

PHYSICAL OWNERSHIP IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED**A. Sandhya¹**

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Abstract

Physical ownership means having control or possession of someone. Aristotle and Jean-Paul Sartre claim that ownership is beneficial to a person's moral character. If someone owns something, then that person has the final decision of fate for that particular thing. In Europe, starting in medieval times and persisting well into today, the land ownership was the dominating symbol of wealth and prestige. Ownership and its subsequent actions were used to disadvantage and harm the Native Americans even into the twentieth century. The idea of owning a human has been seen and documented history has been recorded. Every time since humans have come together as a collective since the dawn of human society, there is always owned people and forced them into slavery.

Keywords: Ownership, final decision, humans, .etc

Introduction

Slavery was a system of dehumanization. It was practiced throughout the American colonies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and African slaves helped build the new nation into an economic powerhouse through the production of lucrative crops such as tobacco and cotton. Though the Union victory freed the nation's four million slaves, the legacy of slavery continued to influence American history, from the Reconstruction era to the civil rights movement that emerged a century after emancipation. Slavery, in other words, was what united blacks in the past and its memory help forges common purpose in the future. The infanticide, brutality, and impossible emotional choices portrayed in *Beloved* also took place in the nineteenth-century South. In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison rewrites the history of slavery in the United States so that the facts of Margaret Garner's story are reinterpreted

Narration of Slavery:

In this novel, Morrison takes large steps beyond the genre of the slave narrative tradition to excavate, then to reclaim and re-create, the hitherto hidden lives of those who survived the ravages of the inhuman institution. Her goal, she said, was to translate the historical into the personal. She wanted her characters to move from the page into the imagination of the reader.

Morrison shows readers that the pain of black people emerged from slavery a long time ago. The pain of slavery presented through *Beloved* is meant to make readers see how the survivors of slavery live from day today. Morrison's *Beloved* delivers a message about slavery to black people especially. The message is that black people have to deal with slavery as part of their past. The message is also delivered to white people that they have the potential to take part in healing the pain of slavery.

The institution of slavery plays a vital role in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison is truly disturbing and it psychologically affects everyone in the novel. In a modern world where slavery has become a distant concept that it is virtually non-existent, no longer has a true identity. *Beloved* explores the physical, emotional and spiritual devastation wrought by slavery even in freedom. "For Morrison, the pain and suffering of the black community go back to the dehumanized history of slavery." (Sengupta 87)

In this novel, we are shown how slavery cannot be simply defined as the trade-in people, but as the manipulation of their emotions and freedom by others who held power over them. *Beloved* reveals slavery in its purest form, which was most powerful and it left former slaves mentally shattered even after it was abolished. The novel is very complex and the theme of slavery works on several levels. Within the text, it is rich in historical detail regarding slavery by cataloging atrocities of slavery, to highlight its harsh reality.

Sethe Suggs was the key protagonist of the novel. She tried to be a good mother for her children even under the system of slavery. This system defines her and her children as property. She suffered by many crimes done to her and some that she committed due to the violent and oppressive system of slavery. She has become a symbol for all black people who have suffered the trauma of slavery throughout their life.

The most dangerous of slavery's effect is its negative impact on the former slaves' senses of self, and the novel contains multiple examples of self-alienation. Another important aspect of slavery in the novel is its effect felt even after individuals find freedom. After Sethe and her family flee from Sweet Home, Slavery haunts them in numerous ways, through painful memories, literal scars, or the former owners himself, who finds Sethe and attempts to bring her and her children back to Sweet Home. Slavery is an institution so awful that Sethe kills her baby, and attempts to kill all her remaining children, to save them from being dragged back into it.

As a slave woman, Sethe was unable to love her children to the fullest extent due to her awareness that they did not belong to her. A slave woman was separated from her family and her children by the master to better utilize her labor as well as exploit her motherhood. She was deliberately delinked from her family – physically and emotionally- so that she wasted no time or invested little emotion in her roles like a wife or mother.

Sethe's identification of her children as the parts of her life that were precious and fine and beautiful, for Sethe, to allow schoolteacher to take her children would be to allow him to destroy everything good in herself, to destroy all the 'life' she had made. According to this understanding, Sethe's murder of her daughter seems a less legally and morally reprehensible crime because it becomes an act of self-defense. The characters debate the morality of her act in pointed language, but Morrison herself withholds judgment on the deed.

Sethe does everything for her children. She even takes the life of her baby girl so that she would not have to experience the same cruelty of slavery her mother did. As a result of slavery, she committed this deed. Sethe becomes an outcast in her community because she even sacrificed her pride for the child's sake. The novel reveals how she sells her body to be able to afford the name 'Beloved' engraved on the child's tombstone. The novel argues that as a result of slavery and the abuse that she experiences in captivity Sethe is unable to value or see her own body as something precious and consequently she 'chooses' to sell her body instead of stealing the money or obtaining it in another way. Sethe's love for her children is limitless.

Baby Suggs has lost seven children and she does not want Halle to be the eighth. Baby Suggs reflects on her past with Halle. They were sold to Mr. Garner when Halle was only ten years old. But, Halle noticed how hard it was for her to get around. Mr. Garner agreed to let Halle work extra time for Baby Sugg's freedom. By allowing Halle to buy her freedom, Mr. Garner gained the extra benefit from Halle. When Halle had enough to make the purchase Baby Suggs did not want to leave, for she could not stand the thought of being separated from Halle. After getting freedom, Baby Suggs feels something new in her life.

Just as Paul D is unable to accept Sethe's murder of her daughter, Stamp Paid describes how he could not forgive his wife for her relationship with their master. With a symbolic name and the determination to break for the North, he walked out of slavery and headed towards Memphis and ultimately Cumberland.

Conclusion:

Baldwins' point of view but rather from Sethe's. Morrison writes history with the voices of a people historically denied the power of languages, and Beloved reveals a history that had been lost-either due to willed forgetfulness or to forced silence.

References:

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