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# The Impact of Gender of the Author on Writing

## Womanism in Toni Morrison *BELOVED*

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# Dedications

In the name of God, the most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

This research paper lovingly dedicated to our beloved parents, who have been our source of inspiration and gave us strength when we thought of giving up, who continually provide their moral, spiritual, emotional, and financial support.

We also dedicate this dissertation to our friends who have supported us throughout the process. We will always appreciate all they have done.

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## Abstract

This paper explores the impact of gender, specifically when the author is a black female, on their writing. The research question addressed is: "How does the gender and racial identity of a black female author influence their writing?" By examining existing literature, this study uncovers the ways in which gender and racial identity intersect to shape the writing style, themes, characterizations, and narrative perspectives of black female authors. The findings highlight that the unique experiences and perspectives of black women significantly influence their literary works, including their exploration of race, gender, identity, and social issues. The intersectionality of gender and race exposes the complex dynamics of power, marginalization, and resistance in their writing. Additionally, the paper examines how black female authors challenge and subvert dominant narratives, disrupt stereotypes, and provide representation and empowerment for marginalized voices. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between gender, race, and literary creation for black female authors.

**Keywords:** gender, race, black female author, writing style, themes, characterizations, narrative perspectives, intersectionality, power dynamics, representation, empowerment, marginalized voices.

## ملخص الدراسة

يستكشف هذا البحث تأثير الجنس، على وجه التحديد عندما يكون المؤلف امرأة سوداء، على كتاباتهم. تتناول الدراسة السؤال البحثي التالي: "كيف يؤثر الجنس والهوية العرقية للمؤلفة السوداء على كتاباتها؟" من خلال فحص الأدب القائم، تكتشف هذه الدراسة الطرق التي تتداخل فيها الجنس والهوية العرقية لتشكيل أسلوب الكتابة والمواضيع وتوصيف الشخصيات ووجهات النظر السردية للكاتبات السوداء. تبرز النتائج أن التجارب والآراء الفريدة للنساء السود في الغالب تؤثر بشكل كبير على أعمالهن الأدبية، بما في ذلك استكشافهن للعرق والجنس والهوية والقضايا الاجتماعية. يكشف التداخل بين الجنس والعرق عن ديناميات معقدة للقوة والتهميش والمقاومة في كتاباتهم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تتناول الدراسة كيف يتحدى ويقلب الكاتبات السود الإناث السرديات السائدة والاستيراد، وكيف يوفرن تمثيلاً وتمكيناً للأصوات المهمشة. تساهم هذه الدراسة في فهم أعمق للعلاقة المعقدة بين الجنس والعرق وإبداع الكتابة للكاتبات السود الإناث.

**الكلمات الرئيسية:** الجنس(الجندر)، العرق، مؤلفة سوداء، أسلوب الكتابة، المواضيع، توصيف الشخصيات، وجهات النظر السردية، التداخلية، ديناميات القوة، التمثيل، التمكين، الأصوات المهمشة.

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# **General Introduction**

## **General Introduction**

The middle of the nineteenth century is often referred to as a progressive era, marked by the emergence of a new image of women in society. Women from diverse ethnic backgrounds, including African American women, faced unique struggles in defining their roles as mothers, wives, and women in general. The history of African American women is deeply intertwined with the issue of slavery, which greatly affected their identities in social life. Morrison's novel *Beloved* addresses this historical context and explores the interplay of race, class, and bodies within women's interracial relationships.

While *Beloved* primarily tells the story of an escaped slave's journey to reclaim her sense of self, it also delves into the complexities of mother-daughter relationships. Morrison uses *Beloved* to underscore the historical paradigm of African American women. Through her novel, Morrison calls attention to the history of black people, utilizing the genre of historical fiction to examine societal conditions. The novel vividly depicts the experiences of African American women in the aftermath of slavery. Morrison draws from her personal experiences and those of her racial community, offering a reflective mirror through her writing.

Toni Morrison, the first African American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, gives voice to the silent struggles of women, aiming to challenge and raise awareness about the hardships faced by black women and the detrimental effects of racism and patriarchy on their identities. Her novels, including *Beloved*, have garnered significant attention from critics and scholars due to the weighty themes she addresses. As a Nobel laureate, Morrison powerfully portrays the degradation and dehumanization endured by black women even after the abolition of slavery. She illuminates the transformative journey of black women, encompassing sorrow, death, and madness, in order to redefine and reshape their identities.

*Beloved* is a testament to the experiences of enslaved African women, their memories, and their underrepresented voices in history. It is within this historical backdrop that Morrison crafts her novel, using fiction to give voice to those whose stories have been neglected.

It is from this historical background that Toni Morrison wrote the novel *Beloved*. It was her fifth novel, first published in 1987. This novel was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction in 1988

and The American Book Award, and it was later adapted into a major motion picture in 1998. Morrison's focus in most of her books is on the feminist element, and she consistently chooses the role of women to deliver her message. This approach reflects her personal experiences and allows her to connect closely with the reader, leaving a strong influence on them through her unique style.

### **Aims of the study**

The ultimate aim of this study is to shed light on the gender of womanism and its representation, as well as its effects on the characters. Furthermore, by the end of the study, we will demonstrate that Morrison has successfully depicted the African female experiences of African Americans in the United States through her characters.

### **Statement of the problem**

Morrison's books are known for featuring female characters in most of her novels, through which she describes and recounts her personal experiences during the period of slavery, which will remain a stigma in the history of America. They were created weak and symbolized tenderness and femininity, unlike the male character, which is characterized by strength. Morrison used feminist theory to highlight the image for women, Gender's effect on what aspect of her novels ?

### **Research questions**

1. How did Morrison represent the female characters in "*Beloved*" with reference to womanism ?
2. How does the author's gender contribute to shaping her voice on conveying her message ?

### **Research Methodology**

In examining Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the appropriate theory to use is womanism critical theory. This theory is primarily based on the history and everyday experiences of black women, focusing on issues of gender and their rights. In this research, we will adopt descriptive and analytical research methods to analyze the oppression of black women and describe their suffering in *Beloved*.

The aim of using descriptive research is to investigate and analyze the phenomenon of "womenism" in the novel. It is employed to draw conclusions about this problem by collecting evidence from the work.

### **Structure of the research**

This research paper is mainly divided into three chapters. The opening chapter focuses on the definition of the new concept of "womanism" and its principles. Additionally, it will provide a comprehensive review of Toni Morrison's life, works, her writing style, and the themes typically explored in her writings.

The second chapter consists of a review of African American literature, discussing its key elements, characteristics, and notable authors. Furthermore, in this chapter, we intend to examine Critical Feminism Theory in order to explore all its relevant aspects for our analysis.

The third chapter is the practical part of the research. It involves a textual analysis of Morrison's novel "Beloved." This chapter is divided into two major sections. The first section focuses on the aspects of gender portrayed in the novel, while the second section examines the impact of gender emphasized by Morrison, shedding light on these particular aspects.

# **Chapter One :**

## **The Critical Context of Womanism in Literature**

## **Intoduction**

This chapter presents Critical context of Womanism Literature. It is,then, divided into elements . The first one is devoted to present a general overview of gender, the concept of gender performativity, Gender Writing issues, and Language writing Style are influenced by Gender. The second subtitle is about Womanism, The Concept Of Womanism and The Stages of Development of Womanism. The third one is about The categories of Womanism and Gender Criticism.

### **1.1. Gender**

Gender, in common usage, refers to the differences between men and women. Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that gender identity is "an individual's self-conception as being male or female, as distinguished from actual biological sex." Historically, womanism has posited gender roles to be socially constructed, independent of any biological basis. Many languages have a system of grammatical gender. The word gender in English means kind or type. Gender is perceived as masculinity or femininity. Sex is what you are biologically, while gender is what you become socially.

Gender refers to the social construction of sex differences. While "sex" is construed to relate to biological differences, i.e. anatomical, physiological or biological characteristics of an individual e.g. male and female, gender denotes the social and cultural roles of each sex within a given society. The World Health Organization(WHO) defines gender as:the socially constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men. It varies from society to society and can be changed.

Gender is the socially constructed roles, activities, responsibilities that are attributed to a particular sex. It also refers to the individual's and society's perceptions of sexuality and the concepts of masculinity and femininity. While most people are born either male or female, they are taught appropriate norms and behaviours – including how they should interact with others of the same or opposite sex within households, communities and work places. It implies that the sets of roles and responsibilities which are associated with being girl and boy or women and men are different. The sets of behaviour, roles and responsibilities attributed to women and men respectively by society are reinforced at the various levels of the society through its political and educational institutions and systems, employment patterns, norms and values, and through the

family. At the practical level, for instance, it is common to hear a boy being chided for crying whereas a girl is rebuked for performing feats expected of males because it is unbecoming for a female to display heroism and courage. Gender roles in some societies are more rigid than those in others. Gender roles vary greatly in different societies, cultures and historical periods and depend on socio-economic factors, age, education, ethnicity and religion, among other factors.

Although deeply rooted in tradition, gender roles can be changed over time, since social values and norms are not static. (WHO) Gender regulates the relations between women and men through social norms, practices and institutions. Therefore, gender relations involve a system of power relations between women and men in the context of socio-cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. In many societies, the system of gender relations gives power and privilege to men and discriminates against women. The gender order determines what is accepted, encouraged and allowed for women and men. When the gender order privileges men, the social acceptance of male domination and female subordination may be sustained by many formal and informal institutions and practices. (Oluwole and Sofoluwe, 2014).

Gender is a concept and process with multifarious complexities in content and structure. It is used as an analytical tool across disciplines in and outside the academia. It is a concept imbued with notions of difference in the forms of hierarchy, opposition and power relations. The use of gender as an analytical tool in many academic engagements resulted from feminists' agitations concerning the status and role of women, especially in Western countries. Gender is informed by assumed capabilities, social power, and it varies from culture to culture as a people's historical experiences contribute to formulate expectations for individuals in different contexts in the society. In addition, gender is dynamic and constantly negotiated through the agency of human activities. Gender is neither timeless nor universal; it is not a fixed concept which is applicable to all societies at all times in the same way. Rather, it is a process that is constantly negotiated in content and structure at various levels. This process, however, differs from culture to culture. (ibid)

In terms of structure, gender is characterized by notions of the differences and oppositions. This opposition sometimes enlarges the differences between males and females; and at other times, it translates into the oppression and domination of one gender over the other, but this is not always the case. It is worthy of note that where these observed differences and opposition between the

two genders do not translate to oppression and domination, some other sociological structure accounts for the attenuation. Examples of such sociological structures, especially in African societies, include seniority and economic attainment (Oluwole and Sofoluwe, 2014). Hierarchy and notions of powers are important to the conceptualization of gender. This implies that one gender may be considered to be above and superior to the other. In other words, roles assigned to one gender may be regarded as more important than roles assigned to the other gender. For instance, the male is always regarded as the head of the home in traditional societies.

In some African societies, this does not mean that he has absolute power in the home but in terms of hierarchy, he is at the apex of the family structure. Next to him are his wife/ves (sexual partners) and then the children. Hierarchy and power are closely linked as the person in charge would demonstrate some form of authority and control.

Gender relations refer to a complex system of personal and social relations of domination and power through which women and men are socially created and maintained and through which they gain access to power and material resources or are allocated status within society. (IFAD,2000, p. 4). Daily experiences reflect notions of gender relationships in the society. There are various ideas about appropriate and desirable masculine and feminine identities. From birth different expectations are assumed and assigned to males and females. For instance, pink coloured gifts are given to baby girls while blue are given to baby boys. One is tempted to ask whether the babies already have preferred colours. More so, children learn that boys grow up to be Dads and girls grow up to be Moms. This is the standard pattern that children incorporate, even when they know these rules have exceptions. The basic stereotypes seem somehow branded on their psyche in the daily course of growing up.

## **1.2. The Concept of Gender performativity**

One of the most famous theories of gender is Judith Butler's Gender Performativity, which presents gender as something performed. It does not mean that a person can perform any gender he likes. It is performed as an act and to serve communication as some expressions are performed, for instance: when a husband says to his wife you are divorced, his not just communicating, he is creating an action which is an end for their marriage.



Butler believes that Performative Utterance produces an identity by the repetition of actions that constitute people's gender. She says: "Gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today, performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms through which one is constituted." Basically gender identity is not formed by people themselves, however by the continuing of doing the same actions. Butler performativity lies on social constructivism. It holds a view that gender is socially constructed. She says "Because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender creates the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (Butler,p.522) According to her gender is not who the person is, it is what he does regularly. His actions are imposed on him by society for example; when a baby is born, and being assigned a male or a female, certain actions are expected from them, mainly the society draw them boundaries to live by, so their gender identity will be created by society.

### **1.3. Gender Writing issues**

As a social constructionist view of gender began to take shape-the seeds of which were sown in the first wave, and sex and gender were distinguished between, feminists began to look at and identify the psychological, socio-cultural and political implications of gender norms. Gerda Lerner aptly summarizes this when she says: "Women writers, as women, negotiate with divided loyalties and doubled consciousnesses, both within and without a social and cultural agreement" (Duplessis,p.40). The tendency to look at certain behaviours and actions as being typical to a particular gender resulted in women writers being in a double bind-they were expected to limit their writings to those areas of which they had first-hand experience (i.e. the domestic sphere) but in a rather clever distortion of reason, when they would stick to conventionally 'feminine' topics, they were accused of being self-serving and parochial. As the prolific author Margaret Atwood had said "when a man writes about things like doing the dishes, it's realism; when a woman does, it's an unfortunate feminine genetic limitation" (Nischik,p.176). To their nineteenth-century peers, women writers were women before and writers later. A woman writer had to often resort to using a male nom de plume if they wished to be assessed solely for the uniqueness of their writing and not for writing well only when compared to the women writers of her time.

The awareness that their literary brilliance would be neglected, owing to the many stereotypes that are attached to their gender, served as a perpetual source of vexation to women writers. Women writers had a strong role to play in undoing these implications. In fact, the uptake of women's writing as a distinctive literary culture, since the last few decades, has been manifold. This trend has given rise to a whole set of literary studies which specifically cater to women's texts.

However, there are certain critics who oppose the employment of the term 'women's writing' stating that it privileges an author's gender over her literary productions, almost suggesting that the privilege is a compensation for the wrongs they have suffered. Nevertheless, traditionally marginalized by men, women, in their capacity as writers, have challenged not only the conventional structures of power and dominance, but also the notions of what comprises literature. Their employment of unconventional literary modes, narrative techniques, diction and style has led to the creation of the separate genre of 'women's writing' that occupies a unique position when compared to men's writings. The written word inevitably then, became a means to empower women. One of the most popular themes of women's writing is its avowal to express and value women's own views about themselves as well as the world around them. Over the years, women's writing has bravely progressed towards an exploration of a woman's identity. In the women writers' refutation of a masculine literary tradition, they have steadily moved towards a literature that is anchored within the 'inner space, and a room of one's own' was a significant symbol of the same.

The twentieth century also witnessed a massive output of African-American literature. African-American writers' texts were characterized by different issues than those of the White writers of the period. Authors like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, and Zora Neale Hurston produced works that focussed on issues of racial injustice, rigid standards of beauty, desire, motherhood, interpersonal relationships, misogyny, gender roles, violence, incest, community and society and God. These stalwarts of Black women's writing inspired a whole generation of young novelists such as Toni Cade Bambara and Gloria Naylor. Black Feminism insisted on the need to include the analytical category of race in feminist arguments. Thinkers like Patricia Hill Collins, Hortense Spillers and Hazel Carby were the pioneers of Black feminist thought. Postcolonial feminism, which emerged soon after, went a step forward and extended the

concerns of Black feminists to the issues faced by the Chicano and Asian American women as well as the women of other cultures and nations.

#### **1.4. Language and Writing Style are influenced by Gender**

Perhaps the most outward examples of the influence of gender on female fictionwriters' work are in the mechanics of the writing itself, i.e. word choice and writing style. Gardiner (1981) speaks of the "diverse traits of writing by women, particularly in its defiance of conventional generic boundaries and of conventional characterization" (p.349). In an analysis of the language used by Arab male and female novelists in their work, Hamdan (2011) found that "males tend to use many more nouns in initial paragraphs compared to females...Females are more conservative in using sex-related words whether implicitly or explicitly. Females generally seem to be more attentive and more likely to pay attention to specific detail, which in turn influences their style" (p.55). Much like their experience of writing, the language women use to write fiction is influenced by the patriarchal society in which they live. Gubar (1981) discusses how traditionally, men are seen as creators in religion, art, and science whereas women are presented as creations made by men. Furthermore, the way we talk about fiction (a "seminal" work; the pen "disseminates" a creative work, spilling it onto the pure, blank page) and reinforces the idea of "the author as male who is primary and the female as his passive creation." This characterization is especially problematic for women who, just like their male counterparts, create culture and tell their story through their writing.

In an analysis of Isak Dinesen's short story "The Blank Page," that Dinesen's story "can be used to illustrate how woman's image of herself as text and artifact has affected her attitudes toward her physicality and how these attitudes in turn shape the metaphors through which she imagines her creativity" (The Blank, p.247). Finally, gender influences the way women write gender, that is, their depictions of female and male characters in their fictional works. According to Frantz and Rennhak (2010), "when women construct and write about men in fictional worlds, not only do they analyze the causes and effects of patriarchy...but they also construct their own realities, imagining alternative masculinities that are desirable from a women's perspective" (Beauvoir, p. 2). In her analysis of de Beauvoir's *She Came to Stay*, Evans (1986) discusses the author's depiction of the relationship between two female characters – the novel's main character, Françoise, and another female character, Xaviere.

Evans explains that de Beauvoir's writing differs from that she uses to describe the relationships between the Françoise and her male partner. She notes that Françoise and Xavière's relationship has another-daughter feel in that the older woman is the clear authority figure to the younger, and that in fact this dynamic is common as a metaphor for women writers' relationships to the work they "give birth" to. "But," she says, "we must suppose that since the two players in this drama of creation are women, the male metaphors defining this relationship gradually but irresistibly yield to another vocabulary" (Beauvoir, p. 78). This, of course, is just one of numerous examples of how women write gender and how gender affects their writing.

### **1.5. Womanism**

Womanism as a concept and ideology has gained momentum and support among a large number of Afro-American activists. The latter prefer "womanism" to "feminism" due to the fact that the former enabled them to shy away from some white feminists and racist ideologies embedded in white feminist organizations. By doing so, they distinguished themselves in an attempt to figure out a genuine ideology through which they could find solution to their various female issues. Such separation with white feminism lines them with black nationalists who too advocated separatism and specificity of black race. (Walker, 2005, p. 13).

The term "womanism" is derived from the word "womanish" which means a grown up and resolved woman. Unlike a girlish woman, womanist is capable of asserting herself and defying all the odds of life. Walker has forged a fivefold definition of womanism.

The first stage of womanism is represented in the idea that a womanist should be "outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior" (Walker, 1983, p. 11). Contrary to a black feminist woman, a womanist should challenge herself and the world around her in order to assert herself in spite of white hostility.

The second stage of womanism is represented in the fact that a womanist is "a woman who loves other women, sexually and/ or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility" (Walker, 1983, p. 11). It means that womanism advocates lesbianism in society. It means that womanism advocates lesbianism in society. positive stance on lesbianism made of them a subject of dire criticism from some black conservative activists and theologians for encouraging sexual disorientation among black women. the inclusion of

lesbianism as a part of womanist philosophy is considered the most striking dissimilarity between feminism and womanism.

The third stage of womanism is reflected in the idea of love. A grown up woman is a womanist who “loves music. Love dance. Love love and food and roundness. Love struggle. Love the folk. Love herself. Regardless “(Walker,1983,p11).

The fourth stage of womanism is the fact “womanism is to feminist as purple to lavender”(walker,1983,p.11).Which implies that blackwomen are superior to and more valuable than white women. It also suggests that black and white women, despite the fact they live in the same territory with the whites, cannot be treated and regarded the same. She extols the colored woman and compares her to the strong color of purple often described as the royal color among the different colors. It also means that there is a common ground between white feminists and womanists as it is the case of purple and lavender sharing the same garden; however, they differ in many respects. Thus, womanism provides a vision that white and black women should co-exist as flowers in the same garden, yet maintain their racial specificity and distinctiveness. Because of its endorsement of such separatism, womanism lines with nationalism. However, womanism doesn't seek a physical separation but a racial recognition of black race .

The final stage of womanism is exposed through the idea of wholeness which means the survival of the whole community irrespective of color or gender. Womanism stipulates that a womanist is “committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female”(Walker,1983). While white feminism seeks to address the issues facing white women only,womanism contrives to cope with issues confronting the entire people. This global vision makes of womanism a pluralist movement which comes to terms with issues hindering both genders: black and white.

Toni Morrison as well-known pioneers of Black Womanism in her writings frequently stimulate black women to love themselves, their race, and their culture and not to trap in white superiority or white beauty standards .Toni Morrison in her theory called Womanism believes that survival of black women in a white racist society greatly depends upon their emphasis on loving their own race, their own culture, and loving themselves and not on engrossing themselves in white culture or white beauty standards. She have a lot of black feminist views in common.

## 1.6. Stages of development of Womanism

The first stage of womanist criticism began with two **influential books**: Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970). Both authors criticised the distorted representation of women by well-known male authors. Their work laid the foundation for the most prevalent approach of this stage, the "images of women" approach. Following de Beauvoir and Millet, feminist critics called attention to the unjust, distorted, and limited representation (images) of females in works of literature, especially works authored by males. They celebrated realistic representations of women and brought to light neglected works by and about women. They sought to expose the "politics" of self-interest that led people to create stereotypical and false images of women.

In the second stage of **womanist criticism**, beginning in the early 1970s, critics shifted away from works by males to concentrate on works by females. Elaine Showalter, a prominent critic from this period, called this approach "gynocriticism." Gynocritics urged women to become familiar with female authors and to discover their own female "language," a language that supposedly enters the subconscious before the "patriarchal" language of the dominant culture. They tried to delineate a female poetics, a use of literary conventions and genres that seems typically "female." Some critics based feminist poetics on the possible connection between writing and the female body. Because women's bodies have more fluids than men's, they argued, women's writing is more "fluid." It is less structured, less unified, more inclusive of many points of view, less given to neat endings, and more open to fantasy than writing by men. It rejects or undermines the "marriage plot" and the "happy ending," in which a strong female protagonist submits to a male by marrying him. Female poetics seeks to understand why female authors tend to favour certain genres (lyric poetry, novel, short story, tale, letters, diaries, memoirs) over others (epic, martial romance, drama, satire).

The third stage of womanist criticism rebelled against the **essentialist** assumptions of gynocriticism with its focus on the cultural creation of identity. The third stage of feminist criticism attempts to distinguish between "sex" and "gender." While sex is the biological difference between males and females, gender is the cultural difference. Culture determines the traits and behaviour that set masculinity apart from femininity. Western culture, for example, has seen women as passive rather than active, irrational rather than rational, subjective rather than

objective, at home rather than at "work," spiritual rather than material, and impractical rather than practical. It has ruled that certain kinds of behaviour are "abnormal" and "unnatural" for females to practice, such as pursuing careers, doing construction work, being pastors or priests, wearing "male" clothes, or being assertive. Such gender distinctions, feminist critics claim, are arbitrary and almost always give women less power, status, and respect than men. They argued that many women are "trapped" by the gender traits assigned to them by culture.

The three "stages" of womanism criticism highlighted, have overlapped and coexisted, and continued to be practiced.

### **1.7. Categories of Womanism**

Womanism is an umbrella term for a number of cultural phenomena. It tries to acquire freedom for women to work, and make independent economically, and psychologically. It indicates institutional and grassroots activities to abolish gender-based inequalities from the society. It hopes to discover the hidden reality of male domination, and women subordination and subjugation in the world, and aims to give equal rights to women economically, politically, and socially. It supports a broader struggle of freedom for women to make their own decisions related to their bodies, financial independence, freedom to choose their lives and sexual choices, and liberation from all types of oppression.

In the society, women oppression and subordination are different; consequently, different womanist groups have emerged in different times. But the main goal of every group is to achieve gender equality. Womanism can be manifested into seven categories as; 1) liberal womanism, 2) Marxist womanism 3) socialist womanism, 4) radical womanism, 5) ecowomanism 6) Cultural womanism, 7) black womanism, and 8) postmodern womanism. Each ideology tries to describe women's oppression, explains the causes and consequences, and suggested strategies for women liberation.

Womanists support a gender-based view of the state, which is based on the creation of a gender-neutral society. On the other hand, they are against the flawed, vague, and illogical procedures of thinking and writing about women. Most womanist categories suggest for the elimination of misperceptions, sexual inequalities, restrictions, and oppression faced by women.

Womanism seeks to appreciate the ways in which women are oppressed: socially, economically, politically and psychologically to reduce their various oppressions.

### **1.7.1. Liberal womanism**

Liberalism is a political and economic principle that stresses individual independence, equality of opportunity, and the protection of individual rights. It supports rule of law, civil and human rights, secularism, democracy, freedom of speech, press, religion, and property. It encourages the development of freedoms, particularly in the political and economic spheres (Alterman, 2008).

Liberal womanism works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into it and make it more responsive to individual women's rights. But it does not directly challenge the system itself or the ideology behind women's oppression. It has failed to fully address the root cause of gender inequality. There becomes a great global social change due to liberal womanism. It considers that women are foremost human beings and not sexual beings. As women are rational creatures as like men and they should not be denied from natural rights and should have freedom to act according to their wishes. Moreover, liberal womanist aim for gradual change in the political, economic and social systems of societies (Tong, 2009; Zhang & Rios, 2021).

### **1.7.2. Marxist womanism**

Marxist womanism indicate the secondary oppression of women with economic, social and political structures related to capitalism. It has stressed to adjust domestic labor, as well as wage work to support their position. It believes that the contribution in economic household may give women a better position in the family. It has realized that oppression on women is not only from men but also from women (Barrett, 1980). For Marxist womanist, if the class distinctions can be overcome in the society through unity of the working (oppressed) class, then women can be free, and their housework should be valued by the state and society. Moreover, Marxist womanist add that, women must take an active part in the unity of oppressed class against the bourgeoisie. The way to this unity is all about raising awareness according to Marxist womanism (Engels, 1884). In Marxist womanism ethnicity, race, wage labor, etc. are ignored (Grosz, 2010). Although Marxist womanism is very well-known framework, it does not have adequate theoretical involvement for uprooting gender dominance from the society (Balbus, 1982; Jagger & Rothenberg, 1993).



Marxist womanist see the patriarchy as a product of capitalism. Women oppression would be linked to private property that creates an environment the control of women by fathers and later by husbands. Marxists reject the capitalist state in totality, but they demand freedom and equality of gender. On the other hand, unpaid domestic work is relatively invisible in Marxist womanism.(Engels, 1884).

### **1.7.3.Socialist womanism**

Socialist womanism wants to analyze the effects of fair distribution of rewards to realize the correlation between gender and classes (Bell et al., 2020). The main aim of it is to overcome the historical account of the exploitation of women. It analyzes both economic and gender-based oppressions and any one form of oppression is not the key form of oppression, instead it is a combination of systems related to gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, social class, and nation that are all interlinked. Gender and class intertwine to create new forms of oppression and privileges (Dworkin, 2007; Armstrong & Armstrong, 1983).

Socialist womanist have realized that liberal womanism does not stress on the depth of the oppression of women, rather it targets the women of the upper and upper middle classes. Actually, women have been oppressed in all known societies, and the nature of oppression is differed for the different economic realities. Oppression of women is not only on the economic system, but also on the combination of patriarchy and capitalism (West, 1981; Bowman, 2016).

Socialist womanist argue that even though women are oppressed in almost all societies, the degree and character of oppression depends upon the economic realities of a given society. They stress that in the society women are considered as birth giver, child rearer and socializer, caretaker of the sick people, etc. When women engage in the job-market, they are subjected to lower wages than men and victim of sexual harassment. To achieve liberation of women, the movement should be aimed at taking all issues collectively (Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997).

Socialist womanism wishes to promote equal wages and the unionization of women in the society. But it has remained silent on race, sexuality or disability. Social womanisy believe that the state supports the patriarchal structure that exists in the family. They have seen that women liberation is a necessary part of social, economic and political action (Wong, 1997).

Socialist womanism has evolved through the three goals: 1) it analyzes the exploitation of women as a result of the two interconnected aspects of patriarchy and capitalism, 2) it provides

extensive social analysis methods to realize historical materialism, 3) it shows the need for significant ideas in material analysis to determine human affairs (Ritzer, 2011; Gordon, 2013). Socialist womanist have seen that class differences among women influence their gender experience. For example, women from the upper classes may employ poorer women to do the domestic work for them (Brenner & Ramas, 1984). It stresses heavily on the economic dimension of gender inequality, the detriment of other areas of women's lives, such as sexuality, violence or abortion.

Socialist womanist find economic dependence of women on men as main cause of their subordination. Therefore, they want social and economic equality and financial independence of women (Brenner & Holmstrom, 2013).

#### **1.7.4.Radical womanism**

Radical womanism see the society as patriarchal, and it is dominated and ruled by men, i.e., men are ruling class, and women are the subject class. Moreover, they believe that women are not just equal but are actually morally superior to men and patriarchy can be replaced by matriarchy.They want to transform the women life and the society through radical actions (Tong, 2009).They think that men to be enemies of women and consider marriage as a hegemonic contract to exploit women. They prefer the use of technologies to men for the fulfillment of sexual desires and reproductive need (Abbasi, 2015).

The early radical womanist Betty Friedan has realized that women are oppressed by the cultural construction of society because of their sex. The radical womanist group shows logic that a woman's decision to marry should be a rational strategy rather than surrendering to a false sentiment. They viewed „gender“ as a socially contrived absolute category than masculinity or femininity (Rudy, 2001). Mary Daly and other activists have argued that women are closer to ecology, but men are to their sexuality. According to radical womanism, women exploitation has resulted from socio-cultural practices in patriarchal societies and the Marxism believes that the main source of oppression and causes is inferior position of women in the communities (Cronin, 2007).

Radical womanist believe that prostitution, pornography, stripping, massage parlors, escort services are sexual exploitation industries, and men routinely buy and sell objectified female bodies for their sexual pleasure. Womanist like Andrea Dworkin and Catherine Mackinnon are

very strongly against pornography, because it is dehumanizing and degrading for women (Jensen, 2021). In the 1980s, some radical womanist argued that participation of women in the manufacture of pornography and in prostitution were not link to patriarchy (Shrage, 1994).

### **1.7.5.Ecowomanism**

Ecowomanism is an organic combination of womanist and ecological thoughts that are articulated through the work of women gardeners, botanists, animal welfare advocates, etc. It focuses ecology and womanism into one point, and seeks to draw parallels between the exploitation of the environment and the exploitation of women. It is rooted in a reawakening of earth honoring and earth caring. It shows that women are closer to nature than men are (Anjum, 2014; Zhang, 2021). In the 21st century, the nature is in the dangerous position due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, commercialization and unlimited needs of human beings (Mohajan, 2015). Women and nature are same in various ways due to their biological status, reproductive role, and discrimination; both defined as passive subjects that subjected to violence and social inequalities (Zhang, 2021). Françoise d'Eaubonne (1920-2005), a French author, labor rights activist, environmentalist and womanist, introduced the idea of ecofeminism in 1974 through the publication of her book "Le Féminisme ou la Mort". She has realized that the only way to save the environment is through the destruction of male power by women (Lagarde, 2021). The movement was further developed by Ynestra King in about 1976 and became a movement in 1980 (Rao, 2012). Ecowomanist believe that male-dominated culture thrives on sexism, racism, class-exploitation, and environmental destruction. Of course, they agree that there is a close link between the liberation of women and of nature. They have called the women and men to re-conceptualize world in non- hierarchical ways (Anjum, 2014). They claim that environmental problems and women's issues are interrelated (Zhang, 2021). For example, women bring humans into the world; nature ensures the continuity of life on earth (Öztürk, 2020).

Ecowomanism views patriarchy and its focus on control and domination not only as a source of women's oppression but as being harmful to humanity as well as destructive of all living creatures and the earth itself (Warren, 1990). It stresses that humans and nature must live in harmony to maintain ecological balance and sustainable development (Zhang, 2021). It observes women rights and empowerment that are related to political, economic, social and cultural factors, which benefit all living creatures. Women can reproduce and create a life, just like

nature. For example, women create humans; they raise children and feed them (Kristeva, 2016; Öztürk, 2020). Nature is just like a mother, ensures the continuity of life on earth with its resources. Nature is mentioned as “Mother Nature, motherland, or mother earth” (Roach, 2003). They wanted to use the term ecological womanism to indicate that women are natural environmentalists, by virtue of being born as women (Raj & Davidson, 2014).

#### **1.7.6.Cultural womanism**

Cultural womanism mainly describes about “female nature or female essence” that attempts to revalue and redefine attributes ascribed to the feminine character. This female essence includes a greater emphasis on cooperation, relationships, and peace; also referred to as an ethic of care. The cultural womanism tries to find differences between men and women, based on biological differences in reproductive capacity. It seeks to validate feminine attributes that have been systematically undervalued within a patriarchal society. It also highlights the conflict between women and men, but reflects the variation of culturally created rather than biologically innate (Lewis, 2021; Ghodsee, 2004). Cultural womanism refers to a philosophy that men and women have different attitudes to the world around them, and that greater value should be applied on the way women approach the world. In some cases, a woman’s way of looking at the world is actually superior to that of men (Alcoff, 1988). Cultural womanism is a theory that praises the positive aspects of women.

The basic principle of cultural womanism is that women have a different culture and even a different epistemology, such as different ethics, ideas, and language from men (Evans, 1995). It attempts to unite all women in a common sisterhood, regardless of ethnicity, race, class or age. The goal of it is to create and maintain healthy relationships and environments that are free of masculinity values (Alcoff, 1988).

Many scholars have observed that when liberal and radical womanism faces difficulties to achieve gender equality in the society; cultural womanism shows ways of thinking, acting, and speaking as distinctive and inherent qualities to build a woman’s shared culture (Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982). Cultural womanist combat woman oppression through means of the creation and sustainability of separate woman-centered spaces that “promote female biology as the basis of women’s power”. They look to find solutions for how the worst offenses of patriarchy can be mitigated (Hyde, 2013). Cultural womanist identified women as

superior/preferable to qualities identified with men, whether the qualities are products of nature or culture. Male characteristics are harmful to society, and female characteristics bring benefit for the society. For example, less aggression among nations would lead to less war and conflict (Echols, 1983; Lewis, 2021).

### **1.7.7.Black womanism**

Black womanism plays an important role in the formation and stability of black families in the USA. It emphasizes on the issue of racism that is a main cause of oppression to women of color, and black women face different forms of oppression that is racist and sexist (Désiré, 2016). Majority of African black women were brought to the USA to work as slaves, in a form of oppression. In the American society, black women and white women have different status. The lives of African-American women have been critically affected by racism, sexism, classism, and ethnicism. All African Black women have experienced living in a society that devalues them, and most of them are victim of much oppressions, such as child rape, child marriage, female genital mutilation, etc. (Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016). Backgrounds for Black women is challenging because, they are considered to be less than human, and “there is no more isolated subgroup in academe than Black women” (Carroll, 1982). In the society, ethnicity is determined by cultural factors, such as nationality, language and culture; while race is determined by physical characteristics, such as skin color, facial features, and hair type (Betancourt Lopez, 1993). Black womanist have expanded the notion “Black womanism” to include issues of class and sexuality, in addition to race and gender (Salzman, 2006). Maria Stewart (1803-1879), Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), and Frances E. W. Harper (1825-1911), agitated for the rights of women of color. In 1851, Sojourner Truth, a former slave who became a public speaker later, told that when white women were struggling for voting and labor rights; black women struggled to be seen themselves as human, i.e., in the same society, black women face a radically different situation than white women (Brezina, 2005; Ribeiro, 2016). womanism African-American writer Alice Walker coined the term “Womanism” in 1979 to describe an intersectional alternative to white feminism. In 1982, her novel “The Color Purple” is published where she used “Womanist” to describe the black feminist movement (Walker, 1983).

Liberation of black women requires freedom for all people, which will end the racism, sexism, and class oppression. The movement believed that the moral and social climate which perceived

women as second-class citizens needed to change, and women should be free to define their own individual identity as part of human society. The women liberation movement focused primarily on middle-class; white women and black liberation movement focused on black men, but black women remain in invisible category and being subjected to sexism (Rue, 1970; Cook, 2011; Studer, 2017).

### **1.7.8. Postmodern womanism**

Postmodern womanism, also called the third generation womanism is a combination of post structuralism, postmodernism, and French womanism. These three terms have emerged spontaneously at the sometimes, and also their themes overlap and philosophies seem contradictory. On the other hand, postmodern womanism has an uneasy relationship between womanism and postmodernism; because some womanism believe postmodern thought weakens the attacks that womanist theory attempts to create, while others are in favor of the union (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). Postmodern womanist believe that there is a multiplicity of women and women's movements, which represent diverse and divergent interests. They recommend a wide range of social forms and behaviors, and argue against a relatively uncomplicated account of oppression based on patriarchy. Postmodern womanism is the destabilization of what is considered normal or natural in relation to gender (Alcoff, 1997). Postmodern womanism rests heavily on social constructivist theories arguing that gender is a construct of language, or discourse (Sands & Nuccio, 1992). It seeks to develop a new paradigm of social criticism that does not rely on traditional philosophical reinforcements and emphasizes the relations of the womanism issues to the languages, sex, and power (Edman, 1997; Kauthar, 2005).

Postmodern womanism reject a common womanist position and support a plurality of perspectives on knowing, such as essentialism, philosophy, and universal truths (Hawkesworth, 1989). They believe that knowledge is always provisional, open-ended, and relational, and each woman can capture the truth differently (Wallin, 2001). They also want to remove gender inequality from the society. They focus on how discourse in society creates social assumptions about how women should be treated. They have followed the ways in which sexual difference is shaped by language and culture (Butler, 1999). They believe that truth is not absolute and merely constructed by individuals groups, culture, and language (Barrett, 1980).

## 1.8. Gender Womanism Criticism

covers almost anything that has to do with female emancipation and empowerment. Jide Balogun (2011) holds that womanist criticism is an attempt by the women-folk to universally liberate itself from male chauvinism and patriarchy. He argues that while the shift is not intended to cause gender terrorism, it aims at making the position of women at home, at work, at school, in the street etc more challenging to themselves and their men-folk in the social phenomenon. The radical posture of feminist criticism is reflected in its dissatisfaction with the place of women in global social and cultural situations. Because of its interest in social issues, womanism criticism, like Marxism, is historical, political and it proposes a dynamic ideological commitment.

The womanist literary critic's interest is to pursue the cause of women in literary texts. This is accomplished by encouraging women authors to write novels, plays and poems. Furthermore, the feminist literary writer features and makes women characters and ideas dominant in her works.

Such writers endeavour to propagate feminist thought, female concerns, ideas and accomplishments and to recover the largely unrecorded and unknown history of women in earlier times (Jerome Beaty, 2002).

According to Lois Tyson (2006), womanism criticism examines the ways in which literary texts reinforce patriarchy because the ability to see when and how patriarchal ideology operates is crucial to one's ability to resist it in one's life. Feminists have observed that the belief that men are superior to women has been used to justify and maintain the male monopoly of positions of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political, and social power.

That is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally, not biologically, produced. For womanist critics, patriarchal ideology works to keep women and men in traditional gender roles and thereby maintain male dominance. Women are oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically and patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which they are kept so. In every domain where patriarchy reigns, a woman is the other: she is objectified and marginalised, defined only by her difference from male norms and values, and by what she (allegedly) lacks but which men (allegedly) have.

## **Conclusion**

The present chapter, is an attempted to provide an overview about gender in general along with the concept of gender performativity and gender writing issues with language and writing style are influenced by gender. Womanism, its categories and gender womanism criticism are further elements that has been tackled throughout the echapter as well.



## **Chapter Two**

# **Historical and Literary Context Of African American Literature**

## **Introduction**

This chapter provides a review about African American literature and female writers. Initially, the chapter presents a characteristics of African American literature. In addition, it gives a description about the most known figures of African American female writers of the period, like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker. Furthermore, The chapter reviews the major female themes in gender writing and the role of female writers in black literature.

### **2.1. African American Literature ( Black literature )**

During the colonial period in America, Black Americans lived under oppression by their white colonial masters. They never enjoyed similar rights as the white American citizens. Blacks were denied the freedom of expression. Because of this, African American writers decided that it would be good to present their grievances through writing. This situation led to the rise of many African American writers who championed the rights of fellow blacks through the writings, which incorporated oral forms such as sermons, gospel music, spirituals, jazz, and blues.

The study will focus on the historical background of the Afro-American literature. The areas of focus will be the African American literary realism, modernism, naturalism, and neorealism. This study will be of significance to readers and academicians as it will provide them with general knowledge of the relevance of the African American slavery to the development of literature. It will also give the reader an opportunity to understand the significance of Black American literature in the liberation of African Americans from oppression.( W.E.B Du Bois )

Black American literature refers to the fictional and nonfictional works of Americans of African descent. The commencement of the preRevolutionary War marked the engagement of African Americans in creative writings, which were often reflecting the oppression of the black people by the whites. African American literature is rich in social insights that seek the identity of blacks within the American continent. The earliest writers sought equality in aspects such as human rights. The brutal conditions of slavery resulted in a certain genre of writing that was later labelled as the slave narrative. African American literature writers included novelists, short story writers, poets, and playwrights. They used different forms of writings from slave narratives to fiction. This essay provides insight into the Black American literature by looking into the subjects

that describe its historical background including African American literary realism, African American literary modernism.

### **2.1.1. Historical Background of Afro-American Literature**

For a long time, the blacks living in America have been undermined, disrespected, and mistreated by the white community due to their skin colour. Subjugation and slavery to black people were common practices between the mid-1700s and early late 1800s. This was expected considering the brutal transportation of slaves, especially from Africa, to America to work as black soldiers and cowboys in the farms of rich white men. Over the years, the inhumane treatment and discrimination that followed eventually became unbearable (Bell,p.105). African American leaders of the time began a resistance movement that aimed at calling off discrimination and provision of equal opportunities to the people of colour. Although this movement brought about some changes, the blacks still faced unequal distribution of power and their participation in political life was quite restricted. Inopportunately, the black community was unable to express its concerns over mistreatment and prejudice due to the lack of power in a chauvinistic nation. (Spring, 1989, pp. 187-192 ).

With time, the rise of black writers paved way for self-expression through literary works. However, the English literary writers at that time still described them as brutal and ugly. This position was vicious and inhuman. The African Americans were not comfortable with this outlook; therefore, they resorted to indirect complaints (Bell 105). These complaints of slavery and brutality on the blacks led to the rise of a certain genre of writing known as slave narrative.

The black writers who felt that being undermined due their race and skin colour was not good opted to use writing to establish a place for themselves in the American community. The significance of African American literature cannot be underrated in a society that has come a long way of evolution. Many of their works are a reflection of the institutions of slavery in the US (Bell,p.105). Various ethnic groups of African origin were forced to merge into an identity named African American. Because of this, new forms of verbal expression emerged. According to Bell, Afro-American literature that starts with undisputed conventions about African cultural unity disseminates the unfortunate notion that literary traditions were a result of immigration and assimilation of a weaker race into the indigenous American society (p.103). Black literature was mainly dominated by nonfictional psychic descriptions prior to the peak of the slave narrative.

These writings were advanced by people who had escaped from slavery (Washington,p.65). They composed stories about their fight for liberation in the face of a brutal white community. For example, Elisabeth Keckley, who was a slave, narrates how she obtained her freedom. In her narrative, she describes the cruelties that were subjected to her in the process of enslavement. She chooses to focus on a particular occurrence that “molded her character”, and how she proved herself worthy of her salt (Du Bois,p.42).

African Americans did not entirely forget their languages and cultures during the period of slavery in America. It is of the wrong opinion to say that African Americans arrived in the United States as hopeless pagans. Bell reveals that the native Africans did not overlook their motherland languages and traditions (p.99). Nevertheless, Africans in the United States had to struggle to learn how to communicate in a land where there were many people who spoke different languages.

The Harlem Renaissance greatly shaped the fictional and nonfictional works of the black people, which were inspired by the migrating writers from the North and settlers originating from the Caribbean Island and Jamaica. There was an explosion of the African American writing and expansion of subjects of black literature (Dickson-Carr,p.76). The most important subjects included the rise of African American writings, the reclamation of history, the resurgence of autobiography, the lesbian literature, and the rise of black grey literature. (Spring, 1989), pp. 187-192 (p.6). In the early days, the works of free slaves and blacks from the north had significant differences. While free blacks articulated their state of subjugation in varying literary forms, the blacks born in the north expressed each act of oppression through religious narratives. According to Dickson-Carr, the African American literature comprised tales, verses, and plays that showed the status quo of people from the African origin (p.76).

### **2.1.2. African American Literary Realism**

Realism is a term that has been used to mean truth to the observed facts of life. According to Bell, it denotes the conceptions of pragmatism and denial of the unreasonable and unrealisable (p.77). Realism is not only a reflection but also a construction of social reality. African American literature was written by Black Americans and it exclusively talked about the black community.

This literary position neglected the history of the black people who were interested in reading and writing about other people and not about themselves. Dickson-Carr asserts that African American literature is overly criticised for the representation of the blacks amidst a racist white community (p.12). It calls for open-mindedness to understand how literary works portray the image of the race while considering not only the resourceful choices and goals of black authors but also the prospects and capabilities of the readers.

Most writers of American literature imply that mainstream realism includes the period of time from the onset of the civil war to the new century, which focused on race relations to the south (Eastwood,p. 76; Dickson-Carr,p.121). During this period, the African American authors wrote fictions that were keen to ensure correct representation and examination of the lives of their people. The main reason for this representation was to conserve the white audience.

Therefore, the Black American authors decided to divert their attention from the mainstream realism, which never represented their interests (Diepeveen,p.23). This marked the beginning of Afro-American realism that promoted the image of their people in the face of the prejudiced white community. The African American writers including William Dean Howell, Pauline Hopkins, Chesnutt, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar among others decided to write fictions that provided a representation and exploration of the American way of life in numerous backgrounds (Diepeveen,p.25). The writings portrayed the black Americans as people who were deserving of equality with the Whites. Therefore, they decided to mix romance and realism, unlike the white American writers who dwelled in inequitable representation and tainting of the image of the black community. African American authors faced numerous critical and commercial expectations to portray their race in a realistic manner. According to Gates, black writers often suffered public criticism for exposing evading the partisan accountabilities that were assigned to them owing to their prominence in their race (p.8).

The African American literature is different from the kind of realism that was very popular at the end of the civil war and the First World War because it ignored the notion of romance. Instead, it used realism as a literary device. Before the civil war started, many Americans had requested that human rights be respected and slavery to be abolished (p.17). Many critics suggested that realism was the same as realistic setting and there was no clear distinction between

realism and naturalism. The realistic authors, therefore, used this language to create hatred towards black mistreatment.

### **2.1.3. African American Literary Modernism**

Modernism is defined as a movement of art (Eastwoodp. 6). It created a distinction between high and low art. The rise of radicalism began in Europe and America between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This period was characterised by an abrupt change from the traditional way of viewing and interacting with the world. It developed at a time when African Americans were not allowed to own any property (Eastwoodp. 6). During this period, only a few African Americans lived among the whites in the cities by sharing limited public space. During this period, racial ghettos emerged. However, it was only the African Americans who occupied the ghettos.

Improvisation was not an easy task for the African Americans. The act of improvisation was not luxurious but due to the conditions in which the African Americans lived, it was necessary to improvise. The ability to speak off the cuff was developed out of the counterculture of modernity that used what was available at hand to critique modernity from the inside. The African Americans and others who were oppressed in America were able to improvise within their communities while at the same time focusing these traditions on modern ways of thinking and being able to survive in the American soil. Because of this lateral thinking, the black community developed a new meaning in the general Americans lives, which subsequently influenced the change in their culture. It was highly believed that the Americas sought their uniqueness in their continued failure to live up their self-decreed, incomparable autonomous privileges (Eastwood,p. 12).

During this period of modernism, the African American writers began to redefine and change literature using various models both from the European and American traditions. They were also able to use models from their distinctive forms. The poems and short stories during this tie represented creative writing and each of the writers had influenced the African American literature. These writers used spirituals, blues, and folktales within the traditional frameworks.

For instance, Longstone Hughes's used blues to redefine stanzas or Ariri Baraka's recreation of the short story as a jazz composition (Eastwood,p.14).The African American artists used

modernism in their writings to convey the truth. They adopted the modern point of view in their writings because it displayed a strong sense of cohesion and similarities across genres and locations. The writers adopted modernism deliberately and self-consciously in their poems and songs; thus, they were able to convey meaning in ordinary language. The authors' awareness of racial matters could not be seen in their work during the period of modernism especially when they used the African American songs in their writings. Authors used music such as jazz was used for many different purposes among them being social contemporary and political protests. This shows that there is a perfect relationship between music and literature. The music clearly reflected the hopes of African Americans for finding a new life. They had a belief that someday they will be free of slavery and racial discrimination.

According to Damon-Bach et al., modernism signified a need to redefine and change the views of the black community as inferior in the face of the chauvinist white culture (p.45).

#### **2.1.4. The Neorealism Movement ( 1970 to present )**

Neorealism gives life description just as it is actually lived rather than giving an imagined likeness of the world. It emphasises the practical state of life, putting emphasis on actual activities instead of imagined theories. The African American literature over time was able to clearly bring out the picture of real life. The primary types of literature that was used included slave narratives and autobiographies. According to Dickson-Carr, "writings emphasised on the life of a society and the pressure of their community" (p.177). The reason why they were important was that they were based on certainty and were used mainly to talk about blacks in racist countries such as America. Today, African American neorealism focuses on giving a reflection of the lives of African American communities" (Dickson-Carr,p.745).

There was diversity in the African American literature during this period and all the genres were presented. Among the famous African American women writers in the 20th century included Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Gloria Naylor. According to the African American neorealist Dickson-Carr, "blacks are social beings and therefore they must not be separated from the social and historical contexts which develops their potential and highlights their relevance as individuals and giving them more hope" (p.177).

Social realism is mainly used when referring to the general middle-class life manners and truth in the 19th century. Today, African American novelists have changed both critical and traditional social realism with a view of bringing about the awareness of the association between capitalism, racism, and sexualism in the American society. Their novels inspire the readers to develop the political courage to stand for their rights and create a better tomorrow for themselves (Conder,p.50). As a result, the African Americans raised their voices against racism,sexism, and slavery. Many of them took measures to escape from the social injustices in the American soil. According to Bell, many people of American descent were profoundly disheartened by the state of the indecency of both their political and social systems, a situation that compelled them to pursue the restoration of morality in the country (p.130).

The presence of the black community in the political arena of the US has improved significantly over the years. Indeed, the civilisation of political institutions and insistence on ending discrimination allowed African Americans to vie for positions in the legislature, executive, and judiciary. For example, Douglas Wilder seized the opportunity to be the first African American governor in the US in 1989. Elsewhere, in 1992, Carol Moseley-Braun was chosen one of the Senate executives (Hill,p.15). Nonetheless, the state of the black Americans still remains desolate due to continued equality and discrimination by some members of the white community. The US is predominantly ruled by the whites. This position leaves restricted opportunities for the African Americans to ascend to ultimate political power. Many of the citizens of the African descent still live in impoverished neighbourhoods while the white elites occupy in the leafy suburbs (Hill,p.23). Although their political life is quite limited, their economic stance is even worse. In this regard, the election of Barack Obama as the first US president of African descent was undeniably a remarkable success to the black African community.

#### **2.1.5. Characteristics of Afro-American literature**

Afro-american writers novelists have changed both the political and social scenes of their fellows by affording a kind of histography that marked the era.so Afro-American literature characterized by set of features than can be spel out as follows:



### **a. Exploration of Identity**

African American literature often delves into the complexities of identity, including racial, cultural, and individual identity. Authors explore the struggles, challenges, and triumphs of characters as they navigate their sense of self within a larger societal context.((Hill,p.67)

Example: "Invisible Man" by Ralph Ellison. The novel follows an unnamed African American protagonist who grapples with his identity and invisibility in a racially divided society.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss )

### **b. Racial and Social Injustice**

African American literature often confronts and critiques racial and social injustices, shedding light on systemic racism, discrimination, and inequality. It explores the historical and contemporary experiences of African Americans, highlighting their resilience and the ongoing fight for justice.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss )

Example: "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee. While not written by an African American author, the novel examines racial injustice through the eyes of Scout, a young girl in the racially segregated South, as her father defends an innocent African American man accused of a crime.(ibid)

### **c. Oral Tradition and Vernacular Language**

Many African American writers draw upon oral traditions and incorporate vernacular language, infusing their works with the richness and rhythm of African American speech patterns, folklore, and storytelling traditions.

Example: "Their Eyes Were Watching God" by Zora Neale Hurston. The novel employs African American vernacular and dialect as it tells the story of Janie Crawford's journey of self-discovery in the 1930s.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss )

### **d. Representation and Empowerment**

African American literature often seeks to provide representation and empowerment for African Americans by showcasing their diverse experiences, achievements, and contributions. It

celebrates African American culture, history, and resilience, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss )

Example: "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas. The novel explores the life of Starr Carter, a teenage girl who witnesses the fatal shooting of her unarmed friend by a police officer. It addresses issues of race, activism, and the power of finding one's voice.

#### **e. Community and Family Bonds**

African American literature often highlights the importance of community and family bonds in the face of adversity. It explores the dynamics, traditions, and support systems within African American communities, emphasizing resilience, love, and unity.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss )

Example: "Beloved" by Toni Morrison. The novel depicts the story of Sethe, a former slave who finds solace and strength within her community and her relationship with her daughter, despite the haunting memories of her past.

#### **f. Cultural Pride**

African American literature celebrates African American culture and history, often with a sense of cultural pride and resistance to assimilation. Many writers use their work to challenge stereotypes and to promote a positive image of African American culture and identity.( AAVE) Overall, African American literature is a dynamic and diverse genre that incorporates a range of styles and themes. Its unique characteristics reflect the rich cultural heritage and ongoing struggles of the African American community in the United States.

#### **g. Historical Context**

African American literature is deeply connected to the history of slavery and the civil rights movement in the United States. Many African American writers draw on this history to explore themes of oppression, resistance, and social justice.( Dermetrice A.Worly and Beverly J.Moss)

## **h. Dual Identity**

Many African American writers explore the complexities of having both African and American identities. This duality is often reflected in themes of cultural heritage, family, and community.(ibid)

These characteristics are not exhaustive, as African American literature encompasses a wide range of themes and styles. However, they provide a glimpse into the richness and complexity of this literary tradition.

## **2.2. Toni Morrison as African American writer**

It is great to be a famous writer and also greater if you were a woman, but here, she is a black woman born in the early 30s of the 20th century, in my opinion it is the greatest because she was a womanist not just a feminist. Toni Morrison is not the first black woman to publish a novel discussing the black community and its suffering of racism. But Harriet E. Wilson did that before her in 1859 (Reuben). Harriet was unable to put her name on her book, due to being black as well as a woman. Since then, black women authors have come a long way in proving themselves as writers. The feminist movement played an important and a huge role in the lives of women allowing them to enjoy rights equal to those of men. While no one argues the importance of the movement to women, feminism unfortunately benefited white women while neglecting women of other races. The term feminism did not bring the same benefits to women of color. However, a movement called “womanism” supported black women writers.

Womanism is different from feminism in many ways, with the main difference being that womanism celebrates the culture, traditions and the characteristics of blacks. The word womanism was first introduced by the famous writer Alice Walker in her short story in 1979 titled “Coming Apart”. Walker called the wife in her story a womanist (Coleman,p. 2), explaining the extensively at the beginning of her *In Search of our Mother’s Garden: Womanist*. From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female.

Toni Morrison is another necessary and extremely acclaimed writer. She started her writing career within the decades of seventies. She has written several novels ranging from *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1974), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992),

Paradise (1999), Love (2003 ), A Mercy (2008). Toni Morrison is taken into account as a literary writer of intense intellect that reflects in her works. Her characters are complicated and then are so the settings. She is commonly referred to as a gifted story teller. Since her stories in real time hook up with her readers. Now-a-days she has acquired a canonical standing within the world of African-American literature.

### **2.2.1. Toni morrison's writing style**

Toni Morrison's composing style is effectively discernable because of her remarkable utilization of language. Her books are very easy to peruse, and she consolidates a wide range of styles into her composition, for example, exchanging the voice of portrayal all through her accounts for a difference in context. A portion of her most regularly utilized strategies is the utilization of unmistakable analogies, significant recorded references, and changed sentence structure.( Morrison. "The art of fiction",p.134 )

By inspecting these models, it will give the readers a more clear comprehension of the sort of writing that Morrison produces. Morrison is commonly known for her utilization of surprising yet powerful correlations that give a further portrayal of the subtleties she presents. She uses comparisons in her composition to enable the readers to associate the substance with substitute pictures and encounters.( Morrison. "The art of fiction",p.134 )

This can be found in *Song of Solomon* at Hagar's memorial service as Pilate murmurs "my young lady" and Morrison portrays the environment of the congregation as words hurled like stones into a quiet ravine. Another occurrence wherein Morrison utilizes a kind examination happens in *The Bluest Eye* when Pecola Breedlove lies wakeful around evening time, tuning in to her mother and father fight. The un-squabble evening embraces like the primary note of a lament in morosely eager air.

Plainly, these analogies make the books more intriguing, yet they likewise add to the general style of Toni Morrison's composition. One of the key signs of Morrison's work is her regular utilization of noteworthy references to history.

#### **a. Storytelling**

Storytelling custom has a significant impact on Toni Morrison's books. At the core of the novels, for example in *Beloved*, is the story that uncovers reality of Sethe's child murder. It is a

story where the characters and readers continue inquiring. “What truly occurred?” Created structure pieces so recollections and in numerous viewpoints, the story is a procedure of act of spontaneity. (Linda Wagner-Martin,p.99 )

This relies upon the proportional exercises between the speaker and the audience. The odds and ends of the story are connected each time incomplete, without unveiling the stunning end. The readers are given sufficient opportunity to utilize their creative mind to take an interest in the making of the story and assess the occasion and the characters.

### **b. A Technique of Forming a Connection**

Morrison embraces the use of storytelling in her work, inviting readers to parake in an enlightening connection between the creator and the audience. Her books embody the association between story and moral experience and the dialogic writer-crowd connection. Moreover, the narrating procedures can't be isolated from its ideological ramifications in conveying recollections and encounters of the past. What's more, Morrison challenges readers' convictions of ethical quality by presenting the African American beneficial encounters.

Her moral treatment of the perplexing circumstance in *Beloved* and *Sula* extends readers' comprehension of the prejudice which has not been so strikingly depicted in any history book. Keeping away from judgment on the character's troublesome goals, Morrison really censures subjection and prejudice. This prompts the mother's killing of their kids. Her literary treatment of the mother's troublesome choice moves the readers to rethink the ethical issues in public activity. (Linda Wagner-Martin,p.99 )

### **c. Mythologies**

Talking about Richard Wright, Toni Morrison saw that Wright's aesthetic undertaking was to make fine art that is both obviously delightful and furthermore political simultaneously. This equivalent difficulty rises in Morrison's work as a strain between a story situated in history and an account situated in a legendary poetic structure. Her books wind around a mystery, uncovering with every gyration substituting pieces of Black history and Black legend.(Linda Wagner-Martin,p.99 )

Despite the fact that Morrison does sporadically draw upon traditional folklore, she states that it is a rule to show that something has turned out badly. Rather, she makes a self-referential

framework that criticism has deciphered as enchantment authenticity, folkloric story, or Africanism. It distinguishes how the presence of a mythic imagination in Morrison's books rubs against the practical components of the work. Considerably more, these dueling surfaces are Morrison's production of characters who ride the fleeting temporal divide historical vs. (a-or extra-) historical.

#### **d. Selection of Character**

In the novels of Morrison, she doesn't utilize whites for the main characters. She is often criticized for this practice. She clarifies her selection of characters by stating that she looks exceptionally hard for dark fiction since she needs to take an interest in building up a group of dark work. They had the main surge of dark diversion, where blacks were composing for whites, and whites were empowering this sort of self-whipping. ( Valerie Smith,p.48)

She states that presently we can get down to the art of composing, where dark individuals are conversing with dark individuals. Furthermore, she expressed that the Black story has consistently been comprehended to be an encounter with some White individuals. She was certain there was a considerable lot of them. They're not appallingly fascinating to her. What is fascinating to her is what is happening inside the network. Furthermore, inside the network, there are no significant White players. When she thought, "What is life like in the event that they weren't there?" Which is the way I-we lived it, the manner in which I lived it."

Morrison's childhood has also added to her character decision, topics in her novel, and how she sees white individuals. Her father was the principal patron towards her point of view toward whites. Morrison has depicted her father's bigot mentality towards whites. At the point when she was two years of age, her family's house was put to fire while they were in it. Her father turned out to be considerably progressively annoyed with whites after the episode. ( Valerie Smith,p.48)

He basically felt that he was better and better than every single white individual. At the point when she was inquired as to whether she felt a similar way that her father felt she reacted that she didn't feel a remarkable same route as he did. With not many special cases, she felt that White individuals would deceive her: that in the last examination, they'll surrender her.

### **e. Use of Biblical Reference**

Toni Morrison's composing style is interesting, and it adds a great deal of profundity to her books. Her use of biblical references and characters attracts her crowd and keeps them intrigued. In each of the three of her works *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved*, Morrison implies biblical references, which gives her books a profound side.

In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison alludes to scriptural thoughts in the title of the novel and the character's names. The title *Song of Solomon* originates from a book in the bible. Milkman catches kids singing a tune about Solomon and in the wake of tuning in to the verses he finds the tune was expounded on by his granddad. (Morrison, p.136)

The names in the *Song of Solomon* are likewise related to the book of scriptures. There is a custom in the Dead family that they pick arbitrary names from the book of scriptures. Pilate's name was picked in light of the fact that her father loved the manner in which the letters looked. Pilate's name truly signifies Christ-executioner. Milkman's sisters additionally have names from the book of scriptures: first Corinthians and Magdalene.

*The Bluest Eye* references the book of scriptures with the style where Morrison expresses that they took the offensiveness in their grasp, tossed it as a mantle over them, and approached the world with it. This selection seems like it would be something straight out of the book of scriptures. *Beloved* references the book of scriptures from various perspectives. From the start, Morrison references the good book in a roundabout way with the topics of transgression, excusing each other, and recovery found in the novel. (Morrison, p.136)

Likewise, the story told where *Denver* and *Beloved* beverage the milk and blood from Sethe's bosom have solid scriptural hints to it. It tends to be taken as *Denver* and *beloved* getting the body and blood of Christ, or fellowship, from Sethe. The utilization of scriptural references in the books gives another point of view to the moral issues that Morrison presents.

### **f. Handling characters**

Toni Morrison has a particular style with her utilization of characters in each of the three of the books. In the books, in spite of the fact that there is one fundamental character, many character's accounts and purpose of point-of-views appeared. In *Song of Solomon*, despite the

fact that Milkman is the fundamental character, different characters, for example, Pilate, Hagar, and Guitar's accounts are told.

This adds to the profundity and unpredictability of the novel by having the option to see a perspective inverse of Milkman. For example, when perusing Guitar's story, the reader begins to accept his sane for being in the Seven Days Club and killing white individuals. It took another storyteller to escape the psyche of Guitar.

Morrison is truly adept at giving her readers access to the brains of her characters and revealing to them everything the character is feeling, seeing, or hearing. After just a couple of sections into the book, the reader feels like he or she is part of the story. In *The Bluest Eye*, in spite of the fact that the primary character is Pecola, the greater part of the story is told through the fundamental storyteller, Claudia. (Valerie Smith, p.160)

Like *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye* additionally tells the perspective of the troublemaker in the novel. In *The Bluest Eye*, the miscreant is Cholly who assaults her. Previous to finding out about the assault from Cholly's perspective, Cholly's biography is told. In light of the hard life he has had, the readers are not amazed that Cholly utilizes sexual brutality to discharge a portion of his repressed annoyance. Albeit Cholly's perspective doesn't eradicate the transgressions he has submitted. It makes his activities somewhat more middle of the road.

In '*Beloved*', there are numerous progressions between storytellers. It changes storytellers so frequently that there were times when one couldn't tell who was describing: *Beloved*, Sethe, or Denver. This not just adds to the multifaceted nature of the novel, it keeps the readers connected consistently. (Valerie Smith, p.160)

One of the minor storytellers in the novel, Stamp Paid, isn't a piece of Sethe's family, yet he is a white man from the town that watches the family at 124. This character shows what the outside view is of the family. The utilization of describing characters, although befuddling now and again, adds to the intricacy and profundity of the books by giving the readers of points of view of the circumstance.

#### **g. Division of books**

Morrison utilizes exceptional approaches to split her books. Although each of the three of the books is separated in an unexpected way, Morrison utilizes a similar rationale in separating



the tales. The Song of Solomon is separated into two areas. The primary area closes with Lena revealing to Milkman he is no longer part of the family. In the second part, Milkman sets out on an excursion to discover gold.( Valerie Smith,p.160)

He never finds the gold, however, he learns a great deal about himself and changes from an individual loaded with disdain and eagerness to an individual fit for adoration and consideration.

*The Bluest Eye* is isolated into four segments, in view of the seasons over a one-year time frame. The tale starts with harvest time and finishes in summer. Beloved is partitioned into three areas. Each area starts with 124 was and afterward a modifier. The main area starts 124 were angry, the subsequent segment starts 124 were boisterous and the third areas begin with 124 hushed up. ( Valerie Smith,p.160)

Every straightforward explanation about where the characters live says a great deal in three words; it quickly sums up the segment that follows the sentence. In the first place, the primary character, Sethe, is as yet furious about her Sweet Home understanding. The center area is the point, at which the most activity happens, which would clarify why 124 is depicted as uproarious. The last segment is the point at which the fundamental issue of the novel has been settled and things have quieted down, which is the reason 124 is depicted as tranquil.

### **2.3. Major themes tackled in gender writing**

African American Women's Literature By abolishing slavery, the United States appeared to both confront with and celebrate the removal of a huge barrier in forming a new national identity that expanded the boundaries of democracy set by its founding fathers. African American women' literature also reflects "the national preoccupation with defining freedom and citizenship, points out the connections between those ideas of the burgeoning American identity, and shapes those issues in relation to African American identity" (Foster and Davis,p 28). Works of African American women authors were ignored and marginalized for a long time because of their low status in society "It was, after all, a 'difficult miracle' to be black and published before the twentieth century" (Foster and Davis,p.16). Nowadays, however, they are essential to American literary tradition as well as American culture and have achieved the official status in the Western literary world.

African American women authors have thus frequently portrayed African American women as mothers: “By embracing motherhood/domesticity, black women writers redefined and enlarged the domestic sphere. For example, the home became the nursery of future leaders taught and inspired by the wife and mother” (Foster and Davis,p. 26). For example, Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, etc. exemplify, among other things, the appeal to rescue African American family and African American motherhood. This initiative, however, did not prevent African American women authors to promote national, public, and political identity as “advancing civic, social, and political equality preoccupies much of the literature by African American women in the nineteenth” (Mitchell and Taylor,p. 7) and further in the twentieth century.

### **2.3.1. Grisly Narratives of Slavery**

The earliest African-American literature was focused on the “indelible stain” of slavery on American soil. The writers focused on themes of slavery, emphasizing the cruelty, indignity and the ultimate dehumanization of slaves. They were mostly written by slaves who had escaped into freedom. Classic slave narratives include the “Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave” by Frederick Douglass and “Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl” by Harriet Jacobs. Slavery and slave narrative are recurring themes in African-American literature adopted in the modern times by writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.(Morrison, p 53\_ women in literature).

### **2.3.2. Alienation by Color-Line**

“The problem of twentieth century is the problem of color line,” ( W.E.B.Du Bois) wrote in “The Souls of Black Folk.” African Americans were free from slavery after the Civil War, but the color line kept them segregated and marginalized. Although the white population had a conception of “the Negro” as a group, it seemed to have no conception of it as an individual. Ralph Ellison’s “Invisible Man” is a shining example of this theme. His book is a cerebral account of a black man who, despite considerable efforts to overcome the color line, finds himself alienated from both blacks and whites.(ibid)

### **2.3.3. The New, Angry Negro**

The dramatic upheaval in material condition of African Americans is reflected in the literature they produced. Rapid industrialization and migration into cities like Chicago and New York created favorable conditions for a reinvented identity. While the theme of servility to dignity was always present in African-American literature, the “New Negro Movement” during the Harlem Renaissance emphasized radicalism verging on militancy in both politics and arts. Writers saw literature as a tool to bring sociopolitical changes, an attitude best expressed by W.E.B. Du Bois’ famous declaration, “all Art is propaganda and ever must be.”(ibid)

### **2.3.4. A Journey to Africa**

Africa looms large in the imagination of all African-American writers in two ways. Those who crossed the Atlantic on slave ships brought Africa with them to the American soil. This Africa survived orally in music and folklore and was later supplemented by writing. In addition, the descendants of slaves looked at Africa for inspiration and a cure to the trauma of slavery and a permanent sense of nostalgia for the lost homeland. Alex Haley's "Roots" is a classic example of the journey-to-Africa theme.(Morrison, p .53) .

### **2.3.5. Slavery**

One of the most common subgenres of African American literature revolves around the hardships of slavery. It focused on the difficult lives of American slaves and how they fared through the unjust and inhuman acts of labor exploitation.

Over 6000 former slaves from North America and the Caribbean were reported to have documented slave narratives based on personal experiences. Writing about their cruel lives as subjects honestly and expressively allowed these writers to control a part of history instead of letting their oppressors tell the story. It also raised awareness regarding the issue.(Morrison,p.53-69).

### **2.3.6. Alienation**

After the Civil War, even though slavery took a downturn, African American societies were still quite divided because of the color line. Many social minorities faced discrimination as they were sidelined and segregated into believing they didn’t belong. Neither were they welcomed to

fit into the color line, nor did their distinct cultures receive the respect they deserved. (Morrison, p.53-69).

### **2.3.7. Black Injustices**

Perhaps the most well-known element African Americans highlighted in their works is their commentary on black rights and the suffering inflicted by racially disturbed civilizations.(ibid) This matter has been raised throughout generations, from the Colonial Era to the twentieth century. The African American communities have always stood in a peculiarly challenging time in the history of the US. In many parts of America, a power gap remained between the black and white population as the general society was accustomed to enforcing and following discriminatory laws. The black vernacular people were known to have limited access to fundamental rights such as education and freedom, while the white people stood in authority beside them.

At such times, poetry was commonly used to celebrate black vernacular traditions and highlight important events in African American history. Famed pieces like ‘Money Road,’ ‘Malcolm X,’ and ‘The Negro Speaks of Rivers’ are only a few examples of how art and language were beautifully expressed to honor a culture that was little known and respected at the time. Thanks to these hidden gems, poetry is seen today as the standard way to represent minorities individually, distinctively, and wholeheartedly. ( Linda Wagner-Martin,p.80)

### **2.3.8. Black Vernacular Identity**

The troubles of the relationships between the black and white societies weren’t limited to slavery and cultural discrimination. The representation of African American culture in mainstream literature was also a serious issue. Many plays, dramas, fairytales, and other genres tended to leave out the black characters or represent them under an unheroic or uninspiring shadow. ( Linda Wagner-Martin,p.80)

## **2.4. The role of female writers in African American literature**

In the 19th century, many female writers paid attention to women’s status and race problem, but not many writers mentioned them at the same time. When the author read Bell Hooks’s book *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Woman and Feminism* (1981), she found that Bell deconstructed and restored the literary and artistic texts of white and black men and the stereotyped images of black

women in movies. She combed out several popular negative images of black women, revealed the strategies of racism, classism and sexism hidden behind them, and pointed out the truth of restoring the true image of black women in history, that is, creating a new image on the premise of establishing the subjectivity of black women. Her criticism of black feminism has irreplaceable value and significance in sending out the weak voice of marginal groups to the world and promoting the status of black women. There are two different images of black people in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, which both are impressive in American literature: the black people in the white writers' works are in line with the black people in the eyes of the mainstream American culture at that time, while the black writers actively speak out, trying to break the inherent impression of black people in American society. It is worth studying that black female have completely different self-consciousness in the works of white and black female authors. And in the study, the author found that the voice of black writers has caused certain changes to the stereotype of black women in American mainstream culture.

Furthermore Female writers have played a crucial role in shaping and contributing to African American literature throughout its history. Their unique perspectives and experiences have added depth, complexity, and a distinct voice to the literary landscape. From the early days of African American literature to the present, female writers have brought attention to the specific struggles and triumphs of Black women, shedding light on intersectional issues of race, gender, and class.

One of the earliest and most notable African American female writers is Phillis Wheatley, who was enslaved in the 18th century. Despite her circumstances, Wheatley became the first African American woman to publish a book of poetry in 1773. Her work challenged prevailing stereotypes of African Americans and demonstrated the intellectual capabilities of Black women.

In the 19th century, Harriet Jacobs published "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl" (1861), a groundbreaking autobiographical account of her experiences as an enslaved woman. Jacobs's work exposed the unique forms of oppression faced by Black women, including sexual exploitation, and provided a powerful narrative that humanized the experiences of enslaved African American women.

The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s brought a flourishing of African American arts and literature, and female writers played a significant role during this period. Writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and Jessie Redmon Fauset contributed to the movement with

their works exploring the complexities of race, gender, and identity. Hurston's novel "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (1937) is regarded as a classic of African American literature and is celebrated for its portrayal of a Black woman's journey of self-discovery and empowerment.

In the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, female writers like Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison emerged as prominent voices. Maya Angelou's memoir, "*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*" (1969), tackled issues of race, identity, and womanhood with honesty and lyricism, inspiring readers worldwide. Alice Walker's novel "*The Color Purple*" (1982) won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and addressed themes of race, gender, and sexuality, highlighting the resilience and strength of Black women. Toni Morrison, a Nobel laureate, explored the experiences of Black women and delved into African American history in novels such as "*Beloved*" (1987), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

In more contemporary times, African American female writers continue to make significant contributions to literature. Authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Jacqueline Woodson, Jesmyn Ward, and Roxane Gay have garnered critical acclaim and brought new perspectives to African American literature. Their works reflect a diverse range of experiences, addressing topics such as immigration, sexuality, and the complexities of modern Black womanhood.

Overall, female writers have played a vital role in African American literature by amplifying the voices and experiences of Black women, challenging societal norms and stereotypes, and contributing to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the African American experience. Their works have enriched the literary canon, influenced cultural discourse, and inspired future generations of writers.

## **2.5. Female Writers versus Female Characters**

African American female writers have contributed significantly to literature, creating compelling female characters that reflect the unique experiences and challenges faced by African American women. Here are some examples of African American female writers and their notable female characters:

**a. Toni Morrison**

Sethe in "*Beloved*" (1987): Sethe is a former slave haunted by the memories of her past, particularly the death of her baby. She embodies the resilience and strength of African American women. ( Woman at point Zero,1975)

**b. Alice Walker**

Celie in "*The Color Purple*" (1982): Celie is a young African American woman who endures years of abuse and oppression. Through her letters, she finds her voice and grows into a strong, independent woman. ( Woman at point Zero,1975)

**c. Zora Neale Hurston**

Janie Crawford in "*Their Eyes Were Watching God*" (1937): Janie embarks on a journey of self-discovery, navigating love, marriage, and societal expectations. She defies norms and seeks fulfillment on her own terms. ( Woman at point Zero,1975)

**d. Ntozake Shange**

The women in "*For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf*" (1976): Shange's choreopoem presents a series of interconnected stories featuring African American women, each grappling with different aspects of their identities and experiences. ( Woman at point Zero,1975)

**e. Jesmyn Ward**

Esch in "*Salvage the Bones*" (2011): Esch is a pregnant teenager living in a poverty-stricken, hurricane-threatened community. She is resilient and resourceful, navigating the challenges of motherhood and family dynamics. ( Woman at point Zero,1975)

**f. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

Ifemelu in "*Americanah*" (2013): Ifemelu is a Nigerian woman who immigrates to the United States. Through her experiences, Adichie explores themes of race, identity, and cultural assimilation.(ibid)

### **g. Maya angelo**

Maya Angelou, a highly influential writer and poet, portrayed a diverse range of female characters in her works. Through her writing, Angelou captured the experiences, struggles, resilience, and triumphs of African American women. Her characters embodied the complexity and strength of Black women, reflecting their individuality, vulnerabilities, and capacity for growth.( ibid)

One of Angelou's most notable works is her autobiography, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (1969). In this book, Angelou recounts her own childhood and adolescence, exploring her journey towards self-discovery and self-acceptance. The central character, Maya, represents a young Black girl grappling with racism, trauma, and the quest for personal identity. Through Maya's voice, Angelou exposes the challenges faced by Black women in a racially segregated society, while also highlighting their resilience and ability to rise above adversity.

In addition to her autobiographical works, Angelou created fictional characters that resonated with readers. In her novel "Gather Together in My Name" (1974), she continues Maya's story, depicting her experiences as a young single mother. The character navigates the hardships of poverty, motherhood, and the search for stability while remaining resilient and determined.

The phrase "African women writers" refers to African female writers who either make women the theme of their literary enquiry or female gender issues an essential part of their subject matter, and who engage in the projection of female characters in both their creative and critical literary works for a better understanding of women's identity, psyche, experience and their almost global tragic condition of subjugation. In this context, "African women writers" does not include male writers who may sometimes write about women, no matter how positive their perspective.

Although sexism and gender hierarchy already existed in Africa in pre-colonial times, colonialism aggravated the woman's condition with the introduction of western education which gave men an earlier opportunity to go to school. Consequently, there were initially only male African literary writers and critics who created stereotypical images and derogatory Roles for women to suit men's needs in everyday life. Such images include That of the all-sacrificing mother who devotes her whole life to the service of Her husband, children and the society, and never attaining full physical and mental development nor realizing self-fulfillment. One of



Africa's leading women writers, Buchi Emecheta has demonstrated the falsehood of this type of motherhood in her novel, *Joys of Motherhood*. Another erroneous image of women in male-authored works is that of woman as primarily a biological aperture or phallic receptacle to satisfy men's sexual needs. This is evident in Cyprian Ekwensi's *Jagua Nana* and Abdoulaye Sadjji's *Maimouna*. There is yet another stereotypical image of the unchanging, naïve, rural woman represented in Okot P. Bitek's *Song of Lawino*. This image tends to coincide with the wishes of most African men who prefer to discourage change and innovation in the lives of African women, so that women can remain subservient in the service of men and the society like the eternal cook or baby nurse and attendant to the old and infirm. The image of woman as depicted by male African authors is often culture-based and usually inhibited by certain factors like the period of writing, its social realities and the nature of the experience explored. In the works situated in traditional societies, woman is often depicted as home bound and contented with her roles as mother, daughter, wife or co-wife. Yet, while men's design, according to Simone de Beauvoir, has been not to repeat themselves in time, but to take control of the instant and mould the future (p.132), most women have been conditioned through patriarchal socialization to be involved only in repetitive tasks like child bearing, child-rearing and domestic chores which make them attain nothing but immanence and passivity. This is the image of them that male authors prefer to continue to represent in literature, as if time and culture were not dynamic.

These are just a few examples of the rich tapestry of female characters created by African American female writers. Each of these characters offers a unique perspective and contributes to the broader representation of African American women in literature.

## **Conclusion**

Studying African American literature is important as it allows for a deeper exploration of its historical and theoretical aspects, as well as the significant contributions made by African American women in this field. Numerous notable figures have emerged from this tradition, and their impact continues to resonate to this day.

# **Chapter three**

## **Exploration of The Impact Of Gender In *Beloved***

## **Introduction**

Toni Morrison was able to reflect her gender as a woman through her female characters because she could convey her developed voice, entrenched experiences, and carefully chose her characters to align with her gender and race. This ensured that her writing resonated with her life and history. Perhaps if novel written by man, it would not have had the same impact as Morrison's work. Therefore, gender plays a significant role in her beloved work through her feminine voices: *Sethe*, *Denver*, *Beloved*.

### **3.1. Methodology of study**

The method the analyses "*Beloved*" by Toni Morrison is descriptive analysis is aligned with the data collected and themes of novel, furthermore the criticism approach that used is "womanism" according to the gender of the author.

The percentage of sampling half of corpus and illustration for reliability of analysis refer to womenism and the impact of gender in novel.

#### **3.1.1. Corpus Analysis**

Analysis of corpus "*Beloved*" that allows to understand the data, extract the wanted results, and reach the aim of the study.

#### **3.1.2. Description of corpus**

*Beloved* is a novel written by Toni Morrison, published in 1987. It is a powerful and haunting work of literature that explores themes of slavery, trauma, memory, and the lasting impact of the past on the present. The novel has received critical acclaim and won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988.

*Beloved* is set in the aftermath of the American Civil War and focuses on the character of Sethe, an escaped slave who is living in Ohio. The story is deeply rooted in the horrors of slavery, as Sethe reflects on her past experiences and the traumatic events that shaped her life.

Central to the narrative is the haunting presence of Sethe's deceased daughter, Beloved, who returns as a ghost and disrupts the lives of sethe and her other daughter, Denver. One of the central themes of "*Beloved*" is the exploration of the psychological and emotional toll of slavery.

Morrison vividly depicts the dehumanizing effects of slavery, the violence inflicted upon enslaved individuals, and the enduring trauma they carry with them. Sethe's experience as a former slave and her attempts to forge a new life for herself and her family are profoundly affected by her past.

The novel is divided into three parts: the first part has eighteen chapters, the second part has seven chapters, and the third part has three chapters. The sum of these chapters is twenty-eight. The first part opens with the sentence “124 WAS SPITEFUL” (Morrison,p.3), which refers to the haunted house in which Sethe lives with her family. The seven chapters in part two refer to the letters of the name Beloved, the ghost of Sethe's baby. The third part starts with the sentence “124 WAS LOUD” (Morrison,p.199), which refers to Beloved, the ghost of Sethe's baby. The third part starts with the sentence “124 WAS QUIET” (Morrison,p.281), which refers to Beloved, the ghost of Sethe's baby.

### **3.1.3. Morrison's Biography**

Toni Morrison is one of the most celebrated authors in the world a Nobel Prize- winning author, was born on February 18, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, USA. Her original name is Chloe Ardelia Wofford, but for the world she is known as Toni Morrison. She was the second oldest of four children born to George and Ramah Wofford. Morrison had Southern roots even though she was born in Ohio. Her father's origins are from Georgia, and her mother's family was from Alabama. She was born during the Great Depression in the United States. Her father worked in different jobs just to provide his family's needs. Chloe's mother was a strong woman who was against injustice. Though Toni's childhood's times had been hard she had a joyful infancy; their house was full of music, her mother and grandfather loved singing, and this love was due to their life under the legacy of slave culture. As Barbara Kramer cited in her book *Toni Morrison: A Biography of A Nobel Prize Winning Writer*:

Although times were hard, Chloe's childhood was not bleak. The Wofford home was filled with music. Rama Wofford was in the church choir, and she was always singing around the house- Jazz, Blues, Gospel music, and Opera. Chloe's grandfather, John Solomon Willis, played the violin and for a while had supported his family with his music. (kramer,p.11).

The life of the Wofford's family was not full of joyfulness. They were living in slavery, they didn't have the right to live and have pleasure. However there were many traditions that the family had, such as storytelling, singing, and reading which gave them the opportunity to live like any person who practices his traditions. Even Toni's mother was a member of a book club. Toni lived in a multicultural environment; she used to go to school with Greek, Italian, German, Irish, and African-American children. Her parents transmitted to her the African- American cultural education through folklore and myths.

The family lived in the Midwest of America so it possessed a great appreciation and love for black culture. Her father's parents had died before her birth; she never knew them. Wofford's family is so close; each one of them is told to be responsible for his acts; it is maybe due to the legacy of slavery which separates families and makes each one of them responsible for only himself. Her career as a writer was a direct consequence of her family's influence, 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. Morrison spent a great deal of time with her extended family, particularly with her maternal grandparents. (Gillespie, p.3).

The influence of her grandparents is seen through her novels. Morrison did not experience slavery, but she lives it through the stories of slaves told by her grandparents. They helped her to know more about the past.

### **3.2. Themes**

Morrison select's the themes in '*beloved*' refer to her gender and her experiences and history.

#### **3.2.1. The Trauma and Memory of Slavery Following**

The abolishment of slavery, the trauma of enslavement still follows Sethe and Paul D as their relationship forces them both to remember the horrors of their pasts. This trauma persists in various hauntings from the haint possessing house 124 to the sudden appearance of *Beloved*. Each haunting reminds the formerly enslaved characters of the residual trauma they grapple with even long after slavery's abolishment. Both Sethe and Paul D struggle with their coping mechanisms at the start of the novel, moving between repression and silence. For Sethe, her isolation from the townspeople has enabled her to avoid confronting the horrors of her

past, particularly her violent actions toward her own children. However, the temperamental haint of 124 physically articulates the anger and pain that Sethe has repressed by shaking the house and tossing its furniture. The haint, the spirit of Sethe's dead daughter, imbues the house with "baby's venom" (p.3). And it is also a constant reminder of Sethe's fear of being enslaved once again. Paul D has coped with his enslavement and subsequent imprisonment by moving from place to place. House 124 is one of the first places he has settled in a while. His growing intimacy with Sethe, a woman he has desired since they were enslaved together at Sweet Home, compels him to speak about his traumas for the first time. However, the process of narrating his traumatic experiences is not easy, as he is practiced in keeping his past to himself. He has placed his feelings in a "tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (p.86). Like Sethe, he has been desensitized by the rapidity of his traumatic experiences during his enslavement and imprisonment. The only viable way of coping he has had all these years is not to feel. Throughout the novel, Sethe and Paul D heal from their traumatic pasts and reconcile with their painful memories of enslavement.

### **3.2.2. The Destruction of Black Identity**

Long after the abolishment of slavery, white people enact control over black people through the destruction of black identity. The most violent example of this harm is the schoolteacher's methods of controlling and punishing the enslaved black people at Sweet Home. His cruel punishments include burning Sixo alive and whipping Sethe when she informs him that his nephews raped her. He is able to justify his dehumanization of them by assigning white superiority over their black identity. As an educator, he practices eugenics, a science rooted in biological racism, and studies the bodies and practices of his black slaves, establishing ideas about black inferiority. To the schoolteacher, the ownership and control of black slaves is the same as taming animals. When he finds Sethe in the shed with her injured and murdered children, he does not express any emotion over the scene but rather calculates his own losses in labor and property value. He determines that Sethe has "gone wild" (p.176).

As horses do when they reach their threshold for physical punishment. Slavery's psychic and physical harms also have a detrimental impact upon kinship among the black townspeople in the novel. While Grandma Baby Suggs labors to produce a sense of community and healing for the townspeople, they betray her family by neglecting to inform her of the slave catchers' arrival.

While they have all benefitted from Grandma Baby Suggs' words of wisdom over the years, they also grow increasingly jealous of her life when her family slowly rejoins her. Grandma Baby Suggs is so heartbroken by this betrayal from her black community that she becomes sick shortly after and passes away. To her, the betrayal is the fault of whiteness, leading her to proclaim "There is no bad luck in the world but whitefolks" (p.105). The persistent influence of whiteness continues to disrupt black kinship, even in a town of black people who have the opportunity to protect one another.

### **3.2.3. The Intimacy of Mother-Daughter Relationships**

While there are different forms of intimate relationships throughout the novel, the most prominent ones are between mothers and daughters. For Sethe, the trauma of motherhood begins with her own mother, who killed every one of her children but Sethe. While Sethe cannot comprehend the meaning behind her mother's actions when she is younger, she will go on to repeat her mother's violent actions against her own children to prevent them from being captured into slavery. In both incidents, the mother permits the survival of one daughter who will live to either break the cycle of intergenerational trauma or sustain the pain for another generation. For Sethe, this tension is exemplified through her two daughters, Denver and Beloved. Whereas Denver stands for the future of growth and healing from trauma, Beloved represents the inability to let go of the past. Denver grows from protecting Beloved to shielding her mother from her dead sister's possession. Despite being afraid of her mother's capacity for violence, Denver also realizes from witnessing Beloved's possession that "if Sethe [doesn't] wake up one morning and pick up a knife, Beloved might" (p.285).

Denver witnesses her mother's pain over time and understands Beloved's possession for what it is. Meanwhile, Beloved's possession represents an unwillingness to heal. Sethe nurses this possession by providing motherly love in excess, spoiling Beloved and feeding her own guilt over killing her child. Realizing this is not sustainable, Denver seeks outside help, disrupting the abusive pattern of mother and daughter relationships by being open to new forms of kinship that might heal them.

### 3.3. The Impact of Gender on Writing

Gender is depicted in multifaceted ways throughout Toni Morrison's Southern gothic text , *Beloved* . The reader is able to acknowledge the concepts of matriarchy , the maternal and female strength which are embodied within Sethe ; a character that opens up a dialogue on the question of the black female identity within a system rife with the combination of patriarchy and white supremacy . This leads to repeated gender subversion , notably through the way in which the men in the novel are depicted as either docile , weak , and unable to function or perverse in comparison to the strength some female characters in the novel demonstrate. Paul D , the only man given a significant voice in *Beloved* further highlights this gender subversion as he constantly grapples with what it means to be masculine in a postbellum society . In addition to this , Morrison's Hire Writer placement of women who persevere despite subjugation at the hands of white , male oppressors at the center of the novel promotes the intersectional feminist idea that black women are equipped with strength despite having multiple oppressors . Morrison also uses language to " manipulate the passage of time " by separating Sethe's experiences of slavery as a woman from her present post - war experiences , and in doing so highlights the " fluidity of [ female ] pain " .

However , although Morrison presents the women in a more positive light than the men , the magical realist nature of the novel , first shown through 124 and then embodied by *Beloved* , appears to oppose this by suggesting that perhaps the psychological constraints of the past can haunt ( literally ) black women , and highlight the limitations to their empowerment. "*Beloved*" symbolizes the emotional , and spiritual devastation of slavery ; devastation that continues to haunt those characters who are former slaves even in freedom " . Therefore , the aim of this essay is to explore the ways in which Morrison uses themes such as motherhood , and strong female identities to offer a narrative to the black women living in the postbellum South ( when women's slave narrative began to be explored ). Also, analyzing the psychological consequences of slavery for the men and women in "*Beloved* ". Fear and the lack or loss of identity have a significant part to play in the lives of the black male characters in the novel and " Howard and Burglar had run away ... " (p. 3 ) Sets the tone for Morrison's treatment of gender in *Beloved* . Fear and fragility of identity are first attached to the masculine with Howard and Burglar's escape from 124



" as soon as merely looking in the mirror shattered it ... the moment the house committed what was for [ them ] the one insult not to be borne or witnessed the second time " (p. 3 ) .

This leaves the women Denver , Sethe , and Baby Suggs as its only occupants , and thus signals the continuation of the theme of female strength from the first page of the novel . The fact that it doesn't take much for the boys to run away from 124's provocations of them as opposed to Baby Suggs who " didn't even raise her head " (p. 4 ).leaves them without a voice in the novel ; perhaps as a forfeit for their lack of strength .

However , through her male characters ' lives in *Beloved* , Morrison demonstrates the complexities and paradoxes inherent in the making of black masculinities and the oppression and denial of selfhood they experienced in a slave owning era ' can be viewed through Paul D. He , unlike Harold and Burglar , is allowed by Morrison to be vocal about the fragility of his masculinity due to its definition being left to that of his white slave master ; " is that where manhood lay ? In the naming done by a white man who was supposed to know ? " (p.147).

The concept of naming a person is significant due to the identity it provides as ' an extension of its bearer , a source of his power , and a possible route to the inner being , therefore in having his definer left in therefore in having his definer left in the hands of Garner , his identity as a black man becomes fragmented , resulting in inner conflict . Gender subversion comes into play when matriarchy and the maternal are presented by Morrison as the cornerstone of strength as opposed to Paul D's fragmented sense of self . Sethe's character is the embodiment of this and she defines herself through the maternal rather than gleaned her identity from the actions of a schoolteacher and his nephews although , through the act of milk stealing , they make an attempt to subdue such a definition : ' They used cowhide on you ? ' ' And they took my milk . ' They beat you and you were pregnant ? ' And they took my milk ! ' (p.20 )

With a single act , the schoolteacher's nephews illustrate the ease with which the ostensible bodily signifier of maternal nurturance -breast milk-functions instead as a ... tool for the furtherance of schoolteachers ( white ) family line ' rather than for her children . The repetition of " they took my milk " reinforces the painful nature of this maternal violation , thus representing the way in which the manipulation of black motherhood through the coerced wet nursing that took place in the antebellum South . However , through " my " ,

Sethe shows a willingness to verbally take back ownership of her milk and her identity despite such psychological trauma whereas her husband Halle "broke ... like a twig"(p. 81).

after witnessing Sethe's defilement . Although through gender socialization , we have been led to unquestioningly believe in the idea that masculinity equals strength , bravado , the ability to be the sole provider for one's family , etc. , whilst women are portrayed as the more vulnerable, ' the weaker sex ' , Morrison blurs this view with Halle's ' breaking ' His emasculation brought about first by his status as a slave and secondly by his inability to save his wife is paralleled by Sethe who manages to empower herself albeit a slave too and the violated . Sethe's " nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children " (p. 236 ) can be viewed as a sign of the way in which the placement of her identity in motherhood gives her the strength to undertake the task of escaping Sweet House and its patriarchal , pervasive and oppressive regime ; schoolmaster its dictator :

" I did it.I got us all out . Without Halle too . Up till then , it was the onlything I ever did on my own./Decided./ I birthed them and I got emout and it wasn't no accident / I had help , of course , lots of that , but still , it was me doing it ; me saying , Go on , and Now" (p.190 ).

### **3.4. Female Characters and Various Generation**

The effect of gender writer on female characters representation

#### **a. Sethe**

Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, is a proud and noble woman. She insists on sewing a proper wedding dress for the first night she spends with Halle, and she finds schoolteacher's lesson on her "animal characteristics" more debilitating than his nephews' sexual and physical abuse. Although the community's shunning of Sethe and Baby Suggs for thinking too highly of themselves is unfair, the fact that Sethe prefers to steal food from the restaurant where she works rather than wait on line with the rest of the black community shows that she does consider herself different from the rest of the blacks in her neighborhood. Yet, Sethe is not too proud to accept support from others in every instance.

Despite her independence(and her distrust of men), she welcomes Paul D and the companionship he offers.

I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running from nothing, I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner; it cost too much!" (Sethe.p 76)

### **b. Denver**

Sethe's daughter Denver is the most dynamic character in the novel. She is shy, intelligent, introspective, sensitive, and inclined to spend hours alone in her "emerald closet," a sylvan space formed by boxwood bushes. Her mother considers Denver a "charmed" child who has miraculously survived, and throughout the book Denver is in close contact with the supernatural.

Despite Denver's abilities to cope, she has been stunted emotionally by years of relative isolation. Though eighteen years old, she acts much younger, maintaining an intense fear of the world outside 124 and a perilously fragile sense of self. Indeed, her self-conception remains so tentative that she feels slighted by the idea of a world that does not include her—even the world of slavery at Sweet Home. Denver defines her identity in relation to Sethe. She also defines herself in relation to her sister—first in the form of the baby ghost, then in the form of Beloved. When she feels that she is being excluded from her family's attentions—for example, when her mother devotes her energies to Paul D—Denver feels threatened and angry. Correspondingly, she treats Paul D coldly much of the time.

"Hot, shy, now Denver was lonely. All that leaving: first her brothers, then her grandmother serious losses since there were no children willing to circle her in a game or hang by their knees from her porch railing. None of that had mattered as long as her mother did not look away as she was doing now, making Denver long, downrightlong, for a sign of spite from the baby ghost."(Denver.p39)

### **c. Beloved**

Beloved's elusive, complex identity is central to our understanding of the novel. She may, as Sethe originally believes, be an ordinary woman who was locked up by a white man and never let out of doors. Her limited linguistic ability, neediness, baby-soft skin, and emotional instability could all be explained by a lifetime spent in captivity. But these traits could also support the theory that is held by most of the characters in the novel, as well as most readers: Beloved is the embodied spirit of Sethe's dead daughter. Beloved is the age the baby would have been had it

lived, and she bears the name printed on the baby's tombstone. She first appears to Sethe soaking wet, as though newly born, and Sethe has the sensation of her water breaking when she sees her. Additionally, Beloved knows about a pair of earrings Sethe possessed long ago, she hums a song Sethe made up for her children, she has a long scar under her chin where her death-wound would have been dealt, and her breath smells like milk.

Beloved as a representation of Sethe's dead mother. In (Chapter 22), Beloved recounts memories that correspond to those that Sethe's mother might have had of her passage to America from Africa. Beloved has a strange manner of speaking and seems to wear a perpetual smile traits we are told were shared by Sethe's mother. By (Chapter 26).

What was unusual (even for a girl who had lived all her life in a house peopled by the living activity of the dead) was that a white dress knelt down next to her mother and had its sleeve around her mother's waist. And it was the tender embrace of the dress sleeve that made Denver remember the details of her birth"(P.61)

#### **d. Baby suggs**

Baby Suggs has a remarkable ability to maintain an open heart and nurturing disposition despite the physical and spiritual suffering she experienced in her life. As the narrator explains, once she arrived in Cincinnati she felt profoundly exhausted. This exhaustion is the reason she turned to preaching: "[She] decided that, because slave life had 'busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb, and tongue,' she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart—which she put to work at once." Baby Suggs's commitment to care in spite of her profound existential exhaustion marks her as an exceptional figure in the novel. She is capable of holding space for others' trauma, which in turn enables healing. In the final section of the novel, when Denver sets out to find work and support from her neighbors, the community's longstanding grudge against Baby Suggs finally begins to wane. Just as Baby Suggs provided a space of healing for her community, at the end of the novel the community bands together to fend off Beloved in an act of care for Sethe and Denver. "A man ain't nothing but a man," said Baby Suggs. "But a son? Well now, that's somebody."(p 109)

### **e. Lady Jones**

Lady Jones, a light-skinned Black woman who loathes her blond hair, is convinced that everyone despises her for being a woman of mixed race. Despite her feelings of alienation, she maintains a strong sense of community obligation and teaches the underprivileged children of Cincinnati in her home. She is skeptical of the supernatural dimensions of Denver's plea for assistance, but she nevertheless helps to organize the community's delivery of food to Sethe's plagued household. Gray eyes and yellow woolly hair, every strand of which she hated—though whether it was the color or the texture she didn't know. (p.26.247)

In fact, she hates the white part of herself so much that she does whatever she can to escape it, including marrying "the blackest man she could find" (26.247).

### **f. Ella**

Ella worked with Stamp Paid on the Underground Railroad. Traumatized by the sexual brutality of a white father and son who once held her captive, she believes, like Sethe, that the past is best left buried. When it surfaces in the form of Beloved, Ella organizes the women of the community to exorcise Beloved from 124.

"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" (p.65.3).

### **g. Amy Denver**

A nurturing and compassionate girl who works as an indentured servant, Amy is young, flighty, talkative, and idealistic. She helps Sethe when she is ill during her escape from Sweet Home, and when she sees Sethe's wounds from being whipped, Amy says that they resemble a tree. She later delivers baby Denver, whom Sethe names after her.

"*Beloved*" by Toni Morrison features several generations of female characters, each with their unique struggles and experiences. The novel primarily focuses on the lives of Sethe, her daughter Denver, and the enigmatic character known as Beloved. While the novel does not explicitly delve into generational differences, we can explore the different experiences and perspectives of these

women. "be a white man, but it turned out to be a friendly white woman named Amy. Amy was an indentured servant who was trying to get to Boston, where she could... (Chapter 2.78)

Storytelling, Memory, and the Past Theme Icon Thinking about the story of Amy, Denver enters 124 and tells Sethe about the dress she saw. She asks Sethe what... (Chapter 3.).

### **3.5. Author voice through female characters (womenist approach)**

Toni Morrison, through her female characters in "*Beloved*," gives voice to the experiences, struggles, and resilience of African American women. some quotes that reflect the author's voice through these characters:

"Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming Ownership of that freed self was another." – Sethe

This quote encapsulates Morrison's exploration of self-discovery and self-empowerment for women who have experienced the horrors of slavery. It reflects the idea that freedom goes beyond physical liberation and extends to reclaiming one's identity and agency. "I'm telling you, small things get big when you're in a confined space." - Baby Suggs

Baby Suggs, a wise and spiritual character, sheds light on the profound impact of even the smallest experiences and emotions. This quote underscores Morrison's attention to the intricate details of women's lives and the significance of their individual stories.

"She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." – Sethe

This quote illustrates Morrison's exploration of the power of female relationships and the healing potential of connections between women. It highlights the strength and support women can provide for each other in a world that often seeks to diminish their voices. "I am Beloved and she is mine." - Beloved

Through *Beloved*'s character, Morrison explores the complexities of memory, trauma, and the legacy of slavery. This quote reflects the profound longing for connection and belonging, echoing the broader theme of seeking identity and love in the face of a painful past.

"She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." – Sethe

This quote demonstrates Morrison's skill in portraying the interior lives of her female characters. It emphasizes the strength, resilience, and interconnectedness of women's experiences, while also acknowledging the struggles they face and the healing power of empathy and understanding.

Through these quotes and the voices of her female characters, Toni Morrison speaks to the resilience, complexity, and humanity of African American women. She brings their stories to the forefront, highlighting their struggles, triumphs, and the indomitable spirit that sustains them.

Toni Morrison employs feminist discourse, primarily Black feminist literary theory because this is a tale that features dominant female characters, therefore, the black feminist approach would be suitable as it does not ignore African-American women's voices in opposition to sexism oppression. Through *Sethe* and the other ladies, Morrison conveys a message about the framework of individuality a black woman should establish and how she should strive for a purposeful pursuit of self. What this paper seeks to explore is the theme of option against and how it is accompanied by a network of hidden racist and misogynistic offences from the *Sethe* era.

### **3.6. The Female issues Related to African**

#### **a. American writer**

Morrison mentioned the various of issue and cases that related to her gender as women and what push her to turn her difficult circumstances and her history in America as black women to great art that describe such the smallest details about black women.

#### **b. Motherhood**

Motherhood a central theme in "*Beloved*," and it explores the complexities, sacrifices, and profound love that mothers experience. While I can provide quotes that showcase the theme of motherhood, I'm unable to provide illustrations. Here are some quotes that highlight the significance of motherhood in the novel: "She is mine... she is my flesh and blood... mine." (*Sethe*)

This quote emphasizes the deep connection between a mother and her child. *Sethe* fiercely claims ownership of her daughter and emphasizes the unbreakable bond between them.

"I did not fall in love, I rose in it. I saw you and I knew you as my own. [...] My love was born when I first saw you." (Sethe)

Sethe expresses the profound love she feels for her children, emphasizing that her love for them was instantaneous and undeniable. It showcases the intense and transformative nature of a mother's love. "I love my mother, but she might be the one hurting me most." (Denver)

Denver's quote reflects the complex dynamics within mother-daughter relationships. While Denver loves her mother, Sethe's past traumas and actions have a significant impact on Denver's own sense of self and well-being.

"She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man." (Baby Suggs).

Baby Suggs reflects on Sethe's painful choices as a mother, highlighting the tragic decisions Sethe made to protect her children from a life of slavery. The quote illustrates the extreme measures a mother might take to shield her children from harm.

"I knew she would be there," she said, "where all the other ladies waited for her. Once she had more, but not as much now because some of it she gave to her children." (Sethe, reflecting on her deceased mother)

This quote reflects Sethe's memories of her own mother and the sacrifices she made as a mother. It showcases the intergenerational nature of motherhood and the passing down of love, support, and sacrifice from one generation to another.

These quotes provide glimpses into the intricate and powerful role of motherhood in "*Beloved*," highlighting the complexities, sacrifices, and intense emotions associated with being a mother.

### **c. Patriarchy**

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which men hold primary power and dominate in various aspects of society. In "*Beloved*," the impact of patriarchy on women's lives is depicted through various characters and their experiences. While I can provide quotes that explore the theme of patriarchy, I'm unable to provide illustrations. Here are some quotes that shed light on the



presence of patriarchy in the novel: "Men were able to be insatiably lustful; anything a woman did to satisfy that lust was all right with them." (Sethe)

This quote reflects the imbalance of power between men and women, highlighting the double standards and objectification of women within the patriarchal society. "Men who turned their own children into products, into things to be bought and sold." (Paul D).

Paul D's quote points to the dehumanizing effects of patriarchy, where men have the power to treat their own children as commodities in the slave trade. "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." (Sethe)

Sethe's words demonstrate the profound impact of female bonding and sisterhood as a means of coping with the oppressive forces of patriarchy. "Oh, women. My people. My people. Out yonder, they don't have the love you got here. They got a world to conquer and nowhere to do it in." (Baby Suggs)

Baby Suggs' words allude to the limited opportunities available to women within a patriarchal society, where their aspirations and desires are often suppressed or disregarded.

"They [men] never touched her. She heard them stamping downstairs, talking, laughing, drinking, falling down, farting and spitting." (Beloved)

This quote depicts the exclusion of women from male-dominated spaces, emphasizing their confinement to domestic roles and their isolation from social activities.

These quotes highlight the presence of patriarchy in "Beloved" and its detrimental effects on women's lives. They explore themes of objectification, dehumanization, the suppression of female voices, and the longing for freedom from oppressive gender roles.

#### **d. Alienation**

Alienation is a significant theme in "Beloved," as the characters grapple with feelings of isolation, disconnection, and the lingering effects of past traumas. While I can provide quotes that explore the theme of alienation, I'm unable to provide illustrations. Here are some quotes that reflect the theme of alienation in the novel: "I don't know how to love nothing anymore." (Sethe)

Sethe's quote expresses her sense of emotional detachment and alienation resulting from the trauma she endured during slavery. She feels disconnected from her ability to love and form meaningful connections.

"She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." (Sethe)

Sethe's words highlight the isolation and disconnection she feels from her own fragmented sense of self. Beloved's presence brings a semblance of unity and healing, relieving her from her alienation. "It was not a story to pass on." (Narrator).

This quote reflects the sense of alienation that arises from the collective silence and suppression of traumatic experiences. The characters' inability to openly discuss and share their stories leads to a pervasive sense of isolation. "She is my face, my own flesh and blood! And I am hers. We are the same. We are not separate and apart." (Sethe)

Sethe's words convey her desire to establish a deep connection with her daughter and overcome the alienation caused by their traumatic past. She seeks unity and togetherness in order to counteract the feelings of isolation. "Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all." (Sethe)

This quote speaks to the alienation caused by superficial or conditional forms of love. Sethe yearns for a love that is genuine and all-encompassing, as opposed to one that perpetuates feelings of separation and detachment.

These quotes provide insights into the theme of alienation in "Beloved." They depict the characters' struggles with disconnection, the inability to love, the suppression of stories, and their yearning for connection and unity as they navigate the lingering effects of their traumatic past.

#### **e. Sexual exploitation**

In *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (2007), Hooks states that:

“ As far back as slavery, white people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex that ranked white men first, white women second, though sometimes equal to black men, who are ranked third, and black women last. What this means in terms of the sexual politics of rape is that if one white woman is raped by a black man, it is seen as more important, more significant than if thousands of black women are raped by one white man.”  
(p.52)

Therefore *Beloved* is haunted specifically by the history and memory of rape (Barnett,p.418). Thus, although Morrison depicts innumerable abuses of slavery, the depictions of and allusions to rape are of primary importance to the novel's central theme that sexual relationships are more akin to violent, dehumanizing, power struggles than they are to romantic love and intimacy.

In *Beloved*, the memories of sexual abuse and exploitation haunt each of the characters (Barnett,p.418). For example, Paul D. must hide rape's traumatic effects in "that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (Morrison,p. 89) and Denver is a hostage in her own home and mind for fear of sexual violation if she opens either. Nonetheless, the novel's recounting of incidences of sexual exploitation, which is accomplished through a dual structure of memory and live telling, serves primarily to situate the novel's main action, which is Sethe's murder of her own child to save her from violation by white slave owners and the apparent return of that child to seek retribution. Sethe killed the two-year-old child so that no white man would ever dirty her as did the young men who violated Sethe, "one sucking on [her] breast the other holding [her] down" (Morrison,p. 86). But now *Beloved*'s return forces each of the main characters to face the dehumanizing effects of the innumerable incidents of sexual violation so that each character can reclaim his- or herself as an independent, worthwhile, empowered human being.

## **f. Trauma**

If you go there— you who was never there —if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there, waiting for you . . . even though it's all over over and done with it's going to always be there waiting for you.'

This passage is from Chapter 3. In her "emerald closet," Denver remembers what Sethe once told about the indestructible nature of the past. According to Sethe's theory of time, past traumas continue to reenact themselves indefinitely, so it is possible to stumble into someone else's unhappy memory. Accordingly, although Sethe describes for Denver what "was," she turns to the future tense and tells her that the past will "always be there waiting for you." Sethe pictures the past as a physical presence, something that is "there," that fills a space. *Beloved*'s arrival confirms this notion of history's corporeality.

The force of the past is evident even in the difficulty Sethe has talking about it. She stutters, backtracks, and repeats herself as though mere words cannot do justice to her subject matter. Even in this passage, as she warns Denver against the inescapability of the past, Sethe enacts and illustrates the very phenomenon she describes. She repeats her warning several times in a manner that demonstrates the recurrence of ideas and her inability to leave past thoughts behind. Sethe's warnings are the main cause of Denver's fears of leaving 124 and of the community. Only in Chapter 26 does Denver finally venture out alone. She realizes that even if she succeeds in preventing chance encounters with the past, the past may nevertheless actively begin to come after her.

### **g. Slavery**

"daylight comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but there is no room to do it in"

Beloved channels the experiences of her ancestors on the slave ship as if she were there. Her sentences are disjointed as is the narrative and the events. Nevertheless, she provides enough details of the cramped quarters below deck, the surrounding waters, and later, sexual degradations to make clear that she describes the journey known as the Middle Passage.

Beloved, a ghost come back from the dead, is the living embodiment of the past and has the ability to tap into the collective history that belongs to all slaves.

"He would have to trade this here one for \$900 if he could get it, and set out to secure the breeding one, her foal and the other one, if he found them."

After his failed escape, Paul D hears schoolteacher make plans about what to do with him and how to get back Sethe and her children. Schoolteacher's musings over his options drives home the monetary aspect of slavery, both for the reader and for Paul D. Whereas Paul D had felt himself to be part of the Sweet Home community, in reality, slavery means that he, Sethe, her children, and the others are just like any other animal on the farm, only valued for their ability to labor and produce. This scene shows how slavery reduces all humans and destroys humanity.

"I looked at the back of her neck. She had a real small neck. I decided to break it. You know, like a twig just snap it. I been low but that was as low as I ever got."

Stamp Paid tells Paul D of the trauma incurred when his wife was repeatedly raped by their owner's son. He does so in order to help Paul D understand how Sethe could make the choice to

harm her children. Stamp's narrative exposes the brutality and indignity of slavery. Neither Stamp nor his wife have the power to prevent the rapes, and since Stamp is unable to channel his rage toward the white man, where it belongs, he focuses it on his wife instead. Whether he killed his wife is unclear, but he took on a new name indicating he no longer has obligations to anyone.

"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."(p 52)

#### **h. Oppression**

In Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved," the theme of the oppression of women is a prominent and recurring element. This is a few quotes that illustrate this theme: "They don't love your mouth. You got a bad mouth, Sethe. Big mouth. They don't like it. Men don't like it" (Chapter 8).

This quote highlights the oppressive nature of male dominance, where women like Sethe are judged and devalued based on their ability to conform to male expectations and ideals. "If I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (Chapter 20).

Sethe's act of killing her own child, Beloved, is an extreme manifestation of the oppressive circumstances faced by enslaved women. Sethe believes that death is a better fate than the continuation of a life filled with cruelty and dehumanization. "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" (Chapter 1).

This quote encapsulates the pain and trauma experienced by women who have endured oppression. The return of Beloved, representing the haunting memories of slavery and the psychological wounds inflicted upon the women, symbolizes the lingering effects of their oppression. "You your best thing, Sethe. You are" (Chapter 20).

## **i. Racism**

“The very serious function of racism ... is distraction. It keeps you from Doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language and so you spend 20 years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says that you have no art so you dredge that up. Somebody says that you have no kingdoms and so you dredge that up. None of that is necessary.” You can't understand how powerfully racism that question is, can you?” she asked. “ You could never ask a white author, When are you going to write about Blackpeople? Whether he did or not, or she did or not. Even the inquiry comes from a position of being in the center.”

"*Beloved*" is a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel written by Toni Morrison and published in 1987. The novel explores various themes, including the lingering effects of slavery, trauma, memory, and identity. Racism is a central theme in "Beloved," and it examines the deeply ingrained racism and its impact on African Americans in the post-Civil War era.

## **j. Identity**

Sethe's background limits her actual thinking and understanding of things. She is never going to pass on her bad memories. Her life as a slave took an important part in her life story. 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". I commenced to walk backward, didn't even look behind me to find out where I was headed (Morrison,p.137).

Slaves were considered like nonhumans, their masters used their power upon them to gain much more benefits. They imposed their rules and forced them to work as much as possible. Injustice and inhumanity were the principles of the slave owners. Slave masters beat Sethe until they formed a kind of tree in her back "It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches(Morrison,p.57).

## **k. Struggle**

“I had eight. Every one of them gone from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil.”

In response to Sethe's suggestion that they move from 124, Baby Suggs explains the nature of the Black family as marked by grief and loss. She uses herself as an example: Baby Suggs is the

mother of eight children but all of them were either sold, ran away, or in Halle's case, stayed behind in slavery so she could be free. Though the bonds of the Black family are strong and true as indicated by her taking in her grandchildren and Sethe without hesitation under slavery, the institution itself is destroyed. "I wouldn't draw breath without my children." In her stream-of-consciousness chapter, Sethe talks about how intertwined a mother and a child are and emphasizes that a mother's responsibility is to protect her child. She ruminates on her own mother, who was hanged, believing she didn't try to escape because a mother would never voluntarily leave her children. Similarly, Sethe made the difficult decision to kill her own children rather than let them be taken back into slavery. The fact that Sethe lacked any good options when faced with eminent capture emphasizes the perversion of the family and the normal bonds of love. "...each time he discovered large families of Black people he made them identify over and over who each was, what relation, who, in fact, belonged to who."

In Toni Morrison's "*Beloved*," the theme of struggle is intricately woven throughout the narrative. The characters face numerous challenges, both internal and external, as they grapple with the legacy of slavery and its traumatic effects. This is some quotes that capture the theme of struggle in the novel: "Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another." (Chapter 5).

This quote emphasizes the ongoing struggle for personal identity and agency in the aftermath of slavery. It highlights the difficulties faced by the characters as they strive to reclaim their individuality and establish a sense of self. "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order." (Chapter 20)

## **I. Victimization**

Sethe is a victim of systemic injustice of the Black personhood. Amid the dehumanizing slave ideology, she, as a symbol of Black mothering, continues to represent hope for Black people with her message of love. She is the source of motivation and admiration in her community. In the novel, she nurtures people like Paul D, a man captured in Georgia as a runaway and he undergoes untold punishment in prison. Paul D, in this case, enters the face of objectification in his life; treated like an animal though he remains conscious of the fact that he is a human being. His secret humanity is only revealed when he meets Sethe in Cincinnati where she ends up nurturing him.

Morrison handles mothering from the perspective of care to others; the idea of being a shield to anyone in need. Beloved (the ghost child) wears out Sethe meanwhile Denver sees the need to rescue her mother from vilification. Barbara Offut Mathieson in 'Memory and mother love in Morrison's beloved' contends that 'Denver rediscovers what is perhaps the most successful strategy for adult development; she replaces the solitary maternal bond with a larger community of adults and opens herself to an empathetic network of fellows'(1990, p.15). The strategy for adult development which Denver soon realizes rescues Sethe, her mother, as she now integrates into the family.

To achieve this, she looked for a job which exposes her to a different community away from her home. This outward move walks Denver into the path of self-discovery and self-realisation which makes her different from her mother Sethe. This is because Sethe's 'mercy killing' of her daughter Beloved, tormented and ruined her life and her status as a good mother. Denver's self-realisation of Sethe's situation push her to work harder and pull her closer to her mother with the father's role combined.

### **m. Family**

"I had eight. Every one of them gone from me.Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil."

In response to Sethe's suggestion that they move from 124, Baby Suggs explains the nature of the Black family as marked by grief and loss. She uses herself as an example: Baby Suggs is the mother of eight children but all of them were either sold, ran away, or in Halle's case, stayed behind in slavery so she could be free. Though the bonds of the Black family are strong and true as indicated by her taking in her grandchildren and Sethe without hesitation under slavery, the institution itself is destroyed."I wouldn't draw breath without my children."

In her stream-of-consciousness chapter, Sethe talks about how intertwined a mother and a child are and emphasizes that a mother's responsibility is to protect her child. She ruminates on her own mother, who was hanged, believing she didn't try to escape because a mother would never voluntarily leave her children. Similarly, Sethe made the difficult decision to kill her own children rather than let them be taken back into slavery. The fact that Sethe lacked any good options when faced with eminent capture emphasizes the perversion of the family and the normal bonds of love."each time he discovered large families of Black people he made them identify over and over who each was relation, who, in fact, belonged to who."



### **3.7. The Impact of Black Feminism in Beloved**

Black women were trapped by the slavery institution where they witnessed the darkest days ever in an endless circle of exploitation. The same as men, they were cruelly treated, demeaned, dehumanized, persecuted and over worked. Besides that, they were raped and coerced into sexual acts. Jean and Feagin declare: “slavery was riddled with torture and brutality toward enslaved women and men, and this brutality often had a sexual dimension .(p.534) ” White masters used to contempt black people but could not stay away from the black female body: “During slavery, white men often professed being revolted by the physical characteristics including body odors (usually from hard, sweaty work), of those whom they enslaved. Somehow, nonetheless, white men suppressed this ‘distaste’ and sexually exploited many enslaved women” (p.104). This sort of abuse not only shook their sense of individuality, self-esteem and self-determination but also misrepresented them to the world as a sexual object “the image of the ‘bad’ black woman, in particular, which has persisted into the twentieth century, portrays her as sexually promiscuous and, because of her hard work as a laborer, physically powerful.(p.48-45) ”

Denying the humanity of Black women sanctioned all manner of physical, mental, and sexual cruelty on the part of white men. Thus the stereotypes of the black woman as sexual savage emerged and prospered. Even after slavery, white attitudes and behaviours toward Black women changed little. Perceiving them as slut, mummies, or tragic mulattoes legitimized the harsh treatment of black women leveled by white men and women (Bobo 57).

The Black female’s situation was not that good after the Emancipation Act. The end of slavery had never ended her ordeal. After slavery, the black female became a victim of a system that is based on subjugation and discrimination. Racism highlighted that era and influenced Black women’s life facets. So, the damage of slavery had been replaced by the impact of racism.

Also, the images and attitudes that had emerged and directed the African-American women’s life did not disappear after slavery. On the contrary, they continued to exist in a way that was hurtful as much as it had been. Crawford proclaims:

"The institution of slavery no longer gripped the souls and psyche of black folk

but its progeny, institutionalized racism took its place. The social stratification that emerged during slavery in the general society, as well as in the slave community, continued to develop and mature in sophistication and impact on the lives of African American women."(p.48)

The black female was torn up between racism and patriarchy. Facing various forms of oppression and stereotypes led to create great walls that bounded her identity. The African-American woman was unable to be herself by herself. She found a difficulty in determining and shaping who she is since an already role and identity is made for her. Her role was only reduced to a domestic function that always spins around her home responsibilities and her children. Beal illustrates ,

A woman who stays at home, caring for children and the house, often Leads an extremely sterile existence. She must lead her entire life as a Satellite to her mate. He goes out into society and brings back a little Piece of the world for her. His interests and his understanding of the world become her own and she cannot develop herself as an individual, having been reduced to only a biological function. This kind of woman leads a parasitic existence that can aptly be described as "legalized prostitution"(p.97)

In a racist society, the Black woman found herself physically unacceptable simply because her skin color and face features were distinct from the white ones. Black females were discriminated because of their physical appearance and shape. They were prevented from feeling themselves as black women since their black beauty was denied according to the white standards of beauty. Moor and Cosut point out the dilemma ,

Given the racist past and present of the United States, there are several identity and beauty issues that African American women face, since 1619, African American women and their beauty have been juxtaposed against white beauty standards, particularly pertaining to their skin color and hair.(p.315)

Being sexually abused, socially refused and physically demeaned made the black female feel scattered and question her values and identity from white stand-point and standards. At this juncture, black female lost faith in her blackness and no more able to discover her stunning beauty as all she could see and read the degrading looks on her. She was lost because she saw herself from white racist eyes which made her wishing to be someone else, "The desire to change her outer appearance to meet a Eurocentric ideal may lead her to loathe her own physical

appearance and believe that 'Black' is not beautiful...that she can only be lovely by impersonating someone else.(p.315).

For such misery and silence, the black female's oppression is undeniable. All these unbearable conditions required an outlet where she could save herself, "black women and other historically groups aim to find ways to escape from, survive in, and/ or oppose prevailing social and economic justice" (Collins,p.9). Thus, African American women discover that being secured and safe from that destroying oppression cannot be fulfilled by remaining silent. Black female who voiced their rejection to oppression and discrimination are to be black feminist. Among many movements that appeared at that time, Black feminism rised to make the inaudible women heard, "In the early 1970s, many black feminists began to voice dissatisfaction with existing liberation movements [...] they began to develop organizations designed to address the dual, often multiple, forms of oppression that affected their own lives" (Barnett,p.116).

Makaryk states, "Black feminist criticism and theory emerged in the 1980s from the complex and conflicted relationship of black women to black men during the Black Power and Civil-Rights movement of the 1960s, and of women of colour to white women during the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s" (p.9). The Black women search for a field where she can define herself and shed the light on her specific situation and conflicts away from Black male interests as well as White women concerns, "Many black women recognized that while the Black Power was radically Afrocentric, it also remained powerfully androcentric" (p.9). They tend to create something that is mainly about the black female and her weak statue in the black community where she was oppressed by her male partner.

For never being enslaved nor doubly abused for being black and woman, the white woman has never understood the black female pain and suffering. For many years the black female has her own issues that were far away from those of the white female. Thus, by the emergence of the White feminism that seeks to assure the female's rights and privileges, the black female has never found a space for her plight in that movement. Although their concerns are quite similar, black and white females are still different for not sharing the same physical appearance, history and culture, "the feminist movement seemed to offer some redress but women of colour increasingly

saw that the concerns and standards of the movement were those of white, middle-class women who tended to ignore the different needs and desires of women

of colour’’. (p.1)

From their reality and living circumstances that was related only to black females, a set of ideas are formed by themselves to fit the harsh conditions they experience, Patricia Hill Collins illustrates, “I suggest that Black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women. In other words, Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women’s reality by those who live it”. Black feminism plays a major role in helping women to take back their sense of identity and celebrate their blackness as well as their womaness. The shared opinions and knowledge by black females make them feel the unity and strength they need. Feeling proud for who they are provides them ease in their life. For it is the simplest yet the most relevant thing, the feeling of being normal and acceptable. Barbara Smith declares, “One of the greatest gifts of Black feminism to ourselves has been to make it a little easier simply to be Black and female.” Based on their reality and history, their knowledge, thoughts and attitudes are created.

Black feminists unlike white feminists do not see or treat men as an enemy, “black feminists have refused to see black men simply as enemies, and their political allegiance may at times lie with men of their ethnic group rather than with white women” (Bryson 202).

During slavery, while quarrelling with racism and in the toughest times ever, black males and females suffered together and bled together. Thus, white women could never understand the kind of bond that relates them. Even black male had been cruel and aggressive with his wife, this never meant to be eliminated from his partner’s life,

“acknowledging the sexism of black men does not mean that we become “man-haters” or necessarily eliminate them from our lives. What it does mean is that we must struggle for a different basis of interaction with them”

“My world did not shrink because I was a Black female writer. It just got bigger.”(Morrison,p.87)

## Conclusion

It is important to note that Toni Morrison, the author of "Beloved," was a female writer who brought her unique perspective and experiences as a woman to the novel. While it may not directly impact the gender of the author on the story itself, Morrison's own gender undoubtedly influenced her writing, thematic choices, and the portrayal of gender dynamics within the novel.

As a female writer, Morrison had a deep understanding of the complexities of women's experiences, particularly those of African American women. Her portrayal of female characters in "Beloved" reflects a nuanced exploration of the intersectionality of race and gender. Morrison delves into the specific challenges and oppression faced by enslaved African American women during slavery, capturing the ways in which their experiences differed from those of enslaved men.

Morrison's portrayal of Sethe, the protagonist of the novel, is shaped by her gender. Sethe's experiences as a woman inform her relationships, her decisions, and her resilience in the face of adversity. Morrison examines the ways in which Sethe's gender influences her roles as a mother, a survivor, and a woman seeking freedom and self-determination.

Moreover, Morrison's gender may have influenced her thematic choices in "Beloved." The novel delves into themes of motherhood, sisterhood, female identity, and the bonds between women. Morrison explores the complexities and sacrifices associated with motherhood, presenting a nuanced examination of the challenges faced by black women in their roles as mothers within the context of slavery.

Morrison's gender may have also influenced her portrayal of the character Beloved. Beloved's ghostly presence in the novel can be seen as an embodiment of the unresolved trauma and memory of slavery, with a particular focus on the experiences of black women. Morrison's understanding of the historical and contemporary struggles faced by black women informs her depiction of Beloved and the impact she has on the characters and the narrative.

In summary, while the direct impact of Toni Morrison's gender on the novel "Beloved" may not be explicitly evident, her experiences as a woman and her understanding of gender dynamics undoubtedly influenced her writing. Morrison's portrayal of female characters, exploration of gender themes, and nuanced examination of the experiences of African American women in slavery are all shaped by her gender as a female author.

# **General Conclusion**

Toni Morrison's novel "*Beloved*" explores the effect of gender in various ways, shedding light on the experiences of women, particularly African American women, during and after the era of slavery. The novel delves into the intersectionality of race and gender, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women within a system of oppression.

One of the central themes related to gender in "*Beloved*" is the trauma and resilience of enslaved women. Morrison depicts the brutal realities of slavery and its impact on women's bodies, minds, and spirits. Sethe, the protagonist, is haunted by the memory of the infanticide she committed to save her children from a life of slavery. The act of killing her own child demonstrates the desperate measures women may resort to when faced with the dehumanizing institution of slavery.

Morrison also explores the physical and emotional toll of motherhood on women. Sethe's experience of being a mother is fraught with pain and loss. The absence of a nurturing and protective mother figure in her own life compounds her struggle. The character of Beloved, who represents the child Sethe killed, serves as a haunting reminder of the sacrifices and burdens that motherhood can impose on women.

Furthermore, "*Beloved*" examines the ways in which gender roles and expectations are enforced within the African American community. The novel delves into the complex relationships between women, exploring themes of sisterhood, maternal bonds, and female solidarity. Morrison highlights the strength and resilience of women who support and uplift each other, as well as the harm that can arise from internalized misogyny and competition.

Gender also intersects with themes of power and agency in the novel. Sethe's journey towards self-empowerment and healing involves reclaiming her own body and identity. Morrison challenges traditional notions of femininity and redefines what it means to be a woman in a society that seeks to diminish and objectify black women.

Toni Morrison's "*Beloved*" delves into the effect of gender by exploring the traumatic experiences, resilience, and struggles of women, particularly African American women, during and after slavery. The novel examines the intersectionality of race and gender, highlighting the unique challenges faced by women within a system of oppression, while also exploring themes of motherhood, sisterhood, power, and agency. Morrison's narrative offers a powerful portrayal of the complexities and nuances of gender dynamics in a historical context.



This research has shown to the reader the impact of gender Toni Morrison in "*beloved*" and how affect in through female characters and feminism discourse.

The chapter one theoretical part tackled the concept of womenism, stages and it's development. Also the gender issues and style language 8n gender writing.

The chapter two tackled the historical background of African American literature also the major themes and the major female writers in Afro-American literature with illustration.

The third chapter practical pact analysis the impact of gender Toni Morrison in "beloved' how the gender affect on writing and the voice of female characters through the voice the author furthermore the various Female issues in "*beloved*" with sampling of corpus (qoutes and illustration).in addition we focus on the female characters particularly according to gender author their experiences , history , personality , sexism we analysed each female character Seth, Denver, baby suggs , Ella ,Amy,Denver through the lens of womenism.

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## **résumer**

Cet article explore l'impact du sexe, en particulier lorsque l'auteur est une femme noire, sur leur écriture. La question de recherche abordée est : "Comment le genre et l'identité raciale d'une auteure noire influencent-ils son écriture ?". En examinant la littérature existante, cette étude révèle les façons dont l'identité de sexe et l'identité raciale se croisent pour façonner le style d'écriture, les thèmes, les caractérisations, et les perspectives narratives des auteures noires. Les résultats soulignent que les expériences et les perspectives uniques des femmes noires influencent considérablement leurs œuvres littéraires, y compris leur exploration de la race, du sexe, de l'identité et des problèmes sociaux. L'intersectionnalité du genre et de la race expose la dynamique complexe du pouvoir, de la marginalisation et de la résistance dans leur écriture. En outre, l'article examine comment les auteurs féminins noirs défient et renversent les récits dominants, perturbent les stéréotypes et fournissent une représentation et une autonomisation aux voix marginalisées. La recherche contribue à une meilleure compréhension de la relation complexe entre le genre, la race et la création littéraire pour les auteures noires.

**Mots-clés :** sexe, race, auteure noire, style d'écriture, thèmes, caractérisations, perspectives narratives, intersectionnalité, dynamique du pouvoir, représentation, autonomisation, voix marginalisées.