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Race, Psychoanalysis and Female Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *Sula*

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Master in Literature and Civilization.

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Declaration of
Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

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Dedication

Great thanks to Allah for helping and guiding me through this work, I would like to express my endless thank to my lovely mother and aunt who encouraged me a lot like no one ever, to my little sister Israa.

I would like also to dedicate this work to my beloved cousin who helped me in finishing this work.

To my soul mate, sister and best friend Imene.

Great thanks to Dr. Benadla for giving me such great help.

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Abstract

The present study highlights and explores the living conditions of the African-Americans, especially, black women in the United States in the past decades through Toni Morrison's novels *Beloved* (1987) and *Sula* (1973). These selected novels examine the aspects of racism in American society and its impacts on the psyche in particular, and on the lives of African-American individuals; their living conditions before and in the first half of the twentieth century. Increasingly, this study provides a view on a variety of historical events including slavery, the Civil War; and most of all the events concerning the blacks' emancipation from slavery. The social and economic conditions in their freed status are also investigated with scrutiny. Besides, it highlights the social struggle of black females who faced obstacles, barriers, and double oppression, racism in a white society, and sexism in their own society. These black women were deprived of their rudimentary rights. They were isolated, neglected, silenced, and most importantly mistreated by black and white men. Black females and males were living in a state of fear and poverty. They were manipulated and controlled by the white supremacy. This kind of oppression has affected their bodies, inner selves, and their psyche. In fact, the present study shows the impact of racism and slavery on black individuals in general, and black females in particular. The understanding and the study of these social issues require, in reality, different lenses: psychoanalysis, feminism, and female subjectivity lenses. The main conclusion drawn from this research is that African-American females and males suffering is everlasting as that they had to endure their ordeal of enslavement, both during and after being emancipated. Black women made huge efforts to change their roles and their position in society. These efforts were sufficient in many ways in which they could draw an identity to the black female and broke the stereotypical pictures of black women.

Keywords: African-Americans, black females, female subjectivity, psychoanalysis, racism, slavery, white supremacy.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

It is very common in literature that one finds out similarities between the characters in the novels, the events; the writer's background reflected in his/her writings. The society and the environment in which he/she is grown actually affect the writer's production. Starting from the premise that literature may have a myriad of functions (a) mirroring the society because its content is picked from the experiences in the society; (b) entertaining with the aim of capturing the readers' attention and leisure; (c) educating because it addresses issues in the society that have gone unaddressed; and (d) purifying i.e the common belief that literary works help writers' emotional release, writers, therefore, produce literature and create art to be used as a tool to face real-life issues, troubles, and to fight for a cause. Disturbingly, African- American literature is no exception. It focuses on defending the rights of the minorities who were rejected, ignored, segregated by the majority. African- Americans suffered for ages from dehumanization, psychological and physical issues. Furthermore, black females suffered from dehumanization and discrimination because they were blacks and, on the other hand, because of their sex gender. In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and *Sula* (1973), black characters and, especially, women tried to find their true identity in a society full of racism, and at the same time. They were struggling to heal their past wounds, experiences, and memories. All they harvested from their dogged endurance was rejection, silence, and neglect of their existence as human beings.

The general aim of this research is to investigate black women's and men's sufferings, dehumanization, and racism. Moreover, to show the efforts of black females to achieve full identity, to cope with the reality of being black and female at the same time, and to heal their physical and psychological injuries and problems. This work tries to see at what extend does racism influence black people in general and black females in specific. To find out adequate answers the researcher poses the following questions:

1. How can racism and slavery affect individuals?
2. To what extent had slavery affected African-American women?
3. How these black females had established and asked for their subjectivity?

General Introduction

The questions asked in this research is to find the real status of African-Americans in the past, how racism affected their psychical and psychological health, and how they did fight to render their lives normal.

To support the previous stated problematic and research questions, this research work is fuelled with the following hypotheses:

1. It is assumed that slavery and racism highly effected and influenced black people's lives; it dehumanized them in which they were treated like animals or even less. Black people had no rights and they were violated and controlled by whites.
2. Black women were victims of a savage and awful white supremacy; they were seen as sub-humans. They experienced the use of rape and violence. Black female characters were traumatized by their past experiences; and they suffered from anxiety and terror.
3. Despite all their past issues, and the impact of racism and sexism on the black females, they tried hard to achieve and accept themselves, and above all to fulfill their dreams and desires.

The study attempts to investigate the physical and psychological effects of slavery and racism on black females and males. It is an investigation of how these black women tried to achieve their identity. Thus, the researcher will give insights into the history of slavery in the United States, and how they were treated during and after their enslavement through theorizing race in African American literature. In order to find questions to the research questions, it is needed to adopt a theoretical framework, such as feminist theory, female subjectivity, and psychoanalysis literary criticism.

Therefore, this humble research work is divided into three main chapters: the first chapter is an overview of the African-American literature, female subjectivity, feminist theory. The second chapter is devoted to the *Beloved* novel. This chapter examines and analyzes the effects of slavery on the African-American individuals, and it sheds light on the female characters and their quest for subjectivity. The third chapter is devoted to the novel *Sula*. This latter, in its turn, examines and analyzes the effects of slavery on the African-American individuals, and it focuses on the female characters and their quest for subjectivity.

1.1. Introduction:

This first chapter which is an overview of African literature is divided into three main parts. Starting from the premise that every literary work is a reflection of the author's background and environment, the first part concerns the history of slavery and the rise of the African-American literature. The second part is devoted to the feminist theory and the conception of female subjectivity. The last part, however, is devoted to the psychoanalysis approach in which the researcher deemed it of paramount importance to carry out the analysis.

1.2. Race in African-American Literature:

The New World, or the United States, was founded upon living in a free state and hoping that everyone could start a new and fresh life. But, it was quickly turned to be a slave and a racist country. The idea of race and racism goes back thousands of years in the history of humanity. It evolved in the late 17th century with the practice of slavery.

As it is acknowledged, the institution of slavery is as old as civilization. Many nations were built by slaves' muscles and efforts, Orlando Patterson points out that:

There is nothing notably peculiar about the institution of slavery. It has existed from before the dawn of human history right down to the twentieth century, in the most primitive of human societies and in the most civilized. There is no region on earth that has not at some time harbored the institution. Probably there is no group of people whose ancestors were not at one time slaves or slaveholders. Slavery was firmly established in all the great early centers of human civilization. (Patterson, 1982, p.7)

Slavery is a system of dehumanization because whites were always considered superior and better than the others. Slavery is both a result and cause of racism, and white people had always the belief that blacks are racially inferior. The main characteristics of slavery are possession and ownership, with both physical and psychological control. Harris stated in 'An Account of Escaping Slavery', "Ownership refers to the practice

of masters having legal rights to the bodies and labor of their slaves. Possession, on the other hand, refers to the psychological dimension of the relationship in which masters were able to convince some slaves in the institution of slavery”, (Harris, Wesley. (2017). *An Account of Escaping slavery*).

Africans’ enslavement started before the United States was a country. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Africans were captured and brought to America as slaves, kidnapped from their homelands in Africa. African men, women, and children were beaten, tortured, and they were obliged to obey their white masters, from whom slavery was a key to maintain their vast properties and lands. Many families were separated through the process of buying and selling slaves. Slavery started in America in 1619. Around twenty African slaves were brought in the British colony Jamestown in Virginia. (History.com Editors. *Slavery in America: Timeline, Figures & Abolition*. (n.d). <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>).

In most cases, slavery emerged and increasingly functioned as an instrument for economic purposes. This is particularly true to the United States. Black slaves played a major unwilling and unrewarded role in laying the economic foundations of the United States. Slavery emerged as a system of forced labor designed for the production of some basic staple crops such as sugar, cotton, coffee, and tobacco. Slavery was not merely an economic fact but something deeply is woven in the very fabric of the American identity. It is in the American colonies that slavery was to forge a new national self-consciousness. As an intense regime of exploitation, slaves’ lives were not worth much than the productiveness and profits they could bring to their masters. Slavery as an institution came to replace the earlier system of indenture and to deprive its victims of all human rights.

Whatever the basis for slavery, there can be no doubt that this institution has deep roots in human civilization and its metaphorical meaning stems back to very ancient periods. (Foner 29) Once groups or individuals had undergone that status, they became subject to all kinds of prejudice and segregation. This brings evidence that slavery is not a typical practice by white Americans in the Americas. On the contrary, every form of tyranny and oppression, over historical periods, had been recognized as a form of slavery. Under these same conditions of oppression in the years preceding independence, many Americans came to consider their relationship

to the mother country, as a form of enslavement. The forced taxation exercised by Parliament over the inhabitants of the colonies, where they were not represented, made the inhabitants feel as if they were slaves of Britons from whom they descended. (Reid 38-45).

Moreover, the life of black people or black slaves was miserable. They had little or no control over their own lives or their bodies. They were forced to work from sunup to sundown to the benefits of their white masters. A slave person could be whipped, beaten, or even killed for no reason. Slaveholders worked on separating wives from their husbands, and children from their parents with no concern for their feelings. Marriage among enslaved men and women had no legal basis, but these black slaves tried hard to make the best of their situation. They got married and raised families. They also tried to form communities for themselves. Sometimes they fought against their harsh conditions; they tried to run away to the North or Canada and Mexico, where slavery was forbidden. Slave-owners deprived the enslaved people from using their language, learning to read and write. Their owners were afraid that they would pass messages to other slaves on other plantations and start a revolt. Slave women were sexually abused and raped from their masters and rewarded the obedient with favors.

Enslaved Africans did not accept their fate, as a result, they gathered together and rebelled against slaveholders. Soon after, these rebellions were put to an end, and those rebellious enslaved people were brutally punished or killed. In response, Southern States passed a large series of laws Slave Codes. These codes defined the slaves were chattels, as properties, not as persons, they also included cruel and brutal punishment for slaves who rebel or run away. ("The Question of Slavery, Chapter 3 Lesson 3", 2019.p.3).

In the years to come, slave rebellions occurred, and there were few successful slave revolts. One was led by Gabriel Prosser in Richmond, Virginia 1800. And another one was led by Denmark Vessey in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822. The revolt that perhaps terrified and frightened slave owners was the one led by Nat Turner in Southampton, Virginia, in 1831. Before Turner and his group were captured, they murdered about 60 whites. (African Americans, Slavery in the United States, Britannica).

Afterward, people in every state started to question morality, whether slavery is something wrong or right. Some slaveholders started to free their slaves. Many Americans started to denounce slavery as well. In the early 1830s, the abolitionist movement emerged with the purpose of ending the practice of slavery in the United States. It was led by escaped slaves such as Frederick Douglass and with supporters such as William Lloyd Garrison, the founder of the radical newspaper *The Liberator*. (“The Question of Slavery, Chapter 3 Lesson 3”, 2019. p.4), and Harriet Beecher Stowe, who published the bestselling *The expansion of slavery to new territories* had been a serious subject of national political dispute. These tensions between Northern and Southern states over slavery, states’ rights, westward expansion, and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 caused seven southern states to secede and form the Confederate States of America. Four more states soon joined them. These conflicts soon gave rise to the Civil War. (History.com Editors. *Civil War, Causes, Dates & Battles*. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>).

The Civil War, or war between states, started in 1861, lasted about four years in which the industrialized Northern states fought against the predominantly agricultural Southern states. The Northern states wanted to abolish slavery and give black men some rights, whereas, the Southern states were pro-slavery because they needed slaves to work on their plantations. The South continued to claim that states retained much of their sovereignty, while the North saw the federal government as the country’s primary and indisputable power. The two regions, therefore, had a different conception of states’ rights. It was the question of slavery, however, that galvanized their disputes and rendered the foes between the two regions irreconcilable. an antislavery novel *‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’* (1852).

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After the Civil War, African-Americans were freed, The 13th Amendment, adopted on December 18, 1865, officially abolished slavery. However, this does not free them from other forms of segregation and stigmatization such as economic servitude and social oppression. They had been subjected to all kinds of stereotypes, discrimination, hatred, marginalization, and cruelty. African-Americans received the rights of citizenship and the equal protection of the Constitution in the 14th Amendment and the right to vote in the 15th Amendment, but these provisions of the Constitution were often ignored. It was difficult for black citizens to gain a foothold in the post-war economy, they had no legal or political power and they could be manipulated and controlled by racist whites thanks to the Black Codes. These laws were intended to limit black's freedom and ensure their availability as cheap laborers. (History.com Editors. Slavery in America: Timeline, Figures & Abolition. (n.d). Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/slavery>).

The reconstruction era was ultimately depressing and frustrating for African Americans, because of the rebirth of white racism and supremacy, such as the rise of racist organization the Ku Klux Klan that had triumphed in the South by 1877.

Almost a century later, the struggle for social justice for blacks to gain equal rights under the law in the United State and the devastating effects of racism was evolving. Civil Rights Movement emerged in the 1960s and achieved the greatest political and social gains for African-Americans. (Ibid.)

Hence, the problem created by racism, slavery and what African-American people experienced in the United States could be the major factor behind the appearance of

many African-American writers and the rise of black or African-American literature, however, many black artist writers started fighting for their social, cultural and political rights, they refused whites' domination and authority. They sought to ensure legislation against all forms of social discrimination and epitomize their nightmares. This was reflected in their literary works. They use literature as an effective tool and way to improve their community and to treat their social problems.

It is worth mentioning that African-American literature is that literature whether it was written by, for, and about African-Americans' history and experiences. Its main themes were about the exploration of black identity, and condemnation of whites' segregation and racism. African-American writers wrote to inform the people about their culture and on the other hand, to tell the black audience that they are not alone. It begins in the late 18th century with writers such as Phillis Wheatley. Then, in the nineteenth century, African- American Literature reached early high points with Slave Narratives. After that, the 1920s was an important time of flowering of literature and arts with The Harlem Renaissance. African-American writers tried to write about what they experienced, what they feel, and what they know. The major issues that were usually discussed were slavery, race; injustice society, the importance of family, love, and faith. Many of them have received the highest awards, including the Nobel Prize to Toni Morrison. ("African American Literature", p.1, n.d.).

1.2.1. Slave Narratives before and after the Civil War:

The place of African-Americans has changed over the centuries. Before the Civil War, African American literature focused on the subject of slavery as designated by the subgenre slave narratives or narrative of slavery which was: "the most unique genre in American literature, affords the reader an intimate view of the life of the slave in the history of the United States" (Novak 390). It consisted of memories of black people who were escaped from slavery, their slave lives, their path toward justice, and redemption to freedom. The slave narrative gives an attention portrayal of the peculiar practice of slavery as the slave experienced it "The narratives were written by former, sometimes fugitive slaves, present individual, and group history, as well as arguments against slavery itself" (qtd. in, Beza, Afro-American Literature from Slave Narratives to Recent Fiction, p.12).

Depriving the Black community of social rights and complete freedom, led the black individuals to respond. The African-Americans found a shared goal among themselves that could be used against racism. Although the search for freedom was a uniting factor among blacks. For instance, Frederick Douglass's autobiography, "*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*" (1845), aimed to convince the readers that slavery should be abolished, and in order to achieve his goal, he described the physical injuries that slaves experienced and his responses to his life as a slave. ("Literature of Civil War, from *Narrative of The Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*". n.d.)

Running away was an act of revolution, it indicated the slave's rejection of their conditions and his or her own decision of recounting his or her own life stories is a sort of a weapon against slavery. Thus were their actual arms used for the sake of destroying slavery and eventually strive for their freedom. Harriet Ann Jacobs was an outstanding example. In her works, she expended her life experiences before she was freed and she offered her readers a realistic depiction of her nuisance as a slave. In this novel '*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*' (1861). Jacobs had to publish under a pseudonym in order to write about sexual exploitation she has and money other slave women had experienced as slaves. (Golden, 2015).

With the end of slavery and the American Civil War, the Reconstruction offered the black a brief respite from whites' discrimination and racism. Several African American authors continued to write nonfiction works about the living conditions of black Americans in the United States. Among the most prominent writers were William Edward Burghardt Du Bois or (W. E. B Du Bois), an American sociologist, socialist, historian, civil rights activist, Pan-Africanist, author, writer, and editor. Du Bois was a black leader who managed to found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It aimed at the abolition of discrimination and segregation. It opposed racism and worked to ensure the constitutional rights of African-Americans. Although he had praised Booker T. Washington as being the most outstanding figure in the history of the American Negro in the 1870s, Du Bois became one of the opponents to Washington's philosophy (Hopes 395). Du Bois believed that education and the right to vote were the best means for Negroes to hope for integration in American society with full equality" (Webster 9). He was known by his influential collection of essays titled

"The Souls of Black Folk" in 1903. These essays were about living behind the veil of race and his personal experiences to describe how African-Americans lived in American society. He proposed "the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line" (Andrew Leiter). Besides, Dubois believed that African Americans should work together because of their common interests to fight prejudice and inequality.

1.2.2 Harlem Renaissance:

During the 1920's and the early 1930's, large groups of black Americans started to move from rural South places to urban North places. They moved to Northern Harlem where they found a better state of living than the remaining miserable life in the South.

For African-Americans, the Harlem Renaissance also called the New Negro Movement was a period of progressive change where new thoughts had been established as the enlightenment from the gloomy past, redesigning of the Black culture, consciousness, and the creation of new expressions. For instance, in the field of music, some Jazz pioneers appeared such as Louis Armstrong, King Oliver, and Jelly Roll Morton. They have brought their music from New Orleans and offered new recording tools to become superstars in the entire world. Jazz music was also attracted by the white audience and they shared the delight of the Jazz Age. (Nikolsky³⁴)

During the 1st two decades of the 20th century, there was a desire among African Americans to stop being like the old Negro style. This was characterized in Alain Locke's famous anthology *"The New Negro"* published in (1925). During that period, there was a change in the quest for identity and lifestyle. Alain Locke described the Harlem Renaissance as a "Spiritual Coming of Age" in which the black society was able to take its "first chances group expression and self-determinism." (qtd. in Kallen 31).

Among the most famous writers of the renaissance is the teenage poet Langston Hughes. the New York Herald Tribune stated: "Although he is 24 years old, is already conspicuous in the groups of Negro intellectuals who are dignifying Harlem in the genuine art life".(Rampersad, 2002). Hughes' writings were generally about the

alienation and marginalization in American society. The Harlem Renaissance period witnessed a blossoming of Black culture and many literary products by many talented and dramatic African American artists, intellectuals, writers, and musicians. It was a time of important ideas, books, culture, arts, poetry, sports, entertainment, and business.

This great migration toward the Northern cities produced a new sense of independence in the black community. It empowered the growth of the American Civil Rights movement, which made a powerful impression on black writers.

One of the first writers was James Arthur Baldwin. He was an essayist, playwright, novelist, and voice of the American civil rights movement. Baldwin broke new literary ground with his exploration of racial and social issues in his works. He was the only one who addressed the issue of black masculinity and sexuality. He was especially known for his essays on black experiences. He is best known for his novel '*Go Tell It on the Mountain*' in (1953), receiving acclaim for his insights on race, humanity, and spirituality. He deeply wrote personal stories and essays while examining what it was like to be both a Black and a homosexual at the same time when neither of these conceptions and issues was accepted by the American culture.

Another great novelist of this period was Ralph Waldo Ellison. He was an American novelist, literary critic, he was best known for his novel *Invisible Man* in (1952), which won the National Book Award in (1953). Ellison talked in his novel about the invisibility of identity and what it means to be a black man.

African-American literature continues until nowadays, with great authors such as Toni Morrison, who helped to promote black literature and authors when she worked as an editor for Random House. Morrison emerged as one of the most important African American writers of the 20th century. She published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). In addition, among her famous novels is *Beloved*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988. Morrison was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature. Moreover, another well-known figure among the African American elites is Alice Walker. She is a novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist. Alice Walker is best known for her fiction and essays that deal with themes of race and gender. Her novel *The Color Purple* (1982) won the National Book Award and The Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Walker is, therefore, the first African

American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

Finally, African-Americans' life has passed through different stages from slavery to freeman. However, during the span of this process, Africans faced very terrifying and horrific events. They faced racism, segregation, and dehumanization that affected their psyche, mental health, and their inner self; as a result, these issues gave birth to new literature and new artists; which is the African American literature. This kind of literature is produced in the United States by writers of African descent. They wrote about the different issues and problems that faced blacks in an American white oppressive society.

1.3. Theorizing Female Subjectivity and Feminist Theory:

after a long trip to making the world a better place by making rules, inventing new things, and changing ancient thoughts and ideas, women were still facing a million problems, struggling every single moment and they were still looking for their rights.

Throughout history, women suffered from social and financial disadvantages. They were considered inferior creatures and they were deprived of everything. Women have been barred from attending schools and universities. They were excluded by law for an inheritance or expected to marry and spend their entire life in housekeeping and childbearing.

Women had been through many obstacles, barriers, and harsh problems to become an important member of society. They were isolated, marginalized, and mistreated by men. They fought and resisted the different kinds of oppression, in many times women were double oppressed and marginalized. But by the coming of feminism, the image and the meaning of a woman have totally changed from being the 'Other' in the hands of man; she becomes a president, an artist, and a teacher with a complete subject.

Feminism is an umbrella term for a different view about injustices against women. Feminists worked to bring social change and justice for women, and it focused on the equality between both sexes. It is among the numbers of social, political, and cultural movements. Susan James defined Feminism as:

Feminism is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and that their oppression is in some way illegitimate or unjustified. Under the umbrella of this general characterization, there are, however, many interpretations of women and their oppression, so that it is a mistake to think feminism as a single philosophical doctrine, or as implying an agreed political program. (qtd. in *Concept of Feminism in Literature*, Chapter 2, p.61).

James used here the notions of ‘disadvantage’ and ‘oppression’ to show the substantive accounts of gender injustice.

The post-Colonial theory emerged at the very outset of the 1990s. It can be seen, however, as a critical analysis of history, culture, and literature. It is interested in how the colonized came to accept the value of the more powerful culture and to resist them too, it looked at canonical texts as well as postcolonial ones.

The relationship between Post-Colonialism and feminism is that, in many societies, women were struggling and asking to change their position in society, men were seeking to reinstate the marginalized in the face of the dominant.

Colonialism gave birth to Postcolonial feminism. Postcolonial feminism was a response to colonialism and Imperialism. Since the 1980s, feminists have argued that the feminist movements should address global issues such as patriarchy, sexism, and rape. Postcolonial feminists argue that racial and class, oppressions that have a relation with the colonial experience have marginalized women in postcolonial societies. (New World Encyclopedia, Postcolonial Feminism and Third World Feminism).

However, God created human beings and divided them into two groups, man and woman, with differences in body and mind. So the feminist movement came and was influenced by the ideas popularized and postulated by different authors and thinkers such as Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. This modern movement expresses its protest against male domination, by providing solutions and strategies for change. The main aim of feminists is to understand the oppression of women. Simone de

Beauvoir noted in her book *The Second Sex* said: “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.” (de Beauvoir, 1949, p.301)

According to de Beauvoir, a woman is always considered as a second in comparison to the man from ancient times. And being a female is a result of social tradition under the male’s control.

Nowadays, the concepts of sexism and gender became debatable issues and an important dimension to analyze and design economic and social policies. (“Concept of Feminism in Literature, Chapter 2”, (n.d), p. 62). Elizabeth Spelman in *The Inessential Woman* (1988) said:

...no woman is subject to any form of oppression simply because she is a woman; which forms of oppression she is subject to depend on what “kind” of woman she is. In a world in which a woman might be subject to racism, classism, homophobia, antisemitism if she is not so subject it is because of her race, class, religion, sexual orientation. So it can never be the case that the treatment of a woman has only to do with her gender and nothing to do with her class or race. (Spelman, p. 155).

The aim of these feminist movements is to understand the true nature of gender oppression and inequality by exploring and examining the social roles, and experiences of women. Moreover, Post-Modernism flourished in the late 20th century, it is a reaction or a response to Modernism, it can only be understood in relation to Modernism. The rise of Postmodernism influenced Feminism, which was gaining prominence and importance at the same time. Many feminists were widely influenced by Postmodernism and some claimed that feminist theory is inherently postmodern. (Kruks, Sonia. (1992). ‘Gender and Subjectivity: Simone De Beauvoir and Contemporary Feminism’, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol.18, no.1, p.89). Feminism and Postmodernism, both engage with global critiques of modernity from related points of views, in fact, postmodern theory opposes the key elements of

the feminist emancipatory project, including, subjectivity and rights. Despite this, a large number of feminists engage with postmodern ideas.

Man always considered being right, while the woman is in the wrong, all the bad and negative qualities are assigned to her. Simone de Beauvoir said that the woman is “defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the absolute, she is the other.” (de Beauvoir, 1949, p.16). Simone de Beauvoir links the female’s identity as ‘Other’ because she was alienated and deprived in society. As Sartre described the struggle between ‘pour-soi’ and ‘en-soi’, man is cast in the role of the pour-soi (for itself), which is the continuous process of self-realization and self-discovery, in contrast, the woman is cast in the role of en-soi (in-itself), instead of engaging in the authenticating project of self-fulfillment, they accept and admit to becoming an object, to exist as en-soi. (“Feminist and Gender Studies”, (n.d), p.317). De Beauvoir encouraged the woman to decline the notion of the ‘Other’, to exist as pour-soi, to be free, and to constitute her future through creative projects. (Ibid, p. 317).

Whereas, many feminists committed to modern ideas and beliefs about gender and they ask the question: “And what about women?” postmodern feminists such as Judith Butler ask “And what do you mean by ‘women’?” (Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print). She refuses the idea that a woman can be understood as a concrete category, interpreting gender identity instead of an unstable ‘fiction’.

Specifically, Butler believes that gendered subjectivity as a fluid identity and confirms that the individual subject is never exclusively “male” or “female,” but rather is always in a state of contextually dependent flux, it means that gendered subjectivity is not fixed or essential, but a sustained set of acts. (Ibid. p.372).

On the other hand, women of color or black females were marginalized from the feminist movement. Their problems were huge and greater than that of white females. Not only history has taken less notice of them but also literature has generally overlooked them. Enhancing their grievances is the fact that they had more than a single battle to fight. The African-American woman found herself pressured by two forces of oppression: racism and sexism. They are bound and tied together in her

experiences, but she does not find circumstances represented by mainstream feminism, which focused only on sexism.

Undoubtedly, the black woman was doubly marginalized. She was called 'Other' among the 'Others'. Patricia Hill Collins in *'Black Feminist Thought'* (1990) argues that black women were always treated as 'Others' in a white patriarchal society. She uses the term 'Matrix Domination' to affirm that the position of the black female in society is affected by race, class, and gender. "Differences in penalty and privilege that accompany race, class, gender, and similar systems of social injustice" (qtd. in, "Feminist Gender Theories", (n.d), p.334).

Collins asserted that the experience of multiple oppression make to black female skeptical of and vulnerable to dominant paradigms of knowledge and thus more depending on their experiential sources of information. Black women come to break the silence of oppression by drawing both from their experiences and from the collective secret knowledge generated by groups on either side of the power. (qtd.in, "Feminist Gender Theories", p.335). *Black Feminist Thought* offers African American women conceptual ways to resist oppression. This is evidenced by black females' continuous and dogged historical resistance. They endured their long ordeal by resisting different kinds of oppression.

1.4. Race and Female Subjectivity as Psychoanalytic Concepts:

Every person has his own features and peculiarities, and as a result of these features, he shows a specific behavior and he acts in a specific way in different situations. This behavior is strongly related to his personality. In other words, this behavior is a mirror of his personality. Epistemologically, the term personality is derived from the Latin word 'persona', but psychologically, personality is all about a person is. On the other hand, literary works are a creation of the human mind, so the role of the author's psychology cannot be separated from his work, so psychology and literature are deeply related and connected to each other. The literary works in general, are written to be read and at the same time are a medium to reveal some of the repressed emotions and feelings from the author. As it is acknowledged, psychology is the scientific study of the human psyche, while literature is a human's production that exhibits how human beings behave with their problems in a given situation.

In the light of these facets, Sigmund Freud came out with the term of 'psychoanalysis' in 1856. Freud is the founding father of psychoanalysis, in which it is both a theory that explains human behavior and therapy or a method for treating mental illnesses. Freud believed that if people could make conscious their unconscious thoughts and impulses, they could be cured. Freud's theory gives a crucial role to the unconscious desire and their effects on the human psyche. Freud thinks that desire is a reflection of human suppressed memories, emotions, unresolved conflicts, and traumatic experiences. (Zaineb Iqbal, Psychoanalysis, p.1).

Freud (1949), in '*An Outline Of Psychoanalysis*' explains the true basis of psychoanalytic theory. He explained the three forces or parts of the personality, the id, the ego, and the superego. First of all, according to Freud, the id is the most important part of the human personality, it has the quality of being unconscious, it is based on primitive impulses and contains the inherited things. The id is related to the pleasure principle and seeks for anything that feels good. (Freud, 1949, p.14).

Then the ego, or it is also called the logical, waking part of the mind. It has the quality of being conscious and it is responsible for controlling and making a balance between id and the superego. The ego controls the demands and impulses of the id, becoming aware of stimuli, and providing a link between the id and the external world. (Freud, 1949, pp.14.15).

The superego, the last part, is the moral part of the human personality. It contains higher principles, and it differentiates between what is good and evil. It responsible to limit the satisfaction and it represents the influence of others such as parents and teachers, as well as the impact of cultural and societal conventions. (Freud, 1949, p.15).

Moreover, Freud believes that these parts are always in conflict because each part has a different goal. Sometimes the conflict is too much for a person to handle. His ego engages in defense mechanisms to protect the individual. When there is a conflict between the goals of the id and the superego, the ego must deploy many defense mechanisms to prevent the individual from anxiety. The defense mechanism includes:

Repression is when the ego pushes the threatening thoughts out of one's consciousness. Denial is when the ego blocks external events from awareness. The

individual refuses to experience it. Displacement is satisfying an impulse, the individual released frustration or the intense emotion from the real cause to the less threatening target. (Freud, 1949).

Furthermore, Freud proposed his concepts of psychosexual stages. He confirms that an infant passes through a series of stages and he must complete each stage to become a psychologically healthy adult with a fully formed ego and superego. Otherwise, he becomes fixated in a specific stage, which may cause behavioral problems in adulthood. These stages include the oral stage, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stage.

In "*The Interpretation of Dreams*" (1900), Freud described dreams as the royal road to the unconscious. He believed that analyzing the dream of an individual can provide valuable and worthy insight into his unconscious mind.

He suggested that dreams are the reflection of our repressed thoughts and desires that are hidden in our subconscious minds. He also made the difference between the actual dream 'manifest content', and the true hidden meaning behind a dream 'latent content' (Ibid).

While Freud believed that that literature is an expression of the repressed memories and conflicts of the author, Carl Jung considered literature as an expression of collective unconsciousness. This collective unconsciousness could be a depot or a store of racial memories and the original image and types of experiences, which he called archetypes. (Mambrol, Nasrullah. (2016). *Literary Theory and Criticism*, Carl Jung's Contribution to Psychoanalytic Theory.).

Freud and Jung worked together in their early days because they were both interested in psychoanalysis but the concept of the unconscious is the important central disagreement that ended their partnership. For Freud, the unconscious is the center of the repressed experiences, thoughts, sexual desires, and traumatic memories. He considered the unconscious mind as a place to gather hidden desires that may produce neurosis.

By contrast, Jung divided the psyche into three main parts including the ego, in which he considered it as the conscious part. The collective unconscious contains knowledge and experiences. And personal unconscious that gathers suppressed and recalled memories.

While the French psychologist Jaques Lacan was always insisting that he was a Freudian and he worked within the Freudian Field, his approaches to analyze are different from Freud's. Lacan called for a return to Freudianism, but with a new focus on the unconscious and greater attention paid to language, the central focus of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is that "the unconscious is structured like a language (Mambrol, Nasrullah.(2016). *Literary Theory and Criticism*, Carl Jung's Contribution to Psychoanalytic Theory). Lacan drew from his knowledge of linguistics and Ferdinand de Saussure and argues that language is an important piece of the developmental puzzle than Freud assumed.

Lacan set up three main key concepts apart from Freud's original talk therapy. The first one is "the real" in which Lacan believed that the human mind exists in the 'real' and experience anxiety because the individual cannot control it. (Ibid). The second is the 'symbolic order' in which our thoughts, ideas, and emotions are placed. Our thoughts and desires are placed, live, and interpreted in the symbolic order. (Ibid).

The final key is the mirror stage and this is important for self-development. Started when children look at their image into the mirror, they became fascinated with the image that they are seeing in the mirror. But ultimately, they recognize that the image they are seeing is of themselves. (Ibid).

With postcolonial studies and psychoanalysis, the problem of race and racism gained increasing attention in psychoanalysis. *The psychoanalysis of race* (1998) by Christopher Lane is a representative work of how psychoanalysis shifted its emphasis on race. Lane explains in the introduction of the book that "we cannot comprehend ethnic and racial disputes without considering the implications of psychic resistance" (Christopher, 1998, p.1).

In the field of African-American criticism, Claudia Tate in '*Psychoanalysis and Black Novels*' gives a racially contextualized model of psychoanalysis in which a combination between African-American textuality and psychoanalysis gave a profound understanding to African-American literature on one hand, and enrich the psychoanalytic model on the other hand. By reading and analyzing works by W.E.B. Du Bois, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, we can explore the African-American alienation, segregation, desire, and subjectivity. Tate realizes the absence of psychoanalytic reading in black literature, she said, "psychoanalysis can tell us much about the complicated social workings of race in the United States and the

representation of these workings in the literature of African Americans” (qtd.in, Su-Lin Yu, *Race, Psychoanalysis and Female Subjectivity in Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye*, pp.2.3).

Moreover, Frantz Fanon describes how colonial power and occupation requires a process of dehumanization which affects and caused an identity crisis in the colonized, “Because it is a systematic negation of the other person and a furious determination to deny the other person all attributes of humanity, colonialism forces the people it dominates to ask themselves the question constantly: ‘In reality, who am I?’” (qtd.in, Gwen Bergner, *Politics, and Pathologies On the Subject of Race in Psychoanalysis*, p.220).

The concept of race in psychoanalysis analyzes the unrecognized racism and segregation in psychoanalysis by discussing and examining the colonialist discourse that made its road into Freud’s texts.

At the time when many theories of subjectivity gave little attention to gender roles in the formation of the subject, psychoanalysis was always interested in gender as important in the production of subjects. Freud explains that infant sexuality is unchangeable. That is, the infant loves everything and everyone.

In classical Freudian theory, the Oedipus complex comes in two flavors, one for boys and one for girls. Feminist psychoanalysis which is based on Freud’s psychoanalytic theories argued that gender is not biological but it is based on the psycho-sexual development of the individual, and that sexual difference and gender are not similar. Psychoanalysis of feminism believes that gender discrimination and inequality come out from early childhood experiences, that drives man to believe himself to be masculine, and woman believe herself to be feminine. More than that, gender makes a social system that is controlled and dominated by males, which in its turn affects the psycho-sexual development of the individual. (“Feminist Theory”, (n.d), p.6).

1.5. Conclusion :

This theoretical chapter mainly tried to line out some essential points related to the representation of racism and female subjectivity in African-American literature. It deals with some historical facts about slavery and racism in America, feminism and psychoanalysis theories, and some different ideas related to the concepts of race and female subjectivity in relation to psychoanalysis. It shed light on the experiences of black people during and after the emancipation of slavery, their sufferings from

violence and segregation, the historical background of feminism, and the emergence of psychoanalysis theory. It gives an overview of African-Americans path into freedom, and women's path in which they suffered a lot; they have been killed, segregated, and raped. However, they succeed to give the woman her social, economical rights, and a complete sense of self. Moreover, psychoanalysis theory helps us to understand the impulses and the motives behind people's actions and behaviours, and how the concepts of race and female subjectivity are represented in psychoanalysis.

2.1. Introduction:

Morrison, the first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, entered the history through her different works that explored black identity in America and, in particular, the experience of black women. In all of her works, especially; the novel *Beloved* (1987), she tried to capture the true image of slavery and racism and their lasting effects on the Black colored people. She presented slavery not just as a historic fact but as a memory. Morrison recaptured the lost stories of violence, pain, racism, and depicted black women's struggle to live under the institution of slavery and sexism at the same time. Hence, the novel highlights the psychological and physical impact of slavery on the individual black man and woman, as well as their communities and their continuous fights and struggles holding their wounds and the scars of their past. They make haste to remember the past and keep their memories and their culture of the past intact.

This chapter is divided into three parts: the first part is entitled to the dehumanized effect of slavery in the novel *Beloved*, in which the researcher explains how were the lives of blacks under the whites' authority and how they were treated in that era. The second part analyzes the physical and psychological effects of slavery on the African-American women where the researcher depicts the different psychological and physical wounds and traumatic issues that faced black women and affected their lives. However, the third part, Morrison's female characters and their quest for subjectivity, is devoted to describing the secret stories i.e. what really happened to them when they were slaves and what they did in their past life, and to capture the lives of the ex-slaves' women who were trying their best to render their lives normal. Despite the great oppression these women have encountered in their everyday life, they manage to preserve their lore and identity.

2.2. The Dehumanizing Effect of Slavery in the Novel *Beloved*:

Toni Morrison, original name Chloe Anthony Wofford, (born February 18, 1931, Lorain, Ohio; United States), a Nobel laureate, has attained an important place in the American literary world. She was a novelist, editor, and professor. Her novels are known for their epic themes like black identity, community, and reconstruction of the past. Throughout her novels, she shows several ways in which slavery, one of the most oppressive periods in black history, has affected African-American's identity.

Besides she examines the experience of the black, especially, black females within the black community.

Morrison grew up in the American Midwest in a family that possessed a great love and appreciation for black culture, storytelling, and folktales. She attended Howard University and Cornell University. She taught at Texas Southern University than at Howard for seven years. In 1965, Morrison became a fiction editor at Random House for many years; then she began teaching writing at the State University of New York at Albany in 1984, but she left in 1989 to join the faculty of Princeton University. She retired in 2006. Morrison was married to an architect originally from Jamaica Harold Morrison. In 1958 and 1961 the couple welcomed their first child Harold. Later on, she has got divorced after six years of marriage while she was pregnant with her second child Slade. Morrison's first books are: *The Bluest Eye* (1970), then *Sula* in (1973). She won the National Book Critics Circle Award for her third novel *Song of Solomon* (1977), and then followed with *Tar Baby* in 1981. *Beloved* (1987), which won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988, deals with the ills of slavery. Then came *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2003), and *A Mercy* (2008). She died on August 5, 2019, in Bronx, New York.

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* digs deep into the history of slavery in America. It depicts the true image of how the slaves were made to bear the lives of inferior creatures. The novel explores the lasting effects of slavery on blacks and their community. *Beloved* is a story of the physical escape of slaves and their journey to freedom. It demonstrates how the slaves survive the psychological trauma. It focuses on the individual characters as well as the historical impact of slavery. *Beloved* is related to the events surrounding the Civil War, particularly, the Fugitive Slave Act, which allowed Southern slave owners to recapture the slaves that escaped from their owners. Hence, the novel is inspired by the true story of a former slave Margret Garner who escaped with her family across the Ohio River in 1856. The slave catchers found her as a result she murders three of the four, rather than allowing them to be taken back into slavery. Garner was taken back into slavery. ("*Beloved* Study Guide, Historical Background, Lit Charts", n.d).

In 1873, just after the end of The Civil War, on the edge of Cincinnati, there was a house 124 that was haunted by the presence of a dead child. Sethe, a former slave lived in the house with the ghost for 18 years and this ghost was her murdered child Beloved. After a long trip of becoming a free slave and running away with her

children from an abusive owner known as Schoolteacher they were caught, and in an act of sacrifice and supreme love, the protagonist Sethe too tried to kill her children in order to keep them away from slavery. Only her two-year daughter died, and the schoolteacher believed that Sethe was officially crazy, so he decided not to take her back. Sethe lived at 124 with her children Denver, Howard, and Buglar and her mother in law Baby Suggs, who died after eight years with exhaustion and sadness.

The entire novel is structured as a series of fragmented memories experienced by Sethe as well as the other characters and, it depicted the dehumanization of black slaves at the hands of the white racists. Morrison tried to capture the scenes of physical and sexual abuse, as well as other scenes of powerlessness and slaves being beaten and controlled by their white masters by using an animalistic language. The novel's story revolved around the idea of dealing with the past of those slaves who experienced different physical and psychological violations and dehumanization that made them feel less than humans, and it showed how their past memories and experiences can shape their present and their future.

First of all, dehumanization is the process of transforming an ordinary normal people into people who are less than humans; they can be treated as enemies that deserve different kinds of torture, torment and even annihilation. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, Dehumanization means to remove the special human qualities of independence from a certain person. It is also to treat people so badly that they lose their good human qualities (Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English). So Dehumanization means suppression, memorization, subjection, violence and, exclusion. It negates the entire evolutionary journey of a natural being into a human being. There are various forms of dehumanization based on race, class, gender, sex, and so on. Social norms define what human behavior is and what is not. (Goff, P.A et.al. 2008) Not Yet Human: Implicit Knowledge, Historical Dehumanization, and Contemporary Consequences, 2008).

The reality of being white was always been considered as an advantage and a privilege in society, and black people, therefore, were somehow seen as the "Other". In literary theories and philosophy, the concept of the "Other" means a standard or a criterion that divides humanity and societies into two groups which are the dominant group who controls and embodies the norms and their identity is valued. The Other group contains people who are different in terms of race, gender, and so on. So the

dominant group has the power to impose its categories and laws over the Other who is perceived to be different and always seen and regarded as subhuman, lesser or inferior being in society. Homi Bhabha said, “the Other loses its power to signify, to negate, to initiate its historic desire, to establish its institutional discourse”(Mambrol, Nasrullah, “Literary Theory and Criticism, The Other, The Big Other, and Othering”, n.d).

African Americans experienced horrific acts of violence and discrimination during the time of slavery. Slavery has many characteristics but possession and ownership are the major ones. Ownership refers to the masters’ practice in having legal rights to the bodies and labor of their slaves, while possession on the other hand refers to the psychological dimension of the relationship, in which masters were able to convince some slaves to believe in the institution of slavery. Slaves were considered property and commodities to their masters, but this institution of slavery had a great impact on the physical, mental, and psychological health of the slaves. They were dehumanized and treated, we can say less than animals. Slaves both men and women were beaten, raped, and tortured by their owners. Many slaves had lost their identities and were psychologically damaged, some of them were suffered from what is now called post-traumatic stress and some had to hide their pain. Many black families were separated. Slaves were not only helpless but also hapless. Through *Beloved*, Morrison intends to show the reader what really happened to the slaves who were working under that system of dehumanization as well as the psychological control and physical imprisonment.

In *Beloved*, the characters who were slaves and worked in Sweet Home experienced different kinds of violence, brutality, and they were treated like animals or maybe less. The masters were able to convince some slaves to believe on slavery, hence, these masters were able to control slaves’ minds in a variety of forms starting with the destruction of the family; in which children were taken away from their parents, or the parents were working all day and night just like animals; far away from their homes and their children. The slave parents had no time to take care of their homes or their children. They were just meant to work, produce, and obey their masters. Slavery has damaged them physically and devastated them mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Slavery has almost upended their process towards finding their identity.

Psychological Impact of Slavery: on their traditions, on their family life, and on their community in general. Slaves were not only helpless but also hapless. As a result, this separation from their relatives, alone, alienated in a new place, and worked to the benefits of the slaveholders make them psychologically damaged and unstable. Their masters possessed their minds, their bodies, and memories. Morrison uses *Beloved* to demonstrate the devastating effects of slavery, *Beloved* characters were psychologically and emotionally suffering from the flashbacks of their past tragedies, they were trying to find a path of self-discovery. They could not separate themselves or their memories from the traumas of their past, and they were haunted by the ghosts of the past. Their traumatic past lived with them just like a shadow; Joy explained that Morrison tried to recapture and to record the unrecorded history of “The lost stories of slavery, imprisonments, displacement and women’s loss, the secret stories of abuse, degradation, and the theft of identity.”(Jot et al.2002, p.9)

The concept of trauma itself means disturbing, terrible, and distressing experiences and events that happened to a person in the past. The traumatized person keeps repeating these horrible and unpleasant memories unconsciously. According to Freud traumatic experiences are located in the Unconscious part of the mind so they are compulsively repeated. They influence the memory, the identity, and divide the psyche (Trauma Studies- Literary Theory and Criticism, n.d).

Indeed, white masters had wiped out if not completely destroyed their histories and abused their bodies. The dehumanization of the characters in *Beloved* did not happen overnight, but this is the logical outcome of the system of slavery. Almost all the characters who had been slaves were haunted by traumatic atrocities that prevailed even when they were freed, slaves. An outstanding example, perhaps, is the protagonist of the novel *Sethe*, who was struggling with the haunting memory of her slave past and the punishment of killing her daughter *Beloved*. *Sethe* has to endure and to suffer the most pain. The protagonist of *Beloved*, *Sethe*, is also kidnapped by her own actions and remains trapped inside a melancholy state, “a frozen place” that evokes Sigmund Freud’s definition of memories of those who suffer from trauma that freeze in place and remain in this time frame (P.Levine Michael. (2000). (ed.)*THE ANALYTIC FREUD*.Philosophy and psychoanalysis. London and New York. Routledge).

Under slavery, Sethe was treated as a subhuman, when once she walked in the office of the schoolteacher, who was giving a lesson to his pupils on her “animal characteristics”, Sethe seemed to be so alienated from herself and filled with self-loathing. As a reaction to the schoolmaster’s cruel attitudes and his bad treatment of the slaves as mere bodies and not as human beings, the slaves, along with Sethe decided to run away.

Sethe was pregnant with Denver and she sent her two-year-old daughter and her two older sons ahead with some other slaves. She decided to stay behind and look for her husband Halle because he does not arrive to meet them. Unfortunately, Sethe was caught by the schoolteacher and his nephews, who held her down, raped her and sucked their milk. Later on, Sethe told Mrs. Garner about this incident. The schoolteacher discovered this so he ordered his nephews to whip her. The whipping of Sethe opens the skin of her back and she bears scars on her back that resemble to a trunk of a tree with its branches. (Morrison, 1987, p.19). “Those boys came in there and took my milk, that’s what they came for. Held me down and took it... Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree, it grows there still.” (Ibid pp. 19.20).

Although Sethe became a free woman, her mind remained strongly shackled in the chains of the past. She was plagued by repression of the past. She was exiled and homeless in her own house. She could not confront the past nor live the present. She was locked in the past so she could not find a road to the future, because of the pain of the past and the fear of being hurt again. Sethe isolated herself and her Denver from the community. Her expensive scars represented a history full of physical and psychological pain and violence; the scars are a reminder of the past. Sethe’s past experiences as a slave are repeatedly haunted her present and stand as an obstacle in making her future. Thus, Morrison’s novel *Beloved* is an account of slavery as it relates to trauma and the legacy of post-traumatic stress and the transgenerational trauma it leaves behind. This is the reason why the readers would witness Sethe’s never-ending agonies when they continue thumbing the pages of *Beloved*.

Moreover, the experiences of slavery were the main reason that made her murder her child. She knew and she was sure that mercy does not present in the hearts of the masters; “It ain’t my job to know what’s worse. It’s my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible” (Ibid 194). Her life was full of

struggles, in the past, she was struggling with slaveholders, and then with the society because she was considered to be a savage mother. She was judged by the killing of her infant, but for her, it was the best and the only way to defend her baby. Sethe was certain that if her baby daughter was taken back to slavery, she would endure and would suffer like her mother. She would demise and disappear under the cruel regulations of slavery or she would be murdered or raped by the masters; "if I hadn't killed her, she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (Ibid. 236). More than that, and as a result of slavery and its effects, Sethe was taken away from her mother. So she, by no means, was practicing her mother's love for her children. She wanted to protect them. She tried to do with her children what her mother did not do with her; "My woman? You mean my mother? If she did, I don't remember. I didn't see her but a few times out I the fields and once when she was working indigo" (Ibid. 72).

Another image of the dehumanized effect of slavery is when Paul D learned about Sethe murdering her child. He could not accept the truth. She kept trying to explain the reasons behind her action. She talked about her deprivation. Because of the horrible institution of slavery, she was obliged to work all day long and then tried to take care of her children without the help of a husband. She explained to him that she felt that death was a better option for them than returning to sweet home. So, she took matters into her own hands. Paul D began to see Sethe from a different lens that he could not accept. He could not resolve the new image of Sethe with the one he had kept during all of his years in exile. He wanted her to be the same young, naïve and obedient woman, but in fact, the wounds and experiences of her years of slavery changed her a lot. He criticized her for trying to save her children from the school teacher and that her love for them is too "thick" "You got two feet Sethe, not four" (Ibid. 194), "Your love is too thick" (Ibid. 193). Under slavery, Sethe and her family were treated no better than animals. They were considered as commodities, and when Paul D criticizes her and told her that she acted like an animal by killing her baby, he made her feel like a slave again. Sethe was not only a victim of a cruel society, but she was also a victim of her husband Halle, who was supposed to protect her from the world. He mistreated her he, in some ways; let the schoolmaster's nephew steal her breast milk while he was hiding in the barn loft. Halle eventually lost his mind. He was traumatized by his wife's suffering (TheBestNotes.com Staff. "Free Study Guide

for *Beloved* By Toni Morrison”, n.d).

On the other hand, the writer reflected the ill-treatment and the dehumanizing of those black people especially Paul D. He passed through horrific sexual acts. He was constrained by slavery and its emasculating effects. He struggled with the problem of defining his manhood. As a slave he was treated as property. He was forced to suck on an iron bit. Throughout his life, he kept losing his loved ones, he never knew his parents. Thus, Paul D, never shared his experiences in the Tobacco Tin, stored, hidden them, and never shared them with anyone for fear of shame. “His shame as a male rape victim was too great”(Barnet, n.d p.424). He questioned the reason behind the suffering of humans; they destroyed his sense of humanity. They took off his human dignity and treated him like an animal. He grieved over the man of Sweet Home “one crazy, one sold, one missing, one hurt, and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me” (Morrison, 1987, p. 86). This doubtfulness, panic, and fright of one’s manhood are a clear example of how the white slave masters applied physical and psychological control and power over the black slaves, they used their power through a process and a method of dehumanization of their subjects, and these subjects accepted their inferiority and sub-human identity through these behaviors (Bloom, Harold. 2004, *Bloom’s Guide: Toni Morrison’s Beloved*, p.60).

Increasingly, there was another character, who witnessed, experienced the use of violence, and rape from the whites over their body was Ella. Ella was a sex slave who was raped by a white son and his father; she was traumatized by this sexual cruelty. She told Sethe, “You couldn’t think up...what them two done to me” (Morrison, 1987, p.119) She believed that what happened in the past must be buried, but she represented the same fears as Paul D, she was unable to tell or reveal her past and all her experiences to others. As a result, the power and sexual assault used against Ella dehumanized her and made her no longer able to feel love anymore. Furthermore, she had scars and she lost her teeth to the brake. Although these memories and wounds of a brutal past, thus, Ella became so much stronger than Paul D. She played a remarkable and an active role in helping and supporting the black community to come together. (ibid, p.76).

The whites had the power to dehumanize the slaves because they were the masters. They were the ones who owned the power and they considered themselves superior and better. Slave women were regarded as breeders in the sense that these women

will give free future slaves by giving birth to children. So they were considered as machines for producing children. These white people used to call the blacks 'slaves', 'niggers', 'beasts', 'animals', just to degrade the slaves and compared them to the animals. The blacks did not have ownership over their bodies because they were controlled and determined by the whites. Even their language was controlled by the slave owners, blacks were deprived of the right to speak and the right to receive education, they were just considered as animals, means of (re) production and to satisfy whites' sexual desire and pleasure.

2.3. The Physical And Psychological Effects of Slavery on the African-American Women:

"The past is not dead. It's not even the past"

-William Faulkner.

The slaves were caught, killed, seduced, raped, oppressed, murdered and most importantly they were depressed in their hearts and minds. All the characters in the novel, and in many cases, were so psychologically traumatized. As a consequence, they denied the existence of their past because it was too painful for them to reminisce the past again. However, their physical wounds and scars made them remember the horrors of slavery. Regardless of all the characters, slave women suffered in a variety of ways when they were slaves. The novel is haunted by history, (re)memory of rape, slavery, and sexism experienced by the black women. It depicts the abuses of slavery-like cruel beatings, lynching, and rape towards slave females. This was particularly true for runaway slaves. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, stated that any slave owner had the right to retrieve his "property," even if the slave had passed into a free state, such as Ohio. Ohio did not have any tolerance for runaway slaves as its population from other "immigrants" kept growing. The penalties for escaped slaves who were caught were horrible: beatings, whippings, and sometimes lynching for other slaves to see as a warning. Pregnant women, like Sethe, were also beaten; the slave master would dig a hole and put the women face down with the protruding part of her belly in the hole and beat her. This way they protected their investment, the future slave woman's belly Huggins, Nathan Irvin. *Black Odyssey: The African American Ordeal of Slavery*. New York: Vintage Books, Inc., 1977).

Sethe Suggs suffered from the effect of enslavement physically, psychologically, and emotionally. The outside atmosphere and circumstances influenced her identity, all her past struggles and obstacles provided her an unstable state of mind; she lived in her recollections and memories. Her life was full of ups and downs. In fact, she is the center of the story and her body is in fact a mirror of slavery. Sethe told that there was a tree with plenty of branches behind her back. Sethe said; "I got a tree on my back..." (Morrison, 1987, p.18). This means that there are numerous of the lashes behind her back caused by the nephews of the schoolteacher. This is a very rich symbol used by Morrison in the novel to show us the physical cruelty of slavery.

Thus, Morrison tried to recapture and interpret the scars of a savage, cruel and violent past, and the function, the reason behind these scars are a sign of a history that needed to be re- explained in order to discover that history. She subverted the dreadful into the beautiful, and this happened when Amy Denver, the young, talkative, and typical white woman, who helped Sethe when she was ill during her escape from Sweet Home. She helped her deliver her baby girl Denver; Amy tried to portray the scars on the back of Sethe. She said that they resemble a tree. She described Sethe's back as a Chokecherry tree. She said: "red and split wide open, full of sap", "The mighty lot of branches" and the "Tinny little cherry blossoms, just as white" (Morrison, 198, p.79). Sethe decided to accept this optimistic description as her reality and then she described the scar to Paul D the way as Amy Denver did so to her. The description of Amy Denver offered an 'aestheticized' truth to a costly scar on Sethe's back. It is no longer an image to be ashamed of, but it is one to be admired and appreciated. Moreover, the physical injuries, wounds and scars of slavery healed quickly, unlike the mental and emotional scars and wounds suffered by the female victims. The past scars and wounds reconstruct their fragile and weak selves. The untold suffering experienced by the slaves is exhumed by many scholars. As Kolk explains the past lives in the present in traumatized people in general and more specifically with the inhabitants of 124. Despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter people's psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences [,] spoiling appreciation of the present (Kolk, Bessel, McFarlane, Alexander C. *The Black Hole of Trauma: Literary Theory: AnAnthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden: Blackwell, 1988, p.p 487-502.)

The novel *Beloved* is a story of an event set against the oppressive slavery. This event has spread and shaped the lives of Sethe as well as the other female characters. These black females were struggling and haunting by their memories, they tried to recall the good things without remembering the bad ones. For example, Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother in law, could not remember all of her eight children, she could only remember the oldest liked the burned bottom of bread; "That's all you let yourself remember" Sethe said, and for her "The future was a matter of keeping the past at bay" (Morrison, 1987, p. 51). And for Sethe, the memories were so strong and enormous that they occurred for her as physical objects. She told her daughter Denver, "If you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again." (Morrison, 1987, p. 44). Sethe had a kind of a rebellious brain that it did not let her forget or escape; she tortured herself with memories as a kind of punishment. While Ella appeared to have a healthy behavior she could put her memories and her past under control, she said: "The past was something to leave behind. And if it didn't stay behind, well, you might have to stomp it out" (Morrison, 1987, p. 256).

Living itself is suspended in *Beloved*'s story because of the continuous presence of the past as well as the memories. All the main female characters and all the members of the black community in Cincinnati were haunted by the trauma of slavery, sexism, and racism. In the novel, women were working so hard just to avoid the past because it was full of pain and horrific events for them. Sethe, as it is known, the main character showed the inclination to repress the past; but until she confronted and faced it, she could neither enjoy the present nor the future. Sethe remembered her journey to freedom in Ohio. "To get to a place where you could love anything you chose, not to need permission for desire" (Morrison, 1987, p. 191).

Flashbacks, black women's remembrance of the terror, horror, deep physical and psychic wounds of slavery, especially the paradoxes and corruption of Sweet home in Kentucky made them weak and afraid. The crime of slavery was so savage and brutal, it was the main cause of the incident of infanticide. Ella was imprisoned or locked in a house and she was shared by a white father and his son. Baby Suggs had eight children with six different men. Sethe's nameless mother was raped by a crew for many times during the transportation from Africa to America. All these facts and acts made these women blocked in their places and controlled by their cruel memories. Slave women were so much fragile than men, they got raped, and they had

no control over their own bodies and fates. Slavery broke down all their dreams and their desire to be normal beings, good mothers, wives, and subjects.

Throughout the characterization of three generations of women in the novel, we can notice that slavery caused physical, emotional, and spiritual devastation and made female characters suffer a lot. Furthermore, all black females were suffering from a corruptive and a contaminated identity and preoccupied with shame and sensation of failure. They also suffered from parasitical and brutal memories. Sethe was in need to reveal her (re)memories but at the same time to hide them as she was struggling to both remember and not remember what happened to her, to say and not to say all her past memories of slavery and all of her painful secrets. "But her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for, the next day." (Morrison, 1987, p.70).

Killing one's own child in order to prevent him/her from being racially inferior, from being a slave and to protect him/her; this act demonstrated in the most awful ways just how slavery has been to the African American females. If a mother cuts the throat of her child, this means that the mind of this woman is roughly and severely damaged. So, the ghost of Sethe's dead child *Beloved* was not only Sethe's dead child but it was the horrible past of Sethe who kept torturing her and tormenting her present. It was clear that the present of Sethe was haunted by her past experiences of slavery and her past actions. It was standing as an obstacle in her face to make her future. This ghost was also the return of all the drowned, *Beloved* represented "the collective unconscious of the African-American" (Bloom, 2007, p.33). FilizKortez is a researcher who published a psychoanalytical study about *Beloved*, stated the effects of repression, throughout the novel. He thought that the return of the repressed signs and the process in which the repressed events and memories reawakened. The arrival of Paul D and the reappearance of *Beloved* are hints of the renaissance of the repressed for Sethe. They made her remember her painful past and they linked her present with her past (Kortez, n.d, p. 82).

No one ever experienced the trauma of slavery can be able to break free from it. Psychoanalysis believed that the past cannot be entirely suppressed, every suppressed emotion or thought will return because it is impossible to control the human mind. The memories of Sethe and her unresolved pain are clear in a distressing consciousness and a haunted present. Harriet Jacob's plea in her 1891 Fugitive slave

narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, wrote: "...in looking back, calmly, on the events of my life, I feel that the slave women ought not to be judged by the same standards as others." Sethe exiled herself internally. The traumas of slavery were so dehumanizing that they alienated Sethe from herself, they made it impossible to Sethe to see herself other than inferior and degraded one, she lost their sense of self, as Sethe described it "Anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up." (Morrison, 198, p. 251).

Trauma then is not just an experience of terror, sufferings, or dehumanization, but it is the ongoing damage that provides the traumatizing events over time. The threat that Sethe frightened the most is her past. Having experienced all that she had, Sethe was only afraid of grown memories of the past. She was afraid of revealing these memories because they were a source of disgrace and shame: This ongoing trauma never seems to heal, this memory or (re)memory as Sethe called it had the power to re-injury by bringing up the feelings of pain and loss. Furthermore, the founding father of psychoanalysis, Freud, thought that the unresolved struggles and conflicts give rise to neurosis to shape itself in literature. He confirmed that "A work of literature is the external expression of the author's unconscious mind, and depends on these techniques to allow the reader to uncover his hidden motivations, desires, and wishes." (Sufyan Al Dmour, (2019), 'A Psychoanalytic Study in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Trauma, Hysteria and Electra Complex', *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, vol.7, no.4, p.50).

Taking into account the author's life, Toni Morrison will ultimately help us understand the true motives and the impulses behind writing such works. After eighteen years, Morrison decided to change her name into Toni Morrison which seems to be a masculine name. She wanted a strong and powerful name instead of a weak and feminine one. She insisted to put behind her back the women's role, and act like a man. Morrison transferred her experiences in her novel, *Beloved*. Hysteria was one of the neurosis diseases that hit this countless group of people as a consequence of depression, oppression, and boredom. "History and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*" is an article written by Emma Parker, she said that: "Freud and Breuer view Hysteria as an organic physical illness and it needed to be understood as a

psychic disorder. They proposed that hysteria is a product of a traumatic event that is excluded from consciousness” (Parker, n.d, p.2). Hysteria demonstrated hostility and desires transformed into physical symptoms such as linguist distortion, convulsions, limps, and coughs. Sethe’s hysteria was confirmed by her actions in the exorcism scene when she attacked the white liberal man Edward Bodwin. This incident served a cure to her past memory ‘trauma’. Freud and Breuer confirmed that “Hysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences”. (Al Dmour, Sufyan. (2019). ‘A Psychoanalytic Study in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Trauma, Hysteria, and Electra Complex’, *European Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, vol.7, no.4, pp.50, 51). This appeared when Denver tried to explain what was happening in her family house she said: “Sethe has lost her wits” (Morrison, 1987, p. 254).The slavery issue had a great impact on African Americans’ physical and mental health as well as their identity, especially women. The way they released their anger and oppression they were exposed to, these women tried to find a way to help them in order to clear and release their painful past experiences and hurtful desires. Kristin Bourdeau is one of the critics to talk about the psychoanalysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. She raised the question in her article “Pain and the Unmaking of Self in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”, “Can one be fully human without having suffered?” (Bourdeau, p. 41). Bourdeau talked about the issues of slavery and its impact on African-American people, and the way they release their oppression and anger. Sethe released all her anger, her negative emotions, and, her stored desires by killing her daughter. Then she reflected her pain and her sufferings at the end of the novel to Mr. Bodwin who she thought him as a schoolteacher. She tried to tell *Beloved* every day about the terrors of slavery and she always insisted on Denver’s freedom and never experience what she had faced in Sweet Home. This kind of pain, their horrific past, and their uncertain present could not make these female characters real. Trauma was too much for Sethe to handle, she gained from it only anxiety and fear. She finally understood that she must confront and face her past and let it go in order to heal all of her past wounds and scars. Sethe left *Beloved* behind her during the exorcism; “But now her hand is empty. Sethe is running away from her, running, and she feels the emptiness in her hand Sethe has been holding. Now she is running into the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving *Beloved* behind. Alone. Again.”(Morrison, 1987, 262).

2.4. Morrison's Female Characters and Their Quest for Subjectivity :

"Racists always try to make you think that they are the majority but they never are."

-Toni Morrison.

The most dominant theme in Black feminist fiction, especially in Toni Morrison's novels, is black women's quest for a positive identity. Morrison's novels described the secret stories behind the violence, segregation, aggression, and rape, they captured the lives of abuse survivors and ex-slaves who were trying their best to make their lives normal. In the novel *Beloved*, Morrison presented all her female characters as subjects not as marginalized ones.

Morrison's female characters stand out as powerful characters, brave enough to ask for their selfhood, abuse-survivors, and ex-slaves who tried their best to live under the shadow of double oppression racism and sexism. They did everything possible to keep their identity as human beings. They learned, by themselves with the help of each other, how to heal and how to deal with their emotional, psychological, and physical wounds and scars and they celebrated their womanhood.

Throughout the history of Western culture, women, in general, were marginalized and oppressed in a patriarchal society, and they have been defined in terms of "other". Black females, in particular, witnessed a series of obstacles and barriers, starting from being slaves to sexism. Black women were doubly marginalized and they were considered the 'others' among 'others', they were marginalized from everything, "I feel it is radical to be dealing with race and sex and class and sexual identity all at one time. I think that is really radical because it has never been done before." (Barbara Smith). She asserted, "We are not hated and abused because there is something wrong with us, but our treatment is absolutely prescribed by the racist, misogynistic system under which we live." (qtd. in. Barnett, Hilaire. 1996, *Sourcebook on Feminist Jurisprudence*, p256)

That anybody could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. (Morrison, 1987, p. 251).

These lines from Morrison's novel *Beloved* showed many dimensions of oppression of race, gender, and class and how this 'matrix oppression' paralyzed black women's ability to love. These female characters learned how to craft significant identities by

challenging all racial stereotypes. Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* talked about black feminist consciousness, she believes that “a distinctive, collective, black women’s consciousness exist”. Black women had always the ability to resist any kind of oppression. The characters, Sethe, Baby Suggs, Ella, and so on... have always resisted the double oppression and they learned to wear a mask of conformity but this mask did not destroy their inner strength. Moreover, Morrison’s female characters, grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and friends always helped the young black girls to grow and develop a strong personality.

Morrison’s women characters are living in a world that denied them subjectively, Morrison created two strong female characters Baby Suggs and Sethe, who were struggling to live under the shadows of oppression, slavery, and rape. They successfully created important and significant identities. These two female characters were haunted and traumatized by the painful memories of Sweet Home plantation, Baby Suggs and Sethe are the images of the human courage to fight and to find their selves under an oppressed past. Baby Suggs is an old slave woman, has a long painful history and an unbearable past full of lost desires and dreams, wishes, and dreams. At the age of sixty, she was the first character to experience freedom. Her son Halle bought her freedom before the events of the novel, she tasted freedom and she was very aware of its meaning when she reached the North, and after she realized the joy of being a free woman, and when she discovered that she truly owned herself and her body she acclaimed: “These hands belong to me. These my hands” (Morrison, 1987, p. 141).

Baby Suggs was a mother who has lost almost all of her children except her son Halle, she believed that Sethe is lucky because she has only three kids to care for and to love. “Be thankful why you don’t? I had eight every one of them gone away from. Four taken four purchased... Eight children and that’s all I remember.”(Morrison, 1987, p. 23).The time, when Paul D asked about the death of Baby Suggs and if it was painful or not, Sethe replied that for her being alive was the hardest thing. Her past life did not allow her to love anyone. She had not the ability to love anyone for a long-time. Even though Baby Suggs is a symbol of power and a healer, she discovered herself in the clearing ritual. Baby Suggs used to invite the newly-freed slave families to cry, laugh, and dance, she allowed them to heal themselves, and they gave them the opportunity to discover their identities. (Bloom, 2007, pp. 87-88). The most important thing, she invited them to seek their lost grace in their tortured flesh.

Baby Suggs became something of a preacher or a holy person in the entire black community, she emphasized on loving individual parts, thanks to her, the newly-freed slaves were able to control their body parts for themselves and not for their masters. She helped in decolonizing themselves of the identity that their masters imposed on them. Moreover, Baby Suggs' preaching, they gained their subjectivity and realized their selves. Morrison described her personality: "She smelled like bark in the day and leaves at night". (Morrison, 1987, p.19) through her past experiences, Baby Suggs knew that there is no one to rely on, and all men are alike, they just provided protection and love for the time being "They encouraged you to put some of your weight in their hands and soon as you feel how light and lovely that was, they leave the women in the middle and demand complete independence." She used to say: "A man ain't nothing but a man, but a son is somebody". (Morrison, 1987, p. 27)

Baby Suggs was considered as and a healer who dared to live in this horrific world full of nightmares. She guided the disturbed and lost souls, she tried to teach the newly freed slave women how to admire their hearts, and how to love and appreciate their bodies. *Beloved* deals with the lives and the experiences of slaves. Margaret Atwood in her article 'Haunted By Their Nightmares' analyzed the horrible lives of slaves who were motherless, and they did not have the right to keep their husbands nor children. She confirmed that it was something very popular in the world of slavery. Slaves were used to losing their loved ones and they usually became unseen or invisible "not through accident or covert operation or terrorism, but as a matter of everyday legal policy" (Bloom, 2007, p.12). Slavery and its terrible souvenirs destroyed the slaves' ability to love and even to know themselves. Baby Suggs forced them to love every single part of their bodies: their eyes; mouth; hands; lips; she made them love their hearts: "More than eyes or feet, more than lungs that have yet to draw free air. More than your life holding womb and your life-giving private parts...love your heart." (Morrison, 1987, p. 88).

Morrison's depiction of three black women's struggles for freedom and their continuous request of self-identity, constituted the pinnacle through which she would illustrate that for black women the quest for self began with the point of self-consciousness. Baby Suggs, in particular, was the representative of the first generation. After having tasted freedom, she discovered a sense of self-ownership and reached a positive self-definition. Baby Suggs provided moral support to her entire community and encouraged them to confront their shameful experiences and to

forget the past, the healing ritual that could be divided into threeparts or stages. The first stage was devoted to 'the repression of memory'; the second stage was 'the painful reconciliation with the memories'; while the third stage was "the cleaning process, a symbolic rebirth of the sufferer' (qtd. in Bloom, 2007, p. 82). But afterward, she lost her confidence in the black community. She attempted to be the healer of this community, but these black people failed to inform her of the coming of the white men after her daughter in law and her grandchildren. When Sethe killed her child, Baby Suggs became very tired, exhausted, and isolated. She completely lost her gained self-consciousness of freedom.

Sethe, the representative of the second generation, was misused, colonized, and exploited by the slave owners. She was considered as a property or an animal. She could not own her body as long as it is controlled by the slave master. The entire black female characters in the novel were bearing scars upon their souls. In the novel, the schoolmaster called Sethe a brute. They took her milk and sexually abused her when she was pregnant, but once she ran from Sweet Home with her children, she, for the first time, experienced freedom, and love. She owned her body. However, when the slave catchers came to take her back to slavery, she killed her dearest daughter just to save her from the institution of slavery. Sethe's identity was completely destroyed and broken due to slavery. In her case, even the healing process became a painful experience. She was not living alone, but with the ghosts of the past which were their brutal memories from slavery, and the ghost of her dead child. She was tortured by the experiences as an ex-slave and the ghost of baby Beloved. Beloved, the ghost, is the trauma that poisons the individual lives of the characters in the novel. On a larger scale, Morrison's novel can be seen as a commentary on the trauma that is submerged in society, or of past horrors of historical facts laid buried literally and metaphorically at the bottom of the Atlantic. Morrison creates the character of Beloved to make us think and recall all the stories of slave women and their voices are not present in history and literature.

Sethe could not find her identity without the help of the community. The recovery of Sethe required and involved dealing with the past. When she tried to leave it behind her without confronting; it came back to her in a body form Beloved. Beloved reminded her of the nightmarish days spent in Sweet Home. She tried to give everything to the child she injured; she tried to forget the past instead of grieving. In

the end, Sethe was able to accept herself and take a path toward finding herself. The coming of Paul D and his decision to help her, made her consciousness awakened. His return brought her a light and the courage to go on and live her life. She concluded that she is her best thing.

Ella the small girl, who was locked in a room for a year, was a sex slave abused by a white man and his son. She could not forget her painful memories. She told Sethe about her sufferings and that they were not only inexpressible but also unimaginable. She called the son and his father "the lowest" creature on earth. She resisted the past and the oppression in her way. They destroyed her ability to love and she lost faith in everything. She is an abuse survivor who faced horrible experiences in her life, but she faced everything with courage and resistance. She was quite different from Sethe because she believed that the past should remain in the past. She used to criticize Sethe for allowing the past to take possession of her present. She told her that she should stop *Beloved* from invading and influencing her present (Morrison, 1987, p.256). Ella tried to give other victim females the courage to resist, to live, and to fight against any form of abuse. (Qasim, Khamsa. (2013). 'Morrison's Black Slave Female Characters and Their Quest for Subjectivity', *International Journal of English and Education*, vol.2, no.1, p.219).

Otherwise, the representative of the third generation, Denver, was the hope of the future. A teenage girl who was consumed by her loneliness and wore her out after the escape of her brothers and the death of her grandmother Baby Suggs. She was isolated from the outside. She wanted all of her mother's attention, but after the appearance of *Beloved*, she completely forgot herself and was devoted to taking care of her. But afterward, she was completely shocked by the relationship between Sethe and *Beloved*. Denver noticed that her mother is wasting away. Denver felt the responsibility toward her mother and her family. She found a new identity in the social structure and she was able to escape alienation. She left 124 and succeeded in asking for help from the black community. Then she worked to support her mother, her family, and of course herself. After this experience, Denver has transformed from a young, isolated girl into a mature woman and she was able for the first time to develop a new identity and an independent sense of self.

2.5. Conclusion:

By creating these characters in *Beloved*, Morrison rearticulates the different lost

stories of grief, pain, and despair. Sethe, Baby Suggs, Ella, and others, are ex-slaves who are still traumatized and shell shocked from their past experiences during their enslavement. They are black female victims who experienced all kinds of racism, violence, segregation, and sexism, they lost their identities, sense of self, and beloved one. Through *Beloved* Morrison tells us about the lost stories of black people and especially black females who are lost in history. Moreover, despite all of their injuries, harsh memories, and experiences they are trying to assert their identities in a society full of racism, hatred, and segregation.

3.1. Introduction:

Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison continued to explore the African American experiences and black identity in America in its many forms in her works. She carried on depicting the crushing life experiences of black women from childhood into adulthood. That is ultimately true for *Sula*, the protagonist woman character and the title of the novel. Subsequently, the novel highlights the living conditions of people in a black community after the first half of the twentieth century. It was the time when segregation and discrimination that divided black and white populations were at its highest pick. The veterans of the First World War were not exempt from being discriminated against and still faced racism because of their skin color. This chapter is divided into three parts; the first part entitled “the dehumanized effects of slavery in the novel *Sula*”, in which the researcher explains the manners and the living conditions of the blacks under the authority of the whites. The second part analyzes the “physical and psychological effects of slavery on the African American women”, to depict both the physical and psychological issues and scars that faced black women, affected their lives, and even shaped their personalities. The third part, however, “Morrison’s female characters and their quest for subjectivity” is devoted to describing the hidden and secret stories, the lives, and the fight of black women. It is meant to highlight their perseverance in fulfilling their dreams, their passions while preserving their identities from being lost under the shadow of the oppressive community.

3.2. The Dehumanizing Effect of Slavery in the Novel *Sula*:

“ I want to write for people like me, which is to say, black people, curious people, demanding people—people who can’t be fake, people who don’t need to be patronized, people who have very, very high criteria”

-Toni Morrison.

These few lines were said by Morrison when she was asked about who she wrote for by a student when she was giving a lecture at Princeton University (Jennifer Smith, n.d, p. 8). *Sula*, Morrison’s second book, which she called a novel about women’s friendship and good and evil, appeared in 1973. Thanks to it Morrison was nominated

for National Book Award in fiction. It is a story about the experiences of African-Americans in the first half of the 20th century. Blacks were freed from slavery following the Civil War but they were not free from social oppression and economic servitude. They were still living in a state of poverty. In fact, they were still manipulated by the whites because they had no legal rights or any political power. It was hoped that after serving in the World War, blacks could gain some political rights, but this was not true. The American government at that time showed no interest in giving and granting political protection for the black community. Morrison explores this issue, the thankless service of the African-Americans in the war through the Character Shadrack, a young, black man who fights in Europe, then returns home broken and psychologically destroyed. In the 1930s and 1940s, the blacks started their own business and making money. As a result, they gained some legal rights for themselves. The year 1965, in which the novel ends, there were more auspicious and successful black families, nevertheless, the situation for African American men and women remained unchanged. While African-Americans had gained some rights and money than ever had before, they were still highly pushed to live a poorer life and in a segregated community. They were living in a world of double standards. (*Sula* Study Guide, Lit Charts, Historical Context of *Sula*. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>).

The novel *Sula* took place in a small town in Ohio, located on a hillside known as "Bottom" the city of the fictional town of Medallion. The neighbors of this small town had a close relationship with each other and it got two segments: the Valley where the whites live and the Bottom where the black reside. It focused on two young African American girls Sula and her best friend Nel, from their childhood through their adulthood and the death of Sula.

The structure of the novel is circular. It started with the narrator's explanation and description of the Bottom and what has happened to it. This African American section of Medallion was bought by the whites; as a result, they forced the remaining inhabitants to leave in order to build homes and to create a golf course. The Bottom's name came from a joke played on a slave by his white farmer who promised to give freedom and a piece of land to his slave in exchange for doing some very difficult chores for the farmer. The slave completed and fulfilled the work then he asked the farmer to fulfill his promise. The farmer gave him his freedom but he was reluctant to

give any land to his slave. Instead, he told his slave that he was sorry because he had to give him Valley land. Actually, he hoped to give him Bottom land, because, from God's point of view, it was "the bottom of heaven". The slave not knowing any better accepted the land; he thought that Valley land is Bottom land, but it turned out to be worthless for farming, and thus the African-American settlement was founded (Jennifer Smith, n.d, *A Study Guide For Toni Morrison's Sula*, p.10). Increasingly, the novel's prologue focused on the history of the community, nostalgia for its past, the violence was done to it, and the consequences of that violence (Suranyi, J.T. (ED.), *The Cambridge Companion To Toni Morrison, The Bluest Eye & Sula: Black Female Experience from Childhood to Adulthood*, p.17).

Moreover, the lives of the characters are deeply shaped by poverty, misery, and discrimination unlike the white counterparts in the Bottom. The first chapter that is entitled 1919 focused on the shell-shocked veteran, Shadrack, one of the residents of the Bottom. He fought in the First World War. He was a young man with psychological injury from the war after he was released from the military hospital and he was treated for battle stress, he suffered from Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to the American Psychiatric Association, Posttraumatic stress disorder is a psychiatric disorder that can occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a terrorist act, war/combat, rape, or other violent personal assault. It has been known by many names in the past, such as 'shell shock' during the years of World War I (American Psychiatric Association). Shadrack is a shattered man; he is severely damaged by the war, with no past and no present.

twenty-two years old, weak, hot, frightened, not daring to acknowledge the fact that he didn't even know who or what he was...with no past, no language, no tribe, no source, no address book, no comb, no pencil, no clock, no pocket-handkerchief, no rug, no bed, no can opener, no faded postcard, no soap, no key, no tobacco pouch, no soiled underwear and nothing to do. (Morrison, 1973, p. 12).

Shadrack did not come out from the war safe, he was blasted, permanently astonished and terrified; he is psychologically and physically damaged. Shadrack's hands are monstrous and they cannot be controlled. He could not even perform simple routine-

day activities like tying his shoelaces which required an extraordinary effort. Shadrack's story reflects and shows the total concern of Morrison with the ignorance, and humiliation that did not escape the blacks and particularly the black soldiers who returned paralyzed, shocked, and mentally damaged from the European front. Shadrack, Moreover, seeing and looking at his own face in a toilet, was no accident, the long years of racism, abuse, and segregation trained him to have the worst image and the bad possible view of himself. After a long time of dehumanization, Shadrack accepted his own misery and saw it as something familiar and comfortable. Morrison's idea was to show the reader how black people can cope with great pain, but also how these coping mechanisms stop them from escaping their inner pain. (*Sula Study Guide, Lit Charts, Summary & Analysis of Sula*. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>).

The characters of Shadrack and Plum are the perfect examples of how racism and slavery had affected and dehumanized the African-Americans. They both had lost their minds; they became insane and crazy at a young age. They lost their sense of self and became insecure. The African-American veterans did not receive any respect or gratitude like their white counterparts. Neither Shadrack nor Plum received any benefits which they deserved. They were left to moan and keep remembering their horrible experience and their trauma. Each character in the novel feels helpless, no matter how hard they try they will always be treated and seen as inferior, and forced to live in a miserable state and poverty.

In *Sula*, Morrison gave us a deep insight into the complexities of the black community, all of the characters, men and women are victims of an unfair and oppressive social system. They were faced by slavery that reduced them to mere two-legged animals. Black women were doubly marginalized from their skin color as well as sex. They were victims of the dominant white culture but also of the men of their own race. In a white racist society, a negro is considered a man without values and character, he is just an object that can be kept and used on social margins ("Inequality between black women: a critical analysis of Toni Morrison's", 2017, *International Journal of English Language Literature in Humanities*, vol. 5, no.8, p.1090).

Furthermore, Eva Peace has a totally different experience from her hurtful past, after being abandoned by her abusive husband; she decided to take matters into her hands. She tried to survive and at the same time to take care of her children, with no food, no

job was available at the bottom because work for African-Americans was limited at that time, because of the racism of those who could hire them. Just a little money she earned from the insurance for her lost leg. Decades after the abolition of slavery, black women and especially mothers were still suffering and facing many difficulties, misery, and sufferings in a sexist and racist society. After seeing her beloved son addicted to drugs, alcohol, totally absent from the world, Eva killed Plum. She set fire on her child she used to love most with Kerosene. The motives behind this act were that Eva felt and knew that her son was in great pain so she could not stand and see him that way. She wanted to free him from his misery and pain. This act reminds the readers of the tragic scene of a mother killing her own child daughter out of mercy, the central act of the famous novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. (Sula Study Guide, Lit Charts, Summary & Analysis of Sula. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>). To kill one's own child, to be addicted to drugs, to lose your mind, to be frightened of one's self and to be psychologically damaged, are just hints and signals of the previous situations and circumstances that affected African-Americans, made them inferior and stuck in their traumas.

Racism is a man-made, white people saw the blacks as property, as machines that could do an inordinate amount of work without objection. What was left to the African-Americans from their African soul was taken away by forcing and imposing white culture and values on them. They have lost their identities and their sense of self. Joel Kovel in his critical analysis of racism said:

[The white master] . . . first reduced the human self of his black slave to a body and then reduced the body to a thing; he dehumanized his slave, made him quantifiable, and thereby absorbed him into a rising world market of productive exchange... Thus in the new culture of the west, the black human was reduced to a black thing, virtually the same in certain key respects as the rest of non-human nature—all of which could become property. This reduction of human to non-human was the first definite step towards the establishment of racism as an innate archetype of white American civilization. (Joel, Kovel (1970). *White Racism: A Psychohistory*, p18).

Another clear evidence about how the white society oppressed, treated, and manipulated the black community is the name "Bottom." This has much to do with the status of blacks within the large society. This led them to their acceptance of their status as second-class citizens and to live in a degraded situation in a country governed by racists.

The black people watching her would laugh and rub their knees, and it would be easy for the valley man to hear the laughter and not notice the adult pain that rested somewhere in the eyelids, somewhere under their head rags and soft felt hats, somewhere in the palm of the hand, somewhere behind the frayed lapels, somewhere in the sinew's curve he'd have to stand in the back(Morrison, 1973, p. 4)

3.3. The Mental and Psychological Effects of Slavery on the African-American women:

"You can't go wrong by reading or re-reading the collected works of Toni Morrison. *Beloved*, *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, everything else—they're transcendent, all of them. You'll be glad you read them."

-Barack Obama.

Slavery and race are common issues in Morrison's books. The dominance of the whites over the blacks and racism toward the black community and its effects on it is very clear in all of her works, but most importantly she always tried to show the effects on the ones who were more powerless: black women. The dominant white society controlled and violated the blacks by making them suffer from stress, anxiety, trauma, and many other psychological disorders, especially women. Morrison continued to deal with black female experiences through the novel of *Sula*, but she puts much focus on the physical and psychological effects and wounds of racism.

Black woman has suffered through time from different sides, race, gender, and culture. But most importantly she suffered from the twin disadvantages of being black and female at the same time. She was subjected to all sorts of physical and psychological abuse. In a white-dominant culture where the blacks were treated as

slaves and bestial creatures, the black mother, sister, and daughter tried hard to establish for themselves a place and identity. They occupied the lowest status in society. They fought for both freedom and self-identity. (Benny. Solomon, 2013, "New World Woman: Toni Morrison's *Sula*", *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research*, vol.2, no. 1, p.194).

First of all, motherhood is a strong feeling in any woman, the theme of motherhood appeared in contemporary literature. Under a patriarchal society, and after post-slavery, black mothers' experience was very complex. *Sula* shows that even decades after slavery's abolition, black mothers still suffer and face many difficulties and hardships in a sexist and racist society. (Natália Fontes, n.d, p.70). The character who had mostly suffered from the impact of both racism and sexism was Sula's grandmother, Eva Peace. Above all, being poor, black, and female was a tough reality. And survival is a serious business. Eva tried hard to define and determine a means of existing in a racist-patriarchal society. She was abandoned by her husband Boy Boy while she was still a young mother. She had three children. Eva's husband, Boy Boy was an abusive man. He used to drink too much and vented his anger on his family. He left her and his children with no money and food. Boy Boy used to work for a white carpenter. The latter used to call him "Boy" until this nickname stuck. This name is a sign of his social inferiority to whites; as a result, he displaced this feeling of anger and shameless on his wife and his children (*Sula* Study Guide, LitCharts, Summary & Analysis of *Sula*. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>). For Freud, displacement is an ego defense, and by using this defense we are protecting our selves from feelings of anxiety or guilt, "displacement is the principal means used in the dream-distortion to which the dream-thoughts must submit under the influence of the censorship" (Freud, 1935. pp.21-22).

Women were considered as a domestic sphere, while men had the opportunity of escaping responsibility and are somewhat independent. By contrast, mothers were sacrificing their own happiness and health for their children, offering them a better life with better opportunities. They found it their *raison d'être* to save their babies from being considered inferior and mistreated. Ferdinand Kpohoue stated in his article 'Emasculation of Male Characters as seen Through *Sula* by Toni Morrison', "Male Characters are shaped to be absent, irresponsible or insane. Female characters take care of the household and fight for their own survival. Children are educated by the female characters, male characters are regularly absent". (Kpohoue, 2018,

“Emasculation of Male Characters as seen Through *Sula* by Toni Morrison”, *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, Vol.7, No.2).

Due to racism and the abandonment of her husband, Eva allowed a train to run over her leg so she could collect large insurance money. Eva was deprived of one of her legs has imprisoned in her own body, but actually, she was not a prisoner at all. She ruled her house, and she was admired by the community. She was a tough woman, a survivor, and adventurous. Although Eva might appear a strong and a fighter woman, but this would sooner turn untrue. When her youngest child Plum turned from the World War completely damaged and disillusioned alcoholic and drug addict, Eva turned to be the weakest person in front of her son's misery and suffering. She set fire over his body. She turned to be inhuman because her experiences from racism taught her to be like that. Eva acts out of the necessity to save her beloved child and to free him from his miserable state. We notice that Eva is a mother who can do anything and everything to help her children and to ensure their survival in a way or another. She is a caring mother and at the same time a complex character. She cannot be judged as a good or bad mother, because of her harsh experiences as a mother and a woman.

In *Sula*, the concept of motherhood includes more than a traditional biological bond between the mother and children, but mother's figure is not determined biologically, as Eva's case, who became a mother for many characters in the novel “black women play integral parts in the family and frequently it is immaterial whether they are biological mothers, sisters, or members of the extended family” (qtd. in Natália Fontes, p78).

African American women were victims of racism, being victimized, and silent made their lives worse. They were abused, harassed, and subjected to all kinds of violence. They had to accept it and at the same time to bear it. Eva peace shows that black women can take control and can rule families as well as men. She dared to face the atrocities of racism. She encourages the black community and people under her care not to be afraid of racists who exercise violence against black people. Eva proved that a black woman can successfully fight against the oppression of the whites. The quest for freedom and the stability of black families is a huge struggle for both men and women. Women have to protect their families because they are playing double roles: women and mothers. They have to take part in any fight to defeat white domination and segregation.

Furthermore, Sula peace takes the power and the courage of her grandmother. One day, when she was on her way back home with Nel, she was frightened by a crowd of white boys. She removed a knife and cuts part of her thumb. When the boys saw the blood running from her finger, they run away. They started to imagine what could happen to them if she is capable to hurt herself. Sula's act means that she can sacrifice her life for the best of the black community, she can fight the oppressive system in order to protect and to defend her rights and to have a brighter future. But the death of Sula demonstrates and explains how it is tough and difficult for black females to survive under an oppressive and racist society "her death is a victory of the whole black community of Medallion" (qtd. Koffi Désiré. 2016. 'Black Feminism in the Family Circle: A reading Of Toni Morrison's *Sula*', *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, vol.21, no.10. p.12).

Therefore, there is Helene Sabat Wright, Sula's best friend Mother, someday, in November 1920; she received a letter that her grandmother Cecil in New Orleans is seriously ill. So she decided to take Nel with her and go to keep her grandmother company, even though, traveling alone as a woman was a very dangerous action. When Helene and Nel were on the train, they made a mistake by accidentally walking into the car of the whites, instead of walking into the car of the "Colored Only" which means that black people were not allowed to stay in the same car as the whites. As a result, the white conductor yelled at her and called her "gal". The conductor's reaction had only one explanation is that black women on a train or any other place in the 1920s had no way or no right of defending themselves from an angry white man. The whites had total power over black women. They could abuse them, as much as they wish. Her daughter Nel witnessed the racist action from the conductor, and at the same time the fear of her mother of being yelled at again. The few simple words like "gal" and "colored only" could have a great impact on people's lives, as well as help to shape their future personalities. Nel was aware of the hatred directed over her and her mother just because they are blacks. So she quickly became conscious of the difficult obstacles and the harsh struggles that she will face as a black (Sula Study Guide, Lit Charts, Summary & Analysis of *Sula*. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>).

While Helene and Nel were traveling down to New Orleans, the train's conditions were getting worse and worse. Black passengers are not allowed to use the toilets. They just had to rush out of the train when it was stopping to refuel and relieve themselves "urinate" in the grass. The tough and harsh conditions on the train, are a mirror of the status of black communities, precisely black women, the further she traveled into the South, the fewer social and legal rights she had, and the more she was treated like an animal.(qtd. in Sula Study Guide, Lit Charts, Summary & Analysis of Sula. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/sula#context>).

When they turned back to their home, Nel started to remember what happened to them on the train. She remembered her mother's fear of the conductor and other passengers and the action of urinating in the grass because she was a black woman. She finally realized for the first time that she was "different" and this difference will affect her life in the future. She looked at herself in the mirror, "there was her face", and "the nose her mother hated" (Morrison, p.28) started to whisper at her reflection, "I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me." (Ibid). After what she saw on the train, Nel wanted to feel strong and to be wonderful. She felt weak, and she knew that her mother hated the fact that she was black.

Morrison's black female characters are victims of a white oppressive society. Slavery, segregation, and past stereotypes affected them physically and psychologically. They were excluded from American society. Even though these black women played a major role in taking care of their families and their children, and they succeeded in their lives as women and as mothers.

3.4. Morrison's Female Characters and Their Quest for Subjectivity:

"Morrison explores the mythic power of femininity in a poor and isolated rural black community where women rule as mothers, warriors, witches and story-tellers...One of the most compelling writers at work today."

- *The Times*

Black women passed through many harsh obstacles, problems, and barriers to becoming a normal human being with complete rights in American society. In the past, they had no kind of rights. They were isolated, completely neglected, and mistreated not only because of their gender but also of their skin color. Morrison's tried to present exactly how racial and gender stereotypes affected the quest for individual identity and selfhood establishment of the black female. Her novel *Sula* is dedicated to getting the bottom of the dilemma of black women. In a 2002 interview, Morrison stated that *Sula* " talks about the friendship between women at a time I was writing it in 1969 when women and women's subjects weren't considered worthy subjects for fiction" (qtd. in *The Cambridge Introduction to Toni Morrison*, Tessa Roynon, p.22).

Toni Morrison's female subjectivity is defined as a resisting power and will of women under any type of oppressive external forces. As Lucille Fultz discussed in *Toni Morrison: Playing with Difference*, Morrison has described in all of her novels "black women's endurance, subversion, and transcendence of pain" (49). Along with Morrison's continuous publication from *The Bluest Eye* (1970) to *A Mercy* (2008), other critics also began to pay attention to both female characters and oppressive circumstances they are facing such as patriarchy, racism, sexual abuse, slavery, domestic violence. Michelle Foucault illustrated that resistance necessarily exists "as soon as there is a power relation." Alison Assiter and Terry Eagleton also defined that subjectivity is formed after a series of struggles.

Sula is a multi-faceted novel. It focuses on two young black girls until their adulthood, and their strong friendship despite their different family settings, different background, and different personalities. It captures profoundly the struggle of black women in a racist and patriarchal society, fighting for their rights and fighting to prove themselves that they can be better and they can do anything they want. In all of her works, Morrison presents the concept of "Othering", not only due to racism but also due to gender. It is very important to mention Simon de Beauvoir's idea about the "Othering" of women that the man is the subject, the absolute, and in contrast, the female is the "Other". Because of social norms and conventions, women cannot be defined on her own, she did not have the right to exist without a man, and she is always defined as the "Other". Morrison tried to explore this idea by observing her female characters, their heterosexual marriages, and their relationships in general. Morrison explained the point of de Beauvoir that generally, the man/woman

relationship is the same as that of master/slave. (Banaj, Arlinda. (2016). "Female Identity Formation: Relationships in Toni Morrison's Novels").

Otherwise, the concept of identity and its formation is very crucial and important in the field of social psychology. It proposed and divided the world into 'them' and 'us'. A social psychologist, Henri Tajfel, in his social identity theory, divided the identity of the individual into two parts 'personal identity' which refers to 'us' and 'social identity' He proposed that social relationships and bonds affect one's identity and play a major role in shaping/reshaping an individual's personality.(Yadollahi, Rmin. Z, n.d, Social identity theory in Toni Morrisson's *Sula*.)

On the other hand, according to Carl Jung, Freud's rebellious student is that our identity (persona) is a socially constructed concept. It is affected by social conventions, norms, and institutions. In a public, we wear a mask which is a persona. And the purpose of this persona is to suppress all of the urges and impulses that are not socially acceptable "A kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual."(Jung C.G., 1953. *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*, p.190).

The central character of the novel, Sula was an independent character who always tried to be apart from the community conventions as well as tried to avoid commitments and attachments to other people as much as possible. She was a "type of woman who chooses inwardness and flights as markers of freedom and who dies out of her undeveloped conscience."(Koolish, 2001, p.140). Sula was a dark character, not because of her skin color, but in terms of her soul. When she was a child she was strange and "was distinctly different" (Morrison, 1973, p.118) from other children. Sula was the kind of a rebellious woman so she rebelled against the role that she is devoted to taking within the black community. " Sula is a story of a girl who is a rebel against all society, all conventions and nearly all moralities." (Bloom, 1999, p.63).

Sula's motivations and behaviors were psychologically and morally unclear, she was an enigmatic character. Toni Morrison wrote in the *Michigan Quarterly Review*:

I always thought of Sula as quintessentially black,
metaphysically black, if you will, which is not melanin and

certainly not unquestioning fidelity to the tribe. She is new world black and new world woman extracting choice from choicelessness, responding intuitively to found things. Improvisational. Daring, disruptive, imaginative, modern, out-of- the-house, outlawed, unpolicing, uncontained and uncontainable. And dangerously female.

The central concern of the novel is Sula's quest for fulfillment. She thought that their complete freedom involved the freedom from responsibility, ambitions, and attachments to people. "She was completely free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed, no desire to command attention or compliments—no ego". (Morrison p.119). Sula lived her life trying to explore her thoughts, feelings, and emotions. She wanted to have no obligation to please anybody except their pleasure pleased her. She was ready to feel pain as to give pain, to feel pleasure as to give pleasure, hers was an experimental life. (Ibid p.118). Through her rebellious actions, Sula's identity was shaped but was permanently reshaped and affected by her black community and its social norms "Sula disregards the social norms and quests desperately for freedom and a united self out of the chaos around her." (Bloom, 1999, p.68).

Likewise, the aim of feminist theories and gender studies is to shed light and to understand the nature of gender inequalities by looking at the social roles of women and their lived experiences, and it is the case of Sula's character. Her life changed and was influenced by two incidents through her adolescence first was when she heard her mother Hannah saying that "I love Sula. I just don't like her" (Morrison, p. 57), this changed her view towards maternal love. She felt that she is not loved by her family, Henri Tajfel asserted that individuals are affected by the way people treated them (Yadollahi, p.100). The second one was the drowning and the death of Chicken Little. Sula's character became influenced due to external influences. She trusted neither herself nor the others.

Sula's journey toward improving her individuality and against sexism and racism become a sort of saga for her. The journey of self-defining made her rebellious toward her community as well as herself. She was not interested in changing anything about her community or the people living in it or the stereotypes of her society, she just wanted to build and to complete herself as well as meet her own needs, she

was the kind of person who focused only on herself, as a result, she was always focusing on the question “who am I”. But eliminated and dismissed to ask herself self “how am I perceived by others”. Otherwise, the process of focusing only on herself and her self-realization drove to her collapse and she died alone. We can say that her individuality made her far away and separated her from the rest of her community; they consider her as “Evil”. Sula felt the disgust from her community because of her casual relationships with men but she did not care she was convinced with her behaviors “Sula is a self-made orphan, Sula presents herself as a self-invented and self-defined woman” (Andrea, p. 63). But at some point, for Sula, sexuality was the only way to experience new things, used it as a distraction, and to find purpose and at the same time to moan to the loss of herself.

They taught her nothing but love tricks, shared nothing but worry, gave nothing but money. She had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be—for a woman. And that no one would ever be that version of herself which she sought to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand. There was only her own mood and whim, and if that was all there was, she decided to turn the naked hand toward it, discover it and let others become as intimate with their selves as she was. (Morrison, 1973, p.121).

In her quest for identity, she realizes that no one could be a version of herself, and ‘man love’ only serves to enhance her alienation

Sula’s identity and herself creation were through her independence from her society, and the rejection of social norms. Her rebellious showed her how to live as a self-dependent girl. She tried hard to shape her own identity and to cope with life obstacles such as sexism, racism, violence, and poverty. She left Medallion searching for herself. Her process in searching for her individuality trying to fulfill her dreams, desires, and ambitions made her alienated and a stranger to her family and her society. “I don’t want to make somebody else. I want to make myself” (Morrison, 1973, p.92), those were Sula’s words when Eva asked her about the possibility of marriage and having children, she emphasized only on her individuality in most of

her expressions “ I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me” (Ibid 143), “Whatever’s burning in me is mine!” (Ibid p.93).

Hannah and Sula were the only women in the Bottom’s community who decided to live according to their desires and needs. Hannah has her own sexual needs and she “refused to live without the attentions of a man” (Ibid p.42), after the death of her husband Rekus; she slept out with all the men in her neighborhood. What she wanted “after Rekus died, and what she succeeded in having more often than not, was some touching every day” (Morrison, 1973, p.44). Despite her character and people’s gossip about her, they “miss her when she is gone. And they take care of her when she burns and, weep for her when she dies. ” (Parker, 1994, p. 63). Hannah fully lived her life because her choice was to follow the desires that led her to be free from any compulsions that conform to the notions of gender in her community.

Contrary to Hannah, Helene was a daughter of a Creole prostitute; but she was raised in the house of her grandmother. She was told and taught to be a respectful woman, pious, moral, a good mother. Helene gained great respect and love from her community because she was doing exactly what the community said, but on the other hand, she was unable to accept herself as a black woman. This by no means complicated and affected her sense of womanhood. She was willing to create for herself a satisfactory life by following social norms and living according to her gender roles. Otherwise, this did not strengthen her sense of individuality, her attitudes and her ideas affected her daughter Nel. She taught her that her life is incomplete until she finds a good man to settle down with. She raised her on the idea that being white is the only standard of beauty. Morrison once said in an interview “if black women want to achieve their self. They must learn to accept themselves and love themselves. They must love their skin, their eyes, their accent, their body, their language, and their culture.” At this point, we can say that the failure of Helene and Nel in achieving their individuality was due to their shame of being blacks because the quest for self- identity and the quest for individuality requires acceptance of themselves and self-love.

While Sula was a rebel, Nel was her conventional counterpart, she was completely different. Nel considered the society norms’ and elements could complete her search of identity, “a dutiful friend, respectful daughter, loyal wife and nurturing mother” (Morrison, 1973, p.33). All she wanted was to have a quite simple life and a clean house, her dreams were always about a prince, but this turned to be untrue, in the

death Sula. Nel recognized that Sula was the right person for her, she recognized that the prince she dreamt for was Sula, and she realized her needs very late.

Sula and Nel complete each other and flow into each other. They represent solidarity among black women; they find emotional and psychological comfort. The two were linked to “two throats and one eye” (Morrison, 1973, p.147). The two characters were represented as two parts of a self; they were like two sides of the same coin. Those parts were distinct, they were complementary, and their friendship was based on helping each other in achieving their selfhood and survive all the difficult conditions. “They found relief in each other’s personality. Although both were unshaped, formless things, Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula” (Morrison, 1973, p.53). They had a lot in common, and their skin color was the main factor in making them friends. Hudson Weems in *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*, explained the importance of race in black women’s friendship:

There has always been bonding among Africana women that cannot be broken—genuine sisterhood. This sisterly bond is a reciprocal one, one in which each gives and receives equally. In this community of women, all reach out in support of each other, demonstrating a tremendous sense of responsibility for each other by looking out for one another. They are joined emotionally, as they embody an emphatic understanding of each other’s shared experiences. Everything is given out of love, criticism included, and in the end, the sharing of the common and individual experiences and ideas yields rewards. (65)

Nel became aware of racism after she discovered the weakness of her mother, she wanted emotional support and acceptance from Sula, and she stopped searching for them in Helene. The same thing for Sula, she discovered in Nel the solidarity and support that she was lacking in her mother Hannah. Nel and Sula rescued each other from their sadness; their friendship was kind of an escape from reality. (Banaj. Arlinda, (2010,) *Female Identity Formation: Relationships in Toni Morrison’s Novels*).

Nel after her marriage devoted herself to her wifely role. Her definition of self became based on the community moral categories “good” “bad” woman, by marrying Jude and following the social norms, being obedient and doing exactly what the community was wanting from her, she killed her sense of individuality, she lost her self under the control of her mother Helene than Jude, Nel was completely manipulated by the influence of her mother. Nel was a fixed character, was a limited response “goodness”, whereas; Sula was an ambiguous character she cannot be defined as totally good or bad.

According to David L. Middleton, 9 articles discuss female subjectivity and whose main ideas are such as ‘resistance against imposed definitions of black women,’ ‘female struggle to find one's identity,’ ‘motherhood and sisterhood as women's power,’ ‘lesbian disavowal of patriarchal values,’ and ‘liberating wanderings that lead to female self-discovery’. Other than the 9 materials from before 1984, other criticisms do not mainly discuss female subjectivity and even the critical essays that deal with female subjectivity are, if summarized, about ‘female scapegoat of community’, ‘female struggle that eventually fails’, ‘isolation of female character’, ‘tragic reality of black female’ and ‘archetypal female figures of Morrison.’ It seems like the tendency of criticism before *Beloved* was to find the tragic situation and ending of African-American women rather than finding elements of female subjectivity in Morrison's characters.

3.5. conclusion:

Morrison used her novels as an expression of her concern with the relationship between race, gender, and class and their influence on the community in general and the individuals in particular. Almost all of her characters exist in a community full of hatred, racism, segregation, and stereotypes. Her novel *Sula* is a mirror about what was happening in the black communities that were defined by racial barriers that were formed by the whites, and how these communities controlled the lives of women. The novel shows exactly the effects of racism after the emancipation of slavery on black individuals as well as their community. Moreover, it represents different types of women, how they are perceived by their community, and how they are seeing themselves and trying to be satisfied. Morrison gives the reader the exact meaning of how to be human, to be black or white, to be good and evil, and most importantly how to be free and in love.

General Conclusion:

General Conclusion:

Our purpose in this research work is meant to show how African-American writers use their literary production to illustrate the real conditions and suffering of black people during and after their enslavement. These writers try to find out the truth about themselves, their identity, and the world they lived in throughout different circumstances and different periods. Toni Morrison, therefore, is not an exception. The Nobel laureate in literature devoted herself to explore the identity of black people in America, their past experiences, and, especially, black women crushing experiences and their struggles in American society.

The emergence of African-American literature seeks equality and freedom for black women and men in America. Their grim wrestling was to prove their humanity and ask for their rights in a society full of racism and violence; and above all to obliterate sorrows and bad memories from their mind. Literature became a way for African-American men and women to voice not just their rejection of slavery and racism, but also their desire for justice, equality, and freedom. African-American literature began as a response to the fact that black people were segregated, dehumanized, raped, and violated. Toni Morrison, in her works, examined black people's experiences and, particularly, black female experiences in an unjust society. She devoted her entire life to fiction so as to ensure that black lives and voices matter.

In this research, the researcher dealt with the residues of physical and psychological effects caused by slavery on African-Americans. The work has focused on the black female characters and their quest for subjectivity in African American literature. As it is acknowledged that slavery and racism have a deep influence on black people's lives, the whites dehumanized them, considered them as 'Others'. They had treated them so badly that they lost their good human qualities. The whites had totally controlled black people's bodies and their minds. African-Americans did not have the right to have a stable family, to learn, or even to use their language. Children were separated from their parents, husbands from their beloved ones arbitrarily, and women from their babies. Slavery was a devastating experience for black people; they were subjected to mental and physical degradation. They were beaten mercilessly. They were treated as property in the eyes of law. On the other hand, black females are considered the victims most affected by slavery and racism. Slavery was worse for women than it was for men. They lived both female and black

General Conclusion:

identities and they faced both racism and sexism. Black females were owned and possessed by their masters. They were psychologically controlled and physically exploited. Black female slaves experienced physical abuse, rape, and beatings. These black women were totally locked in their past memories and experiences but they tried to be out of the wood and furtively trace a road to the future. They tried to confront their past, to make peace with it, and to start a rosy future with a clean sheet. Black female characters passed through a process of identity and self reconstruction by telling, revealing their past, and by accepting themselves and their skin color.

Two major and well-known novels ever written by an outstanding African American writer, *Beloved*, and *Sula revealed* how African-American females and males were treated in a white-dominated society. The protagonists of both novels are women suffering from the trauma of slavery, domination, and oppression.

Beloved does offer a continuous depiction of slavery's abuses. It explores its lasting effects on individuals black women and men as well as their communities, and documents the destruction and resilient survival of the African people. Morrison makes great use of felt history to present truly how marginalized characters are by being treated as mere bodies and not as full humans. She focuses on the individual characters as well as the historical impact of slavery. She exposes slavery as a national trauma and personal trauma as well. Morrison shows us Sethe's journey of transformation from object to subject. The protagonist, Sethe is plagued by repression of the past. She is exiled and homeless in her own house. Throughout Sethe's character and situation, Morrison represents the difficulties of being a slave mother in America, and the relationship between mother and child was one of fear, rather than love, fear that the child will be taken away, being slave, got beaten and raped. Sethe was obliged to kill her infant daughter to save her from slavery, as a result, Sethe is isolated from the entire community and she lives in a state of trauma and psychological torture. It is because of her isolation she suffers from a fragmented sense of identity and memories.

Morrison writes *Beloved* as an example of the persistence of a traumatic past that haunts the present and the future through psychic experiences of trauma. It represents and depicts the most challenging view of slavery the one marked by violence, abuse, and heartbreaks.

General Conclusion:

Sula captures the ups and downs of the black community the Bottom, it is a book about women's friendship and good and evil. It breaks with the popular stereotypes of black women in western literature. The Bottom is a definition that has much to do with the status of black people within the large white society. The novel has a women's experience in the center, it treats continuous themes such as motherhood, self-realization, female sexuality, and self-destruction. The two protagonists Sula and Nel are friends but are totally different. Morrison presents Sula as an enigmatic character, a rebel who rebels against social conventions and the role she is assigned to take within her community. The book is concerned with Sula's quest for fulfillment and a sense of identity. But Nel is her conventional counterpart. She is represented as a respectful daughter, dutiful friend, and loyal wife, who accepts all the social conventions.

Works of black literature tried to depict, expose, and change the reality and the image of African-American characters that were subjected to all kinds of racism and violence in one part, and to show the struggle and barriers that faced black female characters and prevent them from being fully subjects.

This work was an attempt to emphasize the idea of how African-American writers do portray racism, slavery, and sexism in their works. Toni Morrison has been chosen because she is considered to be the most prominent figure in the world of African-American literature. Morrison used the pen as a tool to denounce all kinds of racism and injustices that the black community was suffering during and after the institution of slavery.

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