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ABSTRACT

African American literature contributes more notable than the totality of its reaction to subjugation. This research work dichotomises Black consciousness and Feminine Resistance in the select novels of Toni Morrison. It ventures to present the Black writers' reaction to social and political circumstances through fiction. Black writers interpret artistic creativity that leads to bereave existence in literature. In his introduction to *The Collected Poems of Sterling A. Brown*, James Weldon Johnson expresses that the mere existence of literary texts does not necessarily designate the existence of literature. The slave narratives attempted at restoring the individual dignity and personal selfworth of the Blacks. They followed a standardised form of autobiography in which personal memory played a crucial role. Most of these narratives carried the subtitle *Written by Himself / Herself*, not only to support the claims of truth but also to assert the capabilities and humanity of the slaves. Many African American slaves were drawn to the Bible. However, literacy not only brought inspiration but also played as means to break out from slavery. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Southern society fought to broaden literacy among slaves. Oral histories from ageing slaves were compiled to demonstrate that the slaves sought out the life skills of literacy

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No one can deny that woman gives birth to men. Every now and then, male cognisance fails to comprehend the reality of a woman born. As Otis T. Mason says, in ancient times, "women hear better, see better, are better talkers than men, and can therefore become successful conjurers of fate" (Kalpana Individual 15). Marriage brings a new life, and she becomes her husband's living thing progressively. On the other hand, the husband's work is separated from his wife in the modern era and even mythical times. "Motherhood appears to have the mythological, superstitious and powerful status" (Kalpana, Family 29). Men and women are dissimilar based on biological and natural factors, including mental and physical abilities. Formerly, women were regarded as the martyrs of the struggle and a source of regeneration, and they were given a leadership position. Nevertheless, in modern times, the patriarchal society fails to recognise the abilities of women.

Women are made to live the life of duress from her birth. Women of modern times are emboldened in all ways, and they face a daily war that makes them empowered. Because of invaders, the women wanted to preserve themselves to protect chastity, and the dignity insisted. For this reason, women who went out to earn to manage the house were restricted to go out to continue dignity in society. Women came under the feet of men or became a shadow, which made them suppress rights. It was made as a law,

and women have even rejected fundamental rights such as voting and freedom of speech. Women who looked after the house and went out to work were made to stay at home, depriving them of education. They became puppets in the hands of men, and they were treated as if they were just child-bearing machines. However, the scenario is changed where the oppression of women is questioned, and women have started to break the laws which men imposed. Feminism recounts the art of work expressed in the books of understanding the conditions of women and what they have attained in the patriarchal society.

The female writers disagree that literary texts imitate social prejudice, which sees women as the shadow of religion, cultural and social standards and as the adjunct to males. Hence, the feminists seek to devise a gender-neutral language that neglects men's terms, such as patriarchy. The text is examined from the women's perspective, identity and experience. Feminism is a social assumption that evaluates gender inequality and encourages women's rights, interests and issues. Feminine theories deal with women's empowerment to understand the nature of inequality and gender politics. Feminist activists advocate social, political and economic equality between the sexes. They promote domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and sexual violence. Society is structured into a patriarchal system in which men have an advantage over women. Feminist activism, however, is a grassroots movement that crosses and races boundaries. Black feminist thought may be defined as specialised knowledge created by African American women, clarifying a Black woman's standpoint. This standpoint includes specific core themes, the diversity of Black women's experiences in encountering the core themes, the varied expressions of Black woman's Afro-centric feminist consciousness, and the interdependence of Black women's experience, consciousness, and actions. *Beloved* won Morrison the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. It is her most read, most analysed and widely accepted work.

Morrison's *Beloved* demonstrates how history is not over and done with. By giving voice to in the past silenced stories told by women who have little power over their lives' destinies, she allows re-visioning history. To those who would prefer to forget the past and get on with the present, Morrison points out that remembering is painful, but those who suffered must not forget. Just as prominently, perhaps, the stories passed on by Morrison allow those whose story is told to achieve a Cathartic recovery. These stories serve to provide an alternative history that would otherwise be silenced. Thus, *Beloved* comes to terms with both the dilemma encountering African people and a part of the solution that they must espouse. The novel makes it clear that the plight of Africans in America stems from their nation-class oppression, that their primary enemy is capitalism in all its disguises, and that the solution to this problem lies in collective, not individual, class struggle against capitalism. What is more, Morrison manifests the strategy which ushers in the solution of collective struggle. The mutual point in Morrison, Atwood and Lessing, and several other distinguished female novelists, is that they all believe in feminism on the unconscious, emotional and psychic consequences of slavery. In *Beloved*, the focus is need, is made unreliable by slavery, which either separates her from her child or weakens or depletes her that she has no self with which to confer recognition.

The underlying psychological trauma of the novel incorporates the impact on the child's inner life, the emotional hunger, and the obsessive and terrifying narcissistic fantasies. From the research made by Diala-Ogamba: "Toni Morrison in *Beloved* tells the story of Sethe, a runaway slave who kills her child out of love and also to avoid her being taken into slavery to suffer the same fate. The ghost of this baby comes back to haunt the family at 124 Bluestone Road..." (411). *Beloved* is a touching feminine text dealing with the sufferings of an ex-slave and her relations. The striking feature of this book is that its denial to subscribe to stereotypes. Being the slave-owners, the whites are not only wicked but also profiteers. They are gentle because they know they can exploit the blacks more through gentleness. In this pattern of exploiter-victimiser, sex is not the issue.

A stranger black girl and the heroine's daughter, also black, can have a shifty, beautiful, and tricky relationship. *Beloved*, the stranger has a hold on the heroine, Sethe, and a power relationship develops at once. Denver, a white freak, saved the heroine while Sethe was in labour pains and running for life. *Beloved*'s most unforgettable and heart-warming scenes relate to a slave Sixo and his thirty-mile girl, another slave, who works thirty-four miles away. It is pathetic that she and Sixo use Sundays for running towards each other so that they may be able to get together for a few minutes. The problem of social relations is summed up in the conduct of a white School teacher, brother-in-law of Mrs. Garner used to beat Sixo even though the latter was right: "School teacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers - not the defined" (190). The definers are the power-wielders, and they are pitiable, too, because they do not realise how badly power has distorted them.

Beloved is set in Post-Civil war Ohio. It traces the life of a young woman, Sethe, who has kept a terrible memory at bay only by shutting down part of her mind. It depicts her former life as a slave on Sweet Home Plantation in Kentucky, her escape with her children, and the tragic events. Morrison's characters attempt to move from nowhere to somewhere. Baby Suggs moves from Kentucky to Ohio, where her heart beats for the first time. Later, Sethe runs away from the Schoolteacher and his nephews. She is on the verge of being recaptured, joins her. Her humanity is violated by this man that instead of allowing the whites to enslave them, Sethe feels 139 it is wise to kill her daughter to save her from psychic death. "If I hadn't killed her, she would have died, and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (200). The novel stresses the death of *Beloved*, Sethe's baby girl, who, at the age of two, was killed by her mother to save her from the life of slavery. The quotes in *CLA Journal* states: The community has been avoiding Sethe and her family since she killed the baby. However, one would imagine that things do not turn out the way the people planned. Baby Suggs influence and protection of Sethe and her family give rise to jealousy from the community. (412)

As a result, she can reclaim her wholeness. Early in the novel, when Sethe first contemplates leading a new life with Paul D, Sethe envisions the project as storytelling: "Her story was bearable because it was his well-to tell, to refine and tell again" (99). By the end of the novel, Paul D, too, "wants to put his story next to hers" (273). Storytelling encourages healing when it helps change to occur. There were no reversals for the abandoned ghost, only repetitions, and the concepts when things were over cannot apply. The story of *Beloved* incarnates at least three generations of an abandoned or abandoning daughter or

mother relationships. The relationship between Sethe and Paul D comes closest to a state of mutual recognition and atonement. The touching of Sethe's face by Paul D recalls the touching faces of the mating turtles. The relationship here is not one of merging or domination but resonating likeness and emptiness. It is Beloved who is given more importance than Sethe in the end. Her desperate struggle to know her story is both the frame and the centre of the novel.

Beloved's struggle is the struggle of Sethe, Denver, Paul D and Baby Suggs. It is a predicament and suffering of all black people in a racist society. Finally, Beloved demonstrates the deep psychic reverberations of living in a culture where domination and objectification of the self have been institutionalised. Beloved teaches about the free, autonomous self, an inherently social self-rooted in relationships and dependent at its core on the vital bond of mutual recognition. Eventually, the dead girl, who 145 is never named except by the single word that appears on her tombstone, becomes indistinguishable from the Sixty Million and More to whom the novel is dedicated – the forgotten, anonymous, captured black Africans who never even made it into slavery, those who died either in Africa or on slave ships. Morrison re-tells history through the lives of ordinary people with women characters who struggle in a world created for the convenience of others. Through these characters and the lives of those around them, readers learn a history that cannot be found in textbooks. By writing this novel, Beloved, Morrison succeeds in revising or revisioning American history to tell the plight of the African ex-slave.

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