

TONI MORRISON "BELOVED"

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*Shahrisabz davlat pedagogika instituti Tillar fakulteti xorijiy til va adabiyot
yo'nalishi 4-bosqich talabasi.*

Annotation: Beloved, novel by Toni Morrison, published in 1987 and winner of the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction. The work examines the destructive legacy of slavery as it chronicles the life of a Black woman named Sethe, from her pre-Civil War days as a slave in Kentucky to her time in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1873.

Key words: Anthology, rememories, foreshadowed, lower-status, opaque.

Beloved is a 1987 novel by American novelist Toni Morrison. Set in the period after the American Civil War, the novel tells the story of a dysfunctional family of formerly enslaved people whose Cincinnati home is haunted by a malevolent spirit. The narrative of Beloved derives from the life of Margaret Garner, an enslaved person in the slave state of Kentucky who escaped and fled to the free state of Ohio in 1856.

Garner was subject to capture under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and when U.S. marshals broke into the cabin where she and her children had barricaded themselves, she was attempting to kill her children--and had already killed her youngest daughter--in hopes of sparing them from being returned to slavery. Morrison's main inspiration for the novel was an account of the event titled "A Visit to the Slave Mother who Killed Her Child" in an 1856 newspaper article initially published in the American Baptist and reproduced in The Black Book, an anthology of texts of Black history and culture that Morrison had edited in 1974.

The novel won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction a year after its publication, and was a finalist for the 1987 National Book Award. A survey of writers and literary critics compiled by The New York Times ranked it as the best work of American fiction from 1981 to 2006. It was adapted as a 1998 movie of the same name, starring Oprah Winfrey.

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Sethe is the protagonist of the novel. She escaped slavery from a plantation called Sweet Home. She lives in the house named 124 (a house on 124 Bluestone Rd., but referred to only as "124") which is believed to be haunted because she killed her infant child there. Her two sons have fled because of the haunting, and she resides in the house with her daughter Denver. She is motherly and will do anything to protect her children from suffering the same abuses she experienced when she was enslaved. She is greatly influenced by her repression of the trauma she endured. She lives with "a tree on her back", scars from being whipped. Her character is resilient, yet defined by her traumatic past. She was 19 years old when Denver was born, making her birth year to be 1836.

Beloved

The opaque understanding of Beloved is central to the novel. She is a young woman who mysteriously appears from a body of water near Sethe's house, and is discovered soaking wet on the doorstep by Sethe, Paul D, and Denver, on their return from visiting the fair; they take her in. She is widely believed to be the murdered baby who haunted 124, as the haunting ends when she arrives, and in many ways she behaves like a child. As also mentioned, a young woman enslaved by a White man nearby had escaped, and Beloved recounts stories of past slaves, including Sethe's mother. Morrison stated that the character Beloved is the daughter Sethe killed. The murdered baby was unnamed, so her name is derived from the engraving on Sethe's murdered baby's tombstone, which simply read "Beloved" because Sethe could not afford to engrave the word "Dearly" or anything else. Beloved becomes a catalyst to bring repressed trauma of the family to the surface, but also creates madness in the house and slowly depletes Sethe.

Paul D retains his slave name; most of the enslaved men at Sweet Home were named Paul. He also retains many painful memories from enslavement and being forced to live in a chain gang; he had been moving around continuously before arriving at 124. He has a "tobacco tin" for a heart, in which he contains his painful memories, until Beloved opens it. Years after their time together at Sweet Home, Paul D and Sethe reunite and begin a romantic relationship. He acts fatherly towards Denver and is the first to be suspicious of Beloved. Despite their long past, he fails to understand Sethe fully because of her motherhood and because of the many years that had passed since.

Denver is Sethe's only child who remains at 124. Isolated from her community after Beloved's killing, Denver forms a close bond with her mother. Upon Beloved's arrival, Denver watches as her sister's ghost begins to exhibit demonic activity. Although introduced as a childish character, Denver develops into a protective woman throughout the novel. In the final chapters, Denver fights not only for her personal independence, but also for her mother's wellbeing, breaking the cycle of isolation at 124. She is 18 years old at the beginning of the novel.

Baby Suggs is Sethe's mother-in-law. Her son Halle worked to buy her freedom, after which she travels to Cincinnati and establishes herself as a respected leader in the community, preaching for the Black people to love themselves because other people will not. This respect turns sour after she turns some food into a feast, earning their envy, as well as Sethe's act of infanticide. Baby Suggs retires to her bed, where she thinks about pretty colors for the rest of her life. She dies at 70 in the beginning of the book, 8 years before the main events.

Halle is the son of Baby Suggs, the husband of Sethe and father of her children. Sethe and he were married in Sweet Home, yet they got separated during her escape. He is only mentioned in flashbacks. Paul D was the last to see Halle, churning butter at Sweet Home. He is presumed to have gone mad after seeing residents of Sweet Home violating Sethe. He is hardworking and good, qualities that Paul D sees in Denver at the end of the book, but ones that Baby Suggs fears make him a target.

Schoolteacher is the primary discipliner, violent, abusive, and cruel to the people he enslaved at Sweet Home, whom he views as animals. He comes for Sethe following her escape, but she kills her daughter and is arrested, instead.

Amy Denver is a young white girl who finds Sethe desperately trying to make her way to safety after her escape from Sweet Home, trying to get to Boston herself. Sethe is extremely pregnant at the time, and her feet are bleeding badly from the travel. Amy helps nurture her and deliver Sethe's daughter on a small boat, and Sethe names the child Denver after her.

Acknowledged by an audience becomes real. Sethe, Paul D, and Baby Suggs, who all fall short of such realization, are unable to remake themselves by trying to keep their pasts at bay. The "self" is located in a word, defined by others. The power lies in the audience, or more precisely, in the word-once the word changes, so does the identity. All of the characters in *Beloved* face the challenge of an unmade self, composed of their "rememories" and defined by perceptions and language. The barrier that keeps them from remaking of the self is the desire for an "uncomplicated past" and the fear that remembering will lead them to "a place they couldn't get back from".

The discussion of manhood and masculinity is foreshadowed by the dominant meaning of Sethe's story. *Beloved* depicts slavery in two main emotions: Love and Self-Preservation; however, Morrison does more than depict emotions.

The author accurately depicts the horrors of enslavement and its effects to communicate the morals of manhood. It also distorts a man from himself. Morrison revealed different pathways to the meaning of manhood by her stylistic devices. She established new information for understanding the legacy of slavery best depicted through stylistic devices. To understand Paul D's perception of manhood, Morrison deliberately inserts his half-formed words and thoughts, to provide the audience a taste of what is going on inside his mind. Yet, throughout the novel, Paul D's depiction of

manhood was being constantly challenged by the norms and values of white culture. The author demonstrates the distinctions between Western and African values, and how the dialogue between the two values is heard through juxtaposition and allusions. Scholar Zakiyyah Iman Jackson has argued that Paul D's reduced manhood emerges in relation to a discourse of animality. Morrison maneuvered her message through the social atmosphere of her words, which was further highlighted by the character's motives and action

Paul D is a victim of racism in that his dreams and goals are so high that he will never be able to achieve them because of racism. He thought he earned his right to reach each of his goals because of his sacrifices and what he has been through, that society would pay him back and allow him to do what his heart desired.

After Reconstruction (1890–1910)

During the Reconstruction era, Jim Crow laws were put in place to limit the movement and involvement of African Americans in the White-dominant society. Black men during this time had to establish their own identity, which may seem impossible due to all the limitations put upon them. Many Black men, like Paul D, struggled to find their meaning in their society and achieving their goals because of the "disabilities" that constrained them to a certain part of the social hierarchy.

In *Beloved*, Stamp Paid observes Paul D sitting on the base of the church steps "... liquor bottle in hand, stripped of the very maleness that enables him to caress and love the wounded Sethe..." . Throughout the novel, Paul D is sitting on a base of some sort or a foundation like a tree stub or the steps, for instance. This exemplifies his place in society. Black men are the foundation of society because without their hard labor, the white men would not profit. They were coerced into the society where they were deemed "lower-status" because of the color of their skin.

what she believes in, Sethe also demonstrates her heroism by helping Paul D deal with his own painful past. When he visits Sethe near the end of the novel, Paul D reminisces about "Her tenderness about his neck jewelry - its three wands, like attentive baby rattlers, curving two feet into the air. How she never mentioned or looked at it, so he did not have to feel the shame of being collared like a beast. Only this woman Sethe could have left him his manhood like that. He wants to put his story next to hers" . Paul D's intimate experiences with the iron bit have changed him forever, stripping him of his masculinity and contributing to a deep mental storm tormenting him from within. Morrison utilizes metaphor to compare the iron bit to "three wands, like attentive baby rattlers, curving two feet into the air," underscoring that the venomous influence of the iron bit, much like the bite of a rattlesnake, strikes in three different ways, damaging physical, cognitive, and emotional abilities. Paul D draws support from Sethe "never mention[ing] or look[ing]" at his scars, but more so, this allows him to retain his own manhood, which to Paul D defines the very basis of his character.

Although Sethe defies opposition to her heroic acts of freeing others from their past, Denver defies the confinements of her past, allowing her to help Sethe escape Beloved's parasitism that keeps her from a livable life and foreseeable future. Feeling trapped by her isolation at 124 Bluestone Road, Denver is challenged by the concept of leaving Sethe and Beloved behind, needing the courage to set foot beyond the house to seek the aid of the community she was once a part of.

Beloved begins in 1873 in Cincinnati, Ohio, with Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman, and her 18-year-old daughter, Denver, who live at 124 Bluestone Road. The site has been haunted for years by what they believe is the ghost of Sethe's eldest daughter. Denver is shy, friendless, and housebound. Sethe's sons, Howard and Buglar, ran away from home by the age of 13, which she believes was due to the ghost. Baby Suggs, the mother of Sethe's husband, Halle, died soon after the boys fled, eight years before the start of the novel.

Used literature:

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