

## Redefining Motherhood: Maternal Expectations and Disappointments in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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**Abstract:** Motherhood is a revered and influential period of an individual's life, and the esteemed virtue of compassion is a divine gift bestowed to women. The connection between a mother and her children is often defined as an enduring link that cannot be replaced by any other relationship. However, in truth, this state is sometimes diminished and used as a powerful means by which to assess women as inferior, and as a product of societal constructs. Multiple instances provide evidence of the continued occurrence of marital rape, the maltreatment of women, and the presence of rebellious offspring. Nevertheless, mothers should be shown the proper respect and gratitude. This study examines the complex depiction of motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, from a feminist perspective. The study explores the impact of slavery on the formation of maternal expectations and the difficulties encountered by Black mothers in safeguarding their children. The study centres on the character of Sethe, a former enslaved woman, whose resolute love for her children motivates her behavior throughout the novel. Her maternal instincts serve as both a reservoir of strength and as a trigger for her decisions, illuminating the intricate and sometimes paradoxical essence of motherhood. The novel thereby questions conventional ideas about motherhood, illustrating how cultural norms and historical subjugation can influence a mother's approach to her responsibilities. The narrative of Sethe highlights the tenacity of African American women in the midst of hardship, whilst also revealing the profound psychological wounds inflicted by slavery. The study posits that *Beloved* presents a compelling criticism of the prevailing myths regarding motherhood, elucidating the distinct challenges and achievements experienced by Black mothers in a society characterized by racism and oppression. The work invites readers to reassess the intricacies of parental affection and the lasting impact of slavery by reframing motherhood from the perspective of Sethe.

**Keywords:** Motherhood, Slavery, Feminism, Disappointment, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*.

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### 1. Introduction

Feminist scholarship has increasingly emphasized the crucial role of family as a key social institution within a society. The function of family is crucial for forming a person's character; for promoting social well-being; and for influencing an individual's perspective, conduct, and overall quality of life. In order to maximize the efficiency of this role, it is essential that all the members of a family exhibit a high level of cooperation and support, whilst also fostering a strong, intangible connection between the mother and her children. All the members of a family, including the father, mother, and children, should demonstrate reverence for the familial bond and collaborate harmoniously to establish a contented family unit (Pilcher and Whelehan 2016). Nevertheless, evidence indicates that the mother is often the most committed and devoted to her family, striving consistently to provide for her spouse and offspring, and even to safeguard them. A competent mother is an invaluable presence in an individual's life, and one who seeks consistently to ensure the comfort of her family (Amalia 2007).

The prevailing societal paradigm often holds that a woman's role within a family is confined to domestic responsibilities, childbearing, and managing the household, while the role of a husband is to engage in employment outside the home and to generate income. This presumption positions women as incapable of engaging in social interactions in a public setting and establishes the dominance of men, whilst simultaneously relegating women to a subordinate position. Becoming a mother can evoke both a sense of accomplishment and provide formidable challenges (Nugroho 2014). However, while the state of motherhood is a divine blessing bestowed by God, it is often used to categorize women as inferior to men. Women are often seen as being physically and emotionally delicate, whereas males are often considered to possess more control and influence in many aspects of life. Despite the efforts of feminists and female activists in advocating for women's rights, a significant number of women worldwide continue to experience oppression, uneven treatment, and subordinating preconceptions (O'Reilly 2004). For example, female workers in the Western world encounter dehumanizing treatment from their employers that often causes severe physical injury and financial destitution, while marital rape is prevalent in numerous regions around the globe. Women are therefore required to exert significant effort to secure their survival and sometimes fail to gain the recognition they deserve (Comfort 1995).

The feminist Luce Irigaray advocated for women to establish their own space in society, in order to reclaim agency over their lives and to emancipate themselves from male dominance. Women demonstrate their innate maternal instincts effectively via their capacity to forgive and to love their children unconditionally, without any expectation of reward. The arduous journey of a woman enduring a gestation period of nine months or sometimes more is testament to their fortitude and underscores the need to show them respect and admiration (Nyoman 2004).

The theory of penis envy proposed by Sigmund Freud, which posits that women consider themselves to lack a penis, is a noteworthy component of the notion of motherhood. Women have the biological capacity to experience pregnancy, menstruation, and childbirth, and to assume the role of a mother. Some depictions of women include their characterization as ‘punishers’, ‘protectors’, ‘doers’, and ‘watchers’. Moreover, the mother contributes to the advancement of greater autonomy and engagement in boys (Yadav 2019).

Literary works often reflect the role of mother via their depiction of societal reality and can therefore be considered a manifestation of cultural norms. The author Toni Morrison, a renowned African-American Black feminist writer, explored the essence of motherhood in her novel, *Beloved*, which describes a mother’s endeavours to protect her children from perils, along with examining the capriciousness inherent in women. In 1988, the novel, which was inspired by the life and judicial proceedings of Margaret Garner (Greco 2016), was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction.

The objective of this study concerning Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* is to reassess the significance and nature of motherhood, whilst also promoting admiration for women, including mothers themselves. The need to acknowledge and value the essence of women, particularly their mere presence, is often overlooked. The capacity of women to conceive, give birth, and manage domestic affairs is often seen as their only defining characteristic. Moreover, men often disregard the individuals responsible for their existence and arguably should hold women in higher esteem than they do themselves. This research therefore examines the portrayal of motherhood in *Beloved* through the lens of feminism, seeking to analyse the feminist elements present in the book as a form of literary expression, with a specific focus on exploring the portrayal of motherhood and the many circumstances that shape it. The value of the study lies in both its theoretical and practical elements, which enhance the theoretical foundations of previous literary studies that assessed the maternal characteristics of women from a feminist perspective. Additionally, it functions as a point of reference and provides an alternative viewpoint for scholars engaged in comparable research endeavours. The study seeks to promote readers’ appreciation for their mothers and to provide a brief summary of the qualities that define an ideal mother. While the impact of this work on the broad field of literary studies may be limited, it therefore has significant value for future research.

## 2. Research Problem

Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved*, published in 1987, explores the intricacies of motherhood, with a specific focus on the experiences of Black women in the midst and aftermath of slavery. The work subverts conventional ideas of maternal affection and selflessness, compelling readers to face the psychological anguish caused by slavery and its lasting impact on the characters’ perception of motherhood. The main character, Sethe, conveys the challenge involved in harmonizing the conventional norms of parenthood with the harsh realities of her experience. The infanticide committed by Sethe on her infant daughter, motivated by a desperate desire to save the child from a life of enslavement, undermines the romanticized notion of a caring and protective mother. The character Beloved, who is the physical manifestation of Sethe’s deceased daughter, adds complexity to the idea of motherhood, serving as a continual reminder for Sethe of the pain of loss and representing a mistaken need for connection.

## 3. Research Questions

The novel *Beloved* challenges the conventional norms of motherhood that often revolve around self-sacrifice and unconditional love. The actions of Sethe, motivated by affection, defy these concepts. This study investigated the following inquiries:

- How does Morrison use the character of Sethe to question the societal norms and assumptions regarding parenthood, especially for Black women?
- What historical and sociological circumstances contribute to the challenges faced by Sethe in her role as a mother?
- Does the novel *Beloved* include the potential for reconciliation or the reevaluation of motherhood in the context of pain and bereavement?

## 4. Literature Review

Feminism is a well-recognized concept that has generated much attention over time. Feminist texts explore the concepts of gender, inferiority, the presence of women, and the inequity and oppression experienced by them. These subjects inspire researchers to conduct further extensive examinations. Consequently, feminist literary analysis is a popular field of study (Peterson 2001). Historically, parenthood was considered to be a significant way for women to establish and express their identity. In the novel *Beloved*, Morrison presented a narrative of a mother, conveying her unique linguistic expression, and providing insights into her personal background of parental affection. The author examined the concept of motherhood and the alteration of maternal affection caused by enslavement by focusing on the mother-daughter dynamic (Mankiller 1998). Moreover, Morrison also explored the facets and views of African American women concerning parenting, in order to convey a distinct portrayal of African American motherhood that diverged from the prevailing cultural norms. In her works more widely, the author portrayed daughters and mothers who actively seek narratives that help them to regain their whole identity.

She embraced the role of 'womanist' to articulate the intricacy and adversity faced by African American women in a culture that devalues both their Black identity and their womanhood. Her intention was to spotlight African American women, to amplify their voices, and to validate their identities (Deyab 2). In addition, Morrison sought to develop characters who confront the prevailing white American preconceptions of African American women as a means for these women to attain a constructive sense of self-identity and self-reliance.

Furthermore, Morrison contended that there is no disparity between Africans and African America, either living or dead, or between the past and the present (Darling 247), believing that the existing gaps can be closed by embracing historical responsibility by commemorating the individuals who perished in the Middle Passage and throughout the era of slavery.

In the novel *Beloved*, Morrison employed a ghost as a literary tool, in order to bring historical events to life and to give substance to memories (Darling 249). By utilizing the principles of the womanist motion, she examined the intricacies of the mother-daughter bond within the context of the institution of slavery. As a womanist, Morrison believed that the historical experiences of African Americans in the era of slavery continue to affect the whole race deeply and have become a significant burden upon them. She therefore sought methods to remedy the scars of the past, in order to enable African Americans to navigate their current circumstances and future. She emphasized the need for a deep understanding of history by both her characters and readers, believing this understanding should not be considered a burden, but rather a means to communicate stories from the past that can rejuvenate the present. She thereby fulfilled Ogunyemi's (21) characterization of the womanist as someone who integrates racial, cultural, national, economic, and political factors into their worldview.

In her novel *Beloved*, Morrison sought to rouse and guide her race toward survival by emphasizing the significance of collectivism as the only means for African people to rebel and to accomplish their redemption (Mostafa Hefny 2017). Her decision to revisit the past and to depict slavery in the work aligned with the strong desire of her central character Sethe, a slave mother, to restore and reestablish the maternal bond with her daughter, which was impacted brutally by the cruel institution of slavery. The novel examines the intricate nature of maternal feelings by depicting the oppressive system of slavery, in which slave owners ruthlessly destroyed the fundamental human bond of motherly love, causing it to become perverted, violated, and disfigured.

The novel enabled the present study to engage in feminist analysis of the text from a distinct perspective that primarily emphasized the woman's role as a mother. In the traditional culture of Egypt, cultural transitions occur and are exemplified by Firdaus, a woman who experiences oppression from the patriarchal society. Research that specifically examines the inherent maternal character of women is relatively restricted. The most authentic essence of a woman is her role as a mother. Thus, this study sought novelty in its specific examination of the notion of motherhood and the challenges faced by Black mothers in protecting their children during the period of African American slavery in 1870. It also analysed the many elements that impacted this struggle, as depicted in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, from a feminist perspective (Amalia 2007). This research aimed to highlight the significant role of mothers and to contribute to a greater appreciation of them. It also sought to challenge the misconception that a woman's nature and her household responsibilities are the basis by which women are unfairly classified as inferior. Contrary to this belief, a woman's inherent nature, particularly as a mother, demonstrates powerfully the remarkable essence of womanhood that arguably no man can hope to match, as it is a divine blessing.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Study Design

This research utilized a literary analysis approach to focus specifically on critical race theory and feminist literary criticism. These frameworks were employed to scrutinize the narratological approach employed by

Morrison in her novel *Beloved* by analysing how the narrative structure, encompassing flashbacks and the inclusion of Beloved as a supernatural being, contributes to the depiction of maternal trauma and its enduring consequences. The use of recurrent symbols and imagery, such as milk and water, to symbolize the intricacies of motherhood, grief, and the characters' emotional state, was also explored. The examination of the characters' interactions and internal monologue, especially that of Sethe, enabled insights into their view of parenthood, love, and the weight of previous experience.

## 5.2 Data Collection

The main source of data employed for this study was the textual content of the novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. The secondary materials used included critical studies that analysed the work from the perspective of feminist and race theory, historical records that detailed the effect of slavery on African American households, and biographical data concerning Toni Morrison.

## 5.3 Data Analysis

This study employed a thematic analysis with a specific emphasis on the identification and examination of the themes in *Beloved* that concern maternal expectations, the psychological impact of slavery on motherhood, and the potential to redefine motherhood in the context of trauma. The relevant passages in the novel were encoded and classified according to these topics. The study also examined how Morrison's narrative approach contributes to the comprehensive investigation of motherhood.

## 6. Discussion

The role of a mother is influential and esteemed, not only in public and politics, but also within the household. Literary masterpieces such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* have played a crucial role in articulating the status and influence of motherhood. Published in 1987, *Beloved* is often regarded as the most outstanding work of American literature of recent decades. The narrative concerns Sethe and her daughter Denver, both African Americans, as they flee from the bonds of slavery and endeavour to reconstruct their lives. The work adheres to the conventions of slave tales whilst addressing the most distressing and forbidden elements of slavery, such as sexual exploitation and brutality. As a fugitive slave and mother, Sethe profoundly manifests the depths of motherhood characteristics via her intense connection with her children. Her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, also represents motherhood in the narrative.

The narrative commences in 1853 at 124 Bluestone Road in Cincinnati, Ohio, where Sethe, a previously enslaved individual, lives with her 18-year-old daughter, Denver, as well as her two sons, Howard and Buglar. Her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, died in 1865 soon after Sethe's sons fled from the house. The house in which the characters reside is haunted by the malevolent spirit of Sethe's 18-month-old daughter, whom Sethe killed when she witnessed the arrival of Schoolteacher, an overseer of enslaved individuals, who intended to reclaim them as slaves. Sethe's spouse, Halle, is presumed dead, and has been absent from her life since Sethe's decision to flee from the slave farm in Kentucky, which is ironically called 'Sweet Home'. As a Black woman slave, Sethe faces the daunting challenge of single-handedly bearing four children in the midst of slavery. She must fight to survive and to shield her children from the oppressive forces of slavery; this dictates her predominant beliefs, which concern the strategies necessary to nurture her offspring and to ensure their safety and well-being: "What she knew was the responsibility for her breasts, at last, was in somebody else's hands" (*Beloved* 4).

In this context, Morrison portrayed Sethe as an authentic and mentally stable African American enslaved mother, profoundly conveying a genuine mother, whose love is exceptionally uncommon; it is a courageous love for a woman of colour, whose offspring may be separated forcibly from her at any given moment. The character of Sethe is portrayed meticulously throughout the narrative. Although she has always been enslaved, Sethe instinctively provides safe refuge for her only surviving daughter, Denver, throughout her life. Indeed, her excessive protectiveness causes Denver to become over-reliant on her. However, Denver's social interactions are consistently contemptuous and cause her recent growth. The actions of Sethe demonstrate her role as a highly resilient and nurturing mother. Her innate maternal instinct makes her a strong and dependable mother who provides a safe haven for her children and shields them from anxiety. She strives to be a resolute mother for her children, regardless of the hardships she endures; her only desire is to provide a secure, safe haven for her children.

I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between them but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running – from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. (*Beloved* 15)

Chapter Five provides a detailed depiction of Sethe's resilience. Upon returning from a celebration, Paul D, Sethe, and Denver are surprised to discover a young woman who bears a striking similarity to Sethe's dead baby, sitting on a tree stump outside 124 Bluestone Road. Her presence provokes a profound recollection in Sethe of her dead child. The chapter highlights Sethe's innate motherhood that causes her to see her lost daughter in numerous circumstances, and although she was only an infant when she died, Sethe identifies her lost child in the form of this young woman who bears a striking resemblance to her deceased baby.

Her skin is as smooth as a baby's, and she has no recollection of the past. She has three scratches on her forehead; these remind Sethe of baby hair. Her voice is rough from not being used, her walk is also unsteady like it is a skill she is just learning, her speech is impaired, she does not have full control over her bodily functions, and she sleeps constantly. It is unusual for someone who is approximately nineteen years old. She also represents the untrained and undisciplined desire of an infant. Her single-minded fixation on Sethe resembles that of an infant, who is unable to conceive of an identity separate from its mother and who thinks of its mother as its exclusive possession. (*Beloved* 43)

The young woman subsequently introduces herself as Beloved. Therefore, although Paul D expelled the spirit of Sethe's dead daughter from the house, she seems to have manifested regardless: "When Sethe sees her sitting on the stump, she suddenly has to run out to the house. Sethe feels a strange, irrepressible need to urinate so uncontrollably that it reminds her water breaking before Denver's birth in the boat on the Ohio river" (*Beloved* 44). The evidence connecting the young woman to the infant includes her age, name, rejuvenated skin, the fact that she is suffering from amnesia, and Sethe's peculiar sense of her "water breaking", the last of which indicates the innate intuition possessed only by a mother and invisible bond that always connects a mother to her offspring. Furthermore, it signifies the innate instinct of a mother's constant awareness of her children's existence, regardless of the circumstances.

The first month that Sethe and Beloved spend together is portrayed as being perfect. Nevertheless, the unexplained nature of the situation soon becomes the dominant force: "it was Beloved who made demands. Anything she wanted she got, and when Sethe ran out of things to give her, Beloved invented desire.... the mood changed and the arguments began.... She took the best of everything—first" (*Beloved* 240-41). In this passage, Beloved is depicted as a child driven by her desires, aware only of what she lacks. She is unable to find contentment and her nature, which is dominated by a sense of longing, is unstable and insatiably voracious. Sethe, motivated by remorse for her previous actions, and for the harm she inflicted on her infant daughter, intensifies her efforts to fulfill Beloved's needs: "Sethe exerted herself even more with Beloved, who was perpetually unsatisfied" (*Beloved* 240). This perpetual dissatisfaction compels Sethe to fixate on Beloved and to disregard all other facets of her character and life:

Sethe pleaded for forgiveness, counting, listing again and again her reasons: that Beloved was more important, meant more to her than her own life. That she would trade places any day. Give up her life, every minute and hour of it, to take back just one of Beloved's tears. (*Beloved* 241-42).

Her fixation is therefore as imbalanced as Beloved's longing. By attempting to eradicate an indelible history via a desire to trade her existence for Beloved's suffering, Sethe only manages to underscore the constraints of her own subjective experience. She and Beloved have an intense and exhausting love for one other (*Beloved* 243) that escalates as they remain locked in an unending loop of behaviour, without respite. The bond between Sethe as a mother and Beloved as her daughter is characterized by an excessively intense and overwhelming maternal love.

Furthermore, as Sethe becomes fully aware of the fact that Beloved is her deceased daughter who has returned to her, she is desperate to rectify her past mistake. She does everything for Beloved, regardless of the potential harm to her own health. Her employment is terminated and she dedicates all her efforts and accumulated funds to ensuring Beloved's happiness, thereby devoting her identity fully to the role of motherhood. Everything she does is solely for the sake of her children, and she perceives every instance of abuse she endures as a personal affront to her children, viewing them as an integral part of herself and vice-versa: "Sethe sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur" (*Beloved* 250).

For Sethe, the essence of motherhood lies in the fact that she makes every possible effort for the well-being of her children. Occasionally, a mother voluntarily makes significant sacrifices for the sake of her children's happiness, regardless of whether it is the most appropriate course of action, as her sole objective is to meet the needs of her offspring. However, actions such as those in the above quotation can cause a mother to

become ill or to suffer in other ways. In the novel, Morrison depicted Sethe's motivation and actions in a way that aligns them with this notion. The key underlying motivation for Sethe is freedom, a state that, as an oppressed group, the Black community in the novel seeks actively. However, Sethe, as described by Morrison, is a mother filled with love for her children, who is prepared to make any compromise for them, and she therefore misinterprets the true meaning of attaining freedom, believing it to be the liberty to freely express her unconditional maternal love for her children and to liberate them from a life of servitude. The specific methods involved are irrelevant to her and are depicted in the text as potentially wild and terrible:

She sawed crawling already? girl's head off, wounded Buglar and Howard, and was swinging Denver through the air to crush her head when Stamp Paid, an ex-slave and Underground Railroad agent, stopped her. Schoolteacher and the men with him left empty-handed; Sethe was useless because she was obviously crazy, and her children were worth nothing to him because they were hurt. (*Beloved* 155)

The narrative of Sethe's infanticide of one of her daughters illustrates her profound despair in the face of events and her desire to save her child from being owned as a slave and exposed to the capriciousness and brutality of others. Despite her deep love for her deceased daughter and the long journey she undertook to bear her, she finds it less difficult to kill her than to allow her to be enslaved. This exemplifies an excessively intense form of maternal affection that is both intuitively defensive and terrifying, ultimately embodying the essence of motherhood. Sethe's act of murdering her daughter is a rejection of the colonialist culture's perception of her child as a commodity to be bought and sold. By taking the life of her child, she not only spares her the physical torment of slavery, but also liberates her from the dehumanizing effects of being objectified and oppressed as a Black person. Although motivated by a desire to protect, Sethe's actions ultimately deny her daughter the opportunity to live. This is represented in her adoption of her daughter's untapped individuality.

Sethe therefore embodies the archetype of a brave mother whose motivations may be obscure and require a lack of sentimentality. Her recollection of moving her first child away from Sweet Home Farm to Cincinnati while she was still nursing her and pregnant with another child is depicted in her vivid recounting of events to Paul D, in which she explains that she initially remained at Sweet Home, anticipating the return of her husband, Halle (*Beloved* 17). This exemplifies another aspect of motherhood, namely the innate and emotional inclination of a mother to do whatever is necessary for the well-being of her children. Sethe believes that although her children may be furious with her for making this choice, they will eventually understand its wisdom.

Sethe demonstrates her maternal instinct once again when she ultimately flees from Sweet Home Farm, despite being pregnant, sprinting over the hills in order to reach the Ohio River. She is close to death when she encounters Amy, a Caucasian girl, near the river; the infected injuries on her back are bleeding, her feet are swollen, and she is so exhausted she can hardly move. Her condition is so severe that Amy does not believe she will survive the night. Nevertheless, Sethe miraculously revives upon departing from Kentucky, successfully crosses the river, and recovers her health at her mother-in-law's home. There, she gives birth to her second daughter with the assistance of Amy, despite experiencing intense agony and feeling helpless. Her delivery of a daughter in a setting between two realms is a profoundly symbolic occurrence that highlights the parallel between existence and liberty:

Sethe, six months pregnant and walking into the hills on feet so swollen she couldn't see the arches, was making her way to the Ohio River and freedom. Her body was heavy and tired. When she was too tired to take another step she laid out in the grass and decided to die until the white girl came along and helped her to a shed and massaged her feet. (*Beloved* 30)

This incident demonstrates the unwavering determination of a mother to make every possible attempt to protect and safeguard her children, despite the challenges she faces. The concept of motherhood is thereby depicted as a powerful and all-encompassing love that can triumph over any obstacle, a notion embedded in the very character of Sethe. Her decision to flee the slave farm is motivated by her need to save the life of her offspring, rather than by any desire for self-preservation.

The presence of slavery in *Beloved* plays a significant role in shaping the notion of motherhood. The novel vividly portrays the harshness of the slavery of Africans in America, which continues to affect subsequent generations, particularly those of African descent. The primary reason for this dehumanizing oppression was the disparity in skin and eye colour of Blacks from Caucasians, as well as that of their occupations, languages, traditions, and the historical background of their forefathers. This was used as an excuse to promote the dominance of certain individuals and to legitimize their control over a subordinate minority. As Sokoli (2015) explained, this attitude was transmitted without being questioned from one generation to the next.

It should be noted that there was a long-standing tradition of slavery in Africa from before the inception of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, as slavery was employed as a form of punishment for grave offenses. However, although slavery was employed in Africa as a form of punishment for offenders, slave owners in the African

nations treated slaves with relative fairness. Nevertheless, slavery of all forms undermines the dignity of a person profoundly, despite any profession that all individuals are inherently equal.

In Morrison's novel *Beloved*, the pervasive backdrop of slavery exerts an influence on almost every aspect of the narrative. The text explores the many manifestations of slavery and its significant impact on the notion of motherhood, primarily via the character of Sethe, the portrayal of whom highlights her deep maternal love and depicts her strength as a single mother against the backdrop of African enslavement. Numerous elements and consequences of slavery are depicted in the novel, including racial discrimination, the slave trade, racial prejudice, brutality, and segregation, significantly in terms of their impact on motherhood.

## 7. Conclusion

The novel *Beloved* by Toni Morrison depicted the arduous journey of a slave woman in the context of African slavery in America, and her attempts to shield her children from the torment of enslavement. The work emphasizes the potency of motherhood and maternal affection, the function of a mother, and the bond between a mother and her children. The main character, Sethe, exemplifies these principles via her efforts to ensure her children's safety and to improve their lives. She endures the persecution and humiliating mistreatment of slaves. The novel emphasizes the need to honour reciprocal entitlement and to acknowledge the anguish caused by slavery. The act of infanticide committed by Sethe can be seen as a manifestation of love, motivated by the oppressive nature of slavery, racial prejudice, and the buying and selling of enslaved individuals. The work also emphasizes the need to acknowledge the potency of affection and the tenacity of a mother, especially when confronted with challenges. The story portrays the challenges experienced by mothers, emphasizing the significance of a mother's endeavours to meet the needs and happiness of her children.

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