the Marxist feminism believed that restoration of women to autonomy is possible.

## **II. Waves of Feminism:**

People always asking about how feminism was able to put the end for the discriminatory and patriarchal practices, and how it was able to protect women from suffering and pain .the history of feminism passed through many activities or which called Waves.

### **1-The First Feminist Wave: the Right to Vote (1900-1959)**

when speaking about the first wave of feminism will say the right to vote, this wave goes back to the World War I, is focus on the women's suffrage and political candidacy .In 1916 the National Women Party (NWP) made a strike in USA, and they wrote about the

undemocratic practice over women in America, and they aimed to show world that they were living in a bad status and worst condition.

In that period, women's institution and organization started to speak about women and their rights to vote and expressing their thoughts. During the World War I women haven't the right to do everything without the control of men especially in the public place, they were only mothers and wives and oppressed by men as Suzan Faludi explained: "patriarchy has not disappeared; it has changed from" (p 40). In addition to that, this feminist wave aims to achieving equality between men and women in a larger society not only in politics.

The first feminist wave in Europe was mentioned in the famous work of Marry Wollstonecraft "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (P, 08). She argued that the only way for women to take their position in society and to be equal with men is the education. Therefore the first feminist wave helped woman to build a new street to change her life, and help her to change the old image and to take a new place in societies and to express their thought by voting and participating in election and become an effective element in policy.

## **2-The Second Feminist Wave: the Personal Is Political (1960-1970)**

The second wave of feminism emerged in 1960-1970 broadened debate to a wide range of issue suchas: sexuality, family and work place, reproductive rights and official legal equalities, this feminist wave drew an attention to a domestic violence and marital rap issues and mainly referred to the women's liberation.

However this wave is considered as a continuation to the previous one, it focused on highlighting the way that women look, wear, speak and especially how they think? In addition to this, the feminists of this wave wanted to prove to the world that women are not equal creatures to men and not just a puppet in their hands,also they aimed to show the world that women are not a patriarchal victims, they claimed that patriarchy and women's oppression were old ideas .the feminists in that period were not only looking for woman's right to vote

they also started to discuss her right to marry and to be with the person she likes ,taking no consideration to his or her sex .

After a long period of struggle and events, women started to go deeper in looking for their total freedom in everything and in 1980 a new way of thinking appeared to correct the real aim of the second feminist wave, the leaders of this wave tried to show world that women are an important part of society, they also wanted to change the idea that feminism is only for women's rights but also as an organization of rights of all humans.

### **3- Third Feminist Wave: Transversal Politics (1990 to present time)**

After a long trip of searching for the lost identity and dreams of women, many feminists and researchers started to look for another way to achieve their aims since the previous activities and waves were not enough; they reached to a third wave of feminism which emerged in 1990 to the present time and that was referred to a collection of activities done by feminists and researchers,while the main symbol of this wave was; Rebecca Walker who used the term feminism first time in 1992. This wave came as a reaction to the thoughts and ideas of the second wave, like acts against modesty (prostitution ,pornography ); those feminists believed that the best way to make the third wave effective was by changing the ways of looking for the rights of women, the first step for changing this way is by changing the terms like girl in place of woman in order to make it attractive to another generation. While the second step is to collect some events about women's interest like clothes, makeup and other things to reach the self-confidence for the girl and to lead her to think in a positive way.In addition to this, the leaders of that wave consider themselves as a powerful and the stranger group from the other previous in the first and the second waves because they brought a new ideas and thoughts of feminism by using a new technological means as internet and television. Also this wave considered as a movement of liberation for women as Schneider explain in his book *Oil in the lamps: faith, feminism, and the future* “this movement is

concerned not simply with the social, political and economic equality of women with men but with a fundamental re-imagining of the whole of humanity in relation to whole of reality including non-human creation” (p 98).

The third feminist wave was persuaded by the importance of the development of the feminist theories and politics by all the available means; feminists of that wave believed that they were able to make this theories affective and attractive and tried to give a work in relation to the women’s role in society as a mother and a house keeper. Moreover, the third feminist wave had several names over world as in Europe (the new feminism), and in USA (the girl feminism).

### **III-Trends of Feminism:**

#### **1- BlackFeminism (Afro American Feminism):**

Which also called *Black Nationalist movement* or *Black Panther movement* it is a movement developed according to experience of black women and their suffering and pain in black liberation it also includes civil rights movement, it was emerged in 1970’s as Bell Hooks claimed in her book; *Ain’t I a Women?* that the Black Nationalism was largely patriarchal misogynist movement, seeking to overcome racial division by strengthening sexist ones, and that it’s readily latched into the idea of the emasculating black matriarch, she also examined the effects of racism, slavery and sexism on the black women psychology, and how they hadthe worst conditions and the lowest status in the American society.

Bell Hooks also argued that the slavery systems, such as the sexual oppression still affect womentoday, as Elizabeth Beaulieu explains; “The black feminist movement recognize that women of color are oppressed in multiple levels and that change cannot come by fighting singular forms of oppression; this movement focused on addressing all forms of oppression and developing political theory for advancing the status of women”(Writing African American Women, p68).

## **2-Womanism:**

Therefore, Alice Walker criticized the black national movement and coined the term womanism to focus on the self-definition and searching for identity of black women .In addition to this, Walker highlight the struggle of women of color internationally in her literary work *The color Purple*, as Maya Angelou in her work *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* affirmed that the women of color have been affected by the political and social systems ,while the famous example of the way that American systems of slavery impacted on the black women was the Toni Morrison's *Beloved* when Sethe succeed in killing her own daughter in order to protect her from slavery and hegemony. Although womanism as a term it represented the woman struggle to get her position over the world and escaped slavery and segregation in this idea Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu argued in her book;

“The term characterized feminists of color who cherish women creativity, emotional flexibility, and strength .Walker's understanding of womanism is not necessarily Christian. Black Christian womanist theologians have adopted Walker's gynocentric concept as a way to distinguish their interpretation of a Bible and their focus on black women's religious” (*Writing AfricanAmericanWomen*, p178).

## **IV- Black Feminist Writers (Afro American Writers):**

Toni Morrison has a specific position in the African American literature but she is not the only important figure there are Bambara, Toni Cades.James Baldwin. Anderson,Mignon ,Holland .Maya Angelou .Alexander Elizabeth, all of them belongs to the same generation and identifiable as authors, writers and professors they were rewarded for their literary work, they brought a strong black females in their novels as main characters this last were more real and active also they make us forget about the female characters who were described in the earlier books, the Afro American writers used the communicative techniques, feminist approaches and helpful language to shape characters and action in their works in addition to their treating of social problems and women status in society such as racism, sexism and

slavery in societies were black women living in as Elizabeth Beaulieu explain in her *Encyclopedia*;

“Black women writers have always out of necessity had to maneuver outside of the dominant white (including the white women) literary system. Their exclusion from the mainstream literary tradition led them to develop and employ alternative means of communicating, drawing upon their own experience of oppression and resistance to shape their texts and situation within it”. (p13)

The African American writers shaped and interpreted political, historical and social establishment of black female, also they have fused their fiction with social critique and responsibilities as Angelyn Mitchell claimed in her book *the Cambridge companion to African American women’s literature*; “Moving beyond the black arts movements, contemporary African American Women writers sought to understand the self in relation to society, historically And politically, as well as the interior self, often through personal experience Like motherhood and marriage” (P, 08).

According to Angelyn, the African American writers also focused on the motherhood in the black culture as Andrea O’Reilly pointed “the focus of black motherhood is how to preserve, protect and more generally empower black children” (p. That means that the Afro American writers treated in their fiction how black women or the black mother were struggling to protect their children from all systems of dominance and slavery in societies were living in. Another confirmation that the black writers treated the issue of mothering was explained in the book of *Toni Morrison and Motherhood* written by Andrea O’Reilly “the motherhood is the central theme in Toni Morrison fiction” (p). According to that the black writers also focus on the problems that faced the black mother such as, slavery which considered as a system by which people owned by other, or the condition to work hardily as Bell Hooks claimed; “The poor women of Africa, like those of India have a hard time as a rule, they have all the hard work to do they have to cut and carry all the wood, carry all the water on their heads and plant all the race, the men and boy cut and burn the bush, with the

help of women; but sowing the rise and planting the Cassava, the women have to do” (*Ain't I A Woman?*, p16, 17).

While the main source of women oppression was the racism because the black women treated unfair in the American society in addition some Afro American writers consider racism as; “racism was clearly the evil that had decreed black people would be enslaved” (*Ain't I A Woman?*, p 43). Therefore the Afro American writers usually focused on romantic and realistic fiction in their literary work they relied on folk tradition of masking to convey ideas for the black audience and provided the white audience with surface meaning ,they also succeed to capture the attention of the public, they produce a popular literary genre to reach a wide audience and also reach a high artistic level especially in 1920's as a Harlem renaissance an outpouring of creative themes that were not produced before. After the civil war several black writers emerged such as W.E.B du Bois, he wrote about the condition of the blacks in U.S.A later on the white society started to pay attention to the African American writing .The black writers used genres like fiction to tackle the issues of blacks during the twentieth century and also dealt with era of slavery to understand the present.

The Afro American writers treat many issues and events had relation to black women as slavery, oppression and self- identity, whereas the women's experience of oppression become a major issue for the black writers it considered as a kind of epistemological imperialism as Lynette D Myles claim: “black feminism as a womanist concept is about finding ways and place to escape, resist and oppose dominant discourses and it's a practice of oppression subjugation”( *Female Subjectivity in African American Women*, p54). Another confirmation to that argued by Judith Butler in his book: *Gender Trouble* that the oppression defined as a mark imposed by the oppressor or is a myth of women, in other word the oppression of women means the unfair and injustice treatment and practices toward women in a patriarchal society it's also considered as the effects of slavery in the women's psychology

because when women work and live under the condition of slavery become oppressed person and try to search and define themselves and become free in all aspects of life and built a new future to themselves as Lynette D Myles claimed; “African American women must define themselves in their own word and by their own ideology of black female identity .As one of the most devalued female group in hegemonic society, African American women have suffered from both male and white female abuse”(*Female Subjectivity in African American Women*, p27).

### **1- Black –American Issues and Concerns:**

We have a clear idea about the black situation let’s state what a report had asked to an innocent voice. The reporter to the black girl: “how should we punish halters? The girl answered: “paint him black and bring him over her” (O Callaghan, p 112). This reply carries the heavy message of the real issues where the black American lived. So the prominent issues were: oppression, slavery and self-identity.

#### **1.1. Oppression:**

The black and the white women receive the same oppression that are done by men socially, physically and psychologically ,perhaps one of the earliest reference which point black women oppression is the speech of Sojourner Truth in the mid-nineteenth century (*Ain’t I a Woman?*).

That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere .Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And Ain’t I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And Ain’t I a Woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well. And ain’t i a woman? I have born thirteen children, and seen them most all sold



off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't a woman? (*History of women suffrage*)

Sojourner Truth proves that black women are treated horrifically. She gets worked like a man and so is considered less of a woman and less of a human being. Socially, black women are deprived from their social rights, such as education. Psychologically black women are oppressed by looking from the fact that women are physically less powerful than men. (Wolfrey, 50)

### **1.2. Slavery:**

The black writers considered slavery as an unfair and illegal practice against African-American slaves especially women or in other terms women of color who suffer slavery in several forms economically, socially and politically and more precisely sexually or in another word sex slavery which refers today to the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of women by a patriarchal man in a patriarchal society (M, Jackson, 24) when the black women had no control over their bodies and were faced to constant rape by white men (Lynette, D, p 54) as Bell Hooks mentioned in her book; "The slavery is terrible for men; but is far more terrible for women, superadded to the burden common to all, they have wrongs, and sufferings, and mortification peculiarly their own" (*Ain't a woman*, p 24).

The women suffering and pain were related directly to their sex slavery when the female slaves lived in a fear of white and black men who forced them to sleep with them in a same bedroom as Lynette, D, Myles confirmed; "A common practice in slavery was that the young female slave was forced to sleep in the same bedroom of the master and mistress situation which provided a convenient setting for sexual assault" (*Female subjectivity in African American women*, p36).

### **1.3. Self-definition:**

Drawing on black feminism the black writers focused on self-definition and how the Afro-American women were being able to define themselves, their identity, their character, abilities and attitudes by their own words. In the issue of self-definition the women of color can move beyond new parameters to change their personal and social position and to put an end to the race, sexism, dominance, hegemony and all forms of slavery (Lynette, D, Myles, 62) according to that Lynette also described self-definition as; “Female self-definition is the conscious will on the Part of women to define herself by her own terms And not by other values, beliefs, and expectation, When she does, she creates female autonomy by setting The condition by which she lives and experiences life”(*Female subjectivity in African American women*, p55).

The issue of self-definition considered as a central theme to women of color since their legal enslavement, because they were defined historically as a licentious women, although the efforts of the Afro-American women in defining black female were expressed early in black women writings as Toni Morrison did in her novel *Beloved* when her aim was very clear and obvious which was the African American women must have their self-love, self-knowledge and self-language, as the main female protagonist Sethe who escaped slavery and struggled to get her complete self-identity in addition to that ,the former slave Isabella Van Wagenen who renamed herself as Sojourner Truth in order to show the world that she was a person ,and she was a woman refusing to be denied by others (p 55).

### **2-Toni Morrison’s Racial and Sexual Inclination:**

Toni Morrison was born Chloe Ardelia Wofford on February 1931, in Lorain Ohio her father called George Wofford born in 1908, her mother called Ella Ramah Willis born 1806, is an African American novelist who was gifted both Nobel and Pulitzer prizes, she wrote a lot of novels as a *Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved* for which Morrison was

awarded The Nobel Prize in 1993 she was the first African American woman who received this prize.

Morrison graduated in Howard University with a bachelor of arts degree in 1953 and later she attended Cornell University and graduated master degree in English literature in 1955 and after her studies she taught at Howard University where she met her husband .

In 1961 Morrison got her first child son Herald Ford Morrison but after her getting to the second child in 1964, she divorced and started working on her first story about a little black girl called Pecola which became later her first novel published in 1970, but also worked as an editor in New York in 1971-1972, after the success of her first novel she wrote other novels *Sula* in 1973, *Song of Solomon* in 1977 and the *Tar Baby* in 1981. Morrison got many prizes for her work as the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Prize, and in 1987.

Morrison published her famous novel *Beloved* and as a result, she was awarded both Nobel and Pulitzer Prize, she was described as an author who gives birth to the American reality as Elizabeth Beaulieu claims in her book the *Toni Morrison Encyclopedia* “gives life to an essential aspect of American reality” (P, 10). Morrison published another novel called *Paradise* in 1998, she already published four novels which are *Love* 2003, *A Mercy* 2008, *Home* 2012 and the last novel was *God help the child* 2015.

In 2012, Morrison received presidential Medal of Freedom from USA president Barack Obama this prize is given for, 1 especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interests of the United States, 2 or world peace, 3 or cultural or other significant public or private endeavors. Another important prize given to Toni Morrison for her literary work is the National Humanities Medal given for, 1 work that has deepened the notion understanding of the humanities, 2 broadened our citizen's engagement with the humanities, 3 or helped preserve and expand American's access to important resources in the humanities.

Morrison was associated with feminism because the predominant women are the main characters in her novels as Sethe and Pecola and other female protagonists; also she is famous for her detailed depiction of the characters.

Morrison used an easy style of writing and unique language also she combined different styles into her writing while the most techniques used by her were the descriptive identification, historical references and different sentence structure, she give us clear and easy understanding to the varied types of literature which was produced, Morrison was known for her very descriptive details while writing because she describe everything while writing as in her famous novel *beloved*;

“Except for a heap more hair and some waiting in his eyes he looked the way he had in Kentucky peach stone skin; straight -backed. For a man with an immobile face it was amazing how ready it was to smile or blaze or be sorry with you .As though all you had to was get his attention and right away be produced the feeling you were feeling with less than a bank, his faced seemed to change \_under-heath it lay be active”. (*Beloved*, 3)

In addition to this, Morrison added lot of depth to her novels, and she made us think about the main characters and the relation between them.

Although Toni Morrison revised in her work many themes such as: blackness, identity, love, motherhood, racism and sexuality it also explored the deep and the difficult relationship between blacks and whites and how individual identity affected by racial division .While the tension in her literary works as a black writer were not just between masculinity and femininity it also about the internal psychological traumas caused by sexual and racial discrimination. However Morrison and Faulkner claimed in their novels that America is a region of blood, slavery and all forms of discrimination to black people and especially black women who faced a sexual rape by both white and black men and also masters as what the Schoolteacher did with Sethe in the Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* another confirmation to that suggested by John Duvall in his book; “to speak of a Faulknerian inter-text in Morrison’s

fiction runs the risk not only that some readers will see this as an attempt to question ,her genius ,but also of calling up an images of racial and sexual abuse in the American past”(the identifying fiction of Toni Morrison,p75) .

Although Morrison in her literary work established the forms of relationship between male-female, individual-society and good-evil, she also try to codified attitudes toward racial and sexual discrimination against women of color ,while this idea argued by Tessa Roynon in her book; “I go on to demonstrate and analyze the ways in which Song of Solomon ,the Beloved-Jazz-Paradise trilogy ,and Love ,in their examination of racial justice and injustice”(Toni Morrison classical tradition: transforming American culture,p132).

### **3- The Toni Morrison’s (*Beloved*):**

*Beloved* (1987) was the fifth novel of Toni Morrison which awarded the Pulitzer prize in 1988 , and was considered as a major Hollywood motion picture in 1998, the novel based on a real story of a slave women called Margret Garner who escaped slavery and tried to kill her own daughter in order to protect her from the same life slavery while the name of Garner was present in the novel as intersexual features ,the story is about the killing and the death of a child who returns after years as a ghost and later a real foreign girl seems to be the incarnation of the murdered baby .

The main protagonist of the novel was Sethe who escaped slavery within her children but she killed one of them in order to prevent her from slavery, Sethe lived with her mother-in-law Baby Suggs and their memories of the past about the slavery life .In addition to that he novel revealed the lives of two main characters Sethe and Paul D the formers and the slaves who trying to create a new life for themselves, the portraits of Sethe and Paul D in the *Beloved* was confront by several questions like what means to be a man and what means to be a matter when the basic elements of freedom were ignored .

The novel begins with house 124 in Bluestone Road outside of Cincinnati is a home of Sethe Garner and her family that house is spiteful in the beginning of novel as Toni Morrison describe it and the Sethe's family;

“124 WAS SPITEFUL. Full of baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims .the grandmother, baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Bugler, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Bugler); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard”. (*Beloved*,p 1).

According to Toni Morrison? the novel has three main sections and does not have a chapter's title .Morrison makes things that happen in the past clear and obvious to the reader as Macshler Sabine explain in her book, the effect of slavery on the female characters in Toni Morrison beloved; “In Toni Morrison beloved the relationship between history and memory is dramatized .she uses memory to explore and Represent the various dimension of slave life.by doing so, she Seeks to makes slavery accessible to reader for when the slavery Is not a memory but a remote historical fact to be ignored repressed? And forgotten”. (2007, p13)

*Beloved* the novel's title which can be broken into three parts the first part “to be”which explained by Carmen Gillespie as “the word to be is critical to understanding the novel , what does it means to be a human being and then, particularly , what does it mean to be a human being when one's primary humanity is denied”. (*Critical companion to Toni Morrison*,p29) through the novel the word “be” involved all the characters as human being ,as mother ,friend ,daughter and also slaves after the arrival to sweet home , the second part is the word “love”, Morrison in her novel reflect to the meaning of the word love and its various types like the mother's love ,the adult's love which were shaped by the slavery and its effects upon the characters of the novel ,while the third and the last part of the title was the “ D”

letter which referred to the to the past of the character Beloved who forces Sethe and Paul D to create future for themselves and build a new identity .

According to Toni Morrison, the novel contain several themes like sexuality, night, freedom and slavery and each theme has relation to the other one, as when the black slaves used the night to cover themselves while escaping when the freedom become impossible in the day, also Paul D and Sethe used night to working together also Sethe and her husband talk and touch to each other at night ,additionally the Sethe's daughter Denver was born in the evening, whereas Morrison describe sexuality in her novel *beloved* as a the theme of connection and disconnection between human being .

As soon as the Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* turned into a movie in 1998 directed by Jonathan Demme starring Oprah Winfrey as Sethe, Thandie as Beloved and Danny Glover as Paul D, Beah Richard as Baby Suggs while Kimberly Elise as Denver .The movie was positively received by critics and nominated for several movie awards including Academy Award Nomination in the best costume design category and both Danny Glover and Kimberly Elise were actually awarded for their supporting roles.

According to *beloved* Toni Morrison highlight the importance of confronting and transforming history also it show what slavery did to black people bodies and minds especially women and what it meant for them to be owned by others. While the very specific for Toni Morrison was the mark of alienation that slavery left for African Americans, almost completely denying their personal wholeness because the laws of slavery forbade marriage, free mobility ,self- defense , and the host of other activities of blacks .

## **Conclusion:**

This theoretical part sheds lights to some important point related feminism as a movement to end racism and sexism (Bell Hooks,1970); it deals with some different point and ideas has a relation with this term ,and more significantly focus on the origin of feminism and its types and waves ,this chapter also focus on some feminist experiences as the black feminism(Afro American feminism) in addition to their writers(Afro American writers), and the main issues and events which are dealing with like slavery, oppression, and the self-definition. However the slavery effects on the women's psychology and become an oppressive ones,and struggling for their social, political and economic position and define themselves by their own words, while the woman succeed to make her believe that she is human being who has rights to live, to marry, to vote and to speak, and also to become an equal creature as man.



# *Chapter two:*

*Motherhood in Beloved*

## **Introduction:**

*"Motherhood is the biggest gamble in the world; it is the glorious life force. It is huge and scary. It is an act of infinite optimism". Gilda Radner*

Motherhood is a word full of great meanings and it is a concept that handle a lot of meanings, it gathers love and tenderness, struggle and sacrifice, power and strength, it is the symbol of every beautiful thing in this world, it is a symbol of giving not taking, it is a ticket to paradise the place that we all dream to be in.

Toni Morrison; a contemporary author, who presented in her novel *Beloved* a different view of the concept of motherhood, where a mother's love to her children pushes her to slaughter her daughter so as to protect her from the dreadfulness of slavery, and not to let her live under oppression and subjugation in Sweet Home. However, this was not the end for the protagonist of the novel, Sethe who run away and own her freedom to start a new life with her only daughter Denver in Blue Road House. Unfortunately, Sethe did not live in peace even when she got her freedom, because of the ghost of her daughter who kept haunting her, but one day she showed up from the body of the water as a young woman to be close from her mother and to feel all her love and affections.

In this chapter, first, we are going to discover how Morrison built a whole theory of motherhood and how she defined it. Second, we are going to see how the theme of motherhood is described in Morrison's novel *Beloved*. Third and finally we are going to explain the mother-daughter relationship from the Lacanian psychoanalytical approach in addition to the Freudian theory of Pre-Oedipal and Adlerian theory of birth order.

### **I-Toni Morrison's Theory of Motherhood:**

In most of Toni Morrison's works, motherhood is a main theme and a topic she deals with in most of her writings. Toni Morrison hinge a fully developed theory of African American mothering that is essential to her broader political and philosophical stand on black womanhood. Constructing upon black women's experiences of, and outlooks on motherhood, she developed a view of black motherhood from the side of maternal identity and role that is distinct than the motherhood practiced and prescribed in the dominant culture. She defines and positions maternal identity as a grief of power for black women. From this position of power black mothers interact in a maternal practice that has its clear goal of the empowerment of children. (*Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*. 2014). As Patricia Hill stated in her book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*: "Morrison took the core themes of Black women's standpoint and infusing them with new meaning, Black feminist thought can stimulate a new consciousness that utilizes Black women's everyday [...] this rearticulated consciousness aims to empower African-American women and stimulate resistance"(p,32). Furthermore, Morrison's perspective on black motherhood challenges and enables black women "to challenge the controlling images of black motherhood, which Collins has defined as the mammy, the matriarch, Jezebel, and the welfare mother" (Patricia Hill, p, 276). Morrison's standpoint on black motherhood enables black women to resist these negative evaluations of black motherhood by rearticulating the power that is ingrained in black women's everyday experiences of motherhood. This re-articulation center upon reaffirmation of the traditional roles and beliefs of black motherhood that gives rise to Morrison's theory of motherhood as a site of power for black women (*Toni Morrison and Motherhood: a Politics of the heart*).

In an interview with Bill Mayors (1989), Morrison describes motherhood as "the most liberating thing that ever happened to me"(Taylor- Guthrie, p 270- 71). And when Bill asked

her why mothering is a liberating thing, she answered “because children will make you become the best thing you can possibly be, or the worst thing you can be” (*The Voices of Toni Morrison*, p 213). For her motherhood liberated her and gave her a “better self” that is to say it is a site of liberation and self-realization (Andrea O’Reilly, p, 19). Morrison maternal standpoint of mothering as a site of power and her model of motherwork as concerned with the empowerment of children means in Morrison’s view that mothering is “a political act with social and public connections and consequences” ( Andrea, P.30). While for Toni Morrison motherhood is a liberating thing, “she answered: because children will make become the best thing you can possibly, be or the worst thing you can be”. (*The Voices of Toni Morrison*, p.213)

To sum up, Toni Morrison set up a wholly theory of motherhood where she takes the core themes of black motherhood and develops from them a new consciousness of black motherhood that empowers African American women and engenders resistance, for her motherhood is a site of power for black women and a site of empowerment of children, besides it is a site of liberation and self- realization.

## **II- Motherhood in Beloved:**

In her article "*Motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Psychological Reading*" Sandra Mayfield stated that *Beloved* is a story of a courageous, slave mother called Sethe who dares to imagine a future for herself and her children far away from the horror of slavery (2012). That mother has in her mind that she would move heaven and earth only to be able to set free her children from the spiteful manacles of slavery. Which she has been born into and has serving all through her life. Sethe chooses to kill her beloved daughter instead of letting her be enslaved. She slaughters her own daughter for the “noble motto” of freeing her from the” chronic clasp” of slavery. (*Lacanian Psychoanalysis of Mother –Child Relationship in Toni Morrison’s Beloved*, p, 01). Although Sethe killed her daughter in the past, her dead

daughter keep haunting her until she emerges as a young woman named Beloved, come to live with Sethe and her daughter Denver and at the end of the novel Sethe's haunting disperse by a stirring exorcism. (*Bloom's Guides: Toni Morrison's Beloved*, 2004). Sethe is finally got her real freedom and passed her painful memories of the past and start a new life with her daughter, Denver and Paul D where she forgave herself and started to love herself.

To conclude, Morrison's *Beloved* is a story of a former slave, mother who murdered her baby daughter in order to save her from the terror of slavery, but she couldn't live in peace because of her cruel action, until her daughter emerges as a young woman and lives with her and her sister. Beloved returned from death in order to feel her mother's affections and all her caring.

### **III- ALacanian Reading to Mother-Daughter Relationship:**

In order to examine the relationship between mothers and children relationship, we are going to base on Jacques Lacan's, (1901-1981) a twentieth century psychoanalyst and a literary critic, psychoanalytical approach. Although Lacan based many of his ideas on Freudian thoughts, he differs from him in this point; that a child at birth experiences a psychologically traumatic break with the mother that transcends the child, according to him the child wishes to be "the completing object of the (m) other's desire" (Sandra Mayfield, p. 04). "Lacan believes that a true relationship between mothers and children could be discerned by investigating what he termed the "Existential Break"; the disconnection between the child and the mother in early age as Lacan named. This sort of separation felt between the mother and the child in Sethe's story is shocking because both were slaves and Sethe lost her mother when she was only twelve years old. She splashed between a literal lack of knowledge of her mother and the alienation she experienced as a slave in South Carolina where her mother had been a slave. Lacan believed that children shape different images of themselves based on their contact with other people in their lives and in the form of various narratives about themselves in "imaginary". For example Sethe's building of herself start after witnessing her mother's

death and after removing to a plantation in Kentucky called Sweet Home. (*Motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Psychological Reading*, 2012). This kind of separation of the child from its mother, even if it is linguistic; Language is the utmost importance to Lacan. He suggests that language predates and shapes individual experience: "The child" says Lacan "is born into language" It is the father not the mother who introduces language to the child. Furthermore, the child is also born into a "primordial discord", a desire for connection to the world around him, and longing gives birth to desire to be at one with nature and the mother again (Sandra Mayfield, p. 04) ;

“The father's presence introduces the world of the symbolic order, the world of language, the world of imaginary union between the child and the mother, and in contemporary psychological parlance, the father's introduction the symbolic other, or language, allows the child to perform the necessary task of separation from the mother and the construction of a uniquely individualized self”. (Mayfield, p.04)

That sort of detachment is irreparable and haunts both the child and the mother incessantly. Which Lacan calls it “an experience of loss” that both of them hanker after regaining or compensating for. But this loss is never retrieved no matter what they succeed in achieving. Lacan calls this lost object of desire, „object petit, “or „small object”; this term actually refers very intently to something that is uniquely personal, individual and so extremely private. This has the expository implication that articulates the object of desire “belongs to me and therefore influences only me” (*Critical Theory Today: a User Friendly Guide*, Tyson, 2006).

Lacan uses the term “Mirror Stage” to refer to a phase of development in the beginning of which the baby is dependent on its mother and thinks that they are one. Then, the baby experiences a loss upon understanding that its mother is a separate human nature. Mirror stage is represented by the imaginary realm, another Lacanian term that is equated with the phase of demand because the baby wishes for the desire of the mother and starts using language to utter its demands (*The Mother and the Daughter Relationship*, 2010).

In her article "*Return to the M Other to Heal the Self- identity, selfhood and community in Toni Morrison's Beloved*", Alison Mackey stated that Beloved a pre-verbal, still nursing, "crawling already" baby girl is impulsively separated from her mother when her mother Sethe murdered her to rescue her from the horror of slavery; "The baby girl becomes trapped forever in the Pre-Oedipal stage and experiences an exaggerated desire for her mother that cannot possibly be fulfilled. Beloved's insistent corporeal return can thus be seen as a very literal illustration of the symbolic function of desire" (Alison Mackey, p.44).

Here, it is the first encounter of Beloved; she walked out of the water;

A FULLY DRESSED woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree... By then keeping her eyes open was less of an effort. She could manage it for a full two minutes or more... "Look" said Denver. "What is that?" And for some reason she could not immediately account for, the moment Sethe got close enough to see the face of the woman, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity. She said "oh, excuse me" and ran around to the back of 124... Right in front of its door she had to lift her skirts, and the water she voided was endless. Like a horse, she thought, but as it went on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born... there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no now. "What might your name be?" asked Paul D. "Beloved," she said, and her voice was so low and rough each one looked at the other two. They heard the voice first--later the name (Morrison, p.52).

Beloved here, looks like a baby who newly begins speaking with her patchy voice; "What might your name be?" asked Paul D. "Beloved," she said, and her voice was so low and rough each one looked at the other two. They heard the voice first--later the name" (Morrison, p.52). "Your woman she never fix up your hair?" .Beloved asked. Sethe and Denver looked up at her. Beloved's uneven voice in the first quotation supports the assumption that she has just started using language for the first time. Thinking of babies' speech which has not earned the necessary skill for uttering perfect words yet, one may say that it is a new experience for Beloved to use language. She has got the body of a nineteen year old girl; she possesses a baby's soul. Also Beloved's desire to her mother is another sign that she is in the mirror stage and that is showed when Beloved wants to be the sole object of her mother's care. She refuses

to let anyone share her mother's affections that are why she made Paul D leave the house to feel all her mother's love and care to herself. Another thing to notice about Beloved is that she depends on her mother in everything like an infant in his first years. And this is a conversation between her and Denver;

"What did you come back for?"  
Beloved smiled. "To see her face."  
"Ma'am's? Sethe?"  
"Yes, Sethe."  
Denver felt a little hurt, slighted that she was not the main reason for Beloved's return (...)  
Denver, who was sitting cross-legged, lurched forward and grabbed Beloved's wrist. "Don't tell her. Don't let Ma'am know who you are. Please, you hear?"  
"Don't tell me what to do. Don't you never never tell me what to do."  
"But I'm on 65"  
"She is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have." Her eyes stretched to the limit, black as the all night sky".  
(Morrison, p75-76)

Beloved admits that she returned in flesh only to see her mother and goes on to acknowledge she needs nobody except her mother. Jacques Lacan considers this "mother-child urging to be inevitable and it has greater significance in language and the formation of the unconscious" (*Lacanian Psychoanalysis of Mother-Child Relationship in Toni Morrison's Beloved*, 2018). Sethe believes that her love for her dead daughter is so much that she makes her come back in flesh. She feels happy to find her again and from that moment she acts as an affectionate mother towards Beloved. As the long-awaited mother, Sethe cries out loud;

"BELOVED, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be. But my love was tough and she back now. I knew she would be. Paul D ran her off so she had no choice but to come back to me in the flesh". (Morrison, p. 200)

For Lacan, all the longings of the mother are for her children and all those of the children are for their mother. He explains that a child contains itself to be an inseparable part of its mother (*Lacanian Psychoanalysis of Mother-Child Relationship in Toni Morrison's Beloved*, 2018).



The mother and the daughter talk;

Tell me the truth. Didn't you come from the other side?  
Yes, I was on the other side  
You came back because of me?  
Yes.  
You rememory me?  
Yes, I remember you  
You never forgot me?  
Your face is mine.  
Do you forgive me?  
Will you stay?  
You safe here now. (Morrison, p. 215)

The mother cries again to let Beloved know how intently she has been awaiting her;

I waited for you  
You are mine  
You are mine  
You are mine (Morrison, p. 217).

This signifies an absolute feeling of possessiveness that exists between a mother and her child. It can be clearly seen that for Beloved, Sethe becomes an object of desire for which Lacan uses the term *objet petit*. She longs for her mother whom she is deeply devoted to. Sethe emphasizes again; "When I tell you mine, I also mean I'm yours. I wouldn't draw breath without my children" (Morrison, p. 203); this psychological possessiveness does not endure any slightest separation from each other. Sethe does never want to be disintegrated from her little daughter, Beloved. She wants to keep her with herself at least dead if not alive. Then she continues suffering the cramps of loss and never stops awaiting her child, when Beloved re-appears, Sethe has all the reasons to be grateful; "She come back to me, my daughter, and she is mine" (Morrison, p.204).As for Beloved, she speaks of her heart;

"I AM BELOVED and she is mine. I see her take flowers away from leaves she puts them in a round basket the leaves are not for her she fills the basket she opens the grass I would help her but the clouds are in the way how can say things that are pictures I cannot separate from herher there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too a hot thing" (Morrison, p. 210).

Beloved emergence in 124 houses, affects both Sethe and Denver; Sethe, the enslaved black woman, refuses to allow herself to be defined in anyway other than as a mother, by limiting her identity to motherhood; she still is not able to fully explore the question of what it means to be Sethe. She falls into the vortex of past through her relationship with Beloved (Carmen, 2008). Motherhood is an important aspect of Sethe's self-identity and she is deeply wounded (both emotionally and physically) when the school teacher supervises his nephew in her forcing milking as he would livestock. Sethe lacks clearly defined self. For example, she continually refers to herself in the third person, and she views her children as her best thing, the one part that slavery has not harmed.

“Sethe neglects Denver who represents the present and becomes obsessed with assuaging the needs and desire of the past in the form of Beloved. She becomes consumed, both literally and figuratively, with the need to compensate for the death of her child by indulging her every whim. Such an urgent engagement with the past is self-destructive”. (Carmen, p. 32)

Figuratively, the past is swallowing Sethe. She recounts, over and over, the painful stories Beloved graves, and how much she had suffered for her children However, Beloved refuses to forgive Sethe for her past actions. Denver realizes that instead of protecting Beloved from Sethe, she have to protect her mother from Beloved, Denver decided to step out of 124 house, at first she hesitated, but then she remembered her grandmother words about the courage and the strength of her ancestors. Denver now, is a part of the community after being isolated for eighting years and that is for the sake of her family which suffers from hunger. She finds a job and she starts working. She takes the responsibility of her and her family. However, as Denver's social life improved her home life get worse. “Denver can learn; she changes by the end. She has set in motion of maturation that will eventually make her an empowering ancestral spirit like her grandmother” (*Bloom's Guides*, p, 45).

Beloved's threat to Sethe's life prompts Denver to seek help beyond 124, that action of her, not only save her mother but also enables her to resume her self-creation. (*The voices*

*of Toni Morrison*) And at the end Sethe and Denver learns to live, it is the ghost that taught them. (Harold Bloom, 2009)

Even though, Beloved and Denver are sisters, they have highly different personalities and these differences can be acknowledged by employing Adler's birth order theory. Beloved is the third child of Sethe and even the name of the house 124 stands for her birth order. 3 is the missing number of the house as Sethe killed her when she was a baby. Thinking that she returned to 124 houses in flesh eighteen years later and she still has the soul of a baby; it can be supported that she is not the third child anymore. She returns house as a baby with the body of a grown up girl and naturally she becomes Sethe's last child according to the order of birth. Moreover her behavior supports this assumption. She is spoiled by her mother all the time just like every other youngest child who is pampered by the parents. Sethe gives all her attention and care to Beloved as a result of the guilt she feels inside. So, Beloved achieves exaggerated maternal attention and love and this makes her a spoiled child. She also acts selfishly and likes being the boss and having her mother and sister do everything for her. Denver may be considered as the first child thinking the birth order because Howard and Buglar are away from home and Beloved acts as the youngest child. So, she becomes the elder sister of Beloved and the oldest child in the house 124. She has a responsible personality which is a characteristic of the oldest children and she is a caring elder sister for Beloved. For example, she nurses Beloved when she is bodily weak;

Four days she slept, waking and sitting up only for water. Denver tended her, watched her sound sleep, listened to her labored breathing and, out of love and a breakneck possessiveness that charged her, hid like a personal blemish Beloved's incontinence. She rinsed the sheets secretly (...) She boiled the underwear and soaked it in bluing, praying the fever would pass without damage. So intent was her nursing, she forgot to eat or visit the emerald closet. (Morrison, 1987, p.54)

Another characteristic of the oldest children that is also available in Denver is that she is serious and logical. Seeing that she is deposed and her mother became so caring for

Beloved that she lost her job, she decides to get support from the Afro-American society and tries to find a job for herself;

"I want to see Mr. and Mrs. Bodwin."(...)

"What you want em for?"

"I'm looking for work. I was thinking they might know of some."

"You Baby Suggs' kin, ain't you?"

"Yes, ma'am"(Morrison, p.253)

Denver had heard about an afternoon job at the shirt factory. She hoped that with her night work at the Bodwins' and another one, she could put away something and help her mother too (Morrison, p.266). We see that acting logically, Denver tries to earn a living and she achieves success and career just like most of the oldest children (*The Mother and the Daughter Relationship*, 2010).

Sethe is haunted by the memory of killing her daughter; she spent her life struggling to forget the past and live in the present. Sethe, the target of Beloved's attention and the person from whom she seeks retribution, because of Beloved she suffers physical and psychological deterioration until Denver seeks help from the black women who respond to the call, and Beloved disappears forever. (*Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook*, 1999)

Sethe is separated from her mother at three weeks old, and it is not uncommon for slave children, she saw her mother only once in a while in the rice field. (*Contested Boundaries New Critical Essays on the Fiction of Toni Morrison*, 2013)

At the end of the novel, Denver says about Sethe and Beloved, "it was difficult ... to tell who was who" (Beloved, p. 24).

"For Morrison, Sethe's claim of motherhood is a political gesture, an act of defiance against a culture of repression" (Maxine L. Montgomery, p. 91)

In order to examine the relationship between Sethe and her two daughters Beloved and Denver, we will depend on Freud's concept of Pre-Oedipal period. Sethe's relationship with Beloved is extremely indicative of the Pre-Oedipal behaviour. Beloved, is stuck in a perpetual state of infancy despite her body age of nineteen. She interacts with Denver and Paul D but her main aim returning is to get back to Sethe and Sethe alone. Sethe continues to nourish Beloved from her own health; the latter becomes fuller and stronger. (P.42)

With Denver, Morrison selects for a less literal, more realistic representation of the Pre-Oedipal. "Denver has nearly as difficult a time establishing her mother's because she has had barely more contact with the outside world than Beloved. Denver's superego is stunned, leaving the id underneath less constrained than it might have been while Beloved has no superego or ego" (p. 43). Denver simply suffers from a deprivation of Freud's normal conditions of identity creation. The mother dominates and the father is absent. The presence of the Pre-Oedipal creates a context in which Morrison can firmly set her portrayal of slavery but it is the unconscious mind, where the Pre-Oedipal resides, that drives home the extent of slavery's scars. (Helper Jonathan, 2012)

Sethe the protagonist loses herself for the reason of the painful memories of her experiences in Sweet Home under slavery. She suffers of the lack of identity and tries to reconstruct it. Beloved resurrects and suffocates Sethe's selfhood. Sethe's selfhood is decentered and not able to make a right decision. (Sharma R. Sistani, 2016)

Sethe's mothering is intertwined with her memories of her own mother, who was separated from her by the cruelties of slavery, and with the mothering and memories of mother-in-law. (Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, 2003)

Morrison argued that Motherhood is not the obstacle standing in women's way: it is a question of economics. (Rachel Lister, 2009)

“Sethe reconceptualized metaphor of self based on motherhood, motherliness, and mother-love; a love described by Paul D as “too thick” (William L. Andrews, Nellie Y. McKay, 1999, p. 97).

Beloved traverses the Middle Passage to get to 124 Bluestone Road; traveling not only distance but also time in search for her mother. (Beaulieu, 2003) For Morrison, Motherhood “is the very core of human experience, and to truly grasp or capacity for love, for grief, for pain and for survival” (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 218). Sethe revolve how one can be a mother, a wife, a friend, a daughter and a woman while a slave. (Gillespie, p.29)

To sum up, according to Lacan there is a deep tight between mothers and their children, and whatever happened that tight cannot be broken and even death cannot separate between, as the case of Sethe and her daughter Beloved, she returned from death to stay close to her mother, and to feel her love. Where their relationship is not simply a mother-daughter relationship, but it is the relationship between Sethe’s past and present. In the other hand, the relationship between Sethe and her other daughter Denver is peaceful, they are close to each other. Sethe as a mother refuses to allow herself to be defined in anyway other than a mother, by limiting her identity to motherhood. Moreover, as long as the child is integrated with the mother, it does not feel any want, and neither does the mother. But, for any reason, if disintegration occurs between the mother and the child, neither of them feels alive in this mortal world. Such is the case in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. In the first place, Sethe commits the horrible sin that is for the greater sake of her child. Subsequently, she goes on suffering the worst agony for the absence of her child. Consequently, she continues awaiting the impossible arrival of the slain child. It can be because of the dire intensity of the hankering in the mother’s forlorn heart that the apparition of the lynched child whom she calls Beloved arrives. If the mother and daughter relationship between Sethe and Beloved is compared with the same relation between Sethe and Denver, quite remarkable differences are observed. The

reason for these differences lies in different attitudes of Denver and Beloved against life. Using Adlerian terminology, Beloved is considered to be getting and inclination type that is completely dependent on her mother. Sethe is also keen on responding to Beloved's interest. "When it became clear that they were only interested in each other, Denver began to drift from the play. (Sethe happy when Beloved was; Beloved lapping devotion like cream)" (Morrison, 1987, p.240). Here, it is obvious that Sethe and Beloved have a deeper relationship. Denver, on the other hand, loves her mother in the way of a grown up girl. She does not feel dependent on her mother like her sister and she even looks after her mother when she became ill after Beloved's departure. In short, two kinds of mother and daughter relationships are observed in the novel and the healthy one is between Denver and her mother. The novel portrays two sisters and Denver is the one who possesses the attributions of the oldest child. Beloved, on the other hand, shows behaviors of the youngest child who tends to be pampered and selfish.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude, Toni Morrison in her novel gave a different view to the concept of motherhood by the story of Sethe and her two daughters Denver and Beloved. Where Sethe's love for her children push her to kill her daughter in order to save her from the horror of slavery, but she could not forget her dead, beloved daughter. The emergence of Beloved as a mysterious girl no one knew from where she came, and that is what Lacan stated in his theory by saying that "mother child urging to be inevitable". Morrison examines the archetypal images of motherhood, ruthlessly challenging traditional definitions of mothering. In Beloved, Morrison creates her most complex portrayal of motherhood.



# *Chapter three:*

*The effects of slavery on the female  
characters of the novel Beloved*

**Introduction:**

After a long trip of suffering under the worst conditions of slavery which considered the unfair and illegal practice against woman of color, sexual and racial, she is nowadays playing an important role over the world and in all the domains of life.

In this chapter we introduce slavery by represent its impact on the novel and its effects on the female characters and how they live a horrific life under conditions of slavery, also we shed a light on the strong black female who live in pain and suffer to prevent her life from the ghost of slavery by challenging against marginalization, race, and social class and who women of color faced racial and sexual discrimination.

## **I-African American Women and Slavery:**

*“Make clear how difficult the lives of slave women were”.*

(Elizabeth, 2006.929)

This passage tells about the pain and the suffer of many African-American women slaves who faced a challenge against their marginalization of race, gender and social class during slavery in addition to their taking away from their families and their children also the women slaves were sexually abused and forced to work hardly, and mistreated dating back to the day of slavery. Additionally the Afro- American women had to endure because their lives were not their own.

## **II-Slavery in Toni Morrison’s Beloved:**

The novel was a background to the experience of women during slavery it also so important for its demonstration that the slave mother struggle for the happiness of her children in addition to that it aimed to understand how and why the mother can kill her infant ,also Morrison painted an image of the brutal effects of slavery ,also she treated the slavery’s results as the oppression .Beloved follow the story of Sethe and her little daughter Denver and how the two females try to rebuild new life after the escape ,also the novel considered as a background to the painful aspects of slavery as violence, hard work and sexual abuse ,which pushed Morrison to search about the idea of being human and mother in the same time ,in addition to that she explored the effects of slavery on the characters Sethe and Paul D and their memories of past.

According to the novel the black women faced different kinds of humiliation realizing the relation between female characters in pairs: ( Sethe, Beloved)(Sethe, Denver)(Denver,Beloved) who linked together to tell the reader how the Afro-Americans struggle to protect their history.

The novel was a dedication to the million slaves and black people who died in slavery. In 1873, slavery was abolished in Cincinnati, Ohio for ten years in this setting Morrison put the characters according to their power in moving events in the novel she also demonstrated her skills in penetrating the psychology of characters who shoulder the horrific burden of a slaves hidden sins. With *Beloved* Toni Morrison related her narrative past with the horrors of slavery especially for the black slave mother another confirmation to that mentioned in the book of Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu “the Toni Morrison encyclopedia” :

“*Beloved* relates slavery trauma through personal histories ,stories,and tales history is more than facts and dates ;it is memories ,stories, ghosts ,and houses *Beloved* reinvents historical recovery as an act of imagination .It legitimates alternative sources for history ,such as oral stories and myths ,because for Morrison telling history is a survival strategy for African Americans ,her goals is to figure the past to include other voices not to be possessed by it”. (*The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, p 35)

*Beloved* based on the struggle of psychological wholeness, while it also situated on slavery and its aftermath on the characters of the novel whether male or female, in another hand slavery considered as a program of dehumanization and psychological dimension of relationship in which masters had the power to argue slaves by slavery and its condition (Macshler, Sabine.2007) and considered them as less than human or in another word “animals”. Moreover the important aspects of slavery in the novel was when Sethe killed her own daughter in order to prevent her from slavery and its condition as she said “if I hadn’t killed her she would have died” also when Paul D had an iron bit in his mouth ,additionally slavery broke up the family unit as when Sethe can hardly remembered her own mother and to slaves this was the norm rather than an exception as children are routinely sold off to work for away from their families as Toni Morrison claim;

“Now to take two buckets of blackberries and makes ten, maybe twelve pies; to have turkey enough for the whole town pretty near , new peas in September ,fresh cream but no cow , ice and sugar , batter bread, bread pudding ,raised bread ,short bread-it made them mad .loaves and fishes were his power-they did not belong to an ex -slave who had probably never carried one hundred

pounds to take the scale ,or picked okra a baby on her back .who had never been lashed by a ten -years –old white boy as god knows they had .who had not even escaped slavery –had ,in fact ,been taught out of it by a doting son and driven to the Ohio river in a wagon-free papers folded between her breasts (driven by the very man who had been her master ,who also paid her resettlement free-name of Garner ),and routed a house with two floors and as well from the Bodwins –the white brother and sister who gave Stamp Paid, Ella and John clothes ,goods and gear for runaways because they hated slavery worse” (*Beloved* , p137).

### **III-The Psychological Impact of Slavery in *Beloved*:**

The experiences and memories of slaves caused fragmentation and the loss of identity for the slaves, moreover Sethe, Denver and Paul D all of these characters passed through this experience of slavery and losing identities and transformed from a person’s to a fragmented figures because of slavery, and the slaves consist a painful memories, horrible past and the self –definition denied and becomes a “self that is no self” as a consequence to the painful and the suffer of the slaves the self becomes a subject to a dehumanize practice against humanity as in the novel all of the characters face a challenge of an unmade self composed of their memories of the past .

However the pain in Toni Morrison’s novel presented in a several forms because everyone involved in slavery was scared weather mentally, psychologically, physically or sociologically in addition to that many major characters try to beautify pain in a way that reduces what has been done for example: Sethe continues to repeat what a white girl said about her scars on her back describing her as “choke cherry tree. Trunk, branches and even leaves” she repeat this to everyone suggesting that she was trying to find the beauty in her scars even when she caused her extreme pain , while both Paul D and Baby Suggs were looking in a disgust and deny way to that description of Sethe’s scars .Also Sethe does the same with Beloved .the memory of her daughter’s ghost plays a role of memory ,pain and spite that what separate Sethe and Beloved for example: Beloved stays with Sethe and Paul Din a house which considered as a place of vulnerability which both Paul D and Suggs

suggest that Beloved was not invited into the home ,but Sethe says different because she sees Beloved grown and alive instead of the pain when she killed her .

#### **IV- The Emergence of the Strong Black Woman:**

The novel include many themes such as slavery, blackness and motherhood ,while the main female protagonists; Sethe,Denver,Beloved, and Baby Suggs played a great role in moving the events of the story which was built up around the infanticide and also illustrated how Sethe and Baby Suggs cope with their horrible and painful experiences of slavery when Sethe escaped slavery to Baby Suggs home and killed her own baby in order to protect her from slavery because for Sethe the only way to prevent her child from suffering the horrors of slavery is to put her where she would be safe. Beloved expressed the extraordinary power of the black women and the farmer slaves who were struggled to live in peace and without any conditions because the women of color had faced lot of forms of discrimination weather sexual or racial in this conditions of slavery while the most prominent example of how the black were strong was when Sethe escaped slavery while was pregnant with her fourth infant.

While the name Sethe is a mark of blackness and strangest, because the name is derived from the Egyptian god “Seth”, or the Biblical “Seth” which represents like most of names that Toni Morrison chosen ,while the names Sethe for Toni is a mixture between heritage ,power and relational identity .

#### **V-The effects of slavery on the female characters of the novel:**

##### **1- Sethe:**

The former slave who has a traumatic experience with slavery in a Kentucky farm called Sweet home which cause for her to share a critical memories, she also tries to live in wake of her decision to kill her own daughter rather to have the same worst life under slavery’s condition, she also tries to manages the result of her decision but she find herself lives in isolation, Sethe escaped slavery to 124 Bluestone Road while pregnant with Denver,

but Denver was born just when Sethe arrived on the banks of Ohio River and after the escape of Howard and Bugler the Sethe's sons ,and the death of Baby Suggs ,Sethe and her little daughter Denver were still alone at 124 as Sethe was the only woman in the farm all the men of Sweet home dream to partnering her but Mrs. Garner give Sethe the right to choose the one who partner her but Sethe chose Halle the Baby Suggs's son ,after that Paul D the farmer slave arrived at 124,Sethe invited him to stay for dinner and told him about her back's scars also told him that the white men of sweet home violated her by heating her and suckling her breast ,while in a moment of weakness Paul D kissed Sethe's scar.

Almost the ghost appeared and Paul D used furniture to fight it, additionally Sethe and Halle's daughter Denver always saw the ghost of her sister and told her mother as Carmen Gillespie explain; "even though it no longer haunts 124 Bluestone and traumatizes its occupants, Denver is still able to see the ghost and tell Sethe that it looks like a white dress holding onto her mother" (*Critical companion to Toni Morrison: A literary reference to her life and work*, p 20).

Sethe the murderer of her crawling already daughter, she has been a slave from children until her escape to freedom her life consisted her little daughter Denver and memories of her children the dead and the alive ones, but Sethe hardly remembered anything of her past before she comes to Sweet Home, but everything changed when a new master called Schoolteacher arrived to the home, and he punched an glittering iron out of the eyes of Sethe , also she was violated in way worse than sexual rape by the schoolteacher's nephews. One of them holds her down and the other one drunk her breasts milk as Justin Tally confirm; "the nephew's milking Sethe like a cow, taking her baby's milk" (*The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*, p 46). Sethe had mentioned many times the effects of taking her milk by the nephews of the Schoolteacher, and this kind of violation destroyed the relation between the

mother and the children or in other words was the worst kind of slavery which violated Sethe's feeling to her children as Bonnet Michael explained;

“ The robbing of Sethe's milk ,which is so often evoked in the narrative and referred to as what she owns and as her children's very life, is thus the materialization of the fundamental perversity of the institution which kills the slaves' selves by severing the bonds between mother and child”. (*To take the sin out of slicing trees*, p49)

By the time Sethe found the ghost of her murder daughter moved around her house in 124 Bluestone Road, after a time when Sethe, Denver and Paul D returned to home they saw a young girl appeared from the body of water, near the home, she did not like a person of her age, she look like a baby in everything, thus young girl seemed to present Sethe's dead daughter because she said that her name was Beloved. Sethe felled that she obliged to tell Beloved why she killed her because Sethe think that; if she didn't tell Beloved the truth she cannot live in peace in her house as she claimed; “how if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her when I explain it she'll understand, because she understands everything already” (*Beloved*, p18).

In addition to this, Sethe and Paul D's relation was affected by their pasts and their memories which become an obstacles to them because their love relationship was built up of mutual past and horrible memories, however Sethe think that she had a lot of responsibilities rather than love such as; to think about Denver, to think about her age, and also about her future as she said; “I have other things to do: worry, for example, about tomorrow, about Denver, about Beloved, about age of sickness not to speak of love” (*Beloved*, p83).

As a result of slavery Halls; the Sethe's husband got ruined and went mad after he seen what happened to his wife, and his inability to help her in her situation affected on him that he lost his mind as Paul D described the hall's situation; “I broke him. Paul D looked up at her and signed. You may as well know it all. Last time I saw him he was setting by the churn, he had butter all over his face” (*Beloved*, p82).



## 2- Beloved:

She is the name of mysterious woman who arrives at 124 Bluestone Road (Bloom's Guides, 2004). Her identity is ambiguous and not fixed because of the various explanations and interpretations of it that are otherwise incompatible. (*Ghosts, Metaphor and History in Toni Morrison's Beloved*, 2009)

Some critics claim that she is the embodied spirit of Sethe's murdered daughter, others said that she is a normal woman who suffers from mental instability, but the widely shared is the embodied of Sethe's dead daughter as Carmen Gillespie states: "The name Beloved comes from the word that Sethe had engraved on her dead daughter's sparkling pink tombstone and her name comes from the only two words Sethe hears the preacher say when the baby is buried: "Dearly Beloved" (*Critical Companion to Toni Morrison: A Literary Reference to her Life and Work*, 2008).

Beloved goes through several incarnations in the novel; she acts like an infant, a sexual woman, a daughter and a sister. Beloved symbolizes the past, individual past and history of the past (*Bloom's Guides: Toni Morrison's beloved*, 2004). She is coming out of water. (Carmen, 2008) When Sethe and Denver come back from the carnival, they saw Beloved exhausted and well dressed. She was sitting on a tree stump outside of 124. She was thirsty and sleepy, her voice was tiny as a baby who newly starting talking. (*Bloom's Guides*, 2004)

In their book, "*Cliffs Notes: Toni Morrison's Beloved*", Mary Robinson & Kris Fulkerson states: "the character of Beloved may represent the physical manifestation of history, signifying how the past can invade the present, "As Sethe nearly loses her identity and life through obsession with her past and her resurrected daughter" (p,101). Beloved has no identity other than merged with the "sixty million and more" of the dedication, all those who suffered from enslavement. When Denver and Beloved were dancing in the attic,

Beloved told Denver that she came from a dark and crowded place (Carmen, 2008). Beloved could not find peace until she returned from the other side to destroy Sethe. (*The voices of Toni Morrison*, 1991)

Sethe could not have an identity, because she is separated from her family and then neglected by the society and the environment where she lives, in slavery, where it forbids blacks to have an identity. Sethe identity is lost in all the pain she lived in the past. Beloved can be seen as a representation, a personification of all the trauma and catastrophic human cost of the Middle Passage and slavery. (Carmen Gillespie, 2008) Beloved thrives with buried and truncated stories dramatizing the ways in which slavery assails any sense of self.

Beloved is Sethe's ghost, she is the return of her repressed past, also she forced Sethe to confront the gap between her mother love and the realities of motherhood in slavery. Beloved is everyone's ghost. She functions as Denver's repressed pasts; she enables her to deal with her mother's history as a slave. Beloved comes to represent the repressed memories of slavery, both for characters and for the readers. Beloved symbolizes the past and catalyzes the future. Beloved also develops as a character from a soft, voracious baby-woman to her final form as a beautiful pregnant woman. Beloved embodies the suffering and guilt of the past, but also she embodies the power and beauty of the past and the need to realize the past fully (*Morrison's Beloved: a casebook*, 1999). Beloved penetrates the psychic consequences of slavery and how slavery forbids slaves from their main rights in life, and how it considers them sub-humans.

### **3- Denver:**

Denver is Sethe's eighteen years old daughter; she adheres to Beloved as a sister and companion. She was born during Sethe's flight from Sweet Home to Cincinnati. "She was born in a boat on the borders of the Ohio River" (Carmen Gillespie, p.37). Denver is a shy, lonely and rebuked girl, living in isolated, haunted house where nobody has visited in twelve

years. She has not left the house since she was a young child; the baby ghost has been her only friend. (*Bloom's Guides Toni Morrison's Beloved*, 2004)

For Sethe Denver is a charmed child, she displays intelligence and promise, but her innocence destroyed when she discovered what her mother did to her sister and planned to do to her as well, and with the loss of her brothers and her grand-mother Denver becomes increasingly isolated and self-centered. Even an adult she behaves as a child. (*Cliff Notes*, 2001) Denver does not like to hear stories from her mother's past except the story of her own birth because it includes gestures of kindness of a white person Amy Denver. Although Denver was born free, she is too enslaved by the isolation of the house and her mother's haunted memories (*Bloom's Guides*, 2004). She is tied by slavery from her birth on the Kentucky side of the Ohio River and by drinking her sister's blood and living with her ghost (*The Toni Morrison's Encyclopedia*, 2003). As Mary Robinson and Kris Fulkerson stated in their book *Cliff Notes: Toni Morrison's Beloved*; "Although Denver has never been a slave, she suffers from the ramifications of her mother experiences" (p.81). The trauma that her mother endured in the past is transmitted to her daughter Denver through the psychological status of her mother. "Denver's imagination produced its own hunger and its own food, which she badly needed because loneliness wore her out" (*The voices of Toni Morrison*, p.16).

Beloved's arrival at 124 house marks the beginning of Denver transformation. She becomes hard-working after Beloved's entrance to their life. (*Cliff notes*). She steps into the public eye, growing stronger as she enters the community, she transformed from an isolated and shattered girl into the outgoing heroine of the novel. She takes responsibility for herself and her family. She has changed from a wholly dependent child to independent mature woman, she learned how to pass the past and focus on the present. (*Bloom's Guides*, 2004)

Denver is the first to sense the melting of identity, the merging that is her love for Beloved. Believing that Beloved has left her and returned to her otherworldly existence,

Denver realizes “she has no self” (*Beloved*, 123). At the end of the novel Denver breaks free from the trance that Beloved has cast over 124 Bluestone Road. She ventures out into the world and learns to get along and communicate. She becomes more confident and strong woman. (Carmen Gillespie, 2008) “Denver becomes able to step out of Sethe world into the outside world and begin her own life, and she becomes a mature young woman” (*Cliff Notes*, p.90) she reopens her journey towards empowerment and self-actualization when she realizes that Beloved has come as a force threaten her mother. Denver’s establishment in the community helps her mature into an independent adult. She learns to differentiate herself from mother and to counteract Sethe’s disintegration. Denver’s discover of self-identity is the catalyst that creates the return of community into Sethe’s life. Her Grandmother taught her to love her body and herself even when others do not (*The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, 2003). Denver is truly a ray of hope, a progressive step beyond the harsh indignities that her mother, her grandmother, and other black women had to endure. (Harold Bloom, 2009)

Both of *Beloved* and *Denver* represent the dreadful effects of Slavery, and its psychological harassment, it caused a fragmentation of the self and a loss of true identity. Slavery splits a person into a fragmented and wrecked figure and it left its scars very deeply and nothing in this world can compensate the loss, absence and havoc it played. (*Toni Morrison’s Beloved and the Bluest Eye: a Saga of Untold Suffering*, 2017), Sethe’s children have volatile and unstable identities; they missed the bond between them and their mother, and unearthed the damages of slavery to the mother- child relation. Slavery destroyed the bonds between mothers and children. (Mayra Ikram)

Denver lived in a place between freedom and slavery, Denver lived with her mother in prison, and she became deaf when she was asked about her time in prison, from the Denver lived in seclusion, with only Sethe and the ghost of her sister. In her lonely withdrawal from the world, Denver is trapped by the past of her mother.

Beloved on the other hand, thrives on stories of the past, on pulling from Sethe's details of her past, and Denver's love for Beloved forces her to confront the past she hates. Beloved is the forgotten spirit of the past that must be loved even if it is unlovable and elusive. Slavery caused the absence of power, the absence of self-determination, the absence of homeland, and the absence of language. In the case of Beloved, Morrison represents the collective identity of her characters as fragmented and haunted literally and figuratively by the incipient trauma of enslavement, the institution of slavery makes murder the only mechanism by which Sethe is able to ensure her infant daughter will not experience the sexual violence.

Slavery destroyed the bond between mothers and children, it left deep physical scars. Slavery destroyed the self-sense of the characters and because of the suffering they went through under slavery, they become unable to feel, they lost their humanity, they kept traumatized by the memories of slavery even after their escapement after many years. Slavery pushed a mother to kill her daughter in order to protect from living the same life of her under repression and oppression. Slavery left mental and spiritual wounds that cannot ever be erased or forgotten; it splits a person into fragmented figure. Slaves were considered subhuman and they were traded as a commodity whose worth was expressed in dollars.

**Conclusion:**

In *Beloved* Morrison depicts how slavery undermines the characters' sense of self; it examines the effects of slavery upon an African American woman's identity. Morrison creates a complex web of "quests for social freedom and psychological wholeness" (Bell 8). *Beloved* explores the lasting effects of slavery on individual black men and women and their communities, and how it threatens the bonds between mothers and children (*Bloom's Guides*, 2004).

Morrison in *Beloved* deals the individuals physical, emotional and spiritual destruction brought by slavery. A devastation that haunts those characters who were slaves and even their children get effected by their painful past. Emotionally upheaval caused by slavery they were cripple by their past. It is about, how the character struggled to reconsider the wounds of a shameful past. The ravages of slavery that let deep wounds that it is hard to be healed, depicting the emotional and psychological scars of slavery.

Slavery left such a horrifying images in the memories of the main characters of drowning abandonment rape and murder struggle to assert themselves, besides sexual exploitation.

## **General conclusion:**

In the past, women were not considered as humans; they suffered from oppression, marginalization, and mistreatment, and they were also living in unequal, unfair, patriarchal society. While the best example which reflected the sufferance of women was *Beloved*; the famous novel of Toni Morrison who explained the pain, oppression, discriminations that were faced by women of color in particular black women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the worst condition of slavery, and how the black woman tried to find freedom for herself and her children, and hence struggle to define herself by her own words, while she was considered as the one who had less power, less ability, and also described as a mad person by the masters and whites in a patriarchal society.

After a long trip taken by the black woman to search for freedom for herself and for her children, she realized that the best way to save them was to take their lives; as Sethe did with her own little daughter Beloved when the schoolteacher arrived to Sweet Home with the intentions of hurting Sethe and her children and treating them like animals, Sethe thought that if she would not kill her own infant, she will be dead.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, we focused on all the dimensions of feminism, definition, types, waves, and how feminism transformed from an idea to a belief and finally to a theory. We have also shed the light on Black Feminism, its writers and their concerns and issues and how those writers dedicated their works to a million of blacks who were living under slavery as Morrison did in her *Beloved*, she advocated most of her time in writing about the black females who were suffering from the racial and sexual discrimination during WWI. In addition to this, we have also focused on how feminism painted a new image for the black female.

In the second Chapter, we have emphasized on the idea of mothering in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, and how the black mother under all of the circumstances that faced her as

a slave, was still able to challenge these circumstances to protect her infants from the same horrible life, and from the brutal conditions that she herself faced during slavery. Therefore, Morrison claimed that the feeling of motherhood is a gift of God because it is the only way that would grant happiness to this black mother which was reflected in loving and caring for her children.

In the third chapter we have analyzed the effects of slavery on the main female characters within the novel; Sethe and her two daughters Beloved and Denver psychologically, mentally and physically, and how they were living in brutality and harsh conditions of slavery.

In this research, we have realized that the black slave mother suffers from all kind of discriminations and oppressions but still she managed to remain strong in a patriarchal society and able to struggle to get her freedom and rescues her family. In addition to her struggle to define herself by her own words, she also searched for love, happiness, and peace in a discriminatory society, and eventually she managed to find herself, reach her goals and above all alter the image that was given to her during slavery.



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## **Résumé :**

La littérature noire traite des expériences et de l'histoire des Afro-Américains et en particulier de la femme Afro-Américaine qui traverse beaucoup d'obstacles et de problèmes dans sa vie pour se voir attribuer une place importante dans le monde. Une nouvelle image est dépeinte et devient une reine, président, enseignant et aussi médecin. Dans cette thèse, nous avons jeté un éclairage sur la littérature Afro-Américaine et plus particulièrement sur un roman intitulé *Beloved*, écrit par la Noire ou l'écrivain Afro-Américain Toni Morrison, qui retrace dans son roman le récit de la vie d'un ancien esclave, qui souffre de l'esclavage et de ses conditions, qui la poussent à s'échapper et à tuer sa propre fille afin de la sauver et de la préserver de la même vie d'esclave dans les pires conditions. Dans ce travail, nous essayons de comprendre les mères-enfants victimes d'esclavage et de discrimination raciale et sexuelle et de comprendre comment la mère noire lutte pour protéger ses enfants, en plus de sa capacité à vivre avec le fantôme de sa fille assassinée, également dans cette recherche une lumière sur les effets de l'esclavage sur les principaux personnages féminins du roman, mentalement, psychologiquement et physiquement, parce qu'ils étaient maltraités, opprimés et marginalisés sous l'esclavage. Enfin, nous recherchons les causes de l'émergence de la fille du meurtre appelée *Beloved*. La principale conclusion tirée de cette recherche est que la capacité des femmes noires à concilier plusieurs rôles dans une pire société, les rôles de la mère, de la fille, de la femme et du travailleur acharné.

## ملخص:

يعالج الأدب الأسود تجاربتاريخ الأمريكيين من - - - - - ني , وخاصة المرأة السوداء من أصل إفريقي التيمر تبالعديد من العقبات والمشاكل في حياتها الكيثير يمكنتها في العالم, ولكن معظمها الحركة النسائية حصلت المرأة على صورة جديدة في المجتمع بصفة خاصة وفي العالم بصفة عامة حيث أصبحت ملكة ، رئيسة ، معلمة ، وطبيبة أيضا. في هذا الرسالة القينا الضوء على الأدب الإفروامريكي, وعلى الأخص رواية بعنوان " محبوبة " كتبت من طرف الكاتبة والروائية الإفروامريكية "تونيموريسون" التي تناولت في روايتها قصة حقيقية لحياة عبيد إفروامريكية كانت تعيش في العبودية وظروفها القاسية ، والتدفعها للهروب وقتل ابنتها بهدف إنقاذها من نفس حياة العبودية التي عاشتها هي في ظل أسوأ الأوضاع، في هذا العمل حاولنا أن ندرج كوضعية الأمهات اللواتي يتعرضن للرق والتمييز العنصري والجنسوي وكيف أفتحت ألامرأة السوداء منا جلد ماية أطفالها بالغمم أناتها تعيش معشبح ابنتها التي قتلتها، في هذا العمل سلطنا الضوء أيضا على آثار العبودية على الشخصيات النسائية الرئيسة في الرواية، نفسيا ، عقليا وجسديا لأنها تحت ظلال العبودية تعرضت المرأة السوداء لسوء المعاملة والاضطهاد والتهميش. وأخير انبحثنا عن أسباب ظهور الطفلة المقتولة من طرف أمها التي تدعى "محبوبة". الاستنتاجات الرئيسية المستخلصة من هذا البحث المعمق هو أن المرأة السوداء الإفروامريكية استطاعت تحقيق التوازن بين عدة أدوار في مجتمعها أهمها دور الأم، الابنة، الزوجة ، وكذلك العاملة الشاقة تحت قانون العبيد.

