

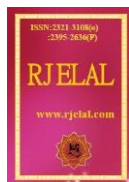


## “THE COLONIAL VIOLENCE OF SLAVERY” IN THE TONI MORRISON’S NOVEL *BELoved*

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### Abstract

The Novel *Beloved* (1987) is an absorbing story based on a true story of the life of Margaret Garner, an escaped black slave who killed her child to prevent it from being taken back to slavery. It is an embodiment of mother-daughter bonding as it is about the crimes of slavery. In the novel ‘*Beloved*’, Morrison creates a story in the historical perspective of slavery and portrays the voices of black people who could not speak through the colonial violence of slavery.

Toni Morrison in her ‘*Beloved*’ clearly and explicitly addresses the issue of post-colonial black identity than in her any other novels by “delineating a process of self-liberation within the colonial context of slavery”.

In this novel, the concept of post-colonial black identity is clearly pictured when Sethe the run-away slave, perceives that getting out of the oppressive reality of slave does not necessarily mean the achievement of true freedom. “Freeing yourself was one thing claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (*Beloved* 95). The two sentences, as a matter of fact, epitomize the theme of Morrison’s literature as well as *Beloved*. Morrison reconfiguration of the post-colonial condition of Black identity effectively resolves as issue of locating Post-Colonial Black Identity, which has been a continuous theme throughout her first four novels.

The novel *Beloved* is set in 1873 and 1874, ten years of emancipation, it brings back the actual story of Margaret Garner and her murdered child to

contemporary readers through the fictitious characters of Sethe and her dead daughter *Beloved* by recreating the story of a black mother’s infanticide with various narratives in *Beloved*, Toni Morrison vehemently rejects the white master’s monolithic definition of the event, make heard the silenced black mother’s voice, and examines ideological forces that contributed to the cause of the tragic event.

More, importantly, through the process of rewriting the history of black people, Morrison envisions and locates post-colonial black identity right in the oppressive colonial space. Morrison portrays that black people have been completely helpless and pathetic victims throughout the history of oppression and Morrison represents black slaves as resistant political agents who could fight to claim self-ownership in their oppressive reality.

In *Beloved*, by exploring a history that has been the shameful and traumatic experience for black people, Morrison attempts to re-examine the

mind/behavior of slaves and masters and re-interpret the colonial site of slavery. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison recreates an actual story of Margaret Garner who killed her own daughter to prevent her from being taken back to slavery through the fictional story of Sethe's killing of her daughter, Morrison tells us real story.

The novel *Beloved* dramatizes the story of Sethe's infanticide and her dead daughter and the painful history of black people who suffered an experienced not only physical torture and physical violence of slavery but also that indicates their inability to represent their own history and agonies. By depicting the plot of Sethe's psychological pain coming from her memory disconnected from the social environment, Toni Morrison discloses how lack of language (as a tool of representation) has kept the black people devastated / colonized even after emancipation (Grewal 102).

The novel begins with the introduction of the spite-full spirit that haunting the Bluestone house. **"124 was spiteful. Full of baby's Venon"** (*Beloved* 3). The novel discloses that the Bluestone 124 was the historical place where Sethe's infanticide took place, where Sethe attempt to prevent her Children from being taken to the traumatic experience of slavery. In the novel the Bluestone house is portrayed as the most privatized and isolated space where the angry spirit of Sethe's slain daughter is punishing Sethe for her moral decision.

Sethe is unscrupulously haunted by the ghost. Sethe believes that it is the spirit of her daughter, she killed in the past.

Paul D's arrival, introduces the process of exorcizing *Beloved* from the Bluestone house. Paul D. a survivor of Sweet Home plantation, unexpectedly arrives in the Bluestone house and he successfully rids the house of the ghost. After that, the Ghost comes back to the Bluestone house as a mysterious young woman who calls herself *Beloved*.

Unable to speak about her act of killing her own daughter without relying on the white master's language, arguably, Sethe's memory has lost the original meaning of her act as the way of loving her

daughter under slavery and accepted her act as animalistic, which leads to her self-indictment/guiltiness for the past.

In order free herself and her children, as the mother. Sethe kills her own daughter the slavery was a drastic experience for the black people as a mother Sethe decides to kill her own child rather than to face and taste the traumatic experience.

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