

## Morrison's Black Slave Female Characters and Their Quest for Subjectivity

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**Abstract:** *Classic slave narratives are considered an integral part of Afro-American Literature. But they just present the one side of reality and ignore the other important dimensions. These narratives became a significant part of popular fiction and present slavery just a historic fact. Beloved can be viewed as a neo-slave narrative, it explores the lives of those countless slave women whose stories are absent from dominant literature. She presents slavery not merely as a fact but a memory. She recaptures the lost stories of violence and pain and depicts black women's heroic struggle to live under the institution of slavery which is named as a dark chapter in human history. Beloved is a symbolic character who reminds of all those nameless victims who died in the belly of slave ships where first time black women's institutionalized rape began. All the female characters in the novel are fighting against post-traumatic stress and learning new ways to cultivate an independent identity. They know how to cope with ghosts of the past and eventually learn to heal their emotional wounds. Thus all female characters in Beloved question stereotypical representation of black women in literature.*

**Key Words:** *black women, breeder, slavery, slave narrative, oppression*

Slave narratives are an important part of Afro-American Literature. Slave era can be declared as the darkest chapter in American history. Henderson (2002) writes, “the forced dispersement of African from their native land” caused ‘indelible mark’ of “cultural wounding” and this became an integral part of “African- American racial memory.” In the history of America, the middle passage always represents “the heinous voyage from Africa to the America in the belly of slave ships.” Most of the American writers have tried to recapture that era in their writings. They have made several attempts to retrieve the African–American body sometimes “through a literary evocation of its physical trauma” and sometimes they recover the lost essence of wounded and “fragmented selfhood” under “the weight of the dominant culture gaze” (pp.5-7).

The slaves were dehumanized during the slave era. As Higginbotham writes that “statute first enacted in 1669... in the slave codes of Virginia ”depicts how the whites had enjoyed absolute authority over blacks. According to statute, the slaves were treated just like cattle, the property of their owner and it was not crime for the master to kill his slave (qtd. in Henderson 2002, p.21). Slave Women were considered very important and valuable piece of property. Women were humiliated and “stripped before an audience in an effort to determine their market value” ( Henderson2002,p.41).During 1600, the law and state kept silence about inhuman treatment of the slaves. All the possible crimes like the murder of rebellious slaves, the rape of

the slave women and the sale of the babies which were the result of the violations of slave women's bodies were committed under the institution of slavery. Former slaves like Sojourner Truth and Douglas had tried to unveil these horrible crimes. Understanding black women's debasement and humiliation under the institution of slavery helps to understand this intricate system of oppression. These distorted images associated with black women's slaves still used to derogate black women. Sojourner Truth and Harriet Jacob in their writings gave us the graphic portrait of inhuman treatment experienced by black women.

Patterson argues that Harriet Jacob had realized her unprivileged and doubly marginalized status as a slave woman. She said that a slave's identity had a deep and strong link with oppression. Black slaves were also victimized and terrorized but black slave women experienced different sort of harassment. They had no choice but to live under the constant threat of rape. Living with a female body was not less than a curse.

The most horrible thing was how slavery placed Harriet Jacob "outside of normative definition of womanhood (white) and blackness (male)." (Mitchell&Taylor2009, p.9) Rape could be called the most "fundamental tool of sexual violence used against enslaved women". In black women's writings, the sexual violence against black women and rape became the most explored theme. White slave owners used to enjoy a sense of power by subjugating the black bodies to extreme sense of torture and pain. Different stereotypical images were promoted and used to mask this heinous display of power. During that era different sort of controlling images became famous. As Qasim(2012) says ,

"Thus the portrayal of black women as the breeders, mammies, matriarchs, and hot girls, women with the deviant sexuality, welfare recipients and the ugly and unfeminine creatures justifies their oppression. The portrayal of black women as others is enough to justify any kind of oppression" against them. (p.1)

Black women were called "prostitute" or the "sexualized women". It was believed that they had uncontrollable sexual desire and wanted to be raped. Black female bodies had been disgraced; they had been displaced on "southern auction block". Denial and refusal on their part meant death. They silently participated in their own disgrace.(Mitchell&Taylor2009, p.9) Davies explores the image of "mythical whore" who deserves the worst sort of punishment ( qtd. in Collin 2000,p.147).In this way the violence against black women was justified. The controlling images of Jezebel, whore and breeder were used to control slave women's bodies' .They were treated like animals.

Moody describes the stereotypes which were used to dominate black women. They were called "primitive barbarian, breeders, indulgent mammies, sex- hungry Jezebels and tragic mulatto". (Mitchell&Taylor2009, p.113)

Through their narratives, black slaves usually had fought against these stereotypes and revitalized their image as subjects. They challenged the white mythologies about black womanhood. These narratives depicted the great effort of slave women and also question the belief that slave's life was meaningless and worthless.

Morrison in her own unique way deals with the lives of black slave women in her novel, *Beloved*. It depicts the ways slavery had destroyed women's capacity to love. Most of the characters of the novel are living in the post-slavery era but are haunted by the ghosts of the past. Past plays a very significant role in their lives. Their traumatic past lives with them like a shadow. Morrison unmask the hidden truth and uncovers the hidden stories of violence and victimization of black women in her fiction. Joy argues that Morrison with her poetic style recaptures and reconstructs "the lost stories of slavery, imprisonments, displacement and women's loss, the secret stories of abuse, degradation and the theft of identity." (Joy et al. 2002, p.9)

In an interview with Reynolds (2002), Morrison confesses that The United States has so many buried histories. She also criticizes its double standards. On the one hand they say welcome to all, and preach equality, while on the other they discriminate on the basis of race and colour. She says, "There is an enormous amount of hypocrisy, an enormous amount of secrecy and deliberate erasure of the cultural narrative in the united states." (Joy et al. 2002, p.12)

Morrison presents slave women as subjects who challenge different racial stereotypes. The image of a breeder was used to exploit black slave women during the slave era. They were considered breeders and compared to animals. It was assumed that they were not delicate and feminine like white women. They were presented as beast of burden. Sojourner Truth, an ex-slave woman, in her famous speech 'Ain't I a Woman?' challenged this image. She was a slave woman whose nine children were sold; she was forced to work like an animal. She had been denied the human status and considered as a sub-human creature. She called into question the dominant definition of black womanhood. Collin (2002) says that the image of breeder was promoted "to harness black women's fertility to the needs of a changing political economy." This image was used to claim that black women can produce children as easily as animals. In this way the dominant groups justified their interference in an enslaved African's reproductive lives. Slaver owners wanted enslaved African women to breed because every slave child represented "a valuable unit of property, another unit of labour, and, if female, the prospects for more slaves. The controlling image of breeder served to justify slave owner's intrusion into black women's decision about fertility" (pp.78-79)

Black slave woman was a very valuable commodity. Her body was misused and exploited by slave owners. In her novel *Beloved* Morrison depicts the miserable plight of black slave women. In *Beloved*, one of the characters defines black woman as a "property that reproduces itself without any cost"( Morrison 1998, p.228). Like an animal, a young slave

woman, Sethe cannot own her body; her body is controlled by the slave masters. All the slave women in the novel are bearing the scars of slavery upon their souls. This image is used to exploit them. According to that society, black women have uncontrollable sexuality. They are born to be ruled. The school master in *Beloved* calls Sethe a brute, in this way he justifies his brutal treatment. Once he took her milk and physically abused her when she was pregnant. When she runs from 'Sweet Home' with her children, she first time experiences freedom to love and own her body. Then the very moment she realizes that the school teacher will capture her; she kills the very child who is dearest to her, her only daughter. This act is a desperate attempt on the part of the mother to save her child. Paul D criticizes Sethe's action and says that her love is too "thick" (Morrison 1998, p.112). A slave woman has no right to love anyone especially her own children. Thus by cultivating a powerful identity as a mother, she destroys the image of the breeder. Here lies the paradox, this very act of killing can be called an act of love. She saves Beloved by killing her because she does not want her daughter to be raped by any white man. She knows that the white will "dirty" her; they can dirty her to that extent that she cannot even like herself. She does not want it to happen to her daughter. Her child is the best thing she ever has, "white might dirty her alright, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing...the part of her that was clean" (Morrison 1998, p.251). When Sethe is haunted by Beloved's ghost, she tries her best to convince her that she loves her, "What she had done was right because it came from true love" (Morrison 1998, p.25). Genovese argues that Sethe's infanticide is a "desperate act of self definition". By killing her child, she claims her identity as a mother. Sethe's mother is also powerful and strong woman who has been raped by several white men but still resists the image of breeder. She gives birth to many babies but throws away, all of them, and refuses to name them. Sethe is the only one whom she gives a name. Thus she proves that the white masters can claim her body but not her soul. Slave women always resisted their sub-human status. Baby Suggs is also a woman who has lost all of her children except her son Helle. She is haunted by the traumatic memories, the memories of her lost children. She recalls that her life at Sweet Home was dominated by silence. She finds it difficult to voice her thoughts. (Bloom 2007, p.112)

In *Beloved*, Morrison explores the ghost of the dead, who had lost their lives in the middle passage. In this novel Morrison shows the devastating impact of slavery upon the Afro-American culture and tradition. She also depicts the inadequacy of language to express the horror of the slavery. (William 2001, p.155)

By creating Beloved's character, Morrison makes us think of all those slave women whose stories are left out of literature and their voices are absent in history. As Qasim says in 'Black Women's Quest for subjectivity: Identity Politics in Morrison's novels: Songs of Solomon & Beloved',

Morrison's novels describe the secret stories of violence and aggression and capture the lives of abuse survivors and ex-slaves who are trying their best to render their lives normal. In her novels, Morrison presents her female characters as subjects not as marginalized others. Morrison's women emerge as powerful characters, brave abuse-survivors who try to live under the shadow of oppression but do not lose their identity as human beings ( p.85).

*Beloved* gives glimpse into the lives of those who are unrecorded by the dominant discourse. *Beloved* stands for those who died in the belly of the slave ship. In her interview with Naylor, Morrison describes her preoccupation with the image of the dead girl, the silenced one whom she wants to give voice. *Beloved* represents all those silenced girls who died in the middle passage. "Nobody knows their names, and nobody thinks about them. In addition to that, they never survived the love; there are no songs or dances or tales of these people." (qtd. in Williams2001,p. 152)

In *Beloved*, Morrison records the unrecorded history, *Beloved* is a ghost, a spirit, an illusion or Sethe's murdered daughter. Atwood analyzes the nightmarish setting of the novel which is full of the description of headless dead bodies, the helpless small baby girls who are 'locked' for the purpose of rape, and the disturbed black children who see whites as people without skins( Bloom 2007, p.7).*Beloved* comes from the world of dead. Her language is incomprehensible; there is no link in it. *Beloved*' speech is full of gaps. The gaps and spaces within the text, force the reader to think. *Beloved* is the most complicated character, the baby ghost who is haunting House 124. Baby ghost is torturing all the people who are living in it. *Beloved* is full of revenge and angry with anyone. Her rage and violent behavior has terrorized everyone. Sethe is shocked at her rage and wonders how it is possible for a baby girl to keep so much rage within herself. The house is cursed by "baby's fury at having her throat cut," *Beloved* symbolizes Sethe's dead daughter whose throat has been cut off by her, because she does not want her daughter to live the same sort of life she herself lived. The baby girl is angry with her mother. House 124 is cursed by "baby's fury at having her throat cut." Baby Suggs knows that every house in the locality is haunted by "some dead negro's grief" (Morrison 1998, p.5). Baby Suggs is happy that the ghost is just a baby not a grown-up woman.

*Beloved* always reminds her of the eighteen years she had spent in 'Sweet Home'. The terrible memories of those days are not gone. 'Sweet Home' which was neither sweet nor home, was surrounded by beautiful green trees. But the thought of every leaf always shakes her, "it rolled itself out before her in a shameless beauty." The strange blend of beauty and pain always makes her tremble. 'Sweet Home' is full of beautiful green trees but the memory of the black boys hanging from "the most beautiful sycamore in the world" paralyzes her with shame and fear. It reminds her of her own powerlessness (Morrison 1998, p.6).

Sethe had made several attempts to run away from the sweet home but failed. She was just thirteen years old when she first came to that place. All those who lived there, could not prevent themselves from thinking about it. Sweet home was a place which reminded everyone of their buried past. Sweet Homes had carried within itself the memories of all the atrocious crimes committed against humanity.

The very sight of Beloved reminds her of those ugly days spent in Sweet Home; how the school teacher and her nephew had beaten her when she was pregnant and forcefully took her milk. They opened up her back, and with the whip made a tree over there. Sethe says, "it grows over there still". Sethe's remarks show the pain experienced by slave women. Even time could not heal all the wounds and with the passage of time, they cause more pain. When Paul D tries to love Sethe, he rubs his cheeks against the roots of the tree and feels "its wide trunk and intricate branches." Sethe's mind is filled with shameful memories. She could not keep even a single part of her body safe from the scars of slavery. There is not even a little safe space in her mind where she can hide herself from these nightmarish memories. She thinks and desires, "a little ... a little time...some way to hold off uneventful." It is very difficult for her to collect the pieces of her broken selves and combine them together. Sethe lacks a unified self. Her identity is completely fractured and broken under the institution of slavery. In Sethe's case, even healing becomes a painful process because healing means to confront the past, to visit the site of violence which in itself is a painful experience. Sethe is not living alone but with the ghosts of past. Similarly, Beloved is angry and violent, she used to shake the whole house with her terrible rage. She makes everything shake in the house. The house seems to be full of terrible voices. Even Paul D could not force Beloved to leave the house. He orders, "Leave the place alone, and get the hell out." But he is unable to force her. (Morrison 1998, p.17-18). In an interview Morrison acknowledges how the memories of the atrocities of the middle passage can destroy the people and paralyze their ability to lead a healthy life. The suppressed grief of the past can damage both the present and the future and her purpose behind writing this book is to make it possible for the wounded souls to confront and face the past ( qtd . in willaim2001, p.152). Thus through Beloved's character, Morrison articulates the pain of all those who are lost in the history without names and recognition. House No. 124 becomes a haunted house, Sethe sees Beloved in different shapes and forms. Sometimes she transforms herself into a little girl and sometimes into a grown up woman. Sethe's daughter, Denver observes how a white dress is kneels down next to Sethe and has "its sleeve around her mother's waist" (Morrison 1998, p. 29). This scene reminds her story of her birth, the story she has heard many times, how a white girl called Denver helps Sethe to deliver her baby (Sethe) and massages her defeated feet near the Ohio River and her soothing words, "any thing dead coming back to life hurts" ( Morrison 1998, p.29). Thus, recalling the past is a painful experience for the all traumatic souls.

In *Beloved* Morrison uses the word "rememory", William (2001) argues that rememory can be defined as "a process by which memory becomes a repetitive act". She states that how

past enters the present in the form of different fragments and becomes the part of the character's consciousness. It stays in their minds in the form of different images. Sometimes merely the sight of a landscape or a touch can bring the character back into the life (p.153). Such as merely the sight of Beloved brings the memories back. Sethe recalls that certain things are easy to forget, they become the part of the past, while some memories just stay there. It becomes almost impossible to eliminate them. As Sethe recalls how difficult it is to forget certain images, even if you will destroy the entire building, "The picture of it ..... stays, not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world"(Morrison 1998, p.36).It is just impossible to control human mind. The psychoanalysts believe that the past cannot be suppressed fully. Every suppressed thought will come back. In this way the buried memories surface again and plague the traumatic victims. After listening the story of her birth, Denver asks a very important question, "If it's still there, waiting, that must mean that nothing ever dies" and Sethe replies "Nothing ever dies"( Morrison 1998, pp.36-37).In a conversation with Naylor, Morrison says that no gap exists between the world of living and the dead. In the same way, it is difficult to distinguish the past from the present. (qtd. in William 2001, p.152).Beloved is described as a "fully dressed woman (who) walked out of the water". She has a very fair and healthy skin "lineless and smooth". She casts a spell on anyone who sees her, after seeing her, Sethe feels that her "bladder is filled to capacity" ( Morrison 1998, p.50-51). The first thing Beloved does, she asks for water. She drinks four cups of water as if she has crossed the desert. She has got flawless skin . She tells Sethe that she does not come from near. She tells her name in a very rough voice. Her name pleases Sethe because it reminds her of her dead daughter. After touching her, she realizes that she is suffering from high fever. Beloved begins to live in the house. She is nineteen or twenty year's old girl, who does not know anything about her home. She cannot even tell the place where she wants to go. All of them think that she has lost her memory. But Denver begins to love her as a sister while Sethe takes her as a daughter. In this way Beloved has become the part of House 124. Susan Bowers writes in 'Beloved and the New Apocalypse' that what helps Paul D and Sethe, is Beloved's return from the dead. She teaches Paul D how to love and open her tin heart. She teaches Sethe to live and bring back her ability to feel. She begins to see colour in everything. Beloved does not appear in the form of a ghost but as a living being. She emerges as a fully dressed up woman out of water. Beloved represents "the collective unconscious of the African-American"( Bloom 2007, p.33). Thus, after meeting Beloved everyone from the House 124 discovers their inner selves. She revives motherly feeling in Sethe's, makes Paul D feel and helps Denver to get rid of her loneliness.

Paul D begins to doubt Beloved but Denver protects her. When he tells Sethe that there is something extremely funny about the girl because she acts and sounds like a sick person but seems perfectly all right. He says that he has seen her picking up "the rocker with one hand" and even when Denver was present. But Denver refuses to admit it.Beloved feels strong love for Sethe, she adores her, "she was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes". She always remains with Sethe and enjoys her company. Morrison writes that "she was flattered by Beloved's open,

quiet devotion.” She never spoils Denver to that extent but the company of this sweet and lovely child pleases her. Sethe feels “bottomless longing” in her heart and she creates in her the desire to live (Morrison 1998, p.57). Davies analyzes Beloved’s character and compares her with the “legendary Abiku children of Yoruba society” who are reborn after the death and plague their mothers ( qtd in William 2001, p.152). Beloved is a vicious soul who is full of rage, an angry baby ghost who spreads terror and restlessness. One of the major themes of Beloved is the significance of the story telling. In the act of story telling, African-American mothers empower their children by teaching them traditional oral wisdom which cannot be found in the written books. The act of story telling also helps to heal black children’s emotional and psychological scars. Beloved also feels strange sort of pleasure in Sethe’s stories, “Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from story telling.” Sometimes it surprises Sethe because all of her stories are full of violence and pain. Recalling all the traumatic memories of the past is in itself a painful process. But Beloved used to listen them carefully and with great interest. Beloved’s “thirst for hearing” forces Sethe to tell her each and every story in detail (Morrison 1998, p.38). Miller discusses in detail how the patients of trauma heal through sharing their stories. Sharing can help the traumatic individuals to connect and heal their emotional wounds. She says that “secret sharing can create a narrative experience”. Thus breaking silence and sharing one’s painful story can help the individual to heal (Miller 1994, pp.222-223). Sethe shares her experience with Beloved and through sharing she recalls how “she had forgotten she knew...Something privately shameful that has seeped into a slit in her mind.” She recalls how her mother was hanged when she was very young. When Beloved asks the cause of her death Sethe can not answer. Because it is through her mother’s friend Nan, Sethe comes to know about her past. Sethe cannot even recall the language her mother used to speak. But she can recall the message. Sethe’s mother was raped several times by the sailors and she threw all the children which were the result of it except Sethe. She is the daughter of the black man, her only child whom she gives a name; otherwise she has thrown all the children without names. Denver also observes how greedily Beloved “hears Sethe’s talk” ( Morrison 1998, pp.62-63). Beloved has great love for all types of stories; she pleads Denver to tell her the story of her birth; how a nineteen years old slave girl has given birth to her. Beloved makes Denver realize the pain her mother experiences when she gives her birth. Beloved is a good listener, she also loves Denver’s stories “the more detail she provided the more Beloved liked it.” Denver loves to give “heart beat” and blood to the “scraps her mother and grandmother had told her”. The white girl helps her to deliver the baby and consoles her mother by these words, “more it hurts more better it is. Cannot heal anything without pain, you know” (Morrison 1998, p. 78). Beloved has been defined as a ghost or the spirit who has come from another world. She exists in a “watery realm”, she neither belongs to the world of living nor to the dead; she not only narrates her own experience but of all those who died in the watery realm (William 2001, p.155). Sale argues that Morrison has created a unique story and also highlights the art of story telling. Morrison emphasizes upon the importance of remembering and how it is necessary to forget (Bloom 2007, p.15).



Mobley argues that Morrison has used memory as “the metaphorical sign of the interior life” to reconstruct and re-explore different sides of the slave lives which are ignored in the other slave narratives. She deconstructs the notions of an ordinary reader about slavery, who do not take slavery as a memory, but “a remote historical fact which must be ignored.” That’s why Morrison’s words carry symbolic meanings because she calls *Beloved* a story which must not be passed on by any one. It should be suppressed. Former slave narratives confirm the notion of linear time while Morrison plays with time in her own unique way. “*Beloved* meanders through time, sometimes circling back, other times moving vertically, spirally out of time and down into is the space.” Morrison discusses the tangible and substantial experience of slavery especially the psychic scars imprinted on the mind of slave women because they are “both means and source of production”. Mobley emphasizes the objectification of black women under the institution of slavery. They were considered property that produce itself without cost ( Bloom 2007, pp.19-20).

In *Beloved*, Morrison writes about the experiences of many black girls who had become the target of white man’s lust. Ella is a small girl, who is locked in a room for a year. Two white father and son used to rape her. Ella could not get rid of those painful memories. She tells Sethe that the things she has suffered, is not only inexpressible but unimaginable. She calls the father and son as the lowest creature on the earth. She resists oppression in her own way. She even refuses to nurse the baby which is the result of those heinous acts. Those incidents have destroyed her ability to love. She loses faith in everything. All the horrible experiences of her life make her think “love (as) a serious disability”. The white father and son “gave her disgust for sex.” She believes that her story is the worst of all the stories of violence and abuse. She says that “nothing is compared to the lowest yet”. She calls her baby a “white hairy thing” whom she could not love. Ella is an abuse survivor who faces everything with courage. She is different from Sethe because she believes that past errors should remain the part of the past. It should not allow to “possession of the present”. She criticizes Sethe for allowing her past to take possession of the present. She should prevent *Beloved* from invading her present (Morrison 1998, p.256). Ella gives the other women the courage to live and to fight against the worst form of abuse. Through Ella’s story Morrison gives us a glimpse into the lives of thousands of slave girls whose stories are buried in history. *Beloved*’s story is not different from the stories of millions of abused girls. Sethe also considers *Beloved* as an abused girl who “had been locked up by some white man for his own purpose, and never let (her) out the door” ( Morrison 1998, p.119) She also shares her story with Sethe, how she used to cry and there was no one to support her and how “that dead men lay on top of her ... Ghost without skin stuck their fingers in her and said *beloved* in the dark and *bitch* in the light” ( Morrison 1998, p.241).

Barnet that *Beloved*’s stories remind us of the stories of those countless women who suffered the violence in the middle passage, where black woman’s institutionalized rape began. But *Beloved* not merely presents the collective memories of those women but also Paul D’s

individual memory (Bloom 2007, p.196). The institution of slavery deprives black women of their self respect. It also emasculates black men. Paul D has locked all of his memories in his heart. It is Beloved who breaks the seal of his “tobacco tin heart”. It is Beloved who makes Paul D confront his past. He remained as a prisoner in Georgia or Alfred as prisoner; he was sexually abused by the prison guards who tortured him all the time. As Pamela E. Barnett mentions in ‘Figuration of Rape and the Supernatural in Beloved’ that “prisoners were forced to fellate the prison guards” (Bloom 2007,p.200). After becoming part of Georgia chain gang, he lost his sense of worth. The torture he suffered somehow made him question his own manhood. The memory of performing fellatio on the guards really disgusted him. Carol argues how this ill-treatment deprived black men of their manhood. The white guards had emasculated them by challenging their identity( Henderson 2002, p.104). Barnett expresses the same idea that black masculinity is associated with certain images. It suggests impotence and emasculation. (qtd. in Bloom 2007, p.200) Those painful memories make him vomit and he has buried them within his heart. Because unveiling those secrets is shameful. In House 124, he confronts himself. Through a positive relationship with Sethe, he rediscovers himself. He begins to love himself and learns to claim his body. Beloved is a traumatized and abused child. Like an abused individuals could not get rid of the traumatic memories of the past. He is plagued and haunted by them in one way or the other. Berger analyzes that suppressed memories always haunt the sufferers. It is just remembering their trauma that the rape victims could get rid of its effects( Bloom 2007p.189).Beloved does not belong to this world.She has the power to control him. Beloved opens his heart. In order to heal him, she makes him re-experience that violence again. She forces him to touch her inside which he could not resist. Thus sex with Beloved helps him to re-discover himself again,“When he reached the (her) inside parts” he shouts, “red-red heart”( Morrison 1998,p.17).Thus Beloved forces him to confront his traumatic memories buried deep in his heart. Beloved is a traumatized child who does not have the unified sense of self. Miller says, those people who have traumatic childhood usually possess fragmentary and fractured sense of self. The women, who are abuse-survivors usually, possess fragmentary and fractured sense of self. She says that abuse survivors have “less likely to have a strong, cohesive sense of self than men.” ( Miller 1994,p.105). Beloved possesses a divided self, her language is fragmentary, and the pauses within her speech depict her lack of coherence. Like a traumatized child she can not articulate her experiences. Miller says, “Trauma causes an enormous rapture in the basic sense of certainty about what one knows. It shatters language and our way of conceptualizing about it.” It completely destroys one’s ability to articulate. Miller argues that “trauma strikes at the heart and soul” of its victim and “demands another kind of language” (Miller 1994, p.85). It benumbs one’s feeling that’s why the trauma survivors live in a colorless world. But when they came out of trauma, they begin to see colours .

Beloved stands for all the traumatized people who speak the language of pain and trauma. Henderson (2002) discusses that the language which Beloved speaks can be called the language of scars. Beloved is unable to express herself fully. This shows an inadequacy of the traumatic

language to express the trauma fully (p.98). William compares Beloved to a painting. The novel is more like a painting composed of “similar pictures tied to stories told by various people that come together as a unified whole”

(William2001, p.153).Morrison also depicts the condition of former slaves who are experiencing the post-traumatic stress and striving for an identity in the post-slavery era. She says in her noble lecture that language is unable to express the pain of those who lived under the institution of slavery. It can only guide us to the place where meaning lie (William2001,p.155). In the same way William says “static language is incapable of capturing the unvoiced and unrecorded grief of the dead. William(2001) also argues that Beloved monologue is written in poetic language ( pp.155-157).Beloved’s speech is inarticulate. The difference between the past and the present and the world of living and dead is blurred within it. It’s the story of a daughter who has been slaughtered by her mother.

Thus by creating these characters Morrison re-articulates the lost stories of pain and despair. Sethe challenges the image of a breeder by killing her baby girl, asserts her identity as a mother. Her social status does not allow her to assert her identity as a mother but she rebels against the societal norms. During slavery the breeder image was used to manipulate black woman’s body and her sexuality, this image provided justification for interference in enslaved Africans reproductive lives. Slave owners wanted slave black women’s to breed because every slave child born represented a valuable unit of property. Through Sethe’s character Morrison challenges the validity of this image. Beloved tells the lost stories of torture and pain. Beloved tells us the stories of all those women who are lost in history.

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