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# **Dehumanization in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

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### *Dedication*

*Before all, Thanks \*Allah\* for guiding and giving me strength to finish this modest work  
which I dedicate*

*To the candles of my life, who devote their life to makes us happy, my Father Bachir & my  
Mother Nacera*

*To my lovely brothers, Chaas and Akram*

*To the one who offered me trust and support, Diko*

*To all people who trusted me and encouraged me,*

*And*

*To myself.*

*Nedjla.*

*First thanks to Allah for providing me strength and guiding me to accomplish this  
dissertation.*

*I gratefully dedicate this work to my precious parents who are the reason of what I become  
today. I thank them for the endless love and prayers.*

*I also dedicate this work to my beloved brothers, sisters and their cute children who have  
offered me support and motivation.*

*A special dedication to my friends.*

***Chaima.***

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines dehumanization in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. *Beloved* is a kind of slave narrative in fiction in which Morrison portrays the horrible history of black slaves. *Beloved* is based on a real life story of Margret Garner. It is set after the American Civil War and during the Reconstruction Era. In this novel, Morrison as a modern writer successfully depicts the traumatic treatments experienced by African Americans. Throughout this novel, Toni Morrison tries to bring back and to remind readers about the forgotten past by using flashbacks and memory. The dissertation aims at exploring the dehumanizing ways of slavery used by the harsh Whites. It also explores the Critical Race Theory as a reference to prove the characters' sufferings from torture and horrors of enslavement. The analysis shows that Morrison focuses on the different effects of dehumanization upon the black characters. Thus, in *Beloved* Morrison shows that slavery has affected them psychologically, spiritually and physically.

**Key words:** Dehumanization, African Americans, Slavery, Slave Narrative, Morrison.

## الملخص

يعالج البحث مظاهر العبودية واللاإنسانية في رواية "بلوفد" للكاتبة الأفروأمريكية توني موريسن؛ تدور أحداث الرواية حول قصة حقيقية لمارغريت غارنر خلال فترة ما بعد الحرب الأهلية الأمريكية. حيث أنّ موريسون نجحت في تجسيد الحياة المأساوية التي كان يعيشها السود خلال فترة الرق والعنصرية. إضافة إلى ذلك فقد حاولت الكاتبة إعادة إحياء التاريخ المنسي للسود.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على أهم صور العبودية التي طالت العبيد من الأمريكيين السود وكذا إظهار أهم النتائج لهذه الظاهرة التي جسدها موريسون في روايتها من خلال الشخصيات.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** موريسون، العبودية، اللاإنسانية، الأفروأمريكيين، أدب العبيد.

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# **General Introduction**

The subject of this dissertation is dehumanization in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Morrison is a significant African American author who devoted her entire life writing about the black people issues. African American authors have excelled in highlighting the issues of black Americans such as slavery, racism and the effects of these painful histories. Also, they have been awarded with many national and international prizes like the Nobel Prize.

Morrison is one of the leading literary figures of modern times. She is the first black woman novelist to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. In her novels, she focused mainly on the black experience and she tried to depict the injustice society towards the black Americans. "*Beloved*" is considered her masterpiece that based on bloody truth; it is inspired by a real life story of Margaret Garner who escaped from slavery. It examines the destructive legacy of slavery. The events of this novel mostly took place within the American civil war and the Reconstruction Era. "*Beloved*" was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988. This study will explore the dehumanization in *Beloved* written by Toni Morrison. *Beloved* is the most popular work that Morrison has produced along her career as a writer. In this novel, Morrison sheds light on the dehumanization of slaves and the social problems during the twentieth century. The appropriate theory used to interpret this work is the theory of Critical Race theory as a reference to analyze the effects of dehumanization and, how Toni Morrison shows that dehumanization took several ways in order to enslave and dehumanize people.

### Motivation

The intent behind choosing to write a dissertation about African American studies is our admiration of the uniqueness of Toni Morrison's style; meanwhile she

uses poetic language in her writing that makes her works distinct. In addition, she succeeds in depicting the real life of African Americans during slavery and she brings back all the missed out memories. In addition, it is related to our interest in African American history, we deliberately choose to investigate this novel in order to show the greatness on how Morrison truly portrayed Slavery time.

### **Aim of the Study**

The ultimate aim of this study is to spotlight on the ways in which slaves were dehumanized and its effects on the characters. In addition, by the end of the study, we will reach that Morrison has successfully drawn a picture that describes the harsh experiences of the blacks in the United States encountered throughout her characters.

### **Statement of the Problem**

During slavery time, the white community operates different procedures of oppression towards African Americans. This study will center on the most apparent way, which is dehumanization was exercised upon the black characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* using the Critical Race Theory standpoint to go into analysis. Then, what is the impact of dehumanization? In what extent was it harmful?

### **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this research are:

1. Exploring the uniqueness of Toni Morrison's portrayals for Black Americans throughout her characters during slavery.
2. Highlighting the main tools of dehumanization extracted from the novel.

3. Indicating the extreme damage, which occurred due to racism and dehumanization.
4. Ensuring evidence for the concepts of Critical Race theory in *Beloved*.
5. Providing new reading for Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

### Research questions

1. What are the types of dehumanization?
2. How are African American characters dehumanized in *Beloved*? Are they enslaved psychologically and physically?
3. Are there in the novel Critical Race theory agendas?
4. What are the significant effects of dehumanization?

### Hypotheses

By the end of this analysis, we are expect to reach this result:

In *Beloved*, Morrison notes two ways of dehumanization, which are psychologically and physically. The dehumanization affects negatively the characters and it creates many troubles.

### Research Methodolgy

In examining Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the appropriate theory that can be used is the Race Critical Theory. This theory based mainly on how the colored people especially blacks are oppressed by the white power. In this research, we will adopt descriptive and analytical methods of research to deal with the analysis of the

dominance of whites throughout their oppression towards the blacks in the novel. The aim of using descriptive research is to conduct and to analyze the phenomenon of dehumanization in the novel and it is used in order to reach certain consequences of this problem by collecting evidence from the work.

### Structure of the research

This research paper is mainly divided into three chapters. The opening chapter detects historical events that surrounded the novel such as the American Civil War and the Reconstruction era as far as the novel took place during that period. In addition, it will contain a review for Toni Morrison's life, works, her style and the themes usually covered her writings as well.

The second chapter includes a review of African American literature. It discusses the key elements such as the characteristics and the most notable authors. Besides, in this chapter we intend to examine Critical Race Theory in order to cover all its aspects that help in doing the analysis.

The third chapter is the practical part of the research. In this part, we engage in textual analysis of Morrison's *Beloved*. It consists of two major sections; the first one is about the ways in which the characters were dehumanized, while the second section deals with the main effects of dehumanization that Morrison emphasizes on them.

**CHAPTER ONE:**

**Historical and Theoretical**

**Backgrounds**

## Introduction

The history of America has been shaped by racism. There have been racial boundaries, which created racial inequality. In the U.S., a person is considered “Black” if they have any African ancestry. However, the blacks have been considered inferior and oppressed by the whites. This discrimination and oppression led to many movements and strategies by the African American elite against the hegemony of the whites aiming to bring back their freedom.

In this chapter, we will explore the background of the novel. It will provide the historical context that covers the events and the surroundings of the novel among these historical movements “the American Civil War”. Additionally, the chapter will present the biography of Toni Morrison, her life and works. At the end, it sheds light on the themes and style that Morrison adopted through her African American Literary career.

### 1.1. Historical context of the novel

#### 1.1.1. FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW(1793-1850)

Generally, the Fugitive Slave Clause inspired the idea of Fugitive Slave Law, which is in the United States Constitution (U.S. Const. art. IV, sec. 2, cl. 3). The U.S. Congress passed these laws in 1793-1850 and allowed the return of slaves who escaped from one state into another state. The idea of sending back fugitive slaves created in the Constitutional Convention in 1787.

In 1842, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Prigg v. Pennsylvania* originated the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 constitutional. In addition, The Supreme Court asserted that slave owner shad “the complete right and title of ownership in their slaves, as



property, in every state in the union into which they might escape...” after that the representatives of the south and the north in Congress, dealt with a compromise that was signed by President Millard Fillmore on September 18, 1850. The North got the admission of California to the Union as a Free State and abolition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia. The South, under the concept of “popular sovereignty,” got a provision that allowed the voters in the new Utah and New Mexico territories to decide if they would be free or slave. The South also got a new Fugitive Slave Law (Ibid).

There was an obvious difference between the old law and the new one, which was enacted in 1793. This latter gave more active role to the returning escaped to their owners.

*Beloved* is a response to the Fugitive Slave Law that victimized Sethe and her family in 1855. Meanwhile Sethe's recapture follows the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which stated that escaped slaves are properties, as Bloom said in his book *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*:

Although Morrison gives only passing attention to the historical details surrounding the case, she clearly grasps the larger political and legal implications involved—namely, the conflict between the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 and the abolitionist effort to have Margaret tried for murder. Since we know that Sethe does jail time for the murder, we can assume that the abolitionists won out over the supporters of the Fugitive Slave Law in Morrison's version. (155)

In the same vein, there were many writers who inspired by the Fugitive Slave Law and in 1852 she wrote her classic anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

**1.1.2. AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)**

Abraham Lincoln election led to secession of several Southern slave States. After the entering of the Union soldiers to the South, there are many of slaves escaped from their masters to Union camp. At that time there was a conflict between the Union officers about how they will manage the huge number of runaway blacks. Actually, Lincoln supported the blacks' emigration as a solution of the nation's racial problem. However, he regarded blacks as inferior that they could not live in peace with whites (McPherson).

Combat began on 12 April 1861 at Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina, and intensified as four more states joined the South. On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that made the abolition of slavery, in other words he decided to free the blacks. After this proclamation, black soldiers were officially allowed to serve in the war (Ibid).

The Civil War or War Between the States is the central event in American's historical consciousness. It lasted for four years (1861 to 1865). Obviously, the issue of slavery in the US was the primary reason behind this war. This Civil War began due to inability to coexist between the free and slave states thus, the power of the national government to prohibit slavery in the territories that had not yet become states (ibid).

Furthermore, there are many reasons that led to the American Civil War, which was the most traumatic experiences on the early history. Slavery is always cited as the most important reason of the war. In addition, the cultural and political differences to start the war. The most significant cause that triggered the war was the dispute over

slavery and its extension into the territories. This issue came mainly from the conflict between the Northern States and South slave States (Ibid).

By May 1865, Union forces had won most battles with the Confederates and the majority of Confederate troops had surrendered. However, the war officially ended in June 1865 in Texas. The triumph of the Northern ended the institution of slavery and made the United States as one Nation. Nevertheless, these achievements came at the cost of 625,000 lives (Ibid). In the same vein, *Beloved* set during the period after the end of Civil War and the Reconstruction era in 1873. Morrison tries to bring back the past that was a burden for the slaves.

### **1.1.3. THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA(1865-1877)**

The debate over the Reconstruction began during the Civil War when the Republican president Abraham Lincoln started to plan for it. Reconstruction Era was the period of rebuilding, followed the Civil War (1865-1877). The Reconstruction was purposefully done to reunify the divided nation and integrate the African American in the society. However, this period witnessed violence and denials from some people and groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (Lewis).

In January 1865, there was a suggestion in form of Amendment to the Constitution by Congress, which aimed to abolish slavery. Lately, on December 18, 1865 the Thirteen Amendment officially was approved by Congress. After the end of the Civil War on April 9, 1865 and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln less than one week later, the Vice President took his place and continued Lincoln's policies. In May 1865, Johnson announced his own plans and intentions for Reconstruction (Ibid).

The main achievement of the Reconstruction Era, African Americans got their freedom and they were able to join education and to own lands as well as the other people. In addition, Slave Narrative was used as a tool by African American authors in order to enter prose and dramatic literature, nevertheless by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; Reconstruction has ended up (Ibid).

Toni Morrison in *Beloved* turns away from the contemporary scene. Therefore, her novel *Beloved* sets during the Reconstruction era in 1873, the period that was known by the indiscriminate violence against black people, who had been given or bought their freedom (Demme).

In *Beloved*, Morrison focused on the strength of memory and history, while the characters resist in order to forget it. (Stefanescu 2006)

As Bloom mentions in his book *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations*:

While Morrison's decision not to return Sethe to slavery may indicate a concern with post slavery race relations—indeed, much of the novel is set in Reconstruction-era Ohio—Morrison is able to situate the narrative present in a post slavery world only by imagining an alternative past. Sethe's freedom is therefore conditioned by an imagined abolitionist "success story" that firmly weds the present (post slavery world) to the very past that it would appear to have superseded. (156)

In addition, in her novel Morrison tries to emphasize that reconstruction was not only at the political level rather, there were different reconstructions such as the reconstruction of lives of blacks. (Blyn 113)

## 1.2. Personal background

### 1.2.1. Toni Morrison life and works

The Nobel Prize-winning Toni Morrison was born with another name. Toni Morrison originally named Chloe Ardelia Wofford. She was born on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio in the United States; Chloe Wofford is the second of four children of Ramah and George Wofford who belonged to a working-class family (Gillespie 3).

Her father was from Georgia and her mother was from Alabama. George Wofford is Toni Morrison's father; he was hard worker who spent his entire life working in order to support and to ensure the financial security of his family. Morrison describes her father as having a deep and unwavering suspicion of white people as result of witnessing many injustices. Furthermore, Morrison's mother Ramah Willis Wofford was a gifted singer and was active in the church. "Morrison spent great deal of time with her extended family, particularly with her maternal grandparents" (3). The family of Morrison had strongly influence on her career as a writer as Carmen Gillespie states in her book *Critical Companion to Toni Morrison a Literary Reference to Her Life and Work*: "Toni Morrison's family had a profound influence on her development as a writer". Her parents, George and Ramah, were protective. They transmitted to their children African American culture through folklore and myths (Ibid).

In early ages, Morrison began to work in different jobs seeking to help her family and to improve their needs. Nevertheless, Morrison continued to be successful in her school career. She read frequently to Jane Austen and Tolstoy. In 1949 and after her graduation with honor degree from Lorain high school, Morrison attended

different universities as Howard University in Washington, D.C as the first member of her family who entered college. Morrison was an excellent student in her major (Ibid).

While she was teaching at Howard University, Morrison met her future husband the Jamaican architect Harold Morrison who later she takes his name Morrison and began to use it as a nickname. She preferred to change her first name to Anthony (Toni) due to the difficulty in pronouncing her name and she became a catholic at age of 12. In addition, Morrison was a member of Howard Repertory Theatre. After her graduation from Howard University in 1953, Morrison held on graduate studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. In 1955, she finished master's thesis on the works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner and received a Master of Arts (ibid).

In 1967, Morrison promoted to be the first African American woman to hold the position of senior editor at Random House, where she was responsible on the writing careers of a generation of young African American writers, including Toni Cade Bambara, Henry Dumas, Michelle Cliff, and Angela Davis (Ibid).

The emergence of the civil rights movement in the 1960s was a kind of motivation that led Morrison writes and expresses her thoughts and feeling of experiencing racism through her words. She wrote for her community as any black citizens who suffered from segregation and discrimination.

In 1970, Toni Morrison published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, which regarded as the entry of life of a skillful future well-known novelist. Morrison got many conflicted critics but failed to attract the readers nevertheless she got inspired to write more. This marked her first beginning as an author.

In 1971, Morrison began her teaching career while she is an editor in Random House. She was an associate professor of English who taught literature and creative writing at the State University of New York at Purchase. Morrison continued her successful emergence as a writer with the publication of her second novel, *Sula*, in 1973. This novel portrays the way Afro-American women battle against their own communities as well as white communities (Ibid).

In 1976, Morrison offered a visiting at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, meanwhile she was producing her third novel *Song of Solomon*, which was published in 1977. This novel, is an empowering piece of writing which based on African American folktale because Morrison was inspired by her maternal grandfather John Solomon Willis's stories. Toni Morrison earned two awards over publishing her latest novel; the National Book Critics Circle Award and the American Academy and Institute of Arts & Letters Award. In this novel, Morrison differently used a male character as a primary protagonist. (Ibid)

In 1980, the president Jimmy Carter hired Toni Morrison as the National council on the Arts. Moreover, Toni Morrison continued lightening up and in 1981, she published her fourth novel, *Tar Baby*. In *Tar Baby* Morrison explores the quest of self-identity of the protagonist Jadine Childs. In *Tar Baby*, Morrison changes location from the geographical boundaries of the United State to the larger context of the Caribbean and Europe.

In 1983 and after almost twenty years Morrison decided to leave Random House where she worked as a senior editor in order to spend her time in writing and teaching. In the same year 1983, she published her only short story *Recitatif*(Ibid).

Morrison was named the Albert Schweitzer Professor of the Humanities at the State University of New York in Albany in 1984. She started writing her first play, “*Dreaming Emmett*.” Which first performance opened on January 4, 1986 at the Marketplace Theater in Albany (ibid).

After all this incredible time, Morrison turned into history and she began to work on her fifth novel named *Beloved* the most celebrated one, that was published in 1987. *Beloved* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988, and known as one of Toni Morrison’s famous and critically acclaimed works (ibid).

*Beloved* was inspired by the real life story of Margaret Garner who escaped from slavery in Kentucky in 1851 with her children to the other side of the Ohio River. The novel is the story of the two former, Sethe Garner and Paul Garner, whose traumatic experiences as slaves in Sweet Home in Kentucky farm cause them sharing memories. In part, the novel provides the story of Sethe's struggle to escape the slave farm at Sweet Home and live in freedom with her children, ended tragically with discovering her former master the death of her youngest daughter. Similarly, Paul D’s story that begins at Sweet Home following his escape, capture, and imprisonment in Georgia. All the characters Paul D, Sethe, Denver, and the ghost *Beloved* each of them try to come to terms with their pasts. The novel highlights the brutality and cruelty of slavery institutions. It also presents the past sway the slaves even after their freedom. (Ibid)

In *Beloved*, Morrison continued investigating the same themes as the other novels like dehumanization, cultural identity and segregation as well. The famous Canadian author Margaret Atwood praised Morrison’s *Beloved* in a review for the *New York Times*:



Indeed, Ms. Morrison's versatility and technical and emotion range appear to know no bounds. If there were any doubts about her stature as a preeminent American novelist, of her own or any other generation, 'Beloved' will put them to rest. In three words or less, it is a hair-raiser.

Morrison wrote also other novels like *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998); *Love* (2002), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2011), and *God Help the Child* (2014) (Ibid).

In addition to her success, Toni Morrison is the first black woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993 and she is the first who critics the history and the painful past of African Americans and makes it vivid and known all over the world as Margalit Fox said in her article in *the New York Times*:

Ms. Morrison was one of the rare American authors whose books were both critical and commercial success. Her novels appeared regularly on the New York Times best-seller list, were featured multiple times on Oprah Winfrey's television book club and were the subject of myriad critical studies. A longtime faculty member at Princeton, Ms. Morrison lectured widely and was seen often on television.

The icon of African American literature Toni Morrison has died at the age of 88 on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019 after a brief illness. Her publisher Alfred A. Knopf announced her death on 6<sup>th</sup> August. She died at Montefiore Medical Center (ibid).

Knopf in the announcement of her death used a quote from Morrison that said, "We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may the measure of our lives. "

## 1.2.2. Toni Morrison's themes and style

### 1.2.2.1. Themes

In literature any author writes about certain themes to convey messages through them, these themes are resulted from his/her experience and environment. Toni Morrison includes several themes in her works to make the meaning deeper and the plot dynamic as well. The main themes that mostly revealed in all her novels are racial discrimination, gender and the quest for identity (Theme, 2009).

Obviously, the first and the most obvious theme that Morrison focuses on is racial discrimination between whites and African Americans. This idea of racism reveals in the portrayals of characters while they suffered from slavery. For instance, Morrison criticizes the blacks' position in *Song of Solomon* through Macon Dead: "He knew as a Negro he wasn't going to get a big slice of pie" (*Song of Solomon* 63). Additionally, Morrison comments on this discrimination by showing that blacks were always feeling inferiority towards whites, thus, these feelings came from old stereotypes (ibid).

Another common theme that Morrison clearly depicts in her works is gender or in another word the difference between men and women slaves. She presents her female characters as the ones who were marginalized and oppressed by men. As in *Beloved* Sethe's experience is regarded as a good example for gender discrimination like Andrew Nyongesa said in his article *Gender Differences in Slave Characters: a Feminist Critique of Toni Morrison's Beloved and Narrative of the Life of Frederic Douglass, an American Slave*: "Sethe's earlier experiences on Mr. Garner's farm depict gender differences between male and female slaves. The slave master sees Sethe as a breeder at Sweet Home."

Also in *Beloved*, Morrison said, “Schoolteacher says he is glad she has ten breeding years.” (184).

In addition, Morrison presents the theme of identity in all her writings. She portrayed this theme through her characters while they were trying to discover their identity. In *The Bluest Eye*, the protagonist Breedlove did not accept the fact that she has brown eyes. She strongly wants to be a girl with blue eyes like other whites (Cashman, 2009).

#### **1.2.2.2. Style**

The style of writing is a key element that defines the authors’ works. Toni Morrison’s writing style is distinct therefore, she uses a unique language that makes the meaning distinguishable. Morrison utilizes several techniques and structures to strengthen her writing. The most significant techniques that Morrison used in her novels are the use of descriptive analogies, important historical events, and magical realism (Style, 2009).

Morrison is mostly known for the unique use of comparison that makes the style more effective and it strengthens the description of the details that she provides. In particular, Morrison contributes her writings with the over use of similes as it clearly revealed in *Song of Solomon* when she describes the church: “Words tossed like stones into silent canyon” (*Song of Solomon* 319). Another example of this distinct utilization of similes is “Daylight slants like a razor cutting the buildings in half” (*Jazz* 7). Also in *The Bluest Eye* when Morrison describes Pecola Breedlove “the unquarreled evening hug like the first note of dirge in sullenly expectant air” (*The Bluest Eye* 41). This animation of events by using comparison makes the readers get involved in the story. (ibid).

In addition, Morrison's style combines the unrealistic elements with realistic presentations this is called magical realism. She uses this magic and supernatural in her novels because when she was young her family talked about their dreams similarly to the way of things that really happened in their life; yet she frequently uses concrete illustration of historical events. This is a key element that makes Morrison's style distinctive. An instance of this special use "Did Jake have to register at the freedman's Bureau before he left the state?" Everybody did. *Everybody* who had been slaves, that is". (*Song of Solomon* 324). Also in another scene in *The Bluest Eye*: "Outdoors, we knew, was the real terror of life. The threat of being outdoors surfaced frequently in those days" (17).

Additionally, growing up in Ohio Toni Morrison provides her style of writing a distinction as a writer. As she explained, "I am from the Midwest so I have a special affection for it. My beginnings are always there (Ohio)... No matter what I write, I begin there... Ohio also offers as escape from stereotyped black settings. It is neither plantation nor ghetto."

### 1.3. Conclusion

Throughout the first chapter, we had tried to provide a general overview of the study. It contained historical, theoretical context. Morrison includes many real events in her work *Beloved*, the corpus of this research, for instance she entails the Reconstruction Era and the issue of fugitive slaves, which is one of the cornerstones that the novel based on.

Subsequently, realizing these different aspects can help for examining Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and reaching to how does she portrayed dehumanization in the latter.

**CHAPTER TWO:**

**Literary and Theoretical**

**Backgrounds**

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides a review about African American literature. Initially, the chapter presents a brief entry and the most important characteristics of African American literature. In addition, it gives short descriptions about the most known figures of African American writers of the period, like W.E.B.DuBois. Furthermore, the chapter reviews the theoretical background of the novel in which can be studied from different tenets of Critical Race theory.

### **2.1. Literary background**

#### **2.1.1. Entry and the characteristics of African American literature**

African American literature is created to show the contribution of black writers in literature and society. This kind of literature aims to explore the role of black Americans within the society. Moreover, African American literature studies the themes of racism, equality, slavery and the history of African Americans. It depicts the brutal experiences of blacks within the white community. African American literature came as reaction to emphasize the ability of blacks to emerge in writings through fiction by portraying the social and political surroundings after long time of neglecting and they try. (3)

African American literature has emerged in the late of the eighteenth century by the works of some black writers. The most known figures of this tendency are Phillis Wheatley, Jupiter Hammon Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and others.

In this vein, also we include some authors' works such as Harriet Beecher Stow; even though he is not an African American but he attempted to characterize the

African Americans life. Since the early days of slavery and colonization, many slave writers wrote on the slave narratives (Florida Center).

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the African American literature tradition began to deepen, especially when such former slaves like Frederick Douglass and Phillis Wheatley caught the attention of large white audience. While in the nineteenth century, the African American literature in early time reached high points in slave narratives (and it continued until today with many authors like Toni Morrison, Maya Angelo, and Walter Mosly.). The highest awards, such as the Nobel Prize to Toni Morrison, have recognized African American literature writers. (Roshif 2; Trent)

However, the main characteristics of African American literature is spotlighting African Americans experiences in the United States. Starting from this, many literary works are revolving around individuals who struggle in order to realize themselves in a white dominated society. In which, some African American writers made those of "*fringe*" characters the main protagonists in their novels to highlight the marginal place of African Americans in society. Such as Richard Wright's "The Original Son" and Alice Walker's "Purple" (Ibid).

More much, African American oral culture is rich in poetry. It often uses black rhythms and black sermons language, in addition to elements such as repetition and circularity. Otherwise, Blues and jazz music has a clear influence on the African American literature. The nonlinear and the structure of jazz music affected African American authors in structuring their works. For example, Toni Morrison's works are structured in a non-linear way, she create novels that seem "free form" and composed spontaneously (Ibid).

On the other hand, during twentieth century, many African American authors have not only covered civil rights issues, but also they used their creative skills to visualize the theme of dehumanization on African Americans life. As in Toni Morrison's "Beloved" when Sethe thinks to herself, "...After they handled me like I was the cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses" (p. 237).

### **2.1.2. Morrison's contemporaries**

#### **2.1.2.1. James Baldwin (1924-1987)**

James Arthur Baldwin is an American novelist and essayist. He was born on August 02, 1924 in Harlem, New York. Baldwin is the first child of Emma Berdis Jones who worked in factories especially as a cleaner and he lived with his stepfather the Baptist preacher named David Baldwin. He was a student in Frederick Douglass Junior High School. Baldwin began to write in order to escape his terrible conditions. (The New Yorker).

In 1942, Baldwin graduated from high school and started to work in railroad. After two years, he met Richard Wright when he went to Greenwich Village where his first novel born which was *In My Father's House*. Lately, and in 1953 he published a novel, which is an autobiographical of his youth and it's the most significant entitled "*Go Tell It on the Mountain*". (Aalbc)

Similarly, to Toni Morrison and the other pioneers, Baldwin was eloquent and interested about race issues in the U.S. In particular, his works flourished during 1960s and 1970s. Baldwin died of stomach cancer in December 1 1987, St. Paul-de-Vence, France. (ibid)



**2.1.2.2. Ralph Ellison (1914-1994)**

Ralph Waldo Ellison was born on March 1, 1914, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to Lewis Alfred Ellison, who died when Ellison was only three years old. Their mother raised Ellison and his brother. Ellison played his first instrument "a cornet at the age eight. From 1933 to 1936, and by age nineteen, he had attended Tuskegee Institute in Montgomery, Alabama, as music major, playing the trumpet. He worked at a variety of jobs including jazz musician, and freelance photographer. He also became a game hunter to keep himself alive, a skill he learned from reading Hemingway. (Washington)

In the summer of 1936, Ellison went to New York City to earn expenses for his final year at Tuskegee, but he had never returned to his studies at Tuskegee and never became a professional musician. While in New York, he met writers Richard Wright and Langston Hughes, which led him to his first attempts at fiction. Eventually, Ellison began writing essays and short stories for the "New Masses," "The Negro Quarterly," "The New Republic," "Saturday Review" and other publications. (Ibid)

In 1952, Ellison published his first novel "*Invisible Man*", and he described it as a novel about innocence and human error, a struggle through illusion to reality. It was a popular and critical success. In 1953, the novel won the National Book Award .Ellison became known for his novel "*Invisible Man*" which established him as one of the most important American authors of the twentieth century. (Ibid)

In 1960, Ellison published his first Hickman stories, "*And Hickman Arrives*", "*The Roof*", "*the Steeple*", and "*the People*". These stories are about Senator Adam "Bliss" Sun raider, a light-skinned black man, passing for white most of his adult life,

and Reverend "Daddy" Hickman, the Negro preacher who takes him in and raises him as his own son. (Ibid)

Ralph Ellison also published several nonfiction works including *"Shadow and Act"* in 1964, *Going to the Territory* in 1986, and short stories as *"King of the Bingo Game," "That I Had the Wings,"* and *"Flying Home"*, that were published posthumously in 1996 as *Flying Home*. Ellison died of cancer on April 16, 1994, at his home in New York City. (Ibid)

### **2.1.2.3. Maya Angelou (1928-2014)**

Maya Angelou the civil rights activist, poet and award winning author known for her acclaimed 1969 memoir, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was born on April 4, 1928, in St. Louis, Missouri. She received several honors throughout her career, including two NAACP Image in nonfiction category, in 2005 and 2009. In 1973, Angelou started to write for television, she wrote articles, short stories, poetry and autobiographies. With her drama *Georgia, Georgia* in 1972, *Caged Bird*, Angelou broke new ground artistically, educationally and socially. That she becomes the first African American woman to have a screenplay produced as a feature film (Britannica).

The first black woman director in Hollywood, Angelou was both an author and executive producer of a five-part television miniseries *"Three Way Choice."* In 1986, Angelou wrote her autobiographical book, *All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes*, covers the years she spent living in Ghana. Maya acted in such movies, *Poetic Justice* (1993) and *How to Make an American Quilt* (1995). Besides, she appeared in several television productions, including the miniseries *Roots* in 1977 (Ibid).

Maya Angelou in all her work, tries to use such major themes like the hope of freedom, she depicts hopes and compassion in her books. Angelou also focuses on the theme of motherhood and the relationships among African American women. Angelou faced several health issues and eventually she died on May 28, 2014 in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (Biography).

## **2.2. Theoretical framework**

*Beloved* is a novel written by the laureate African American author Toni Morrison who is mostly known with her strong view against racism and highlighting the black history. In this vein, we intend to conduct this work by applying the Critical Race Theory as a reference in order to clarify the complicated issues the African American slaves who suffered from racism and slavery before abolishment. Critical Race Theory is a theoretical mode that studies the appearance of Race and racism through dominant cultural modes of expression.

### **2.2.1. The origin of Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race theory henceforth CRT “is an academic discipline focused upon the application of critical race theory examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power. Critical race theory is often associated with many of the controversial issues involved in the pursuit of equality issues related to race and ethnicity” (Tyson).

CRT has emerged in the mid -1970s as a movement that originated by several activists and scholars who were interested in law and legal issues. CRT is widely spread to many other disciplines, even though, it began only as a movement in the legal profession. In addition, CRT came as a response to perceived delays in civil

rights advancements. The movement's intellectual father figure is Derrick Bell, the professor of law at New York University; also Alan Freeman and Richard Delgado are leaders of this movement. (Richards and Stefancic 3).

Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Richards Delgado discussed that the elements of American legal system were defined by racism and white supremacy.

CRT goes beyond the tradition of civil rights meanwhile it looks for the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law.

The education is the field that mostly influenced by this theory as Richards and Stefancic said in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*: "Today, many in the field of education consider themselves critical race theorists who use CRT's ideas to understand issues of school discipline and hierarchy, tracking, controversies over curriculum and history, and IQ and achievement testing" (3).

Also Richards and Stefancic added in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*:

Unlike some academic disciplines, critical race theory contains an activist dimension. It not only tries to understand our social situation, but to change it; it sets out not only to ascertain how society organizes itself along racial lines and hierarchies, but to transform it for the better. (3)

Firstly, CRT emerged to challenge the idea of color-blind society that the United States had become in which the ones' racial identity no longer had an effect on ones' social or economic status. Subsequently, CRT is a doctrine that aims to highlight and to develop the ways that "supposedly color-blind laws have allowed racial oppression

and inequality to continue despite the outlawing of segregation”. In addition, Kevin Brown and Darrel Jackson (2013) expressed how CRT emerged from the convergence of historical developments and the need and to respond to those developments.

CRT is an interdisciplinary framework, while it draws on Post-colonialism, Marxism, and Feminism. In particular, black feminists strongly supported CRT among them Patricia Williams and Angela Harris who had made great contributions to CRT.

In 1995, a group of Asian American and Latino activists created a sub-movement from CRT, which called Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit).

### **2.2.2. Basic tenets of Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory is an approach that looks and examines the society from the perspectives of race, law and power. According to Delgado and Stefancic, there are six basic tenets, which are the ordinariness of racism, interest convergence, social construction, differential radicalization, the notion of intersectionality, and the concept of voice of color. This section will focus only on two tenets, which are Everyday Racism and Differential Racialization.

#### **2.2.2.1. Everyday racism**

Everyday racism is a basic tenet that CRT goes around. It happens every day in both subtle and explicit ways. In other words, Everyday racism appeared in ordinary experiences and life of people from different races in the United States as Delgado and Stefancic mentioned in their book *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*: “racism is ordinary, not aberrational—“normal science,” the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (7).

In addition, race is ordinary means that the existence of Racialism that deals with the superiority of whites and the inferiority of other races particularly blacks. In other word, racism exists explicitly and implicitly and it is ordinary for the dominant group. As Tyson argues in his explanation for Delgado and Stefancic's basic tenets of CRT:

*racism* applies only to very visible forms of racism, for example, physical or verbal attacks against people of color; the activities of white supremacist groups; the deliberate and overt exclusion of racial minorities from particular housing, restaurants, and social organizations open to the public; and the like. (369)

Subsequently, this feature of "ordinariness" or "every day racism" (Delgado& Stefancic 7) appeared in many scenes in *Beloved* which Morrison uses to portray psychological dehumanization through her narration. This section will center mainly about Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and Baby Suggs who have particularly get traumatized and dehumanized psychologically. They suffered from complete loss of self due to the inability in believing in their own existences as Tyson gives in his book *Critical theory today*.

#### **2.2.2.2. Differential racialization**

The tenet of differential racialization is recognized as notion in which used ways that dominant group practices racism against minority races. Also Delgado and Stefancic said: "Critical writers in law, as well as social science, have drawn attention to the ways the dominant society racializes different minority groups at different times, in response to shifting needs such as the labor market" (8).

An example of differential racialization, back to the late of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; Asian Americans were racialized and they were regarded as “ unfavorable” group because of the hegemony of the white group. (76)

“Differential Racialization” which Delgado and Stefancic well defined is:

the idea that each race has its own origins and ever evolving history—is the notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. No person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity. A white feminist may be Jewish, or working-class, or a single mother. An African American activist may be gay or lesbian. A Latino may be a Democrat, a Republican, or even a black—perhaps because that person’s family hails from the Caribbean. (8-9)

In the other hand, Tyson has explained deeply this notion of Differential Racialization:

Differential racialization refers to the fact that “the dominant society racializes [defines the racial characteristics of] different minority groups [in different ways] at different times, in response to [its] shifting needs...For example, it suited the needs of white plantation owners before the Civil War to depict Africans as simple-minded, in need of white supervision lest they revert to their “heathen” ways, and as happy to serve white people. This mythical stereo-type helped justify, the plantation owners believed, their enslavement of Africans. (375)

### **2.3. Conclusion**

African American literature helps black authors to revolt against slavery by their writing. African American authors have excelled in creating a contribution for exploring the role of blacks within the community. Morrison is one of those prominent figures who highly portrayed her society issues due to her greatly affection by the deep society she lived in. Thus, *Beloved* is the best illustration for African American literature in tem of the richness of portrayals of slavery. On one hand, this research adopted the Critical Race Theory in order to understand more about the issues of racism depicted in the novel.



# **Chapter Three:**

**The exploration of dehumanization  
in *Beloved***

## Introduction

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison depicts the journey of the African Americans past of lifetime of slavery and she ultimately portrays its effects and how it individually affects each character. Almost all major characters have gone through dehumanization from the white community. This chapter intends to shed light on the ways in which slaves were dehumanized and the effects on slaves in *Beloved*, the different damages and the inhumanity acts that the African Americans experienced. The novel is a mirror that Toni Morrison tries to reflect the marginalization and the exploitation upon the black slaves. This chapter deals with the CRT views aiming to conduct the different aspects of dehumanization, its ways and its horrible effects in order to show that Morrison emphasizes the painful means of slavery. It purposefully adopted the two tents, which are Everyday racism and Differential Racialization to reach a deep analysis of the novel.

### 3.1. Types of dehumanization in *Beloved*

#### 3.1.1. Psychological dehumanization in *Beloved*

*Beloved* is truthful illustration for investigating the African American society back to the slavery and its aftermath. It offers a memory for many forgotten and dreadful past. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison sheds light on the different types of dehumanization that applied by the white supremacy against black slave. This section provides the significance type of dehumanization in the novel, which is psychological side.

Morrison writes freely in this novel and she breaks the bounds of tradition. She is an author who was always trying to establish different use of language that led her

to be unique. *Beloved* is the genre of slave narrative. Thus, the characters have freed themselves and they protest against the horrors of slavery. In addition, Morrison highlights the harsh acts that the African Americans experienced during slavery. Being slave is the terrible fact that any human beings encounter. In this vein, and in an interview with Bonnie Angelo in *Conversation with Toni Morrison*, Morrison reported about her novel *Beloved*, "I thought this has got to be the least read of all the books I'd written because it is about the character don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember" (257).

In the other hand, psychological dehumanization revealed through the psyche of characters, their emotions and their spiritual side of their life. The novel's settings are back to twelve years after the end of the American Civil War in Cincinnati, Ohio. In the Garner's home or what it called Sweet Home. Nine slaves work there. Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs and six other slaves. They are affected by being slaves; the one who is the most suffered from pain and slavery. Schoolteacher's nephews raped her. Sethe was treated badly and eventually killed her two years old daughter, *Beloved*, "How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (Morrison 236). So that no "gang of whites invade her daughter's private parts, soil her daughter's things" (Morrison 296). For Sethe, death is better than rape in terms of harmfulness:

That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. (Morrison 295)

This story is adapted from a real life story of a runaway slave called Margaret Garner who killed her daughter as well in order to not send back to slavery due to the fugitive slave law. Morrison uses it as evidence to strengthen her work. *Beloved*, serves evidence that shows the ordinariness of racism.

At the very beginning of the story, Paul D, a former slave comes back to meet Sethe after Eighteen years of absence. They tried to bring back their memories of slavery and its effects:

As if to punish her further for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch not forty feet away was Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men. And although she could never mistake his face for another's, she said, "Is that you?" ... "Eighteen years," she said softly. "Eighteen," he repeated. "And I swear I been walking every one of em. Mind if I join you?"... "You looking good." "Devil's confusion. He lets me look good long as I feel bad." He looked at her and the word "bad" took on another meaning. Sethe smiled. This is the way they were—had been. All of the Sweet Home men, (Morrison 7-8)

To understand how Morrison shows the pure reality of racism and how whites regarded it as ordinary acts, it should be preferable to relate this analysis to Delgado and Stefancic and how they assert and explain in their book *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction*: "ordinariness means that racism is difficult to cure or address. Color-blind, or "formal," conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination" (7).

As it was explained in the previous parts, Differential racialization is clearly appeared in many scenes in *Beloved*, which Morrison uses to portray psychological dehumanization through her narration. This section will center mainly about Sethe, Paul D, Denver, and Baby Suggs who have particularly get traumatized and dehumanized psychologically. They suffered from complete loss of self due to the inability in believing in their own existences like Tyson who provides in his book *Critical theory today* in the chapter of African American Criticism some examples of everyday racism that lead to self-loss that was depicted in the novel, “common examples of everyday racist behavior exhibited by white people include “being patronizing, talking down, assuming lack of confidence, hiring token blacks. . .” (369).

In particular, Sethe and Paul D the two former slaves, who had experienced the worst slavery. Sethe is the protagonist and the one who mostly endured many pain and oppression. All her experience is regarded as a representative to the other slaves. Sethe’s traumatic past affected all those who around, Paul D, Beloved and Denver. She treated as Subhuman particularly after the schoolteacher came in order to help Mrs. Garner in the farm. Once she provides a lesson for Schoolteacher’s pupils about animal characteristics:

Schoolteacher was standing over one of them with one hand behind his back. He liked a forefinger a couple of times and turned a few pages. Slow. I was about to turn around and keep on my way to where the muslin was, when I heard him say, “No, no. that’s not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don’t forget to line them up (Morrison 228).

In addition to feel less than humans, Paul D said to Sethe, “you got two feet, Sethe, not four” (Morrison 194). Moreover, Sethe did not suffer only from the brutality of whites; she suffered from her husband who supposed to be supporter and protector. Halle mistreated her and for some extent let schoolteacher’s nephews to steal her milk:

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

Humiliation and animalization are the most powerful tools to show the dehumanization process that whites in Sweet Home used to dehumanize their slave psychologically. Here an instance for Paul D who suffered greatly under Schoolteacher. Paul D witnessed and suffered from many atrocities during the Civil War. He has dark memories of time when he was poisoned. Besides, the contempt of Schoolteacher through slaves to make him feel worthless, Morrison uses the word “Mister” to express heavily the behavior of Schoolteacher toward the slaves by something lower than animals:

Mister, he looked so...free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher. Son a bitch couldn’t even get out the shell by his self but he was still king

and I was..." Paul D stopped and squeezed his left hand with his right. He held it that way long enough for it and the world to quiet down and let him go on. "Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you'd be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub.. (Morrison 86)

Additionally to these traumatic experiences, which, Paul D was always; raising a question of what it means to be a man. Once he said, "I am not a man" (Morrison 151). Paul D and other slaves are stripped from their manhood. When the master was Mr. Garner, Paul D had a degree of freedom but when the Schoolteacher is the master, he loses all this liberty:

For years Paul D believed schoolteacher broke into children what Garner had raised into men. And it was that that made them run off. Now, plagued by the contents of his tobacco tin, he wondered how much difference there really was between before schoolteacher and after. Garner called and announced them men—but only on Sweet Home, and by his leave. Was he naming what he saw or creating what he did not? That was the wonder of Sixo, and even Halle; it was always clear to Paul D that those two were men whether Garner said so or not. It troubled him that, concerning his own manhood, he could not satisfy himself on that point.(Morrison 260)

Another image of the notion of ordinariness that Delgado and Stefancic previously noted is, referring to the slaves by “niggers” is a way in which racist whites humiliate their slaves especially the Garners who used to call them as niggers. The Garners who were always pretending as if they treat their slaves respectfully, nevertheless slaves were oppressed:

Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is men every one of em. Bought em thataway, raised em thataway. Men every one.” “Beg to differ, Garner. Ain’t no nigger men.” “Not if you scared, they ain’t.” Garner’s smile was wide. “But if you a man yourself, you’ll want your niggers to be men too.” I wouldn’t have no nigger men round my wife. (Morrison 7).

Furthermore, Baby Suggs, Sethe’s mother-in-law, is a practical example of the brutality of the past. “Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed,” she said, “and broke my heartstrings too. There is no bad luck in the world but white folks” (Morrison 104-105). She experienced the slave system, and she suffered from sexual abuse and lack of normal maternal affection:

Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn’t run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby’s eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children. (Morrison 27-28)

Dealing with tragic memories of Baby Suggs in slavery life, Stamp Paid, one of the minor characters of *Beloved*, remarks:



After sixty years of losing children to the people who chewed up her life and spit it out like a fish bone; after five years of freedom given to her by her last child, who bought her future with his, exchanged it, so to speak, so she could have one whether he did or not—to lose him too; to acquire a daughter and grandchildren and see that daughter slay the children (or try to); to belong to a community of other free Negroes—to love and be loved by them, to counsel and be counseled, protect and be protected, feed and be fed—and then to have that community step back and hold itself at a distance—well, it could wear out even a Baby Suggs, holy. (Morrison 209).

Although; the Garners were less severe than many other slave masters in *Beloved*, yet; their role contributes badly the characters' life in Sweet Home.

### 3.1.2. Physical dehumanization in *Beloved*

Slavery knows no bounds. The dehumanization of characters in the novel was not only at the level of their psyche, however, they have been dehumanized physically. This section is going to focus on the significant images of physical dehumanization using a key tenet “Differential Racialization”.

In *Beloved*, Morrison detects some images of differential racialization throughout showing some physical dehumanization. Sexual abuse was one of the cruelest hardships endured by enslaved African Americans, practices by their slaveholders at first and a clearer example is the Schoolteacher violence, “Then schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe’s eyes leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight” (Morrison 11).

He is cruel and sadistic master. He uses multiple means of dehumanizing slaves of the plantation; in other words, Schoolteacher does not have ability to feel compassion or empathy for other human beings, his approach is to classify the slaves as sub-human or animal. He exercises whipping, torture, humiliation. Sethe is the victim who mostly affected by his cruel attitudes. "I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up" (Morrison 83).

When Sethe was pregnant and her husband Halle did not arrive yet:

Sunday came and he didn't. Monday came and no Halle. I thought he was dead, that's why; then I thought they caught him, that's why. Then I thought, No, he's not dead because if he was I'd know it, and then you come here after all this time and you didn't say he was dead, because you didn't know either, so I thought, Well, he just found him another better way to live. Because if he was anywhere near here, he'd come to Baby Suggs, if not to me. (Morrison 82)

Schoolteacher's nephews have got raped her and sucked her milk from her breasts and Schoolteacher enjoyed seeing her body exploited:

After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still. (Morrison 19-20)

In addition, Morrison imitates the bad treatments and the dehumanizing of black people particularly Paul D. We notice that Paul D suffered from hurtful memories of enslavement as Sweet Home's authority transfers from Mr. Garner, upon his sudden death, to schoolteacher. Like the wings of a bird, schoolteacher clips Paul D:

First his shotgun, then his thoughts, for schoolteacher didn't take advice from Negroes. The information they offered he called back talk and developed a variety of corrections (which he recorded in his notebook) to reeducate them. He complained they ate too much, rested too much, talked too much, which was certainly true compared to him, because schoolteacher ate little, spoke less and rested not at all. Once he saw them playing—a pitching game—and his look of deeply felt hurt was enough to make Paul D blink. He was as hard on his pupils as he was on them—except for the corrections. (Morrison 259)

Paul D have got deeply humiliated during his transference off Sweet Home, when forced to wear a collar, chains and a leg irons. Bound like a beast, walking in front the old rooster "Mister", who has more authority than he does. As evidence of his defeat, Paul D says, "schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on a tub" (Morrison 86).

Paul D faced many abuses as sleeping in ditches and being forced to perform oral sex on the white men, it's no wonder he couldn't feel like a man, While he was shackled with ten other slaves to a brutal prison for the crime of threatening to kill Brandywine, the man who bought him from Schoolteacher after the attempted escape from Sweet Home:

Paul D began to tremble. Not all at once and not so anyone could tell. When he turned his head, aiming for a last look at Brother, turned it as much as the rope that connected his neck to the axle of a buckboard allowed, and, later on, when they fastened the iron around his ankles and clamped the wrists as well, there was no outward sign of trembling at all. Nor eighteen days after that when he saw the ditches; the one thousand feet of earth—five feet deep, five feet wide, into which wooden boxes had been fitted. A door of bars that you could lift on hinges like a cage opened into three walls and a roof of scrap lumber and red dirt. Two feet of it over his head; three feet of open trench in front of him with anything that crawled or scurried welcome to share that grave calling itself quarters. And there were forty-five more. (Morrison 125)

Eighty-six days, Paul D and the other prisoners, chained together and threatened with suffocation under a mudslide. They had experiences so much trauma that cannot even been spoken:

One by one, from Hi Man back on down the line, they dove. Down through the mud under the bar, blind, groping. Some had sense enough to wrap their heads in their shirt, cover their faces with rags, put on their shoes. Others just plunged simply ducked down and pushed out, fighting up reaching for air some lost direction and their neighbors, feeling the confused pull of the chain, snatched them around. For one lost, all lost. (Morrison 130)

### 3.2. The effects of dehumanization in *Beloved*

The most dangerous thing of slavery is its effects on humans. The plantation owners considered slaves as property. The whites' exploitation of slaves reveals through various means. In *Beloved*, Morrison remarks the extent in which Dehumanization affect badly through the black characters.

Dehumanization of slaves has negative impacts on slaves. Obviously, self-loss is the most significant effect that characters have gone through since they were treated as animals. Such an example Sethe, the protagonist who is the mostly affected by the racist whites; the effect of her stolen milk is mentioned by Sethe in many times, "They used cowhide on you? And they took my milk. They beat you and you were pregnant? And they took my milk!" (Morrison 20). She considered her daughter's milk to be her most important possession, and losing it means losing a large part of herself.

Consequently, she expresses this loss of self to not forget her stolen milk and she keeps repeating, "Nobody will never get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else---and the one time I did it was took from me---they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby" (Morrison 236). Also Halle, Sethe's husband who lost his mind because he has got traumatized by his wife's suffering, "it broke him" (Morrison 97).

In addition, *Beloved* was suffering psychologically, which led her becoming oppressive and vindictive, and all her wants were to get revenge on her mother for killing her:

That her plan was always that they would all be together on the other side, forever. *Beloved* wasn't interested. She said when she cried there was no. That dead men lay on top of her. That she had nothing to eat. Ghosts without skin stuck their fingers in her and said *beloved* in the

dark and bitch in the light. Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons; that Beloved was more important, meant more to her than her own life. (Morrison 284)

Other slaves have also experienced the same kind of sense of self loss during slavery. In *Beloved*, Morrison notes that slavery stops the slaves' progress towards finding their identity. Meanwhile, Denver, Sethe's daughter was unable to separate herself from slavery influencing by Beloved. Even though, Denver did not live as a slave, but she suffered from the complications of her mother's experiences.

Beloved's return makes Denver seeing the person her mother killed which caused her loving her mother out of fear that she says, "I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I'm scared of her because of it" (Morrison 242). Denver's real fear of leaving 124 seems to be nothing in comparison to her fear of her own mother. As she, permanently dreams that Sethe will cut her head off when braiding her hair every night:

She cut my head off every night. Buglar and Howard told me she would and she did. Her pretty eyes looking at me like I was a stranger. Not mean or anything, but like I was somebody she found and felt sorry for. Like she didn't want to do it but she had to and it wasn't going to hurt. That it was just a thing grown-up people do—like pull a splinter out your hand; touch the corner of a towel in your eye if you get a cinder in it. She looks over at Buglar and Howard—see if they all right. Then she comes over to my side. I know she'll be good at it, careful. That when she cuts it off it'll be done right; it won't hurt. After she does it I lie there for a minute with just my head. Then she carries

it downstairs to braid my hair. I try not to cry but it hurts so much to comb it. When she finishes the combing and starts the braiding, I get sleepy. I want to go to sleep but I know if I do I won't wake up. So I have to stay awake while she finishes my hair, then I can sleep. The scary part is waiting for her to come in and do it. Not when she does it, but when I wait for her to. (Morrison 243-244)

The only bright in Denver's life was baby suggs, who taught her how to appreciate and love her own body. After Baby Suggs death, Denver lost her spiritual guide. Baby Suggs was an important person in Denver's life.

Baby Suggs on the other hand, encounters the quest of her identity. She was not able to be wife, mother or sister rather she was restricted herself, which led her to ruin her family:

She had been prepared for that better than she had for his life. The last of her children, whom she barely glanced at when he was born because it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway. Seven times she had done that: held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own—fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere. She didn't know to this day what their permanent teeth looked like; or how they held their heads when they walked. Did Patty lose her lisp? What color did Famous' skin finally take? Was that a cleft in Johnny's chin or just a dimple that would disappear soon's his jawbone changed? Four girls, and the last time she saw them there was no hair under their arms. Does Ardelia still love the burned bottom of

bread? All seven were gone or dead. What would be the point of looking too hard at that youngest one? But for some reason they let her keep him. He was with her—everywhere. (Morrison 163-164)

In the other hand, Paul D has become tired and depressed similarly like Baby Suggs. He was extremely broken from slavery and self-defeated, "While Stamp Paid asserts that slavery has destroyed the lives of African Americans in order to empower the whites so they have become more "bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be" (Morrison 234).

For Paul D to undergo the horrible experience, when he shackled and transported to a brutal prison for a crime he committed, makes him always think if he should have died with Sixo because he believed that to allow himself to have feelings will kill him. This experience broke him in a way that slavery never could:

After Alfred he had shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, and sing. If he could do those things—with a little work and a little sex thrown in—he asked for no more, for more required him to dwell on Halle's face or Sixo laughing. To recall trembling in a box built into the ground. Grateful for the daylight spent doing mule work in a quarry because he did not tremble when he had a hammer in his hands. The box had done what Sweet Home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not; drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind. (Morrison 49).

As the many other slaves in Sweet Home who suffered because of Sethe's actions, Paul D also there was one of the most significant characters affected by



Beloved's vindictive. Beloved takes advantage of Paul D and brings his horrible memories, which led him to open his "little tobacco tin" (Morrison 137). She forces herself upon him that was a victim of rape. One night, when Paul D was sleep outside the house she comes to him, and says, "I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name." (Morrison 137)

One of six male slaves on the Sweet Home plantations who suffered from dehumanization and loss of self was Sixo. Even though Sixo was a wild confident man with nature and knew how to do certain things better than anyone, He is still a slave that has suffered in his life. His sufferance was travelling sixty miles in thirty-four hours, with only an hour of rest, to say hello to his Thirty Mile woman named Pasty. This brought him pain because he had to stab his pregnant wife in the leg and hurt her in order to use it as a reason:

Now it was too late for the rendezvous to happen at the Redmen's house, so they dropped where they were. Later he punctured her calf to simulate snakebite so she could use it in some way as an excuse for not being on time to shake worms from tobacco leaves. (Morrison 29)

Hence, Morrison uses the name Sixo for a number of reasons, one and the most important being written in the front of the novel as, "Sixty Million and more." By using the name Sixo as a character, Morrison wants to honor the number of slaves where in America. In addition, the number six in the novel represents the number of slaves there were at Sweet Home. Sixo was the sixth and the only one without last name, "And so they were: Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Paul A Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man" (Morrison 13).

### **3.3. Conclusion**

In short, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a piece of art. She depicts every incident with concert experiences to make the reader aware about the sufferings of black Americans through the painful life of the characters. This work has offered a vision to understand racism from different perspectives by joining the views of Critical Race theory. This chapter has dealt with two tenets of CRT; the notion of the ordinariness of racism and Differential Racialization that helped to criticize the systematic dehumanization and brutality exercised by the White Supremacy. Also, in this chapter, the ways and effects of dehumanization have examined. Throughout the novel, the characters have been emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually dehumanized.

# **General Conclusion**

Toni Morrison was an influential writer who devoted her literary works writing about the history of her community. She wrote about the African American history in her most touching books such as *Beloved*. Toni Morrison is the first black women who have become an editor at Random House and win the Nobel Prize for Literature. She has become source of inspiration for several generations and one of the major contributors to African American literary criticism.

In *Beloved* Toni Morrison repaired the forgotten history of slavery and revealed the situation of the African Americans. Through her fiction's pages, she succeeded to go deeper in this watershed of American history. Thus, Morrison in her piece of work depicts all the pain, violence, and torture experiences that the African American lived during slavery. Morrison has essentially focused on the oppression and supremacy of the whites upon the blacks. In the novel, the characters seemed that are real people because Morrison transformed a real story into history.

This research has shown to the reader what African Americans suffered in the institutional slave system. By focusing on the dehumanizing effect of slavery through *Beloved*, we have been able to shed light on the painful experiences of slaves and how they have been able to resist such kind of life. Mostly, each character in the novel has been live under such dehumanizing conditions effects.

In the first chapter, we first dealt with the historical background of the African American slaves, by providing the historical events that surrounds the novel *Beloved*. On the other hand, we have depicted the biography of the first African American awarded Nobel Prize, Toni Morrison to acknowledge her literary career, by focusing on her personal life and works. At the end, we gave a look on Morrison's themes and style that she relied on through her African American Literary career.

The second chapter is divided into two main parts. The first one has covered the key facts of African American Literature, as subtitle in this part we shed light on the development of African American literature. It also discussed the characteristics of African American literature, and focusing on African American writers of the period. As a second part, the chapter dealt with theoretical framework of the novel "*Beloved*", in which, it has reviewed the origins of Critical Race theory and its main tenets.

While in the third chapter, we presented a deep analysis study of Morrison's *Beloved* including the setting and characters by using the CRT views. Through investigating the African American past life and how it affected the former slaves in the novel. We also focused on the physical and psychological inhumanity experiences caused by Mr. Garner and Schoolteacher. Meanwhile, we analyze each victim character's sufferance from instability of the mental status and dehumanization. Sethe, Beloved, Paul D, Baby Suggs and Halle were the ones who mainly suffered from extreme humiliation, torture and violence on their body and psyche.

Consequently when analyzing the characters dehumanization we noticed that most characters were living in isolation. In addition, we found that the scars of slavery memory affected Sethe and Paul D's ways of living freely.

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