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The Exploration of Motherhood and Slavery in Beloved by Toni Morrison

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الملخص

محبوبة، رواية تحظى بتقدير كبير من تأليف توني موريسون، تتعمق في المصير المأساوي للأفراد المستعبدين وتصوره بشكل معقد، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على الأمهات المستعبדות. تبحث هذه الدراسة في التجارب المؤلمة المرتبطة بالأمومة في سياق عصر العبودية، وتظهر بوضوح من خلال الشخصيات المركزية مثل سيث ودفنر ومحبوبة وطفل ساكس. يبدأ بتقديم تصوير تاريخي للدور متعدد الأوجه للمرأة التي تولت في نفس الوقت مسؤوليات الأمومة والعبودية. وتبدأ الدراسة بدراسة البعد الزمني، ثم تحليل العلاقات المتبادلة بين الشخصيات المختلفة للتوضيح. إبراز الأثر السلبي العميق للعبودية على مؤسسة الأمومة. في رواية محبوبة لا يتم استكشاف مفهوم أهمية الأمومة فحسب، بل يقدم أيضاً لمحة عن سياق مجتمعي أوسع، وتعاني الأمهات من ضائقة جسدية وعاطفية كبيرة، فضلاً عن حالات الاستغلال الجنسي، في جهودهن لحماية ذريتهن، وعلى الرغم من احتمال الافتقار إلى القبول الأخلاقي، فقد يكون للأفراد مصير مشترك. ويتعلق موضوع الاهتمام بموضوعات العبودية والأمومة والاستغلال الجنسي كما يظهر في الرواية الشهيرة «محبوبة» للكاتبة توني موريسون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العبودية، الأمومة، الاعتداء الجنسي، توني موريسون

Abstract

Beloved, a highly regarded novel authored by Toni Morrison, delves into and intricately portrays the tragic fate of enslaved individuals, with a particular focus on enslaved mothers. This study investigates the distressing experiences associated with motherhood within the context of the era of slavery is vividly shown through the central characters of Sethe, Denver, Beloved, and Baby Suggs. It provides a historical depiction of the multifaceted role of women who simultaneously assumed the responsibilities of motherhood and slavery.

However, the study proceeds by examining the temporal dimension, followed by an analysis of the interrelationships among various characters for elucidation. To highlight the profound negative impact of slavery on the institution of motherhood. The concept of maternal significance is not only explored but also provides a glimpse into a broader societal context. Mothers endured significant physical and emotional distress, as well as instances of sexual exploitation, in their efforts to protect their offspring. Despite potentially lacking moral acceptability, individuals may yet have a common destiny. The topic of interest pertains to the themes of slavery, motherhood, and sexual exploitation as shown in the renowned novel “Beloved” authored by Toni Morrison.

Keywords: Slavery, Motherhood, Sexual Abuse, Toni Morrison

Introduction

Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, adeptly examines and elucidates the profound repercussions and ramifications of slavery on various dimensions of human existence, with a particular emphasis on the institution’s impact on the concept of motherhood. The presence of a mother plays a significant part in the development and well-being of every kid. In instances where the mother is not actively involved in the child’s daily life, this absence can have notable effects. The experience might elicit significant discomfort and

result in severe ramifications. context of feminist theory, it is important to consider the various perspectives and debates around this topic.

In addition, motherhood has been a subject of interest and analysis within feminist discourse, as it intersects with issues of gender, power, and identity. Scholars have examined how motherhood is constructed and, in her novel, Morrison places particular emphasis on households comprised solely of women and the experiences of single mothers. Families frequently arise as a result of males abandoning their responsibilities. Numerous Enslaved women were compelled to engage in sexual relationships with multiple men, resulting in the procreation of offspring. Individuals who have different biological fathers. (Ramirez, 2015, p. 109). Consequently, there was a dearth of affectionate bonds between numerous moms and their offspring, as a result of this situation. It was observed that individuals have significant difficulty in developing affection towards children who were conceived in the absence of love, particularly. Offspring born from the union of white slave owners.

Moreover, a significant number of maternal and filial ties were irreparably damaged. Due to adverse living circumstances in her work, Morrison devotes particular attention to this issue. Sethe lacked knowledge of her maternal figure due to her mother's execution, whereas Baby Suggs held contrasting viewpoints. In the context of her children, Sethe's role as a mother to Denver and Beloved exemplifies maternal qualities possess the ability to accomplish. The adverse life circumstances exerted a lasting influence on their lives, persisting for years thereafter they achieved liberation. This research aims to examine the concept of motherhood during a certain historical period. This analysis examines the theme of slavery through an exploration of the characters Sethe, and Baby Suggs, and their mother-child connections, to illustrate the impact of slavery on their lives. During the era of slavery, mothers encountered numerous challenges, harsh circumstances, and suffering.

1. An Examination of the Historical Context Surrounding Slavery and Its Impact on Motherhood

Slavery stands as a prominent focal point within the context of African-American history. It is commonly acknowledged that the individuals subjected to the atrocities of that oppressive dictatorship were predominantly of African descent, forcibly transported to America for exploitation and subjugation. The origins of slavery were closely intertwined with economic factors, primarily serving as the primary impetus for its emergence. The practice of enslaving Africans was driven by the desire to exploit their labor for economic advantage. In the 17th century, “the” initial arrival of enslaved individuals with dark complexions in the region that would later develop as British North America took place in Virginia.

Moreover, during that historical period, a significant majority of enslaved individuals resided in the southern regions of the United States. Enslaved individuals relied upon them. During the eighteenth century, it became increasingly evident that family heads possessed far greater physical authority over their domains. Slaves were treated worse than their employers. African Americans were prohibited from engaging in the acts of writing or reading. (Bourne). Furthermore, individuals were subjected to severe consequences if they engaged in any form of misconduct.

Furthermore, given the large number of enslaved individuals, it may be inferred that female slave owners did not refrain from utilizing enslaved individuals to fulfill their sexual desires. Slave mothers, regarded as inferior beings and dehumanized to the level of animals, were subjected to an exceedingly dreadful fate, arguably one of the most abhorrent in human history. Consider the hypothetical scenario. The experience of being enslaved was inherently abhorrent and harrowing, and the presence of offspring exacerbated the severity of the circumstances far more alarming. African American enslaved mothers and their offspring were denied recognition of their humanity entities. The separation and destruction of families

occurred. Mothers and fathers frequently experience separation not only do individuals learn from one another, but they also acquire knowledge from their offspring. The inherent cruelty associated with being possessed by another individual.

Likewise, this situation has significantly impeded the ability of the family to effectively carry out their daily activities and fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Although certain moms may indeed have had the same slave masters as others, In the case of their offspring, their lifestyles exhibited a departure from the conventional. Every day, mothers had a profound sense of anguish. Emotions such as grief, frustration, despair, and fear are experienced, mothers are prohibited from assuming the responsibilities of child care and nurturing. The individual lacked the chance to adequately nurture them. The experience of being pregnant while serving as someone's slave was a profoundly distressing ordeal for several individuals held in bondage. Mothers encounter many challenges, it is widely recognized that the act of carrying a kid is inherently challenging; nevertheless, the additional task of simultaneously engaging in a performance exacerbates this difficulty. Engaging in labor-intensive occupations and enduring frequent mistreatment daily were significantly more alarming and distressing. The situation is deeply distressing. These circumstances resulted in a significant number of children being born with impairments, as a consequence of the aforementioned disorders. Insufficient prenatal care was provided. This significantly exacerbated the challenges faced by mothers in their daily lives, rendering their tasks and responsibilities tenfold more difficult.

In addition, it is noteworthy that slave owners exhibited no empathy towards enslaved individuals, thereby compelling them to return to their previous circumstances. Many women return to work shortly after giving delivery. Due to this circumstance, "their mothers - who were already". The individuals in question find themselves overwhelmed by a continuous influx of labor-related requests, resulting in their parental responsibilities

being forcefully relegated to a subordinate position. Slaveholders faced significant challenges in fulfilling their economic interests, particularly when it came to addressing the needs of their crippled slaves. The imperative is to address the needs of children and safeguard them from an institution that subjects them to objectification and devaluation. (Barclay, 2014, p.120). The exertion of strenuous physical labor not only had an impact on infants but also the well-being of the mothers themselves. (Cowling, 2017, p. 224), authors argue that the institution of slavery inflicted significant harm on mothers, resulting in their inability to complete pregnancies. Furthermore, slave owners exhibited a lack of concern.

For their agony and struggle: “Although they possessed a certain level of awareness regarding the arduous nature of their efforts...” (p. 224), deemed responsible for the demise of enslaved infants, hence rendering the situation devoid of advantages. Frequently implicated in the act of suffocating their newborns, (Jennings, 1990, p. 54). Moreover, the emotion of terror was consistently prevalent within the context of enslaved individuals, it is notable to consider the experiences of mothers who were subjected to enslavement. Every mother wants optimal outcomes for her offspring, although, without certainty, there is a concern regarding the potential separation of one’s offspring and the likelihood of their survival under unfavorable circumstances. The institution of slavery evoked profound horror, as a result, certain mothers intentionally refrained from procreating.

Numerous individuals who were parents made concerted efforts to shield their offspring from the negative effects of the institution of slavery. Morrison, the subject of discussion, is a prominent figure in the field being addressed and depicts this phenomenon in her literary work titled “Be-loved,” primarily through the character of Sethe, a mother who bears deep emotional wounds as a result of her experiences. The institution of slavery has had such a profound impact on her that she is willing to engage in actions that are difficult to comprehend to protect those she cares for deeply.

Even though several readers, who did not experience slavery firsthand, cannot fully empathize with all aspects of the protagonists' experiences.

In addition, in the work under consideration, Morrison adeptly portrays the vivid imagery that encapsulates the historical context. It effectively captures the inherent cruelty inside the institution of slavery in the United States was characterized by a system of oppressive control and discriminatory practices. The experience of being in the presence of African-American individuals was very distressing, and the existence of discriminatory practices further exacerbated this distress. The persistence of racial discrimination against African Americans in the present era intensifies the overall sense of sadness and despair.

2. The portrayal of sexual abuse in the novel *Beloved*.

Morrison's novel *Beloved* challenges the societal norms of the nineteenth century by freely addressing topics of sexuality and sexual abuse. (Montgomery, 2013, p.55). Numerous protagonists in the story undergo traumatic experiences as a result of their previous histories, which were characterized by a prevalence of sexual encounters. Instances of physical attacks or acts of aggression. The primary protagonist, Sethe, is fortunate to have the same biological father for all four of her children.

However, while she was in bondage at the Sweet Home plantation, she had a violent attack that had a profound impact on her. In the capacity of a maternal figure. The physical maltreatment she endured serves as a representation of the adversities faced by enslaved mothers. The protagonist in the novel experiences a challenging situation where she is deprived of her milk by the male characters, as she explicitly mentions (Morrison, 2004, p. 17). The individual in question was without a crucial element that served as a means of connection between herself and her offspring - her breast milk. Was cowhide employed in your case? The milk was confiscated by the individuals in question. Did they physically assault you when you were pregnant? (Morrison, 2004, p. 20), Sethe displayed indifference

towards the physical abuse inflicted upon her, as her primary concern was solely centered on her lactation and the preservation of her milk. Intended for her offspring.

On one side, this demonstrates her affection for her offspring, and the reality it might be argued that these matters held significant importance for her. On the contrary, she embodies the entirety of the enslaved population. Mothers who encountered significant challenges and experienced considerable distress due to their inability to adequately care for or breastfeed their children. Parents must ensure that they suitably raise their children. Sethe exhibits an unwavering commitment to safeguarding the well-being of her offspring, as seen by her act of homicide. Beloved provides evidence to support the claim.

Furthermore, she exhibits an unwavering commitment to her children, exemplified by her willingness to engage in the act of selling her possessions. This is the method by which she effectively carves the tombstone of Beloved. Baby Suggs experienced multiple instances of sexual assault and conceived children with various men. The impact on her life is substantial, as she encounters significant challenges in establishing emotional connections with her children. In this discourse, the user presents an additional point or perspective. The individual who experienced this abhorrent action is Ella, who exhibits a reluctance to engage in the act of breastfeeding her offspring because the conception occurred as a result of a non-consensual sexual act, the subsequent outcome is the demise of the offspring. One might observe instances where slavery resulted in the sexual objectification and exploitation of women. Historically, individuals who identify as white males have held a position of societal privilege and power. The individuals in question possessed complete authority over individuals who were held in bondage, enabling them to exercise unrestricted control over them and engage in any actions they choose, without any limitations or constraints. The repercussions of these events have resulted in enduring psychological

distress for numerous women.

3. The Relationship Between Sethe and Her Mother

Sethe emerges as a pivotal figure in *Beloved*. The symbolism of Sethe as a Representation of Black Female Slaves Oppressed by White Patriarchy, Drawing from the Real-Life Margaret Garner (Watson, 2009, p. 160). In addition, Sethe exemplifies the tragical circumstances of simultaneously embodying the roles of a mother and a female offspring residing in the antebellum Southern region characterized by the institution of slavery. Due to the absence of her mother, she lacks the chance to create a genuine connection. The individual experiences challenges in developing a mother-daughter relationship, thus facing difficulties in establishing a similar bond with her offspring.

3.1 The concept of separation

Refers to the act or process of dividing or isolating entities or elements from one another. It involves creating distinct. Undoubtedly, the separation of children from their mothers stands out as a deeply distressing outcome of slavery, since it deprives these mothers of the opportunity to form, nurture, breastfeed, and establish emotional connections with their offspring. Similarly, Sethe experiences a separation from her mother, depriving her of the opportunity to establish a meaningful relationship and enjoy the companionship, nurturing, and protection that a maternal figure would provide. Sethe's sole recollection of her mother is that of being carried by her behind the smokehouse, where her mother revealed the mark located beneath her breast. Sethe's desire to possess her mother's mark stems from her longing for recognition as her daughter by her mother. This observation unequivocally demonstrates Sethe's profound desire for a maternal presence in her life.

However, rather than being in her presence, the mother of Sethe is executed by hanging. is left feeling empty and deprived due to the circum-

stances, on one hand, she individually experiences the loss of a significant person in her life and concurrently perceives her mother's departure. The individuals who were subjected to hanging were exclusively those enslaved individuals who made attempts to flee. The mother decided to pursue a particular course of action. The individual's cognitive process would guide her toward a more advantageous situation. Similarly, Sethe believes that she may emancipate her offspring by Causing their demise.

3.2. Affection and Safeguarding

The experience of slavery had such a profound dehumanizing effect on Sethe's mother that she decided to abandon all of her children except Sethe, as evidenced by the statement, "She discarded all of them except for you." The individual from the team that she discarded on the island. The individual in question discarded the objects in question, without specifying their specific identities. She provided the name of the African-American gentleman. (Morrison, 2004, p. 62). The level of distress experienced by women following instances of sexual assault can be exemplified by Sethe's mother's decision to distance herself from her children since they served as painful reminders of her perpetrators.

Furthermore, the employment of the term "threw" serves to demonstrate and underscore the absence of affection that Sethe's mother harbored for her other offspring. There was a lack of correlation or association between the two entities. The primary motivation for the protagonist's decision to retain Sethe as her daughter is rooted in her deep affection for her father and her subsequent demise can be interpreted as a means of safeguarding her offspring. Similar to other enslaved mothers, she had very limited chances to personally care for and breastfeed Sethe, a crucial aspect for any mother, whether in contemporary times or the past. This is significant because the absence of this nurturing act can be interpreted as a form of maternal abandonment. Breast milk symbolizes a mother's enduring love. Sethe's mother, through her deprivation of nursing and milking,

serves as a metaphorical representation of the hardships and suffering experienced by imprisoned women in general. (Mock, 1996, p.119). During her early childhood, Sethe struggled to comprehend the events unfolding around her and the actions of her mother. As she matures and assumes the role of a parent herself, she gains a deeper comprehension of her mother's behaviors and the profound affection her mother harbored for her.

4. The Maternal Role of Sethe

In a subsequent part of the narrative, when Sethe reaches adulthood and assumes the role of a mother, her profound psychological distress resulting from her enslavement becomes evident. This distress is so severe that she expresses a preference for ending the lives of her offspring rather than subjecting them to the abhorrent conditions associated with slavery. Sethe articulates this sentiment, stating, "I couldn't let her nor any of them live under schoolteacher" (Morrison, 2004, p. 163). The actions of the individual in question can be characterized as more monstrous than nurturing.

However, an alternative perspective suggests that these actions can be interpreted as acts of love, driven by the desire to protect her children from experiencing the hardships she endured. It is important to note that Sethe, the subject in question, should not be labeled as a bad mother, but rather as a mother who was enslaved and, when confronted with a threat to her role as a mother, chose to assert her agency by taking the life she had given. The individual consciously opts to dismantle the conventional societal expectations associated with motherhood through the act of perpetrating what is metaphorically referred to as 'love murder'. According to Watson's work ("The Power of the 'Milk'", 2004, p. 161), The profound occurrence of her mother's execution had a profound impact on Sethe, influencing her perspectives on slavery and motherhood. Deprived of her mother's nurturing, care, and affection, Sethe places significant importance on providing maternal nourishment and care to her offspring.

Furthermore, given Sethe's personal experience of lacking the most

essential elements in life, namely a nurturing and affectionate mother figure, she is driven to ensure that her children receive all the provisions and care that she is capable of providing. Deprived of the nourishment and emotional connections provided by a mother's milk, Sethe is aware of the insatiable emptiness within her own physical and emotional being. Consequently, she desires a more favorable situation for her offspring. She solemnly pledges that her offspring will never experience the sensation of hunger. Despite being enslaved herself, she asserts her parental rights over her children. The individuals in question will possess their supply of milk. The individuals in question will not be required to engage in sharing activities, as they will possess dedicated periods for nursing and the female figure will assume the role of their provider. In the given scenario, the primary source of sustenance for the woman's children is her breast milk, so, when this vital resource is pilfered, the woman experiences a greater emotional impact from the audacity of the theft rather than the physical pain inflicted upon her. The act of appropriating her milk is not just a transgression committed against her, but also a violation of the statutes. Sethe's actions not only affect herself but also have consequences for her children.

4.1. The Characters Sethe and Denver

The relationship between Sethe and her daughter Denver is undeniably distinctive. The maternal instinct to safeguard one's offspring is commonly seen as a fundamental responsibility. In the case of Sethe, her inclination to shield Denver from harm manifests as an overarching characteristic. Consequently, Sethe's unwavering commitment to safeguarding Denver results in prolonged seclusion within the confines of their residence, effectively shielding her from the harsh realities of the external world. It is crucial to highlight that Sethe has a profound dedication and intense determination to safeguard and care for her children. Her nurturing behavior can be viewed as a bold and rebellious response to the taboo on enslaved motherhood (O'Reilly, 2004, p. 131). The individual in question expresses

a desire for Denver to remain at her side because her two sons have already departed. As a consequence, Denver's upbringing was devoid of opportunities to venture beyond the confines of their immediate surroundings. Sethe is apprehensive about the potential loss of independence that may arise from her confinement within the house.

Over time, Denver becomes increasingly disturbed by the situation, expressing her inability to reside in the current location. I am uncertain of the appropriate course of action or destination, however residing in this current location is untenable. There is a lack of visitors, I am not favored by boys. Girls do not possess the mentioned characteristics either. (Morrison, 2004, p. 14), Towards the conclusion of the literary work, Denver is compelled to vacate her residence and venture into the external realm. She finds a job to provide for her mother, who, "without Denver and community, . . . would die from exhaustion and hunger, still locked in psychological conflict with her ghost-daughter" (Montgomery, 2013, p. 131). Moreover, Sethe conceals her personal history, further complicating their interpersonal dynamics. The protagonist's behaviors contribute to an increased sense of isolation and alienation experienced by the character residing in Denver. Upon discovering her mother's reprehensible deed, the protagonist has a confluence of peculiar and alarming emotions against her mother, which manifest as a surge within her being (Morrison, 2004, p. 102). The protagonist gradually develops an understanding of the reasons for Sethe's actions in preventing her from leading a conventional life, as well as her intense commitment to safeguarding her children from a similar fate.

However, despite the complexities of their relationship, Denver holds a deep admiration and affection for her mother. The sole source of support for the individual in question is her mother, which explains her heightened sense of protectiveness towards her. When the protagonist begins to experience apprehension towards Beloved and the potential harm she may inflict upon Sethe, she undertakes all possible measures to ensure the safety and

well-being of her mother. This observation demonstrates that even the most intricate dynamics within mother-daughter relationships are not devoid of affection and empathy. Despite the prevalent theme of characters grappling with the challenges of their pasts in the novel, Morrison strategically presents Denver as a beacon of optimism due to her resilience and ability to overcome adversity. Regardless of the challenging conditions of her childhood and the hardships she faced in life, readers can observe and track her personal development. Denver faces significant challenges in her life, despite not being enslaved. The protagonist in question does not experience the physical anguish endured by enslaved mothers, however, she does encounter psychological and emotional distress as a result of her lifelong isolation within her residence. Nonetheless, this seclusion contributes to her personal growth and enables her to transcend her worries and challenges.

Furthermore, Denver's journey toward healing is facilitated by her proactive efforts to seek assistance and engage with the community. As Beaulieu argues, Morrison strategically places Denver on a trajectory toward empowerment by highlighting significant events in her life. (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 43), for instance, Denver's birth, which is aided by a white woman, takes place during Sethe's escape to freedom. Additionally, Denver's transformative encounter with her sister occurs when her mother confronts the oppressive system of slavery. These occurrences contribute to Denver's progression toward personal growth and resilience.

4.2. Sethe and Beloved

The nature of the relationship between Sethe and Beloved is a subject of intrigue and debate, as it raises questions regarding Beloved's identity as either a resilient individual who has endured significant hardships or a spectral entity. The former individual's favorable attributes are her physical beauty, poor linguistic proficiency, and dependency. Upon Beloved's sudden arrival, Sethe's life undergoes a profound upheaval, as Beloved assumes the role of her deceased daughter and exhibits knowledge of Sethe's

personal history. Beloved has a profound ardor for Sethe, resulting in their entanglement within a relationship that is simultaneously detrimental and beneficial. Sethe repeatedly engages in discussions with Beloved, whereby she endeavors to elucidate her decision-making process and the underlying motivations that led her to do certain actions.

However, this persistent inclination to revisit prior events while in the presence of Beloved reflects Sethe's ongoing struggle to come to terms with her past actions and provide a comprehensive account of her choices. Despite being commonly perceived as a detrimental association; it is worth noting that their relationship has certain positive aspects. Notably, Sethe gradually exhibits a newfound willingness to disclose her prior experiences, engaging in dialogue about a subject matter that had previously remained unspoken. In the novel *Beloved*, the character Sethe embarks on a psychological trip of remembrance, which aids her in the process of healing from the traumatic events she endured at Sweet Home. Through this journey, Sethe not only learns to come to terms with her past but also develops self-acceptance. The daughter has a crucial role in facilitating the mother's recollection, acceptance, and forgiveness. Hence, the bond between a mother and daughter serves as a means to symbolize and accomplish a connection with, as well as a recognition of, historical events and experiences.

Therefore, it can be observed that Sethe can rediscover her ancestral lineage using her connection with Beloved, who symbolizes the essence of the African-American maternal heritage. The portrayal of the relationship between Beloved and Sethe in the novel highlights the profound impact of slavery's trauma. (O'Reilly, 2004, p. 87). Beloved symbolizes the historical trauma endured by the characters, while Sethe represents the psychological effects of this traumatic experience (O'Reilly, 2004, p. 85). The character of Beloved catalyzes Sethe's introspection, prompting her to recount her former experiences. This narrative device allows readers to gain insight

into the hardships endured by mothers throughout the era of slavery. Simultaneously, Sethe confronts the psychological ramifications of enslavement as a result of the numerous emotional and psychological adversities she endured. The destructive nature of their relationship is further exemplified by the fact that “Beloved, a character with an ambiguous naming background, assumes the role of a trickster capable of assuming different forms and instigating turmoil and misfortune among the living” (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 2). The individual in question embodies the historical elements of destruction that the protagonists must confront to overcome them, progress, and direct their attention toward forthcoming endeavors.

Furthermore, Beloved serves as a symbol for the multitude of children who endured the anguish of being separated from their families and the profound grief resulting from the loss of their moms due to the institution of slavery. In the literary work, Morrison additionally presents a reversal of traditional parent-child roles. To clarify, the character Beloved assumes the role of a maternal figure, whereas Sethe exhibits behaviors reminiscent of a kid. Moreover, the novel Beloved primarily focuses on the character of Sethe, with Beloved exhibiting a strong desire to possess her exclusively, as evidenced by the statement, “She is the one.” She is the one whom I require. The protagonist expresses a strong desire for the woman mentioned, emphasizing her importance by stating that she is the one he must possess (Morrison, 2004, p. 76), over time, the intensity of their bond becomes overwhelming for Sethe, as she finds herself burdened by the single recollection of her history and the horrifying deed she committed. Consequently, this slow erosion weakens Sethe, while simultaneously empowering Beloved.

Additionally, it is observed that Sethe experiences a gradual decline in her physical appearance, becoming increasingly slender. In contrast, Beloved undergoes a significant increase in body mass, to the extent that her weight resembles that of a pregnant individual. In an apparent effort to

make up for her prolonged absence from the lives of Sethe and Denver, she endeavors to get all that she can from Sethe. Conversely, how *Beloved* elicits Sethe's historical experiences may prove beneficial, as it leads her to relinquish her emotional repression and engage in a process of emotional catharsis. Over an extended period, Sethe made concerted efforts to suppress her previous experiences, although presently she finds herself revisiting them once more. In contrast to Denver, who symbolizes optimism in challenging circumstances like slavery, *Beloved* embodies the harsh truth of this historical period, serving as a haunting reminder of the past resurfacing in the present. Numerous individuals who were enslaved, including the character Sethe, encountered significant challenges in their endeavors to build a semblance of normalcy in the years after the abolition of slavery. Despite their current state of freedom, the lingering effects of their prior incarceration and the presence of external control over both themselves and their families continue to impede their present circumstances. In her portrayal of the characters Denver and *Beloved*, Morrison illustrates distinct post-emancipation experiences of enslaved mothers. Due to the inherently brutal nature of slavery, a significant portion of individuals faced considerable challenges in their pursuit of a semblance of normalcy in their lives.

Conclusion

It can be inferred that the aforementioned arguments and evidence support the notion that the institution of slavery had a detrimental impact on the bonds between enslaved mothers and their children, resulting in mothers engaging in inexplicable actions, it failed to completely eradicate the profound love that existed between them. Each mother exhibits unique expressions of care and affection towards her children, which may involve either surpassing conventional limits to ensure their safety or creating emotional distance. This theme is effectively portrayed and exemplified by Toni Morrison in her novel *Beloved*. The institution of slavery inflicted numerous hardships upon the female characters depicted in the story.

For instance, Sethe is compelled to make a fateful decision about the fate of her children, Baby Suggs experiences the heart-wrenching separation from all her offspring, and Sethe's mother is compelled to relinquish all her children, except Sethe, due to the oppressive nature of the cruel system. Each character in the novel employs different coping mechanisms to deal with their sorrow. Baby Suggs, for instance, seeks solace via emotional detachment, while Sethe resorts to immoral actions. Additionally, her sons choose to escape from their mother as a means of coping. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, an element that remained impervious to the ravages of slavery was the unwavering and formidable mother affection, as depicted by Morrison in her literary work, *Beloved*.

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