

Chapter I

Introduction

My research paper focuses on the examination of the blending of horror and beauty in Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize winning book of 1988, *Beloved*. In this novel Morrison skillfully presents the psychological effect of slavery on the minds of the freed slaves. She here blurs the line of distinction between the real and the imaginary to show the extent of the impact of slavery and racism. The real is horrific past and its haunting in the aftermath. The imaginary is partly the ex-slaves' longing for the beautifully corrected past and partly for the freedom from the badly gripping psychological impact of all the brutalities caused by the whites.

The aim of this detailed study of *Beloved* is to see how the horrific past melds into a hope of a beautiful life in the life of Sethe, the main character of the novel. She represents the women slaves in the aftermath of slavery system in America. The character Beloved is not a supernatural figure. Rather she is the manifestation of the aftermath of the physical and mental torture inflicted on Sethe. The character Beloved is the embodiment of Sethe's tragic past of slavery, which Sethe refuses to deal with. She can also be read as collective memory of the black community, who has lived and suffered under the brutal institution of slavery. In order to heal the scar of their enslaved past the community needs to confront the past that for so long has kept on haunting them like a ghost or a nightmare and they have been unsuccessfully trying to suppress and forget it. This research will present psychoanalytical reading of the text, *Beloved*, to see that the memory and desire of the characters, especially Sethe's, turn out to be a unique blending

of horror and beauty – horror as a bitter reality and beauty as a hope or desire for a free life from all bondages.

This research tries to prove the presence of Beloved as a psychological phenomenon in order to support the argument put forward. The character Beloved symbolically represents the damaged past of Sethe. On the whole, it refers to the distorted past of each and every freed slave who is struggling towards subjectivity after having led an objectified life.

The modality of the research rests on the theory developed by Sigmund Freud, which looks into the workings of the human mind and some social practices such as racism and slavery. Freud has divided the human mind into three zones: the id (unconscious), the ego (conscious personality) and the superego (conscience), and explained dreams and neurotic symptoms as a result of drives rising from the id, being repressed by the ego and superego and finding expression in 'displaced' forms. Sigmund Freud's concept of "the return of the repressed" can be used to study Beloved's presence. Sethe's desire is fulfilled in her dreams as it takes the form of visual images. Freud calls this process regression.

With the help of Freudian theory, Beloved can be portrayed as Sethe's expression of the repressed in 'displaced' form. Sethe has suppressed her past in the unconscious for long, and it surfaces with the coming of Paul D. Paul D acts as a catalyst whose presence reminds Sethe of her past, which for so long she has been able to suppress in the unconscious. Beloved is nothing but an extension of Sethe's memories. She is a result of Sethe's extreme desire to justify her action to her dead daughter.

Based on the theories of psychoanalysis, racism and slavery, and critical views available on African-American literature this research will try to see the character Beloved as a product of the past and a symbol of hope for better future. It concentrates on the various kinds of physical infliction figured in the text and the emergence of Beloved that gives the impression of the presence of the supernatural representing the product of horrific past and hopeful future. It deals with those theories and critical works that are directly related with the objective of the research. The research will be limited within the periphery of memory and desire to look into horror and beauty going hand in hand in the text.

Introduction to American

Literature:

In the beginning,

America was a series of British colonies on the east coast of the present-day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition begins with the tradition of English literature. However, very quickly unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production began to develop an American writing tradition. Some consider Captain John Smith to be the first American author, when he wrote *The General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (1624). The writers of similar of interest include Daniel Cox, John Hammond, Gabriel Thomas, George Percy, Daniel Denton, Thomas Ash, John Lawson and William Strachey.

American literature like American history, although short, is still full of glories and shining masterpieces and writers. Those American writers, while conquering this wild America, also had conquered the great field of American literature. From its first imitative activities to innovative attempts nowadays, American literature gradually gains its unique style, theme and form, and it is always exciting to see their works as more American in its true sense. American

literature is part of world literature. However, it always has its unique flavor that cannot be easily ignored. It is almost inevitable that given the history of the early American settlers, religious questions were rich topics for early writings. A journal written by John Winthrop discussed the religious foundations of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Edward Winslow also recorded a diary of the first years after the Mayflower's arrival. Other religiously influenced writers included Increase Mather and William Bradford, the author of the journal published as *A History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-47*. Others like Roger Williams and Nathaniel Ward more fiercely argued state and church separation. A Calvinistic revival in the early 18th century inspired strict Puritan and other religious writers including, Samuel Willard, John Wise, Uriah Oakes, Thomas Shepard, and Thomas Hooker. Other less strict writers were Samuel Sewell, Sarah Kemble-Knight and William Byrd. Interaction and conflict with the Indians are described by Daniel Gookin, Alexandra Whitaker, John Mason, Benjamin Church and Mary Rowlandson. The Bible was also translated by John Eliot and Mary Rowlandson. Most critics hold that the history of American literature can be divided into six parts orderly: colonial period, romanticism, realism, naturalism, modernism and post-modernism. Although American literature in its true sense did not begin until 19th century, however, we always talk about colonial period as a preparatory introduction to American literature.

Colonial period is unique in American literature. The literature in this period is mainly a literary expression of the Puritan idealism. Puritans soon established their own religious and moral principles, which has influenced the American thought and American literature a lot. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the literature at this period is utilitarian.

The term romantic was a designation for a school of literature opposed to the Classic. Early romanticism was more or less imitative of British literature of Romanticism. Above all, it was a time of extension of the American nation and the American identity. During this period, some American writers began to attract notice abroad and their books drew attention of important foreign figures. Although English literary models were still admired, the American writers soon turned to the American civilization and found their materials in the culture and history of their native land.

American Romanticism reached its peak with some literary giants like Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. Washington Irving was considered as the forefather of the American literature, who turned American literature from pure imitation to independent creation.

William Bryant is often regarded as one of America's earliest nationalist poets, who was called the American Wordsworth. He was respected by American people because he provided at that time the national consciousness. Poe established a new symbolic poetry, formulated the new short story in the detective line and laid the foundation for analytical criticism. Hawthorne was essentially a moralist, using the new England regional past as subject and showed great concern about the American past. Whitman was considered as the forefather of American free verse. Dickinson was a lyric writer as well as private writer; while Melville filled his book with symbolic richness and penetration.

In a word, realism describes real characters, real scenes and real incidents. The general themes of American literature during these years concerned the effect of money getting upon American literature and civilization. American realism is

prominent in the history of the world literature, and this can be contributed to several fantastic American realistic writers, among whom William Howells, Mark Twain and Henry James were the most famous.

Naturalism is a theory in literature emphasizing the role of heredity and environment on human life and character development roughly between 1890s and 1900s. Naturalistic literature tends to be concerned with the less elegant aspects of life. This tendency is in part a reaction against earlier literature. Stephen Crane and Hamlin Garland are well known naturalists in America. Modernism is a literary movement from the early to the middle 20th century. It challenged traditional literature with the technique of symbolism, stream of consciousness and the use of myth, in order to make a strong and conscious break with traditional forms. Thus, it represents one of the most remarkable periods of American literary history and its hunger for new styles, new forms, new attitudes to human nature and human history and new modes of artistic self discovery. African-Americans made significant contributions to the American modernist movement. During the Harlem Renaissance, black Americans such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston became prominent and applied modernist techniques to speak of the realities of black cultural and political life. Influenced by modernism, Hughes incorporated blues rhythms into his poetry and Hurston incorporated depictions of black folk life into her world. Largely white audiences of Harlem Renaissance art and culture became attuned to the specificities of cultural-political realities of African America. In the post modern era a new black American writing has flourished, raising the central question of the historical identity of the blacks in America and chaotic urban life. Black female writers have made remarkable achievements in the field of literature – especially in the genre of fiction. These writers have explored and dealt

with the experience and feelings of females as slaves. They have elaborately studied the psychological repercussion of slavery. Prominent black female writers of our time are: Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Alice Walker.

Black

Literature:

Black literature in the history of American literature carves out its place so prominently that without its mention the whole body of American literature becomes incomplete. The struggle of black Americans for their human and social rights has paved the way for the evolving of the black literature in the twentieth century American history. In 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln had ended the slavery of blacks. But their position in American society remained very bad. In the South especially, government laws were used to keep black Americans in a low social position. There was also a powerful organization called the Ku Klux Klan which often used violence against blacks. Around the turn of the 19th century, large numbers of blacks began moving from the South to the cities of the North. In the North, young black artists and writers began their long struggle for social justice for their people.

In literature, this struggle began with *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) by W. E. B. Du Bois (1868 -1963). This book is a work on sociology, rather than of fiction. It describes the effects of white American racial prejudice on the minds of blacks. Also, for the first time in American literature, it describes the special culture of American blacks. This culture unites them into a single "nation ". Du Bois also uses this theme of "black cultural nationalism" in his novels, "The Quest of the Silver Fleece" (1911) and "Dark Princess" (1928). In the thirties, Du Bois became interested in Africa. For him, it is

the spiritual and cultural home of all black. Near the end of his life, he wrote his most complete study of America

The era of the 1920s is often called the *Jazz Age*. *Jazz*, a musical form created by Southern blacks, became an important part of white culture at this time. For the first time, the names of black musicians and black writers became famous among all Americans. In Harlem, a northern part of New York City, black writers began the "*Harlem Renaissance*". The writers in the movement were influenced by the experimental styles of Europeans and Americans literature. They tried using these forms to talk about the experience of black people in American society. The best writers in Harlem Renaissance were able to create works of high artistic quality. *Cane* (1923), by Jean Toomer (1894 -1967) , is the most famous work of the movement. *Cane* combines poetry with short stories. Langstan Hughes was another leader of the Harlem Renaissance. Not only was he an important poet, he also helped many other black writers to get their works published. In his poetry, he sometimes experiments with Jazz and blues rhythms of black music.

Countee Cullen (1903-1946), another important Harlem Renaissance poet, wanted to be a poet of all mankind, not just as a black poet. Behind the them of love, beauty, and the shortness of life, he clearly feels the pain of being black in America. The next step in black literature was to bring "The heart that bleeds "out of hiding. This is what Recharad Wright (1908-1960) does in a number of works using powerful realistic techniques.

In the 1960s, many blacks and young whites joined together in the huge Civil Rights Movements. Its purpose was to change the laws which hurt blacks. Its call was for "Freedom now!" Although it succeeded in changing the laws, many other problems remained for

many blacks; real freedom was coming too slowly. They called for “Black Power” to fight for their own economic and social rights. In the writings of James Baldwin, we see the rising anger of blacks in the sixties. The anger of another poet and playwright, Amiri Baraka at this time became very violent. The poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks also tells of the tragedy of black life in America. There came yet another writer, Alex Haley, who in his *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965) describes the spiritual growth of this man: his painful childhood, his prison years, his years of anti – white hatred and his religious “awakening” to a love for all people. It is

not sure that the years of “black anger are over. As long as the black experience in America remains different from that of other Americans, there will continue to be a “black literature ”.

Toni Morrison in

American literature:

Born as

Chloe Anthony Wofford, on 18th February 1931, in Lorain, Toni Morrison is the second of four children, born of George Wofford and Ramah Willis Wofford. Both her maternal and paternal grandparents had moved North from the South and as such they knew very well the reality of racial violence. Her strong-minded parents laboured hard to provide a congenial atmosphere and finance for their daughter's education during the depression. One

of the most critically acclaimed living writers, Morrison has been a major architect in creating a literary language for Afro-Americans. Her use of shifting perspective, fragmentary narrative, and a narrative voice extremely close to the consciousness of her characters reveals the influence of writers like Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner: two writers that Morrison, not coincidentally, studied extensively while a college student. All of her work also shows the influence of African-American

folklore, songs, and women's gossip. In her attempts to map these oral art forms onto literary modes of representation, Morrison has created a body of work informed by a distinctly black sensibility while drawing reading audience boundaries.

Toni Morrison holds an important position within the circle of black female writers. Her role has been pivotal in promoting Black literature. Morrison is more widely read than any other writer by a broader cross section of the American reading public. Henry Louis Gates Jr. observes that Morrison's readers include both sexes and all colours, age, and creeds. He is of the view that she has been able to attract a large and cosmopolitan readership of women including intellectuals, professionals, feminists- in addition to the more traditional, but smaller, black reading audience, male and female, have combined to produce an audience, for works by Black women larger than anyone could have imagined just two decades ago. Toni Morrison has been able to gain wide acclaim and acknowledgement for her works and her contribution to Black literature

(x). Toni Morrison was taught and encouraged to believe in herself and be proud of her works. She grew up in an environment steeped in black culture, ritual, music and language and these are clearly reflected in her works. After her graduation with honours from Lorain High School she pursued her studies in English and classics in Howard University where she adopted the name, Toni.

She received a Masters degree in English from Cornell University in 1955. The subject of her masters thesis was the theme of suicide in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf and "... the thematic of guilt and the complex fragmentation of time that shape Morrison's fiction are inherent in Faulkner's writing..." Mobley

18). Morrison began her career as a teacher at Texas Southern University for two years after which she returned to Howard in 1957 as an English teacher. In 1964 she became a senior editor for the publisher Random House. It is from this capacity she worked for promoting Black literature. Her literary career began in the 1970's when she began writing for newspaper and literary journals, in particular *The New York Times*. During this period she reviewed as many as twenty-twenty books about black life and wrote articles on black life. Her writings particularly deal with black history and issues of black identity. Morrison deals with black issues not just at an academic level but also at a very personal level. She also taught African-American literature and creative writing at the Yale University. In 1987 Toni Morrison became the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Council of Humanities at Princeton University. She is the first African American female writer to hold a named chair at a university in the Ivy League. She published *Jazz* in 1992, along with a non-fiction book entitled *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. The next year she became the eighth woman and the first black woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. 1998 saw the publication of her seventh novel, *Paradise*. Her novel *Beloved* was published in 1987. She other novels are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1974), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar baby* (1981), *Jazz* (1993), and *Paradise* (1998). Her first work on literary criticism, *Playing in the Dark; Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* was published in 1992 Toni Morrison's works have received wide acceptance and accolades. In 1977, she was awarded both the National Book

Critics Circle Award and The American Academy and Institution of Arts and Letters Awards for *Song of Solomon* in 1981, she appeared on the cover of *Newsweek*, the first black woman to be so featured on the cover of a national magazine since Zora Neal Hurston in 1943. In 1988, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the Robert F. Kennedy Award for *Beloved*. In 1993, she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. For the first time this award was given to an African-American.

The Work

"Beloved":

Beloved

considered to be Morrison's masterpiece was published in 1987. Mythic in scope, *Beloved* tells the story of an emancipated slave woman named Sethe who is haunted by the ghost of the daughter she killed. The novel is an ambitious attempt to grapple with slavery and the tenacity of its legacy. Dedicated to the tens of millions of slaves who died in the trans-Atlantic journey, *Beloved* could be called a foundation story (like Genesis or Exodus) for black America. It became a best seller and received a Pulitzer Prize.

Beloved is based on the

plight of ex-slaves. Morrison skillfully explores the life in the aftermath of slavery. The physical and mental torture inflicted on the slaves' left a tremendous impact on their psyche. In *Beloved*, Morrison exhibits the range of emotions undergone by the slaves who are now physically free but mentally bound by the traumatic past.

Beloved presents a story of the past that is continuously relived in the present; there is neither hope nor anticipation of a bright and a prosperous future not a livable and a happy present. *Beloved* is rather a testament to the stubbornness of a mother's love in opposition to the dehumanizing demand of an inhuman institution –

Slavery.

Morrison in her novel brings to light

that aspect of slavery that had been most neglected when talked about it. Morrison

thematizes and discusses the seldom-discussed experience of black women. The situation of women as slaves is complex as their suffering is double – of being black and female, and this brings out another aspect of racial discrimination. Morrison's novel *Beloved* has proved to be a landmark in African-American literature. It explores the range of a mother's emotions and the extent to which she can go for the welfare of her children.

The novel *Beloved* is based upon a true story, which appeared in a newspaper in 1855. The story is a account of a runaway slave Margaret Garner. When she realizes she is about to be recaptured in accordance to the fugitive Slave Law, she kills her own child rather than sell into slavery (Mobley 21).

Morrison amplifies this story into her most celebrated novel *Beloved*. In the novel Margaret becomes Sethe – a run away slave who like Garner kills her two-year-old daughter in order to save her from enslaved future. She presents various aspects of slavery through the voices of different characters. Morrison starts the novel where the story of Margaret Garner ends. She studies the psychological effect of what happens when a mother kills her own child no matter how justifiable the cause might be. *Beloved* revolves round the act of infanticide and the emotional and psychic problem the mother undergoes as a result of her act.

Morrison sets her novel in 1873 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Here Sethe resides in a small house, which was once owned by her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, with her daughter Denver. Her mother-in-law has recently died and her two sons Howard and Bulgar have left home. Sethe and Denver are the only people living in the house where they feel the presence of the ghost. Under such circumstances Denver is forced to live in isolation and starts enjoying the feeling of the presence of her baby sister. Sethe seems absorbed in the memories of her escape from slavery, the failure of her husband, Halle to join her, her murdering of her

child and the Kentucky plantation, which was called Sweet Home. Sethe's secluded life is disturbed with the arrival of Paul D, one of the "Sweet Home" men. Like Sethe, Paul D too is obsessed with his past. The friends from "Sweet Home" become lovers and travel down their memory lane, which has nothing but pain to offer. They share their individual stories, memories and experiences. Paul D drives away the ghost and finds it difficult to cope with Sethe's obsession with her daughter. A young woman who calls herself Beloved appears after Paul D rids the house of the ghost. Sethe and Denver believe Beloved to be the reincarnation of the two-year old child Sethe had killed. They devote all the attention and care on nurturing Beloved. Sethe becomes obsessed with Beloved to the extent that she deteriorates physically and mentally as she tries to make up for all that she had done. Finally, Denver realizes that the consuming love of her mother for Beloved is destroying her completely. With this realization Denver breaks the shackles of her obsession and leaves the security of her home to get help for her mother and to rid their lives of Beloved – an image of their haunting past. Denver eventually seeks the help of black community and rescues her mother and Beloved vanishes.

Beloved elaborates the female pain and history that are inscribed in the mental and the physical scar that each woman in the narrative bears as a result of the suffering caused by the most inhuman and peculiar institution of slavery. *Beloved* delves into the various kinds of repercussions the inhuman institution has had on the ex-slaves. The traumatic experience of being physically, politically, socially and economically exploited that has had a lasting impact on the African-Americans are vividly brought out in this fiction. On the whole *Beloved* focuses on the oppressive practice of a racist white society and brings out its extreme effects.

The

characters in *Beloved* give much importance to the physical body deformed by slavery. They try to heal themselves of the past suffering by loving the different part of their body, which was treated like a commodity during their enslavement. The text *Beloved* can also be seen as a process of recovery and the means to recovery is 'rememory'.

The use of 'rememory' and the emergence of the character Beloved have given rise to psychoanalytical reading of the novel thereby blending horror of the past and beauty at present with the prospect of good in future. It is necessary to see the novel from this perspective, in order to measure the degree of the effect; slavery had on the psyche of ex-slaves as a result of physical and mental torture.

Chapter

II

Beloved in the Background of Racism and

Slavery

Racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another, that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics. In other words, it may be defined as the hatred of one person by another or the belief that another person is less than human because of skin color, language, customs, place of birth or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person. It has influenced wars, slavery, the formation of nations, and legal

codes. Racis

m has existed throughout human history. During the past 500-1000 years, racism on the part of Western powers toward non-Westerners has had a far more significant impact on history than any other form of racism (such as racism among Western groups or among Easterners, such as Asians, Africans and others). The most notorious example of racism by the West has been slavery, particularly the enslavement of Africans in the New World (slavery itself dates back thousands of years). This enslavement was accomplished because of the racist belief that Black Africans were less fully human than white Europeans and their

descendants. This

belief was not "automatic", that is, Africans were not originally considered inferior.

When Portuguese sailors first explored Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries, they came upon empires and cities as advanced as their own, and they considered Africans

to be serious rivals. Over time, though, as African civilizations failed to match the technological advances of Europe, and the major European powers began to plunder the continent and forcibly remove its inhabitants to work as slave laborers in new colonies across the Atlantic, Africans came to be seen as a deficient "species," or as "savages." To an important extent, this view was necessary to justify the slave trade at a time when Western culture had begun to promote individual rights and human equality. The willingness of some Africans to sell other Africans to European slave traders also led to claims of savagery, based on the false belief that the "dark people" were all

kinsmen. On the important feature of racism, especially toward Blacks and immigrant groups, is clear in attitudes regarding slaves and slavery. Jews are usually seen by anti-semites as subhuman but also superhuman: devilishly cunning, skilled, and powerful, Blacks and others are seen by racists as merely subhuman, more like beasts than men. If the focus of anti-Semitism is evil, the focus of racism is inferiority – directed toward those who have sometimes been considered to lack even the ability to be evil (though in the 20th century, especially, victims of racism are often considered morally degraded).

Racism in

America:

As

European settlers moved to America, They began to import a large number of captives taken from the west coast of Africa to do the work they were reluctant to do themselves Louis E. Lomax in *The Negro Revolt* traces the history of

slavery: Negroes- in large numbers, as explorers and as servants – came with first Europeans as they set out to exploit the resources of the New World. Thirty Negroes, including Nuflo de Olano, were with

Balboa when he discovered the Pacific. Cortez carried Negroes into Mexico and one of them is recorded as having reaped the first wheat crop of the New World. Several Negroes were with Nawaez on his expedition of 1527, and many more were with Cabeza de Vaca in the exploration of the South Western part of the United States. (9)

He further says that the Negroes have been involved in the problems of America from its inception. It is estimated that some ten thousand free Negroes and indentured servants were in the United States by the first quarter of the seventeenth century period during which slavery became

widespread.

According to him,

slaves were introduced to America after, and only because, efforts to make slaves of Indianans and white indentured servants failed. It was found that Africans were a good deal less informed as to their rights and privileges than were their fellow white servants and were easily recoverable if they ran away. Thus, starting in 1619, Africans were imported in large numbers and with time they passed from indentured servitude into slavery.

This

imported population soon multiplied and made a distinct category of human population. They found themselves living along with white but at a very different level. They found themselves posited at a much lower-level on the socio-economic scale. The whites lived a life of comfort and luxury on the labour of the black slaves.

The difference of these imported slaves was assumed to be inherent and their treatment was attributed to the visible physical difference.

The

credit of making America, particularly South America, goes to the African-Americans who toiled to give a new shape to the wild landscape. They cleared the forests, built houses, planted and harvested crops but this did not help them in uplifting their

general living standard, as they did all this for the benefit of their masters. The position of this class of people was no better than animals. The master had almost unlimited power over his slaves, they were easily bought and sold like commodities in the market, their master's severely whipped and brutally punished them without any fear of being legally tried. The slaves had no identity of their own; they were numbered and not called by name. For the blacks the family as an institution did not exist. Their white masters considered family ties as detrimental as such families were separated. Their labour was valued whereas they were dehumanized.

The plight of the slaves was miserable. Not only were they placed at the lowest possible strata of the socio-economic ladder, but also they were treated in the most possible inhuman way. Children were separated from their parents and siblings as early as possible. As a result, children did not know who their parents were and what family life was like. They were treated like animals and severely whipped if they failed to perform their duties properly.

Despite the rise of the institution of slavery the Blacks never wavered in their loyalty to the Whites. They played a major role in the colonial agitation that preceded the American Revolution. Later, they used their participation in the war as a basis for demanding a better role in the American mainstream.

After Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, almost four million slaves were freed. These ex-slaves started migrating to the North with the hope of a better life but racial prejudice was even greater in the free states. The social, political, economic and racial oppression experienced by the Blacks in the North disillusioned their hopes and aspirations of living a decent life. These factors curbed the effort made by the Blacks

for their general upliftment. The pattern of discrimination and mass violence degraded and reduced the Blacks to a lamentable condition of illiteracy, hopelessness and poverty.

Despite being physically free, these freed slaves were psychologically bound. They were fairly confused about themselves. They had deep psychological problems over the apparently simple ethnic questions. They were rather confused about their identity and were incapable of articulating just exactly what they were seeking. In the North, they had to make a place- a home for themselves, a shelter which they could possess and call their own. It was not easy for them to cope with the urban life; they felt alienated and lost which aggravated their identity crises. The ex-slaves felt displaced and alienated in a completely new environment and their notion that the North was their promised land proved to be wrong.

The life of women after the Emancipation Proclamation was full of turmoil and uncertainty. Their life was no better than that during their slavery. Only few opportunities were allowed to them and they continued to live a life of oppressive discrimination. During slavery their life was complicated by racialized and genderized circumstances, their sexuality was subjected to commodification, exploitation and abuse whereas now their life was full of uncertainty.

Above all the ex-slave had to reconstruct not only a healthy physical environment to live in but also strike a mental balance as this ruthless institution had left a majority of them mentally disturbed. In spite of being physically free, they were psychologically hemmed in their traumatic past. The scar of slavery can be seen in the works of African-Americans even to this day.

The African-Americans, who had been living in America for hundreds of years now, had no alternative but to identify themselves with the American norms, values, ways of life and culture. The

intermingling of two/many races and culture gave rise to multiculturalism in America. The African-Americans have made their presence felt strongly in present America and they have excelled in whatever they have undertaken. In fact, they have surpassed the white Americans in many fields.

Expression:

Literature: A Medium of

As literature is regarded as the mirror of society it cannot be isolated from the society and the environment in which it evolves. Literature depicts the society in its best as well as the worst form. Society's beliefs, practices, culture, history, hopes, aspirations and institutions find its expression in

literature.

From the

time the concept of race gained its roots in the minds of man, there developed a wide chasm between the people belonging to the so-called superior race and the inferior race. The oppressors belonging to the superior race found ways and means to get the most from the oppressed race. Social norms and legal laws were formulated to the best advantage of the oppressors and they skillfully manipulated their cause and actions. The pain and suffering of the oppressed found its expression in their writings. These expressions gradually became a voice of protest. The oppressed began to realize that their plight was not their fate and they became aware of their rights.

The

worst form of racial discrimination can be witnessed in the peculiar and dehumanizing tradition of slavery. In America an entire race was imprisoned and tortured on the basis of skin color. Slavery has had a lasting impact on American culture. It was an institution that caused a national turmoil. It caused a war. Slavery existed in America from the day of the founding fathers to the end of civil war and the constitution claimed, "... all men were created equal with certain unalienable rights" but this claim

seemed to have been meant for only white men. Blacks were not included in this proclamation. Blacks were denied of having mental capacity of reading, writing or intellectual thought. This idea is, however, proved to be very much wrong in the recent times. Black

American writing started as a medium of expressing the experiences of

slaves. Black American literature is a narrative of the atrocities of the whites on the blacks. This body of writing gradually became a way to search and project their identity, a way to portray their true image, which was often distorted and misrepresented by mainstream literature.

From its time of initiation African-American literature has traversed a long way. We can say that it has surpassed the mainstream literature in many ways. *From Puritanism to Post Modernism; A History of English Literature*, says that the debate regarding as to what should be the content of this body of writing and as to whom it should address gained momentum in the early 1920s. The writings during this time mainly covered the political dimension of slavery that was carried as a tradition. In the 1960s, the black rights organization pressurized the black authors to “. . . Write first as blacks, to fashion a black sensibility, a black aesthetics. The search for a black tradition led to renewed interest in the writers. . . ” (Ruland and Bradbury 400).

The blacks took literature as medium to prove that they were not inferior in any way – physically, emotionally or intellectually. The European and American intellectual tradition had always undermined and denied the mental capacity of the blacks. This notion upheld by the dominating class came to be challenged by African-American writers. What African-American writers have very well demonstrated is that physical appearance and ancestry of an individual do not determine one's

mental capacity. And it has become utmost important for them to trace a historical literary tradition. The mainstream literature has always marginalized the presence of Afro-American literature and has denied its contribution to American literary tradition. Master narratives are such that it legitimizes and justifies the hegemonic hierarchy.

Black literature existed in America as autobiographical works of the slaves. These writings were basically narrative of slave life. It can be said to be a flow of their feelings and emotions, a record of their experience as slaves. Even after the abolition of slavery their position in American society remained very bad. In the South especially, government laws were used to keep black Americans in a low social position. Towards the end of the nineteenth century large number of blacks started moving from the South to the cities of the North. It was in the North where young artists and writers began their long struggles for social justice for their people.

The once marginal ethnic tradition of African-American writing started to become central after the First World War. And since 1950s black writing has developed in the United States. In the Post-modern era a new black American writing has flourished, raising the central question of the historical identity of the blacks in America and chaotic urban life. Black female writers have made remarkable achievements in the field of literature- especially in the genre of fiction. These writers have explored and dealt with that aspect of slavery that had been seldom dealt with, that is the experience and feelings of females as slaves. Prominent black female writers of our time are: Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and Alice Walker. They have elaborately studied the psychological repercussion of slavery.

Charles Johnson in *Being and Race* says that the writer should write about what they know and for the Afro-American author that inevitably means the "Black" experience (3). He further discusses Andre Malraux ideas of creativity. Malroux is of the view that :

... artists do not stem from their childhood, but from their conflicts with the achievements of their predecessors; not from their formless world, but from their struggle with the forms which others have imposed on life. (4)

So the core of black literature is their experience of life lived as slaves. As Toni Morrison in *Playing in The Dark; Whiteness and Literary Imagination* says:

The Black American writer begins his or her career with- and continues to exhibit – a crisis of identity. If anything black fiction is about the troubled quest for identity and liberty, the agony of social alienation, the longing for a real and at times a mythical home. (79)

Black literature is no doubt an instrument for change. The writers are concerned with creating a meaningful present and a better future out of a meaningless past.

Women as Slaves:

The position of women as slaves was not as that of their male counterpart.

Jacqueline Jones studied the position of black women during the slave era and brings out that aspect of slavery that had been generally overlooked. In *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, Jones says:

Black women's work took place within two distinct spheres that were at the same time mutually reinforcing and antagonistic. One work place was centered in their homes and communities, the locus of family feelings. Beginning in the slave era, the family obligation of

wives and mothers overlapped in the area of community welfare, as their desire to nurture their own kin expanded out of the private realm and into public activities that advanced out of black people as a group.

(4-5) Black females had to fulfill their duty as a female in their homes and as a slave in the work place. Their family obligation was reduced to the advantage of their master. The double responsibility entrusted on females was physically and mentally challenging. The most challenging aspect was their being treated not just as slaves but female slaves who could multiply cheap labour and serve as sex objects to their masters. Their biological role was diminished as families were broken and sold. Jones further says:

The Black mother's family responsibility was considered to be detrimental to the economic welfare of the white masters and as such families were scattered. For the whites black women were steady and reliable source of new laborers and suppliers of cheap labor. Female slaves saw no balance between the degrading regiment of slavery and ones desires as they are related to work, love and motherhood. Women on the whole suffered a dual caste system based on sex and race. (20)

Above everything else women worked under the constant threat of being raped and physically abused.

To a white man, a black woman was not only a worker who needed prodding, but also a female capable of fulfilling his sexual or aggressive desires. For this reason, a fine line existed between work related punishment and rape. Black females were treated in a very inhuman way without any consideration to their biology. Pregnant

women were whipped so that blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts; this reveals the myriad impulses that conjoined to make women especially susceptible to physical abuse (Jones³²).

Such degrading and inhuman working condition and traumatic experience made slave women take up radical steps against this peculiar institution of slavery. The most traumatic experience for a woman is to be physically abused or raped and this has deep effect upon the psyche of the women. To undergo the same experience repeatedly can make a person react in an abnormal way showing extreme kinds of emotion.

As Toni Morrison in *Playing in TheDark; Whiteness and Literary imagination*, says, "Whites in this history act, Blacks can only react" (56). And the characters in her novels react to the extremes. Morrison's female characters try to invent themselves out of desolation, as they had nothing to fall back on. In the absence of anything meaningful and having led a commodified life women were doubly struggling to cope with their situation. They found extreme ways of resisting the demands posed on them as slaves. Black women had their own way of rebelling against the "Barbaric" practice of slavery.

Paula Giddings in *When and Where I Enter; The Impact of Black on Race and Sex in America*, writes about female slaves and their perpetual fear of being sexually exploited. She also discusses how resistance to this brutal institution evolved, particularly female resistance. Female slaves used every means available to resist slavery. Giddings says:

As black women realized their degraded position, their resistance to slavery took an added dimension. With the diminution of overt rebellion, their resistance became more covert or internalized.

The focus of the struggle was no longer against the notion that they were less human, as in Elizabeth Freeman's terms but that they were different kinds of humans. For women this meant spurning their inferior roles of mistress, whore and breeders. (40-41)

Under the circumstances of slavery females had undoubtedly a difficult time and faced psychological problems in accepting their position as slaves and live a life respecting and loving themselves. The evolutionary process of the females is more psychological than physical and

material. The female black writers have tried to foreground the experiences of female slaves in their works. The fiction of the female writers focus on the female experience and thus their work is different from the fiction which projects the sensibilities of the slaves in general. *The Pelican Guide* sees the works of the black female writers as "compendium of black fears and frustrations" (Ford 567). It sees Morrison's works as dealing "with the questions of female identity, amidst black social and political needs." I further says:

To assert that 'female fiction' exists is to suggest that the human experience bifurcates into two distinct streams; so that fear, pity, terror, sympathy, love, not to speak of language itself, are not shared commodities. Since they are common ground pre-empt difference in quality and quantity of the given experience intensely about a female experience. (Ford 575)

The writings of the female black writers give a true picture of female slave life. Their effort is to reinvent the meaning and significance of African-Americans' "unspoken past" which everyone wishes to, "disremember" but it keeps coming back in various forms.

Aftermath of

Racism:

Th

e marginalized blacks had been trying to negotiate their position in American society after their emancipation. However their efforts to solve the problems at the socio-economic level became more complicated in the racially divided society. The most important fact that stopped the freed blacks from exercising their so far suppressed rights and privileges is their memories of their enslaved past. Racial discrimination had undoubtedly left an unfathomable impact on the psyche of the entire race. This impact is seen fresh on the psyche of many generations to this day.

The institutionalized marketization of blacks as slaves, and its psychological effects are not easy to do away with. The freed slaves were unable to break the shackles of their past memories. The blacks needed to uplift their spirits and accept their subject position first. Having led a commodified life the blacks developed a sense of worthlessness and self-loathing of which they needed to get rid of. Their marketized and poverty-ridden life gave way to fear and pessimism in their lives. Cornel West talks of these fears as nihilistic threats that brings about a sense of meaninglessness, lovelessness and hopelessness among blacks. Nihilism, as West defines, is :

. . . not as a philosophical doctrine that there are no rational grounds for legitimate standards or authority; it is, far more, the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness. The frightening result is a numbing detachment from others and a self-destructive disposition toward the world. Life without meaning hope, and have breeds a cold-hearted, mean-spirited outlook that destroys both the individual and

others. (22-

23)

This Nihilism is the consequence of their being treated as mere object. It is important that the blacks get rid of this nihilistic threat. The only way to exorcise this threat is to value oneself and, as West puts it is , to attack the sense of worthlessness and self-loathing.

Despair and hopelessness arising from their living condition made them realize and desire egalitarian society. This desire obviously gave them a sense of worth and meaning in life. The desire of a dignified life gave them a spirit and zeal to live life freely. But, mental and spiritual liberation was not as easy to attain as physical freedom.

It is this psychological bondage that finds expression in extreme ways in an effort to assert their presence in the society. The only way to come out of this bondage is to heal oneself of the past memories and live a subjective life loving oneself and giving meaning to the present and build a prosperous future.

Slavery Depicted in Beloved:

Humans are divided into groups based on their physical characteristics, like colour of skin, facial features. Certain humans to create a wide gap between themselves and others whom they consider to be inferior have successfully used these physical characteristics of human beings. The worst form of racism existed in America for hundreds of years. Discrimination based purely on skin colour flourished for long. The experiences and feelings of this class of people found expression in writing. The dominated slaves gradually began to revolt and their resentment found expression in various ways and forms. Writing became one of the mediums for them to trace their root and culture. Literature on race and racism then

came to exist. Today literature on race and racism has created a vast academic field for students of literature, sociology, anthropology and racial

studies.

Amid the vast literature on race and racism black literature has become a vast area of study. Blacks have taken to literature to establish and trace a kind of culture themselves. Black literature represents the physical, political and social problems faced by the blacks not only during slavery but after slavery as well. Black literature today presents the much overlooked dimension of slavery, i.e., the psychological problems suffered by the slaves. Black female writers and intellectuals have come to depict yet another experience of slavery, i.e., women as slaves. Experiences have been expressed from a feminist sensibility.

Literature for the blacks had become a medium to express not only their lives as a dominated race but also a medium to establish a culture of their own. They needed literature and intellectual expression of their own to create a niche for themselves, to fall back on and to trace their roots. They needed a culture of their own as a tool for liberation. They needed not just physical liberation but psychological as well. It is for psychological liberation that they needed to hold onto something substantial and create a strong position in the society, first for themselves and then for generations to come.

Black women share common experiences of being a black in African-American society and this forms their sensibility. Black today continue to draw on their past which is embedded in their consciousness. Amid the vast literature on race and racism Morrison's *Beloved* is a landmark. *Beloved* reflects the black society at the time of reconstruction and dwells on the various issues that evolved as a result of slavery. It presents the struggle of a mother in a racist, sexist society.

Tony Morrison's work has received wide recognition. Critics have observed that her works tell stories which ". . . are not calculated to please." (Gates Jr. xi). Her most acclaimed novel *Beloved* has received varieties of critical attention. The novel, which unfolds diversified themes and aspects of slavery, has received different types of interpretation. She addresses the themes of racism, feminism and motherhood.

Marilyn Sanders Mobley in " Different Remembering: Memory, History and Meaning in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", discusses why Morrison uses memory in her text:

She uses memory as the metaphorical sign of the interior life to explore and represent dimensions of slave life that the classic slave narrative omitted. By doing so, she seeks to make slavery accessible to readers for whom slavery is not memory but a remote historical fact to be ignored, repressed or forgotten. (19)

She further says that Morrison's novel delves into that aspect of female slavery that never found expression:

. . . her narrative describes the sexual exploitation that challenged the womanhood of slave-women and tells the story of their resistance to the exploitation. . . Morrison's text foregrounds the dialogic characteristic of memory along with its imagination capacity to construct and reconstruct the significance of the past. (20)

Mobley is of the view that Morrison's novel exposes the unsaid of the narratives, the psychic subtexts that lie within and beneath the historical facts. Indeed the novel *Beloved* is all about dealing with the traumatic past in order to proceed to a meaningful future. Mobley presents a psychological reading of the text and says, "

The obsolete meaning of rebuked- repressed – not only suggest that the ghost represents repressed memory, but that , as with anything that is repressed it eventually resurfaces or returns in one form or another" (23).

Jennifer Fitzgerald in " Selfhood and community: Psychoanalyses and Discourse in *Beloved*" presents multiple psychoanalytical discourses present in the text. She says, " The novel's intertwined narratives can be viewed as a form of talking ' taking cure': consequently, several critics have taken a psychoanalytic approach to *Beloved* (110).

According to Jennifer Fitzgerald, the psychoanalytic theory of object relation which proposes that the psyche is constructed within a wide system of relationship, offering a model of how social, cultural and political forces become internalized can be aptly applied to study the discourse in *Beloved* (111). She further says:

Psychoanalysis is only one of the discourses circulation through the novel, one of the ranges of positions and meanings available to *Beloved's* character under, and after, slavery. It is therefore not offered as a truth to which the characters, qua patience, must be led. It is nevertheless worth nothing the resemblances between the discourses of psychoanalysis and slavery. . .each of the characters in *Beloved* has been damaged by slavery, they are not only victims – they are also agents. (111)

Fitzgerald sees *Beloved* as presenting a discourse, of slavery, of the good mother, of masculinity, of black solidarity and the pre-oedipal (first articulated by Melanie Klein) discourse of object relations, which she elaborately discusses. Fitzgerald's reading of *Beloved* presents it as, "psychic struggle prior to subjectivity".

The discourse of slavery inscribes *Beloved's* protagonists as objects they therefore have an investment in inscribing themselves in other discourses in which they act as subjects. But their unconscious also has investment in Kleinian discourse, in which pre-oedipal fantasies are inscribed.

(113) Beloved is the product not only of Sethe's suppressed past but also the intense feelings of a mother. She represents the mental state of a mother who is ready to kill her children rather than submit them to the sexual abuse, exploitation and indignity that she has had to suffer. However, Sethe is successful only with her toddler child. Sethe wishes that her daughter would be back and allow her to explain her mortal action. Fitzgerald further views Beloved's obsession with Sethe psychoanalytically as 'pre-oedipal'. She says that she also functions as a figure on to which others can project their fears and desires. She can thus be read in two ways, as Morrison herself suggests: both as a physically damaged real-life slave girl and as a ghost (fantasy object for the emotions of others) (114).

She remains to be a psychological phenomenon. No matter whether the character Beloved is taken as a real-life slave girl onto whom the characters impose their imagination or a fantasy object for the emotions of the others. She is nothing but the product of the working of tormented minds. Linda Krumholz in "*The ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Tony Morrison's Beloved*" says:

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* reconceptualizes American history. Most apparent in the novel is the historical perspective. Morrison constructs history through the acts and consciousness of African-American slaves rather than through the perspective of the dominant

white social classes. But historically methodology takes another vital shift in *Beloved*; history making becomes a healing process for the characters, the reader, and the author. In *Beloved*, Morrison constructs a parallel between the individual processes of psychological recovery and a historical or national process. Sethe the central character in the novel describes the relationship between the individual and the historical unconscious. (79)

Krumholz sees *Beloved* as healing process for the characters, the author and the readers and the "ritual" or medium of "healing" is sethe's "rememory" of and confrontation with her past. Krumholz analyses *Beloved* along the Freudian psychological constructs:

Morrison uses Freudian psychological constructs to depict the response of slaves to their psychological torment, thus putting the construction of the African American psyche into the most ubiquitous model of the psyche in Western literature and philosophy. According to Freud, the repression of traumatic memories directs energy away from social and sexual satisfaction to the construction of symptoms. The psychoanalytic treatment involves unedited associational speech that is meant to elude the unconscious censors, transference of emotions on to the analyst, and finally acting out or narrativizing of the trauma in order to free the diverted energy and to reintegrate (to some extent) the ego and the libido. (83)

Beloved attempts to bring back the suppressed memories of the characters into their conscious mind in order to relief them from those memories. It is important that those memories be dealt with properly or else they will not go away. Baby Suggs tries to heal the wounds of her fellow people in the clearing by advising them to

love their bodies. This spiritual healing is complete with the psychological healing of the people after their encounter with the past.

According to Ann Snitow in "The Village Voice" the whole centre of the novel is Sethe's longing, *Beloved* is a snare to catch her anguished hungry mothers heart and keep her in the prison guilt forever. She is also memory, return of the dreadful past"(28)

Beloved has also been discussed for its focuses on womanhood and motherhood. The novel presents subjects of social and feminist studies. It voices the unspoken aspect of females under slavery. The novel presents the black female slaves in search of their 'self.' Morrison's works deviate from the other African- American works. As Deborah Barnes puts it, Morrison uses the text" . . .to include the African American's memories, interpretations, and perceptions; she merely writes the novel from an African-centered perspective.(33).

In *Beloved* we see the protective nature of a mother surface strongly and overtake the cultural imposition as under no ordinary circumstances can an ordinary mother be expected to execute her own child, but Morrison's character does it. Morrison makes a point that the slaves need to be liberated from psychological bondage and accept themselves as 'subjects'. And the path to subjectivity is reconstruction of their fragmented past and this is what Morrison is doing in her novel *Beloved*:

To remake the myth of the south, to exorcize its historically inferiorizing, disfranchising, self-negating power over American Blacks Morrison reconceived discursively the African-American's memory of, relationship with and disposition toward this

country and the south. If blacks are to claim America as their land in the same way and for the same reason some season European immigrants have done they too must be able to perceive it propitiously and with hope. (Barnes 33-34)

The characters in Morrison's *Beloved* are in search of 'self.' Their story is a subjective recollection of what each character underwent under slavery and their individual response to these circumstances. Their repressed recollections take the form of abstract thought that eventually gives way to self-recognition and psychological liberation. Their liberation is their discovery of the self. Reliving and remembering anything related to their painful past led them discover and rediscover their 'self'.

Carolyn. M. Jones discusses how Morrison uses the southern landscape as a metaphor. She says that in *Beloved* the south functions both as a site for disjunction and for reunion with the self (37). Just as their repressed memories the journey through the south is painful. The journey also symbolizes their psychological journey. The journey is essential to rediscover themselves, their true being and to assert their existence to the society. The journey of Paul D through the south according to Jones is painful journey ". . .into the past and into the self, but from them these men forge reconnection and freedom. Paul D's quest to return home takes him across the southern landscape and gives us a microcosmic view of its complexity and history. What he internalizes as he moves prepares him not only for his reunion with Sethe but also for reunion with self (37) . Paul D rediscovers himself through his physical journey and Sethe rediscovers herself through her psychological journey. Paul D's discovery of the self is however complete only after

he learns about the 'bitter news' of Sethe's past. It also ". . . allows him to define himself . . . to forge a new identity" (39).

In the end, the characters in *Beloved* are successful to liberate themselves from the shackles of psychological bondage and they are truly emancipated. They are able to accept themselves and define their relationships, as Sethe and Paul D are able to. Morrison gives meaning to the lives of the characters who have been living an empty life rather she lets her characters discover meaning in their lives.

Chapter III

Textual Analysis: Blending of Horror and Beauty

Set in 1873, in the southern part of America, during the aftermath of slavery, the novel *Beloved* treats the memory and desire of Sethe, the main character, as a unique blending of horror and beauty. Sethe is the representative of all blacks, especially black slave women. Soon after the end of the Civil War, the slaves either freed by emancipation or who have bought their freedom are trying to find their own true identity. These ex-slaves are, above all, trying to reconcile and accept their free existence and the traumatic immediate past that haunts them incessantly.

The novel shifts between the characters' memory and desire representing their enslaved past and their present respectively immediately after the Civil War. The

readers get to know the story of the characters through their flashbacks. The characters in the novel – Sethe, Baby Suggs, Paul D and Denver - all are obsessed with their past and are more close to their past than their present. However, the central character Sethe, an escaped slave, who is unable to break the shackles of the memories of her executed child, refuses to confront her memories and suppresses them. She does not discuss the past with her only surviving daughter, Denver, who is forced to live in isolation. Sethe does not deal with her memories of the past until the arrival of *Beloved*.

The novel, which is divided into three sections, unfolds the traumatic and dehumanizing experience of the characters in fragments. These bitter experiences are talked about and come into the forefront with some hope of a meaningful life only in the family, the community, the desire for a free life, the struggle to cope with any adversity as the characters do and the realization of the past to move ahead in the future more meaningfully. *Beloved* does not present the story chronologically but we get information in snippets as the characters decide what incidents they are to discuss and confront. *Beloved* treats slavery not on a general level, but on a very personal level. It studies not so much the physical and material distortions but the aftermath brought about by the institution on the psyche of an individual. The novel centres on the execution of a two-year-old child by cutting her throat with a handsaw and the person who carries out the execution is her own mother, Sethe. The effect of the incident on the central character, Sethe, is unpredictable and difficult to decipher as she finds it difficult to come to terms with her action. Mobley in her essay discusses the ways in which Sethe responds to her actions later:

"Sethe modifies, amplifies and subverts her own memory of the murder that serves as the locus of the narrative. In fact, even in freedom

she lives in kind of psychic bondage to the task of "keeping the past at bay"... the text of *Beloved* moves through a series of narrative starts and stops that are complicated by Sethe's desire to forget or "disremember" the past. Thus at the same time that the reader seeks to know "the how and why" of Sethe's infanticide, Sethe seeks to withhold that information not only from everyone else but even from herself. Thus, the early section of the novel reveals the complex ways in which memories of the past disrupts Sethe's concerted attempt to forget. (22)"

The tension in the novel is the result of Sethe's extraordinary response to slavery between what she wants to remember and what she desires to forget. It is necessary for the characters in *Beloved*, particularly Sethe, to come out of the past and learn to live in the present (with the knowledge and acceptance of the past) and move toward a hopeful future. The use of memory in *Beloved* is an attempt to come to terms and exorcize the ghost of the traumatic past, which continues to haunt them.

Linda Krumholz sees *Beloved* as an individual process of psychological recovery and a national and historical process (79). Krumholz cites Arnold Rampersad, who in his discussion of W.E. B Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* also describes the recovery of history as both a national and a personal necessity:

[Du Bois'] point of view is clear. Admitting and exploring the reality of slavery is necessarily painful for a black American, but only by doing so can he or she begin to understand himself or herself and American and Afro-American culture in general. The normal price of the evasion of the fact of slavery is intellectual and spiritual death. Only by grappling with the meaning and legacy of slavery can the imagination, recognizing finally the temporality of the institution, begin to transcend it.

(80)

Rampersad here says that the repression of the historical past is as psychologically damaging as the repression of personal trauma.

The damage done on the psyche of the characters is visible in the novel. The damage done as a consequence of their attempt to repress the past almost destroys them. Sethe's self-imposed isolation and her refusal to confront and discuss her position lead her to fulfill her wishes, which destroys her physically as well as psychologically. On the other hand, Denver is unable to cope with the nature of her mother and the circumstances under which she is forced to live. Her only company in the house is her mother and the memories her mother wishes to share with her. Denver's knowledge of the past is limited to whatever her mother wishes to tell. Denver and Paul D are in their own way able to negotiate their position after their knowledge of the past. Here lies the beauty of this novel that the most needed tool has been their knowledge of the past in order to interpret their position.

Linda

Krumholz sees Denver as a mirror image of her mother's repressed past she was innocent witness of her sister's execution .Denver, too, needs to retrieve her historical past in order to break free of the psychological bondage (91). Denver is able to emerge into the world only after she acknowledges her past. Krumholz suggests that with understanding comes power to endure and to change. And no doubt it is with her understanding and acceptance of her historical past that Denver is able to place herself into the world.

The novel based on racism focuses on the challenges faced by women slaves and its effects on their psyche. The story of their resistance to the demands of slavery foregrounds the psychological problems the characters face as a result of their action.

The narrative is full of vivid description of physical tortures and repeated reference to forced prostitution shows the intensity of the effect it can have on the psychology of the female mind. The novel focuses on the problems arising from this kind of treatment on the female slaves. Morrison is successful in healing her characters and gives them a meaningful future.

All the female characters in the novel *Beloved* are haunted by the memories of being sexually abused. Baby Suggs's obsession with different parts of the body can be seen as an effort to heal the wounds inflicted by slavery. Baby refers to their being used as a commodity being bought and sold and being moved like checkers. She preaches the ex-slaves to love and restore their bodies, which has been battered by their enslavement:

Here", [Baby Suggs] said, "in this here place we flesh that weeps,
 laughs, flesh that dances bare feet in grass. Love is. Love it hard. Yonder
 they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes;
 they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they have the skin on your
 back. So love your neck; put a hand on it, grace it, stroke it and hold it up.
 And all your inside parts that they'd just as soon slop for hogs, you got to
 love them. The dark, dark liver-love it, love it and the beat and beating
 heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. More than lungs that have yet
 to draw free air. More than your-life holding womb and your life-giving
 private parts hear me now, love your heart, for this is the
 prize.(88)

Here Baby Suggs urges them to heal their suffering bodies – the legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue broken by slavery. Sethe and Baby Suggs have undergone the same psychological and emotional humiliation as slaves', humiliation for not being able to have a close-knit family.

"Men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off, or been hanged, got rented and, loaned and, bought up, bought back, stored up, mortgaged, men, slum or seized" (23). Women were treated as mere sex object who could multiply without investment to the profit of the owner. "So Baby's eight children had six fathers" (23). Baby Suggs is forced to have sex "with straw boss for four months in exchange for keeping her child, a boy, with her – only to have him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and to find herself pregnant by the man who promised not to and did"

(23). Incidents of rape on other female characters are also referred to in the narrative. Ella spent her puberty ". . . in a house where she was shared by father and son, whom she called "the lowest yet". It was "the lowest yet" who gave her a disgust for sex and against who she measured all atrocities" (256). Basthi, Stamp Paid's wife is also forced into sex by her enslaver. Sethe's mother has to go through the same traumatic experience during the middle passage.

Sethe has the amazing luck of six whole years of marriage to that "somebody" son,(23) who fathers every one of her children and values family deeply but the structure of family is non-existent in the slave population as slave owners sell spouses and siblings separately. Sethe herself does not know her mother and is forced to watch her hang while she is only a girl. All this and the accounts of rape, male slave studding and physical abuses exemplify Sethe's motivation of killing her child. Sethe knows what free life is and she now by no means is going back to where her children have to live the same traumatized life she has lived.

One of the many questions that the novel gives rise to is the identity of the character Beloved. The emergence of the enigmatic character Beloved has given rise

to various interpretations of the character and the nature of the novel. The coming of Beloved out of nowhere and her equally enigmatic disappearance leaves various gaps to be filled and interpreted by the readers themselves. The hypnotic power Beloved exercises over the rest of the characters and her mysterious presence give her a supernatural touch.

Literary critics have devoted enormous attention to the question of Beloved's existence. Beloved is seen as the ghost of the child who was executed by Sethe (the child's mother). She can also be taken as a real slave girl who accepts the identity Sethe imposes upon her. Beloved can be convincingly studied as a nightmare (like the lives of the slaves) that no one wishes to remember. She is the embodiment of slavery and a projection of the fears of the characters, most particularly of Sethe.

Beloved as a supernatural figure is the manifestation of the executed daughter of Sethe in the corporeal frame. Again the manifestation of the dead child in flesh gives rise to another issue – the necessity to bring back the dead from the grave. This necessity is Sethe's intense desire for a meaningful life in a family where she can have her children to suckle her milk and a husband like Paul D to convince her that there is a world for her to live in freely. As we probe into the psyche of the characters and study the circumstances under which they have lived we get a clear picture of the sufferings and the need to heal them of their past. We see a tremendous impact of their past on their present. The impact is so great that a mother wills her dead daughter into existence. For the mother, who commits the gruesome act of cutting her daughter's throat with a handsaw in order to protect her child from slavery the very act of defense proves to be destructive. This is how the very destruction begets the need of construction – the construction of a new life, a strong hope for life and a happy family for Sethe. Even though she seems to be unable to forgive herself for the act she

committed almost 18 years before her desire to explain her action is so intense that she wills her dead daughter to return in flesh. Most importantly, the presence of Beloved helps to heal Sethe and the ex-slaves of their past. As a result, this healing process through Sethe's intense desire and the emergence of Beloved gives the novel a unique sense of beauty which is purely therapeutic.

We can take Beloved as a real slave girl who appears and onto whom Sethe asserts her desire. Beloved chooses to accept the identity imposed upon her. Beloved who must have undergone the same circumstances undoubtedly finds no difficulty in identifying herself with the imagination of Sethe. She here serves as a medium in the process of healing.

Beloved can be best interpreted as a part of Sethe's imagination. She is simply an embodiment of the past – an extension of Sethe's imagination. Beloved's appearance here, too, can be explained as a medium of healing process. She is a dream object – the expression of Sethe desires, her wish fulfillment. This is made very clear towards the end of the novel. The characters do not remember the things they have said just as we have a vague impression of dreams.

Beloved is the manifestation of Sethe's repressed memories and desires. She is the wish fulfillment of Sethe. It is important that Sethe confronts her so far repressed memories and learn to live with it. Beloved's presence compels the characters to face their past and all the pain. As a result of this confrontation they are able to reconcile their past with the present.

Beloved's central character Sethe's act of infanticide is impulsive and spontaneous. Sethe has time neither to evaluate her decision nor to think about the consequences of her action. Sethe later explains to Paul D. " It ain't my job to know

what's worse. It's my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that". (165)

Sethe is unable to handle the weight of her memories and locks them away in her unconscious. She is closed to the world, her sons, and her remaining daughter Denver. Sethe's withdrawal from her family and society can be termed as "psychic isolation" (Atkinson, Brene, Woodworth 362).

It is important to remember traumatic events because if they are not remembered they will not go away. The problems related to the traumatic events will be magnified, though buried in the unconscious. Paul D's arrival represents the invasion of the unconscious into the conscious of Sethe. Paul D can be taken as a metaphor for reality as he drives away the ghost which Sethe says is present in the house. Sethe's tucked-away memories start to reveal despite her attempt to suppress them. Sethe even shows her anger towards Paul D as he reminds her of all her traumatic past which for so long she was able to keep at bay. Paul D who represents reality brings back the memories to the present. He displaces the baby ghost Sethe thinks is present in the house. Even though the memories are brought to the present Sethe refuses to deal with them until the arrival of Beloved. It is necessary for Sethe to confront Beloved who represents her past memories to heal herself and come to terms with her act of infanticide and start a new life, which is not haunted by her past.

It is said, "Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder." No doubt horror at different levels of physical, mental and emotional tortures is all prevalent at the foreground in the text. But, as a critical reader, we find in the novel that Morrison has seen beauty against the backdrop of horror that is undergone in the past and talked about in the present in flashbacks by the characters. The sense of beauty in the forms of hope for a meaningful life, intense desire to live in family, the need of community, strong

defense of past action reasonably even though gruesome it is, and most importantly, continuous struggle of the suppressed to cope up with any form of adversity underlie the horrific past and comes to surface at present. A strong sense of their struggle and realization of it is beautiful in that they can see a silver line in the black cloud. The horror begets philosophical outlook toward life." The future was sunset; the past something to live behind. And if it didn't stay behind, well, you might have to stomp it out. Slave life; freed life-everyday was a test and a trial. Nothing could be counted on in a world where even when you were a solution you were a problem"(256). Such kinds of looking at the sunny side of any adversity can be found at various points in the text. Sethe replies, "Me ? Me?"(273) when Paul D wants to make a life with Sethe, deal with their past, build a future with her and tells her, "You your best thing, Sethe. You are." (273).

As every coin has its two sides the very act of infanticide also possesses two equal dimensions: horror and beauty. Horror here is explicit whereas beauty is implicit and seems to be unreasonable for us to talk about. But, truth is always there whatever way it is. In this respect, Sethe's intense desire for being one with her executed daughter gives birth to the issue of motherhood. This is a beautiful aspect of the novel. Her motherly feelings toward her daughter have been epitomized in her monologue in the second part of the novel:

"Beloved

You are my sister

You are my daughter

You are my face; you are me

I have found you again; you have come back to me

You are my Beloved

You are mine

You are mine

You are mine

I have your milk

I have your smile

I will take care of you."(216)

We can see how beautifully there has been a melding of horror and beauty in Sethe's yet another intense desire. We find that she wants to explain her past action to Beloved as a progressive act – the act of going ahead in life no matter how painful and difficult it is to confront a bitter past. This explanation of Sethe regarding the defense of her compulsive and reasonable act of infanticide as per her for her daughter's sake is really very touchy. This is beautifully revealed when Sethe in her monologue shows her desire to reunite with her dead daughter:

Beloved, she my daughter. She mine. . . she had to be safe and I put her where she would be. Paul D ran her off so she had no choice but to come back to me is the flesh . . . I won't never let her go. I'll explain to her, even though I don't have to. Why I did it. How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could met bear to happen to her. (202)

Sethe reconstructs her past by living her past the way she must have wanted to and in the process heals herself. Sethe comes out of her isolation only after reality (Paul D) strikes. Paul D, Sethe and Denver together go to the carnival, which is their (Denver's and Sethe's) first encounter with the society after almost eighteen years of self-confinement. Paul D's arrival forces Sethe to confront her past life as a slave and

an inseparable and the most traumatic memory of her past is her act of infanticide and this surfaces along foremost with the rest of her memories. These memories form the image of Beloved with whom she has to finish many unfinished tasks. Above all, Sethe emerges as a caring mother who was unable to perform her motherly duties to her daughter. Now as Sethe creates the image of 'Beloved' she begins to live her life to the fullest. "Now I can look at things again because she's here to see them too. After the shed, I stopped. Now, in the morning, when I light the fire I mean to look out the windows to see what the sun is doing to the day"(201).

Sethe is constantly shaken to reality from her strong urge to continue living in her secluded life with the memories that keep haunting her. The characters' realization of reality and their struggle to confront it is yet another strikingly beautiful aspect inherent in the novel. The presence of Paul D that she time and again mentions refers to her realization of the reality and the world out of the world created by her and her memories. Her intense desire to reunite with her dead daughter is evident that she could have sensed the reality which she realizes now. "I would have known who you were . . . but Paul D distracted me" (202). " I would have recognized you right off, except for Paul D. Seems to me he wanted you out from the very beginning but I wouldn't let him" (203).

The monologue brings out the motherly aspect of Sethe. This motherly feeling of Sethe leaves an indelible emotional scar on her psyche. It is so deeply rooted that it almost destroys her. In order to heal this scar she has to relive her past and reconstruct it. It is essential for Sethe to heal herself of her obsession with her past act. Linda Krumholz sees Sethe's confrontation with the past as instrumental in healing her. The central ritual of healing is Sethe's "memory" of and confrontation with her past:

The arrival first of Paul D then of Beloved forces Sethe to confront

her past in her incompatible roles as a slave and as a mother . . . the second part describes Sethe's period of atonement, during which she is enveloped by the past, isolated in her house with Beloved, who forces her to suffer over and over again all the pain and shame of the past. Finally part three is Sethe's ritual 'clearing' in which the women of the community aid her in casting out the voracious Beloved and Sethe's experiences a repetition of her scene of trauma with a difference – this time she aims her murderous hands at the white man who threatens her child. (81)

Of all the atrocities that were inflicted on woman slaves the most disturbing experience is of being sexually abused and it is from this painful experience that Sethe desperately wants to save her daughter.

Pamela E. Barnett discusses the facts that disturbed the female slaves. She particularly stresses the fears in Sethe's mind:

For Sethe, being brutally overworked, maimed or killed is subordinate to the over aching horror of being raped and "dirtied" by whites; even dying at hands of one's mother is subordinate to rape.: And the incidents of rapes that prominently figure in the text "frame Sethe's explanation for killing her baby daughter. Sethe tries to tell the furious beloved that death actually protected the baby from the deep despair that killed Baby Suggs from "what Ella knew, what stamp saw and what made Paul D tremble" (251): horrific experiences and memories of rape. (419)

In spite of all the arguments to justify her action, Sethe cannot forgive herself. She nourishes intense desire to reunite with her dead child. It is to heal Sethe of the guilt she is suffering that Beloved is brought into the scene. Beloved's presence heals not only Sethe but also the rest of the characters. She compels Denver to come out of 124

Bluestone into the community and discover herself. Paul D, too, discovers the possibility of a future with Sethe. Sethe, above all, realizes her position and comes to accept her relationship with Paul D with whom she shares her past life.

The narrative of *Beloved* is full of recurring prominent memories of rape. All female characters as mentioned earlier have a painful story of sexual abuse to tell. Life for them was doubly difficult as compared to male slaves. " . . . rape seemed to be a solitary gift of life " (10). The memories of being sexually exploited kept on haunting them even long after being freed. They simply could not bury their bitter past and it kept on coming back to them disturbing them mentally.

The female slaves lived under the fear of being sexually abused by their master and this fear was perpetual. There are several references to the incidents of rape and forced prostitution in *Beloved*. These incidents haunt the female characters. Particularly Sethe is haunted by her memories of the past. Sethe repeatedly refers to her abusers as 'mossy toothed' boys. These 'mossy toothed' boys also steal Sethe's breast milk. (6, 16-17, 68-70, 200, 228). Sethe is also not able to forget the whipping she suffered at the hands of her masters. These memories frame Sethe's psyche from where (her free life) she is not willing to return.

The most crucial and appalling incident in the life of Sethe which controls her action and activities thereafter is the incident that occurs just twenty eight days after her escape to Ohio in the shed. When the white schoolteacher comes to claim them and take them back Sethe retaliates aggressively in an effort to save her children rather than submit them to slavery but she is successful only with her two years old daughter. This incident in particular haunts Sethe but she does not discuss it openly and tries to repress it although unsuccessfully.

Another bitter experience associated with this incident is her payment for the engraving on the tombstone. The payment was ten minutes of sex with the engraver for the single word "Beloved".

Sethe refuses Paul D's suggestion to leave 124 Bluestone saying 'no more running from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth' (15). Sethe's refusal to leave the house is guided by her unwillingness to forget her past. Somewhere deep within her she is bound by her past and the memories associated with the house. However, Sethe knows that she is not moving forward with time. She explains to Denver about her stagnant position and her 'rememory':

Some things go on. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. . .the pictures of it – stays, . . . even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still there. Right in the place where it happened. (35-36)

Sethe finds it impossible to get rid of her past and acknowledges it but at the same time by not discussing things with Denver she is stopping her to move forward with time just like herself. As for Denver, "the job Sethe had of keeping her from the past that was still waiting for her was all that mattered" (42).

Paul D's entry into her life forces Sethe to come out of her own world and face reality, her past as well as her present. Sethe even stopped thinking of the events that happened or that she expected to happen. For Sethe "124 was so full of strong feelings perhaps she was oblivious to the loss of anything at all" (39). Perhaps every corner of the house conveyed her presence of whatever she had lost. But 'Paul D arrived and broke up the place, making room, shifting it moving it over to someplace else, then standing in the place he had made' (39). This disturbs Sethe for he has reshuffled her

entire set up not just the material set-up but her mental make up as well. Paul D's presence made her view the real world. "Emotions sped to the surface in his company. Things became what they were: drabness looked drab; heat was hot; windows suddenly had view" (39). Yet she could not bring herself to accept this reality. For her as mentioned earlier picture of the past was still there alive.

Sethe cannot forget her past, yet she does not wish to discuss it. She represses it in the deep recesses of her mind. Everything associated with the past is painful and it hurts and she has decided not to speak about it, '. . . every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable. . .' (58). The past that Sethe wishes to forget keeps on resurfacing and does more so with innocent enquiries made by beloved. To every small enquiry made by Beloved she gives detailed information contrary to the short and brief answers she gives to Denver's enquiries. She knows 'she was remembering something she had forgotten she knew. Something privately shameful that had seeped into a slit in her mind . . .' (61).

It is not easy for Sethe to squeeze out the memories that have seeped deep down in her mind. Sethe has totally lost her individuality first as a slave and later as a result of her self-imposed role of a mother. She carries the burden of her past and it completely overshadows her present. The memories of the past retard her reasoning capacity and she is unable to see the possibility of a liveable future. The narrator at one point comments on Sethe's condition. "but her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day" (70). Everyday some forgotten memories kept on resurfacing and the knowledge of some raw incident was added to the old memories. Sethe's burden of the past becomes even greater when she comes to know that Halle

had witnessed the 'mossy toothed' boys steal her milk while their teacher watched it and wrote it up (70). And this made Halle go insane whom she never met again.

The past is not just Sethe's. She shares it with the rest of the characters as well. Stamp Paid, Ella, Vashti and Paul D with whom she had worked at sweet home also share the pain of the slave life. The novel's essence lies in the way in which Paul D and Sethe come to terms with their memories. They share their pain and speak what had not been spoken so far. The past also belongs to Denver for whom it would not be possible to navigate her path to future without proper and clear understanding of the past. Sethe is in a way strengthened to bear the pain and burden of the past in Paul D's presence as she shares with him "more yesterday than anybody else"

(273). The role of the past history is central in the novel, which talks of the present. The suppressed and the buried guide the activities of the protagonists. The narrative itself oscillates between the past and the present. The power of the past over the present is clearly visible throughout.

The pain and experience suffered by the slaves in general make them physically and psychologically deprived. However, there is an added dimension of torture and humiliation suffered by the female slaves and this is another recurring theme in the novel. Another most prominent and recurring theme in terms horror in the novel is sexual violation. The act of sexual violation has deep psychological effect on the characters. They are neither able to love themselves nor the product of the violence imposed on them. This has irreparable damage on the psyche of the victims. The memories of rape haunt the female characters and it makes the male characters loathe themselves. For example, Halle goes insane after he witnesses Sethe being sexually abused (68). Sethe comes to know of this only after the arrival of Paul D. This knowledge of the past adds to Sethe's traumatic memories and the intensity of the pain

she suffers. She is extremely disturbed by Halle's inability to interfere and save her from humiliation (68). This also brings her to face the truth of their position in a slave community and above all their limitation to act and react.

The first reference to the incident of rape appears in the beginning of the first section of the novel. The incident mentioned here is the memory of Sethe associated with the death of her daughter and her burial. The burial of her daughter is unceremonious and it reminds her of her payment for the gravestone of the dead daughter. This incident causes her more pain and agony than anything else. As it is said in the beginning of the narrative "Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut, but those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn coloured stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby's blood that soaked her fingers like oil" (5). This incident refers to Sethe's ten minutes of sex with the engraver in order to pay for Beloved's gravestone. This incident of forced prostitution is more immediate in Sethe's memory. Sethe uses the word 'appetite' to refer to the carnal desires of the oppressors (5). The word 'appetite' is repeatedly used throughout the narrative to convey different types of hunger. The pink headstone and Sethe's payment are referred to subsequently (201, 204, 208, 241). There are several other references to "mossy toothed" boys who hold Sethe down and suck her breast milk (70, 6, 16-17, 31, 68, 200, 225).

All these instances of sexual abuse show how the females must have made up their mind to resist the system of slavery in any possible way. The characters have been so profoundly affected by the horrors of the past that even the passage of time could not undo its effects. Through the trope of rape Morrison shows the extent of physical pain and suffering.

The most vital theme in *Beloved* is that of motherhood. The role of the mother is central in the novel. The role of a mother bestowed by nature on women is diminished and manipulated by the social establishment, which is evolved by the people placed at comparatively better position than the others. The female slaves are marketized for their procreating ability and this is a return without investment for the slave owners. Their role as a mother is, however, diminished by the restriction imposed on them by the system. Family, as an institution, never exists under slavery, as the siblings and the parents are separated at a very early stage. The function of the biological mother is always reduced according to the wishes of the slave-owners. The issues of motherhood play a dominant role in the novel. The central protagonist Sethe's act of infanticide exhibits her claim over her daughter and this forms the main plot of the novel set against the background of racism. Sethe's claim over her daughter is her assertion of her maternal rights, which has been so far denied to any mother. However, the radical step taken by Sethe proves nearly fatal for her and her only surviving daughter.

Sethe is obsessed with her role as a mother. Her obsession with her biological role is, to a great extent, the consequence of what she was deprived of as a child. Sethe has a very vague picture of her mother. Sethe "sucked from another woman" and "did not sleep with her mother" (60-61). The only thing she remembers of her mother "was a circle on her rib and a cross burnt right on the skin"(61). The experience of pain and a sense of denial of her right to maternal love nourish Sethe's determination to carry out her role as a mother. Her pride as a mother is obvious when she announces that she has milk enough for all her children. Her determination is more pronounced when she says that she has to get her milk to her baby.

The system of slavery prevents Baby Suggs from living a life of a mother. Baby Suggs can not see any of her eight children grow into an adult. She is broken by the fact that her children, too, will be used as pawns in the game of checkers. She watches her children being sold like commodities and this breaks her heart. Baby Suggs has spent the rest of her freed life to heal her wounds and help the community to heal their wounds as well.

The repeated use of milk and breast imagery also signifies the theme of motherhood. Black mothers are not allowed to nurse their children and are forced to suckle the children of the whites. Black mothers are deprived of their basic instincts. They are controlled and manipulated by white people. Their role is restricted by the institution which though accepted in the beginning is sowing seeds of resentment in the hearts of the oppressed. The result of this encroachment is radical and violent.

Sethe's violent act is an example of the radical assertion of her restricted role.

Sethe

's repeated reference to her stolen milk suggests its power of life. Sethe takes pride in her motherhood and wishes to shower all her love and affection on her children. Sethe loses her individuality and sees herself only as the mother of her children. She is determined to take her milk to her children who need it.

Sethe's sense of responsibility and the duty she assumes to protect her children from any harm causes her to take the fatal step for her daughter. Eighteen years later Sethe's self-imposed role of a mother proves to be almost equally fatal for her.

Sethe cannot separate her existence from her dead daughter. Sethe is ever so assertive about her role as a mother because she has experienced the pain of being deprived of what is a child's basic need and right. Sethe and Beloved's monologue

expresses their innate desire to be with each other and their possessive nature.

Beloved merges herself with her mother. Beloved desires to be one with the mother.

Sethe accepts her biological role of a mother and this role overshadows her existence. Sethe, in order to fulfill the duties and obligation of her self-imposed role, extends her desires to a dream object from which Paul D liberates her before she is totally consumed. Sethe's inability to separate herself from her role of a mother leads her to believe in Beloved's resurrection. Sethe loses her individuality as she takes up her role as a mother. Sethe is liberated from her own created world by the presence of Paul D and the effort of her own daughter Denver. The liberation of Sethe signifies the liberation of the entire race. Beloved is the projection of the repressed memory of the violated.

The physical and sexual assault on the slaves is like a bad dream, which they want to forget. They want to forget their unpleasant past like one would like to forget a nightmare. Beloved is their bad dream but she is more alive to them than anything else. Beloved's assault on the characters represents the assault of the slaveholders. Beloved manipulates and renders the characters unable to use their reason just as the whites have made them. In destroying Beloved the characters destroy the shackles of slavery that has bound them for so long. After her disappearance, Beloved is soon forgotten by the townspeople just "like an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep" (275).

In the sexual assault by Beloved the characters especially Paul d and Sethe relive their own experiences in their enslaved past. For every character in the novel, the character Beloved is nothing more than a dream figure – a nightmare. The characters give in to the wishes of Beloved involuntarily. In the process Beloved swells up draining Sethe of all her life and

vitality. Sethe invests all her efforts and love on Beloved (her extended imagination) whom she assumes to be her daughter and as such thinks that she is her inseparable part. Sethe's very inability to undo and forget her past takes the charge of her. She realizes this towards the end but she is too weak to counteract. Sethe now needs to reclaim herself and her individuality.

The supernatural-looking figure Beloved is nothing but an extension of the psyche of the ex-slaves the manifestation of the memories of the traumatic past – particularly of Sethe. According to Pamela E. Barnett " . . . the book is haunted by rape not to pun idly on the ghostly presence that invigorates the novel's dominant trope: the succubus figure" (418).

Beloved can be treated as a part of the mother's memories rather than the manifestation of the daughter in flesh. Beloved is "like a bad dream" (Beloved 274) that everyone is willing to forget. Barnett discusses Beloved like a nightmarish figure like a vampire, a disturbing element during sleep. Personification of human beings disturbed mind:

At the end of the novel, beloved seems to disappear, and the townspeople forget her 'like an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep' (275) – indeed like a nightmare. . . .Before the community forgets Beloved "like a bad dream", Paul D and Sethe experience her as sexually menacing nightmare figure. (421)

Beloved's emergence in the novel is the intrusion of the past on their present. Beloved's presence indicates the inescapability of the effects of slavery. Despite their efforts the characters in *Beloved* cannot undo their past memories. The memory that haunts Sethe repeatedly throughout the novel is the death and burial of her two-year-old daughter on whose tombstone is engraved 'Beloved'. The death of Beloved takes

place under horrendous circumstances. Beloved has her throat cut by her own biological mother who thinks that she'd be safe on the other side of the world. Sethe takes this grave decision for her daughter rather than let her live in a world where human beings are merchandise. The burial of this daughter is unceremonious. The payment for the engraving on the tombstone is ten minutes of sex with the undertaker. Sethe wants "Dearly Beloved", but has strength to pay only for one. The burial of the baby needs to be proper and for this Sethe has to relive her past and end it.

Part III of the novel is significant in interpreting the emergence of Beloved. Sethe leaves her job and spends all her time, energy and material possession trying to fulfill the desires of Beloved. Beloved demands Sethe's attention and drains her of all her life.

Beloved unfolds its story in fragments and is not easily comprehensible. Readers are required to put the bits and pieces together so as to understand it. The coming of Beloved into the scene makes the text even more vague and incomprehensible. Although Beloved seems to be an enigmatic figure it is through her that the knotted stories and emotions of the characters get loose. Beloved is the product of the psychic process of Sethe. Beloved is the manifestation of the thoughts of Sethe. The thoughts and memories of Sethe which were playing havoc on her mind find expression in the form of Beloved. She is an outlet of all the suppressed thoughts and feelings and, above all, the craving wishes of a mother. Beloved is an extension of Sethe's memories and desires, which takes the form of visual images.

According to Sigmund Freud, dream is manifest in its present situation with the omission of 'perhaps' the thoughts and the translation of the thought into visual images and speech. he further discusses another peculiar quality of dream " . . . the conceptual

content is not thought, but is transformed into visual images, to which we give credence and which we believe that we experience" (376).

This is exactly what happens in Sethe's case. Sethe believes that she is experiencing what she had been suppressing. The memories she has for so long been suppressing in the unconscious surfaces in her dream thoughts which then are transformed into visual images. Freud calls the direction of this psychic-process regressive. He gives this kind of dream process the name regression because the "idea in the dream is changed back into the visual image from which it once originated" (383).

The raw material of Sethe's dream is derived from her memory traces. Sethe's strong unconscious desires are replaced by images. External forces activate the suppressed memories. Paul D acts as a catalyst to activate her rejected thoughts and desires. Above all, the memories that Sethe wishes to 'disremember' most – is the death of her daughter resurfaces. Sethe tries hard to forget those traumatic moments and the circumstances under which she kills her child. Sethe nourishes a desire to relive the circumstances in a different way that would satisfy her. The reestablishment of suppressed memories to relive in a desired way gives satisfaction to an individual. Set

he's intense desire to justify her action to Beloved finds expression in her dreams. She confesses in her monologue that Beloved is "the one and only person she felt she had to convince, that what she had done was right because it came from love" (251).

Sethe's confrontation with the past also helped her to come out of her "physic isolation" and merges with the society which she had for so long refused to accept. Ella rightly understands the situation and decides not to let the past errors take

possession of the present (257). Paul D awakes from his dream crying "Red heart" and waking Denver. Denver, too, realizes the necessity to come out of 124 Bluestone.

Just like Baby Suggs helps the people heal their wounds and pain in the clearing the women come to heal Sethe of her personal pain and wound. Her acceptance in the society gives her a new direction:

For Sethe it was as though the clearing had come to her with all its
heat and simmering leaves, where the voices of women searched for the
right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back
of words. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they
did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock
the pods off chestnuts trees. (261)

Sethe lives through the same situation that had driven her insane twenty years before. She attacks Mr. Bodwin who has come to pick up Denver, with an ice pick, thinking that he has come up to her yard to take her child. Sethe must have wanted to do the same thing eighteen years ago. Her reliving the situation and doing what she wants gives her a sense of satisfaction.

The community people who come to rescue Sethe are not sure of what they have seen and heard. They are not even sure that Beloved has really disappeared but one thing they are sure of is that they do not want to remember her. They wish to forget her like a bad dream.

Living at present with a hope of bright future even though very dreadful the past has been for the blacks like Sethe comes to be the only option in life. On the basis of psychoanalytical reading and the theory of reader response, we, as readers, thus, can trace that almost all the characters in the novel have undergone the ordeal of all types

of physical, mental and emotional ups and downs. As a result, a new hope of change peeps at their lives in the end.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The physical and mental tortures inflicted on Sethe and her intense desire to bring back her dead daughter gives birth to the character Beloved. The presence of

Beloved is not only just an extension of Sethe's memory but also it is her intense desire of living a free life. She wants such a life that is free from all those haunting images of the horrific past. Her memory here stands for horror and her desire represents a beautiful future to live in. Beloved is a manifestation of Sethe's troubled mind and traumatic past and at the same time, a hope for a better future, i.e., a beautiful life. Beloved's presence is as abstract as Sethe's fear. Sethe's life, thereafter, is guided by this very act of hers. Sethe longs to be with her child but she does not acknowledge this. She represses her desire, which under no circumstances can be fulfilled. The novel *Beloved* is trying to present a mother's longings – her struggle with the guilt and the fear induced by slavery.

The novel evokes the history of the blacks in fulfilling Sethe's desire. The painful history that no one wishes to remember is brought to light. The most painful and humiliating experience of the female slaves is depicted in the experiences of Sethe. The shame and disgrace she has felt on being sexually abused leads her to execute her child so as to save her child from the same kind of humiliation. But this action does not end here and Sethe continues to live with it being unable to accept her act. From this moment on she lives and is unable to come out of her action until her desire to justify her action as an act of love and security for her child is fulfilled through the manifestation of Beloved.

Beloved can be examined from the point of view of Sethe's desire for beauty and a hope also that everybody has in general. It is not only the manifestation of her repressed memory but also the symbol of her desire – the desire of being with her children whom she could suckle her own milk that she has been deprived of by the whites before. She feels pleasure in the presence of Beloved even though repressed memory of the horrific past raises its head. Sethe does not want the absence of

Beloved for a little time even in the third section of the novel. She grows impatient to be with her so as to find a solace to clear her repressed guilt and fulfill her intense desire to be with her executed child as a beautiful girl she would have been had she lived. Even though Beloved is a ghost, she, for Sethe, stands for a thing of beauty and hope for a comfortable life.

We can take the presence of Beloved in the life of Sethe as beauty even after the exorcising of the apparition of Beloved. Later, in the novel, this beauty has come into her life in the form of a prospect of living a happy life with Paul D. After the exorcism of the ghost of Beloved, Sethe realizes that her repressed memory of the horrific past has been let out and her intense desire of living a free life in a family has begun. Thus, the presence and the exorcism of Beloved both have proven to be a therapy to cure Sethe's psychological problem. This therapy has been a boon that helps propel Sethe's life into a better future.

Beloved is not a supernatural figure or the ghost of Sethe's executed daughter only but the ghost of slavery – as an institution also in a true sense. Beloved manifests the repressed thoughts of Sethe. The whole novel revolves around Sethe's longing. It unfolds as the characters resolve the tension between what they want to remember and forget. And Beloved represents all that Sethe wants to forget and repress. Sethe does not allow the intense past to emerge but continues living in her extended moments of grief. The novel presents the minds of ex-slaves – the minds that have been tormented for so long.

Sethe experiences extreme forms of mental disorder. She cannot forgive herself for her decisive act of infanticide as such. She nourishes a desire to justify her action to her dead child. She wants to tell her daughter that her action was guided by her sole motive to save her from the humiliation of being raped. However, Sethe suppresses

desire to reunite with her daughter. Her desires are so strong that her thoughts find expression in her dreams. The presence of the character Beloved seems to be a supernatural phenomenon as we fail to understand the workings of human mind under stressful circumstances. In fact, Beloved is a product of the complex working of the mind of Sethe.

The characters in the novel are haunted by their nightmares. The root of their nightmare lies in their distant past, the memories of which are all bad. Paul D, Baby Suggs and Sethe have prominent voice in the novel and they have had a more common past – 'Sweet Home'. The memories associated with 'Sweet Home', however, are neither sweet to remember nor easy to forget. Paul D, time and again, remembers his life in 'Sweet Home' then after on the 'Chain Gang' and his flight from there and he does not have a single memory of moments to be cherished. Sethe has more nightmarish memories than anyone else for nothing can be more painful than murdering one's own child. The central voice in the novel belongs to Sethe and the whole novel revolves round her mental state after her decisive action for her daughter eighteen years before.

The text unfolds as Sethe decides what she desires to forget. But the memories are so intense that she is not totally successful. Sethe's verbalization of love triggers her memory of selecting a tombstone for the baby she has murdered. Their memory recurs and brings the ambivalent emotions of consolation and anguish. Similarly the memory of the tombstone triggers her memory of the shameful circumstances of getting it engraved. In this memory, the reality of gender and oppression converge, for the engraver offers to place seven letters – the name 'Beloved' – on the headstone in exchange for sex. She also remembers that for ten more minutes, she could have gotten the word "dearly" added. Thirdly, this memory raises the issue around which

the entire novel is constructed and which is the consequences and/or responsibility that she must carry for her actions.

The tension between memory and desire or remembering and disremembering is present throughout the novel. This tension depicts the state of the minds of the slaves- the minds of the characters trying to 'disremember' events in their lives that caused them nothing but immense pain. This tension disturbs Sethe mentally to the extent that she starts deteriorating physically. Sethe's conformation with the past is therapeutic. Even after the community chases the ghost of slavery away. Sethe is unable to come out of its grasp. She is still confined in the overwhelming sense of guilt and consuming love for her daughter. Paul D helps her come out of her self-confinement, just as he has initiated to confront and discuss the past.

The beauty of the whole novel lies in the healing process of the characters and the healing is to be precise and purely psychological. The motive of repression is to simply turn something away and keep it at a distance from the conscious and this is done either to run away from certain things or in condemnation. Sethe and the rest of the characters do not wish to remember their past. Their flight is from their shameful past which makes them loathe themselves. Sethe has additional psychic scar to bear. She carries the guilt of killing her daughter. Sethe's attempt to run away from her action almost kills her.

The last two pages of the text *Beloved* discuss the presence of the character Beloved. Everyone knows her presence. No one, except Sethe, wishes to remember her for her memory brings them nothing but pain and suffering. At the same time, she cannot be forgotten because she is their past. She represents their documented as well as undocumented history of suffering. She is no more than a bad dream and they fabricate their own stories about her and deliberately forget her. This forgetting

process is easier for those who have not lived with her (slavery) and it takes longer for those who have spoken to her, lived with her, fallen in love with her, to forget, until they realize that they can't remember or repeat a single thing she has said, and begin to believe that other than what they themselves were thinking she hadn't said anything at all. So, in the end, they forget her, too.

The process of forgetting is not so easy for those who have lived in slavery but living with it is unwise as well. So, the characters face it, accept its distant presence and overcome it as well. The memory and desire have been instrumental for the characters to carry on their journey of life. On the one hand, the forces of horror like rape, various kinds of physical and mental tortures inflicted upon the blacks caused by the whites and the act of infanticide by Sethe are dominantly prevalent in the novel. On the other, the elements of beauty like hope for meaningful life, intense desire to live in family, need of community, and more importantly, continuous struggle of the suppressed to cope with any adversity. Thus, the novel becomes an epitome of showing how the two opposites are inherently blended with each other. The characters knowingly or unknowingly happen to go through both dimensions of life: horror in reality and beauty of hope and desire in imagination. Such is the beauty of this novel to present such a unique blending of the opposites. The horror that the characters go through and the beauty that they form in terms of hope and desire for a meaningful life even in very critical time in the aftermath of slavery go hand in hand in the novel. This is why the novel remains to be a unique blending of horror and beauty.

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