

T.C.
BEYKENT UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
MA IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAMME
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**CHARACTERS AS VICTIMS OF SLAVERY: A BLACK
FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF BELOVED BY TONI MORRISON**

(MA Dissertation)

Written By: **Selma KAHVECİ**

İstanbul, 2009

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İstanbul, 2009

YEMİN METNİ

Sundugum Yüksek Lisans Tezimi, Akademik Etik İlkelerine baęlı olarak, hi kimseden akademik ilkelere aykırı bir yardım almaksızın bizzat kendimin hazırladığına and ierim. 15/07/2009

Aday: Selma Kahveci

STATEMENT OF OATH

I hereby declare that I prepared this dissertation in propria persona in full commitment to the academic ethic principles without having any supports incompatible with these academic principles. 15/07/2009

Candidate: Selma Kahveci

KARAKTERLERİN KÖLELİĞİN MAĞDURU OLARAK: TONI MORRISON'UN BELOVED KİTABIN'IN SİYAH FEMİNİST İNCELEMESİ

Tezi Hazırlayan: Selma Kahveci

Özet

Bu tez'in amacı Toni Morrison'ın Beloved adlı eserini Afrikan Amerikalıların travmalaşmış tarihinin geçmişini ayrıntılarıyla incelemek ve ayrıca ırk, tarihi ve topluluğun kavramlarını, cinsiyet ayırımı yapmama düşüncesini oluşturmak amacıyla yazılmıştır. Beloved Beyaz hegomenyanın; karşı konulmaz tarihi, politik, ekonomik, fiziksel ve psikolojik baskının Siyah topluluğu kişiliksizleştirmelerini hatırlatmaktadır. Unutulmuş tarihi ve ırkçı hatıralar kızın annesiyle yeniden bir araya gelme ve barış arzusuyla düzeltilmiştir. Bu tez köleliğin kişiliksizleştirme sürecini takip ederek farklı katmanlarda hangi şekillerde- hem tarihi ve gerçek, hemde sembolik olarak- varlığını sürdürdüğünü göstermek amacındadır. Bu tahlil, bir teori olarak Beyaz egemenliğindeki Batı edebiyat geleneğinden sistematik ve amaçlı olarak dışlanmış siyah kadın kimliğini ve siyah kadın temsiline dair yapılan ırkçı ve seksist çıkarımları yapıbozuma uğratmayı amaç edinen Siyah Feminist edebiyat eleştirisi çerçevesinde yapılmıştır.

Anahtar kelimler: Kölelik, Siyah Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi, Eziyetler, Kişilik,

Umut

**CHARACTERS AS VICTIMS OF SLAVERY:
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Presented By: Selma Kahveci

Abstract

This dissertation examines Toni Morrison's novel Beloved to reconstruct the traumatized history of the African-American people, and to constitute the notions of race, history, and community without sexual difference. Beloved commemorates the struggle for selfhood that has been taken from them by the White hegemony; the overwhelming historical, political, economical, physical and psychological force. Lost historical and racial memories are recovered through the daughter's desire for reunion and reconciliation with the mother. This dissertation presents how slavery works on different levels- not only historical and factual but also symbolic- while it follows the same pattern in its processes of dehumanization. It presents a Black Feminist evaluation as a theory that aims to deconstruct the racist and sexist implications against the Black female voice that is omitted and negated in the dominantly White Western Literature.

Key Words: Slavery, Black Feminism , Sufferings, Selfhood, Hope

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I. Introduction

I will call them my people,
which were not my people;
and her beloved,
which was not beloved.

Romans 9:25

1.1. Feminism and Black Feminism

The Feminist Movement seeks to remediate the sexist discrimination and inequalities. Within this context the subject matter of feminist literary criticism centered around revealing masculinist distortions and stereotypes, pointing out the omitted and marginalized women writers in the male dominated literature and analyzing female creativity, genres, themes and literary traditions.

There is a need for the analysis and evaluations of the representations of female in the male dominated literary history and texts, as Maggie Humm points out in her introduction of her work A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism. Secondly, she points out that the feminist critic's duty is to pay special attention to the marginalized women writers and their texts. Thirdly, she expects the feminist reader to be more responsive. And finally, she maintains that feminist criticism should be charged with new dimensions of political responsibility.

However, the modern feminist movement as a whole seemed to speak out principally for the White, middle-class, heterosexual women and eventually this has been the focal point of many major critiques. Even though the women's liberation movement and the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s attained success in many areas including the academia, the majority of criticisms were because of the limitations. Within the theoretical body of

knowledge, much were devoted to defining all women's experiences as one-regardless of the differences between race, class and gender. Mary Berry in her foreword to All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave notes that, "the women's movement and its scholars have been concerned in the main with White women", and only "their needs and concerns"(xv).

George Yancy in his essay titled "Feminism and the Subtext of Whiteness", reflects a critique by Patricia Hill Collins that; "theories advanced as being universally applicable to women as a group" come along to be greatly limited by the White, middle-class, and Western origins of their proponents. Collins also gives examples regarding the two prominent figures of the feminist critical discourse; she criticizes Nancy Chodorow's legendary work The Reproduction of Mothering (1978) and Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1982) as being studies of "the moral development of women" which "rely heavily on White, middle-class samples" (Qtd. in Yancy 156). Although these works had made "the key contributions" to the development of the feminist critical discourse, they "simultaneously promoted the notion of a woman who is White and middle-class" (Yancy 156).

Within the changing theoretical and critical discourse there appeared to be political differences and conflicts of interest among different groups of women. Women of colour, women from different classes, women of different sexualities, women belonging to different nations have complained that White, middle-class women often end up speaking feminism or for all women even though they tend to represent only their interests. This also shown as an inevitable gap in much of the academic theorizing and research in women's studies.

Many academicians from different ethnic groups claimed that one pattern of suppression is that of omission and accused the White mainstream feminism of creating a theory for themselves only and thus omitting different voices. At this point it might be inferred that this is not merely an accusation but rather a declaration that draws up racist

implications. Barbara Smith in her article titled “Racism and Women’s Studies” says that, the reason “racism is a feminist issue” might be explained by “the inherent definition of feminism”. She further notes down that “feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women”, in other words; “women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women” as well as the “White economically privileged, heterosexual women”. Smith implies that any form of thought less than this vision of complete freedom and emancipation is not feminism, “but merely female selfaggrandizement” (49).

For many critics now, the feminist literary criticism ought to be perceived as a body of perspectives that acknowledges the differences and the different readings. In her introduction to A Reader’s Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism Maggie Humm emphasizes the fact that the feminist literary criticism is bound to be read and evaluated from a radically new perspective of international politics. She also notes that, eventually feminism should be acknowledged to be in constant flux of change that shapes the readings and understandings of the canon. It might be inferred that the radical change in the international politics of feminist literary criticism that Maggie Humm speaks of, starts with the activism and organization of different groups of women which feel silenced, unrepresented and marginalized in the White mainstream feminism and aim that their voices are heard.

Specifically, among these groups of women, the Black women wished for the forging and articulation of new theory and criticism for themselves only. As mentioned above, the major chunk of the critiques that are directed to the White mainstream feminism consists of the deliberate omissions of different authors from the literary field. The need for such a theoretical context was sourced from the demand to point out to the multiple oppressions lived by women of colour, thinking over, contemplating and specifying their everyday experiences in their own terms.

Now, for many Black academicians in the U.S., the solution rests on canonical revisions. Marry Berry states that practically no attention has been given to “the distinct experiences of Black women” in the education provided in the colleges and universities (xv). The absence of Black authors from the literary canon in the colleges and universities, Black feminist ideas from these and other studies placed them in a much more tenuous position. Eventually, challenging the hegemony of mainstream literary theory on behalf of all women was put at stake. Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith also note that merely to use the term “Black women’s studies” is an act “charged with political significance” (xvii).

Within such context, it might be implied that the literature of Black women have been considered unimportant to the dominantly White academia and thus excluded from the canon. Such action has certain detrimental effects to the readers as well; Black literature is often perceived as a body of works written with specifically Black audience in mind and thus having no significance for the White reader. Alice Walker in her collection of essays In search of Our Mother’s Garden recounts one incident she experienced when she was asked to give a speech at a certain college in the U.S. She was asked by one of the audience what she considered the major difference between literature by Black and White Americans. Walker mentioned two books; The Awakening by Kate Chopin and Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neala Hurston. She goes on saying that when she mentioned these two books to her audience, she “was not surprised to learn that only one person, a young black poet in the first row, had ever heard of Their Eyes Were Watching God”. She tells that the book was unknown to her audience primarily because “it was written by a Black women, whose experience-in love and life- was apparently assumed to be unimportant to the students (and the teachers) of a predominantly White school” (6).

1.2 The Challenge to the Construction of Black Women

Black women writers wanted to bring out the sufferings of the Black women, especially the oppression of race, class and gender. They wanted to remonstrate the points which White feminism left untouched and the social and political issues that is specific to the needs and concerns of Black women. In the mid 1980's racial discrimination started. Barbara Christians claims that there are reactionary assertions especially in the way that American academy embraced the critical theory in the 1980's. She also claims that this race for theory marginalized often the Black and/or lesbian women (qtd. in Humm 42).

Furthermore, Hull and Smith claim that "because of White women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either era for serious consideration of the lives of Black women". They also note that "even when" there is a consideration of Black women, "White women usually have not had the capacity to analyze racial politics and Black culture, and Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives" (xxi). In Barbara Smith's other article "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism" she implies that the existence, experiences and culture of Black women, and "brutally complex system of oppression" which form these are in the "real world of White and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown" (157).

Jean Fagan Yellin notes that; Black women's "presence is what is most important". In her essay titled "Afro- American Women, 1800-1910: Excerpts from a Working Bibliography" which is a compilation of excerpts from the working manuscript of a book-length reference tool, Writings By and About Nineteenth-Century Afro- American Women, she draws attention to reasons of the evident marginalization; "if we are unaware of Black women in nineteenth century America, it is not because they left no records. It is because their lives and their work have been profoundly ignored" (221). She also points out to the fact that "both as the producers of culture and as the subjects of the cultural productions of others"

Black women's "traces are everywhere" (221). After all, in the order dominated by White men, White women come second, then Black men and finally Black women. As Bell Hooks writes in her book *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, she asserts that, "As far back as slavery, White people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex, that ranked White men first, white women second, though sometimes equal to Black men who ranked third, and Black women last" (53). And as Zora Neale Hurston emphasized; "De nigger woman is the mule uh de world" (qtd. in Walker 232).

In the twentieth century there are three important political movements that has to deal with Black women's studies: The struggle for the Black liberation, the women's liberation movement, which fostered the growth of Black and women's studies, and finally the Black feminist movement. All these movements are distinct yet interconnected. The Black movements of the 1950s, '60s and '70s gave rise to new social and political change for Black people and also for Americans. Hull and Smith note that "women's movement gained inspiration from the Black movement as well as an impetus to organize autonomously both as a result of the demands for all Black organizations and in response to sexual hierarchies in Black-and White-male political groupings". However, Hull and Smith maintain that, "for many reasons-including the increasing involvement of single, middle class White women (who often had the most time to devote political work)", the factious campaigns of the White-male dominated media, and "the movement's serious inability to deal with racism"; eventually lead to the reason that "the women's movement became largely apparent and White" (Hull and Smith xx).

Barbara Christian, Alice Walker, Audre Lorde and Barbara Smith are concerned with two major issues. The first one is how closely related the Black critic and the writer and the people and the reader, and secondly the relationship between the academic theory and the Black feminist studies. Maggie Humm also notes that Black feminists' literary criticism

parallels between creating a literary identity in the middle of racism for the Black writers and developing the careers of Black writers (50, 251).

There are many kind of themes in the tradition of Black feminism. Spiritualism, folk traditions, mother and daughter relationships etc. The Black feminist criticism focuses on Africa's, Afro-America's and Caribbean's history and culture, for example on the energy of oral histories, songs, handicrafts, gardening and the representation of motherhood. Black studies create a background for criticizing the literary means and methods to give a chance to see the differences between especially Black and White literatures and the meaning of White heterosexual academy (Humm 49, 270). As Audre Lorde notes in her work, *Sister Outsider* that, "Black Feminism is not White Feminism in Black Face" (60). Black feminism's main point is to bring out the subjects that have been ignored by the women's movement. As Hull and Smith state that Black women scholars deal with various themes and these themes included the necessity of "Black feminisms total commitment to the liberation of Black women and it's recognition of Black women as valuable and complex human beings" (xxi).

Black feminism came out to address the issues that White feminist movement refused to. Black women and women of colour had to resist racism. Black feminist and womanist thought is committed to the liberation of Black women and women of colour from the oppressors of race, class, and gender. Black feminist thought represents multiple state of consciousness. Finally, the terms of Black feminism celebrate Black women and women of colour, recognizing a history, and validating it as having liberating power.

1.3. Black Feminist Reading of Beloved

Toni Morrison along with Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor stands to be one of the Black female voice against the deliberate omission and negation of the Black female from the dominantly White and male literary canon. The presence of their works not only contributes to the constitution of a Black literary canon but also demonstrates an

internalized version of the history of the Black women in the continental America. These works draw attention to the unsung history of the Black women before, during and after the slavery and depict how and in what terms the Black women were disadvantaged in a racist and sexist social system. In other words, it might be implied that the insight that dominates the works of these writers is the accurate articulation of the Black female's struggle from a Black female perspective. Black feminist literary criticism renders specific importance to such articulation in two ways: Primarily because it represents the accurate story of the Black female by a Black female writer. Secondly, the fact that such articulation counteracts the influence of the omission and negation of the Black female voice from the literary canon.

Without doubt, the Black female's struggle that is depicted in the works of these authors finds its roots in the racist and sexist preconceptions which also dominate the institution of slavery. Either implicit or explicit, the racist and exploitative social system that created the institution of slavery is ever present in the depictions of the Black female. As Patricia Hill Collins suggest in her article "Defining the Black Feminist Thought", this legacy of struggle against the racist and sexist social system is embedded into the stories the female protagonist that are created by these writers.¹

Beloved presents the Black female perspective through deviant female protagonists, who resist to the racial and sexual oppressions. The resistance which is depicted in the novel forms a significant reaction against the institution of slavery and reveals that the transition of the Black community from enslavement to freedom has never been pain free.

In this context, Beloved becomes the necessary Black female voice that critiques and analyzes the slavery, its effects on people, on the Black community as a whole both on a factual and ontological level. This is why the novel yields to a Black feminist analysis: such analysis unveils accurate, objective and unbiased history of the Black existence in the continental America. It firstly brings about the negated female encounters of the factual

slavery and projects the dehumanizing procedure that is employed by the institution of slavery. Secondly, such analysis reveals how slavery perpetuates itself even after the abolition, in other words, it reflects how racism takes in other forms of oppression.

Beloved presents a slave narrative that is entirely based on the factual depiction of the ex-slaves' lives and how the Black conscience is influenced by the factual slavery. Beloved reveals the accurate details of the Black female slave and how race, sex, and class work as interlocking sources of oppression, all embodied in the institution of slavery. The slavery in Beloved is in total control of the White dominancy: The slavery entails the enslavement of the Black by the White. The Black community is far from being free and forced to stay as slaves.

The Black Feminist analyses of this novel also represents a critique of the history that is inherent in this work. Such criticism is necessary because the retelling of the underlying history in Beloved stands as a political opposition to the White writing of history. The omission of the Black female experience of slavery and after require an action that gives political cognizance to the history as having liberating power. It might be inferred that Toni Morrison's fiction is loaded with such political awareness and clearly represent that history of the Black women's existence in the U.S. has been build deliberately according tot the White and male supremacy.

The political significance of making of the Black slave in a White racist and supremacist society call for an equally important paradigm; a paradigm that itself has a liberating will and a stimulating power not only for the Black community in a White racist social system but also for Black women in any given sexist community. In this context, Black feminism presents a framework that encompasses the task of evaluating, questioning and criticizing primarily the racist discourse in which the slave is constituted, and secondly the sexist discourse in which the enslavement of the Black women by her own community is attained.

Notes

¹ Patricia Hill Collins defines the term as one of the core themes of the Black women's standpoint. In simple terms, "legacy of struggle" entails that throughout the history of the U.S. White supremacy and male superiority has shaped the existence of the Black women. Black Feminist critic is therefore primarily and automatically confronted with the White and male superiority and has to bear this legacy of struggle in handling his/her subject matter.

For further details see: Collins, Patricia Hill. "Defining Black Feminist Thought". In Patricia Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 19-40.

II. The Institution of Slavery

2. 1. History of Slavery

Slavery is based on dominance and power relations and it goes back to the ancient world. The word slave can be traced back to 1300s.¹ In the Columbia Encyclopedia slavery is defined as: “institution based on a relationship of dominance and submission, whereby one person owns another and can exact from that person labor or other services”. Slavery has been seen in highly developed societies but also in lower societies.²

There are references to slavery in the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi revealing that it seems to be common in the Tigris- Euphrates civilizations and in ancient Persia. Also, in ancient Egypt, it is known that slave labour was used in building pyramids and temples. There was a belief that slavery was not common among primitive pastoral groups of people such as Arabs, Vikings and Native Americans is contradicted with the findings that domestic and concubine slavery appeared among these groups even before the development of agriculture (“Slavery”).

In Greece slaves were classified according to the labour, which included domestic slaves, agricultural slaves, artisans and workers. They were seen as properties, they were bought and sold, and had no rights in law. For instance, The Louisiana Black Codes stated that Black people were not allowed to rent or keep a house, they could not sell or change their properties and they were expected to be in service of White people. People with African origins and the ones who were not English by birth were not included in the English Common Laws.

In the Roman history there was estate slavery, which was a kind of agricultural slavery. The landowner had absolute power over the slaves, who were employing for the agricultural labour. The widening of the Roman Empire brought forth an increase of the members of the

servile class. The conquering of new lands brought for the need of more people. There was an increase of slaves, most of them were foreign and they were employed in theatres, gladiatorial combats and even in prostitution (“Slavery”).

Mediterranean pirates continued the custom of enslaving the victims of their raids and so slavery also flourished in the Ottoman Empire and the Byzantine Empire. Slavery became an institution in Muslim lands and the Islam and Christianity accepted slavery. Having a large number of slaves was a sign of wealth. In Muslim lands slaves were mostly of African origin and they were used as soldiers, concubines, cooks and entertainers and also they were used as the eunuch guardians of the harems.

Columbus made also an excuse for slavery by using the Christian religion. He wrote in his journal about San Salvador that “Many of men I have seen have scars on their bodies, and when I made signs to them to find out how this happened, they indicated that people from other nearby islands come to San Salvador to capture them; they defend themselves the best they can. I believe that people from the mainland come here to take them as slaves. They ought to make good and skilled servants, for they repeat very quickly whatever we say to them. I think they can very easily be made Christians, for they seem to have no religion. If it pleases our Lord, I will take six of them to Your Highness when I depart, in order that they may learn our language” (Clements 90). When he returned to Spain he kidnapped ten to twenty five native Indian people and took them with him, but only seven of them arrived in Spain alive. On Columbus’s second voyage he took about 1200 men to colonize the places he would find. He went to the Canary Islands and he and his men instituted a policy in Hispaniola. The native people on the island were enslaved and murdered. Hundreds of them were brought by ships to Europe to be sold, but many died on the route. Although Columbus

supported slavery, he refused to enslave the native people of Hispaniola, because the Catholic law didn't allow the enslavement of Christians. (Dugard, 54)

The use of religion against slavery is again seen in 1562, when an English navigator called John Hawkins was curious about the slaves in the West Indies. He went to the coast of Guinea and took 300 Black people and later sold them to Spaniards in Hispaniola. The Spanish and Portuguese ships took their African slaves with them when they tried to explore America. He came back to England with a richness in pearls, sugar and ginger and satisfied Queen Elizabeth by saying that it was for the good of the Africans because they were introduced to Christianity. (Dugard 55-67)

In the 15th and 16th centuries slavery became a new form, because in Western Europe slavery largely disappeared. The African coast was explored by the Europeans, and the Africans were brought to Europe, but America profitted from them. African slaves were taken by the Spaniards into the West Indies. Charles V. of Spain wanted to import 4000 black people into the West Indies. England and Spaniards became two great slave dealers. The exploration of the Africans as slaves lasted for almost five centuries and marked the definition of New World Slavery. The British, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese were all engaged in the African slave trade ("Slavery").

During the British colonial period, every colony had slavery. Those in the North were mostly house servants, but those in the South worked on farms and plantations on which they grew rice, tobacco and cotton. In 1720, in South Carolina 65 percent of the population consisted of slaves. Even some of the British colonies feared that the importations of the new Africans would be disruptive and they tried to abolish the international slave trade. In other words, there was a fear that Slave Power was gaining control over the national government.³

2.2. Slavery in America

2.2.1. Identification of Slavery in the Americas

The institution of slavery can be traced back before the slavery in the Americas began. With the arrival of the Africans in the Americas one can see the political significance: Obviously the presence of Africans in the Americas could be traced back to a time when the demand for labourers was “colour blind” (Walvin 74).

In 1619 the first groups of Africans and White women came to the American Colonies. Erlene Stetson cites from Clarke and Harding that, “at first the Africans were not brought as slaves, but as servants under indenture” (Walvin 71). The colonizers came with the problem of cheap and steady labor, thus they started to use Indian and White indentured servants. But the Indian male slaves left all the work to the women, while they concentrated of hunting and warfare.

The reality, according to James Walvin, lies in the difference between the “indentured labour” and “slavery” (Walvin 74): As Clarke and Harding suggest the demand for labour especially in the northern colonies was acquired by indentured labourers (Stetson 71). These indentured labourers served for a limited time and they were bound for five to seven years. They were different from the African slaves because they had rights and their bondage was limited. Many of them were Irish or Scottish “and therefore low in English social and political esteem” and they were mostly needed in the tobacco industry (Walvin 74).

Many of the indentured servants signed themselves in. They were actually not slaves. For many of the planters, the labour they received was not adequate, they needed more durable labour for longer terms, a labour “that could be managed more intrusively, that could be replaced easily” and a labour that was cheaper. As Walvin states; “Africans began to arrive in ever greater numbers” (Walvin 74).

Slavery developed as a substitute for the indentured labourers, as colonizers realized that the Black slaves were more useful workers around farms and plantations, because the Black slaves were accustomed to farming in Africa. During the 1640s many Africans in the

U.S. colonies were serving their life terms under indentures. Stetson point out that the first recorded case establishing a Black person as a slave for life dates back to the mid-1650, in the colony of Virginia. She also claims that by 1661, there were provisions in the law concerning “Negroes” (no longer called Africans) that contributed to the formation of Black slavery within Virginia. One of these statutes announced that “if any White indentured servant ran away with any Negro, the White servant must not only serve more time as punishment, but must servet he life term of the Black person too” (72).

The slave holders were not only concerned with the runaway slaves, but also with the status of the children of the slaves. By 1662, the colony of Virginia had passed nine laws specifying the status of newborn children; all children born within the colony of Virginia would folow the status of the mother. Stetson notes that this law was important in two ways. Firstly, it was a shift from English Common Law, which “announced that a child’s status was determined by the father’s condition”. And secondly, “it implicitly condoned sexual intercourse between White men and Black slave women”, eventually allowing “the White men more legal, social, and psychological freedom by not holding them responsible for any offspring resulting from sexual relations with female slaves” (72).

By 1670, a law passed saying that any non-Christian servant travelling by ship into the colony of Virginia was to be held a slave for life. Without doubt, Africans were the only non-Christian servants travelling to Virginia by ship. The law also provided that non- Christian servants travelling to Virginia by land, if children, were required to serve until age thirty; if adults, for no longer than twelve years. Stetson states that by 1705, “the General Assembly of Virginia was no longer oblique”. The law declared that: “... All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves shall be held, taken, and adjudged to the real estate, in the same category as livestock and household furniture, wagons and goods.”⁴

Stetson notes that by 1750, Black slavery had become a fact of life in the colonies of Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The processes of subordination and submission of the slave to master were realized through a growth of slave codes concerning education, religion, marriage, etc. The economic grounds of slavery were ratified by law and at the same time, were reinforced by other systems that “explained” the positioning of Blacks into the nonhuman class (72, 73).

2.2.2. Sufferings During Slavery

It is obvious that the institution of slavery did not start out with the transatlantic migration nor it can be politically limited to the history of Black people in the Americas; there have been slave-owning societies and nations before the slavery in the Americas flourished. However, the slaves in other slave owning societies were captives, concubines or human beings that are considered to be from a lower caste in the social order. Unlike former slaves, Black people were brought to the Americas in large numbers, already enslaved, and for the specific purpose of servitude for the White supremacy.

The issues of race and ethnicity should be taken into consideration if any analysis of the slavery in the continental America is aimed at. James Walvin in his book Questioning Slavery notes that “Blackness” in the Americas denoted slavery. He asserts that slavery became a defining institution that generated the image that to be black was to be a slave. Further down he inquires for the possible reasons and concludes that “such a formative link between race and slavery had not necessarily been true of earlier slave societies” (72, 73).

Walvin describes this as the “best known” quality of the “New World slavery”, and maintains that, “its link to race, or at least to colour” is perhaps the reason why “its consequences live onto the present day”. In such a context, the slave politics entail profound issues of racial discrimination (75).

From 1820s onwards, the number of transatlantic migrants grew rapidly, and when compared to the others, Africans were not “voluntary migrants”. These Africans landed in the continental America with literally nothing; they did not have any material possessions or a family, but only “a fair chance of dying soon after arrival”. The enslavement began long before they landed in America, they were bought, sold and violated before “they stumbled ashore, naked or near naked” (Walvin 20).

There was a huge economic change because of the African labour. The material well-being depended thoroughly on the African labour; even the North America colonies flourished “on the back of sugar-based slavery”. Therefore “in the daily economic practice” and afterwards “in legal definition” the African slave was “reduced to the level of property: to be bought, sold, bartered and exchanged much like any of them trade”. Walvin asserts; “the problem remained, of course, that they were also human” (24). Ira Berlin notes that “The internal slave trade became the largest enterprise in the South outside the plantation itself, and probably the most advanced in its employment of modern transportation, finance, and publicity” (166-169)

Although James Walvin explains the reasons of a subsequent racial bias with collective preconceptions of the colonizing Europeans (75), for Bell Hooks, the results of the perpetual racial preconception had an impact in writing of the history which eventually changed our knowledge of the Africans in the Americas. Although they were free Africans before the indentured service or the slavery dominated the plantations, Bell Hooks asserts that because the “racist biases shaped the historical scholarship... the story of Africans presence... would begin with slavery”. Bell Hooks, also insists that, gradually this might have altered the way that the Black community perceived itself (Hooks 89).

It is obvious that the racist discourse that dominated and shaped the continental slavery has not essentially been valid for the former slave-owning societies. Therefore what

characterizes the U.S. slavery and the more recent relations of the Black community to the White has been the racist discourse. It might be added that, this racist discourse that works in favour of the White supremacy has also been the leading factor in preventing the Black community's social integration to the U.S. demography after the abolition.

2.2.3. System of Oppression

Resorting to the images of slavery in the modern vernacular is often spoken out with the expressions such as, “working like a slave”, or “being a slave”, “to be enslaved” denoting that there is a “labouring condition beyond human endurance” (Walvin 30). Naturally, the making of the slave is not solely limited to the overpowering, intolerable working conditions or cruel treatment. The elements in making of the slave follow a dehumanizing process; it includes oppression on physical, mental and psychological levels; subjugation; a perpetual and deliberate deprivation of identity of the person; civic degradation, and the constant and controlled deprivation of basic human rights of freedom and equality in dignity and rights. Carole Pateman even asserts that “The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection” (207).

Thus, slavery is a social and economic system in which people are forced to work and their personal freedom is taken. Slaveowners are a danger for African- American families, because they force them to work, migrate, they interfere their marriages and child care. All these bring sexual exploitation of women, shortfalls of basic survival needs and ecological risks. Everything is decided for the slaves; they don't have the right to go without permission and they can't refuse to work. They are treated as if they are a property of someone else, and they are not paid for their labor. Slaves are people who are owned by other people and they have no rights and no freedom.⁵

Black people became a slave in different ways. Most slaves were captured in wars or they were kidnapped. Some were sold by their own parents in order to survive in the extreme

conditions. Actually, most slaves were born as a slave because their parents were already a slave. Children were sold into slavery so that they could pay off their own debts. They had to do this to prevent starvation. People offered themselves into slavery so that their master would feed them and take care of them. Steven Golberg asserts that “A woman’s feeling that she must get around a man is the hallmark of male dominance.”(11). In these situations the children became also the property of their master. These children were forced to do adult’s work like terror, injustice, and arbitrary power. Children got little attention, because they were accepted as silent and invisible people.⁶

Slave’s work depended on the time period and the location. Actually, they did the same things as other people of the lower society they lived in, but were not paid. They only got a little food, clothing and a shelter. The most common types of slave work are service in the house, agriculture, industry, working in the army etc. Domestic service was expected in the more wealthier houses and it usually included about four female slaves and their children as its staff. They were expected to cook, clean, carry water from an outdoor pump and grind cereal. Secondly, many slaves were used in agriculture. The strong, young men and women were forced to work for long days in the fields with almost no breaks. They nearly didn’t get any water or food.⁷

The enslavement of the slaves clearly encompassed a dehumanizing process. Without doubt such process was an absolute need for the slave owners to hold the absolute power over the slaves. For the perpetuation of such power oppression in any form was necessary. Patricia Hill Collins defines oppression as “any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society” (4). It might be inferred that such a definition pretty much puts the framework for further elaborations on slavery: In very simple terms, the slave and the institution of slavery connote hard labour under physical conditions, or a systematic harsh treatment of a person. To be a

slave is to be denied of very basic human rights which “distinguish mankind from lesser creatures”; and to be reduced to “objects of exchange” in other words, as it is in a phrase coined by Orlando Patterson; “to be reduced to social death” (Walvin 30, 31).⁸

The initiation to the dehumanization starts with the physical oppression. Obviously, the Africans were captured in Africa before they were forced to go through the transatlantic voyage. Naturally this was attained through physical oppression; the Africans were almost literally preys for the White hunters. Thus the captured Africans were moved around in a triangle of slave trade. The African captives were faced with physical oppression and assault starting from the day they were held as captives. Walvin emphasizes that “every African shipped across the Atlantic (and more than 11,000,000 Africans survived the passage) had been violated physically” (50).

From the first days of Black slavery, Whites assumed that the only way to guarantee to keep slaves in their places was repressive force. Once captured, the slaves were herded, coralled and marshaled in the slave barracoons.⁹ The slaves had been held in chains, they were branded and piled up in the slave ships in which they had to pass the whole Atlantic plunged in their own filth. The slaves’ arrival to the Americas was no end to the physical assaults; they were forced to learn that their existence was bound to the White power which was usually attained through guns and whips (Walvin 50).

The physical assaults and corporal punishments for the Black slaves were perpetuated even after their arrival to the continent. The punishments were carried out by overseers and drivers who watched them as the slaves worked on the fields. The physical oppression was a way for the White owners to maintain and preserve their power over the Black slaves. The flogging was one of the most common ways of corporal punishments, others included regular beatings, slitting the nose, branding in the forehead, cutting of the ears, and in some islands in the Americas, even taking off a limb (Walvin 57- 61).

Slaves were forced to labour in which they faced health risks. Slaves' had scars from burns, knives, and agricultural tools and missing and deformed fingers, missing arms, hands, lost toes due to frostbite. Secondly, cancerous tumors were seen in one out of fourteen slaves. Scars from whipping, or scars from dogbites. Slaves lived for about twenty-one years of age in 1850, but White people lived about 5 years more. To assess the health problems is to examine the physical descriptions that were published. Many slaves had physical deformities and two or more visible health problems, stuttered, speech impediments, broken or decayed teeth.

Will Oats notes that slaves "wore out their winter shoes before the spring weather they had to do without until the fall" (Dunaway 77). Slaves were given a few clothes. They got two outfits a year, one for winter and one for summer. Their clothes were just like a sack with holes for their arms and head. Some slaves didn't receive shoes and some did. Slaves complained that they had so few clothes that they couldn't keep themselves clean.

Privacy was invaded for the Black slave women when they worked together with the men in the fields. This invading was because of their clothes. The clothes were too skimpy and irregular to deal with the physical needs of women during their childbearing years. They only got a dress once a year which would split as they gained weight during their pregnancy. They couldn't manage with their menstruation periods so there was no hygiene for them. In order to pick up tobacco, women had to tie up their dresses around their necks, but owners did not give them underwear. Thus, they were standing in a nude position in front of the male. (Dunaway 77-87)

The psychology that dominated the minds of the slaves for many centuries have been sourced from the assaults and beating and the fear of pain caused by corporal punishments. Obviously corporal punishments were not the only way for exerting power over the black slaves; they were mentally oppressed as well. The slaves were relocated, they were aliens to

the environment they were brought to, and they were subjected to instruction in languages they were not familiar with and most of the time, they were infected by the diseases from the passage ships. Walvin argues that all the collective remnants of the corporal hardships that the slaves endured are sealed in their psychology and thus formed another source of oppression (58).

The humane treatment of the Black slaves by the White slave owners was not limited to the physical oppression. The slaves were defined and treated as non-humans; they were rather regarded as chattel to be bought and sold like many other objects. The slaves were denied many areas of freedom that most people took for granted. For instance, slaves' ages were not mentioned, because slaves' ages were dates by their size and their memorable events. Richard A. Wright notes in Wilma Date King's work titled Stolen Childhood: "Slave Youth in Nineteenth Century America", that most slaves did not know their age, but dated their existence by events, since age without events, made little sense. Slaves who were twenty-one were considered as the end of upper adolescence and they were considered as the beginning of adulthood. Slaveholders considered their slaves adults when they were about sixteen years old.

The Black slaves were denied the freedom of mobility, to buy and sell goods, to conduct social family and communal life independent of the owner. Slave traders didn't want to transport a whole slave family together, they tried to create their own labor kind which was reproducible. The slave traders transported equal men and women. This eventually serves to the psychological and mental oppression of the slave, pointing at a non-human category for the slave to define himself/ herself. Ira Berlin asserts that "the massive deportation traumatized black people, both slave and free" (161-162).

As stated above, humanity was denied to slaves. They had to live as a property of their owners, they were sold, were not seen as a human being but they were seen as a 'thing'. They

had to suffer and they had to serve others, they were picturized as dumb people and brute animals or they were seen as a child. They were slapped by their owners and got no education. Their owners made them experience cruelty, they were whipped, and they were used by them.¹⁰

As the Black slave delves deeper into a selfless state, he/she subjugates even more willfully, and is easily subjected by the White standards. This eventually generates a paradox for the slave in which the acceptance of enslaved state brings forth an enslavement pertaining to his/her existence. It might also be implied that this eventually leads the hostility towards one's own race. Karl Marx wrote in 1845;

“We do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development: but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life” (102).

The feeling of estrangement, the absence of communal and familial bonds leaves the slave no grounds for a self discovery and self definition. As Historian Peter Kolchin writes, “By breaking up existing families and forcing slaves to relocate far from everyone and everything they knew this migration replicated many of the horrors” (96).

2.2.4. Family Life During Slavery

The slaves were denied of communal life and a social family so that they could not form a unity against the dominating party. Thus, slaves were all alone and they had to suffer for survival. Such sense of loneliness might reverberate in various ways in the individual's psychology. Ira Berlin points out that "The Second Middle Passage was extraordinarily lonely, debilitating, and dispiriting. Capturing the mournful character of one southward marching coffle, an observer characterized it as a procession of men, women, and children resembling that of a funeral. Indeed, with men and women dying on the march or being sold and resold, slaves became not merely commodified but cut off from nearly every human attachment"(172-173).

Slave owners stereotyped slaves as weaker beings who had not the same kinds of family bonds or loyalties as the White people. Slaveholders constructed that slaves did not have a strong affection to their children. Fathers were treated as if they were absent and had no rights to have a continuous contact with their children. Males were so often hired out that slave women referred to them as "men on the road", because they were separated from their families by forced labor migration. Most husbands didn't even know that their children were living or not. Slave owners acted as if slaves could get over with family separations by a quick remarriage or pregnancy. Harriet Beecher Stowe argues in Jennifer Fleishner's work titled Mastering Slavery: "Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives", that "slavery dismembers families, slave and free, and it remains for America's mothers to put an end to the institution that disrupts motherhood and destroys homes" (54).

Slaves experienced chronic hunger, sexual exploitation with White men, and they had to return to the field quick after giving birth. Heidi Hartmann notes in her work The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence or solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women." She also writes that "the

material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power... (it) does not rest solely on childbearing in the family, but on all the social structures which enable men to control women's labour... Control is maintained by denying women access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women's sexuality" (79). Slaveholders described slaves' marriages as a "commical, mirthful and hilarious" which didn't have any family connections to be respected (Dunaway 53).

Friedrich Engels explains in his work titled The Origin Of the Family, Private Property and the State, how the creation of power over women starts he explains that patriarchal societies began to emerge about nine thousand years ago with the development of agriculture. They learned how to grow crops, and people became to realize how reproduction occurred. They learned how reproduction occurred in plants, animals and human beings. This led people to live in larger groups on farm places. After that it introduced the idea of private property. And this created social classes. So, there had to be control over these societies. Firstly, the people needed to control the natural environment for planting and harvesting. Secondly, they needed to control the breeding of the animals. Thirdly, men got a feeling in their part of reproduction which made them unrespectful against their women and this also created a kind of control. Thus, finally all these created a kind of power over women.

Women are historical victims as Gerda Lerda claims that "Once we abandon the concept of women as historical victims, acted upon by violent men, inexplicable 'forces', and societal institutions, we must explain the central puzzle- woman's participation in the construction of the system that subordinates her. I suggest that abandoning the search for an empowering past- the search for matriarchy- is the first step in the right direction. The creation of compensatory myths of the distant past of women will not emancipate women in the present and the future" (82). Ruth Robbins asserts that "Physiological oppressions which attack women by virtue of their bodies, childbearing and rearing defined as 'women's work',

or the fact that women are physically less powerful than men, and can be subjected to violence and rape” (15).

The slave owners didn't act in a serious way with pregnant women. Women did not only have more tasks to do, but when they worked in the fields they were expected to work as good as men. (Dunaway 72-73)

As Gutman contended in Wilma Dunaway's work titled The African- American Family in Slavery and Emancipation, all slave marriages were insecure:

“No slave could predict when an owner would die and how his estate would be divided. No slave could affect the business cycle. And no slave could shape an owner's decision to reallocate his investments in human or other capital. That is why slave marriages- however long they lasted- cannot be characterized as stable. And that is why slave parents everywhere had good reasons to socialize their children to prepare for either the possible breakup of their marriages or sale from an immediate family. One of every three slave marriages was broken by a master who removed adult males through forced labor migrations. Black Appalachian husbands separated through interstate sales rarely were able to reunite with wives and children after emancipation. (55).

Slaveholders on large plantations generally place strict limits on marriage. In contrast, small and middling plantations permit fewer marriage choices. So, small slaveholders try to create “abroad spouse” marriage arrangements. The husbands would be then in a plantation field of a neighbour. The women could not live with their husbands. It was as if they had no husband at home. Clearly, such relationships were in advance of the slaveholders. They got new births, but they didn't have to feed and cloth the fathers. Although some slave masters tried to make

arrangements to keep slave families together, they only made these arrangements if there were no financial involvements. (Dunaway 62)

Slave marriages were not legally registered and were not done in churches. So, marriages did not give the male slaves the legal rights as White males. When marriages caused economical damages to their masters, they made them split. This was especially done with the abroad marriages. To improve the slave reproduction, the masters sometimes replaced the abroad wife and children with one of the women he owned himself. Fox

Genovese explains marriage and family breakups:

Afro- American slave women transmitted their condition to their offspring even if their fathers were free. Their “marriages” to black men, slave or free, had no status in law. They could be seperated from spouse or children without any recourse except personal pleas. Slave men could not protect their “wives” from the sexual assaults of white men... “Husbands” did not support their wives, who worked at the will of the master. They did not provide for their children or even fully determine their preparation for adult life...(Instead), white male heads of slaveholding households provided slave women with food, lodging, clothing, and medical care, assigned them tasks, supervised their work, disciplined them, determined the destiny of their children, and could impose nonnegotiable sexual demands. (Dunaway 81)

Slave owners interfered in child care. Slave mothers had to work so much, that even if they weren't seperated, they had no time for their children. They were prevented to look after their child. The mothers spent most of their time and energy towards their master's work. (Dunaway 70)

Slave owners intruded into motherhood by dominating child care strategies which weakened the bonds between family members and young children were at a high risk of

malnutrition, injury, and a not proper psychological development. Slave masters decided about child care; they decided where, when, by whom, and how much they should be cared. Slave mothers did not have the option of not going to work when their children needed attention or care. The slave owners didn't act in a serious way with pregnant women. Women did not only have more tasks to do, but when they worked in the fields they were expected to work as good as men. (Dunaway 72-73). When the slave mothers didn't obey to the slave master's rules- especially when they looked better after their children than the slave master's arrangements- their children would be punished. As Harriet Jacobs puts it, "there is no shadow of law to protect her (the slave girl) from insult, from violence, or even from death" (27). Slave masters didn't want the parents to have good ties with their children. Instead, they wanted to socialize the children in such a way that they would obey their masters.

Slave parents tried to develop their own strategies to look after their children within the limited options that were available to them. More than one- third of the parents took their children to their work stations. But, still one- fifth of the slave children were left alone during the workday or they were left to play with older siblings who were also very young. Thus, most of the slave children "played around the quarters" (Dunaway 70) until they were old enough to do their tasks.

However, slave children had to deal with their master's children. Slave children had to work on a very young age. That's why slave masters paid little attention to childcare. When the slave children were five or six their childcare was labor. Some young children had to do very dangerous work. For instance a slave boy had to bend over, so that his master could put his gun on his back to shoot. They experienced lost childhoods and in these situations they had to grow up fast and they had to take care of themselves.

Labor migration weakened bonds between mothers and children. Family members were often hired out or assigned to work at a distance from each other. Children did "not

appear to miss” their absent parents very much because they were away during most of their early years, mothers lost control over their children when masters selected them as house servants or nurses. Their children lived with White people, so they were away from their parents and from the other Black people or relatives they had. (Dunaway 74)

Slave masters intruded into motherhood by interfering the disciplinary link between parents and children. They were the authority. They did not only sell their children or gave them away, but they also assigned them tasks even when their parents thought they were too young for it. It was very difficult for slave parents to gain control over their masters, because the owners believed that slaves were psychologically and cognitively like children.

All these were actually a kind of system that the White people created. They intended to teach slave children to obey White youth and to prepare the White children to be masters or mistresses. The White children were taught to feel superior, and “in consequence of this feeling, they sought to treat black children with the same air of authority that their father did the older slaves” (Dunaway 76). When young masters broke the rules, slave masters would blame the slave children. King describes the motivations behind such child discipline;

Parents often mothers alone, guided youngsters through the muddle of slavery. Their primary objective was to protect their children and others from harm... Hardworking, decent, courteous children were not likely to offend anyone; nor would they bring retribution upon their mother. Slave parents expected obedience from their children, and it is not surprising that they have been portrayed as harsh disciplinarians...

The underlying motive for their “harshness” was to demand faithfulness, dependability, and family unity. (Dunaway 76)

Actually, slaves acted very harsh to their children to prevent worse discipline from the white people.

Father slaves were kept somewhere else. This made the family bonds grow apart. were sometimes seen by their own children as temporary intruders and they knew them hardly. Thus, most of the slave children were indifferent towards their fathers. Slave children blamed their owners for paternal absences. On the other hand, some slaves spoke proudly about their fathers. They told how loyal they were to their mothers, how they tried to protect their children against the slave masters. Here one can see again that all these aspects lay in the hands of their masters. They had the power over them and they broke their family bonds, either in a psychological way or in another way.

Many slave children thought that their mothers had abandoned them because their master had hired them out. Slave masters created many opportunities so that slave families couldn't remember things about their history. When slave masters seperated young children from their parents, they actually stole their linkage with their families. They didn't allow the mothers to look after their babies.

Mountain slaves tried to keep their individual family histories alive. They taught young children about a past that belonged to them, even if they weren't permitted to experience it. In a song with these words one can see that they still had some hope: "There is a beter day a coming" (Dunaway 82)

Notes

¹ From Medieval Latin “Sclavus” and the Old French “Esclave”, meaning “the person who is the property of another”. See <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=slave>

² Here the entry exemplifies “the low material cultures” as the groups in Malay Peninsula and some Native Americans.

³ Slavery in America. Encyclopedia Britannica’s Guide to Black History. 2007

⁴ Qtd. in J.H. Clarke and V. Harding, eds., Slave Trade and Slavery New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970. 37

⁵ Dunaway, Wilma. The African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation. Cambridge University Press: 2003, p.8

⁶ Dunaway, Wilma. The African American Family in Slavery and Emancipation. Cambridge University Press: 2003, p.9

⁷ King, Wilma Date. Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth- Century America. Indiana University Press. Bloomington: 1995

⁸ Qtd. in Walvin, James. Questioning Slavery. New York: Routledge, 1996. Also see, Paterson, Orlando. Slavery and Social Death, Cambridge, MA, 1982.

⁹ slave warehouse, an inclosure where slaves were temporarily quartered.

<http://www.worldwebonline.com/search.pl?ww=5&w=barraccoon>

¹⁰ Lester, Julius. Thirty Years of To Be A Slave. Penguin Books, US: 1998.

III. Slavery in Beloved

3.1 A Brief Account of Slavery in Beloved

Beloved explores slavery and it is set in the mid 1800s. It is about the story of the Black female slave, Sethe and it examines the effects of factual slavery on the runaway slaves' lives with stories of Sethe, Paul D., Baby Suggs and Beloved. The novel focusses on the private lives of the slaves and how and to what extent slavery had impact on their familial and communal bonds. It shows how slavery can change human beings to animals. It clearly represents how the White hegemony can turn to a destructive force for its economic aims. It also shows how the White hegemony dehumanize the Black people through physical, psychological and mental oppression.

Beloved shows the reader the history of the Black female slave during the 1870s. Beloved re-examines the traditional representations of Black female slave, the unwritten feminine experience of the slave life (Kubitschek 135). The past actions are continually reinterpreted in terms of the present. Thus, Beloved is interpretively historic. The novel opens with an omniscient narrator introducing Sethe and her eighteen year old daughter Denver. They live alone in a house haunted by the ghost of a baby. There is an outline of the events that have led to a summer afternoon in 1873, where Sethe remembers her dying baby's blood pulsating into her hands from its gaping throat. According to Ricoeur "we tell stories because in last analysis human lives need to and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative".¹

The slaves have got various ways of resistance to slavery in the novel. Beloved is a reaction against the institution of slavery and it is the negotiation of the Black female voice in literature. In Beloved one can see that throughout the Black existence in the U.S. the resistance of the Black people to racism and oppression varied greatly. Some chose to commit

infanticide, some chose to stand and speak against the slave owners and accepted to be killed rather than to be raped or maimed, while the others were quiet when they were about to be lynched.

Beloved is about the story of Sethe, a fugitive slave who tries to make her own way in Cincinnati living with her daughter Denver. Their loneliness in their house 124 is like they are stayed apart from the Black community and excluded from the social life of Cincinnati. They are haunted by a ghost, called Beloved, who is the baby girl whom Sethe killed years ago. She killed her when the Schoolteacher, the former owner in Sweet Home, Kentucky came to claim her and her children as his legal property.

The infanticide marks the end of the circle of happiness that she and Baby Suggs built around 124, the communal space where fugitive, ex-slaves found refuge and comfort. When Paul D- who was one of the male slaves in the plantation in Kentucky- visits Sethe, she regains her hopes for a familial unity. But at the same time Beloved reappears in 124, and she is still at the same age as Sethe had killed her. It is as if she didn't die. The supernatural existence of Beloved in the fictional plot of the novel serve a higher purpose in emphasizing the existent results of slavery in America; she stands as the "ultimate victim of slavery, a living reminder of the brutality of the institution" (Malmgren 194).

Through these details and more Morrison enables her readers to "experience American slavery as it was lived by those who were its objects of exchange".² Morrison's dedication of the novel "To Sixty Million and More" is likewise significant; Morrison says the dedication honors "the number of Black Africans who never made it into slavery- those who died either as captives in Africa or on the slave ships".³

3.2. Sufferings in Beloved

3.2.1. Physical and Psychological Oppression

Sethe suffers constantly from oppression that finds its origins in the White racist American society (Walvin 23). This oppression, which started from the slave ships to the complete emancipation of the slaves after the Civil War, has taken different forms to retain the control of the slaves. The slaves got an inhuman treatment that exerts physical, mental and psychological oppression. As one can notice in Morrison's lines: "The people of the broken necks, of fire-cooked blood and black girls who had lost their ribbons". (Morrison 213)⁴

The characters of the novel are not faced with a concurrent slavery they try to make their way through a racist social system in the aftermath of slavery. They are subjected to and subjugated by the same sources of oppression that Black Feminism targets to destroy. The female slave in Beloved is subjugated by the White because of her skin colour, race and ethnic differences. She stands as a distinct character rather than a symbolic representation of the contemporary Black female figure.

3.2.2 Physical Oppression

Punishments were very common and useful for the handling of slaves. The slave owners wanted to create a sense of fear among the slaves to prevent them from forming a unity against the slave owners. The slaves were subjected to many sadistic kinds of physical oppression in order to be kept under control. But not all of the slave owners used the same methods and not all slaves used the same methods against them. Beloved resists and reacts to slavery in his/her own way. It exhibits most of the actual methods that are used for the control of the slaves.

Toni Morrison uses the image of a "chokecherry tree" for the scars on Sethe's back, whereas the most common form of corporal punishment during slavery, was flogging. The scars could even be counted and the number of the scars became a describing feature for the

slaves. For instance, advertisements of slaves, for fugitives or for sales, usually specified the number of scars (Walvin 59). When Amy, a white girl, finds Sethe while she is running away from the Kentucky plantation, her scars are still wet, Amy is shocked at the brutality of the view: "It is a tree LU. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk- it's red and split wide open, full of sap, ... You got a mighty lot of branches..." As a White girl, probably an indentured servant, she can not help but think about of her whippings; "What God have in mind, I wonder" she says; "I had me some whippings, but I don't remember nothing like this" (Morrison 93). The scars show Sethe's past and the White people's treatments. She says; "I've never seen it and never will. But that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Cough have cherries too now for all I know" (Morrison 16). A chockecherry tree produces bitter fruit, which represents the evilness of the institution of slavery and the scars of Sethe's past.

Not only Sethe was the one who suffered. Paul D suffered through floggings, was later sent to Alfred, Georgia as a convict, because he attempted to kill his own owner. He was sentenced to stay in penitentiary where other Black convicts were held. Obviously this was no standard institution; there were ditches; "the one thousand feet of earth-five feet deep, five feet wide, into which wooden boxes had been fitted... Two feet over his head; three feet of open trench in front of him with anything that crawled or scurried welcome to share that grave calling itself quarters. And there were forty-five more" (Morrison 125).

Paul D. Was punished along with other convicts; the convicts always felt the power of guns threatening them. all forty six men were chained to each other with the "one thousand feet of the best hand-forged chain in Georgia", they all woke up to "rifle shots" and chained all together they were herded to work in the fields. At the end of the day, convicts were put in

their boxes in the grounds where they “squatted in muddy water, slept above it, peed in it” (Morrison 126- 127,129).

Floggings, beatings, rape, even killings are depicted as physical hardships that a Black slave has to deal with. But what really destroys the lives of the slave is the psychology created with witnessing and surviving through this physical oppression. As Sethe remarks; “Other people went crazy, why shouldn’t she?” (Morrison 83). Toni Morrison tries to show all these punishments to show the brutality of slavery.

The characters in the novel had to face the murder, torture, or sale of family and friends; whippings, chains, iron bits in the mouth, and underground “boxes” in which the convicts are held; the divisions of “human” and “animal”, milking of pregnant women by White boys. As Caroline Rody asserts in her article “Toni Morrison’s Beloved: History, Rememory, and a Clamor for a Kiss”, surviving through the “traumas of slavery” presents a distinctive voice in the narrative. In a similar line as discussed above Rody asserts that, these experiences fragment and block the personalities of the slaves (91).

3.2.3. Psychological Oppression

All the physical oppressions come out as mental oppressions. Margaret Atwood notes that the attitude of the White slave owners towards the slaves as “a paradigm of how most people behave when they are given absolute power over other people” (50). Carl D. Malmgren asserts that “such power reduces people to animals”. Each paragraph devoted to the depiction of some sort of physical oppression reflects a sense of White dominancy over the Black to such extent that the Black are seen less than human (198).

The slave owners put a bit in the slaves’ mouth. The iron bit is ever present in Sethe’s childhood memories; “People I saw as a child, who’d had the bit always looked wild after that... how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, ...The wildness that shot up in the eye the moment lips were

yanked back... but nothing would soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye” (Morrison 84). Barbara Schapiro, in her article titled “The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison’s Beloved” defines these memories as some of the “most disturbing” ones in the novel. “Having a horse’s bit forced into one’s mouth creates the sense of deep, searing injury to one’s humanity” (161). Sethe remembers about her mother that she “had smiled when she did not smile” because it was “the iron bit clamped on the tongue that had produced the perpetual smile” (Morrison 240). As Rodrigues claims; “to smile is to know what it meant to be a slave” (64).

The characters faced events that effected their mentality. “...it wasn’t the bit- that wasn’t it” (Morrison 85), as Paul D. says. It was more about the feelings it created to them. Paul D. further explains about it to Sethe; “I wasn’t even thinking about the bit. Just Halle and before him Sixo, but when I saw Mister I knew it was me too. Not just them, me too. One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me... Mister, he looked so... free. Better than me” (Morrison 86). Secondly, Halle went unsane when he saw his wife being raped and milked by Schoolteacher’s pupils, and Sixo who was burned on the fire.

Paul D. is emasculated by the slave culture. He feels the sense of emasculation upon his comparison to “Mister”, who is an embodiment of an overly masculine image for a man who is forced a horse’s bit in his mouth. He says: “Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn’t allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you’d be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn’t no way I’d ever be Paul D again, living or dead” (Morrison 86). Barbara Schapiro asserts that that he feels that even the old rooster Mister was allowed an essential integrity of being that was kept from him. (167). Paul D. believes that “his status as a human subject is denied by the slave culture” (Morrison 86). As Rodrigues states, Sethe and Paul D meet again with “selves fractured and reduced to things lower than

animals” (68), they start a process in a “world of slaves and slavery” of which “horrors can no longer be visualized today” but of which “sounds of pain and suffering stil linger on” (Rodrigues 62).

Historically, as Erlene Stetson notes, after 1776 the agitations in “the human rights” of the time called for the enlisting of the ideology of Great Chain of Being, Blacks were placed in the nonhuman category (73). According to the Great Chain of Being, God was at the highest position, “which proceeded downward to the weakest, most unintelligent, and inferior form of life known to humanity”. Stetson quotes from Richard Erno, that:

“...any attempt to alter the present condition of the Negro which was ordained by providence would destroy the very fabric of universe. If the Negro was, as strongly suspected, a form of being mediate between the higher animals and man, his enslavement was justified and the social order of the South was the only social order in which was shown the will of the Divine Creator” (Stetson 73).⁵

Stetson also argues that the philosophers, scientists, lawmakers, scholars, physicians, and laymen all accord with the believe that the Black’s position as “somewhere between man and the higher animals (i.e. apes) was especially borne out in the Black woman”. They agreed that the orangutans showed a special attraction to the Black woman; that at some unspecified point in history the Black woman and the orangutan had mated. This idea was used to explain the creation of the Black race and female slaves were often referred to as “female animals” (73). One can see that the Schoolteacher goes accord with this view. He measured their skulls, numbered their teeth, experimented as the pregnant slave is milked. Barbara Schapiro argues that all these have “deep repercussions in the individual’s internal world”. “The denial one’s status as a human subject” are so deep that, “even one is eventually freed from external

bondage, the self will still be trapped in an inner world that prevents a genuine experience of freedom” (155).

Milking a pregnant woman creates deep scars in the individual’s mind. Sethe retells the incident to Paul D.; “After I took left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That’s what they came in for. Held me down and took it... Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree... And they took my milk!” (Morrison 20). Sethe is not able to forget these incidents.

Sethe resists to slavery by killing her own daughter: “And though she and others had lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was, was her children... no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter’s characteristics on the animal side of the paper... Sethe had refused- and refused still” (Morrison 296).

Sethe’s mother, like Sethe, had chosen the death of her children, rather than to see them killed, maimed or weakened by the Whites, or the slavery. Sethe’s rememory of her mother’s infanticide is one of the ways how slavery becomes an impact upon their psychologies. This collective past sharply intrudes into the present and hopeful future.

Paul D. has a more symbolic form of resistance. He closes himself; his memory, rememory, tortures, floggings and all the things he witnessed are put in the “tobacco tin lodged in his chest”. He “had shut down a generous portion of his head” only allowing himself to “walk, eat, sleep, sing” (Morrison 49). In this tin there are memories of “...Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, Schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, note-book paper...” When he finds Sethe and Denver in Cincinnati, and plans to unite with them as a family; “nothing in the world could pry it open” (Morrison 133). This tin box stands for the memories of the emasculation he experienced in Sweet Home. He puts his past in a box to forget about it; “the box had done what Sweet

Home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not: drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind” (Morrison 49).

Baby Suggs resists to the slavery in a different way. After her freedom is bought by her son Halle, she is brought to Cincinnati, to 124, a house owned by the abolitionist Bodwins. She forms a community of Black people where the fugitive slaves can find refuge and company. She creates a space for the people to define themselves.

Baby Suggs had eight children. Four of them were taken from her and four others were “chased” (Morrison 5). Her son Halle worked very hard to buy his mother’s freedom. From 1850 to 1855 Baby Suggs was a leader among the people in Ohio. When she arrives in Cincinnati around 1850, which was the year of Fugitive Slave Act, she spends her five years of freedom preaching and she worked for the abolition of slavery. She also helped runaway slaves, but the community betrayed her. She abandons her life as an activist when Sethe murders her baby.

Although Baby Suggs has not suffered from slavery in a humiliating way, she has seen the worst happening to her loved ones, she knows how slavery can sear into one’s mind; she had seven babies, “seven times... held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own-fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere” (Morrison 163). Baby Suggs becomes a preacher who calls Black people to start loving themselves. She becomes a preacher because of her experiences of slavery, the things that she witnessed, and slavery’s effects on people.

Stamp Paid resistance is to change his name; “born Joshua, he renamed himself when he handed over his wife to his master’s son... With that gift, he decided that he didn’t owe anybody anything... whatever his obligations were, that act paid them off” (Morrison 218). He and Ella devote their lives to save the runaway slaves through the underground railway.

He and Ella help Sethe reach 124. Although Ella never forgives Sethe for the murder, she is the one who directs the women to exorcize Beloved from 124.

3.2.4. The Issue 'Selfhood'

There is a factual omission, the knowing of oneself. This is a political making of the slave. The process of stripping ones identity is initiated through the physical, psychological and mental oppression. Eusobio L. Rodrigues in his article titled "The Telling of Beloved" argues that the novel implies "the achieving of inner freedom... slowly discovering themselves as human beings in a new world" because besides other matters freedom is "imposed by others from outside" (68).

Even after freedom, the slaves have to deal with the psychology of what they have witnessed during slavery. As Sethe says; "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another". "Recognizing and claiming one's own subjectivity" cannot be maintained "independently of the social environment" (Morrison 112). Thus, freedom does not really entail the freedom in the slave's mind.

The self definitions of the slaves are never clear. Their sense of freedom is connected to the community in which they live and in the slave community they are not allowed for attempts of self definition. Jessica Benjamin argues in The Bonds of Love that, "a free and autonomous self" is an "essentially relational self" and therefore "dependent on the recognizing response of an other" (53). In traditional African societies selfhood does not exist on its own; it is "made up of a web of shifting relationships to other physical and spiritual beings" (Kubitschek 23).

Forming a community is very important for the fugitive slaves. Baby Suggs is respected and loved by her community because she is the one who formed the community. In her house, 124, they had "the days of healing, ease and real-talk. Days of company: knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their views, habit; where they had been and what

done; of feeling their fun and sorrow". The ex-slaves in this community feel closer to each other and start to form communal bonds. This is significant in the shaping and expression of identities; each feel the individuality and thus not lack the others to define themselves with.

The mother in a slave society is powerless in recognizing the child, and the child's ways of recognizing are sealed. For instance, when Sethe was a child, she had to have her mother pointed out to her by another child. She hardly remembers her mother and the language her mother speaks. As Barbara Schapiro asserts; when Sethe herself becomes a mother, "she is so deprived and depleted that she cannot satisfy the hunger of recognition" (158). This is why Sethe believes that her maternal bonds are ruptured by the slave culture.

Sethe recalls the theft of her mother's milk so painfully, because the child owns the milk, and for Sethe the theft of milk that belongs to the child is unforgivable. For mother and child, nursing and the mother's milk is an important bond.

When Halle freed Baby Suggs, she expresses "the deep sadness of not knowing herself, not being able to read her own story", and she doesn't express the happiness of freedom (Schapiro 156- 171). One can see this again in these lines:

"No question. The sadness was at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home. Sad as it was that she did not know where her children were buried or what they looked like if alive, fact was she knew more about them than she knew about herself, having never had the map to discover what she was like" (Morrison 165).

Paul D. is another character who has to overcome the absence of the self. Carl D. Malmgren defines self and other as master and slave, in which the slave is selfless. Malmgren argues that the institution of slavery "perverts the relation between self and other by thoroughly dehumanizing both parties" (197- 198). He also asserts:

“Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging, screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet White blood... But it wasn't the jungle Blacks brought with them to this place from the other place. It was the jungle Whitefolks planted in them. and it grew. It spread. In, through, and after life, it spread until it invaded the Whites who had made it. Touched them everyone. Changed and altered them. made them bloody, silly, worse than they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own White skin; the red gums were their own” (Morrison 235).

Both Barbara Scharpio and Carl D. Malmgren claim that the formation of the slave as animals or objects is because of the “denial of the selfhood of the slave” (198).

During the time when Baby Suggs was at Sweet Home, her only name was Jenny. It was the name that was written on her bill of sale. When Garner asks her how she calls herself she says: “Nothing... I don't call myself nothing”. In her free life she has to be renamed and Mr. Garner advises her to stick with Jenny Whitlow, because “Baby Suggs ain't no name for a freed Negro” (Morrison 167). She is not able to make a decision, because her mind is so full of other things. She is not even able to pick a name for herself.

Sixo's name shows how the slaves were treated during the late nineteenth century. His name comes from the number 6, which shows that the White slave owners didn't have respect for their slaves, because they recognize them with a number. Giving names to the characters shows the power of the slave owners who even had the power to take the individuality of them.

Several of the slaves had no name to give to their children, because they had to use their master's surnames and not those of their husbands. Very few slaves were able to give their children the surname of their biological fathers. They had to do this because “it was the

custom for slaves to take the name of the man what owned them” (King 152). Most slaves had more than one surname because of their different masters. One can notice here again that the men reinforce the dominant role against the women by giving their names.

According to Malmgren the institution of slavery causes a denial of humanity and selfhood. As Schoolteacher says before he beats Sixo: “Definitions belong to the definer- not to the defined” (Morrison 225). It might be argued that these thoughts made Sethe to commit infanticide:

“That anybody White could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn’t like yourself no more. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn’t think it up. And though she and others lived through it and got over it, she could never let it happen her own” (Morrison 295).

As Betty Jane Powell in her article titled ““Will the parts hold?”: The Journey Toward a Coherent Self in Beloved” defines the characters as “physically and spiritually fragmented individuals who are disconnected from themselves, from each other, and from community (143, 144).

According to Eusebio L. Rodrigues, the slave is a bundle of pieces, of names, and a collection of fractured parts that have been defiled”. Beloved is also afraid of breaking up into pieces, “an indication that she is a composite of slave pieces of the past”. Likewise, Sixo loves the Thirty Mile Woman, because she can make “the pieces come together” (64).

Bringing the pieces together is like Patchwork, which is an important issue in the novel. The way the characters come and go throughout the novel is a way of Toni Morrison to try to show how the characters are distracted. By leaving the reader to fit the parts of the novel as one wants, and giving information, she wants the reader to knit the parts of the story, and to think and imagine on these subjects.

One can see another fragmentation when Sethe tries to define herself; “one thought her the alphabet; another a stitch. All thought her how it felt to wake up at dawn and decide what to do with the day. That’s how she got through... Bit by bit” (Morrison 111). One can see this fragmentation also when Baby Suggs is free, she sees herself “only in fragments”:

“She didn’t know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, “These hands belong to me. These my hands.” Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along?” (Morrison 167).

And “Paul D dug it up, gave her back her body, kissed her divided back, stirred her rememory, and brought her more news” (Morrison 189). Betty Jane Powell argues that “it is Baby Suggs’s ultimate recognition of her own body that allows for salvation” (144). This recognition of her own body leads to a mental awareness. She even starts her speech at Clearances with pointing out to the fragments of body, and then it goes on about freedom. At the end of her speech she addresses to a complete individual. She is in a recognition of herself, which implies the final stage of defining oneself. The awareness of the slaves symbolically stands against the omission of them as individuals.

The omission shows a political significance. While the Black Americans’ define themselves, they were actually absent as a race in history. Black Feminism finds its roots in this omission. The Black slaves are unpronounced and the Black women remain as details of which stories are never articulated.

The lack of self is seen in the characters who have to identify themselves with someone else. Paul D, remembers Sixo’s attitude toward the Thirty-Mile Woman: “She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man, the pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It’s good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of

your mind” (Morrison 272- 273). Beloved also experiences herself with the figure of Sethe. Sethe says, “I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too” (Morrison 210). According to Wilt, Beloved is a projection of the needs and desires of other characters (161-162).

Beloved believes that Sethe and she are one. Her mother’s disappearance leaves her without her own face. She goes on; “I drop the food and break into pieces she took my face away there is no one to want me to say my name... I see her face which is mine... I have to have my face... I follow her we are in the diamonds which are her earrings now, my face is coming, I have to have it, I am looking for the join... now I am her face, my own face has left me... I want to be the two of us... I want the join” (Morrison 212- 213). Her fragmented parts of herself shows that she is in a longing to be united with Sethe; “You are my face, you are me”, “why did you leave me who am you, and “Will we smile at me?” (Morrison 216). Horvits argues that Beloved is seen as a condensation of Sethe’s daughter and her African mother (151).

Although Elizabeth House sees the novel as “a story of two probable instances of mistaken identity” (Walker 191) there are some details that support that Beloved’s identity is supernatural. For instance, her name; in the rebirth scene Beloved says her name and “Sethe was deeply touched by her sweet name; the remembrance of glittering headstone made her feel especially kindly toward her” (Morrison 53). There are also “three vertical scratches on her forehead” (Morrison 51) which Sethe identifies as “my fingernail prints right there on your forehead for all the world to see. From when I held your head up, out in the shed” (Morrison 202- 203). Thirdly, the scar on Beloved’s neck is the same as the cut caused by the handsaw in the murder scene. This scar creates a special bond between mother and daughter. Beloved knew Sethe before; she asks for Sethe’s earrings all the time. “Where your

diamonds?” (Morrison 58) and “Tell me your earrings” (Morrison 63). These earrings were given to Sethe by her Kentucky lady as a wedding present. Sethe kept these earrings through all her sufferings. There is also a song that “nobody knows... but me and my children” (Morrison 175) says Sethe. And when Beloved humms this song Sethe totally believes that Beloved is the dead baby that has come to life again. But as stated above, Elizabeth House asserts that Beloved is not a supernatural being but a young woman who herself suffered the horrors of slavery and who haunted by the loss of her dead parents, comes to believe that Sethe is her mother. Sethe longs so much for her dead daughter so it makes her convinced that Beloved is the child she has lost. (Walker 192) Moreover Ferguson asserts that Beloved is the return of the repressed. (113)

3.3. Black Women in Beloved

When analyzed from a Black feminist perspective, the slave and the institution of slavery, acquire a political identity. Slaves suffered historically factual and painful. Thus, Beloved stands for a rebellion against the realities that presented an undefined race, gender and identity.

Black literature is a cultural response that “no other group shares”. As Walvin also points out; although many other ethnic and racial minorities encounter discrimination, no other group was “forcibly brought or enslaved”. Toni Morrison’s novel is factual in terms of reflecting the historical records. It reflects the aftermath of slavery, secondly its extensions until 1920s and finally the racist implications that stil go until the mid 1970s (Kubitschek 13).

Toni Morrision’s portrayal of Black female slave shows the fact that Black women, in the dehumanizing process of slavery, are doubly disadvantaged. Along with racism, they were also sexually abused. Toni Morrison shows how slavery attains the control over the slaves through racial, physical, psychological and mental oppression.

Beloved, who is a Black female slave suffers from the racial and sexual oppression. She is physical oppressed; she is flogged to the extent that even after years she can no longer feel the skin on her back. She is tortured by her owners, her breast milk was stolen from her, thus she was used as an animal, not as a human being. All these treatments affect her psychology so much, that she even kills her own baby girl, because she doesn't want to give her baby in to the slavery. Toni Morrison depicts how slavery shattered the lives of Black people. As Katie Cannon observes, "throughout the history of the United States, the interrelationship of White supremacy and male superiority has characterized the Black women's reality as a situation of struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one White, privileged, and oppressive, the other Black, exploited, and oppressed" (Qtd. in Collins).⁶

Rose Mary Brewer points out in her essay titled "Race, Class and Gender" to the issues of race, class and gender as "simultaneous" forces of oppression; in Toni Morrison's portrayal of the Black female, these forces seem to be "simultaneously embodied in the factual institution of slavery and the Black community's biases against Black women (16). And as Patricia Collins maintains; race, class and gender along with sexuality and ethnicity constitute major forms of oppression for the Black female in the United States.

3.3.1 Beloved as a Writing of Slavery

Unlike other slave narratives; Beloved presents a story build up on the fatal consequences of the institution of slavery on the life of a female protagonist. Slave narratives were limited with offering "masculine images", although the servitude did not change between the male and the female in the writings of their histories. As Erlene Stetson and Melvina Johnson Young state the problem that slavery in the Americas was the treatment of "the slavery experience as a Black male phenomenon" that posited women to a level of "biological functionaries whose destinies are rendered ephemeral-to lay their eggs and die" (Stetson 62).

Black Feminist critique of the study of slavery in America aims to include major evaluations in which female slaves are included.

Beloved is actually a response to the writing of slavery. And it also points out the truth about the Black people in America. It presents an internalized and unbiased account of history of the Black people unlike many slave narratives did (Kubitschek 131). Beloved shows the reader the reflection of the difficulties of slavery. As Melvina Johnson Young argues; “While scholars of the institution of slavery in the USA have utilized the narrative data they have omitted analysis that incorporate an understanding of the impact of racism, sexism and classism” (5). This was in part because most of the slave narratives were written by the abolitionists to persuade the White audience to do away with slavery. According to Missy Dehn Kubitschek these narratives were shaped to show the cruelties of slavery and had no literal curative effect on the lives of ex-slaves or Black people (Kubitschek 131,132).

In a way, the fictional depiction of the slave hints at the political making of the slave in reality. Toni Morrison’s fiction that depicts the oppression of a female slave is to comprehend the oppression that modern Black women encounter today. In other words, the slave in Beloved is a way to understand the underlying facts that contemporary Black feminist theory bears today.

Barbara Christian writes in Beloved, She’s Ours, that “spirits are everywhere, are naturally in the world, and are not ghosts in the horror genre sense of that term.” Here she links the past with the present and claims that spirits are crucial because “continuity, not only of genes but also of active remembering, is critical to a West African’s sense of her or his own personal being and, beyond that, of the beingness of the group” (44). In Beloved, Toni Morrison deals with the same issues. There is a return to the history of slavery and she deals with how the Black women handle with freedom. She tries to show that freeing the soul makes the individual go on a kind of journey which is both physical and metaphysical, and in

which one can confront the past. The character, *Beloved* has often been described by critics as a ghost, but she is actually a kind of spirit who reminds the memories to create changes in the lives of the other characters.

Toni Morrison deals with the complex situations of Black women who tried to create a whole sense of self and community in a racial society. But they still had to deal with the memories of slavery.⁷ Morrison tries to focuss on formerly enslaved Black women who succesfully escape from slavery and try to live in freedom. Toni Morrison focussed on the physical conditions of the Black women and she tries to inform feminist themes, as one can see in the character Sethe.

As Melisa Walker observes, Morrison shows a non- linear narrative from the past to the present. Melisa Walker writes, “into the primary story so continually and subtly that the tyranny of that past impinges on the experiece of the linear narrative just as the characters have felt it interfere with their lives” (15). Toni Morrison wants her readers to imagine the situations, by giving the historical knowledge of female sexuality, motherhood, individualism and community. Sethe, who is a woman capable of showing her free will to give a way to her destiny and doesn’t care about her environment. Brian Finney observes, “part of Morrison’s narrative strategy, then, is to position the reader within the text in such a way as to invite participation in the reconstruction of the story, one which is usually complicated by an achronological ordering of events” (Walker 21). Toni Morrison describes her writings as “expecting, demanding participatory reading... It’s not just about telling the story; it’s about involving the reader” (Tate 94).

Toni Morrison uses voices throughout her monologues, which show flashbacks, streams of conciousness and shiftings. She writes her novel as if it really is in an African American society. She doesn’t give historical information about slavery directly. Her characters are mainly African American and some of them are Anglo American. According to

Karla Holloway, “In her re-visioning of the history of slavery, Morrison proposes a paradigm of that history that privileges the vision of its victims and that denies the closure of death as a way of side-stepping any of that tragedy” (Tate 523). Morrison shows the experiences which are related to enslaved Black women. But the readers expectations are disrupted by the personification of place, 124 Bluestone Road. The house is described as “spiteful” (Morrison 3), “loud” (Morrison 169) and “quiet”(Morrison 239). Morrison explains:

“The reader is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign, and I want it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the reader and the novel’s population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, from any place to another, without preparation and without defense... And the house into which this snatching- this kidnapping- propels one, changes from spiteful to loud to quiet, as the sounds in the body of the ship itself may have changed. (Genovese 396).

All these show the complexities, abuses, and misuses of motherhood, explorations of the self and the interruptions of community.

The emotional power of the novel comes from its memorial for those who did not survive. The focus of the historical perspectives are shown throughout the narrative structures and the treatment of the characters. There is much historical fiction throughout the novel. The characters are representatives and they are from their time in history, place and society.

Slavery was abolished ten years before the opening scene of the novel, but many of the events are still practiced. Stamp says, “Eighteen seventy-four and white folks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty- seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken.

He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing” (Morrison 180).

The novel remembers those who were totally destroyed or crippled throughout slavery. She doesn't focuss on typical slaves, but she examines the personal and historically determined lives of the slave victims. Morrison has placed her story in history in the fugitive Slave Act, the workings of the Underground Railway. She shows how the characters lives are in these historical circumstances. Her novel calls attention to the late 1980s to the stories that most slaves did not prevail in the aftermath of emancipation. There was no “piece of art that commemorates, remembers all... the innocent black dead.” (Morrison 67)

The novel explores the relation between private lives and public circumstances by creating charcters whose lives are mixed up throughout history, so most of their private life is shaped by community. The novel doesn't progress further in time. For Morrison, community determines the personal lives of people. Sethe recalls people waiting for the arrival of Frederick Douglass's North Star and hearing talkings of “the Fugitive Bill... Dredd Scott... Sojourner's high-wheeled buggy... and other weighty issues”(173). She recalls to these in her first days of freedom.

The past actions are continually reinterpreted in terms of the present. Thus, Beloved is interpretively historic. According to Ricoeur “we tell stories because in last analysis human lives need to and merit being narrated. This remark takes on its full force when we refer to the necessity to save the history of the defeated and the lost. The whole history of suffering cries out for vengeance and calls for narrative”.⁸ The novel opens with an omniscient narrator introducing Sethe and her eighteen year old daughter Denver. They live alone in a house haunted by the ghost of a baby. The opening scene of the novel is set eighteen years after Sethe killed her baby. Paul D is a men of Sweet home, appears on the porch. He expelled the baby ghost from the house and made love to Sethe. After three days he claims that they “can

make a life” and offers Sethe to take care of her and her daughter Denver (Morrison 46), but Beloved seduces Paul D, makes Sethe’s health weaker and bewitches her. She punishes her mother for her deed. Beloved is both a woman and a baby. Stamp Paid is the one who tells Paul D about the deed.

There is an outline of the events that have led to a summer afternoon in 1873, where Sethe remembers her dying baby’s blood pulsating into her hands from its gaping throat. The novel invites the readers to think about the summer of 1874, the foreshadowing of the Hayes Compromise of 1877, which includes the dominance of the White males according to politics and the downfall of the Black people. (Mobley 75)

Sethe is isolated from society. Sethe’s past is written in the first pages. As a young slave girl she marries Halle. When she is pregnant with their fourth child, they join other slaves on the plantation. The house 124 itself shows the past repressions. Sethe has got four children, the third one is dead and as in the house number the three is missing like it is in reality. They are in a want to escape. Halle is captured, but Sethe is terribly beaten and treated. Sethe gets to the other side of the Ohio River with the help of a White girl who delivers her baby in the bottom of the boat. She becomes safe in the house of her mother-in-law, called Baby Suggs. Baby Suggs is a person who inspires the others and Sethe is free for less than one month, because the slave owners come to take her. She doesn’t want to give her child to them so she cuts the throat of her baby. The ghost of her baby haunts Sethe’s house and scares off her neighbours, which makes her isolated from society.

Slaves were not able to escape from their past. The memories did them pain. The novel Beloved, is about a man and a woman who meet after being apart eighteen years; Sethe and Paul D’s past are the same. Sethe says, “I can’t live here” and “I don’t know where to go or what to do, but I can’t live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Boys don’t like me. Girls don’t either.” (Morrison 143). They fall in love and want to create a life together,

but they are constantly reminded of the past; Sethe's life as a slave, her escape, and her meeting with the white girl, who delivered her baby, the experience with the white boys who sucked her breasts, the memory of holding her bleeding child in her arms after cutting its throat with a saw, all these memories don't go away. Denver concludes that "nothing ever dies" (Morrison 36). On the other hand, Paul D's remembrances include his terrible days with a bit in his mouth. Also Sethe can never escape from her memories; she uses the words "rememory" and "disremember". One can see here that the past still goes on in the present; everything is held in memory. They "disremember" things, to force them to the back of their minds. As Frederick Douglass asserts; "when we get a little farther away from the conflict, some barve and truth- loving man, with all the facts before him... will gather... the scattered fragments... and give to those who shall come after us an impartial history of this the grandest moral conflict of the century. Truth is patient and time is Just" (Jacobs 65).

A political dominance of the White males and the going down of Black people is noticed when Edward Bodwin is on his way to give Denver a ride to work; he goes to Sethe's house, where Sethe has lived for eighteen years. Sethe suddenly comes forward and the scene is surprising; Sethe lets go of Beloved; she and Denver rush toward the crowd of women who have escaped from their past. "Away from the pile of people out there. They make a hill. A hill of Black people, falling. And above them all, rising from his place with a whip in his hand, the man without skin, looking. He is looking at her" (Morrison 263). The context is about the Hayes Compromise of 1877, the going down of the Blacks, because of the political oppression of the Whites (Mitchell 107).

The Black community in the novel fails to come together. The cause of the killing of Sethe's own child is actually slavery and its public policies. The Fugitive Slave Act and lynching. But, one can see throughout the novel that the Black community fails to come together and create a unity against the enemy. The word 'Beloved' refers to the struggle for

racial justice. It memorizes the past and calls for a different future. Beloved is actually a wanting of a recovery of the Black community, and it makes the reader think about a possibility of a cooperation with White people.(Mobley 56)

One can see throughout the novel that Denver expects White people to be helpful. When Denver leaves the house where she stayed with her mother for a long time, she goes first to a Black woman and then to White people who have played an important life in Sethe; Miss Bodwin and her brother Edward. They are kind to former slaves, but they don't have the sense of mission anymore. Edward Bodwin still creates projects for the future and he looks back at his abolitionist days with sadness, "Those heady days were gone now; what remained was the sludge of ill will; dashed hopes and difficulties beyond repair. A tranquil Republic? Well, not in his lifetime" (Morrison 260). He longs for his childhood but he feels the loss of his twenty years, one can see this when he says, "Nothing since was as stimulating as the old days of letters petitions, meetings, debates, recruitment, quarrels, rescue and downright sedition. Yet, it had worked, more or less, ...Good years they were, full of spit and conviction" (Morrison 260).

Toni Morrison dramatizes the complex relationship between history and memory from shifting real-life experiences. She doesn't want to be placed in white literature traditionality. She explains: "most criticism justifies itself by identifying black writers with some already accepted white writer I find such criticism dishonest because it never goes into the work on its own terms. It comes from some other place and finds content outside of the work and wholly irrelevant to it to support the work... It's merely trying to place the book into an already established literary tradition" (Tate 122).

3.3.2. Birth And Rebirth

The ambiguity in Beloved serves as an access to ones self. The novel is ambiguous to make one see the very bad sides of slavery and it tries to represent the reality. The narration of

birth and rebirth is; the birth of Denver and the rebirth of Beloved. One can see the relationship here between the narration and ones self. Denver's birth is twice shown throughout the novel and it is told in a very dramatic way. Sethe is alone in the woods and she runs away from Sweet Home, where there were boys who sucked her milk from her breast. Her legs are swollen and she can hardly move. She is afraid that she or the baby dies. A white girl, called Amy helps her and Sethe's water breaks, so she is about to give birth. They are on a boat on a river. Denver is born there and she is called after the white girl. One can see that Sethe's water breaks on the river which also shows becoming one with the river. This scene is shown with many details and many dialogues. It is told in a dramatic way.⁹

When Denver is in the snow and she tries to return home, she sees a vision of her mother praying while a white dress kneels next to her. Her mother and the white dress makes her remember, "And it was the tender embrace of the dress sleeve that made Denver remember the details of her birth- that and the thin, whipping snow she was standing in like the fruit of common flowers." Sethe tells about the birth: " a thin and whipping snow very like the picture of her mother had painted as she described the circumstances of Denver's birth in a canoe straddled by a whitegirl for whom she was named" (Morrison 124). The birth scene is a memory of story and the narrator often reminds us of this by using expressions like "Sethe told Denver" or by referring to Denver in the third person, "And now the part that Denver loved the best" (Morrison 134).

Denver lives her birth in the present. When Beloved wants to learn about the birth in chapter 2, she says to Denver "tell me how Sethe made you in the boat" (Morrison 76). Denver explains by saying that "The White girl, she said, had thin little arms but good hands. She saw that right away, she said" (Morrison, 76); "she cried, she said, from how it hurt" (Morrison 77). In the first birth chapter Denver doesn't only remember the stories she heard about her birth but "easily she stepped into the told stories that lay before her eyes on the path

she followed away from the window” (Morrison 29). Denver even sees her pregnant mother “walking on two feet meant standing stil” (Morrison 29). “Denver began to see what she was saying and not just to hear it. There is this nineteen- year- old slave girl- a year older than herself” (Morrison 77). “Denver was seeing it now and feeling it- through Beloved. Feeling how it must have felt to her mother. Seeing how it must have looked” (Morrison 78).

Although Denver’s birth is given in great detail, Beloved’s birth isn’t. There is a description of the birth: “The water she voided was endless, and there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now” (Morrison 89). When Sethe gave birth to Denver she says, “But as it went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born” (Morrison 89). In both scenes there is much water. When Beloved returns she has a smooth and soft skin like a newborn baby (Morrison 50- 52).

Beloved’s return is more emphasized. When Amy, the White girl, is massaging Sethe’s swollen foot, she warns by saying: “It’s gonna hurt, now... Anything dead coming back to life hurts” (Morrison 35). Here one can see that the return of Beloved hurts both herself and the others. As John Spargo asserts, “In the absence of intervention, the trauma might continue unabated, involving its survivors in the patterns of precipitating violence, while also-and perhaps more importantly for our historical sense- exercising a mystifying influence on our social narratives of agency.”(115).

Beloved’s return is a rebirth. She returns as flesh and blood and before she came as a ghost, so her second coming is actually a third coming. This can be noticed in; “A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained by the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree... Nobody saw her emerge or came accidentally by” (Morrison 51). Toni Morrison shifts from two worlds. Firstly, she introduces Beloved the ghost, which is part of the spiritual world. Secondly, she picturizes Beloved as a live person. These two images are in great chaos. When Beloved implies on holding herself

together, she says that the day “when pieces of her would drop maybe one at a time, maybe all at once” (Morrison 133).

Rafael Torres asserts that “the reason why Paul D wants a child is... the excuse of a child might be, he reasons, what it takes to cause a rift between Sethe and beloved” (Mitchell 99). He wants to show his manhood in a way because the spirit of Beloved questions his manhood. “A grow man fixed by a girl” (Morrison 127). But, Sethe is afraid of having another child. She thinks, “Needing to be good enough, alert enough, strong enough, that caring- again. Having to stay alive just that much longer. O lord she thought, deliver me. Unless carefree, motherlove was a kiler” (Morrison 132). Toni Morrison tries to ask in her novel when motherhood carefree is. For Sethe, motherhood is constantly emotional, a mother is a killer and it can kill also (Mitchell 99). Motherhood overrules Sethe, whereas Paul D feels guilty about the sexual relationship with Beloved, and he is not able to confess this to Sethe.

3.3.4. A Brief Account of African Issues

Toni Morrison uses medicinal, superstitious and religious components from African life. Doctors were not available for the Black people, they were dependent on their own knowledge which they achieved in their upbringing. For instance, spiderwebs were used for cuts. To notice the lives of the ex-slaves during the eighteenth century, African issues are used in Baby Shuggs “sermons.” White people went to church and could sit down on banks, but Baby Shuggs calls her people in nature to dance, cry and laugh. It was about their feelings that came out of their hearts.

Trudier Harris focusses on the silences throughout the novel and she claims that these silences come from the African- American aspects. Toni Morrison writes in her work Unspeakable Things Unspoken, that “circumscribing and limiting the literature to a mere reaction to or denial of the Queen... cripples the literature and infantilizes the serious work of imaginative writing” (10). Trudier Harris comments that Toni Morrison’s folkloric aspects

creates a barrier between literature and folklore. She asks the question “Can a literary text create materials that will subsequently enter the oral tradition and be passed down by word of mouth as original folk creation. She asserts that Toni Morrison tries to create new folkloric forms and she also claims that Toni Morrison “reverses” the traditional ghost story (8).

Toni Morrison wanted her novel to make it a confrontation and a kind of remembering. She says: “I think Afro Americans in rushing away from slavery- which was important to do- it meant rushing out of bondage into freedom- also rushed away from the slaves because it was painful to dwell there and they may have abandoned some responsibilities in so doing. It was a double edged sword, if you understand me”.¹⁰

3.3.5 Hope and Freedom

In the journey of Sethe, one can discover that there is a hope of freedom. When Sethe was found out by Schoolteacher she decided that going to jail was a better choice than to go back with him to Sweet Home. Here one can see the bad sides of slavery in Sethe’s response to Paul D when she says, “Any life but that one. I went to jail instead” (Morrison 212). One can see her search for freedom- even though her dream did come out as she wanted, but it was still better than the life she once had.

Because of the cycle of narration the story goes on and on and it only grows and becomes more ambiguous and it comes to answer ones questions. Thus, the story is a process which will be never completed (Walker 46).

Toni Morrison makes her novel ambiguous about the issue of hope when one wonders about whether Paul D will be successful in healing Sethe or not. Secondly, one wonders about their future together. In the novel when Beloved disappears, Sethe says to Paul D when she is lying in bed, that she has “no plans” she has no future plans and no hope (Morrison 272). He tries to wash her and rub her feet in order to make her come to herself. Paul D says: “me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.” When Sethe

says that her children are the best part of her, Paul D says “You your best thing, Sethe. You are.” (Morrison 273). To this Sethe asks in a very surprised way “Me? Me?” She is so surprised, because she has no self- trust. The reader is left with the hope that they will have a better future

With Paul D’s arrival, Sethe gets a new hope in her life. For instance, she represses her sexuality from the time of her escape until Paul D arrives. With Paul D, she allows herself to feel sensual again. She feels safe with him. She also feels relieved when she has the feeling that her sexuality is not in the hands of a slave owner, it is “in somebody else’s hands” (Morrison 18). However, her relief is for a short time, because *Beloved* makes her and Paul D confront their past. Sethe tried to hold her past away and Paul D hide it in his tin heart. (Mitchell 95)

In an interview in the *Washington Post*, Toni Morrison observes that *Beloved* is a happy story, when she compares it with the life of the historical Margaret Garner. Margaret Garner killed her child for the same reason and she was sent back to her master. But Sethe and Paul D try to clean her past by making a new future together. They try to create a new start. As one can see in the character Denver tries to take responsibility and she finds a community which offers her work and education. (Walker 45).

Sethe experiences freedom once; she has the ability to experience freedom for twenty-eight days. She enjoys her children and herself; “I did it. I got us all out... It was a kind of selfishness I never knew nothing about before. It felt good. Good and right. I was big, Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn’t love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t mine to love. But when I got to Cincinnati, when I jumped down off that wagon- there wasn’t nobody in the world I couldn’t love if I wanted to. (Morrison 162). Sethe’s story doesn’t give practical political information. It makes one

suggest it. It tries to create a parallel between now and her time. The narration doesn't reach a conclusion. Thus, there is always a kind of hope.

One can see the issue of hope again when Stamp doesn't give up. He tries to find his old friend and tries to contribute to Sethe's isolation. After eighteen years he even leads to the restoration of the community. He firstly visits Ella, who is one of the community who has been against Sethe. Stamp confesses his own guilt to Ella and he makes her make the women of the community come together to exorcise the ghost.

The past should not be forgotten but it also musn't overtake the present. As Bulworth's Griot says, the past has "to be a spirit. It can't be no ghost" (Mitchell 107). Beloved is a "reaccentuation" of the past of slavery as Mikhail Bakhtin calls it. It is to create a newer meaning.

Beloved is a "reaccentuation" of the past of slavery as Mikhail Bakhtin calls it. It is to create a newer meaning. Toni Morrison uses an ironic tone and doesn't want the White people to be convinced of slavery, but wants to address Black people not to repress or ignore their past. In the end that there is not a call to silence or forgetting; it is a reminder that the process is still continuing. The stories have to be passed on and on so that one can make meaning out of their own lives. There is not a call to silence or forgetting. It is actually a reminder that the process is still continuing. It focusses on the fact that the stories have to be passed on and on so that one can make meaning out of their own lives (Moblely 189-199).

Notes

¹ Qtd. in “Chapter 6.Toni Morrison, Beloved”. P. 124

² Qtd. in Carl D Malmgren. “Mixed Genres and the Logic of Slavery in Toni Morrison’s Beloved.” Iyasere, Solomon O., and Marla W. Iyasere, eds. Understanding Toni Morrison’s Beloved and Sula Selected Essays and Criticisms of the Works by the Nobel Prize- Winning Author. (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing, 2000). 190-203
See also, Margaret Atwood, “Haunted by their nightmares”. Rev. Of Beloved. New York Times Book Review, 13 September 1987 (1, 49-50).

³ Qtd. in Carl D. Malmgren in the essay mentioned above. For further details see, Terry Otten. The Crime of Innocence in the Novels of Toni Morrison. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989).

⁴ All the paranthetical citations of Toni Morrison in this chapter refer to the book Beloved by the author. Toni Morrison. Beloved. (Great Britain: Vintage, 2005).

⁵ Erno, Richard. Dominant Images of the Negro in the Antebellum South (Ann Arbor: A Xerox Company, 1961) 62.

⁶ Qtd. in Collins Patricia Hill. “Defining Black Feminist Thought”. In Patricia Hill Collins Black Feminist thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 19- 40.

⁷ Walker, Mellissa. Down From the Mountaintop. Black Women’s Novels in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, 1966- 1989. Slavery and Reconstruction. Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1991.

⁸ “Toni Morrison, Beloved. Chapter 6.” p.124.

⁹ From the essay mentioned above.

¹⁰ Morrison., Guthrie. p, 274.

V. Conclusion

Feminism is a theory that aims to point out the representations of women in a male dominated literary history and texts. The feminist literary criticism focusses on exposing the masculinist distortions and stereotypes in the literary history and texts. However, a majority of critiques claimed that the mainstream feminist literary criticism showed no interest in the marginalization and omitting of the women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. These critiques, the Black women in particular, wanted to create a new theory and criticism for themselves. They focussed on what the White feminism neglected: Black women were faced with multiple sources of oppression. They created a theory that acknowledges race, class and gender as oppressors. Thus, Black women created a political issue to the needs and gains of Black women only.

They wanted to bring forth the works of Black female authors that are marginalized from the literary canon and the racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women in the White and male dominated Western literary tradition. Some writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Bell Hooks, Barbara Christian, Barbara Smith, and Gloria T. Hull used their works to make the Black women's voice heard and acknowledged. They claimed that the Black women's voice was omitted from the literary world.

Black women were omitted starting from the early days of the first Africans' arrival in America. Even in slave narratives the Black women was unpronounced. The stories of Black women written by Black female authors as racially oppressed slaves, captives or their depiction as sexually oppressed subjects after the abolition gained importance in validating the female voice and in the deconstruction of the stereotypes.

Black Feminist literary criticism does not neglect the fact that Black men suffered the subsequent results of slavery along with the Black women. In this context, the institution of slavery and its reflections in texts, stands as a key to understand how and why such criticism

is necessary, and to what extent such criticism can alter the racist and sexist bias that are still existent in the U.S. demography.

Slavery in America includes race and ethnicity, and the enslaving of a certain race is in question. The enslaving party is the White supremacy and the enslaved party is the Africans that are brought to America by force. But, the slave narratives reveal that the White deliberately differentiated between the Black and White indentured servants. The White indentured labourers were given the right to achieve their freedom after servitude, yet the service of the Blacks remained permanent.

The Black slaves suffered from psychological and mental oppression which resulted from physical punishments. They were not seen as human beings and they were treated as animals.

Black people reacted to these treatments and tried to resist in different ways. As one can see in Beloved, she succeeds in her own way by showing that she still has something of herself. Something over which she can have the absolute control.

The novel Beloved contributes to the Black Feminist Literary criticism on various levels: Beloved gives accurate references to the history of slavery, and it shows the Black female slave's experience. Beloved can be read and analyzed as the story of how a race is enslaved by the White. The slave in Beloved is men and women together acting as one slave in service of the White racist society system of post Civil War America. The segregation, and the legendary figures of the Black runaways are still eminent in this world. The slave, in this context, is the Black women and men who are subjected to the White supremacy as a whole race. The significance of this subjection from a Black Feminist perspective is that; such subjection is needed and supported so that the White hegemony and supremacy could be perpetuated.

Women were actually doubly disadvantaged, but the White slave owners did not differentiate between the sexes. Black men suffered along with the Black women. They both worked together to overcome the impacts. It was in the writing of history of these people when scholars began to discriminate against Black women. Their stories weren't heard until writers like Toni Morrison wrote their stories. The slave in Beloved is entirely silenced and oppressed, and is linked to the Blackness.

Since 1990, many critics have explored Beloved's identity in ways that overlap with mine. I will therefore start by outlining the main directions of the studies. Many studies discuss the mysterious title character as a double symbol. Which has to deal with a personal, psychological way. In the essay "Chapter 6 Toni Morrison, Beloved", according to Horvitz Beloved is seen as a condensation of Sethe's daughter and her African mother (158), and as Wilt asserts, a projection of the needs and desires of the other characters (161-62); the return of the repressed according to Ferguson (113), Rushdy believes that Beloved is the incarnated memory of Sethe's guilt (578), according to Wyatt, the pre- Oedipal child who desires a merger with her mother (480); and finally Homans talks about a more general view about Beloved. He sees her as all the babies in the womb (10-11).

My opinion is more basic than theirs. I am confused at who Beloved is at the level of events. I have tried to figure out the story with symbolic and narrative interpretations. One can not totally understand if Beloved is the flesh- and- blood reincarnation of Sethe's dead baby, or the ghost returning as a person (a supernatural being) or just a stranger who comes to 124 and mistakes Sethe for her lost mother. Most critics think of one of those possibilities. In "Chapter 6 Toni Morrison, Beloved", Deborah Horvitz talks about "the powerfull corporeal ghost" (157); Rebecca Ferguson, about "the supernatural at work in the 'world of common reality'" (113); and Ashraf Rushdy about a "ghost" and a "reincarnation" (571). Elizabeth House tries to develop a totally different interpretation. She sees the novel as "a story of two

probable instances of mistaken identity” (22). According to her, Beloved is not a supernatural being but a young woman who herself suffered the horrors of slavery and who, haunted by the loss of her dead parents, comes to believe that Sethe is her mother. Sethe’s longing for her dead daughter makes her rather easily convinced that Beloved is the child she has lost. Thus, there is a conflict between the supernatural and natural interpretations. But the novel doesn’t give the answer, it only offers you clues for both of the alternatives and it creates an ambiguity.

There is an ambiguity throughout the novel, which creates hope. The characters get hope when they meet someone new and when they can start a new life. But their hope is still chased with their past. Toni Morrison leaves one question unanswered that’s why one gets curious about, for example, the disappearance of Beloved. The story is a process which will never be complete. Actually, Beloved becomes a kind of bridge which leads them to desire. Without Beloved they are an incomplete family and they have lack of selfhood. One can see this again in the house number 124. There is no 3 in it, because the third child is Beloved. Sethe was devoted to her children she can never leave her faith behind her. Sethe sees herself as a provider and she struggles to get on, but she becomes the slave of Beloved’s desires. Their roles turn because Sethe becomes the child of Beloved.

Humanity was denied to slaves and they were seen as properties. Slave families were separated, like in the case with Beloved and Sethe. All the slaves had a horrible life and but still they tried to keep their individual family histories alive and they had hope. They waited for a better day coming.

Spirits are everywhere, like Beloved haunted Sethe. In the novel there is a returning to the history of slavery and one can see how the black women handle with freedom. The freeing of the characters’ souls makes them go on a kind of journey in which they confront the past.

The women in the novel try to create their own sense of community in a racial society but they were still confronted with their pasts.

Toni Morrison wants her readers to imagine the situations, she wants the readers to understand what the black people had to suffer. She wants the reader to get involved, not just to read the novel. That's why she used flashbacks, monologues and other shiftings. These made the novel more realistic. She doesn't give, for example the historical information about slavery directly. Thus, I have included a chapter about the history of slavery to understand what the people went through during that period of time.

Beloved is one of the best and most popular works in African-American literature and it deals with anger towards many social problems of that time, such as slavery, African American cultural identity and many other things. The problems of race and the effects of slavery are mainly dealt with throughout the novel. The novel focuses on a community of ex-slaves and how they struggle to lead a normal life. Toni Morrison questions what the difference is between a man and an animal. The realistic description of the Black community is about their hopes and problems, and the novel shows that a black person is like any other person. The novel makes one ask to oneself whether it is better to suffer the injustices of cruel people or to come against them.

Toni Morrison revises the conventional slave narrative by insisting on the primacy of sexual assault over other experiences and brutality. Each of the characters have had a horrible past. Some examples of these are that Sethe was raped and she was in a way forced to murder her own daughter, Paul D was imprisoned in a cube, and Stamp Paid was forced to give his wife away. Many of the people have chosen to forget their past and that was also the case with Sethe and Paul D. But other people fought against it. However, there is no peace for any of the characters until each learns to accept and deal with the past. Only then there is hope and a future for them.

Slavery is not just an institution, it is a way of thinking. This can include deep consequences. The Garners treated their slaves well, and as a result they were respected by people. They were respected by Sethe and Paul D. However, Paul D realizes later that, everything had rested on Garner being alive. Without his life each of theirs would fall to pieces. The Black people were treated nicely on Sweet Home but still they were little more than toys and they were in a way used by the Garners. This is seen in the description of the Bodwin's household, in which there is a statue of a Black boy and on it the words "At Yo Service" (Morrison 236). The Bodwins failed to understand the thoughts behind that statue. By giving such images, Toni Morrison demonstrates slavery and what one must do against it.

Toni Morrison tries to create a kind of ambiguity in the novel. One questions oneself if the murder was right or wrong. Actually the answer is that it was the right thing to do, but Sethe was the one who didn't have the right to do it. If she hadn't murdered Beloved, she and all the children would have been sold back into slavery. But when she committed the murder, she made the whole community become angry.

In the novel there is the hope issue. It questions what it means to be free. For instance, it is questionized whether Baby Suggs was truly free, when the institution of slavery destroyed much of the heritage of the Africans brought to the Americas; thus, the novel partially recounts the creation of a new people and culture, a people displaced and forced to forge a new identity in the face of brutality and dehumanization. Secondly, White men were allowed to barge into her yard at any time. The third issue that is questionized is about Paul D's freedom; he wasn't allowed to love what or whom he wanted to love. Forthly, the Black people had to wait at the back of the supermarket for the White people to be served. Whether they were free or not is still the question. Toni Morrison tries to point out that freedom is more than a matter of not belonging to a single master.

Most of the slaves have been torn apart from their families at an early age. There is little hope for them in finding their families that is left. In the case of Sethe, the consequences of slavery lead her to be very possessive of her children. Also Paul D is determined not to love anything too much, if he does he will lose it because he doesn't deserve it to be happy.

Beloved embodies the recurrent experience of a past that the community of women in the novel wants to forget. Toni Morrison has a political purpose for this. Her work has to be political, because it is not just about one person or one thing. She includes the present and the past, and she is not talking about something private, she is writing about communal problems. The communal problems are written according to history or people's life. Beloved is a new type of novel, which represents the hopes, desires, and historical memories of the Black women. African American women struggle under two problems: Raciality and a male centred society (patriarchy).

Beloved is so possessive of her sister, that she doesn't allow Sethe to care for her when she is ill. Denver spends her time alone with Beloved when Sethe is at work. She wants to know about the mysterious history of her sister, and she is not satisfied by her responses to Sethe and Paul D's simple questions. She becomes angry, which is actually a desperate attraction to become one with Beloved. One can see know that Denver is never satisfied in her desires.

The novel Beloved is about the negative consequences on Black people's physical, emotional, and spirituality which was caused by slavery. All these aspects follow them, even when they have got freedom. But the most dangerous effect of slavery is the negative effect on the former slaves' senses of self. The examples of self-alienation; for instance, Paul D is so alienated from himself that he can't tell whether the screaming he hears is his own screaming or somebody else's. Black people were told they were not human and were expressed in dollars. For instance, Paul D is very insecure about whether or not he is a real

human being, and he questions himself about his value as a person. Both Baby Suggs and Paul D become depressed and tired, because they actually don't believe in their own existences. Baby Suggs's tiredness is spiritual and Paul D's is emotional.

In Beloved one can see that the characters need the support of their communities in order to survive. Firstly, Sethe begins to develop her sense of self during her twenty eight days of freedom and she becomes a part of the Cincinnati community. Secondly, Denver discovers herself and grows up when she leaves 124 and becomes a part of society too. Thirdly, Paul D and the others in prison in Georgia are only able to escape by working together. They have to come together to achieve their goals. Paul D says, "if one lost, all lost" (Morrison 212). Finally, the community saves Sethe from mistakenly killing Mr. Bodwin. Thus, they save her from another sin upon her and her family's life.

However, Cincinnati's Black community plays a main role on the events of 124. The community fails to warn Sethe about the schoolteacher's approach. This event brought out the death of Sethe's daughter. But at the end of the novel, the Black community makes up for their wrong behavior in the past and they come together at 124 to exorcise Beloved. When they drive Beloved away, they secure Sethe from her past.

Toni Morrison created a novel to make people confront their mistakes and to tell them to come together and take actions against the wrong things. One shouldn't allow everything to happen. Toni Morrison wrote the novel in an open-ended way, and the story is going on and on, even today..

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

18 Haziran 1983 tarihi, Hollanda doğumluyum. İlkokulu ve ortaokulu Hollanda'da tamamladıktan sonra, İstek Vakfı Kaşgarlı Mahmut Lisesini bitirdim. Beykent Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı bölümün'den 2005 yılında Burslu öğrenci olarak mezun oldum. Mezun olduktan sonra yine Beykent Üniversitesi Meslek Yüksek Okulunda Öğretim Görevlisi (İngilizce) olarak görev aldım. 2007 yılında ise Maltepe Üniversitesi'nin Hazırlık Bölümünde okutman olarak göreve başladım ve halen devam etmekteyim.

Yabancı Dillerim İngilizce, hollandaca, flemenkçe, almanca ve çok az Fransızcadır.

Evliyim ve bir bebeğim var.

Aday: Selma KAHVECİ