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**Physical and Psychological Dehumanization and Identity Reconstruction of Selected  
Female Characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

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A Dissertation submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Master Degree in  
English Literature

Option: Literature and Civilization

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**Declaration**

I, undersigned, do hereby declare that this dissertation has been carried out by me as a partial fulfillment for the Master's degree in English literature and civilization under the guidance and supervision of Mr. Boulegroune Adel, Faculty of Letters and Languages, English Language and Literature Department, Mohamed KHIDER University of BISKRA, Algeria.

I further declare that the interpretations put forth in this thesis are based on my own readings, understanding and examination of the original texts. The reported findings that I have made use of are duly acknowledge at the respective place, I declare that this work is not published anywhere in any form.

**Lakhdari Rofaida.**

**Dedication**

*To my parents, who offered me trust and support, my brother Aymen, my sister Anfel and to*

*The memory of my grandmother Mira*

## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I am grateful to the Almighty Allah for giving me the power to finish this master's dissertation and guiding me to this achievement. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my former methodical teacher and supervisor, Mr. Boulegroune Adel, for his patience, support, guidance, and fruitful pieces of advice that helped me during all the time of the research. My deepest thankfulness goes to him also for his endless and brilliant ideas that helped me to finish my dissertation. Again, I am honored to be one of his candidates because working with him has been one of my dreams since 2015. I would also like to thank Professor Ryan Hitch for his help and explanations.

**Abstract**

This dissertation is an investigation and examination of the Physical and Psychological dehumanization and identity reconstruction of selected female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The novel depicts the real-life events of a female slave, Margret Garner. Her life events set after the American Civil War and during the Reconstruction Era. Toni Morrison shows readers the horrors of slavery and the brutality that African Americans faced. The research problem that is raised is how female characters are dehumanized and affected by slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and their quest for identity. This study aims to identify the dehumanization and oppression of the three female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and how they were substantially affected. The study adopts an eclectic approach that draws on feminist and Marxist theories in literary criticism. It also adopts Critical Race Theory and Psychoanalytic as a references to prove the characters' torture and horrors of enslavement, as well as their way of reconstructing their identity. The analysis of the selected female characters will show how slavery affects them physically and psychologically.

**Key words:** Dehumanization, Toni Morrison, African Americans, slaves, Sethe, Denver, *Beloved*, Slavery, Identity reconstruction.

## ملخص

هذه المذكرة هي بحث ودراسة نزع الإنسانية وإعادة بناء الهوية لشخصيات أنثوية مختارة في رواية توني موريسون المفضلة وتصور الرواية أحداث حياة جارية مارجریت غارنر. وقد تم تحديدها بعد الحرب الأهلية الأمريكية وخلال فترة إعادة الإعمار. توني موريسون تظهر للقراء كيف كان الاستعباد الرديء وكيف أن الوحشية التي تواجه الأفارقة الأمريكيين. كيف تم تهميش الخادمتين من قبل الذكور البيض والسود. الإشكالية التي تثار هي كيف أن الشخصيات الأنثوية تجرد من إنسانيتها وتتأثر بالعبودية في رواية توني موريسون بيلوفد. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على ظاهرة تجريد الأشخاص من إنسانيتهم وقمع الشخصيات الأنثوية الثلاث شيث ودينفر و بيلوفد في رواية توني موريسون، وكيف كان أثرها في الغالب. وتعتمد الدراسة منهاجاً يستند إلى نظريات نسائية وماركسية في النقد الأدبي، كما تستكشف نظريات العرق النقدي والتحليل النفسي كمرجع لإثبات معاناة الشخصيات من التعذيب والفظائع الناجمة عن الاستعباد، وطريقتهم في إعادة بناء هويتهم. وهكذا فإن تحليل الشخصيات النسائية المختارة سوف يبين كيف تؤثر الرق فيها جسدياً ونفسياً.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** التجريد من الإنسانية، توني موريسون، الأمريكان الأفارقة، العبيد، سيث، دنفر، بيلوفد، العبودية، إعادة بناء الهوية.

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## General Introduction

African American literature is created to show the contribution of black writers to literature and society. This kind of literature aims to explore the role of black Americans within their society. Moreover, African American literature studies the themes of racism, equality, slavery, and the history of African Americans. It depicts the brutal experiences of blacks within the white community. After a long period of neglect, African American literature emerged as a reaction to emphasize blacks' ability to emerge in writings through fiction by portraying the social and political surroundings. Slave narrative emerged in the late eighteenth century through the works of some black writers. The representative figures of this tendency are Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and others. Indeed, since the early days of slavery and colonization, many slave writers have written about the slave narratives.

However, the main characteristics of African American literature are spotlighting African Americans' experiences in the United States. Many literary works revolve around individuals who struggle in order to realize themselves in a white-dominated society. Some African American writers made those of "fringe" characters the main protagonists in their novels to highlight the marginal place of African Americans in society.

Morrison was one of the leading literary figures of modern times. She was the first black writer to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. In her novels, she attempted to portray social injustice toward African Americans. *Beloved* is considered her masterpiece, based on an authentic life experience; it is inspired by a true-life story of Margaret Garner, who escaped slavery to encounter the destructive legacy of white supremacy. The events of this novel took place in the year 1873, and it was set after the American Civil War. Morrison's most popular literary work is *Beloved*. In this novel, Morrison examines the dehumanization

of slaves, its different form, and its effects. It also depicts a variety of social problems that exists in the 20th century.

Morrison in *Beloved* shows what it means to be a slave and the devastation slave life has brought. In *Beloved*, she sheds light on the painful past and its traits which are property and possession, reflecting both physical and psychological control. In her research, Myra mentioned that in *Beloved*, Morrison further explores the psychological effects of losing the mother-child bond and uncovers the damage slavery does to the mother-child relationship. That offered them until they were destroyed by slavery (Myra 5).

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison leads the reader to become more aware of the harsh American system that is imposed upon African Americans, especially women, because they are the most vulnerable characters in this novel. The problem understudy is the ways in which female characters are dehumanized and how they are affected by being dehumanized. In addition to the identity reconstruction, Therefore, the main question to be investigated is as follows: How are female characters dehumanized and affected by slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*?

This study answers these following subsidiary questions

1. How are female characters dehumanized in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*?
2. Why are female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* mostly effected?
3. How do female characters succeed in reconstructing their identity?

This research aims at

1. Identifying the dehumanization and the oppression of the three female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.
2. Describing and analyzing the status of the African American woman and how the female characters were mostly affected.
3. Finding out how Toni Morrison succeeds in highlighting the identity reconstruction.

This research plans to analyze Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, focusing only on how female characters are affected by dehumanization. Furthermore, the study attempts to determine how the author portrays the character's reaction to various forms of dehumanization and their identity reconstruction only on three female characters: Sethe, Denver, and Beloved.

This research intends to adopt a descriptive and analytical research paradigm and using qualitative method. Mostly based on library research, data will be collected from books, dissertations, scholarly articles, and the internet. Samples and extracts from the novel would be selected according to their relevance to the ideas being studied. The data analysis will adopt feminist, Marxist, and critical race theories to analyze the concept of dehumanization and psychoanalytic theory to describe the identity reconstruction.

This research consists of two chapters. The first chapter will be about African American literature in general and the historical events that surrounded the novel, such as slavery; which was one of the society's major issues of that period, male and female African slaves, and the African American slave community. It also includes the research's theoretical framework. The second chapter will be about dehumanization in *Beloved* and the psychoanalytic study of the selected female characters, discussing the dehumanization from a Marxist, Feminist, and Critical Race Theory perspective as well as discussing the effects of dehumanization from a psychoanalytic perspective on the chosen female characters.

Morrison's novel *Beloved* has attracted the attention of many writers, scholars, journalists, and historians. They attempted to form a critique of her work from different perspective and on various angles. Among these we mention Harold Bloom, Shelby Larrick, Carmen Gillespie, Adriana Zühlke, Bensseddik Nedjla and Abecha Chaima

Harold Bloom, in his book *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Toni Morrison's Beloved*, stated that Morrison, through her novel *Beloved*, said that during slavery's times it was up to the slave owners to determine the identities of blacks and whites. Thoughts like

whites are human beings, but blacks are not were quite prevailing. Black bodies were like texts, they were full of signs left by the whites to indicate the horrors of slavery. When slaves were beaten by their owners, those blows left scars on their bodies, such as the marks left on Sethe's back (Bloom 155).

Shelby Larrick, in her article entitled "Psychological Criticism of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," argues that the behavior of some of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* characters at the beginning may seem brutal and savage, but when getting deep into their stories and their past, it is easy to understand that their actions were reactions to the psychological oppression of the traumas of slavery. Each one of these characters had suffered in some way, either directly or indirectly, from slavery (Larrick 1-5).

In her book *Toni Morrison: Forty Years in the Clearing*, Carmen Gillespie stated that *Beloved's* story is a painful because it tells many things through its lines. It speaks of memory and forgetfulness at the same time, as well as negation and recuperation. Through Sethe's flashbacks, one can feel the memory, but she wants to forget that horrible past. Therefore, she is both denying and recalling the past. It is a part of her life that she cannot omit or change (Gillespie 3).

In addition to the previous critics, Adriana Zühlke, in her book *Toni Morrison's Novel Beloved: An Analysis*, argues that *Beloved* is a novel full of emotions. It includes many feelings, such as love, hatred, fear, and affection. All those emotions are presented through Sethe's motherly love. A mother is passionate and loves her children, but she hates slavery, and she becomes scared when she thinks that they will be used as slaves to serve the whites. The views of Bloom, Larrick, Gillespie, and Zühlke are supportive of Toni Morrison's objective because the writer's aim is to show and highlight the reality of African Americans' way of living during slavery, their miseries and unhappiness (Zühlke 5).

In "Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge of Historical Dehumanization and Contemporary Consequences." Opatow states that dehumanization is viewed as a central element of social violence because it is frequently the most important indicator to moral exclusion, the process by which banished groups are placed "outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply" (Opatow 1).

In a dissertation titled Dehumanization in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Benseddik Nedjla, and Abecha Chaima, they have discussed the different effects of dehumanization on the black characters. and shows that slavery has affected them psychologically, spiritually, and physically. It also explores the Critical Race Theory as a reference to prove the characters' sufferings from torture and the horrors of enslavement; they also highlight the novel's main dehumanization tools. We share the viewpoint that we both used the critical race theory, but on different characters (Benseddik, Abecha 5).

## Chapter One: Historical and Theoretical Backgrounds

### 1.0 Introduction

African Americans are interested in their cultural and ethnic heritage as well as in black literature in the United States that depicts the experience and history of African Americans, particularly in the 20th century, which was marked by the development of African American literature. Both history and literature are combined and lead to one another, which is particularly evident in Toni Morrison's novels, which force her readers to acknowledge the existence and conditions of slavery. This chapter examines the historical background of the novel, as well as the events that took place in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It also focuses on African American literature mostly of the 20th century literary production, male and female African slaves, and the African American slave community. The theoretical framework that will be used in understanding the literary theories are: the feminist literary theory, which focuses on black feminism and black female issues, the Marxist theory and the issue of slavery in the United States; the critical race theory; and the applicability of the psychoanalytic theory to the three female characters.

### 1.1 Historical Background

#### 1.1.1 African American literature

When we hear the term "African American literature," we immediately think of canonical names like Fredrick Douglass, Booker Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Mary Church Terrell, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and many others. These writers fit into the category of "African American literature" and not only "American literature." The exciting evolution of African American literature emerged from and within the oppressive, racist, and gender-based evolution of the United States of America;

the contextualized narratives that will be experienced this term will address a number of issues currently debated within the African American community.

The main characteristic of African American literature is that it appeals to the African American ethnic group within the United States, a country with a history of slavery and racial segregation laws. Because of this approach, many works of literature are grossly about people struggling to navigate a white-dominated society. Some African-American writers have made "fringe characters," made up of criminals, con artists, and people with unconventional sexualities, the main protagonists of their novels. These characters mark the margins of African Americans in society. Examples of novels with fringe characters include Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (Trent).

According to new research, African American literature has grown to be strongly tied to American culture and literature. The growth of Native American, Asian American, and Chicano American streams of literature has been supported by the outstanding presence of African American literature. Before investigating the origins of African American literature, it is important to comprehend the period's major issues. The issue of race and racial tensions inspired African Americans to use writing to create a space for themselves in society. English therefore played a role in the segregation debate. Using their literature, African American writers highlighted concepts of inferiority and distinction based on beliefs about blackness and physical differences between the two peoples (Andrews et al. 331).

Due to prejudice, works by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs were not recognized as authentic. African American literature during the colonial period was a mean of breaking the chains of slavery through poetry, sermons, letters, and slave narratives. Slaves in New England who were close to their master's families shared stories. They recalled their daily life habits in Africa before they were enslaved. Those tales portray a level of awareness of slavery's concerns (Dickson 20).

In American history, the Antebellum Period encompasses the years preceding the Civil War and following the War of 1812. It was marked by the rise of abolition and the country's increasing split between abolitionists and pro-slavery advocates. Blacks rebelled against the circumstances they were living in during the nineteenth century among them we mention Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner. Unfortunately, many of the rebels were defeated, and their leaders were killed. Slaves were known for being stubborn (Jones 38).

During the twentieth century, African American literature witnessed a rising growth in the literary production. African American writers expressed what they could not face in actions but in words. Their themes were usually about racial issues, white segregation, inhuman crimes, personal experiences, and the state of black people in America. Women writers in the other hand gained their status in the African American community through rejecting inferiority. They succeeded at both presenting a new image of slavery from a different perspective and fighting for civil rights to eradicate segregation.

### **1.1.2 African American Slave Community**

Slavery is the only experience that African Americans would not and could not forget about because of the harsh life they lived back then and the illegal system. The African American community was based on the benefits of the slaveholders and the effects of being a slave in a white community, especially the black women, because they were triple burdened. The black person is a human capable of reasoning and judgment, but within slavery, blacks could not move away or feel free without their masters. They were used to gain benefit and treated like things or animals. It cannot be easy for them to forget about their past and the sufferance they faced because of being black. This results damaged memories full of sadness and madness.

The African American slaves experienced a very terrific past of pain and oppression for many years. Their community grew in a dark period during and after slavery. Many events took place after the abolishment of slavery. The Klu Klux Klan, as Dr. Joy Degruy mentioned in one of her debates, no longer wears hoods; instead, they wear suits, but they are still very much alive. Which means they are free to kill any black person because, for them, they are no longer human beings (Degruy 0:58-1:30).

Robbing dreams and pure souls, dehumanizing, burning, separating families, killing, and other horrible crimes existed in the African American slave community where black people were considered anything but humans. In addition, slavery involved practicing sexual abuse on men and women. It was one of the cruelest things enslaved people had to face. They were forced to do things that had nothing to do with logic or humanity. They had to obey or to be killed, but in any ways, they were doomed to be killed.

In an article entitled "How Slavery Affected African American Families", Heather Andrea Williams shows the impact of slavery on the memories of the African American slaves. She says, "Slavery is a stable formation, and it is impossible to secure a family." (Heather) She explained that black people could not marry in any American colony because they were considered commodities and property. This shows the harsh circumstances of the enslaved African American families and how they belonged to their masters. Heather also mentioned that an enslaved family consisting of a father, mother, and children should belong to the same owner. In addition to the separation of many families through selling one or more of the family members, the enslaved people's predicament requires them to work for long periods of time on large plantations. Children as young as seven and eight began working for the purpose of producing wealth for America. In other words, the African American community was generally under the authority of the slave owners or masters. Paradoxically,

they even encouraged marriage after slavery ended to protect their investment in slaves and ensure the continuity of slave labor (Heather).

An African American slave could not see himself or herself as a citizen because of white discrimination and deprivation of essential rights, including the right to be a human or to live as a free citizen. They witnessed a history that could not be erased over the course of their lives. Being black at that time was considered a major sin that they had to be punished for.

### **1.1.3 Male and Female African Slaves**

Slavery is exactly what it has always been one person using violence to subjugate another. It occurs when a person is unable to walk away from another's control over their free will while also profiting from the situation. It is also a centuries-old system of forced labor that exists all around the world. Slavery in America began in the 17th century as a slave trade from Africa and Europe. Slave narratives are significant not just for enriching and diversifying African American literature but also for revealing the complexity of the white-black debate. Slavery is an unquestionable wrongdoing that has been on many people's minds. It is no longer universally justified on the surface level of our culture, as it was in early America. The slave story, which has been called "the genre that inaugurated the African American literary tradition in prose" (Moble), is the most functional and thought-provoking component that arose from slavery in America.

A speech by Clint Smith *Women's Experience under Slavery* on a YouTube channel called Crash Course. Clint described both the experiences of black women in the early days of American slavery, and the differences in the way men and women were treated focusing mainly on gender bias. He argued that society in that time was built on racism and sexism. White women were treated differently than black women, who were dehumanized in many

ways. Among These he mentioned doing all the domestic labor for their masters, taking care of white children, therefore neglecting their own children. However, enslaved women were obliged to breastfeed white infants. Many slave women were obliged to get engaged in domestic labor and directed to work outside too. It means working the land like the men do, and even their children, mostly women, were comparable to men. Black women were seen in fundamentally different ways than white women. Their experiences were the ugliest tragedies in history due to the sexual abuse they experienced from both white and black men. They were treated like anything but women, and these effects still exist nowadays (Clint 2:00-4:20).

Angela Davis' book, *The Black Women's Role in the Community of Slaves*, shows the matriarchal Black women within American society and how slavery in America differs from ancient slavery. In addition, how Africans have been uprooted from their environment and heritage. Slave women were oppressed by being forced to do things they could not do, especially in relation to work. Slave men suffered too, and both sexes were aware of the oppression and the dehumanizing ways in which they lived their whole lives. They worked in many fields, especially agriculture, since they were the basis of the American economy, including selections, which were chosen, for example, according to their physical appearance, strength, and age. Slaves have been forcibly stripped of their humanity and have no desire for freedom (Davis 2-4).

Male slaves were oppressed and were treated like animals. They were seen as machines, and their purpose in life was just to support the labor system. They were dominated by the white hegemonic. In many works of art, black masculinity is always related to the lower working class, which means the right to be a human first and a man second does not exist. Furthermore, being black means being subordinate to the white man and to the horrific situation.

## 1.2 Theoretical Framework

### 1.2.1. Feminist literary theory

Women were not treated equally to males. They were subjected to persecution and suppression, and were highly marginalized and doomed to suffer discrimination from infancy to death for no fault of their own. All over the world, women were perceived to have limited access to opportunities, education, ability, and even basic human rights.

In Lois Tyson's book *Critical Race Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, she mentions that it is important to understand that there is a clear distinction between feminism and feminist criticism. The first one is the theory of political, economic, and social equality of the sexes. It is necessary to remember that feminism is associated with men as well, which means that both sexes are on an equal level in terms of political, economic, and social freedom. It is a matter of gender issues within the patriarchal society. While feminist criticism views literature through a feminist lens, examining the relationships between men and women as well as various types of power and freedom (Tyson 84-85).

Any literary approach has its own uniqueness that will help us to understand the beauty of literature. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. Feminist literary criticism analyzes the language of literature using feminist principles and patriarchal ideology. In addition to observing and breaking down the other's messages and ideologies in the text. It seeks to analyze and describe the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embodied within literature (Tyson 117–118).

In his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Peter Barry's discusses many theories including the feminist theory. He argued that feminist criticism is the result of the women's movement in the 1960s. It began in the United States as

a women's rights movement. It demanded equal rights and opportunities for women in education, workplace, politics and voting rights. The feminist criticism in the 1970s exposed the mechanisms of patriarchy that is based on sexual inequality. The way women were portrayed in male writings gave attention to their books. Therefore the criticism during the 1970s was combative and critical. During the 1980s, there were many changes in the feminist critical perspective (Barry).

Feminist Criticism focuses on exploring the nature of the female world instead of attacking male versions of the world. It begins to reconstruct the lost or suppressed records of female experiences. Special attention was given to creating a new standard for women's writing by rewriting the history of the novel and poetry in such a way that the neglected women writers were given new prominence. In all these various feminist discourses, theory plays an important role, whether embraced or rejected. In the Anglo-American strand of feminism that is mainly based in the U.S, the discourse was skeptical of theory and focused on analyzing works of literature as representations of women. Major voices among these are Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Rachel Brownstei, and others (Barry).

Another important term that is mentioned in Tyson's book is multicultural feminism, which deals with the intersectionality of things like race and ethnicity with gender and sex. Their primary focus of intersectional feminism was on black women. Multicultural feminism discusses the systems of patriarchal oppression. Oppression differs from a culture to another. All women are subject to patriarchal oppression and woman's needs, desires, and problems are shaped by their race, sexual orientation, religion, and nationality. African American feminists have been particularly helpful in exposing the political and theoretical limitations of white mainstream feminists. In other words, black women were double burdened by patriarchy and the white community, not just because she is a woman but because she is a black woman. It is because black women were marginalized by the black male community

that they encouraged them to prioritize racial issues over gender issues, arguing that women of color are oppressed more by racism than by sexism (Tyson105-106).

Because they are black and women, black women writers had to express the complex and difficult social challenges that they face. They eloquently convey the indescribable suffering, injustice, and misery of slavery. Black women have been subjected to a variety of forms of oppression by both white and black men. They now have enough material to express their oppression as a result of this event. Both the women's literary legacy and the African-American literary tradition have purposefully kept these writers out of the spotlight, "A cultural establishment acting according to male norms out of male perceptions" has "patronized, slighted, and misread" black women's writings (Morgan 11).

African-American feminist critics have tried to give voice to the challenges of double invisibility and double jeopardy that they face because of being black and female. Black feminist ideology focuses on masculinity bias and racism as two important aspects contributing to the subjugation of black women. The sexual politics of black femininity, black women, motherhood, black women's lesbian relationships, and activism are just a few of the major subjects in black feminist philosophy.

### **1.2.2. Marxist literary Theory**

The basic idea of Marxist literary theory is that we see the text as somehow in relation to the economic conditions of the time. Karl Marx in the 19th century famously distinguished between two levels of culture, society, and life. He saw them as related to the economy, the means of production, innovations and technological changes. Specifically, the kind of economic reality that tells us how we work. All of these aspects are part of the base. Marx's basic point is that historically, economy influences various aspects of human life. For Marxism progress is considered an outcome of the struggle for power between different social

classes. The aim of Marxism is to bring about a society based on the same means of production. So basically, we can say that Marxism is a materialist philosophy that tries to explain things without assuming anything, even the existence of a world around us (Barry).

To explain Marxist criticism in literature, we can look at the main work that launched this theory, Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848). During that time the term "communist" was used to refer to the whole theory. However the term used now is Marxist. Marx and Engels believes that good art always has a degree of freedom from prevailing economic circumstances. They had that reverence for great art and literature, which was typical of their class. According to Engels, the more opinions of the author are hidden, the better the work of art becomes. Barry mentioned that Marxist literary criticism assert that a writer's social class and ideology have a major role on what is written by a member of that class. In other words, Marxists see authors as constantly formed by their social contexts (Barry).

This is done through the process of interpolation, a trick that makes them feel like free agents when in reality they are controlled and interpolated by the system to adopt ideologies. The importance of this move from the straightforward view of the base as a controlling superstructure to the analysis of how ideologies are formed through a variety of forces. Both repressive and ideological, is that the base no longer just passively controls literature now. Marxist literary criticism is an adaptation of all these concepts and ideas into the study of literature (Barry).

Being able to understand Marx's critique of classical economics and capitalism requires a firm grasp of the concept of the economy as Marx outlines. He intentionally starts out with capital, generally known as his most developed work. With an analysis of the commodity, which rests on the capitalist mode of production, Marx dissects the commodity. He reveal its complex nature and its connection to social relations embedded in capitalism as an economic

system. It is difficult to define what a commodity is according to Marx, because as we see, there are many critical parts worth noting. He does not provide a comprehensive condensed definition of the commodity because the commodity for him existed outside of the historical period of capitalist development. It took different ways and less important rules in social and economic relations (Tyson 62).

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels book *The Civil War in the United States* shows how the American Civil War shaped their understanding of social revolution and international politics. The way Marx and Engels saw slavery is very different from other academic Marxists. They did not see slavery as a pre-capitalist or feudal mode of production. That was not due to their knowledge that there had been slavery in many societies, including non-capitalist societies. They did not think it was capitalist. They said that this enslavement of African people in America was part of capitalism. For Marx and Engels, slavery provided an analogy for understanding wage labor. Marx and Engels often compare the domination of the rich over wage earners to the domination of slaveholders over enslaved people. This had a lot of resonance in the labor movement. On the one hand, it may lead to minimizing the horrors of slavery or even apologizing for slavery. On other hand, it may lead to great solidarity among wage earners admiring and learning from enslaved people (Marx and Engels, 184-185).

In other words, slavery was a component of capitalism, which had a strong link with commodity politics. The amount of slaves owned determined the social standing of a master. It makes them appear wealthy. It is not an analogy for slipping for wage work and it is not an input to real capitalism; it is rather a genuine component of capitalism. Even before the civil war, Marx recognized that unfree workers in the periphery, especially enslaved people, were a kind of vanguard. They are not just a part of capitalism. They are are a vanguard in the struggle against capitalism. A letter was written by Marx to Engels in January 1860:

[I]n my view, the most momentous thing happening in the world today is the slave movement on the one hand, in America started by the death of John Brown, and in Russia, on the other ... I have just seen in the Tribune that there is been another slave revolt in Missouri, which was put down, needless to say. However, the signal has been given. (Marx 1860)

In this letter, he is not talking only about white fighters against slavery like John Brown; he is talking about uprisings of enslaved people in the Americas as well as in Russia. When the civil war breaks out, Marx and Engels saw it as a part of a revolution against slavery. One of the points makes clear that the civil war is not a discrete event but part of a long revolution against capitalism (Marx and Engels 184).

### **1.2.3 Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory was first used in 1994 as an analytical framework to assess inequalities in education. Critical race theory examines the role of race and racism in perpetuating social differences between dominant and marginalized racial groups (Decuir and Dixon 26). In other words, Critical Race Theory, or CRT for short, is a legal academic framework that focuses on the idea that racism is systemic. It is a collection of ideas or approaches to better understand the history and present of American society, examining how racial injustice has been woven into the fabric of our institutions.

The exclusion of African-American history and culture from American education was first discussed in the late 1960s. It was only in the recent decade that black Americans were included in American history books. It covered black Americans who were oppressed. However it seems more like an attempt to promote cultural hegemony or dominance of white America. African-American literature treats racism as a literary record of the African-American experience. Throughout the Black Arts Movements, the social role of the black

writer remained an important issue. Critics had been urged to interpret the literature in terms of its portrayal of African Americans. It is similar to that of Marxist critics, but naturally focuses on race. The critical race theory began at a time when the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was ceasing to be a political or social force. Although it began as a critique of constitutional law (Tyson 365–368).

As such, CRT can play an important role as higher education institutions work to become more diverse and inclusive (Hiraldo 54). It attempts to explain and understand a wide body of facts, specifically facts relating to racism in the United States. It is critical because it focuses on the hidden or fundamental conditions that give rise to racism with the intent of changing them. That is why it is important as a way of understanding the persistence of racial inequality in America despite improvements in legal equality. CRT assumes that these inequalities are the result of racism.

In Tyson's, book *Critical Theory Today: A user Friendly Guide*, CRT's framework is composed of six tenets that has been identified by Delgado and Stefancic that are:

1. Everyday racism is a framework that legitimizes the racial and subordinate experiences of marginalized groups. This tenet is about personal composite stories or narratives of people of color. Rather than thinking about bad people doing bad things, CRT asks us to think about racism as an idea that is built into the fabric of how society operates. Instead of thinking about bad people doing bad things, think about structures existing in society that perpetuate the bad all on their own (Tyson 369-371).

2. Interest convergence: this tenet acknowledges white individuals as being the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation. These big systems, structures, or ideas that are perpetuating racism only work because of people's motivations. Interest convergence is literally when I want to work with someone and that person wants to work with me with the same interests. Then we might invent rules that support us working together. Material

determinism is the idea that if I have a lot of money (material), I will make decisions that keep that money with me and away from others (Tyson 371).

3. The social construction of race: we are only one human race, and as far as ethnicities go, most of them are not purely one thing or another, and terms like "black," "Asian," "Muslim" are just terms to make them into different boxes to make tenets one and two work (Tyson 372-374).

4. Differential racialization: This tenet essentially describes tenets one to three together. If structural racism is dependent on different interests converging and different groups of people having material interests. Then, it will never look the same to everyone everywhere all the time. This is what makes CRT such a big research field (Tyson 375).

5. Intersectionality is the process of redefining how we think about identity. We often default to things like ethnicity or nationality. When we do so, it promotes all the other tenets. Intersectionality tries to look at how different identities overlap and how people discriminate against many situations (Tyson 376).

6. Voice of Color stems from the idea of colorblindness. A mechanism that allows people to ignore racist policies that perpetuate social inequity and how different people of color will have experiences that only they can speak to (Tyson 377).

Critical Race Theory has been studied in fields like sociology, economics and political sciences. It is also considered similar to the way Marxism frame the oppressors and victims. It has been used to examine issues such as housing and educational segregation, unconscious bias, and criminal- justice reform. It helps people to think more critically, more engaged and more seriously around the practices happened in the past. The legal scholars undertook a set of analyses and investigations that were aimed at trying to make sense of puzzling persistence of racism in the legal, political system and economy.

### 1.2.4 Psychoanalytic literary Theory

Even though most of his ideas have been abandoned by modern psychology; Sigmund Freud, remains one of the most famous names in psychology and one of the most controversial minds of the twentieth century. His psychoanalytic theories formed the basis for many current psychodynamic theories. And His psychoanalytic perspective on personality offers a unique way of looking at the body-mind connection to personality.

In his book *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Terry Eagleton's discusses Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. He addresses the question of the use of psychoanalysis and its mobilization in literary studies. As well as, mental problems and human experiences through their history, from id to ego. As Freud's own slogan explains it all "Where the id was, the ego will be"; and this is the work of psychoanalysis. This slogan makes Freud appear more rationalistic than ever. Believing that the ultimate goal of life is death, where the ego cannot be harmed. He mentioned that human beings are ruled by the desire for gratification and Eros. For him the sexual energy, is the force that drives our story to build up (Eagleton 139).

According to a critique of Freud, he stated that his thinking was individualistic. That is, social and historical factors related to the unconscious. It may mean the development of the human individual through or in social and historical terms, to what he wanted. It is due to the interrelationship of bodies. Another common criticism of the technical term "Pansexualists," meaning that Freud reduced everything to sex and saw sexuality as central enough to human life and our activities. He has always opposed sexual drives as instincts of the ego. As a result, Freud was most likely a radically dualistic thinker (Eagleton 141).

Psychoanalytic criticism is an interesting form of criticism. It means you can do more than looking for phallic symbols. It can tell us something about how literary texts actually come about. It can be as difficult or as simple as we want it to be, revealing something about the meaning of that formation. As well as where the meaning lies in the text, depending on the

nature of the critique. Again, psychoanalytic literary criticism can be roughly divided into four classes according to what it takes as the object of attention. It could be with the author and author's intention. It can be in the text itself and it can also be in the reader. Psychological criticism is taking the ideas of psychology and applying them to literature. Psychology is all about human motivation. The question of why we do the things we do, why we think the things we think, and why we react the way we do in situations (Eagleton 155).

In his book, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, Barry introduces the main concepts relating to psychoanalytic criticism, which is the use of some techniques of psychoanalysis to interpret works of literature. He focused on Freud and Lacan's theories of psychoanalysis. In spite of some strong criticism of how Freud developed his theory of the unconscious. He remains a major force in how we think about ourselves and how we interpret literature. In his earlier work, Freud saw the psyche as split between two parts. The conscious, which we are aware of, and the unconscious, which is hidden from us. In his later work, he developed this further into a three-part psyche made of the ego or consciousness, and the superego. The consciousness is our internal moral police force, and the id, which is the unconscious. It is in the unconscious where Freud developed his theory of repression, where those desires, conflicts, and traumas we do not wish to face are pushed into the unconscious or repressed (Barry).

Another important term when it comes to Freud and psychoanalysis is the defense mechanisms that we use to avoid pain. Those include transference, which means emotions for one person to another person, and projection, which is personal aspects like emotions, feelings, characteristics, and viewpoints. Screen memory refers to how we push away significant memories and replace them with trivial ones. One of Freud's major ideas is psychological trauma and unresolved conflicts of the past. That is what most people suffer

from in different stages of their life, like childhood and adulthood. These traumatic events have a strong influence upon our actions and behavior.

The Freudian interpretation of dreams is significant to readers of literature. The techniques used by Freud are the same ones we use to analyze a work of literature. Among these techniques is displacement, where one thing or one event is represented by another, and each thing represents something else. There are many ways of using Freud's theories to analyze works of literature. Among them is looking for the overt meaning of the work of literature. The critics of this school of thought trace the influence of the human mind on a piece of art. They believe that the unknown state of mind of the writer, if laid bare, can reveal the underlying truths (Barry).

### **1.3 Conclusion**

Since the colonial period up to the abolition of slavery, African American literature has been shaped by social and historical events, and racial issues. A period that witnessed the appearance of many slave writers and poets with different ways of writing. They draw a clear image of their black history. They come up with a new style of writing to explain the real meaning of being a slave and the feeling of inferiority. African American literature provides a chance for many writers to establish a place for themselves. Furthermore, through their writings, they hope to forge an identity for themselves. Male and female African slaves suffered a lot, especially the female slaves. First for being black women in the white community, second because of the black man and the patriarchal society they lived in. The male slaves also witnessed oppressions as well as for being black. They were totally deprived of many rights, such as being free. Economically speaking, The African American community built on the wealth of the country. Slave trades were for the sake of plantations and goods.

The American nation was known as the nation of dreams, justice, and equality. It used to represents freedom and liberty. Unfortunately, these believes seems to be far from reality.

## Chapter Two: Women's Dehumanization and Question for Identity in Toni Morrison's

### *Beloved*

#### 2.0 Introduction

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* is the most powerful book about nurturing boundless hope while suffering infinite misery. She tries to represent the history of African Americans from her own perspective. *Beloved* is based on the real-life events of a black female slave named Margret Garner, and it is an extremely painful story about slaves who were exploited carelessly. She worked hard to portray the dilemma of the African American people in this novel and aggressively exposed human prejudices in it. Toni Morrison depicts the journey of African Americans past a lifetime of slavery in *Beloved* to remind the reader about the harsh past, and she ultimately portrays how slavery affected each character physically and psychologically. This chapter aims to illuminate the various methods in which female slaves were dehumanized, as well as the impacts on them in *Beloved* and the various harms and inhumanities that African Americans endured. This chapter will adopt the Feminist and Marxist theories to examine what exactly slavery has done to African Americans, specifically female slaves. The Critical Race Theory and the impact of slavery since the ancient days The psychoanalytic perspective tackles the issues of the female characters and their quest for identity.

#### 2.1 Dehumanization of Selected Female Characters in *Beloved*

##### 2.1.1 From a Feminist Perspective

When we want to talk about feminism, there is a strong link between male and female concepts. That means we cannot analyze a work from a feminist perspective without referring to male characters. To be more specific, the black feminist lens is up to the black community only with the need to talk about the white community and its gender oppression of the African

American slaves, and that is what Toni Morrison writes about, a work of fiction based on the real facts of an oppressed black female.

*Beloved* investigates the roles of trauma and love in African American history. Toni Morrison shows how slavery influenced the formation of relationships between the female slave characters and how they were dehumanized in the past. Again, the act of dehumanization is to use verbal abuse on human beings to non-human them and physical abuse to torture them. It is carried out by social institutions and based on sexual orientation and gender because dehumanization has been applied to both male and female slaves, but as a weak element in a harsh society, females suffer more and have been dehumanized twice, first by the black man and second by the white man. Sethe is a great example of these crimes (Smehil 2).

Looking at the novel from a Black Feminist perspective gives a specific way to analyze the characters' behavior and how they experience dehumanization as a source of violence and horror and to discover the physical brutality when they are treated badly by the whites because they are sadistic:

[W]orse than that---far worse than that---was what Baby Suggs died of, what Ella knew, what Stamp saw, and what made Paul D tremble. That anyone could take your entire being for whatever reason came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so badly that you couldn't even like yourself. Dirty you so badly you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. (Morrison 251)

That is, *Beloved* examines the dehumanizing effects of the slave trade in a variety of ways, some of which are obvious, such as referring to enslaved people as animals with monetary value. But others are more subtle. Sethe is a great example of this marginalization (Hussein 45).

Morrison's fiction, *Beloved*, becomes the manifesto of black feminist criticism and analyzes the complexities of class, race, and sex and how they affect black women. Furthermore,

the crime of slavery is so cruel and inhuman to black female slaves like Sethe that "her back skin had been dead for years." (Morrison 18). The main character of the novel suffers in her past and present and commits infanticide. She witnessed the death of her mother, hanged on a tree, till she gave birth to her two daughters, Beloved and Denver, and two sons. When the masters took her milk away, she cut the throat of her two-year-old daughter Beloved and tried to kill the other ones so they would not experience the cruelty of slavery.

The novel *Beloved* is deeply rooted in Afro-American culture and black women's special experiences, feelings, and the fact that they were treated as tools to feed white men's needs and sexual desires. Many female slaves have been subjected to crimes and rape because Morrison questions masculinity in terms of owning women's bodies as property, such as Baby Suggs because she had eight kids with different six men, and Ella being shared by a white man and his son in a locked room. Sethe's mother was also raped violently by many men. Slaves were stripped of their rights and denied the ability to be good mothers; they even had no right to control their own fates, and the only way for them to show love and care for their children was to murder them in order to free them from slavery and dehumanization (Hussain 44).

Female slaves were more fragile than males, so slavery was the reason behind the distorted black maternal love. The first chapter of the novel shows the crimes committed by the whites among female slaves, even the destruction of motherhood, as the main theme in this novel, because we notice many mothers were raped for this right. The black women in the community were the most oppressed of the most oppressed. The white people had the power to dehumanize the slaves. Slaves were not considered human beings, but they were considered either property or animals. They were unable to define any stable identity or to define themselves. In other words, slave women were regarded as breeders in the sense that they would give birth to future slaves by giving birth to children:

(G) Grandma "Baby must be stopping it," said Denver. She was ten and still mad at Baby Suggs for dying. Sethe opened her eyes. "I doubt that," she said. "Then why doesn't it come?" "You forget how little it is," said her mother. "She wasn't even two years old when she died. too little to understand. "Too little to talk much about." "Maybe she doesn't want to understand," said Denver. "Maybe. But if she'd only come, I could make it clear to her. (Morrison5)

Toni Morrison examines the importance of race and gender through the lives of her characters, where she mentions the obstacles that face women's ability to create relationships with others, and that's because of their double marginalization. Arlinda Banaj writes that "female agency, the ability of a woman to act for herself, the capacity of a woman to make the choice to act, is prevalent in Morrison's works." Being black is bad, but being a black woman is way worse. "To be a woman can never be defined on its own." Banaj also explained, "Rather, because society defines only men as being non-men, or "other," a woman cannot exist without a man, whereas a man can exist alone." That gives an opportunity to males to be the only master of these female slaves, and that is so bad for a woman to be manipulated by both black and white men. The selected female characters suffer, but they are strong enough to stay alive, meaning they survive from death by facing many kinds of dehumanization and imposing their existence within their community, keeping in mind they could not enjoy their rights or femininity (Banaj 2-3).

Morrison provides a womanist tenet that only deals with female oppressions by emphasizing Sethe's adventure closer to self-reputation in a competitive environment. Sethe witnesses the effects of slavery's bestiality on her previous generation. They even took her milk away, which represents her right as a mother. Denver narrates: "Beloved is my sister." I swallowed her blood right along with my mother's milk" (Morrison 252). Sethe's mother, the most effective surviving member of the slave ship, instructed Sethe that her mother and she had

been collected from the sea. Both have been taken up often by the crew (Morrison 62). They each endure the ache of the Middle Passage and the white masters' oppression. Sethe's mother, just like the different black slaves, changed into a handle with dehumanization, operating from sunrise till past due at night inside the rice fields. She no longer had sufficient time to spend with her baby as she spent her most effective day off. This explains the ignorance that Sethe suffers from because she was neglected by her mother when she was working all day long and was neglected by the community she lived in (Ayadi 264).

Slavery was harsh on Sethe because she never got rid of her old memories and traumatic past. Whenever she tries to move on and find a new life, she goes back to what she used to suffer from, which caused her whole life to feel what she wanted to feel. Remembering her past was because of the coming back of the former slave, Paul D:

[A]s if to punish her similarly for her horrible memory, sitting at the porch now no longer 40 toes away turned into Paul D, the final of the Sweet Home men. And even though she should by no means mistake his face for any other's, she stated, "Is that you?" "Eighteen years," she stated softly. "Eighteen," he repeated. "And I swear I had been on foot each certainly considered one among them." "Mind if I am part of you?" .. "You look precise." "Devil's confusion." He we could me look good so long as I feel bad. " He checked out her, and the word "bad" took on any other meaning. Sethe smiled. This is the manner they were—had been. All of the Sweet Home men. (Morrison7-8)

Remembering the past felt like punishing her for her mistakes and blaming her for things she had to do. Morrison's intentions for Denver's voice may have been black feminist because as the sub-community shrinks from a trio to a duo, excluding Denver, she becomes the novel's only woman to speak of the racial community. Denver tried to protect Beloved from the community

and her mother so she would not kill her again, "Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on into the yard if it wants to." So one never leaves the house and I watch over the yard, so it can't happen again and my mother won't have to kill me too" (Morrison253).

Denver suffers more and more because she was rejected by the community and was alone all the time between the walls of 124 bluestone house. She fears her mother and believes that she could kill her just as she did with her sister, Beloved:

She cut my head off every night. Buglar and Howard told me she would, and she did. Her pretty eyes were looking at me like I was a stranger. Not mean or anything, but like I was somebody she found and felt sorry for. She didn't want to do it, but she had to, and it wasn't going to hurt her. That it was just a thing grown-up people do—like pull a splinter out of your hand or touch the corner of a towel in your eye if you get a cinder in it. She looks over at Buglar and Howard to see if they are all right. Then she comes over to my side. I know she'll be good at it, careful. That when she cuts it off, it'll be done right; it won't hurt. After she does it, I lie there for a minute with just my head. Then she carries it downstairs to braid my hair. I try not to cry, but it hurts so much to brush it. When she finishes the combing and starts the braiding, I get sleepy. I want to go to sleep, but I know if I do I won't wake up. So I have to stay awake while she finishes my hair, then I can sleep. The scary part is waiting for her to come in and do it. Not when she does it, but when I wait for her too. (Morrison 243–244)

Black Feminism explains the suffering of female slaves in a very specific and detective way. So, as Beloved investigates the roles of trauma and love in the African American community and history, Beloved's characters are united by their desire to find love and be loved,

even when it is painful. Morrison considers how the human spirit is diminished when you know the things and people you love most will be taken away. She also shows that slavery is destructive to love in all its forms, poisoning both enslaved people and their enslavers.

### **2.1.2 from a Marxist Perspective**

The events that may have prompted Toni Morrison to write about post-slavery America vary in complexity and legitimacy; they are African American; her construction is not so clear, which directs her writing in a certain direction and towards certain people. "One of the aspects of slavery which resulted in negative effects on the slaves' self-image was the fact that they were sold" (Wising 5). Slaves were not considered human; they were considered products with a price, which meant social and class oppression for African American slaves, whether they were treated as animals or as a means of production.

We can see the oppression from a Marxist point of view, which makes it clear and easy to figure out how female slaves feel when they spend all of their time on plantations giving birth to children and being raped because the masters want more slaves for their plantations. Because African Americans do not have money, they sell themselves into labor to pay their debts: "If all my labor is sweet home, including extra, what do I have left to sell?" (Morrison 196). This means poverty and class oppression oblige the slaves to sell themselves, even their kids and mothers, as Sethe had to sell herself to buy her baby's headstone, "Ten minutes for seven letters." With another ten, could she have gotten Dearly too? " (Morrison 3). Slaves have no right to decide their own lives, but with money, they can move here and there because money holds the power to one's freedom. "Right off, it was clear, to the schoolteacher especially, that there was nothing there to claim." (Morrison 149). In other words, their community was fully based on Marxist ideas. You could be a human being just with money (Wising 5).

Beloved examines how slavery dehumanizes female slaves, treating them as property, animals, and machinery. Morrison says, "Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another." (Morrison 95). This quote explains that women in the black community would have to become more like men both physically and mentally to provide for themselves as well as their families. Slavery shows how social divisions create oppression and how the characters in this novel overcome this distortion. The obvious class divisions in *Beloved* are exemplified by slavery, such as between white and black people. However, the novel's more subtle points show how black people also oppress each other in creating class divisions within their society, and how Morrison used Marxist ideology in her utopian work to highlight the suppression of the Afro-American community (Caballero 4).

The scene where Sethe gives birth to Denver with the help of the white woman, Amy, shows the connection between people of the lower class and those of the upper class because Amy suffers too and lives the same oppression as Sethe, but in a white version rather than a black female. Therefore, analyzing this scene from a Marxist point of view explains social equality and how society's intrinsic values treat groups of people of the lower social class with disdain. However, she champions the idea of equality and no social classes through the conversation between Sethe and Amy. Toni Morrison focuses on how materialism affected the social classes and the use of black slaves as a means of production. Aside from the policy of commodities to own slaves and treat them as property and animals too, "You got two feet, Sethe, not four." (Morrison 194).

In this overarching class strife for material culture, that is, the necessity to adapt to the market economy or stay who African-Americans suppose themselves to be, we discover Paul D, who tries to seek out a higher life once he chooses to flee slavery and return to Sethe when she becomes a lonely mother that suffers to protect her kids and keep them safe, much aloof from

slavery and also the schoolteacher. Certainly, the lifetime of a single mother also plays well into *Beloved*, as Sethe tries to point out her children on her own. Single African-American fathers went in search of fortune, causing many problems for single African-American women. "An ex-slave who had probably never carried one hundred pounds to the scale, or picked okra with a baby on her back." They had never been lashed by a ten-year-old white boy, as God knows they had watched and remembered." (Morrison 162). These women, like men, are seeking independence in the new system. Boys like Burglar and Howard were too busy following the instance of their fathers, seeking to avoid slavery as a past that haunted them on their terms. Sethe, the maximum amount, as Morrison herself is aware of, knows differently; she understands re-memory and also that they ought to face slavery head-on because it's the key to really advancing in society. Afro-Americans are often seen as second-class citizens in American society. They are often discriminated against and marginalized (caballero 6).

In his book *Nationalism, Marxism, and African American Literature Between the Wars: a New Pandora's Box* Dawahare Anthony explains that in post-Civil War America, African-Americans were in the same state of affairs during which they had been post-Civil Rights: given the power to create their own construct. In essence, their base is what they currently select it to be, and their structure can develop on the far side of that which might be settled by their masters. Some, like Sethe, seem to have taken control of their lives by building upon their current culture instead of trying to expand on it; others, like Paul D., are wandering the land in search of higher opportunities for themselves, basically trying to enlarge what's been assigned to them. One thing that may solely be done outside of the local people is a sense of equal poverty. Given that poor communities tend to become more socialistic, anyone who needs to create peace for their neighbor is labeled negatively. In essence, post-slavery African-Americans had a sense of purpose, a sense of reconstruction first, then to hunt for better things. Unwantedly, this sense of

purpose results in conflict between African-American males and females; the conflict between those that are freed and those that have escaped; the conflict between those who are poor because of the community and those who are rising on top of it; and sophistication struggle in *Beloved* begins not as a difficulty between blacks and whites, but as an issue among African-Americans themselves (Dawahare 87).

Based on the thoughts of Peter Barry in his book *Beginning Theory: an Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, the most effective example of this internal African American conflict is the story of Baby Suggs. Some things are completely different. She is not like most of the people in her neighborhood; she has been freed; she has overcome reification and made her hands not solely her own, although she is extremely skilled. There's no danger lurking around the corner for her; she's not looking over her shoulder to observe the previous slave master return to her with the authorities. Furthermore, in her freedom, she has found a calling: preaching. Metaphors of hands that currently belong to oneself and not the master are embedded in her speech (caballero 10).

The construct in *Beloved* is purely Marxist. Marxism can describe the elements that form the novel's *beloved* and make it what it is. That is way better than the other literary theories. Morrison, like Marxist theory, asked to be written down so others could perceive the chances of a brand new future. Morrison appears to argue that only unity can prevent the African-American community from reverting to slavery; only women can educate future generations on how to avoid such problems by preserving vestiges of slavery; and only they can become what they aspire to be by breaking the bonds of economic idealism and recognizing the worth of their race. All the characters in *Beloved* are victims not only of the clear-cut, historical slavery to which they have been submitted and then liberated, but also of the author's Temporal Intertextuality.

### 2.1.3 From a Critical Race Theory Perspective

The real-life events of Margret Garner make it clear to understand the events of the novel *Beloved* from a real perspective and not as a work of fiction, especially when Toni Morrison mentions the way Sethe was forced to go back to the plantation of the schoolteacher under the fugitive slave law. As Margret did, she murdered her baby in order not to send her children to experience slavery. Because racism has not given much more attention to works of art, this event helps Toni to give credibility and strength to her work. It was like facing slaps from white politicians, who even tried to ban the novel because it said what others could not do. She even uses the life of this slave woman as a weapon to attack all the rumors and lies about slavery and the way whites hide their crimes. *Beloved* serves as evidence that shows the ordinariness of racism (Benseddik 34).

In their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Delgado and Stefancic analyze the concept of racism and how it was seen by the whites and how it was used by Toni Morrison to uncover the facts and the truth of racism in her novel *Beloved*. She shows the pure reality of racism and how whites regarded it as ordinary acts as well as the animalization and humiliation used by the masters of Mr. Garner's house over slaves, especially Sethe and Paul D. One can say that race oppression does not stand for physical abuses only, but also with the use of bad language too, like calling them "Niggers," which causes psychological trauma, "Now at Sweet Home, all of my niggers are men. I bought them that way and raised them that way. Men every one. "Beg to differ, Garner, I ain't no nigger. Not if you are scared, they ain't. Garner's smile was wide. But if you're a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too. I would have no nigger men around my wife." (Morrison 7).

These effects are related to the term "differential racialization" when Morrison uses it in her narration to depict psychological and physical dehumanization among the main characters,

particularly the female slaves such as Sethe and Baby Suggs. They suffered from complete loss of self due to the inability to believe in their existence and their job as mothers because the schoolteacher was a cruel and sadistic master. He employs a variety of techniques to dehumanize the plantation slaves; in other words, the schoolteacher treats the slaves as subhumans or animals because he lacks compassion and empathy for other humans. He exercises whipping, torture, and humiliation. Sethe is the victim whose life is most affected by his cruel attitude. The schoolteacher was dispatched to restore order. But what he did was break more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight (Morrison 11).

He always enjoys seeing slaves getting hurt and also enjoys torturing them physically, like when he orders his two sons to take her milk away. Sethe is the victim whose life is most affected by his cruel attitude. "God damn it, of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast, the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up." (Morrison 83). Morrison succeeds in showing the right image of how bad slavery was and how they suffered from racism. She collects the facts and records the African American experience (Benseddik 36-41).

Lois Tyson's book *Critical Race Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* explains the motives of African American criticism, describing how literature is related to politics and power because African American literature deals with racism as a literary record of African American experience. He defines racism as "the unequal strength of relationships that develop from the socio-political domination of one race by another, leading to systematic discriminatory practices such as segregation and domination". As for this definition, we can relate it to the first scenes of the novel, where African American slaves have been dehumanized and traumatized according to their inferiority in the American community; "racial superiority, inferiority, and purity are based

on the conviction that moral and intellectual characteristics, just like physical characteristics, are biological properties that differentiate the races." Tyson demonstrates how whites use racism based on various characteristics, such as how Sethe is treated like an animal. It is based on the idea of racial superiority and inferiority because As it is mentioned, female slaves were double marginalized like Sethe. She was humiliated by the schoolteacher and her husband when he left her and ran away, keeping her alone to suffer to protect their children from the whites and the sayings of the community. She was hurt because no one stood beside her or even tried to understand her:

[T]he underground agent said, "By Sunday." They took my milk and he saw it and didn't come down. Sunday came and he did not. Monday came and went, and there was no Halle. Then I thought he was dead; then I thought they had caught him. Then I thought, "No, he's not dead," because if he was I'd know it, and then you came here after all this time and you didn't say he was dead, because you didn't know either, so I thought, "Well, he just found him another better way to live." Because if he was anywhere near here, he would come to Baby Suggs, if not to me. But I never knew he saw. (Morrison 82)

Sethe gets hurt also because of the disrespectful words from Paul D that make her feel less than human when he says, "You've got two feet, Sethe, not four" (Morrison 194). She deals with rape and sexual abuse perpetrated by The Garners. So in order to be a racist, one has to be in a position of power, or in other words, one needs to be white (Tyson 360–361).

The same book also explains many different kinds of racism because critical race theory is very popular as a new approach to civil rights that discusses any topic related to race issues and white discrimination, like what the schoolteacher and his nephews did to both male and female slaves and the fact that they sucked Sethe's breast to take off her milk so she would not feed her

children. It is a very awful and inhuman way to torture a mother, because for her, being a mother is to protect her children from any abuse, which causes her to kill an innocent baby in order not to live through what she has been through (Tyson 367).

The critical race theory examines how details of African American everyday lives are related to race, or as it is known by Delgado and Stefancic as Everyday Racism, which means "physical or verbal attacks against people of color... in many ways, the most emotionally draining, stress-provoking forms of racism are the kinds that happen to people of color every day." This can illustrate that psychological dehumanization is revealed through the psyche of characters, their emotions, and the spiritual side of their lives because memories and trauma of the past have lived with and inside Sethe, mentally and physically, like the scars of beating and the tree on her back (Tyson369). Her crime affected her and the people around her, like her daughter Denver and the former slave Paul D. Sethe, who sees that she did the right thing to save Beloved, "That every person should take your whole being for something cause got here to mind. Not simply work, kill, or maim you, however dirty you. Dirty you so badly which you could not even like yourself. you so terrible you forgot who you had been and couldn't suppose it up." (Morrison295). The power is in the hands of the whites. Black slaves cannot control their own lives and fates, so it is up to the slave owners to decide for them. It is insane to own another's life as property or a subhuman.

I can also shed light on a former slave, Paul D., who was stripped of his manhood. He could not feel like a man but purely as an animal under the mercy of the schoolteacher. He was forced, like others, to call him Mister and obey him. Mr. Garner was using less bad, humiliating expressions than the schoolteacher, who was totally treating them as anything but humans, or if I can say, lower than animals. Paul D says:

[M]ister, he appeared to be...liberated. than me. stronger, tougher. He couldn't even get out of the shell by himself, but he was still king and I was... Paul D stopped and squeezed his left hand with his right. He held it that way long enough for it and the world to quiet down and let him go on. "Mr. 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 there wasn't any way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead. The schoolteacher changed me. I was something else, and it was less than a chicken lying in the sun on a tub. (Morrison 86)

From this vantage point, we can concentrate on racial oppression, emphasizing African American prejudice. *Beloved* is also put at a critical transitional point in Afro-American history which stresses the experiment of racism. Morrison herself says, "The trauma of racism is for the racist and the victim, the severe fragmentation of the self, and has always seemed to be a cause, not a symptom of psychosis." (Morrison 16). Racism alienates both "racists and victims" in *Beloved*. Slaves are tortured and experimented on to confirm the prevailing hypothesis that they are more animal than human (Spillers 65), making whites less human; and blacks are tortured intolerably and are forced to shut off some of their minds, or at least some of their memories, to survive (Delgado 61).

## **2.2 The Effects of Dehumanization on Selected Female Characters: A Psychoanalytic Perspective**

The black community has significantly suffered from slavery and its appalling tragedies. The narrative is rife with depictions of slavery's atrocities, especially in opposition to enslaved black women. The hardships and humiliation they have faced have left them with psychic and

physical repercussions. Indeed, in trying to isolate themselves and neglect the horrors of the past, they should, however, confront what is left of their memories of the ache of that past. Hence, the hint of trauma follows them, urging them to reconcile with their beyond due to the fact that it is the proper course to be renowned for their business enterprise in American society and verify their existence. We can say that 124 Bluestone Road houses the history of the psychological effects of slavery on Afro-American women.

### **2.2.1 Sethe**

Sethe is the main character and the protagonist of the novel. A slave woman escaped from slavery for freedom and to live a better life, but she could not be free from her past and bad memories. Toni Morrison coins remembrance as one of the main themes of the novel, in addition to the psychological trauma of the past and how it affects the present and future. She was influenced by her actions; slavery, rape, trauma, and dehumanization by the white community in Mr. Garner's sweet home in Kentucky. She ran away to Cincinnati to feel free, but she was haunted by memories and brutal history. This freedom did not last for long, because after 28 days she was forced to go back to Mr. Garner's house under the Fugitive Slave Act (Al-Dmour 49).

Morrison says, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another." (Morrison 112). Sethe's goal was to keep her children next to her because when she escapes, she thinks it is her moment to be free. Her goal was to save her children from slavery and the racial discrimination of Mr. Garner and the schoolteacher.

When the ghost of the baby Beloved hunted the 124 house, Sethe did not ask for forgiveness from the ghost because she was completely sure that she did the right thing to protect her. Morrison says, "How if I hadn't killed her, she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her." (Morrison 236). This is the awful part of the novel. Sethe killed her

innocent daughter so she would not experience slavery and rape as she did. She believed that by killing her, she was freeing her from oppression and racial exploitation. That was the way she showed love to her daughter and protected her from slavery.

The unconscious is thought to be Freud's most crucial contribution to psychoanalysis, and it must be connected to the concept of repression, which serves as a cowl for the unconscious goals and traumas when set free. Sethe is constantly subjected to past activities and repressed trauma due to the separation of affection bonds, families, and the lack of her job as a great mother. Morrison states, "Snatched simply because the slaves had been from one place to another, from any area to another, without practice and defense." (Morrison 103).

The research was done by Filiz Korez, "The Study of *Beloved* by Toni Morrison from the Perspective of Psychoanalytic Approach". It shows how old memories come back to Sethe when Paul D arrives at 124 House. She remembered her awful facts and cruel incidents, even the way she was tortured in the sweet house, especially when they took her milk away (Korez82). Sethe's life again after 18 years surprises her and puts her in front of her old miserable actions of the past. We can notice that Paul D is the link between the present and the past of Sethe because when she shows him the scars of the tree on her back, she retrieves what slavery had done to her (Korez85).

Morrison stated in her novel *Beloved* very deep words by Sethe about her feelings after freedom, "It looks as if I loved them extra once I was given here. Or perhaps I couldn't love them well in Kentucky because they had been now no longer mine to love. But after I was given here, after I jumped off that wagon—there has been now no longer a soul withinside the world I could not love if I wanted to." (Morrison16).

Sethe's only way to keep her children safe and love them as a mother was to flee; when she arrived in Cincinnati, she could do whatever she wanted and have the right and ability to defend them; it was the beginning of her healing. But unfortunately, she was traumatized more

and all of her hopes were destroyed when she saw the schoolteacher coming back to take her back. She made her biggest mistake: "I stopped him... I took and put my babies where they would be safe." (Morrison 164).

Sethe's existence became complete with ups and downs. There are masses of strains about the whole dehumanization of Sethe in the story. Her back is definitely a textual piece about slavery. Sethe says that there is a tree with several branches growing in her back. Sethe said, "I've been given a tree on my back." (Morrison 11). This technique means that there are masses of lashes in Sethe's back, as a result of the whip of both the schoolteacher and his nephews. This tree is a totally wealthy image that Morrison uses in her novel as a symbol of the physical cruelty of slavery.

### **2.2.2 Denver**

Denver is the second daughter of Sethe. She represents the link between the present of African Americans and their future and also the pure image of hope. It is evident that Denver did not live during slavery's period. But she experienced it through the eyes of her mother. She hates slavery. As Morrison wrote, "a foot rose from the riverbed and kicked the lowest of the boat." (Morrison99). This explains the scene when Sethe fell down, and she was lucky enough to be found by Amy Denver, a white girl who cared for her wounds and helped her escape to Ohio. Amy delivers Sethe when she goes into labor on the boat, and Sethe named her baby Denver after Ms. Amy Denver. "That's pretty. Denver, Real Pretty." (Morrison 100).

Gillespie mentioned in her book *Critical Companion to Toni Morrison: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work* that Denver was only a baby when Sethe murdered her older daughter, so her life was like growing up with the shadow that dominated her family's life. She was forced into isolation because no one spoke to the family, which made her a disturbed girl

forced to be alone because of the community. Furthermore, she became a prisoner of Sethe's past (Gillespie 37–38).

Denver found herself alone in a very awful community. Everyone in the neighborhood ran away from her, which caused her psychological harm. The fact that she grows up alone makes her realize that no one wants her, and her mother is the reason, "I am unable to continue. I'm at a loss for words. Can't what? What can't you do? I can not live here. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I cannot live here. Nobody speaks to us, nobody comes by. Boys don't like me. Girls don't either." (Morrison 17). All of her life, Denver has been isolated from the world past 124 Bluestone Road, affecting her mental and emotional state. She feels lonely and scared due to the fact that everybody avoids her and her very own mother attempted to murder her.

People worry about Denver and her family because of their stressful past. Denver has continually been frightened of her mom, afraid that the issue that came up may want to appear again. She couldn't even love her like a natural love between a mother and a child. As Denver explains how she feels about her mother: "I love my mother. However, I realize she killed one of her very own daughters, and as soft as she is with me, I'm fearful of her due to it." She neglected to kill my brothers and they knew it." (Morrison 242). She feels that her job is to defend Beloved and hold her mother far from her. All Denver's fears are of going back to the past and being killed due to slavery. She becomes even more terrified of leaving the 124-house, fearful that white humans will come and take her, "I need to know what that thing might be, but I don't want to. Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on into the yard if it wants to. So I never leave this house and I watch over the yard, so it can't happen again and my mother won't have to kill me either." (Morrison 145).

Denver was so lonely that the coming of Beloved made her feel so happy because she would never be alone again. One can say that Beloved's arrival at Sethe's home is a gift to

Denver. She feels that she will be able to build new relationships. And maybe it's time for her to get out of her solitude and discover the outside world. Beloved's arrival serves as a test of Denver's worth and her ability to connect with another (Larrick 3). Denver is overjoyed to see her previously absent sister happy again. Denver has lived a life of isolation, feels as though there is finally another person in her life besides her mother. She was willing to do whatever it took to maintain another life. She thinks that it is time for her to get out of her loneliness and explore the outside world and make relationships (Bachiri 35).

Denver lives in denial and ignorance because of a past she did not make and because of a crime that forces her to live with guilt. After the escape of her two brothers and the death of her grandmother-in-law, Baby Suggs, who always feels safe and happy with her, has damaged her mental health and even her way of seeing the present, she is stuck between the walls of 124 house and the sayings of society. Actually, she was abandoned because of her mother's actions. She believes that the baby ghost is her only companion, especially when Paul D comes into their life. She creates an unhealthy life by relating her life so closely to Beloved, Denver "kept watch for the baby and withdrew from everything else." (Morrison 123). This means her view of her surroundings has changed completely and she starts to be afraid about losing the baby ghost. She says: "I thought you left me, I thought you went back." (Morrison, 145). She even tried to keep her beloved's interest only in her by doing anything. Roy F. Baumeister et al. say that "the most adaptive response to rejection is to become friendly, kind, affable, well-behaved, and customarily prosocial." Eventually, once a group has rejected you, you want to make new friends to exchange the lost connection (Baumeister et al., 509).

Both Denver and Beloved need each other. She even affects Denver's life so that he cannot imagine her life without her anymore. Denver presents the most positive growth in the novel; she is the clear image and the link between the present and the future without giving much important

to the past because she gets hurt by the trauma of the past and the fact that her mother murdered her sister, so she lived like a prisoner in a dark society, believing that going outside is the biggest mistake that could end her life.

The effects dehumanization on Denver were much more on the psychological side of her life because she completely convinced herself that her life was under the control of both her mother and slavery. Isolation, belonging, and denial were all characteristics of this dynamic character, and she unconsciously developed the notion in her mind that keeping Beloved close to her would make her happy and safe from her mother.

### **2.2.3 Beloved**

Beloved, is the crime of Sethe. A two-year-old baby who is murdered by her mother to free her from slavery, a very mysterious character that develops the events of the novel from the first page till the end. She represents the spirit of the dead slaves and also the way slaves were dehumanized and raped. "Beloved becomes more than just a repressed memory, but also a representation for the entire community" (Larrick 4). Which means it exposes the real horror and violence perpetrated by the white community against African Americans. Beloved is also the representation of the horrible past that comes back to the present for revenge. Her presence effects the progress of the novel. In other words, beloved has an impact on many characters in the novel because she was a ghost who hunted a house to spread fears and memories of the past.

Beloved is a victim of love and motherhood. She returns in the body of a woman but acts like a baby who smells milk. She tried to do harm to her mother because she remembered her face very well. The Ghost Beloved is the product of an unspeakable trauma; it means the legacy of a barbaric history that shows the traumatic issues caused by slavery. Harold Bloom states that "And thus Beloved agitates memory, expressly in Sethe, from whom she seeks, even whereas still

a stranger, stories from Sethe's past" (Bloom 17). This explains the obsession with Beloved towards her mother, which helps her to make sure that this ghost is her daughter coming back to life to represent the link between the past and the present.

On the other hand, Lyunolu Osagie explains in his article "psychoanalytic strategies in Beloved", that There is plenty of evidence for the reading public to assume that Beloved is a ghost. She returns in human form, and at the end of the novel, no one knows what happened to her (Osagie 4). There are many clues in the novel which support the inference that 124 house is controlled by a ghost of Beloved. At first, inspired by her appearance with Sethe and Paul D, she tried to be close to Sethe, but she has recently become obsessed with her. Besides, the girl's name is Beloved. She comes from the water and asks for something sweet, which Sethe gives her (Kamaluldeen 3).

The come of Beloved will be seen as Associate in Nursing extension of the circle of slavery. Sethe was a slave and was conjointly in bondage by her children. to safeguard them, she behaves like their master and created a life-and-death call for them. Then, Beloved returns and enslaves Sethe nonetheless again. Sethe appears to be unceasingly at bay by her female offspring She utterly controls her mother once she rose from the dead. She even drives Sethe to insanity (AL Dmour 53).

Beloved's questions and consistent want for memories reopen the injuries and reach back to recapturing Sethe's memory. Sethe experiences an awakening of ache and anger while recounting memories she has never told Denver or Paul D. but freely shares with Beloved. She recalls her mother, who is now no longer allowed to nurse her and who was killed for a mysterious reason. Sethe refuses to just accept the constraints imposed on her through the agency of slavery. Due to her otherworldly knowledge, Beloved has requested the proper questions as a consequence of

reliving Sethe's past, who, in her turn, begins to evolve the method of operating through her grief.

### **2.3 Selected Female Characters Quest for Identity**

The word reconstruction may be used for the Afro-Americans, especially for the Afro-American women who face double discrimination for being black and women. In dealing with women's oppression, Afro-American women have to reconstruct themselves as an act of survival, and to be aware of the horrors of the experiences which their ancestors had to go through. Toni Morrison tried to highlight the double marginalization of female slaves and how they tried to create their identity far away from oppression and slavery.

#### **2.3.1 Sethe**

Slavery forbids blacks from having an identity or controlling their own fate. They were controlled by their masters and treated like animals. Sethe says, "I've got a tree on my back and a heart in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms" (Morrison 11). An identity can be formed only by the environment, family, and the society they live in, but she suffered from injustice and dehumanization, so she could not have an identity again. She was separated from her family and did not experience the real meaning of family love because of the loss of her mother, the escape of her husband, and the crime she committed.

Mohit Kumar Ray and Rama Kundu argue that: "Her humanity has been so violated by the slave master, and her complete revel in as a slave woman, she kills her daughter to keep her from psychic death" (Kumar93). Society ignores her, first because of slavery, and second because society judges and fears her, as her daughter Denver and Paul D do, because she did not repent of

her actions; everyone wonders and questions her humanity and motherhood. Sethe's identity is lost in her past and the pain she has experienced (Kumar 93).

Sethe's life is defined by her role because she has not been allowed to develop a strong individual identity or self-value. The idea of repression carried out to Sethe due to her encounters with the schoolteacher. The Schoolteacher represents an ordinary brutal masculine colonizer, for the reason that he treats the slaves as sub-people by looking to cause them to consider their inferiority, and he has an effect in Sethe's mental repression he classifies Sethe as a representative of the animal and . Her isolation among the four walls of 124 Bluestone Road can be understood as a place of redemption where Sethe is able to some extent define her identity (Kamaluldeen 8).

Sethe's stories as a slave make her right into a female with "iron eyes and a spine to match" (Morrison 10). Trauma performs a massive function in shaping a person's character. The trauma of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse Sethe had skilled a sturdy effect on her identification. Throughout her enslavement, and the relaxation of her life, the horrors Sethe is subjected to are terrible, particularly as compared to her time enslaved with the aid of using the Garners, whilst slavery doesn't appear so bad. Overall, Sethe suffers plenty of misery due to being a slave, however, her identity develops in an exciting and uncommon manner due to what she encounters. Whereas trauma can have an effect on humans in a terrible manner, she is made strong with the aid of using the trauma she endures . She thus puts her energy into loving her children. Her own identity is clearly defined in terms of motherhood. Sethe regards her children as the way that she could feel her duty as a mother to protect them (Daniel 17).

Simultaneously, Sethe's adventure of struggling leaves bodily scars on her back, any other indication of the horrible violence practiced on slaves. The schoolteacher's nephews beat her when she became pregnant with Denver to the point that they injured her so badly. They held

her and sucked her breasts. The fact that "they took her milk" (Morrison 17) through pressure is traumatizing to her, in addition to her husband, Halle, who noticed what came about and changed into not being able to do anything. Consequently, Sethe feels lost, fractured, and robbed of her identity and essential essence as a lady and as a mother. Due to the fact that beloved's function is crucial to the formation of the characters' identities, her going back in the flesh may be studied because of the hint of the annoying past she left in the minds of every one of the characters. This is due to the fact that her disappearance illustrates the very purpose of their rapprochement with themselves and with their community. *Beloved* depicts the lines of trauma in addition to the approaches to healing the psychic wounds dug within the reminiscences of the characters. Sethe succeed in reconstructing her identity by protecting her children from slavery and oppression "I did it. I got us all without Halle too" (Morrison 115). Even more without her husband she finds out that she could live and survive without her husband (Ayadi 264).

### **2.3.2 Denver**

What one can deduce is that Denver serves as the bridge that makes her mother discard the possessions of the past and return to the present. She is also the one who allows the community to confront their past. of the present. The image of women's voices joining together to perform a collective exorcism is a very crucial image in the novel, which means that only through unity could the Black community regain their agency and freedom, once taken from them in the past, and go into the process of recovery and self-identification. In other words the character of Denver represents the black female suffer through the walls of both white and black community, even the humiliation that causes her personality because of the fear of judgments (Ayadi 266).

The fact that the coming of *Beloved* influences Denver's attitude, makes her think about the outside world, or in other words, to create relationships and try to be a normal human being

rather than being stuck between the walls of their house with no friends and no family, she did not have an identity. Sethe and Beloved share the same past, which Denver was not a part of but constantly tried to be close to because of the need to have an identity. She thought that being beloved was her hope rather than her mother, that she did not care for her. Denver decided to go out and ask for help; "Denver knew it was on her." She would have to leave the yard; step off the edge of the world, leave the two behind, and go ask somebody for help "(Morrison 170). It is clear that she wants to make a new start and build a new identity far from fear and loneliness. She faces the horrors of both slavery and the community that changes her to be afraid of her mother if she kills her.

One can argue that Denver's solitude is the reason why she decide to face the reality and tried to have an identity she wanted to communicate with her community as everyone do because she was not able to build her own strength thinking her destiny is controlled by her mother or her mother's crime at this level she becomes a strong woman that have more confident .Denver Gained her identity through strengthening her own personality based on individuality she was living in (Bachiri 36)

### **2.3.3 Beloved**

Due to the fact that beloved's function is crucial to the formation of the characters' identities, her going back in the flesh may be studied because of the hint of the horrors of the past she left in the minds of every one of the characters. Beloved's identity is mysterious This is due to the fact that her disappearance illustrates the very purpose of their rapprochement with themselves and with their community. Beloved depicts the lines of trauma in addition to the approaches to healing the psychic wounds dug within the reminiscences of the characters both her appearance and disappearance are weird she is a real woman in flesh, appears in front of the

people: "A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree" (Morrison 60). She seems like using her force to create her own existence within the 124 bluestone road and the black community (Ayadi 264).

Beloved's disappearance liberates the whole race's memory and plans for a better position in society which represents the basis of the reconstruction of the self and the community. (Morrison 266), which opens a new path of hope for future black generations to face oppression and demand their rights, as well as for black females, who should be a female beloved, was not satisfied with being a ghost, so she tried her best to return as a body (Ayadi267).

The return of the beloved in the flesh is remarkable. It denotes the going back of the repressed past that was unforgivable, as a consequence, establishing the manner for forgiveness. Bell Hooks argues that "there's not anything about the pain of the past that I even have now no longer forgiven." However, forgiveness does not suggest that one forgets (Hooks 119). Beloved additionally talks about ancestry and relationships between the enslaved and the free. Alive and lifeless, moms and daughters. Beloved, the dead baby who comes back to haunt her mother, has more than one symbolic meaning. She represents many Africans. Those are ladies whose memories are by no means told, and who're uprooted from their hometown to come to be white men enslaved, degraded, raped, and denied their identity. She is likewise the haunting image of generations of mothers and daughters hunted down and stolen from their hometowns (Setefanus 61).

Pamela B. June claims that; "Most obviously, Beloved's scar on her neck reveals her identity as the daughter murdered by Sethe" (June 24). This means that Beloved lost her identity when her mother murdered her because she is no longer a human being but a ghost who lives in the past and exists in the present. She never dies and was alive in her sister's memories and

believed that she was always with her. She gave herself an identity through her thoughts. One can understand that the beloved did not want to come back as a ghost. She was not satisfied by her spiritual presence. That's why she regained the body of a young lady. Through her return, she believes that her identity as a human being is back (Bachiri 40).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

The novel focuses on Afro-American women after the abolition of slavery and the impacts, including maternal discourse, a process of healing trauma and recovery, by forcing the main character, Sethe, to confront and remember the past. Similarly, *Beloved* not only represents the past of the characters in the novel, but it also represents those to whom Morrison dedicates the novel. Moreover, as a reminder of the horrific past that possesses the characters, *Beloved* is a threat to their lives; yet, they must face it and acknowledge its pain because it is part of their self-definition. Indeed, the characters go into a process of self-affirmation. They take their time recognizing the fundamental methods of self-affirmation. In this sense, the healing of memories is the first step needed toward self-identification. It enables a new life in the future. So, through analyzing the desire to repress memory, Sethe, Denver, Paul D, and the entire community move right into a process of psychic recovery. They discover a new way of reading the world, themselves, and others. Strikingly, Toni Morrison echoes the womanist vision by craving more space for her female protagonists. She creates a female figure that symbolizes the hurt of the past as well as restoring identity.

## General Conclusion

This dissertation is an investigation into the Physical and Psychological dehumanization and identity reconstruction of selected female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, *Through Sethe*, *Denver*, and *Beloved*. Toni Morrison succeeds in highlighting the true image of slavery and how female slaves were double burdened in *Beloved* by analyzing the case of dehumanization and humiliation of African Americans by white slaveholders. Toni Morrison was an influential writer who devoted her literary work to writing about the history of her community. She also uses historical events to strengthen and give more credibility to her work. Specifically focuses on the real life of a female slave called Margret Garner and how she experienced slavery and trauma during and after the abolishment of slavery and the civil rights acts.

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison repairs the forgotten history of slavery and reveals the situation of African Americans. Through her fiction pages, she succeeded in going deeper into this watershed of American history. Thus, Morrison, in her piece of work, depicts all the pain, violence, and torture experiences that African Americans lived through in slavery. Morrison has essentially focused on the oppression and supremacy of whites over blacks. In the novel, the characters seem to be real people because Morrison transformed a real story into fiction.

The first chapter is about the historical background of the novel and the theoretical framework that is going to be applied to analyze it. I have mentioned African American literature, especially from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Male and female slaves' issues and how they were seen by the whites, besides their community. Morrison wins the Pulitzer Prize for this novel because she was a real warrior by showing facts and uncovering the truth about slavery. The theoretical framework, which aims to study and analyze the novel from various perspectives, that are: Feminist Literary Criticism, which focuses on female issues in general and how they are dehumanized. The Marxist Literary Criticism, which deals with social and

class oppression; Critical Race Theory, to better understand racism from various points of view; and In order to analyze the characters' behavior and psychology, I used the Psychoanalytic Literary Theory. This also made it clear how female slaves felt when they were treated like animals and as machines on the plantations.

The second chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part focused on the dehumanization of specific female characters in *Beloved* from three different perspectives: feminist, Marxist, and Critical Race Theory. The second part shows the effects of dehumanization on selected female characters from a psychoanalytic perspective. To be more specific, it discussed dehumanization and how it affects the three female slaves mentally and physically, and the way memories and past trauma deeply affect the present and future of these characters, including how repressed memories make their lives full of ups and downs. Consequently, when analyzing the characters' dehumanization, we noticed that most of the characters were living in isolation. In addition, we found that the scars of slavery memories affected Sethe, Denver, and Beloved mentally and physically, they even become disqualified from everything.

The third and last part of this chapter, which is about selected female characters' quest for identity, shows how slavery and racial oppression caused a loss of identity and divested these female characters from deciding their fates and even enjoying their rights. But, by the end of the chapter, Sethe, Denver, and Beloved have all succeeded in reconstructing their identities because each of them has their definition of identity, and Sethe's definition is vastly different from Denver and Beloved's view. Sethe is a great example of how slavery represents the cruelty and horrors of slavery, which makes her more able to face the brutality of her community.

Sethe considers her children her identity. She believes that since she could protect them from becoming slaves, she is seen by others as a human being who can feel and love, and also

as a protective mother who cares for the well-being of her children. For Beloved, she wants to regain her identity through her coming back to life. Slavery made her lose her life as well as her identity. So she thought that with her return to life, she was going to have an identity.

Denver's quest for identity is different. She thinks that since she is living with just her mother and without having any contact with the outside world, she cannot form her own identity.

Therefore, she feels that she acquired her identity when she succeeded in getting free from her solitude and making herself a part of her community, where she feels like she is free and does not depend on her mother's help. Denver creates her own personality and identity.

This investigation is still far from perfection. Hence, this modest study has not covered all the details mentioned in the novel; it has not also analyzed the other female characters because I shed light on the very affected ones. Further research is required to explore other kinds of oppression and focus on different perspectives. Therefore, this investigation could be a cornerstone for those whose area of interest appeals to the works of Toni Morrison and African American literature.

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