

# Fragmented Voices and Sonic Resistance: Trauma, Memory, and the Politics of Healing in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Srividya Lakshmi K

Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R & D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai,  
India;

SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Dept. of Language, Culture and Society, Ramapuram, Chennai, India

Priyadarshini M.C\*

Department of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai, India

Karthik Kumar S

Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, Chidambaram, India

K. Gobalakrishnan

MALLA REDDY(MR) Deemed to be University, Maisammaguda(H), Gundlapochampally (V), Medchal (M). Medchal  
– Malkajgiri District, Telangana, India

**Abstract**—Toni Morrison's *Beloved* explores the enduring impact of slavery on African American identity, memory, and community. This paper examines Morrison's narrative techniques, including fragmented voices, sonic elements, and nonlinear time, to represent trauma and embodied memory. Using interdisciplinary theory, it argues that *Beloved* transforms the discord of slavery into a powerful expression of resistance and healing. The novel's fractured narration and repetition reflect the cyclical nature of trauma, while communal and spiritual spaces offer avenues for reclaiming identity and agency. Additionally, Morrison critiques white liberalism and systemic racism, revealing their ongoing role in racial oppression. *Beloved* stands as a testament to the resilience of those affected by slavery, highlighting literature's capacity to confront historical trauma and envision pathways toward justice and community healing.

**Index Terms**—embodied memory, neo-slave narrative, sonic resistance, temporal entanglement, trauma

## I. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a powerful exploration of the enduring psychological and social impacts of slavery on African American identity and memory. The novel challenges traditional narrative forms through its fragmented voices and nonlinear timeline, revealing the complexity of trauma and resistance. Sethe, the protagonist, kills her child to save herself from the horrors of slavery, an act that embodies both maternal love and desperation. Trauma theory helps explain the novel's treatment of memory as nonlinear and cyclical. Morrison's concept of "rememory" captures how painful experiences resurface repeatedly, affecting both individuals and communities. Morrison employs fragmented narration and spectral elements, such as the ghostly presence of the Beloved, to depict the haunting effects of trauma. Baby Suggs plays a vital role by fostering spiritual gatherings that encourage self-love and communal healing. The novel also critiques white liberalism's contradictions through characters such as the Schoolteacher, who dehumanises enslaved people despite purportedly civil intentions. This exposes systemic racism embedded in seemingly progressive attitudes. *Beloved* draws from the historical case of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who killed her child to prevent re-enslavement. By weaving real history into fiction, Morrison reclaims erased narratives and affirms African American experiences—the novel challenges dominant cultural stories that minimise Black suffering and identity struggles. Morrison urges readers to recognise how past injustices shape present realities and the importance of storytelling in the healing process. Ultimately, *Beloved* reveals the ongoing impact of slavery while offering a vision of resilience and the possibility of communal recovery.

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\* Corresponding Author. Email: [priyadarshinimc@veltech.edu.in](mailto:priyadarshinimc@veltech.edu.in)

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Among the literature of African Americans, trauma studies, and neo-slave narratives, *Beloved* by Toni Morrison holds a remarkable place. Experts examine the meanings of trauma, identity, resistance, and narrative experimentation within the text. It explores the current critical views, which are essential for the study, focusing on how “sonic alchemy” and narrative elements are used in *Beloved* to illustrate trauma and memory in spatial, auditory, and psychoanalytic ways.

### A. Trauma, Memory, and Temporality

Much critical attention has been devoted to how trauma is central in *Beloved*, particularly concerning its unconventional time flow. According to Caruth (1996) and Herman (2015), the events of trauma are difficult to sort into a clear story because they disrupt regular time flow. As Caruth notes, the power of trauma depends on the experience of the event only after it has happened (Caruth, 1996). Morrison’s approach, called “rememory,” looks at painful memories again, in a way that seems repetitive or like a ghost shows an 11th pattern in her writing. Similarly, Balaev (2014) explains that trauma literature often makes memory look like pieces lacking a clear organisation, and Morrison does so in the novel to capture Sethe’s mental breakdown. Similarly, Van der Kolk and McFarlane describe trauma in 2013 as a “black hole of experience” that Morrison depicts by bringing back Beloved and making Sethe act very differently than before. This paper contributes to the conversation by demonstrating how Morrison’s use of voice, silence, and memory enables readers to experience the characters’ ordeals. This relates to Eyerman’s (2013) claim that for cultural trauma to matter to a society, it needs to be recorded and remembered in cultural symbols.

### B. Embodied Memory and Corporeal Narratives

Several teachers in the field, such as Krumholz (1992) and White (2000), have examined how Morrison employs embodiment to convey trauma in her writings. In Krumholz’s reading, the chokecherry tree scar on Sethe’s back becomes a physical symbol of race and a mother’s hardship (p. 395). He also covers the trauma of slavery by noting that the bodies of Black women show evidence of being used for bad, but also becoming a site for resistance to that abuse. This concept of corporeal cartographies is helpful because it highlights bodily experiences through space and records pain. The sound and space of Baby Suggs’ gatherings in the Clearing helped to heal her community. This backs Waterman’s (2001) observation that sound can either limit us or set us free, and your work emphasises sound as a meaningful activity for both performance and healing.

### C. Critical Race Theory and Structural Critique

According to Delgado and Stefancic (2023), Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides Morrison with a valuable framework for examining white liberalism and institutional racism. The School teacher and the Bodwins are good examples of what Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes as “color-blind racism,” by which racial equality in practice means racism continues in society. The author makes it clear that the support for abolition could still be rooted in paternalism, a point also made by Berger (1996) in his analysis of *Beloved* as a reply to the liberal Moynihan Report. Analysing how Morrison’s broken narrative helps challenge hegemonic liberalism agrees with CRT’s call for the centre of discussion to come from marginal voices. What you say about the spirit in *Beloved* as a political character fits Harris’s idea that the presence of Black ghosts underlines the illusion that race is no longer a significant factor.

### D. Psychoanalytic Approaches and the Spectral Unconscious

The theory of trauma gained over time from Freudian psychoanalysis offers a valuable basis for research. According to Bennett and Royle (2004), *Beloved* is seen as a version of Sethe’s unconscious guilt and pain. *Beloved* is not only a person in the book; she is also a mirror of Sethe’s inner demons and the trauma she has not overcome. Morrison does not use rituals or moments of repetition to end her stories; instead, you see how such moments help readers relive essential episodes from the past that still hurt them, drawing them back in time psychologically. In turn, Caesar (1994) and Rushdy (1992) emphasise that the novel’s “spectral” focus zooms in on loss, memory, and amends related to historical trauma. Morrison’s writing reveals the unconscious, as if the story is being “warned” by sound through the use of detached prose and spaces of silence.

### E. Sonic Resistance and Narrative Alchemy

Although Waterman (2001) and Reinhardt (2002) studied how music is used as a form of protest, your work creatively combines sound as both a narrative method and a metaphor for surviving. Sonic resistance helps us understand that music, moaning, silence, and prayer can, in various ways, challenge and transform the effects of trauma. Baby Suggs’ words about loving your hands are just as much about faith as they are about celebrating freedom from slavery. The author supports Toksöz’s (2024) stance that Morrison employs a fragmented style, allowing the characters to function as both witnesses and repositories of memories. Morrison brings all these voices together as a “harmonic resistance,” a new spiritual and literary approach to healing.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. *Trauma Theory: Disruption of Linear Time and Its Manifestation in Morrison's Narrative*

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* may be better understood through the prism of trauma theory, as put out by academics like Judith Herman and Cathy Caruth. For many, trauma is more than just a tragic incident; it is a rupture in time itself, wreaking havoc on people's minds and society. A "crisis of narrative," as highlighted by Herman (2015), occurs when a traumatic event fights to be integrated into one's conscious recollection and instead resurfaces in fragmented and disconnected ways. Morrison rejects traditional chronology in favour of a narrative that vacillates between the past and the present, thereby fundamentally disrupting the bounds of time. Despite her emancipation, the trauma surfaces in *Beloved* as Sethe is unable to escape the horrors of slavery altogether. Her traumatic experiences as an enslaved person, including her brutal separation from her mother and the murder of her child, continue to impact her life even now. As Caruth (1996) notes, trauma often "impedes, indeed contests, a distinct separation of past from present" (p. 119). Morrison reflects this temporal entanglement through the use of literary devices, including imagery, fractured language, and repetition. An example of this is how the "chokecherry tree" theme, which appears repeatedly on Sethe's back, both physically and metaphorically, represents the wounds that remain from her previous trauma (Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, 2024). By employing these literary strategies, Morrison skillfully portrays the delayed and invasive nature of trauma, allowing readers to empathise with the disorienting reality of enduring unsettling agony. Furthermore, *Beloved's* ethereal presence exemplifies trauma as a "shattering break" in experience, as eloquently put out by La Capra (cited in Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, 2024). Sethe and other characters are compelled to face the traumas they have buried when *Beloved* returns, underscoring the novel's examination of the interconnectedness between individual and communal history. Morrison highlighted the timeless effects of slavery and the need for healing in the face of its history by jolting linear time.

#### B. *Critical Race Theory (CRT): Critiquing White Liberalism and Systemic Racism*

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a powerful lens through which to examine how Morrison critiques white liberals and racism in society in *Beloved*. Delgado and Stefancic (2023) described critical race theory as an approach to social, legal, and political inequality and marginalisation that seeks to dismantle structural racism. Morrison reveals the double standard of white liberal principles and the pervasive oppressive systems that continue to hurt Black Americans long after slavery was abolished in her novel *Beloved*. Morrison mainly attacks white liberalism in her portrayal of the Bodwins, abolitionists who fight for the abolition of slavery but are blind to their role in upholding racial inequalities. They exhibit what DeCuir and Dixon (2004) call "color-blind racism," in which altruistic behaviour belies the desire to exploit and dominate those who were once enslaved. The dehumanising beliefs of white supremacy are shown by the Schoolteacher, who also reduces enslaved people to mere objects of study and classification. These depictions show how institutional racism is pervasive and evil; it manifests itself in both overt violent actions and more covert forms of exclusion and erasure. In addition to focusing on the lived realities of African Americans, Morrison highlights the agency and resilience of her characters as they confront institutional injustice. The portrayal of Sethe's choice to murder her child as a manifestation of the mother's love and defiance against the degrading aspects of slavery obscures the complexity of her moral position. In her work, Morrison presents a counter-narrative that upholds the worth of Black existence and history, challenging prevailing narratives that aim to marginalise African American perspectives (Karnan, 2017). By employing critical race theory (CRT), readers can gain insight into how Morrison's work highlights the need for genuine systemic change by critiquing racialised power structures that shape American society.

#### C. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives: Repression, the Unconscious, and the Spectral Presence of Beloved*

Another critical framework for examining *Beloved* is psychoanalytic theory and, more specifically, Freudian ideas on the unconscious and repression. The psychological processes by which trauma is processed (or repressed) and manifested symbolically shed light on Freud's ideas. *Beloved* depicts Sethe's psychological disintegration as a reflection of the wounds from her tragic past that she has tried to hide but cannot be entirely removed. One possible interpretation of *Beloved* herself is that she represents Sethe's suppressed past and remorse. According to Bennett and Royle (2004), trauma often causes a "loss of identity" as the significance of prior events shifts and transforms (p. 107). For Sethe, the ghost of *Beloved* represents her unresolved trauma in both a physical and symbolic sense, compelling her to face the unpleasant realities she has repressed for so long. To guide readers through this journey of recalling long-lost details, Morrison deftly employed imagery and repetition. For instance, the novel's repeated depiction of birds alludes to past trauma, drawing the reader. At the same time, they are awake and encouraging them to piece together the information hidden in the story (Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, 2024). Morrison also draws similarities to Freud's "repetition compulsion," the underlying tendency of people to relive painful experiences to control them. This psychological process is evident in Sethe's obsessive rehashing of past tragedies and her recurring meetings with *Beloved*. Morrison sheds light on how larger societal and cultural factors influence individual histories by employing psychoanalytic viewpoints to examine the complex relationship between collective and personal traumas.

#### D. *Sonic and Spatial Dimensions: Sonic Resistance and Oppressive Structures*

The acoustic and spatial qualities of *Beloved* provide another rich source of analysis, drawing on researchers who study sound and silence as strategies of resistance and oppression. Morrison utilises aural elements, such as whispers, music, and silences, to emphasise how the work explores the physical and geographical aspects of trauma. According to Waterman (2001), when people are oppressed or resisting sound, the influence of sound on their subjectivity and memory is especially strong. Sound is a source of pain and a therapeutic tool in *Beloved*. As a reflection of the psychological aftereffects of slavery, the spectral figure *Beloved* is often accompanied by unsettling noise and quiet. On the other hand, the public singing and testimonies that take place during Baby Suggs' meetings in the Clearing serve as an example of "sonic resistance," which gives formerly enslaved people a feeling of community and value. Contrary to white supremacist narratives that dehumanise people, Baby Suggs encourages people to "love your hands" and appreciate their bodies (Morrison, 1987, pp. 103-104). Morrison emphasises the transforming potential of sound in dismantling oppressive systems and recovering agency through these spatial and auditory activities.

Additionally, the novel's spatial dynamics highlight how physical places carry horrific memories. The haunting house on 124 Bluestone Road, where Sethe formerly lived, represents the ineradicable effects of slavery. However, it may also be a place of healing, as the characters are compelled to confront their pasts to move forward. Morrison creates a complex examination of pain and rejection that transcends conventional literary conventions by incorporating spatial and auditory elements into her story. To fully understand *Beloved*, one must consider it through the lens of trauma theory, critical racial theory, psychoanalytic viewpoints, and sonic and spatial elements. Using these theories, Morrison's work becomes a deep contemplation of trauma's complexity, the potential for healing and resistance, and the lasting effects of slavery. The study examines how Morrison challenges mainstream narratives and affirms the validity of African American experiences through the use of narrative tactics, drawing on the work of academics such as Herman, Caruth, Delgado, Stefancic, and Freud. Ultimately, *Beloved* demonstrates how narrative can transform lives by confronting past injustices and fostering hope for the future.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Mapping Trauma and Time in *Beloved*

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a profound exploration of pain, memory, and identity, intimately intertwined with the disruption of conventional notions of time. The book defies the conventions of linear time by weaving events from the past and present together, mirroring the recursive effects of trauma on both people and societies. The work brilliantly depicts the inseparable intertwining of the past and present through Morrison's use of a nonlinear narrative, "rememory," and flashbacks. The idea of "temporal entanglement," the ghostly presence of *Beloved* as a manifestation of unresolved trauma, and Sethe's quest to reconcile her horrific past with her current reality are the three essential components of this temporal entanglement. These characteristics highlight the intergenerational transfer of suffering and the ways trauma resists resolution.

##### (a). *Temporal Entanglement: Flashbacks, "Rememory", and Nonlinear Storytelling*

Morrison used the narrative technique of purposeful disruption of linear time in *Beloved*, which reflects the psychological experience of trauma, as one of the most remarkable aspects of the book. According to researchers such as Caruth (1996), trauma can make it difficult to recall events in sequential order, instead leaving them lodged in fragmented memories that emerge unexpectedly. Morrison constructs a narrative framework that mirrors the repetitive and invasive character of trauma through the use of flashbacks, "rememory," and nonlinear storytelling. To grasp Morrison's depiction of the past's enduring presence fully, the idea of "rememory" is crucial. Sethe says in *Beloved* that "rememory" is not a thing you leave behind but rather something that exists apart from you and is ready to be experienced again. This theory aligns with Caruth's assertion that traumatic experiences evade incorporation into conscious memory, instead recurring in overwhelming and unexpected ways (Caruth, 1996, p. 119). Consider how the chokecherry tree scar on Sethe's back brings back the physical and mental agony of her servitude every time she sees it (Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University, 2024). Morrison uses the narrative technique of "rememory" to stress that the past is indestructible because it shapes the present in such a deep manner.

Morrison further complicates linear time by employing fragmented narration and flashbacks. The narrative jumps seamlessly between many periods, blending the present with past events. This method captures the essence of trauma psychology, in which unexpected and illogical flashbacks interrupt a current moment. In one case, readers are immersed in Sethe's broken mind as her sporadic memories of murdering her child to escape being sold back into slavery interrupt the story's flow. According to Mingo (2019), the brain has a choice after a traumatic event: either integrate the memory into the past or keep it as a trigger for emotions that bring the past into the present (p. 59). Morrison's use of a nonlinear narrative echoes this process, illustrating how trauma can resurface in unexpected ways. Morrison emphasises the cyclical nature of trauma and its endurance across generations via these storytelling tactics. Historical injustices like slavery continue to impact the lives of the characters in *Beloved*. This intertwining of time emphasises the novel's central point: the past is never truly gone, but rather a persistent presence that necessitates recognition and reconciliation.

##### (b). *The Role of Beloved: Spectral Presence and Embodiment of Unresolved Trauma*

Beloved, Morrison's central character, represents unresolved pain in both a physical and metaphorical sense through his ethereal existence, which she uses to explore trauma and time. When Beloved comes back from the dead, it throws Sethe's family into disarray and makes everyone face the facts that they have been trying to hide for a long time. According to Balaev (2008), those who have experienced trauma often experience a "speechless fright" that causes them to become estranged from themselves and their memories (p. 149). Sethe's suppressed memories and latent shame are embodied in Beloved, who arrives to symbolise this alienation. The Beloved's function further complicates the novel's chronological structure as a ghostly entity that blurs the boundaries between the past and the present. There is no particular moment in which she is not there; instead, she is a ghost, the reincarnation of Sethe's daughter, who has died, and a representation of the horrors that enslaved people have been through. Morrison has been thinking about unconscious and Freudian notions of repression, and this multiplicity reflects that. Freud posits that repressed memories often reemerge in symbolic manifestations, such as dreams or hallucinations, that need interpretation (Bennett & Royle, 2004, p. 107). Because she is so mysterious, Beloved begs the reader to see her as a miniature representation of Sethe's tragedy, the anguish and longing that gave her birth.

*Beloved* also showed how trauma affects relationships through encounters with Sethe and Denver. Creating a dynamic that swings between caring and destructive impulses, Sethe's incessant requests for affection and attention reflect Sethe's feelings of guilt and yearning for forgiveness. The more time Beloved spends at Sethe's company, the more she withdraws from the present and the world around her. This regressive episode highlights the novel's examination of how unresolved trauma may alter an individual's identity and interfere with their relationship. In her depiction of Beloved, Morrison emphasises the dual aspect of trauma, showing how it can be both a solace and a trigger for disorder.

(c). *Sethe's Journey: Reconciling Traumatic Past with Present Reality*

*Beloved* focuses on Sethe's journey of coming to terms with her horrific history and her current situation; this journey highlights the passage of grief from one generation to another. There are protective and destructive ways in which Sethe's actions and relationships are shaped by the permanent psychological scars left by her experiences as a slave. The moral complexity of her choice to murder her child belies the depth of her love and her wish to protect her children from the atrocities of slavery. As noted by Karnan (2017), Sethe's deeds demonstrate the terrible decisions made by imprisoned mothers, who often had to put survival ahead of the traditional ideas of motherhood (p. 3). Throughout her voyage, Sethe tries to push the memories of her past to the back of her mind, but they keep returning in surprising ways. At a pivotal moment in her journey, she forms a bond with Paul D, another free slave. In his confrontation with Sethe about her child's death, Paul D encouraged her to face the consequences of her acts and the trauma that motivated them. To piece together the various parts of her past and present, Sethe is forced to confront the broken pieces of her identity in this encounter. According to Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam University (2024), Morrison unveils the layered pain inside Sethe's mind by guiding readers through her psychological environment using language and images (p. 6). The larger concept of communal healing is ultimately interwoven with Sethe's path towards reconciliation. As Sethe meets Baby Suggs, Denver, and other African-American community members, she begins to understand the value of communal resilience and shared memory. The Clearing events, hosted by Baby Suggs, serve as a model for the transformative potential of the community in the face of trauma. They provide a haven where victims can rediscover their inherent value and dignity. Morrison demonstrates that recovering from trauma requires both individual reflection and the support of those who can relate.

(d). *Intergenerational Transmission of Pain*

As the trauma endured by enslaved people impacts succeeding generations, the idea of the intergenerational transmission of suffering emerges again throughout *Beloved*. As a result of their mother's unresolved trauma, Sethe's children, especially Denver, face significant challenges as they attempt to establish their own identities. The lasting impact of slavery, which denies Denver the chance to be educated and independent, is shown in her dependence on Sethe and her solitude. Morrison (1987) observed that people are still oppressed and marginalised because slavery's legacy prevents them from living completely human lives (pp. 103-104). Nonetheless, Morrison presents a picture of perseverance and optimism, implying that it is possible to escape the shackles of history. Morrison stresses the possibility of fresh starts and self-discovery through Denver's slow escape from 124 Bluestone Road. A turning point in the story occurs when Denver decides to reach out to the community for assistance; this action represents her escape from loneliness caused by her trauma and her acceptance of the power of togetherness. The belief in the transformational power of the narrative and community in overcoming past injustices is highlighted by Morrison's act of agency. Toni Morrison deftly charts the interaction between trauma and time in *Beloved*, subverting conventional notions of time "through the use of flashbacks, 'rememory,' and a nonlinear narrative,." While Sethe's quest to heal her past and present highlights the passing of suffering from one generation to another, Beloved's ghostly presence is a potent manifestation of unresolved trauma. Using these aspects, Morrison weaves a story that sheds light on the lasting effects of slavery while also providing solutions for moving forward. Beloved, a lasting monument to the power of narrative in addressing the past and inventing new futures, engages readers in the complexity of pain and memory.

B. *Embodied Memory and Sonic Resistance in Beloved*

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* delves deeply into themes of resistance, memory, and trauma through the use of sound and body sensations. In addition to exploring how sound, in the form of silence, whispers, or songs, serves as a weapon of

resistance against repressive power systems, the book explores how the physical wounds of slavery and the metaphorical burden of embodied memory impact identity. Morrison also used fragmented storylines to reflect the characters' and the African American community's identity crises. With these aspects in place, *Beloved* stands as a monument to the lasting effects of slavery and the strength of those facing its atrocities.

### C. Corporeal Cartographies: The Physical Scars of Slavery and Their Symbolic Weight

The use of corporeal cartographies, or the mapping of trauma onto the body, by Morrison to depict the mental and bodily wounds caused by slavery, is one of the most remarkable aspects of *Beloved*. Witnessing the brutality faced and the identities moulded by slavery, the body becomes a location of remembrance. The "chokecherry tree" scar on Sethe's back is a tangible manifestation of the psychological and physical dehumanisation she suffered as a result of the cruel flogging she received at Sweet Home (Morrison, 1987, p. 25). According to Krumholz (1992), who contends that Morrison's writings offer a view of history through the eyes of enslaved African Americans as opposed to the white elite, this scar is more than just an individual wound; it is a collective symbol of the anguish that enslaved people endured (p. 395).

The indelible marks of slavery mould communal identity in ways that go beyond physical. According to White (2000), the oppressive institution of slavery had a profound impact on slave communities' gender roles and identities, particularly on black women who often endured both racial and gendered forms of exploitation (p. 45). At the crossroads of gender, race, and trauma, Sethe put maternal love ahead of social expectations by murdering her child to avoid being enslaved again. Morrison shows these acts not as heroic deeds but as desperate reactions to a cruel society, highlighting how the body stores pain and unmet sadness. Morrison also highlights the symbolic significance of one's physiological experiences in shaping one's identity. The importance of recovering control over one's physical self in the face of systematic erasure is highlighted by Baby Suggs' call to "love your hands" and accept one's body (Morrison, 1987, pp. 103-104). The dehumanising ideals of slavery, which aimed to turn people into nothing more than tools of labour, are opposed by this exhortation to love oneself. Morrison created a story that not only highlights the atrocities of slavery but also provides avenues for self-discovery and healing by concentrating on the physical aspects of trauma.

#### (a). *Sound as Resistance: Silence, Whispers, and Song*

*Beloved* people rely heavily on sound, which functions as a place of pain and a tool for resistance against repressive power systems. Morrison challenges the erasure of African American voices and asserts their humanity in the face of institutional dehumanisation using songs, whispers, and silence. As noted by Waterman (2001), sound shapes human subjectivity and memory, particularly in the context of oppression and resistance (p. 78). The spectral figure of *Beloved* often appears, accompanied by unsettling noises and pauses, mirroring the psychological aftereffects of slavery. An effective means of resistance is to remain silent. Society as a whole has a propensity to bury the terrible memories of slavery, and Sethe's silence on the subject reflects this. Sethe's choice to keep her narrative hidden until she is prepared to face it makes her silence active rather than passive. Mingo (2019) noted that when people experience trauma, they have a choice: either to accept the memory as a part of the past or to hold on to it emotionally, which might bring the past into the present (p. 59). Through the use of silence, Morrison draws attention to the nuances of tragedy and encourages readers to empathise with the unspoken suffering that shapes her characters. Song, on the other hand, has become a means of collective resistance, providing comfort and unity to those who have been oppressed in the past. As people assemble in the Clearing to sing, pray, and affirm their value, Baby Suggs's gatherings show how music can change lives. As an alternative to the degrading narratives propagated by slavery, these assemblies help people feel valued and become part of a community. Reinhardt (2002) notes that marginalised groups can demonstrate their humanity and reclaim their past through storytelling and music (p. 95). Morrison emphasises the strength and defiance of African American culture in the face of tyranny via these musical components.

#### (b). *Fragmented Voices: Mirroring Fractured Identities*

The fractured narratives used by Morrison enhance the examination of trauma and resistance throughout the book. In *Beloved*, the characters' identities are shattered by the psychological toll of slavery, and the story's fragmented structure reflects this. According to Balaev (2008), people who have experienced trauma often develop a "speechless fright" that causes them to lose touch with who they are and what they remember (p. 149). Morrison skillfully portrays this disintegration via her unique storytelling skills, combining many viewpoints and timeframes to form a web of interwoven narratives. As her ghostly presence upsets the delicate balance of Sethe's home, *Beloved* personifies the disintegration. This dynamic, which swings between nurturing and destructive impulses, is a reflection of Sethe's shame and need for atonement and manifests in her ravenous need for affection and attention. Caesar (1994) notes that Morrison's depiction of *Beloved* emphasises the recurring nature of trauma, as unprocessed hurt manifests in unexpected forms (p. 115). Morrison employs fractured voices to enable readers to understand the tragedy her characters have experienced by connecting the dots in their lives. In addition, the shattered tales in *Beloved* mirror the larger African American experience, in which prevailing narratives have distorted or obliterated communal history. Scholars such as Delgado and Stefancic (2023) note that critical race theory aims to amplify the voices of marginalised individuals and challenge the dominant narrative (p. 45). This perspective aligns with Morrison's emphasis on storytelling as a means of recovering lost histories.

Morrison highlighted the importance of African American perspectives and the need for fundamental systemic changes via fractured tales.

(c). *Integrating Embodied Memory and Sonic Resistance*

The novel's use of corporeal memory and sonic resistance in *Beloved* highlights the essential themes of perseverance, identity, and trauma. Morrison uses sound to emphasise the transformative power of resistance, and her focus on bodily cartographies reveals how the physical scars of slavery shape individual and social identities. All of these parts come together to form a story that illustrates not only the horrors of slavery but also how people can recover and become stronger. Taking Sethe's quest for reconciliation as an example, she uses embodied memory and sonic resistance in her path. Her encounters with Baby Suggs, Denver, and other Black Americans emphasise the value of communal memory and strength. The Clearing events, hosted by Baby Suggs, serve as a model for the transformative potential of the community in the face of trauma. They provide a haven where victims can rediscover their inherent value and dignity. Morrison demonstrates that recovering from trauma requires both individual reflection and the support of those who can relate. *Beloved* is proof that stories can change lives by bringing light to injustices of the past and inspiring hope for the future. Morrison created a complex examination of trauma and resistance that transcends conventional literary conventions by combining embodied memory with sonic resistance. *Beloved* is a tale that, via Toni Morrison's expert use of bodily cartographies, sonic resistance, and fractured narratives, reveals the lasting effects of slavery and provides a means of overcoming them. To fight back against oppressive power systems, people use physical wounds resulting from slavery, the symbolic significance of embodied memory, and the transforming power of music. Morrison shows how complicated trauma is and how it affects people and communities by using fragmented narratives to reflect the characters' broken identities. All of these things come together to make *Beloved* a profound reflection on trauma, its complexity, its potential for healing, and resistance in the face of the lasting effects of slavery.

D. *Alchemy of Fragmented Voices: Transforming Trauma into Healing in Beloved*

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a brilliant investigation of trauma, memory, and identity, with fractured voices serving as transformational instruments. Morrison emphasises the enduring impact of trauma and provides solutions to recovery through the use of narrative devices, including witness testimony, vivid imagery, and repetition. These literary methods serve a dual purpose: they bring the characters' inner lives to life and establish an emotional connection between the reader and the book. Morrison brings together disparate experiences into a unified force of strength and agency through storytelling, which she uses to recover forgotten past experiences, promote group healing, and rebuild broken narratives. Here, the research examines how the elements of witnessing and testifying, as well as imagery and symbolism, contribute to the transformative process of *Beloved*.

(a). *Repetition: Reinforcing Trauma and Offering Pathways to Healing*

Repetition is one of the most remarkable storytelling devices in *Beloved* as a reflection and tool for processing trauma. To establish control over unpleasant memories, some people experience "repetition compulsion," as pointed out by Mingo (2019, p. 59). Morrison employs a narrative rhythm that reflects the cyclical nature of trauma via the use of recurrent words, pictures, and themes, capturing this psychological process. The recognisable rhythm that emphasises the growth of trauma inside Sethe's home is established by the opening lines of each book: "124 was spiteful" (Morrison, 1987, p. 13), "124 was loud" (p. 134), and "124 was quiet" (p. 186). By making trauma's presence more commonplace, this recurrence encourages readers to confront the intricacy and tenacity of the experience. Readers are led through a range of emotions connected to the lingering effects of slavery by the narrative device of "124 was..." repeated throughout. This structural recurrence suggests that Toksöz (2024) portrays the multifaceted nature of trauma, captivating readers on both unconscious and conscious levels simultaneously (p. 8). Repetition confirms that trauma is inevitable and provides opportunities for recovery. Morrison helps her characters (and, by implication, her readers) deal with unresolved anguish by having them repeat horrific experiences through narrative. One example is how Sethe finds solace in reliving the terrible events surrounding her escape from Sweet Home and her child's death. To transform trauma into a shared experience that fosters empathy and understanding, Morrison employs repetition, which Heinert (2008) notes as creating an opening for conversation and contemplation (p. 112). In addition, the fact that trauma has been passed down through generations is brought to light through repetition. The long-lasting effects of slavery on African American families have been brought to light by the recurrent theme of separation, which may take the form of child loss, relocation, or even death. Morrison deftly incorporates these echoes into her story, ensuring that the past is not a cold, dead memory, but an active part of the present. The transforming power of repetition is highlighted in *Beloved* by its dual function of perpetuating trauma and creating recovery routes.

(b). *Imagery and Symbolism: Creating a Visceral Connection*

Another essential component of Morrison's narrative alchemy is the use of symbolism and vivid imagery, which forge a strong emotional connection between readers and characters. Her descriptions are intricately woven into the cultural and psychological realities of her characters, rather than merely ornamental. Morrison uses visuals to portray the mental and physical wounds of slavery, giving readers a firsthand understanding of the suffering that her characters went through. The "chokecherry tree" scar on Sethe's back, which represents the cruel beating she received at Sweet Home, is among

the most stunning instances of imagery in *Beloved*. This scar serves as a communal reminder of the brutality perpetrated on enslaved people, in addition to being a personal injury. According to Krumholz (1992), Morrison offers a historical viewpoint “from the consciousness of African-American slaves rather than through the perspective of the dominant white classes” (p. 395). The chokecherry tree reminds readers of the tenacity required to endure such horrors and is a potent symbol of resilience.

Beyond personal wounds, symbolism encompasses general concerns about memory and identity. Unresolved trauma is symbolised by the figure of Beloved herself, who represents the persistence of the past in the present. Morrison challenges readers to confront the complexities of pain by blurring the lines between life and death, reality and memory through the ethereal figure of Beloved. Caesar (1994) asserts that Morrison’s depiction of *Beloved* highlights the cyclical nature of trauma, with unresolved anguish resurfacing in unexpected ways (p. 115). Morrison’s use of imagery is crucial in promoting comprehension and empathy. She allows readers to experience their characters’ bodies by depicting the bodily feelings of trauma, such as the weight of chains, suffocating imprisonment, and the agony of whippings. Because of this sensory connection, the story’s emotional effect is enhanced, and the characters’ experiences become more realistic and sympathetic. Toksöz (2024) notes that Morrison’s use of symbolism and imagery turns intangible ideas, such as memory and trauma, into tangible, experienced realities (p. 10).

(c). *Testimony and Witnessing: Reclaiming Lost Histories*

The significance of storytelling as a means of recovering lost history and promoting group healing lies at the core of *Beloved*. Morrison highlighted the importance of witnessing and testifying as crucial steps in trauma healing, emphasising the ability of the story to close the gap between the known and the unknown. Morrison affirms her characters’ humanity and dignity by allowing them to speak about their experiences through narrative. Sethe’s capacity to share her experiences is intricately linked to her recovery path. She is hesitant to talk about her history at first, but eventually opens up to Denver, Paul D., and the community. This act of witnessing engages others in the process of remembering and healing, and is not only a personal catharsis. According to Reinhardt (2002), in the face of systematic erasure, storytelling enables marginalised populations to express their humanity and recover their past (p. 95). Morrison highlighted the transformational power of a story via Sethe’s testimony, transforming personal suffering into a communal experience that promotes empathy and understanding.

In *Beloved*, witnessing is equally significant since it affirms the experiences of trauma survivors. The last action taken by the community was a powerful demonstration of support, acknowledgement, and witness to Sethe’s suffering. This group reaction emphasises the importance of social cohesion in overcoming trauma. White (2000) noted that the institutional oppression of slavery had a significant impact on gender roles and identity in slave societies, with black women often carrying the twin burdens of gendered and racial exploitation (p. 45). Morrison affirms the worth of African American voices and experiences by challenging oppressive institutions through the lens of testimony and witnessing.

Furthermore, Morrison’s narrative structure serves as a witness act in itself. She crafted a tapestry of interwoven tales that represent the larger African American experience by fusing various viewpoints and historical periods. A more comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of history is made possible by the diversity of perspectives, which prevents any single narrative from dominating. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2023), critical race theory seeks to subvert the prevailing narrative and amplify the voices of underrepresented groups (p. 45). Morrison highlighted the importance of African American experiences and drew attention to the need for real systemic change through his testimony and observations.

(d). *Alchemy of Fragmented Voices: Transformation Through Storytelling*

In *Beloved*, Morrison employs the alchemy of fractured voices to transform narratives into a means of healing pain. She creates a story that not only highlights the atrocities of slavery but also provides avenues for resilience and empowerment by using symbolism, testimony, imagery, repetition, and the power of witnessing. Together, these narrative strategies foster a close connection between readers and characters, promoting understanding and empathy. In addition to providing chances for healing, repetition serves to highlight the cyclical nature of trauma as both characters and readers go back over upsetting experiences in the quest for closure. Through the use of imagery and symbolism, the characters’ experiences become concrete and accessible, establishing a visceral connection. Witnesses and testimonies highlight the humanity and dignity of those who have experienced a tragedy. When combined, these components convert disjointed stories into a coherent alchemy of resilience, empowering people and transforming tragedy into a source of strength.

Ultimately, *Beloved* is a testament to the enduring power of narrative to confront past injustices and envision alternative futures. Morrison created a story that transcends conventional literary bounds by recovering forgotten histories and promoting collective healing, enabling readers to engage actively with the complexity of the human condition. Toni Morrison crafts a narrative in *Beloved* that transforms tragedy into healing through her skilful use of symbolism, imagery, repetition, testimony, and the act of witnessing. These narrative devices establish a visceral connection between the book and its audience while also helping the reader better comprehend the psychological landscapes of the characters. Morrison created a unified alliance of resilience and strength by recovering forgotten history and promoting communal healing. Morrison emphasises in *Beloved* the transformational potential of narrative in addressing pain and imagining fresh approaches to equality and justice.

## V. CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* reveals the deep and lasting psychological effects of slavery through its innovative narrative techniques. By portraying trauma, memory, and identity, the novel illustrates how individuals and communities confront the legacy of historical trauma. Morrison's use of fragmented voices and sonic elements transforms suffering into resilience and hope. *Beloved* challenges dominant narratives, emphasising the power of storytelling to confront injustice and envision a more equitable future.

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**K. Srividya Lakshmi** is working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Language, Culture and Society at SRMIST, Ramapuram. She has 18 years of teaching experience. She has published over 32 research articles in International Journals and Conferences in the areas of Afro American Literature and Technical English. She has published four book chapters and authored a Book published by an international publication in 2023 titled “ELEMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,” the book is for the benefit of undergraduate and postgraduate students to enhance their language expression skills and communication abilities. She has presented more than 14 research papers at an International Conference. She is a Cambridge Speaking BEC Examiner and a member of ELT@I. She has completed more than eight NPTEL and COURSERA courses. She is a faculty coordinator for the Model United Nations.



**Priyadarshini M C** is an Assistant Professor and Research Supervisor of English, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sangunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai. She 7 years of experience in teaching. Notably, she was honoured with the BEST FACULTY AWARD, RESEARCHER AWARD from the IARA group. She serves as a Cambridge University Business English Certificate (BEC) Speaking Examiner, and she is also a freelance trainer with IELTS. Her research acumen can be understood with her impressive track record of 25 publications, which include books, book chapters, and 4 papers in Scopus-indexed Journals with a high impact factor. She has participated in International Conferences, 10 National Conferences, 10 seminars and 25 workshops. She is the most sought resource person and she has delivered more than 10 invited talks.



**S. Karthik Kumar** is a Professor of English at Annamalai University, Annamalainagar, India, and he is, at present, heading the century-old department. He is also serving as the Deputy Director, IQAC of the University. He has put in 25 years of teaching and research experience. His research interests lie in Post-Colonial Literature and Eco Studies in Literature. With his research guidance, 20 PhD scholars and 25 M.Phil. scholars have successfully earned their degrees. Karthik Kumar has completed 02 Major Research Projects sponsored by UGC and 01 minor project sponsored by RUSA, and presently he is part of an ongoing project sponsored by the Tribal Welfare Development, Govt. of Tamil Nadu. He has a considerable research publication to his credit: more than 120 articles in National/international journals; 30 articles in edited books with ISBN; and 30 papers in conference proceedings. Besides, he has authored two books and edited nearly 20 books. As Co-ordinator/Organising Secretary, he has been involved in the conduct of more than 20 workshops/Conferences/Seminars. He is a member of the Boards of Studies in English of as many as 20 institutions across India. As a resource person, he has delivered invited talks in workshops, seminars and refresher programmes. Karthik Kumar has visited Singapore and Australia for academic purposes.



**K. Gopalakrishnan** is an accomplished academic and researcher currently serving as Associate Professor of English at Malla Reddy (MR) Deemed to be University, Hyderabad. With over six years of teaching experience, he has taught English Language and Literature at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He obtained his PhD in English from Annamalai University for his thesis titled “Social Vision through Magical Realism: A Study of the Select Novels of Gabriel García Márquez.” Dr. Gopalakrishnan has a rich academic portfolio, having published eight research papers in reputed national and international journals, including UGCCARE-listed journals such as the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai and Dhimahi. His research covers diverse areas like American and Indian Literature, Feminist Studies, Postcolonial Theory, and Magical Realism. He has presented papers in several national seminars and contributed to the growing body of contemporary literary studies. A recipient of the National Faculty Award (2021–2022) for Best Young Researcher and the Global Faculty Award (2022), he is also an Editorial Board Member and Reviewer for leading international journals. Dr. Gopalakrishnan is a lifetime member of the English Language Teachers’ Association of India (ELTAI). His current interests include English language pedagogy, life skills, educational development, and soft skills training.