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**Revisiting the trauma of Slavery in
Beloved Through a Postmodern Lens**

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Master Degree in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Civilization.

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Dedication:

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, who have been my guiding lights and unwavering support throughout my academic journey. Your love, encouragement, and sacrifices have shaped me into the person I am today. You mean the world to me, and this work is a testament to your unwavering belief in my abilities. Mom and Dad, through your boundless love, you have taught me the values of perseverance, integrity, and compassion. Your unwavering presence in my life has provided the strength and reassurance I needed to overcome obstacles and embrace challenges. Thank you for always believing in me and for instilling in me a love for knowledge and learning.

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Amina

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Abstract:

Literature, where the human imagination is at its highest degree of freedom, is where real-life problems got addressed simultaneously with fiction. It enlightens us about the unexplored facets of man. For instance, slavery played a significant role in writing, especially in novels. In which the writers' goal is to expose the brutality of white people, disguised under the pretext of chosen ones. This research paper explores the depiction of slavery in Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved" by examining the author's adept combination of post-modernism and realism. The narrative delves into the traumatic experiences endured by American slaves and the lasting consequences of their oppression. Through the perspective of the protagonist Sethe, who commits an unthinkable act to shield her daughter from the cruelties of slavery, Morrison sheds light on the broader struggles of enslaved individuals in their quest for freedom. Additionally, this research employs a psychoanalytical approach to analyze the psychological impact on the characters long after the abolition of slavery. By investigating the interplay between post-modernist techniques, realistic portrayals, and psychoanalytical perspectives, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the enduring legacy of slavery in American literature.

Keywords: beloved, slavery, post-modernism, realism, traumatic experiences, psychoanalysis.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Because of its sordid past, slavery has been tremendously discussed in various academic fields, including literature, civilisation, and psychology. These studies shed light on the historically barbaric practices perpetrated by white Americans. Moreover, in literature, writers predominantly focused on depicting the traumatic experiences endured by enslaved individuals, encompassing both physical and psychological consequences.

Beloved, written by Toni Morrison, is a captivating novel that explores the lasting effects of slavery on individuals. The book's protagonist, Sethe, was born into slavery but managed to escape. Despite her newfound freedom, however, Sethe remains haunted by the memories of her past, particularly her time at "Sweet Home." By portraying Sethe's struggles and those of other characters, "*Beloved*" delves into the profound psychological trauma inflicted upon the victims of slavery. This book has won both the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes and stands as a testament to Morrison's remarkable talent as a writer.

Beloved, Toni Morrison's acclaimed novel, was first published in 1987 and is undoubtedly a post-modernist work. Morrison employs techniques commonly associated with post-modernism, such as magical realism and stream of consciousness. By incorporating these elements into her writing, Morrison creates a multifaceted narrative that blurs the line between reality and fiction. Magical realism, a literary device that combines the mundane with the extraordinary, allows Morrison to introduce fantastical elements into her story without sacrificing the emotional realism of her characters' experiences. Additionally, the use of stream of consciousness narration enables the reader to delve deeply into the psyche of the characters, experiencing their thoughts and emotions in a raw and unfiltered manner. Together, these post-modernist techniques challenge traditional notions of storytelling, leading the reader to a deeper understanding of the novel's themes and ideas.

Through Toni Morrison's masterful storytelling, this paper seeks to explore the remarkable fusion of magical realism and stream of consciousness in a single work of literature. By delving into the pages of this novel, we aim to uncover the profound trauma experienced by former slaves and examine the lasting psychological effects of slavery on the human psyche. In addition, we aim to show that this book is an essential and invaluable read for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of American slavery practices. Through an analysis of its themes, characters, and narrative techniques, we hope to illuminate the profound insights this novel offers into the most crucial aspects of life.

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At the core of this study project lie several key questions:

- How did African Americans live during the slavery era?
- How did Toni Morrison manage to combine several techniques in one story?

In a society that relegated African Americans to a limited status in both literature and life, the 19th century witnessed the emergence of a powerful movement for greater rights and opportunities. Black people, through their courage and perseverance, fought to overcome the traumas of their past and create a better future for themselves and their communities. At the heart of this struggle lies the true story that inspired Toni Morrison's masterpiece, *Beloved*. Drawing upon the haunting experiences of black people from years gone by, Morrison created a narrative that stands as a testament to the enduring strength and resilience of the human spirit. In recognition of her remarkable achievements as a writer, Morrison became the first African American to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, a momentous event that marked a turning point for Afro-American literature. Through her writing, Morrison helped to transform the literary landscape, giving voice to a people long silenced and inspiring future generations of writers to do the same.

The first chapter of this research paper aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the historical context of slavery in America and its profound impact on the psychological health of the African enslaved population. We will explore the social and economic factors that contributed to the emergence and expansion of slavery in the United States, tracing the evolution of this practice from its origins in the colonial era to its eventual abolition in the 19th century. We will analyse the psychological effects of slavery on African Americans, exploring the ways in which this institution affected their sense of identity, self-worth, and agency. We will also examine the ways in which enslaved individuals resisted and rebelled against the oppressive system of slavery, exploring the range of strategies and tactics that they employed to assert their humanity and claim their freedom.

As part of this analysis, we will consider the role of postmodernism in African American literature, exploring the ways in which writers have used this literary movement to challenge dominant narratives and reassert the humanity of oppressed groups. We will also explore the use of magical realism and stream of consciousness in literature, analysing how these techniques have been used to convey the psychological experiences of marginalized groups. Through this chapter, we hope to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of the historical

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and cultural context of slavery in America, and its profound and lasting impact on the psychological health of the African enslaved population.

In the second chapter of this research paper, we delve deeper into Toni Morrison's literary techniques, specifically the combination of magical realism and stream of consciousness that she employs throughout "Beloved". We will examine how Morrison expertly utilizes these techniques to vividly portray the horrific experiences of the book's characters, and to convey the complex psychological states of individuals who have been subjected to trauma. Through a careful analysis of key scenes and passages in the novel, we will explore the ways in which Morrison employs magical realism to blur the lines between reality and fantasy, and to create a surreal atmosphere that mirrors the psychological disorientation experienced by the characters. We will also examine the use of stream of consciousness narration to depict the inner workings of the character's minds, revealing the depth and complexity of their emotions and thoughts.

Overall, this chapter offers a close reading of "Beloved", exploring the intricate ways in which Morrison combines different literary techniques to create a haunting and deeply moving portrait of the psychological effects of slavery. By examining the novel from multiple perspectives, including literary psychoanalysis theory, we hope to provide a rich and nuanced understanding of this powerful work of literature.

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1.1 Introduction:

African American literature has always been an integral part of the cultural landscape of the United States. The literature of this community reflects the unique experiences, struggles, and triumphs of African Americans in America. From the days of slavery to the present, African American writers have used their literary works to explore the social, political, and economic realities of their communities. Furthermore, examining the historical background of the tackled society is essential before studying a literary work.

This chapter explores the relationship between African American society and literature, focusing on four main themes: the society during the slavery era, postmodernism in literature, magical realism, and psychoanalytical theory. Through an analysis of these themes, this writing seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between African American society and literature. By examining the ways in which African American literature reflects and responds to historical, social, and cultural contexts, this chapter aims to shed light on the unique and important contributions of African American writers to the literary canon of the United States.

1.2 African American Society during the Slavery Era

During the plantation era in the United States, African American society was shaped by the institution of slavery. Colonial society in the Americas began with a tripartite division in which European and colonial whites were free and Indians and Africans were capable of being enslaved. Over time as laws and decrees changed Indians' status, they too became free. With the abolition of Indian slavery, only Africans remained enslaved (Rodriguez, 2007, p.78). Enslaved Africans were brought to the United States to work on plantations, and their labour was the backbone of the Southern economy. Moreover, the economy, society, and politics of the United States underwent a substantial transformation during this time.

1.2.1. The Origins and Development of Slavery

Slavery in the United States had its origins in the early colonial period, when European colonists first began importing African slaves to work on plantations in the South. The first recorded shipment of African slaves to the British colonies in North America occurred in 1619, when a Dutch ship brought 20 enslaved Africans to Jamestown, Virginia. Over the following centuries, the institution of slavery became deeply ingrained in the Southern

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economy, as large plantations emerged that relied on slave labour to cultivate cash crops. Slavery was legal in all 13 British colonies, and it continued to expand even after the colonies achieved independence and formed the United States. Horton, James Oliver and Lois E. Horton report in their book:

The rise of slavery in America was a complex and multifaceted process, shaped by a range of economic, social, and political factors. While slavery existed in various forms throughout the world, the system that emerged in the British colonies was distinctive in its racialized character and its emphasis on lifelong, hereditary bondage. The first Africans to arrive in Virginia in 1619 were initially treated as indentured servants, but over time, their legal status shifted to that of permanent slaves, reflecting the growing racial divide between black and white colonists.

(Horton and Horton, 2005)

The growth of the tobacco economy in the Chesapeake region in the late 17th century created a growing demand for labour, and planters increasingly turned to enslave Africans to meet their needs. By the early 18th century, the vast majority of labour in Virginia and Maryland was provided by enslaved Africans. Therefore, millions of Africans were forcibly brought to America and subjected to the brutal conditions of forced labour. Furthermore, for more than 200 years, slavery was an integral part of the American economy, particularly in the Southern states where large plantations were heavily dependent on slave labour. Hundreds of forced labour camps came to exist, scattered throughout the South—operated by state and county governments, large corporations, small-time entrepreneurs, and provincial farmers. These bulging slave centres became a primary weapon for the suppression of black aspirations. Where mob violence or the Ku Klux Klan terrorized black citizens periodically, the return of forced labour as a fixture in black life ground pervasively into the daily lives of far more African Americans (Douglas, 2008).

Slavery was not just a moral abomination; it was an economic system that enriched a few at the expense of many. It distorted the US economy, created vast inequalities, and left a legacy of poverty and racial injustice that persists to this day (Foner, 1988). The foundation of the Southern economy rested on the institution of slavery. It was the driving force behind agriculture, industry, and commerce, and it created enormous wealth for the slaveholding class (Baptist, 2014). Plantation also played a significant role in the industrialization of the

United States. The cotton industry, in particular, was a major driver of economic growth, as cotton was used to produce textiles for both domestic and international markets. The vast majority of the cotton produced in the southern states was grown and harvested by enslaved people.

Slavery was not a peripheral feature of the American economy, but rather its very foundation. It generated tremendous wealth for the slaveholders and their allies, while denying economic opportunities to millions of African Americans (Beckert, 2014, p.615). By the 1840s the North had built a complex, industrialized economy on the backs of enslaved people and their highly profitable cotton labour (Baptist, 2014). The plantation system was the backbone of the Southern economy, and it relied entirely on the labour of enslaved Africans. It produced enormous quantities of cotton, tobacco, and other crops that were sold for high prices in global markets (Jones-Rogers, 2019).

Enslaved people were treated as property, bought and sold like commodities, and subjected to brutal living and working conditions. Slavery recognized the slave as an object: as chattel that could be bought, sold, and traded (Rodriguez, 2007, p.78). As the slave population grew, so too did efforts to justify and perpetuate the institution of slavery. Some slaveholders argued that Africans were inherently inferior to Europeans and therefore needed to be enslaved and controlled. Others claimed that slavery was a necessary evil that provided for the economic and social stability of the South.

1.2.2. The Impact of Slavery on Enslaved People

Slavery has had a profound impact on the lives of enslaved people throughout history, particularly in the United States, where the institution of slavery lasted for more than two centuries. Enslaved people were stripped of their basic human rights, treated as property, and subjected to unspeakable cruelty and exploitation. The brutal conditions of slavery not only dehumanized the enslaved people but also stripped them of their basic human rights, dignity, and agency. They were treated as mere commodities and subjected to unspeakable cruelty and abuse. This had a profound impact on their physical and mental well-being (Foner, 2010).

Physically, slavery was a gruelling and brutal experience. Enslaved people were forced to work long hours in harsh conditions, often without adequate food, water, or shelter. They were subjected to back-breaking labour in the fields, mines, and factories, and were frequently whipped, beaten, and tortured for any perceived disobedience. Many were forced to endure

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inhumane living conditions, including overcrowded and unsanitary housing that led to the spread of disease and illness. Chains enabled another kind of violence to be done as well. Chains saved whites from worrying about placating this one's mother, or buying that one's child. Once the enslaved men were in the coffle, they weren't getting away unless they found a broken link. For five hundred miles, no one had to call names at night to ensure they hadn't run away (Babtist, 2014).

The physical toll of slavery was particularly acute for enslaved women, who were often subjected to sexual exploitation and abuse. Many were forced to bear children at a young age and were separated from their families, causing lasting psychological trauma. Enslaved children were also subjected to physical abuse, forced to work from a young age, and denied a proper education. William Wells Brown exposes in his novel: "The cruelty of the slave system is beyond belief. The physical and psychological abuse that enslaved people endured on a daily basis is a stain on our nation's history that can never be erased." (Brown, 1853).

Psychologically, slavery had a devastating impact on the mental health of enslaved people. They were denied their basic humanity and forced to live in a constant state of fear and anxiety. They were subjected to cruel and arbitrary punishments, including public whippings and hangings, that served as a constant reminder of their powerlessness and vulnerability. Emotionally, slavery had a profound impact on the relationships between enslaved people and their families. Enslaved families have often been torn apart, with parents and children sold to different owners, and husbands and wives separated for years or even decades. This separation caused deep emotional pain and trauma that lasted long after slavery had ended. Enslaved people were also denied the right to form intimate relationships with other enslaved people, and many were forced to endure sexual abuse and exploitation. This lack of autonomy and agency eroded their sense of self-worth and contributed to a deep sense of despair and hopelessness.

Enslaved people were also denied the right to practice their own religion, speak their own language, or engage in cultural practices that were important to them. This forced assimilation eroded their sense of identity and contributed to a deep sense of dislocation and disorientation. Slaves had to be indoctrinated into the culture of slavery, and in doing so they had to lose all aspects of their African identity. African names were taken away and new slave names, usually nonsensical or humorous in origin, were assigned in their place (Rodriguez, 2007, p79). The loss of identity suffered by enslaved Africans was not simply a matter of

physical captivity or cultural assimilation. It was also a matter of psychological trauma, as Africans were subjected to the constant threat of violence and forced to adapt to a completely foreign environment (Wood, 1991).

1.2.3 Afro-American Resistance to Oppression

African American resistance to slavery was a constant and widespread phenomenon that took many forms throughout the history of slavery in the United States. From passive resistance such as slowing down work and breaking tools, to active resistance through uprisings and escapes, enslaved people used a variety of tactics to resist their oppressors. One of the most well-known forms of resistance was the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses used by enslaved people to escape to freedom. The Underground Railroad was a coordinated effort between both black and white abolitionists, and it was estimated that between 40,000 and 100,000 people escaped slavery through this network between 1800 and 1865. Many of these escapees were able to establish new lives as free people in the North or Canada.

In addition to the Underground Railroad, enslaved people also resisted through uprisings such as the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831 and the Stono Rebellion in 1739. These uprisings were violent and often unsuccessful, but they served as powerful symbols of resistance and inspired future generations of enslaved people to continue the fight for freedom. Enslaved people also resisted slavery through everyday acts of rebellion. Slowing down work, breaking tools, and feigning illness were common tactics used to disrupt the plantation economy and exert some measure of control over their lives. These acts of resistance may have been subtle, but they were effective in making life more difficult for slave owners and overseers.

Resistance to slavery was not limited to enslaved people themselves. Free blacks, both in the North and South, played an important role in the abolitionist movement. They used their freedom to speak out against slavery, publish abolitionist newspapers and pamphlets, and provide financial and logistical support to the Underground Railroad. Furthermore, the impact of African American resistance to the abolition of slavery cannot be overstated. Enslaved people who escaped to the freedom provided a powerful example of the horrors of slavery and helped to mobilize public opinion against it. Uprisings such as the Nat Turner Rebellion, although ultimately unsuccessful, galvanized the abolitionist movement and helped

to shift the debate about slavery from one of moral ambiguity to one of unequivocal condemnation.

The abolitionist movement in the North and the political conflicts over slavery that led to the Civil War in 1861 marked a turning point in the history of slavery in the US. The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 and the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865 finally brought an end to legal slavery in the United States. The Civil War was a turning point in American history, a time when the nation was forced to confront the evil of slavery and decide whether to continue to tolerate it or to put an end to it. The war was fought over many issues, but ultimately it was a moral struggle, a battle between right and wrong. The Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment were the result of this struggle, a testament to the courage and perseverance of the abolitionists and the enslaved people who fought for their freedom. These documents not only ended slavery, but they also transformed the nation, setting it on a course toward a more just and equal society (Oakes, 1865).

To conclude, slavery was and still is a difficult topic to talk about because of its evils and the best way to end this historical background is by Edward E. Baptist writing about it when he said:

The worst thing about slavery as an experience, one is told, was that it denied enslaved African Americans the liberal rights and liberal subjectivity of modern citizens. It did those things as a matter of course, and as injustice, that denial ranks with the greatest in modern history. But slavery also killed people, in large numbers. From those who survived, it stole everything. Yet the massive and cruel engineering required to rip a million people from their homes, brutally drive them to new, disease-ridden places, and make them live in terror and hunger as they continually built and rebuilt a commodity-generating empire—this vanished in the story of a slavery that was supposedly focused primarily not on producing profit but on maintaining its status as a quasi-feudal elite, or producing modern ideas about race in order to maintain white unity and elite power. And once the violence of slavery was minimized, another voice could whisper, saying that African Americans, both before and after emancipation, were denied the rights of citizens because they would not fight for them. (Baptist, 2014)

1.3 Postmodernism in Literature

Modernist literature was the prime literary movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, postmodernism, a new school of literary theory, emerged following World War II. A brand-new approach to creative thinking began to take shape by the end of the twentieth century. Post-modernity can be interpreted as an epistemological break with modernity; it plays with the universality of instrumental reason and it rejects those social, sexual, psychological, philosophical, and historical postulates that are totalising, metaphysical, and essentialist (Hogue, 2009, p.5).

The rebellious attitude and eagerness to push boundaries define postmodernism the most. The early years of postmodernism in literary studies saw a strong and pervasive linguistic turn. The plenitude which postmodernist fiction would set out to match was represented not as a plenitude of things, but as a plenitude of words. (Connor, 2004, p.69) One might almost say that the move from modernism to postmodernism involves a move from poetry to fiction (Connor, 2004, p.62). The conventions of postmodernism are only superficially based on the notion of "anything goes". Their polemical nature, their opposition to modernist ways of writing - dictated by social-historical, generational, and aesthetic mechanisms - made quasi non-selection a basic principle (Bertens & W.Fokkema, 1997, p.24).

If in modernism, the author's main goal is to find the meaning in the changing world, then postmodernist writers talk about the meaninglessness of what is happening. They deny the patterns and put the case above all. Irony, black humour, fragmentation of narration, mixing genres - these are the main features characteristic of the literature of postmodernism (NamSu, 2022, p.1). Postmodernist work of fiction borrows its energy from a world it conceives of as accomplice rather than an antagonist. Rather than pitting its resources against a resistant world, postmodernist fiction attempts to outdo the world in the way the surfer does, staying audaciously just ahead of the wave from which all his impetus derives (Connor, 2004, p.71).

1.3.1 Postmodern African American Literature

The 1970s marked a decisive turn in the African American literary tradition, when the emancipatory promise of urban modernity was widely felt to have been exhausted (Dubey, 2007, p.5). Postmodern African American literature is marked by a rejection of traditional linear narratives and an emphasis on fragmentation, disruption, and irony. These works often

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use unconventional narrative techniques, such as nonlinear timelines, multiple narrators, and meta-fiction, to convey their themes and ideas. Postmodernist fiction became big in an effort to outdo the world. In saying this, it must also be recognized that there is little in this postmodernist rivalry between word and world of the sense of obscurity or obstacle to be overcome (Connor, 2004, p.71).

Postmodern African American literature also frequently engages with historical and political issues, such as slavery, racism, colonialism, and the civil rights movement. These works often challenge traditional historical narratives and explore the ways in which history has been shaped by power structures and dominant ideologies. It is scarcely surprising that claims to represent racial community have become highly fraught in postmodern African-American fiction as well as literary and cultural studies (Dubey, 2007, p.5). Overall, postmodern American literature and post-structural theories offer new and interesting ways to look at American society (Hogue, 2009).

One of the central themes in postmodern African American literature is the idea of multiple and contested identities. These works often explore the African Americans' complex and intersectional experiences, including their relationships with their racial, gender, sexual, and cultural identities. Furthermore, postmodern African American female writers have made significant contributions to the literary landscape, using their works to challenge traditional narratives about race, gender, and identity and to explore the experiences of African American women in particular. W. Lawrence Hogue Points out in his book *Post Modern American Literature and Its Other*:

Most postmodern African American women, and American Indian writers do not experience and write postmodernity in the same way as postmodern American white male writers. They are not inclined to neglect/otherize racial, gender, and sexual issues in their narratives. They are deeply concerned with the existence of racism and sexism and how the two define them as inferior, as victims, or as devalued other.

(Hogue, 2009, p.11)

Toni Morrison is perhaps the most well-known postmodern African American female writer, whose works, such as "Beloved," "The Bluest Eye," and "Song of Solomon," explore the complex experiences of African American women and their relationships to their families,

communities, and histories. Her work often incorporates elements of magical realism and explores themes of memory, trauma, and the legacies of slavery and racism.

1.3.3 Major Postmodern American Writers:

Toni Morrison is one of the most celebrated African American writers of the postmodern era. Her novels, including "Beloved," "The Bluest Eye," and "Song of Solomon," explore themes of race, gender, and identity. Morrison's writing is characterized by its non-linear narrative structure and use of magical realism. In "Beloved," for example, she employs a ghostly presence to explore the trauma of slavery and its impact on African American culture and identity.

Another prominent African American writer who has contributed to postmodernism is Ishmael Reed. Reed was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on February 22, 1938, and grew up in Buffalo, New York, where he attended the University of Buffalo. Reed started his career with journalism, contributing to publications such as the Buffalo Empire Star, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. He is known for his satire, which he uses to critique dominant cultural narratives and challenge traditional notions of race and identity. His writing often combines science fiction and fantasy with African American slang and mythology. Additionally, Reed's writing is distinguished by its use of metafictional elements and non-linear narrative structures.

One of Reed's most famous works is the novel "Mumbo Jumbo", published in 1972. The book employs satire and parody to critique cultural movements of the early 20th century, including the Harlem Renaissance and the New Age movement. "Mumbo Jumbo" also explores themes of race, identity, and power through the application of African American folklore and mythology. Reed's other notable works include "The Last Days of Louisiana Red," which explores themes of cultural identity and the relationship between African Americans and the American South, and "Flight to Canada," a satire that imagines a slave rebellion in the United States during the Civil War. In addition to his work as a writer, Reed is also a prominent literary critic and editor. He co-founded the literary magazine "Yugen" in the 1950s and later co-founded the Before Columbus Foundation, which promotes the works of writers of colour.

David Foster Wallace, while not African American, was a writer who engaged with postmodernism and its themes in his work. David Foster Wallace was an American writer

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known for his postmodern literary style and exploration of themes such as addiction, entertainment, and the relationship between individuals and society. Born on February 21, 1962, in Ithaca, New York, Wallace grew up in Illinois and attended Amherst College, where he majored in English and philosophy. Footnotes, non-linear narrative structure, and meta-fictional aspects distinguish Wallace's writing. His most renowned piece, "Infinite Jest," was published in 1996 and addressed themes of addiction and entertainment in a dystopian future America. The book is notable for its length and intricacy, as well as the inclusion of several plot lines and characters.

Wallace's other notable works include the short story collection "Brief Interviews with Hideous Men," which explores themes of male identity and sexuality, and the non-fiction book "Consider the Lobster," which includes essays on topics such as the Maine Lobster Festival and the ethics of eating animals. Wallace struggled with depression and addiction throughout his life and tragically died by suicide on September 12, 2008, at 46 old. Despite his short life, his contributions to postmodern literature have had a lasting impact and continue to inspire readers and writers today. In addition to his writing, Wallace was also a professor of English at Pomona College and later at Illinois State University. He gained a reputation for his distinctive teaching style, which included multimedia elements and highlighted the value of critical thinking and creativity.

Another African American writer who has contributed to postmodernism is Octavia Butler. Butler was an American science fiction writer recognized for her works that explore themes such as race, gender, and identity. Born on June 22, 1947, in Pasadena, California, Butler grew up in a working-class family and began writing science fiction at a young age. Butler's writing often incorporates elements of African American history and mythology, besides feminist and social justice themes. Her most famous work, the novel "Kindred," was published in 1979 and explores themes of slavery, time travel, and the legacy of racism in the United States.

Butler's other notable works include the "Parable" series, which imagines a dystopian future United States and explores themes of religion, politics, and identity, as well as the "Xenogenesis" trilogy, which explores themes of alien-human interaction and the meaning of humanity. Throughout her career, Butler received recognition for her contributions to science fiction and literature. She was the first science fiction writer to receive a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" grant and was granted induction into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame

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in 2010. Butler's writing received praise for its treatment of topics like intersectionality, gender, and race, as well as her ability to construct rich and nuanced characters. Her work has influenced a new generation of science fiction writers and is still researched and discussed in academia. Tragically, Butler died at 58 on February 24, 2006, but her contributions to science fiction and literature have had a lasting impact on the genre and beyond.

Finally, we must mention Colson Whitehead, a contemporary African American writer who has made a significant impact on postmodern literature. He is known for his exploration of African American history and experience in his work. Born on November 6, 1969, in New York City, Whitehead grew up in Manhattan and attended Harvard University, where he studied English and worked for the Harvard Lampoon. Whitehead's writing often incorporates elements of magical realism and explores themes such as race, identity, and history. His most famous work, the novel "The Underground Railroad," was published in 2016, speculating the underground railroad as a literal railway system, exploring the legacy of slavery and its ongoing impact on American society.

Whitehead's other notable works include the novels "Sag Harbor," which explores the experience of a group of African American teenagers in the 1980s, and "The Nickel Boys," which explores the legacy of the Jim Crow era and the abuse suffered by Black boys at a fictional reform school in Florida. Throughout his career, Whitehead has received numerous accolades for his writing. He has won two Pulitzer Prizes, one for "The Underground Railroad" and one for "The Nickel Boys," and has been a finalist for the National Book Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Whitehead is also known for his involvement in the literary community. He has served as a judge for the Pulitzer Prize and has been a faculty member at several universities, including Princeton and New York University.

African American writers have made significant contributions to postmodernism in literature. Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, Octavia Butler, and Colson Whitehead are just a few of the many African American writers who have embraced postmodernism as a means of exploring themes of identity, power, and oppression. Through their innovative and challenging works, these writers have helped to expand the literary canon and shed light on the unique experiences and perspectives of African Americans in the United States.

1.4 Magical Realism:

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Magical realism is a genre of literature which appeared in the twentieth century. It was not a genre created by coincidence, but rather it came as a reaction to western realism. The latter was founded once writers and artists of the nineteenth century revolted against romanticism and the romantic style of writing, which focused on decorating a reality and portraying it aesthetically, neglecting its veritable image. In literary realism, authors began trying to represent contemporary lives as they were, a prime example being George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, because the characters speak in the vernacular of the day and Eliot details all of their activities, including the banal ones (McKinney, 2014).

Some artists and critics found that the strict lines of realism limited art creativity, and they became unsatisfied with realism. As a reaction, Franz Roh, the German art critic, introduced the term "magical realism" in 1925. First, it was related to art only, but it did not remain an artistic movement until the 1940s. Latin American writers were the first who generalized it as a literary form, first introduced by the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier in his 1949's classic essay "lo real maravilloso" to the Americas (Zamora, Faris, 1995).

Simply put, magical realism is a genre of fiction based on reality blended with a touch of fantasy. The settings of its narratives are rooted in the real world, but some of its characters and traits are presented fantastically. Considered unique, writers of this genre are not interested in the mechanism of that magic on their characters; but in its impact on them and what it portrays they leave that mechanism ambiguous. Often in in this genre, the mechanics and rules of the magical element are left unexplained, a divergence from much of the fantasy genre (Provost, 2022).

One of the most crucial features of magical realism is its attention to detail. In works of magical realism, the fantastic elements are not just random or arbitrary but meticulously incorporated into the fabric of the narrative. They are presented as matter-of-factly, as though they are a normal part of life rather than something unusual or out of place. This attention to detail creates a sense of realism essential to the genre's success. Another feature of magical realism is its connection to cultural identity and mythology. Many works of magical realism draw on traditional stories and beliefs from a particular culture, using them as a framework for exploring the relationship between the real and the imagined. For example, the works of Gabriel Garcia Marquez often draw on the folklore and mythology of Latin America, while the novels of Haruki Murakami have deep roots in Japanese culture and tradition.

Magical realism can be seen as a way of articulating the relationship between the imagination and reality, a way of exploring the boundaries between what we believe to be true and what we are willing to accept as possible (Rushdie, 1987). Magical realism also allows writers to explore complex themes and ideas that may be difficult to address through more traditional forms of storytelling. By blending the real and the fantastic, writers can produce works that are both inventive and assumed-provoking. Salman Rushdie is a renowned novelist who has written extensively about magical realism. He argues that using magic elements in literature can allow writers to express the inexpressible and to explore the complexities of the human experience in new and unexpected ways. Rushdie's own work, including his novel "Midnight's Children," is often cited as an example of magical realism. In "Midnight's Children," Rushdie uses magic elements to explore the history of India and the experiences of its people. The novel is full of fantastical elements, such as a boy with the ability to telepathically communicate with other children born at the exact same moment as him. Through these elements, Rushdie is able to create a world that is both imaginative and deeply rooted in the history and culture of India.

1.4.1 Magical Realism in African American Literature:

Magical realism has been a significant component in African American literature, where writers have employed it to convey complex and profound themes of history, identity, and spirituality. African American writers have used magical realism to explore the impact of slavery and racism on the Black community and to express the resilience and strength of African American people in the face of oppression. The use of supernatural elements in otherwise realistic narratives allows writers to communicate the complexities of the African American experience and to create a unique and powerful form of storytelling that engages readers on both emotional and intellectual levels.

African American literature was largely influenced by the past. The journey of African American fiction started from the slave narratives and oral storytelling moving to the rewriting of popular whites' novels. After World War I, the term "Negro Renaissance" appeared (Runtić, 2012). The experience of migration and the opportunities they created for themselves, besides the movements that appeared in the late 1960s, motivated black writers to publicise the black history of slavery; their novels tackled mainly the topics of freedom, racism, segregation and the black community. Indeed, African American literature served to regain the pride of black culture.

Part away from realism, magical realism was more convenient in African American literature. Indeed, in magical realism, the magic melts in reality, and supernatural traits count as normal. Realist writers are objective; they follow the truth and present it as it is, whereas magical realists are subjective when using magic to reveal that reality; it is that way that catches the readers' attention towards such kinds of novels. Breaking the norms and challenging nature of writing made the black community experiences memorable. Yet, magic has no limits so does the suffering of slaves at that time. Basic real-life descriptions of such torture were not sufficient enough, but adding magic to it gave it that persuasion and made the generations that follows aware of black people past. Magical realism, according to Miguel Angel Asturias, belongs to the so called "third reality", which is a fusion between the real -- visible and tangible -- reality and between the magical reality, that is, dreams and hallucinations.

Toni Morrison was one of the magical realist writers keen on holding the black community's traditions and keeping their past engraved in the memory through their works. Her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "Beloved" (1987) is one of the most recommended magical realist novels, which depicts the suffering of black people through the ghost of the baby beloved.

1.5 Stream of Consciousness:

Stream of consciousness is a literary method that aims to capture the natural flow of a character's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions as they occur in real life in a continuous and unbroken sequence. Stream of consciousness is a technique that allows us to see the mind at work, to get closer to the raw material of thought and feeling than we can through any other means (Lessing, 1995). It is a narrative method in which a character's innermost thoughts and feelings are present in a spontaneous, unfettered, and occasionally chaotic manner, with no apparent order or organization.

Often linked with modernist writing, the stream-of-consciousness technique creates a sense of immediacy and closeness between the reader and the character. This style may also include free association, imagery, and metaphor to depict the nuanced nature of human intellect and experience. Stream of consciousness is a technique for dramatizing the continuous flow of consciousness, giving the reader a sense of the complexity and immediacy of human experience (Lodge,1977).

1.5.1 History of Stream of Consciousness:

The stream-of-consciousness approach emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, having origins in the writings of various thinkers, notably William James, who used the term "stream of thought" to characterize the continuous flow of conscious experience. It was initially used in literature by Gertrude Stein, an American novelist who experimented with stream-of-consciousness writing in her early works such as "Three Lives" (1909). However, early twentieth-century modernist writers popularized the technique, rendering it a hallmark of modern literature. The Irish novelist James Joyce is likely the most well-known practitioner of the stream-of-consciousness method, most notably in his work "Ulysses" (1922). Joyce employed a range of narrative techniques, including stream-of-consciousness writing, in this revolutionary book to convey the thoughts and sensations of his characters in a way that never existed before.

Virginia Woolf, another notable modernist writer who employed the stream-of-consciousness approach, was an English novelist. Her novel "Mrs Dalloway" (1925) is an excellent example of this style in action, following the thoughts and sensations of its principal character, Clarissa Dalloway, for a single day in London. William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett, and Marcel Proust are renowned writers who used the stream-of-consciousness style in their work. Today, writers in various genres, from literary fiction to science fiction and fantasy, use stream-of-consciousness technique.

1.5.2 Principles of Stream of Consciousness:

Stream of consciousness, as opposed to external events or speech, involves the inner monologue or the continual flow of a character's thoughts and feelings. Stream-of-consciousness writing's narrative structure is frequently fractured and disorganized, with rapid alterations to the time, location, and perspective because a character's thoughts and feelings are not necessarily sequential or rational.

Stream of consciousness symbolism and images to describe a character's inner world, authors frequently employ symbolism and evocative imagery. These literary strategies contribute to the reader's feeling of reality and immersion. It is frequently used to delve into a character's psychology, exposing their motives, anxieties, and wants.

Stream-of-consciousness writing can be hard to read and understand due to its fragmented form and lack of apparent story advancement. It may, however, be beneficial for readers ready to interact with the book and investigate the inner workings of the character's mind. The stream of consciousness technique can be seen as an attempt to capture the inner workings of the human mind, to reveal the layers of thought and feeling that make up our conscious experience (Kristeva,1974). Overall, the stream-of-consciousness approach is an effective instrument for delving into the complexity of human thinking and experience, and it has had a substantial influence on modern writing.

Stream of consciousness includes writing in a capturing way to the flow of a character's thoughts and feelings as if the reader is inside the character's mind. That gets accomplished through internal monologue, in which the character's thoughts convey an uninterrupted stream of consciousness. According to Fredric Jameson: "Stream of consciousness can be seen as an expression of the modernist fascination with the fragmented, subjective nature of human experience, reflecting the breakdown of traditional forms of representation and the rise of a more fluid, subjective mode of consciousness".

Stream-of-consciousness writing is distinguished because of association and free-association usage, in which one idea flows to another in an associative and often surprising manner. The stream-of-consciousness approach highlights the subjective character of experience, emphasizing how unique and individualized each person's perception of the world is. A common feature of the stream-of-consciousness method is the fragmentation of narrative structure, with the narrative frequently missing a typical plot or linear framework. Using imagery and sensory details to create a vivid and immersive picture of the character's reality is commonly used in stream-of-consciousness writing.

According to the literary theorist Julia Kristeva: "Stream of consciousness is a technique that has revolutionized the way we think about literary expression, opening up new possibilities for exploring the complex and often contradictory nature of human consciousness". The stream-of-consciousness approach seeks to capture the core of human awareness besides the complexities of human thinking and experience, frequently blurring the distinction between the internal and exterior worlds.

1.5.3 Stream of Consciousness in Literature:

As reported by David Lodge: "The stream of consciousness technique, at its best, can give readers a direct and unmediated access to the inner workings of a character's mind, allowing for a more immersive and emotionally affecting reading experience". Stream of consciousness has been widely used in literature, notably in modernist and postmodernist works. It allows writers to dig deep into their characters' brains and explore their thoughts, feelings, and motives in minute detail. It may also create a realistic and instantaneous picture of subjectivity and human experience by revealing characters' thoughts and sensations without filtering them via a narrator or third-person perspective. The use of stream of consciousness can be seen as an attempt to capture the immediacy and vitality of lived experience, allowing for a more truthful and authentic representation of human thought and feeling (Lessing, 1971).

Some writers utilize a stream of consciousness to disrupt standard narrative structures and linguistic conventions, revealing their limits and prejudices. The nonlinear, associative form of the stream of consciousness can be especially effective in depicting the fractured nature of memory and the persistent consequences of trauma.

Stream of consciousness has frequently been utilized by writers who seek to experiment with language and form, challenging readers to connect with their works in new and original ways. It is used in literary works such as James Joyce's "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake," Virginia Woolf's "Mrs Dalloway" and "To the Lighthouse," and William Faulkner's "The Sound and the Fury" and "As I Lay Dying."

1.6 Psychoanalytical Theory:

Psychoanalytic theory, established by Sigmund Freud, is a psychological approach that stresses how the unconscious mind impacts human experience and behaviour. Freud believed that unconscious thoughts, feelings, and desires could influence behaviour without a person's awareness. The psychoanalytical theory also emphasizes the role of early childhood experiences in shaping personality and behaviour. According to Freud, early experiences with parents and caregivers shape the development of the individual's personality leading to the construction of unconscious conflicts and defences that affect later behaviour.

Psychoanalytical theory has influenced literary theory, particularly in literary criticism and analysis. It suggests that literary works can be seen as expressions of the author's unconscious desires and conflicts and that characters can be analysed in terms of their psychological motivations and desires. It has also been used to analyse the creative process itself. Some

psychoanalytic critics argue that creative works are a way for artists to express and work through their unconscious conflicts and desires. For example, in Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse*, the character of Lily Briscoe is a painter who struggles to express her artistic vision. Psychoanalytical critics have interpreted this struggle to reflect Woolf's conflicts and anxieties as a writer.

1.6.1 Trauma Theory:

Trauma is an ancient Greek word for wound which appeared in the late 17th century. In its all beginnings, it derived from physical injury at the body level, then it was used as a wound but upon the mind in the medical, psychiatric studies, literature and Freud texts. Sigmund Freud was the father of psychoanalysis, the theory that treats mental illnesses and human behaviour. He started his research on trauma in the nineteenth century. He saw it vital to study such mental illness, so he sat the trauma theory in which he believed that mental trauma resulted in women hysteria and that childhood experiences control the course of human life. "Trauma results from a constellation of life's experiences as well as from a sudden flash of terror, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single assault, from a period of attenuation and wearing away as well as from a moment of shock" (Kai Erikson). Freud saw that trauma is largely related to history precisely that of the war, as cited by (Dispatches). It took war to teach it, that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did; the problem was that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later, that a lot of it never made it in at all, it just stayed there in your eyes. Michael Herr, (Dispatches).

In 1980, the American Psychiatric Association defined trauma under the title Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which denotes the reactions to human and environmental disasters that are mostly symptoms of history. While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (Caruth, 1996).

It is natural for the human brain not to anticipate some shocks. Thus, when the sudden shock comes, it takes time to be translated and thereby consciously recognized. This

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unexpectedness causes after-period nightmares, hallucinations and imaginations of bizarre situations related to the traumatic event. Through several studies, Freud concluded that the latency of the victim in realizing certain shock after that his brain return from the state of unexpectedness to that of awareness (as previously mentioned) is the principal feature of trauma:

Someone may get away, apparently unharmed, from an area where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance, a train collision. In the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave physical and motor symptoms which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a 'traumatic neurosis'. This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms is called the 'incubation period', a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease... It is the feature one might term latency (Freud, 1953, p.84). 'Traumatic neurosis' comes in the form of unconscious and accidental reenactment of an event that left a scar in the psyche of the traumatized and that cannot simply go unnoticed or left behind. The experience of slavery, racism and harassment, for example, are classified as subjects of traumatic neurosis. Freud discovered that adult neurotic disorders, especially hysteria, were caused by psychic shock which he saw as three-part process; traumatizing event, the victim experiencing this trauma and this person's psychological defense, either by forgetting or repression (Freud, 1953).

Women, children and survivors from catastrophes are the main three categories of people who are victims of traumatic experiences. Also, women who have subjected to various kinds of traumas, have been associated with negative thoughts about the self, negative thoughts about the world, and self-blame (Beck and others, n.d.). After one faces trauma, his life will never come back as it was before all the coloured memories and the glamorous moments that he faced turn to grey. Traumatic experiences restrain the brain process, affect the traumatized's psyche, and shift his thinking from a normal to a dark and pessimist view. According to Balaev: "The more violent the trauma, the more subjects are likely to remember it, indeed to never forget it even if they want to". Only one experience is sufficient to erase all the good ones that the person once faced it creates even doubts about all his past experiences. Even though people adapt to changes in their lives easier but those related to trauma are never exposed to adaptation. Traumatic events are extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but rather because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptation to life (Herman, 1992). Trauma changes the person's personality besides his self-recognition, memory, social life, and

his relations with the outside world. In reality, his goals and intentions for the future are affected, in addition to his history and present. Freud argued that the patient fixated upon some very definite parts of their past are unable to free themselves from there and have, therefore, come to be estranged both from the present and the future (Freud, 1920).

1.6.2 Literary Trauma Theory:

Trauma theory is a modern term that did not appear until the 1970s. It was related to the study of survivors of wars and sexual assaults and everything related to traumatic incidents. Also, it is considered a method of treating literary texts that deal with trauma and its victims' topic, as it is concerned with both the theoretical and practical aspects of everything related to violence or cruel treatment that leads to trauma. Literature like psychoanalysis is interested in the complex relation (Caruth, 1996).

Trauma theorists shed light on how trauma is portrayed and demonstrated through the different fictional characters. Though every writer has a different style in writing, creating plots and escalating events, the common fact is that they always arrive at the same conclusion. Which is each time one of them publishes such a traumatic story, be it his personal experience or another one's, the traumatic experience of the protagonist is well explained, and in most cases, it represents the one of a whole culture. according to Balaev: "The protagonist functions to represent and convey an event that was experienced by a group of people, either historically based or prospectively imagined". Slavery for example is full culture's trauma, all Africans suffered from segregation and oppression, faced the same shock and shared psychological destruction. Different life conditions are pervasive and, when types of traumas produce different responses, such as dissociative amnesia or intrusive recall, which are a result of the social valuation of the traumatic experience, created in a particular culture (Laurence, 1996).

Indeed, trauma theory is a method for understanding (decoding) literary texts. It is fundamental in literature mainly in demonstrating history; through trauma theory, various cultures' experiences, such as those connected to racism, are portrayed. Even theorists and critics found it more efficient to deal with trauma through literature. In his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud also described the traumatic experience in those literary and historical texts testimony played a role. The latter is the interest's centre for theorists because it is the credible source of information about the traumatic experience. The witness is the

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survivor from that traumatic event and the only person who understands how serious it is; his testimony, oral or written, helps in understanding trauma in an organized manner, thereby, making it easier to discover solutions.

Just like testimony is the centre of interest for theorists, the place is also an intriguing element in trauma novels because it is the sense that readers and people from all cultures see through another culture than theirs and allows them to discover a new environment with new beliefs, traditions, history and even trauma, perhaps a cultural one which symbolizes a part of its history and that all members of the community share. The physical environment is often understood best as a symbol that represents cultural values and perceptions invested in a place (William, 1999).

In fiction, the responses to traumatic experiences relate to the past. As mentioned, once the protagonist faces trauma, all ensuing events in the future will link it to the past. What matters more for a traumatized is not his future but his past that he stays stuck in it; he can never move forward or forget his trauma, particularly when the latter remains in the same place where he took the chock or coincides with a familiar thing or place that made his mind return to the event. As stated by Balaev: "trauma is both a personal and cultural experience linked to place". In novels, traumatic experiences appear through flashbacks; the protagonist never stops narrating about his experience switching the story from narration to flashbacks and vice versa. Theorists assumed that trauma harms the person and ruins his identity, the reality that he used to see turned to become another. Novelists consider it a must that the traumatized reorder himself according to the new situation. Sometimes it works with certain characters or communities, and sometimes the character can't recover or look for a new self.

There are alternative approaches for analysis of trauma in literature, including trauma as intergenerational, transhistorical, unspeakable, unrepresentable and place theory (Muhammad, 2015). Trauma is often seen as a heritage that a generation leaves for the coming ones of its community and the one which is historically transmitted. This leads to the claim that trauma narratives can recreate and abreact the experience for those who were not there--the reader, listener, or witness can experience the historical experience firsthand (Felman and Laub, 1992).

1.7 Conclusion:

In conclusion, the first chapter of my thesis examines the historical background of the slavery era in the United States. By delving into the social and cultural context of this period, this chapter lays the foundation for a deeper understanding of the complexities and ramifications of slavery on individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole.

Moreover, it explores postmodernist techniques, magical realism, and stream of consciousness in literature, with a particular focus on their significance in African American literature. Through this analysis, we have uncovered the transformative power of these techniques in conveying the profound emotions and experiences of individuals affected by slavery.

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2.1 Introduction:

Throughout history, literature has served as a powerful tool for exploring and confronting the complexities of slavery. In the face of immense suffering, oppression, and the enduring legacy of this institution, writers have turned to the written word to give voice to the silenced, challenge prevailing narratives, and illuminate the profound emotional and psychological impact of slavery on individuals and communities. The written word becomes a vessel for remembrance, a conduit for conveying the psychological, emotional, and cultural complexities of slavery and its aftermath with grace and authority. One of the key strengths of literature lies in its ability to delve into the interior lives of characters and to explore the psychological impact of slavery. Through the power of storytelling, authors can convey the emotions, fears, hopes, and aspirations of those subjected to the dehumanizing system of slavery.

Within the realm of African American literature, few authors have achieved the profound impact and critical acclaim of Toni Morrison. As a writer deeply attuned to the complexities of the African American experience, Morrison's work stands as a testament to the power of literature in confronting the legacy of slavery. Among her remarkable body of work, the novel "Beloved" emerges as a powerful exemplar, inviting readers to explore the depths of trauma, memory, and the enduring effects of slavery. Therefore, the second chapter delves deep into the rich tapestry of "Beloved," examining Morrison's skillful narrative techniques, thematic explorations, and socio-cultural context.

2.2 Toni Morrison's life:

Toni Morrison was born in Lorain city Ohio, on February 18, 1931. She was the second child between her three other brothers and sister. Morrison's real name was Chloe Ardelia Wofford, but because of personal reasons, she later changed her name to Toni, and Morrison was her husband's last name. Her father, George, was a welder, and her mother, Ramah, was a domestic worker. Both were struggling financially and faced the nightmare of oppression and racism. Indeed, the Morrisons witnessed the insecurity and fear they got their house burned by the owner because of a late rent payment; Toni was only two at that time. They moved to Ohio, searching for a better life because of these challenges. Toni's past life, as well as her parents, had a significant impact on her.

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Since childhood, Morrison was keen on reading books, especially those by Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy and Gustave Flaubert. She felt responsible for holding the heritage that her parents, especially her father, instilled in her, love and pride of African American culture. Morrison was the most active among her brothers. She didn't know how to stop imagining and developing her skills, as she always wished to read a book that retold or resembled a bit of her life. If there is a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it (Morrison, 2003). Though the pain she had never stopped bleeding, she found its cure by herself.

Throughout her life, Morrison was strong, serious, and mainly productive woman and the lady of her time. About her friend Toni Morrison, Fran Lebowitz commented: "The thing very few people know about her is how much fun she was, because she wasn't that much fun with most people, people were afraid of her. And she wanted them to be." She always had that side of her own which no one else used to know except of her relatives. Her passion was writing in the voice of all oppressed black people and transferring the African Americans tragedies. She aimed at spreading freedom and teaches the audience to stay stick to these values where she mentioned in her book *Song of Solomon*: "When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else." This enthusiasm grew stronger as she aged because of her increased wisdom and determination to free African Americans.

Morrison grew up in an atmosphere that appreciates African American culture and sticks to its roots. Her father taught her as her sister and brothers to defend their origins and speak out loud to achieve the freedom of black people and regain their stolen dignity. Before even going to school, she used to read. During her academic courses, she was always the first in grade, as Linda Wagner-Martin writes: One of her middle-school teachers sent home a note to her mother which said, you and your husband would be remiss in your duties if you do not see to it that this child goes to college (Als 68). She studied at Howard University (1953) and then at Cornell University (1955). She started her professional career as a college professor, then an editor and by the time she became the icon novelist "Toni Morrison".

2.2.1 Toni Morrison's works:

Morrison was a skilful writer, one of her kind, who relied on and believed in the power of the pen. Her way of choosing the language, when to employ which word, and the depth of her imagination, in addition to the characterization in her novels, made readers thirsty for reading more of her works. She wrote plays, fiction, non-fiction, articles, and children's books, but her eleven novels—which reflected her emotions—were her most significant works. Her writings permitted her to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction (1988), besides being the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature.

African Americans, in particular held her up as a role model of strength and courage. She always wanted and succeeded at spreading the voice of all the black, voiceless people. In order to achieve her goal of obtaining liberation, she exposed the horrifying realities of slavery and racism and their consequences on entire societies through her writings. As A.J Verdelle mentioned in her famous book *Miss Chloe: This little girl from Lorain made books covering all our eras*. She focused on our positions under the low sky of our lives: first as coloured, which was originally an “emancipated” moniker; then as negro; then as Negro; then as black; then as Black; then as African American—which brings us, through self-definition, to now. Her books about us—about people living under unseemly, outrageous, and callous conditions—managed to capture our persistence and stamina and aliveness, regardless of how our country left our future for dead.

Toni Morrison became the source of inspiration for many scholars, thinkers, novelists and writers. Her wisdom gave her that presence that left everyone eager to meet her and read more of her novels though she was writing with a touch of fiction which she heritages again from her family. Morrison competes with all the writers of her time and proves her existence by expressing her thoughts and visions and revealing what fills her heart and soul. Toni Morrison's stories shaped me; and made me tell my own (Afua Hirsch, 2019). *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* and *Beloved* are three of her novels that resonated widely by touching the readers' feelings.

Song of Solomon was her third novel published in 1977. It was a fulfilling piece which she dealt with differently from the novels that preceded it. It narrates the story of a man, a male narrator who searches for his identity. In short, this is a full novel—rich, slow enough to impress itself upon us (Reynolds Price, 1977).

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Her fourth novel *Tar Baby* published in 1981, covers the conflicts of race and sex. *Tar Baby* is, of course, a black novel, a novel deeply perceptive of the black's desire to create a mythology of his own to replace the stereotypes and myths the white man has constructed for him (John Irving, 1981). A fact about Morrison's way of writing is that she seemed to neglect the finalities of her characters' lives, as John Irving had mentioned in *The New York Times*: "Toni Morrison is less interested in the final details of her characters lives than she is interested in demonstrating the vast discrepancies between the places black people end up and the places they seek".

Beloved, her fifth novel, was her masterpiece and earned her to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988 (only one year after publication). The book, also called the breath-taking novel, was published in 1987. It is a sweeping narrative, adapted from a true story that happened in the mid-1800s on a farm in Kentucky, of a black woman who ran away with her husband and kids, and killed her baby daughter to prevent her from slavery. It was written artistically, in sensuous language, mixing several techniques and using flashbacks to make people aware of the past and the hidden realities that white slave owners modified in their ways to justify slavery and how they falsified the African Americans hurtful history. "Out of what she has called a survivalist intention to forget certain things' Toni Morrison has created a frightening, beautiful and intensely exciting novel about America and its past. I am not able to think of a better one "(Jane Miller, 1987). *Beloved* is one of the most beloved pieces in the world of literature. Even Toni Morrison herself repeated the sentence "; "It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison,1987, p.274) in her novel several times as if she was illuminating the worthiness of the story.

2.3 Overview of *Beloved* the Novel:

"It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison, 324). Toni Morrison's "*Beloved*" is a haunting and powerful book that explores the lasting impact of slavery on African Americans and their communities. The novel takes place in post-Civil War Ohio (1987), but it is deeply rooted in the history of slavery and its aftermath. Through the story of Sethe and her family, Morrison illuminates the trauma, violence, and loss that were an integral part of the experience of slavery in the United States. Through the different voices and memories of the book, including that of Sethe's mother, a survivor of the infamous slave-ship crossing, we experience American slavery as it was lived by those who were its objects of exchange, both at its best—which wasn't very good—and at its worst, which was as bad as can be imagined.

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(Atwood, 1987) *Beloved* is a novel that refuses to reduce the experience of slavery to a simple narrative of victimhood and suffering. Instead, it offers a complex and nuanced portrayal of the ways in which individuals and communities are able to resist and survive in the face of oppression (Quayson, 2004).

Sethe, the protagonist of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, a former slave who escaped when she was pregnant to Ohio from Sweet Home, which was not sweet after all, it is there where she and the other characters survived slavery, especially after the arrival of the Schoolteacher. The latter embodies the worst of slavery; he used the slaves' bodies for experimentation and utilized all sorts of violence. In Ohio, her three children Denver, Howard and Buglar were waiting for her with their grandmother Baby Suggs. Unfortunately, the story has to take another path because even if she managed to arrive to her family, she had to kill her baby daughter that she was pregnant of when she escaped to save her from white people's atrocity. Sethe's act of killing her daughter was an act of desperation and love. She believed it was better for her daughter to be dead than to live a life of slavery. This act, however, could release the baby, but its memory haunts Sethe her entire life.

After arriving in Ohio, Sethe resided with her mother-in-law Baby Suggs and her children - Denver, Howard, and Buglar. However, Sethe faced societal rejection due to her past actions involving her baby, which were deemed unacceptable by people. Following this, her two boys could not accept the ghost's presence, so they ran away, and Baby Suggs passed away, "The grandmother Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar had run away by the time they were thirteen years old... Neither boy wanted to see more" (Morrison, 1987, p.3). Working as a cook, Sethe lived with her daughter Denver, who remained by her side even after the departure of her other children. Consequently, Denver was the sole companion of her mother. Later on, Paul D. Garner, a former slave who had lived with Sethe in Sweet Home, suddenly reappeared one day. Being a familiar acquaintance, Paul D. was well-versed with the difficulties Sethe had faced during her time in slavery; she found herself comfortable enough to share her past experiences with him. However, Denver was not keen on having Paul D. reside with them at home. But this did not last; Paul D. managed to kick the ghost outside the house, and he could also create a good relationship with Denver. She appreciates him, after all.

One day, an unusual young woman introduced herself as Beloved and arrived in their yard. She had a croaky voice and ate like a child, in addition to her unsteady gait. Sethe let

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Beloved live with them at home since she believed Denver needed company. That is true since Denver found satisfaction in caring for her and having her companionship. Sethe also experienced memories of her departed daughter and assumed Beloved was her infant reincarnation. Beloved is always craving Sethe's stories and insists on hearing them repeatedly. By constantly demanding "tell me, tell me" she drains Sethe of her life and memories. To appease the latter, Sethe sacrifices her job and loses her sense of judgment, yet Beloved remains unsatisfied. Their situation deteriorates quickly, and Denver realizes that it is her responsibility to leave the house and seek help. Despite her fear of the outside world, Denver overcomes it and secures a job. Therefore, news spreads quickly about Sethe's torment by her deceased daughter, leading the black women in Cincinnati to take action and exorcise the ghost.

Upon the ghost's departure, Sethe is overwhelmed with sorrow as she feels the loss of her child once more, resulting in her becoming a shattered individual. Denver successfully locates Paul D., who returns to Sethe and provides care and support to aid in the healing of her traumatized soul. All three of them are presented with a chance to move forward from their past and commence a new chapter by concentrating on the future. "So they forgot her. Like an unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep" (Morrison, 1987, p.324).

Overall, in portraying the capacity of the past to haunt individual and community life in the present, *Beloved* brings into daylight the "ghosts" that are harbored by memory and that hold their "hosts" in thrall, tyrannically dictating thought, emotion, and action (Lawrence, 1991). The house they live in is described as having a "bluish cast" and a "spiteful" presence that permeates the atmosphere. But, despite its dilapidated appearance, the house is a place of refuge for Sethe and her family, as it represents a haven from the outside world. However, the ghost of Sethe's daughter becomes increasingly spirituous throughout the novel, and the house becomes a place of terror and isolation. Moreover, Beloved's presence in Sethe's life creates a rift between her and the community around her, and her attempts to connect with Beloved become increasingly desperate and destructive. On the other side, the use of flashbacks reveals Sethe's past, and readers see the horrors she experienced as a slave. She got whipped, raped, and forced to give birth in nature. Sethe's trauma continues to shape her life, even after escaping "Sweet Home" where everything happened, and her attempts to build a new life for herself and her family are constantly threatened by the past. Her relationships with her daughter Denver, her lover Paul D, and the community around her are all shaped by her history as a slave and her ongoing struggle to come to terms with her past.

2.3.1 Characters and Relationships:

Toni Morrison's "Beloved" is a novel that explores the complexities of relationships in the aftermath of slavery. One of the central relationships in the story is the bond between Sethe and her daughter Denver. In the beginning, Sethe appears to be overprotective of Denver, the only one of her children who remains with her at 124 Bluestone Road. Sethe's desire to keep Denver close is rooted in her fear of losing another child, as she has already lost two sons and a daughter. Denver, in turn, is shown to be somewhat isolated and socially stunted because of her sheltered upbringing. She is utterly reliant on her mother and has little experience interacting with people outside their home. Denver's isolation is compounded by the fact that the community shuns Sethe and her family because of the mysterious and disturbing events that have occurred at 124 Bluestone Road. However, as the novel progresses, Denver begins to assert her independence and distance herself from Sethe's overbearing influence. That is partly due to the arrival of Beloved, who becomes Denver's companion and confidant. Beloved's presence allows Denver to explore the outside world and to develop a sense of identity and agency separate from her mother. Sethe's relationship with Denver also evolves over the course of the novel. Sethe initially struggles to understand Denver's desire for independence and is threatened by her daughter's growing autonomy. However, as Sethe begins to confront her own trauma and take responsibility for her actions, she becomes more supportive of Denver's desire to become independent and start her own life. This growth allows Sethe to begin to heal from her own trauma and to connect more deeply with her daughter.

Denver's relationship with Beloved is also significant. Their relationship is complex and fraught with tension. Denver draws to Beloved out of a sense of loneliness and a desire for companionship, but their relationship quickly becomes strained as Beloved's true nature emerges. At first, Denver is excited by the arrival of Beloved, seeing her as a potential friend and companion in her isolated and lonely existence. "Denver had worried herself sick trying to think of a way to get Beloved to share her room" (Morrison, 1997, p.79). But as Beloved's true nature becomes apparent, the relationship between Denver and Beloved becomes increasingly fraught with tension and conflict. Beloved's demands for attention and affection become increasingly overwhelming, causing Denver to become jealous and resentful of her presence. Despite the issues and disagreements that occurred between Denver and Beloved, their relationship ultimately serves as a powerful reminder of how trauma can shape our relationships with others. Denver's desire for companionship and connection reflects a deep-

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seated need for love and belonging, one that has been denied to her through years of isolation and trauma. Beloved, for her part, represents the haunting and lingering effects of slavery, a ghostly presence that refuses to be forgotten or erased.

Another complex relationship in the story is this between Sethe and Beloved. It reflects the profound psychological and emotional scars left by the trauma of slavery. Sethe is Beloved's mother, but their relationship is not one of the traditional parent-child bonds. Instead, it is one of a mother haunted by the memory of a child she murdered and the ghost of that child, who has returned to her in physical form. At first, Sethe is overwhelmed and consumed by her guilt over the murder of Beloved, seeing her daughter's ghostly presence as a punishment for her actions. She cannot fully accept the reality of Beloved's physical form, instead seeing her as a spectral presence haunting her every move. Beloved, for her part, is consumed by her desires and needs, demanding Sethe's attention and affection at all times and becoming increasingly possessive and demanding as the novel progresses.

One more vital relationship is that between Sethe and Paul D, their relationship is one of deep love and compassion but also one of grief, trauma, and loss. Sethe and Paul D are both former slaves who endured severe trauma and brutality in their earlier years, and their shared experiences define their relationship. These traumas create a sense of distance and tension between them as they struggle to come to terms with their shared past. At the same time, Sethe and Paul D's relationship characterizes a deep sense of mutual understanding and respect. They become attached to each other as survivors of the same trauma, and their shared experiences allow them to connect on an advanced level. They understand each other's pain and loss in a way that others cannot, forming an intense bond. Their bond provides both of them with deep comfort and healing. They find solace in each other's company, and their connection serves as a reminder of the power of love and human connection in the face of overwhelming trauma and pain. The relationships between Sethe, Paul D, and Beloved are deeply intertwined, and Morrison uses these connections to explore the complexities of black identity, memory, and trauma; through these relationships, she shows how the legacy of slavery continues to shape the lives of black Americans today (Morgan, 2002).

Other characters in the novel, such as Baby Suggs, Halle, and Stamp Paid, serve to deepen our understanding of the complex web of relationships and experiences that shape the lives of African Americans in the aftermath of slavery. Through their interactions and experiences, Morrison highlights the ongoing need for healing and reconciliation in the face

of overwhelming pain and loss, underscoring the importance of community and connection in the face of trauma.

2.3.2 Themes in *Beloved*

Beloved is written in an anti-minimalist prose that is by turns rich, graceful, eccentric, rough, lyrical, sinuous, colloquial and very much to the point (Atwood, 1987). *Beloved* is a masterpiece of American literature that challenges readers to confront the difficult truths of slavery and its aftermath. Through its exploration of the themes of memory, trauma, and identity, Morrison offers a powerful vision of hope and redemption (Sanders, 1994). One of the most central themes of the novel is the lasting impact of slavery on the lives and identities of African Americans. Through its vivid portrayal of the experiences of the characters, the novel reveals the profound psychological and emotional toll that slavery has taken on generations of African Americans, and emphasizes the urgent need for acknowledgement and reparations. "*Beloved*" illustrates the ways in which slavery leaves lasting scars on individuals and communities. It highlights the ongoing struggle for freedom and self-determination that continues long after the physical chains of slavery have been broken.

Another important theme of "*Beloved*" is trauma, and the ways in which it can be passed down through generations. The novel emphasizes the deep psychological wounds inflicted by slavery, and the ways in which these traumas continue to shape the lives and identities of the characters long after they have escaped bondage. Through its portrayal of the character of *Beloved*, the novel also explores the ways in which repressed traumas can resurface in unexpected and disruptive ways, and the challenges of confronting and healing from these wounds. Even though the novel shows how trauma can shape and define individuals and communities, but it also offers a glimmer of hope that healing and transformation are possible.

Memory is another central theme of "*Beloved*," with the novel emphasizing the power and importance of personal and collective memory in the processes of healing and reconciliation. The characters in the novel struggle with the weight of their memories of slavery, and the novel emphasizes the importance of acknowledging and confronting these memories to move forward. The story explores the power of collective memory and how the shared history of slavery continues to shape the identity and culture of African Americans. It also explores how memory is distorted and fragmented by trauma. The characters in

"Beloved" often struggle to remember their pasts; their memories are often fragmented and incomplete; this is particularly true for Paul D, a former slave who escaped to Ohio. Paul D experiences flashbacks and nightmares related to his time in slavery, but he struggles to piece together a coherent narrative of his past. *Beloved* is a novel that demands to be read not just for its insights into history but for its power as a work of art (Kakutani, 1987).

2.4 Magical Realism in *Beloved*:

To confront the inhumanity of slavery, present a new interpretation of the traditional history of white slave-owners, and offer an alternative version from the perspective of the slaves, *Beloved* uses the magical realism style. The book illustrates the communal experiences of all slaves and their battle for freedom, including those who perished through the "Middle Passage" on slave ships, rather than focusing solely on one character.

Morrison utilizes the technique of magical realism by creating a character named *Beloved*, who is a ghost reflecting the black community's shared experiences. *Beloved* enables Sethe and other previously enslaved folks to tell their tale and develop their version of history by pushing them to recall their experiences. For instance, when Denver asks *Beloved* about the place she is coming from, she answers that she was in "Dark" and that place is "Hot, nothing to breathe down there and no room to move in... A lot of people is down there. Some is dead" (Morrison, 1987, p.88) The depiction given is reminiscent of the conditions aboard a typical slave ship during the Middle Passage. African individuals were crowded below decks in small, cramped spaces where they could not stand upright. The stifling heat and unpleasant odors made breathing difficult. The conditions were truly deplorable, with men, women, and children squeezed into every possible space without adequate provisions for sustenance or air. To make matters worse, they were given insufficient amounts of water.

The magical realist narrative in *Beloved* is unconventional and defiant because it challenges the notion that reality is fixed, which creates ambiguity in the world beyond the novel, despite the realistic setting. In *Beloved*, the boundaries between the spiritual and physical worlds, the living and the dead, and the past and present are all hazy. The use of this technique is apparent from the very first sentence, which reads: "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom" (Morrison, 1987, p.3). The use of magical realism in this instance is twofold: it serves to personify the house and imbue it with a distinct personality; it also sets the tone for the novel's exploration of trauma and the supernatural. Morrison depicts 124 as having a malicious and spiteful disposition, which manifests in various ways, such as creaking floors,

doors slamming shut on their own, and ghostly apparitions appearing to the characters “a perfunctory battle against the outrageous behaviour of that place; against turned-over slop jars, smacks on the behind, and gusts of sour air. For they understood the source of the outrage as well as they knew the source of light” (Morrison, 1987, p.5).

2.4.2 The Ghostly Presence in Beloved

The ghost in Toni Morrison's "Beloved" is a complex and powerful element of the novel. The ghostly presence of Beloved represents the past that Sethe cannot escape, and the burden of memory that she must confront in order to move forward. (Tate, 1989). The ghost is named Beloved, and she is the embodiment of the traumatic experiences of slavery that continue to haunt the characters in the present. She is a metaphor for the psychological wounds of slavery that have not healed and that continue to have an impact on individuals and society as a whole.

Beloved's appearance is a powerful and haunting symbol of the legacy of slavery, and Morrison's masterful storytelling brings this painful history to life in a way that is both beautiful and devastating (The New Yorker, 2019). Throughout the novel, the characters sense the presence of Beloved in various ways. First, she haunted the house without being seen, and then Paul D arrived and liberated the house from her. Then she reappears as a young woman who seems to have a strong affinity for Sethe and her past; her arrival disrupts the fragile stability that Sethe and her family have established after escaping slavery. Beloved's presence also triggers memories and flashbacks of the traumatic experiences that Sethe and the other characters have endured, and she seems to embody the pain and suffering of all those who were slaves. One of the key ways in which the ghostly presence of Beloved manifests in the novel is through the application of magical realism. The story blurs the border between reality and fiction, creating a surreal setting where the protagonists encounter their past selves. For example, when Beloved first appears, she is described as having a strange, otherworldly presence, and her arrival comes with a sudden drop in temperature and an eerie stillness in the air.

Some writers may argue that Beloved is a typical individual. However, several indications and evidence throughout the narrative suggest that she is, in fact, a ghost or a supernatural entity. One of the elementary pieces of evidence indicating that Beloved is a ghost is her sudden appearance in Sethe's life. When she first arrives, she appears to have materialized out of nowhere. Sethe and her family can't infer where she came from or how she got there, suggesting that she is not a typical person. Moreover, when Paul D tried to figure

out who she was and how she arrived at their house, she got mad at him. This sudden appearance is reminiscent of traditional ghost stories, where spirits appear suddenly and without explanation. Another clue that suggests Beloved is a ghost is her unusual behaviour. She has an insatiable appetite, eats and drinks excessively. "The woman gulped water from a speckled tin cup and held it out for more; four times Denver filled it, and four times the woman drank as though she had crossed a desert" (Morrison, 1987, p.62). In addition, she confirms that she is the incarnation of the baby's ghost when she says to Denver: "In the dark my name is Beloved ... I'm small in that place" (Morrison, 1987, p.88)

There are several hints throughout the novel that suggest that Beloved is connected to Sethe's past and the traumatic events that have shaped her life. For example, Beloved is able to recount stories from Sethe's past and describe events that she could not have witnessed. For instance, when she asked about Sethe's diamonds taking into consideration that she was not wearing them. "How did she know?" (Morrison, 1987, p.75) She is also able to evoke memories and emotions in Sethe and Paul D that are associated with the trauma of slavery and the loss of loved ones. These connections suggest that Beloved is not just a random spirit or ghost, but rather a manifestation of the unresolved pain and trauma that Sethe carries with her.

As the haunting presence of Beloved becomes more and more tangible, the true nature of her existence slowly reveals itself. One such hint can be found in a disturbing incident involving Sethe, the protagonist, and Baby Suggs' rock. Sethe, still reeling from the emotional impact of Paul D's revelation about Halle, finds refuge in the familiar environs of the rock, seeking solace in her thoughts. However, her moment of introspection is suddenly interrupted when she begins to choke, as if someone or something is trying to suffocate her. This violent attack on Sethe's life is witnessed by Denver, her daughter, who becomes increasingly suspicious of the enigmatic Beloved. In this moment, the reader is left with a lingering feeling of unease and foreboding, as it becomes clear that the ghostly presence of Beloved may have far more sinister intentions than initially thought.

2.5 Echoes of Pain and Resilience in Beloved:

Within the depths of the reader's mind, memories swirl and collide, creating a stream of consciousness that transports them back to the haunting world depicted in "Beloved." He is transported to Sweet Home, where the air is thick with sweat and the scent of the earth. Sethe is seen, her face etched with the marks of suffering, her eyes haunted by the unspeakable horrors of her past. She is a woman whose every step is weighed down by the heavy chains of

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slavery. *Beloved*, she my daughter, she mine (Morrison, 1987, p.200) The echoing voice of Sethe resounds in their mind, expressing her love and desperation, while her transformation from a fugitive slave to a tormented mother consumed by guilt weighs heavily on her thoughts. The sacrifices she made and the unimaginable choices forced upon her seep into her consciousness like a relentless ache.

The book breathes life into thoughts, immersing in the complex web of emotions and memories that the characters navigate. It is a story of love, loss, and the insidious legacy of slavery. As one delves into the depths of this literary treasure, fragments of the book emerge, blending with their musings. *124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom* (Morrison, 1987, p.3). These words resonate, a haunting introduction to the house at 124 Bluestone Road, a place haunted by the specter of Sethe's past, where the scars of slavery linger like a festering wound. The brutality and cruelty of that dark history infect every page, infusing the stream of consciousness with anguish and outrage.

The words of Morrison's prose echo in the mind, their rhythm a haunting melody. The pain and longing reverberate through the pages, intertwining with Sethe, Denver, and Beloved herself. The weight of their stories felt like burdens carried by a river threatening to overflow. The poetic and evocative prose captures the psychological turmoil experienced by each character. Denver, haunted by the ghostly presence of Beloved, feels the pull of her family's past. The weight of history threatens to engulf her, and one can't help but feel the urgency and vulnerability that resonates from her struggles.

The ghostly figure of Beloved, a specter from Sethe's past, haunts the present and demands attention. She is a reminder of the unspeakable act that Sethe committed, a mother driven to unthinkable depths of desperation to save her child from the horrors of slavery. Beloved's presence is a shroud of guilt, a relentless force that pulls Sethe deeper into the depths of her fractured psyche. Beloved, a spectral figure, possesses an enigmatic allure; her presence is both beguiling and unsettling, a catalyst for painful memories. As she weaves her spell, the reader becomes entangled in the complexity of her existence, questioning her purpose and the depths of her impact on Sethe and those around her.

The narrative shifts, and the reader find himself immersed in the memories of Sethe's journey from slavery to freedom. The brutality and degradation inflicted upon her and her fellow slaves etched into his mind. The passage of time blurs as the stories of past and present

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merge, creating a kaleidoscope of emotions. Love and violence, joy and pain, hope and despair blend together, forming a tapestry of human experience that is both beautiful and devastating.

Freeing yourself was one thing, claiming ownership of that freed self was another (Morrison, 1987, p.95) Paul D's words ripple through consciousness, resonating with the novel's themes. The scars of slavery go beyond physical chains; they penetrate the very essence of identity. The struggle to reclaim one's self, to find a sense of agency and belonging, reverberates within the reader as he contemplates the profound impact of the book's exploration of selfhood and liberation

The bond between Sethe and her daughter Denver is witnessed, forged through the shared traumas they have endured. Their love is a lifeline, a beacon of light in a world that seeks to snuff out their spirits. Together, they navigate the complexities of their history, confronting the ghosts that linger in their midst. As the stream of consciousness flows, the reader is reminded of the power of Morrison's words. Her prose is an invocation of memory, a call to confront the painful truths that lie buried within the collective consciousness. Through her writing, she gives voice to the silenced, illuminating the darkness of history with a relentless and unflinching gaze.

By immersing themselves in the stream of consciousness inspired by "Beloved," one traverses the depths of the human experience. The pain, the love, the horrors, and the hope all converge, intertwining the lives of the characters with their own thoughts. Indeed, "Beloved" is a testament to the indomitable human spirit. It is a story of resilience and survival, a reminder that the wounds of the past cannot be ignored or forgotten.

2.6 Slavery and Oppression in Beloved:

Beloved is a novel that portrays the brutal reality of slavery and its lasting impact on individuals and communities. Morrison uses vivid imagery and stark realism to depict the violence, degradation, and inhumanity of slavery. The plantation in "Beloved" appears as a site of extreme violence, trauma, and dehumanization; a place where black people are treated as property rather than human beings and where their lives and bodies are subject to the arbitrary whims of their white owners. In particular, the plantation where Sethe and Paul D were enslaved, known as Sweet Home, serves as a place where physical violence and psychological abuse are routine. The slaves at Sweet Home are subject to the brutal whims of

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their white owners, who can beat, rape, or kill them at will. The white owners justify their actions by arguing that black people are not fully human and therefore do not deserve the same rights and protections as white people.

The rule of white people is a system of violence and oppression that dehumanizes black people and justifies their exploitation and abuse. The novel portrays the white characters as highly invested in maintaining their power and privilege. They use violence and intimidation to control the lives and bodies of the black characters. For that portrayal, Morrison creates the Schoolteacher's role, one of the primary antagonists in her story *Beloved*. He is a white slaveowner who represents the oppressive system of slavery and the violence and dehumanization that it perpetuates. Moreover, Schoolteacher portrays a cruel and sadistic figure who demonstrates a keen interest in maintaining the social order of slavery and the power it affords him, he has no mercy on black people, all that matter for him is to do his experimentations since he sees black people as animals and not humans. In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher is clearly the primary representative and agent of the system of white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy in the era of slavery. His interpellations of Sethe, Paul D, Sixo, and Halle lead to rebellion, madness, and death (Keizer, 1999)

The revelation that Paul D has an iron bit covering his mouth is one of the most striking examples of violence in the story, as it vividly represents the cruelty and dehumanization of slavery. "How offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it" (Morrison, 1987, p.85). The bit serves as a powerful symbol of how white slave owners sought to exert total control over their slaves, including their speech and communication with one another. The act of placing a bit in Paul D's mouth not only inflicts physical harm but also strips him of his voice and agency. This scene effectively illustrates how slavery served to strip enslaved people of their humanity, rendering them mere objects to be manipulated and controlled.

Another instance of the violence of slavery is Baby Suggs' experience. It is a powerful and heart-breaking example of the devastating impact of this institution on individuals and families. Born slave herself, Baby Suggs likely experienced a lifetime of trauma and oppression, including physical abuse, forced labour, and the constant fear of being sold or separated from her loved ones. Baby Suggs felt slavery's pain when her family split up by the slave trade. Forced to watch as her husband and children got sold to different slave owners, she was left alone and powerless in a world that offered little hope or opportunity for escape.

The loss of her family members was not only emotionally devastating, but it also meant that she had lost her primary sources of support and love, leaving her with few reasons to keep fighting against the overwhelming forces of slavery and oppression.

2.6.1 Sethe's Experience with Slavery:

Sethe's experience with slavery is a testament to the unimaginable horrors enslaved people endured during this time in American history. As a young woman, Sethe found herself living in the brutal world of Sweet Home. One day, Schoolteacher and his nephews whipped her, raped her, and sucked her milk. In a later occurrence, it is revealed that Sethe had confided in Mrs. Garner about a traumatic incident; when Schoolteacher finds out, he commands his nephews to brutally whip the weak woman. The merciless whipping causes deep lacerations on Sethe's back, opening up her flesh and causing immense physical and emotional pain. A tree trunk and branches appear on her back due to the abundance of scars. Amy Denver, a young white girl who aided Sethe during her escape, refers to the scarred back as a chokecherry tree. "It's a tree Lu. A chokecherry tree" (Morrison, 1987, p.93).

Despite the severity of her wounds, Sethe does not focus on the physical pain when discussing her scars with Paul D. Rather, the theft of her milk, a symbol of motherhood and the bond between mother and child, is what truly traumatized her. Sethe was whipped while pregnant, causing her to produce milk that was taken from her without her consent. This event highlights the dehumanization and exploitation inherent in slavery, reducing Sethe to a mere source of milk rather than a human being with agency and autonomy. "They beat you and you were pregnant? ... And they took my milk!" (Morrison, 1987, p.20). Sethe refers to the impact of having her milk taken multiple times in the novel. The robbing of Sethe's milk, which is so often evoked in the narrative and referred to as what she owns and as her children's very life, is thus the materialization of the fundamental perversity of the institution which kills the slaves' selves by severing the bonds between mother and child (Bonnet, 1997).

Sethe's experience with slavery did not end when she escaped Sweet Home. Years later, when she was discovered by Schoolteacher and his nephews, Sethe again faced the possibility of returning to the plantation and the horrors that awaited her there. However, instead of submitting to their control, she tried to kill her kids to save them. When she was caught and arrested, Sethe made yet another bold choice: she opted to go to jail rather than risk being returned to Sweet Home. This decision is a testament to the deep-seated trauma and fear that

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had been instilled in her as a result of her experiences with slavery. For Sethe, the idea of returning to the plantation was too terrifying to bear, and she would rather face the uncertainty and dangers of jail than submit to the power of her oppressors. “Any life but not that one. I went to jail instead.” (Morrison 1987, p.50).

Sethe's experience with slavery is a harrowing reminder of the ongoing legacy of violence and trauma that continues to impact black individuals and communities in America. Her decision to risk her life to escape from Sweet Home, and her subsequent choice to go to jail rather than return to the plantation, are powerful acts of resistance against a system of oppression that sought to strip her of her humanity and reduce her to a mere object to be controlled and manipulated. Despite the many challenges she faced along the way, Sethe's story is a testament to the resilience and determination of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable horror.

2.7 Psychoanalytical Approach to Sethe:

The novel's heroine, Sethe, is one of the complex characters in literature that has aroused the interest of many critics and theorists. Her conflicted personality, which led her to kill her infant daughter to protect her, led to an in-depth study of her psychology. Logic says the opposite of what she did, as killing is not a protection but an end to the child's existence from the ground up and depriving her of life. Sethe's psychology has been studied according to the trauma theory of Cathy Caruth and Freud's theory of personality.

As mentioned earlier, Caruth's theory indicates that trauma is that thing which continues to haunt the survivor in the form of repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena. Indeed, the crucial part of the novel takes place in the form of flashbacks, which keeps the traumatic past of Sethe always mentioned. Sethe's personality is considered unstable because the traumatic experience of slavery that she faced led to a clash occurrence between the three parts of her psyche, which are her Id, ego and superego, according to Freud's theory.

Her suffering started in childhood when she moved to Sweet Home. She began to realize the cruel treatment of white masters towards black people. When growing up, she endured mistreatment by the Schoolteacher and his nephews who stole her milk; though stealing milk might seem like a normal thing which can be compensated for her, it was the wound that will never recover when she tells Paul D: “Those boys came in there and took my milk...Held me down and took it” (Morrison, 1987, p.16). The fact of seeing her mother suspended, her

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husband leaving after losing his mind when he saw her raped left another wound on her psyche. It was only the beginning for her, since slavery was a lengthy journey with unforeseen twists and turns. In her pursuit to safeguard her three children and escape, she gave birth to her baby. However, life took an unpredicted turn, veering away from her intended path. In a desperate attempt to shield herself from further anguish, she made the heart-wrenching decision to end her newborn's life, believing it to be the only means of evading similar tragedies. Traumatic experience for Caruth, is an enigma of the otherness; she could not know all features of slavery and hidden awfulness nor forget what she knew so far; therefore, she killed her daughter for fear of witnessing more. The fact of killing her baby and saying: it was me doing it (Morrison, 1987, p.162) was shocking for other people because it was unexpected, but psychologically speaking, as mentioned by Tayson: "our present behaviour is the direct result of our past experiences". Sethe's behavior was a reaction to and a result of everything she encountered throughout her life, from childhood to adulthood. Her psyche bore the heavy burden of relentless haunting from her tormented past, an ongoing menace that constantly jeopardized her well-being. Consequently, her role as a troubled mother was not a conscious choice but a consequence of the traumatic ordeals that compelled her to lose control.

Interpreting Sethe's psychological state through a Freudian perspective, her shattered sense of self was the result of an "unconscious repression." Revisiting Freud's theory, the act of killing her daughter was a manifestation of her id's command, compelling her to harm her infant and assault her other children. Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a bloodsoaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other (Morrison, 1987, p.149).

Sethe endured a prolonged period of loneliness and acknowledged her isolated state, as expressed by the quote, "She stayed lonely for a long time and admitted the situation. Nobody but nobody visited that house" (Morrison, 1987, p.184). Following those twenty-eight fleeting days of happiness, she faced eighteen years of disapproval and solitude (Morrison, 1987, p.173). The prolonged isolation from social interactions triggered a stirring of consciousness within her, driven by a powerful sense of guilt. Within a part of her superego, she experienced her baby's blood metaphorically "soaked into her fingers like oil" (Morrison, 1987, p.5). Sethe became captivated by her past, unable to envision the future. Her mind, burdened by the weight of her history and yearning for more, left no space for imagination or the ability to plan for the following day (Morrison, 1987, p.70). Beloved, the ghostly presence, embodied

Sethe's overwhelming guilt, which she sought desperately to reclaim. She referred to her as "my daughter, she mine... See, she comes back to me of her own free will, and I don't have to explain a thing" (Morrison, 1987, p.200). For the people around her, she always sought ways to convince them of her reasons and comfort herself; as previously mentioned, killing is not protection; she justified it with love. Due to her intense affection for her daughter, she took the drastic step of ending her life to safeguard her. Her failure to justify herself led her back to the beginning, when she pointed out the following: "What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean even if I don't think it, even if I die the picture of what I did, or knew or saw is still out there, right in the place where it happened" (Morrison, 1987, p.36).

Sethe's state remained unpleasant, and when her daughter's boss went to give her money, she remembered the traumatic situation of the schoolteacher tacking her children, she tried to kill him, but her surroundings intervened. Beloved disappeared as a sign of satisfying Sethe's ego-ideal and self-reward of being a good mother who punished the criminal but not the victim, this time; she remained her children but not the master, as Freud (1923) stated, "social feelings rest on identifications with other people, on the basis of having the same ego ideal." Sethe believed that her actions were in alignment with the collective sentiments of her community, allowing her to relive and pass on her trauma.

2.8 Psychoanalytical Approach to Other Characters:

If you go there – you who never was there – if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you (Morrison, 1987, p.18). Sethe was not the only victim of Beloved's evil at 124 Bluestone Road. Denver and Paul D also had their share of the moral punishment of the return of Beloved's ghost, which had a crucial impact on their psyche.

2.8.1 Psychoanalytical Approach on Denver:

Denver's character is a shy and fragile young woman whose mother neglects her in many ways, causing her a sad childhood. As a result of her past, particularly the traumatic events surrounding her birth and the subsequent murder of her sister by her mother, Sethe. The latter's hardships in life were the major factors that led her to be unable to raise her children properly, especially Denver, her youngest daughter. Seems to me she's of a different mind (Morrison, 1987, p.41).

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Throughout the novel, Denver undergoes a transformation as she confronts her past and ventures beyond her isolated world. She yearns for independence and an identity separate from her family's traumatic history. Denver's growing sense of self leads her to connect with the community and establish her own identity, breaking free from the constraints of her mother's experiences. This journey involves confronting her fears and forging her own path. "She is a friend of my mind. She gathers me, man. The pieces I am, she gathers them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind" (Morrison, 1987, p.272)

The mother-child relationship is considered significant in shaping individual's psyche. However, Sethe never spoke to her child about her past or feelings, she cut Denver out completely. (Morrison, 1987, p.240). Her relationship with her mother, Sethe, is complex. On the one hand, she depends on Sethe for her sense of security and survival. On the other hand, she experiences conflicts and ambivalence regarding her mother's past actions that involve infanticide. She feels both love and abandonment towards her mother. Thus, her relationship with her mother can be seen through the lens of the oedipal complex, as Denver competes with Paul D, a young man who begins to show interest in Sethe. Her fear of losing her mother's attention and affection leads her to take actions that attempt to secure her place in Sethe's life.

Denver's character transforms the novel as she confronts her past and ventures outside her isolated world. She yearns for independence and a sense of self separate from the traumatic history of her family. Denver's growing sense of self leads her to connect with the community and establish her own identity beyond the confines of her mother's experiences, riding a journey that involves confronting her fears and forging her path.

She is a friend of my mind. She gathers me, man. The pieces I am, she gathers them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind

(Morrison, 1987, p.272)

She yearned for companionship, validation, a desire for independence, and self-discovery. Through her connection with Beloved, Denver seeks to reclaim her fragmented identity and find solace in a shared bond.

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Further, Denver is deeply affected by the repressed memories and traumas of her family's past. She carries the weight of these memories, influencing her psychological landscape. She confronts her family's history and the emotional burden it places on her.

"Working dough. Working, working dough. Nothing better than that to start the day's serious work of beating back the past" (Morrison, 1987, p.73). The act of "beating back the past" symbolizes Denver's struggle to confront and suppress painful memories. The repetitive nature of "working dough" represents her attempt to create order and stability in her life, countering the chaos and trauma inherited from her family.

Though her trip was not that easy, and she had no reasonable mother to rely on, she ended up growing into a strong independent woman, calling for help from community members to rescue her mother from her dark conscious. Denver knew it was on her. She would have to leave the yard; step off the edge of the world, leave the two behind and go ask somebody for help (Morrison, 1987, p.243).

2.8.2 Psychoanalytical Theory to Paul D:

Freudian psychoanalytic theory suggests that individuals have unconscious conflicts that arise from repressed desires or traumatic experiences. In the case of Paul D, his traumatic past as a former slave and his experiences at Sweet Home are significant factors that shape his behavior. His inability to fully confront and process these experiences can lead to psychological conflicts.

Paul D's experience as a slave, particularly the emasculating "biting the bit" incident, represents a deeply traumatic event in his past. Repression played a role in his attempts to forget or suppress these painful memories. However, these repressed memories resurface throughout the novel, affecting his relationships and emotional well-being. He wants to put his story next to hers (Morrison, 1987, p.273)

He wanted to put his story next to hers. The two of them walking on the road that led from nowhere to nowhere. The shape of that black tin tobacco box was frightening because it was not a box to him, it was a coffin. And he had refused to be buried in it. Refused to be taken alive in the tobacco tin lodged in his chest. He wanted a resting place in the warmth of a woman's hips, in the shade of a tree, on a porch step where men dozed in hammocks.

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Anyplace but where that tin could open and close on him like a prison door.
(Morrison, 1987)

Paul D recalls his traumatic experiences as a slave when he reflects on the "tobacco tin lodged in his chest," representing emotional and psychological burden he carries. This imagery suggests that Paul D has repressed emotions and memories, which aligns with Freud's concept of the unconscious mind. The tobacco tin symbolizes the containment of his traumatic past, which affects his present actions and relationships. His psyche is demonstrated in another situation, when he encounters with the character Beloved. Beloved is the manifestation of the repressed memories of Sethe's deceased daughter. Her arrival disrupts Paul D's emotional equilibrium, triggering his vulnerability and surfacing his own repressed memories. This event can be interpreted as a representation of the return of the repressed.

He saw her face as she saw his and hers changed. The eyes widened, the mouth fell, the shoulders turned down and inward. The hand which held the ice pick was shaking. There was a long silence in which he heard the dry leaves on the ground shift and the water down in the ditch mutter and suck at the mud banks. He believed the blood pounding in his head was the sound of her heart. (Morrison, 1987)

Paul D's journey throughout the novel involves a struggle between his conscious and unconscious desires and fears. He tries to maintain control over his emotions, appearing stoic and reserved. However, beneath his exterior, his unconscious desires for love, intimacy, and emotional connection are constantly at odds with his fear of vulnerability and further emotional harm.

Additionally, his struggles with intimacy and love reveal underlying psychological conflicts. His relationship with Sethe is complex and influenced by his past experiences and fear of intimate connections; vulnerability is evident in his initial reluctance to engage in a sexual relationship with her. His difficulty in fully embracing and expressing his emotions stems from the repressed trauma of his past, creating obstacles in his ability to form healthy, intimate relationships. This can also be justified as having the oedipal complex because of Paul D's relationship with his mother and the absence of a father figure in his life as a slave could contribute to unconscious conflicts and desires that shape his behaviour and relationships with women.

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The ending of "Beloved" for Paul D is bittersweet. While he has found a measure of peace and stability in his new life, he remains haunted by the traumas of his past and the memories of the people he has lost. However, there is also a sense of hope as Paul D reflects on the beauty of the natural world and the possibility of finding joy and meaning in life despite the pain and suffering that he has experienced.

He shut his eyes. Saw the charred ruins of a shack. The feathers of its sleeping inhabitants came down softly on the city. It was not a list he gave them, but a story. A story he had never told to anyone. A story he had never understood himself until he walked away from Sethe, until he heard from others that there was no place for him to go, unless he wanted to feel the wind on his face and love it till it broke his heart.

(Morrison, 1987)

2.9 Conclusion:

In conclusion, the second chapter of this thesis has explored the themes of slavery, trauma, and the African American experience through an examination of Toni Morrison's influential novel "Beloved." This literary work serves as a compelling example of the power of literature to confront the lasting effects of slavery and engage with the complexities of historical and personal narratives.

Moreover, it examines the role of magical realism and stream of consciousness in *Beloved*. These narrative techniques allow Morrison to transcend the boundaries of conventional storytelling, offering a more comprehensive and visceral understanding of the characters' experiences and the broader implications of slavery on their lives and communities. The inclusion of magical realism and stream of consciousness in "Beloved" enriches the narrative by capturing the psychological complexities, emotional realities, and lasting traumas resulting from slavery.

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In conclusion, this research on Toni Morrison's novel "Beloved" and its exploration of slavery shed light on the profound impact of this historical atrocity on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Through a qualitative analysis, this research delves into the postmodernist elements, magical realism and stream-of-consciousness narrative style within the novel to explore the trauma caused by slavery, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and nuances of Morrison's work.

The first chapter of this thesis explores the historical background and psychological impact of slavery on African American individuals. By delving into the oppressive nature of the slavery era, we have gained valuable insights into the traumatic experiences endured by enslaved people and the enduring effects it had on their well-being and perception of freedom. Furthermore, this chapter sheds light on the significance of postmodernist techniques, such as magical realism and stream of consciousness, in African American literature. These narrative devices enable authors to challenge traditional storytelling conventions and engage with complex themes and emotions. By incorporating these techniques, authors like Toni Morrison bring a fresh and innovative perspective to slavery exploration and its aftermath.

The chapter has underscored the significance of understanding the psychological state of the African enslaved society and their revolutionary efforts against oppression. By shedding light on the postmodernist techniques in literature, particularly magical realism and stream of consciousness, we have begun to unravel their importance in African American literature as well. These techniques serve as powerful tools for conveying the profound emotions and experiences of individuals affected by slavery.

The second chapter of this research focuses on Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. It delves into Morrison's literary techniques and underscores the significance of understanding the psychological state of the African enslaved society and their revolutionary efforts against oppression. By shedding light on postmodernist methods in literature, particularly magical realism and stream of consciousness, we have begun to unravel their importance in African American literature. We have also explored their ability to convey the profound emotions and experiences of slavery victims.

In closing, postmodernist techniques analysis, magical realism, and stream of consciousness in "Beloved" provides a deeper understanding of the African American literary tradition and its unique contributions to the broader literary landscape. Through these techniques, Morrison

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not only conveys the emotional realities of the characters affected by slavery but also gives voice to their experiences, challenges dominant narratives, and invites readers to confront the enduring legacies of slavery and the ongoing pursuit of liberation.

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