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CHARACTERIZATION IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED TO CONVEY THE THEMES VIOLENCE AND SLAVERY'S DESTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

It is natural that human beings show an interest to find out matters in others' surroundings. It is reasonable to expect readers since they also represent a category of humans. Readers are also interested in real life stories of authors when they engage with reading, because it provides them a wide space to think and experience than merely referring a book. Therefore, some authors try their maximum to attach something real and true from their lives in their pieces of writing to add a literary value and a depth to the composed text. So with this general understanding when it turns towards *Beloved* written by Toni Morrison, she has employed many incidents and factors in the text that are closely related with Black community which was underestimated by white people for number of decades. In the novel, the writer uses many places, characters and incidents to indicate the degree of violence that her people had to feel and face before white people. Mainly she focuses about the effects of slavery and its' long lasting results upon victims. In this study the main attention goes for identification of the characterization of the author to represent the theme violence and slavery's destruction of identity.

Keywords: Characterization, Destruction, Violence, Community, Writer, Slave.

I. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison is a Black American writer, editor and a professor who represents her nation through writing to re-build her people to stand as an independent nation. She has acquired both Nobel Prize- and Pulitzer Prize for her skillful writhing. The greediness and the eagerness she is having to gain knowledge about the outer world from her childhood brings the author for the education in university level including Howard University and Cornell University. Presently many of her readers identify her not as Toni Morrison but as the author of *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1975) and *Song of Solomon* (1977). Among her best known novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* are predominant.

Toni Morrison first publishes *Beloved* in 1987 as a story which tells about her own community and sufferings with the harassment of white people. This cannot consider as a text that brings romance for the people but gives them an opportunity to see one aspect of the history. Since the novel deals with her own community and the environment, it becomes famous among author's readers. In *Beloved*, Morrison depicts the pain, violence and the long lasting aftermaths of the discussed matter. Mainly in the text, the writer focuses her attention to discuss about violence as the major thematic aspect in the text. Further she takes the chance to show the violence that the slave masters kept upon slaves, slavery's destruction of identity, and conscious verses probability of living without harassments and the necessity of having a sound society. While the author deals with themes, the novel has been overloaded with some literary devices such as imagery, metaphor, flashback, magical realism and symbols. However, characterization is the one got highlighted among these figures of speech because the success of a creation always comes with its' representatives. So in this study it talks about characterization of *Beloved* to convey the themes violence and slavery's destruction of identity of the human beings.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify characters which represent violence in *Beloved*.
2. See the depiction of Slavery's destruction of identity through characters in the particular text.
3. To interpret possible characters with related to above mentioned themes.

Research Questions

1. What are the characters that the writer uses to convey both violence and slavery's destruction in the entire soul in the text?

2. How these particular characters interpret selected themes in Beloved?

II. METHODOLOGY

To fulfill the objectives in the research the researcher has used qualitative method. The data collected to this research through referring the particular text and understanding the whole content of the text. The researcher has caught out all the possible and major characters to depict the slavery's destruction of soul and violence as major themes of the text. The collected data have been analyzed and discussed by the researcher with the researcher's perceptions and ideologies but related with the text. Here the qualitative study becomes an effective method for data collection since it makes the path to investigate the reliability of the evidences for all people and reviewers.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Schoolteacher (As the symbolic character of violence)

The term "Schoolteacher" creates extremely positive picture in readers' mind, because the terms "school" and the "teacher" always connect with paving correct paths for the people. So there is no space for misdeeds with such type of characters. However, in the novel, the author selects this character as the symbolic representation of violence by mainly using the actions. Though the title of the character has a respect with the community, the actions make him violent in novel. First, readers identify Schoolteacher's character in chapter one through his actions. So this action makes the readers aware about Schoolteacher though the author accounts the appearance and the shape later in chapter three.

"Then Schoolteacher arrived to put things in order. But what he did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight." (Beloved, Chapter 1, Page 11, Line 6-9) With the arrival of Schoolteacher, the things begin to change badly in Sweet Home. The obedient men of Mr. Garner were sold by Schoolteacher and he changed the order and the way of working in the farm. This is the way that the writer provides many incidents to depict the violence grabbed within Schoolteacher's character. When all the human beings feel the beauty, the slaves of Sweet Home were treated as animals by its' master. For real human beings who are with humanity, that can be difficult even to imagine the comparison of humans with animals. However, Schoolteacher compares Sethe with animals to have the animal characteristics. This shows the cruelty and the violence of his heart. Here the writer presents schoolteacher as a heartless character.

"He was talking to his pupils and I heard him say, "Which one are you doing?" And one of the boys said, "Sethe." That's when I stopped because I heard my name, and then I took a few steps to where I could see what they were doing. Schoolteacher was standing over one of them with one hand behind his back. He licked a forefinger a couple of times and turned a few pages. Slow. I was about to turn around and keep on my way to where the muslin was, when I heard him say, "No, no. that's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left, her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up." (Beloved, Chapter 19, Page 228, Lines 4-15)

The meeting between Paul D and Sethe in 124 gives us much information about the cruelty of Schoolteacher. Using flashback as a technique in the novel, the author brings the readers to grab all the important happenings in Sweet Home. While the talking is in progress in Sethe's home, she tells about the tree she had with stealing milk. The whipping of Schoolteacher upon Sethe makes a tree in her back. Here it is important to analyze the position of Sethe, when she was beating by him. Every man in this world gives their caring for the ladies who are with children in their bellies. Though Sethe was expecting with her fourth child, Schoolteacher torchers her violently. And also he sucks the milk of the kid from her breasts. "Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still."

"They use cowhide on you?"

"And they took my milk."

"They beat you and you was pregnant?"

"And they took my milk." (Beloved, Chapter 1, Page 20, Line 1-6)

When all the people respect and protect pregnant women, Schoolteacher beats her. This tells regarding a side of humanity in his character and also cruelty and the violence in his character. In this light, without any doubt, it is

capable of representing Schoolteacher as a symbolic representation of violence and cruelty in Beloved. So the author has added these types of characteristics to talk about violence to the text.

3.2 Baby Suggs

The author introduces Baby Suggs as the mother of Halle, a Sweet Home man who was selected by Sethe as her husband. As a female character, she has many roles to play and responsibilities to accomplish. However, the influences of slavery upon Baby Suggs's character deprived her fulfilling her role as a respectable character within the family. This failure of Baby Suggs puts her in to a great depression at the end of her journey of the life. When the consideration is there as a mother, she cannot be satisfied about her role and she regretted about her children. The author provides us sufficient evidences to imagine the gloominess of Baby Suggs from the following quotation to understand the destruction of her identity as an effect of slavery.

"What'd be the point?" asked Baby Suggs. "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband's spirit was to come back in here? Or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house in to evil," Baby Suggs rubbed her eyebrows. "My first born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember" (Beloved, Chapter 1, Page 6, Lines 8-19)

Through that quotation, Baby Suggs questions about her identity as a mother and her achievements for the kids. Though she was a mother of many kids, no one is there with her now. Four children have been taken by slave masters and four have been chased since they don't need to engage with slavery. These evidences provide enough clues for showing the influences of slavery vanishes the responsibilities of a mother from Baby Suggs character. In addition to her role as mother, she couldn't be a good partner to her husband. Even she doesn't know whether he is living or not. This reflects the pathetic situation of slave women and the destruction of their womanhood. Simply, Baby Suggs's character in the novel keeps as a symbol to denote about the impacts of slavery for destruction of identity of human beings.

3.3 Paul D

Paul D is the last Sweet Home man who is alive in the novel. In the text, the author creates a meeting between Sethe and Paul D intentionally, since the writer needs to keep some situations to display the degree of the destruction of identity in his character. The author uses Paul D's character to exemplify the self-alienation and the emotional devastation of the former slaves while demonstrating the lack of self-identity. In one situation, when Paul D was in Sethe's house, the floor boards began to tremble. This trembling of floor boards makes Paul D confused, because he cannot identify clearly what is going around him.

"Now he was trembling again but in the legs this time. It took him a while to realize that his legs were not shaking because of worry, but because the floorboards were and the grinding, shoving floor was only part of it. The house itself was pitching" (Beloved, Chapter 1, Page 21, Lines 26-30)

In addition to this, in Georgia also, Paul D had to face such kind of situation. He couldn't imagine the screaming that he heard and identify where it comes from?

"Paul D thought he was screaming his mouth was open and there was this loud throat-splitting sound-but it may have been somebody else. Then he thought he was crying." (Beloved, Chapter 10, Page 129, Lines 28-31)

The failure of Paul D to identify the things can be accounted as an aftermath of working as a former slave. The oppression he got as a slave comes with him until the end of his life.

It is natural for human beings to have a pleasure from their sexual intercourses while it stands for the reproduction. Though Paul D has his desires for having the taste of sexuality, the confusion that has in his mind as an effect of slavery, doesn't allow him to prove his manhood in front of Sethe. So his haste sexual engagement with Sethe makes a doubt in her mind regarding the manhood of Paul D. This shows another example to use Paul D to represent the slavery's destruction of identity. Simply, slavery has destroyed his identity as a man in front of a woman. "There were two rooms and she took him into one of them, hoping he wouldn't mind the fact that she was not prepared, that though she could remember desire, she had forgotten

how it worked, the clutch and helplessness that resided in the hands,” (Beloved, Chapter 2, Page 24, Lines 14-18)

“It was over before they could get their clothes off. Half-dressed and short of breath, they lay side by side resentful of one another and the skylight above them.” (Beloved, Chapter 2, Page 24, Lines 22-24)

Though slaves born to live like human beings, slavery shapes their lives similar to animals. Mr. Garner addresses his slaves as “Sweet Home men” to give some identity while the coming of Schoolteacher makes them completely animals. In one situation, schoolteacher fixes an iron bit in Paul D’s mouth as a punishment. However, this is more to a punishment to him, because this overwhelms his identity as a human being.

“All news of them was rot. They buttered Halle’s face, gave Paul D iron to eat, crisped Sixo, hanged her own mother.” (Beloved, Chapter 19, Page 222, Lines 13-14)

In this way throughout the novel, the author gives many examples to see the evidence for the slavery’s destruction of identity

3.4 Beloved.

Beloved is the title of the spirit who comes for Sethe in the text. Sethe kills her baby girl to keep her away from slavery, since she identify well the aftermaths and the influences of slavery lasting for long in one’s life. So her limited worldly knowledge allows her to decide death upon her loving and beloved baby girl. In the time of killing, it destroys the identity of baby girl from human to a spirit.

In literature, ghost is the representation of human mind. Later, the arrival of spirit as Beloved, recalls all the desires that people have but slaves cannot achieve through their life time though they belong to the category of human beings. So this spirit reflects the mind set up of slaves and their longing for the taste of life. Though slaves have their own desires for having sex with someone, the path has been closed by their masters. This can be seen from the desire of Beloved to be touched her inside part of the body by Paul D.

“What you want in here? What you want? He should have been able to hear her breathing.

“I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name” (Beloved, Chapter 11, Page 137, Lines 1-4)

And also she wants to taste all the good foods and to wear beautiful ribbons and dresses. All the good things should be reserved for Beloved. This tells about the desire of slaves for having a comfortable life. “The cooking games, the sewing games, the hair and dressing up games. Games her mother loved so well she took to going to work later and later each day until the predictable happened. Sawyer told her not to come back. And instead of looking for another job, Sethe played all the harder with Beloved, who never got enough of anything: lullabies, new stitches, the bottom of the cake bowl, the top of the milk. If the hen had only two eggs, she got both.” (Beloved, Chapter 26, Page 282, Lines 2-10)

Being a spirit, it destroys all the possibilities to live with human beings and see the beauty of life. Though the things are going in this way, Sethe kills the girl to protect her from slavery. Indirectly, this spirit symbolizes the destruction of identity of the people through slavery.

IV. CONCLUSION

Characters take the responsibility of actions in a literary creation. And also this has the ability to grab the mind of the readers. Therefore, the author has taken much attention to build the characters in the novel since she wants to convey different messages through the same text. So purposefully the author uses a few characters in the text to convey different thematic aspects. She has built some characters effectively to give her themes violence and the slavery’s destruction of identity with different interpretations. To symbolize violence as a theme in Beloved, the author has used Schoolteacher as a character. Slavery’s destruction of identity can be seen through the characters Sethe, Beloved, Baby Suggs and Paul D. To conclude, it important to say that Morrison’s Beloved is magnificent with its’ characterization to convey the themes violence and slavery’s destruction of identity. Though it is impossible to deal with all the characters, the present study has focused more on the major ones and tried to explain their meanings in order to add an extra meaning to the novel.

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