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**The Exploration of the Cultural Haunting and the Inclusion of  
Mythology in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture**

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## **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to Allah, my creator and my master, thank you for the guidance, strength, power of mind, protection and skills and for giving us a healthy life. All of these, we offer to you.

To my great teacher and messenger, Mohammed (May Allah bless and grant him), who taught us the purpose of life.

This work is lovingly dedicated to my respective parents who have been my constant source of aspiration, they are supporting me and giving me pieces of advice to reach success and finish this study.

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And lastly, to my friends, brothers and sisters, especially my sister HOUDA, whom I pray to Allah to dwell her in paradise.

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### **Abstract**

This work engages in a cultural and mythological discussion of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It explores the existence of elements and symbols of ghostly haunting and how they reflect the protagonist's dilemma to struggle with the slavery of the past, and her fight in order to protect her children from their slave masters. Besides, the study shows the writer's use of myths like the mother's myth, the trickster myth, and the myth of the rebirth in order to explain their wide effect and relation with history of African Americans' slavery. Toni Morrison includes those mythological manifestations because she wants to glorify the image of the mythic mother who is ready to sacrifice for her children and save them from the dehumanizing consequences of slavery.

## Table of Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	I
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	II
<b>Abstract</b> .....	III
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	IV
<b>Introduction</b>	
<b>Chapter One: A Window on Cultural Haunting and Mythology in Contemporary</b>	
<b>African American Literature</b> .....	1
I.1. Thematic Characteristics of the Contemporary African American Literature.....	1
I.2. Cultural Haunting: An Overview.....	9
I.3. The Significance of the African Mythology.....	12
I.4. Cultural Haunting and Myths in Contemporary African American Literature.....	14
<b>Chapter Two: The Exploration of Cultural Haunting in Toni Morrison’s</b>	
<b><i>Beloved</i></b> .....	16
II.1. The Summary and the Narrative Structure of <i>Beloved</i> .....	16
II.2. The Psychological Effects of Slavery in <i>Beloved</i> .....	18
II.3. The Appropriation of the Haunted House in <i>Beloved</i> .....	23
II.4. The Significance of the Ghost of Daughter in Toni Morrison’s <i>Beloved</i> .....	25
II.5. <i>Beloved</i> ’s Ghost Relation to Sethe and to the African Americans.....	26
<b>Chapter Three: Myths and its Role in Toni Morrison’s <i>Beloved</i></b> .....	30
III.1. Myths and the Contemporary African American Literature.....	30
III.2. Myths in Toni Morrison’s <i>Beloved</i> .....	31
III.2.1. The Mother Myth.....	31
III.2.2. The Trickster Myth.....	34

III.2.3.The Rebirth Myth .....	37
III.3. Myths' Role in <i>Beloved</i> .....	40
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	43
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	46
<b>Abstracts (Arabic/French)</b>	

## Introduction

In many literary works, the use of the concept of the cultural haunting and the inclusion of myths have been occurred and tackled especially in the Contemporary African American literary works. The African American literature has appeared during the nineteen seventies until the present day. It told the stories of the enslaved people and their experiences in America. The writers of the Contemporary African American literature, by their writings, show the real image of slavery, and how slaves faced violence and oppression at that time. In addition to showing slavery and its difficulties, the use of the theme of the cultural haunting, and the inclusion of myths are crucial concepts in the Contemporary African American literature.

The present study will examine the concept of the cultural haunting and its use, which has and is still discussed in the Contemporary African American literature, especially in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*(1987), and how she uses mythology to shape the idea of heroism, mother-daughter relationship, and mother's fight in order to protect her children from their masters. In addition to discussing the cultural haunting and its significance in some writings, many other writers tackle the inclusion of myths and mythology in their novels, articles, and papers. More specifically, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, this study will investigate the use of myths and shed light on its meaning, symbolization, and its reference in relation to the characters of the novel. Those articles, papers, and dissertations, focus on dealing with the use of mythology, and consider some types of myths such as the motherhood myth.

Such works describe the use of the cultural haunting motif and its relation to history, identity, culture, and society in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Therefore, the present study explores the haunting ghosts' role, which is connecting the past with the present. They have a cultural role where these ghosts influence the past, the present, and the future. In discussing this role, the study examines the ghosts' relationship with the other characters in the novel, as

well as their relationship with the African American community. Moreover, this study aims to point out what effect do the haunting ghosts bring about on the characters on both personal and collective levels? In addition, this study aims to show how the brave slaves, who fight slavery to get freedom, and slave mothers who defend their children from slavery in *Beloved* are considered as myths. It investigates the myths' bravery inside slaves to face their masters, life difficulties, and to save their children's life. The study aims to explore how the mother becomes a powerful nurturer and protector. Whether she has taken the right or the wrong decision when she has killed her baby girl, she remains the one, who protects her dead child.

Thereby, this work is divided into three major chapters. The first one is entitled « A Window on Cultural Haunting and Mythology in Contemporary African American Literature ». It is a theoretical chapter, which will provide an overview of the cultural haunting and the use of mythology and its significance in the contemporary African American literature in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Before that, It deals, with the definition and the characteristics of the Contemporary African American literature, and discusses the novel of *Beloved* as a Contemporary African American work. The second chapter will be an analytical study, and mainly about the cultural haunting and its psychological impact on the relationships between the characters. Finally, the third chapter is entitled « Myths and its Role in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* ». It is, also, an analytical chapter, which deals with the use of myths in the Contemporary African American literature, and especially in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. In addition to that, it presents some myths that Morrison uses in her novel like the mother myth, the trickster myth, and the myth of rebirth.

This study concerns with two important concepts in the Contemporary African American literature, which are the cultural haunting theme and the inclusion of myths. This work takes into consideration the analysis of those two concepts and their significance in Morrison's



*Beloved*. This study is important for other future literary studies, because it will play the role of a second source of information. It will be taken as a tool to write a literature review for a new research. By analyzing Morrison's work from a psychoanalytical point of view, the study shows how the cultural haunting affects the characters, and how the use of myths makes the reader get a clear idea about African Americans' life of slavery.

## **Chapter One: A Window on Cultural Haunting and Mythology in Contemporary African American literature**

This first chapter that is entitled « A Window on Cultural Haunting and Mythology in Contemporary African American Literature » will be a theoretical one. It will deal, firstly, with the definition and the characteristics of the Contemporary African American literature. Then, it will discuss the novel of *Beloved* as a Contemporary African American work, and it will deal with Toni Morrison's biography, too. After that, as an overview, it will tackle the issue of the cultural haunting in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. In addition to that, this chapter investigates the use of mythology and its significance in the Contemporary African American literature.

### **I.1. Thematic Characteristics of the Contemporary African American Literature**

The Contemporary African American literature is a genre of the African American literature that has began from 1960 till the present. In the Contemporary African American literature, the works reflect a real image about the blacks' life that comes from the written expression of their experiences and start with the slave narratives. In relation to a huge number of writings, this contemporary African American literature sheds the light on the freedom of creativity of American literary artists from African origins. In deep ways, historical information about slavery and racism are emphasized by the literature of this period, which highlights the politics of race, gender and other issues that are related to African American people (Cousin 2).

In 2016, the writers of the New World Encyclopedia, in an article which is entitled « African American Literature », state that at the beginning of the 1970s, the African American literature reached success because the black writers won many awards and prizes, and their literary works achieved great sales. This period was also the time when the academia began to accept the literary works of the African American writers as a valid genre of

American literature. In addition, OndoraKrouse, in 2016, in her article « African American Literature: An Overview », notices that the most distinguished feature of the Contemporary African American literature is the return to the African American history and emphasizes on the relationships within the African American society. This period of the African American literature shows an expansion in the literary works which are written by women. There were writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, who have significantly participated in the field of African American arts and letters. Walker, Morrison, and other writers of that period, adopt the history of pain of the African American slavery. They share something in their minds that, in order to understand their lives in the present, African Americans should own their history.

Katie Surber, in her article « Contemporary African American Writers: Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, James Baldwin », in 2003, identifies some points about the Contemporary African American Literature. This article talks about the focus of the contemporary African American literature and its history:

Like the beginning of the African American movement, current literature focuses on the themes of African American culture, racism and equality, and the role of African Americans in society. The writings often reflect the current struggles of the African American race. The history of contemporary writing begins after the Great Migration to the North, the time between 1910-1930 when as many as six million African Americans migrated north. Following this, a sense of independence grew among African American culture that led to the Harlem Renaissance and a movement of black activists and writers. These writers pushed for an end of segregation, confronted the

issue of racism and helped shape a sense of pride and independence in the African American community. (01)

Also, Surber tackles an important point that represents the contemporary African American writers' success in their literary writings, in which she argues:

This sense of pride continued into the 1970s but also expanded into mainstream literature. Black writers began to earn a high place in American writing and were recognized through many awards, achievements and bestselling novels. Today, African American writers continue to address many of the same societal concerns but are accepted outside of their community, as well.

(01)

The major developments in the contemporary African American literature include the great success of many African American writers, like Toni Morrison, as well as a growth in the number of authors who are related to this genre of literature. As a result, of the large number of the contemporary African American literary works that have been published since the 1980's, many themes, which are considered as its characteristics, are presented. Some of them are racism, feminism, search for identity, and blues a major source of self-definition.

The first characteristic is racism, which comes from the word race. From the chapter that is entitled « Racial Discrimination », it is "...the belief that it is a primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial difference produces an inherent superiority of a particular race..."(42). According to these words, racism, in general, is a belief that one race is superior to the other or treating a person or group of people differently on the basis of their race. In particular, racism is one of the themes, which have led to the emergence of what we call the African American Literature. According to Mbanefo S. Ogene in his book: *Black American*

*Literature and the Problem of Racism, Slavery and Oppression in the Post Slavery Era: A Reappraisal of Dunbar's The Sport of the God:*

The problem created by racism could be traced to be the major factor behind most Black literature through the ages. In America, this gave rise to a new form of literary expression known as the Black American Literature or African American Literature. (75)

Racism, in addition to its general definition, it is one of the major themes and characteristics of the Contemporary African American Literature, by which the authors of that period show their suffering like all the African Americans' within the American society.

The second characteristic of the Contemporary African American literature is feminism. Jane Freedman claims that "Feminism is thus a term that emerged long after women started questioning their inferior status and demanding an amelioration in their social position" (03). From those words, feminism took place in literature after the emergence of the women's desire of changing their position in order to have an important role to play in the society, and to go beyond their submission and inferiority. In the African American literature of the late twentieth century, the African American writers, especially women, tried to show their experiences of slavery, race, inferiority, inequality...etc, as African Americans, and this made an important step in the African American literature. This is what is noticed from Daina Miniotaité's article « The African-American Literary Tradition », when she states:

In the 1970s women began to openly express their experience as both suppressed women and members of minority groups. The black women writers of the period – Glorya Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, Shirley Anne Williams, and Gayl Jones – explored the

issues of their problematic position and struggle for liberation in a racial and mainstream culture. Their work marked a significant shift in African-American literature. (42)

A search for identity is another third characteristic of the Contemporary African American Literature, because identity is all what shapes African Americans' past, present, and future. By using this characteristic, the contemporary African American writer, Toni Morrison, wants to show the real life and experiences that the blacks faced in the American society, in relation to their memory and history. Mark, in his article that is entitled « The Identity Crisis and the African American literature », shows how memory and history are important to shape identity:

Toni Morrison also confirms the importance of memory and history... In *Beloved* geographical locations were utilized as important sites of memory in the construction of African American culture and identity. This is significant not because it creates a historical setting but also it fosters connection to memory-generating experiences to emphasize the relationship between memory and history. (08)

So, according to this writer, history and memory are related to identity because they are the most important elements, which construct African Americans' identity and culture.

In addition to the three first characteristics of the Contemporary African American literature, which are racism, feminism, and the search for identity, there is a fourth one that is the blues as a major source of self-definition. The blues, as it is known, is a type of folksong which has a melancholy sound from repeated use of blue notes in America. This music is not

just sounds to be heard, however, it has a relation to African Americans' life and experiences. According to Susanna Steinfeld in her article « The Social Significance of Blues Music »,

Blues music was created from the living conditions and emotional experiences of African Americans in the southern United States. The social significance of Blues music resides in the revolutionary element of African Americans creating their own aesthetics. (02)

According to what Susanna Steinfeld, blues comes from the blacks' sentiments. It represents their life's experiences, and it signifies the desire of the African Americans to fight the bad circumstances of slavery, racism, oppression... etc. In order to define and prove themselves inside the American society, they face those obstacles and try to displace them to show the white Americans that they are strong people.

The African American writers, to express their experiences, mostly use the Contemporary African American literature of the contemporary period. Novelists, like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, James Baldwin and others, have shown the African Americans' lives focusing on racism, slavery, poverty and inequality. From the blacks' point of view, this genre of literature reaches success because it sheds the light on the different circumstances that the African American faced during the slavery period. Furthermore, women have a very important role in this success in general because they deal with many themes, like slavery, women's oppression, racism... etc, which touch the African Americans' lives. These women writers were forced by an American society to search for their identity and dignity. All these women novelists should write about their lives and its difficulties. They should define themselves and deal with their importance in the society as individuals or members in the family, especially as women, mothers and wives, and as saviours of their culture by writing

black stories, using myths. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is an example of the story that explains the pain of the African Americans, and tries to show how they love their culture and identity, through the use of myths, mainly the return back of Beloved from death to haunt her family, in order to make them remember their past and history.

One of the most significant African American writers of the contemporary literature is Toni Morrison. Her original name is Chloe Anthony Wofford. She was born on February 18, 1931, Lorain, Ohio, U.S. She is an American writer noted for her examination of black experience, particularly black female experience, within the black community. In addition, Morrison wrote her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, and it was published in 1970. She continues to explore the African American experience in its many forms in her work. Her next novel, *Sula* in 1973, explores good and evil through the friendship of two women who grew up together. The work was nominated for the American Book Award. She has another book which is entitled *Song of Solomon* published in 1977, because of which Toni Morrison receives a number of prizes. In addition to those works, Toni Morrison has another literary work which is entitled *Beloved*. It was published in 1987, and after it is published, she won several awards, including the famed Pulitzer Prize in 1988. Ten years later, in 1998, the book was turned into a movie starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover.

*Beloved*, the book that many writers consider Morrison's masterpiece, tells the story of a slave woman named Sethe who is haunted by the ghost of the daughter she killed. According to Hajer Ayadi in her essay, which is entitled, « Towards a Reconstruction of African American Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* », Toni Morrison in her novel *Beloved*, examines how to form a black identity in the American society, based on relating history of the black people with their personal and cultural memories. In her writing she says:



The project of Toni Morrison in *Beloved* is to make a connection between history and personal and cultural memories to participate in the formation of the Black community's identity. The author illustrates how the African American identity could be reconstructed through its own cultural heritage and social structure. Morrison depicts an enormous and horrific context which is the period of slavery and reconstruction. After the abolition of slavery, the psyches of the characters are filled with traumatic experiences that they faced during slavery, which have influenced their personalities and damaged their relations with themselves. (263)

Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, is a literary work that deals with slavery, racism and oppression of the African Americans inside the American community. This is what is noticed from Yasemin Aydemir's article « The Suffers of Black Women in Alice Walker's Novels the Color Purple and Meridian and Toni Morrison's Novels *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye* ». In her work she argues:

In most parts of the novel, the racist thoughts and attitudes are displayed vividly. Knowing the truth that Sethe has killed her own baby daughter, Paul D insists to look over the newspaper pages. Stamp Paid reluctantly shows Paul D the clipping from the newspaper concerning Sethe's crime. Even so, the very fact that he has kept the clipping is significant. Both of these characters know that if a black's face is seen on papers, there should be an unusual event, since black race is ignored even in newspapers. To white people, Sethe's act is seen as a "... private

story". In addition to this, there is a mystery meaning under this news. "The newspaper is the product of white society". There is also an implication that the reason of Sethe's behavior is white race. (442)

In addition to that, Morrison's novel *Beloved* is a literary work, which deals with black feminism and African American women's issues about their struggles in life within the American society. Many writers have tackled this issue in *Beloved*, and Aamer Shaheen is one of them in his paper entitled "The Study of Gender in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". In this paper he says:

Women do exist and they have played their role in sharing the responsibilities of family and society where men have often shrunk their responsibilities. Especially under the institution of slavery women have struggled hard to realize themselves fully where either their role as mother or some internal agency catalyze their journey towards the construction of self. (211)

As a result, in regard to the characteristics of the Contemporary African American literature, *Beloved* incorporates many themes and issues of the Contemporary African American literature like racism, slavery, feminism, and search for identity. Toni Morrison bases her writing of the novel on dealing with some issues which the African Americans have faced within the American community. In *Beloved*, she wants to tackle those issues and to show their impact on the African American people. Furthermore, those issues reveal the characteristics of the Contemporary African American Literature, hence make Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as a Contemporary African American literary work.

## **I.2. Cultural Haunting: An Overview**

This section of the study is concerned with the concept of the cultural haunting, its definition, origin, and some examples about its influence on the African Americans. So, when looking to the word haunting, the most important thing that comes to the mind is ghosts, their stories, and their impact on human beings. However, adding the word cultural to the word haunting can make another meaning. Cultural haunting, from its name, may represent the role that the ghosts play in order to affect humans' lives, and to connect their past and present. In literature, this concept is used many years ago. According to Mohammad Shaaban Ahmad Deyab in his dissertation that is entitled « *Cultural Haunting in Toni Morrison's Beloved (1987)* », "Stories involving ghosts are found in traditional cultures worldwide. These stories of ghosts are as much a part of the culture of many people in Europe and America. In fact, gothic writings started in both British and American literature many centuries ago" (13).

The role of the cultural haunting is an important point, which has been discussed by many writers before. In one hand, some of them believe that the ghost, which haunts people, and his revenge are what the plot of the story talks about. In the other hand, some writers of the contemporary literature see that the ghost is a symbol that conveys a specific meaning to the readers. That is what Mohammad Shaaban Ahmad Deyab wants to say in the introduction of his dissertation:

The use of ghosts and the role they play in literature has always been an issue of debate among writers for many centuries. In many cases, the ghost is used as a plot device. The plot goes around a malign ghost whose purpose is either to set right an injustice or to take revenge upon the living. The most obvious example is the ghost of Hamlet's father in William Shakespeare's Hamlet who asks his son to avenge his murder. In contemporary literature that role has

been modified to be more than just a plot device. In this literature, ghosts are meant to have a figurative or symbolic meaning and function. In contemporary African American literature, for example, the ghost is used as a way of making social use of a poorly documented and an incompletely erased cultural history. (13)

There are many examples of the cultural haunting in the third world literature. To begin with, there is the daughter's ghost of *Beloved*, and Xuela in Jamaica Kincaid's novel. Both are either signs of the past haunting the African Americans' present, or the writer's anxiety about history, which comes from his race that affects his writings about history. According to Shu-Li Chang, in her study « Daughterly Haunting and Historical Traumas: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Jamaica Kincaid's *The Autobiography of My Mother* »,

If we take the latter approach, Michaels posits, the ghost in *Beloved* cannot be taken only as metaphor to embody the past. As a metaphor, it also gives "body" to an "anxiety" about history and how race matters in the writing of history. Taking a cue from Michaels's reminder about the dual meanings the figure of the ghost bears, I take the mother who repeatedly returns to Xuela's dream in Kincaid's novel both as a figure for history and as a figure for a collective anxiety that this traumatic history should be erased and forgotten so easily. Though the mother who died at the moment Xuela was born does not appear regularly in the novel, Xuela wonders about "this woman whose face I have never seen, not even in a dream," about "what did

she think” and, more importantly, about “How to explain this abandonment...” (108-9)

According to what has been said, in the Contemporary African American literary works, the cultural haunting is not just symbolized in a character of a ghost that haunts people and makes a fear from an invisible thing. However, the cultural haunting is what represents the painful experiences, which the African Americans face within a white American society. This haunting, according to the African Americans, is what affects them all the time and everywhere. In the contemporary African American literature, this ghost is used like a means, which relates the African Americans to their historical culture. In addition to that, it affects those black people who have been compelled to face their past, which they have forgotten, in order to discover and find themselves within the white American community. In other words, the present and the future of the African Americans are affected by their past.

### **I.3. The Significance of the African Mythology**

The contemporary African American literature is a genre of literature that includes many stories, mainly, about the black Americans’ past, way of life, slavery, racism, oppression...etc. In their storytellings, the African American writers use some, if we can say, strategies in order to make their writings reach success. Among those strategies, there are fiction, imagination, and even the use of myths. This last is one of the most important points, which should be tackled, because of its big use in the recent African American literary works.

According to Mary Magoulick, in her article « What is Myth? », in 2004, myth is a word which comes from the Greek word *mythos*, and *mythology* is the study of *myth*. According to her, the term myth refers to some characteristics shared by a certain category of stories. Those characteristics such as legends and folktales can make the story different from other categories of oral narratives. In addition, she summarizes the definition of myth when she says that

myths are the symbolic stories about the past that concerns the origin and the nature of the universe.

There are several definitions of the concept of myth, and there are writers who define it, especially in relation to the African people's lives. One of the most important articles that tackle the issue of the African myth and its significance is « Myths in African Concept of Reality ». Jones M. Jaja, the writer of this article explains:

Generally, a myth is a story which is believed to be true and has its origin in the far distant past history of a people. They are historical information transmitted orally by processes peculiar to each community. Myths are man-made stories that play explanatory functions in the African understanding of reality[...] myth is a story handed down in oral form from our forefathers which explain reality, concepts and beliefs and further serve as explanations of nature events such as creations, origin of things, history of a race or a people. (9-10)

For the use of the African myths and their important role in the literary writings, Jones M. Jaja, in the same article « Myths in African Concept of Reality » argues:

Myths play a very important role in the African understanding of reality. African philosophy cannot operate in a vacuum; therefore myths provide the necessary analytic and conceptual framework for an authentic African philosophy [...] They constitute expressions of the inner side of individuals and their relationship with others, nature and with the supernatural. It is the philosophical reflections of the people in past, preserved and

handed down to society through myths; if indeed the past is unintelligible and conveys meaning only in the light of the present, then myths convey meaning only when they establish a coherent relationship between the past and the present. (11)

For the African Americans, the use of myths and mythology does not only preserve their African culture, but it gives a clear image about their suffering. The use of mythology is one of the most important tools, which is used by the African American writers to show the blacks' real lives during the slavery period. Furthermore, the African American writers use mythology to tell people about their real past within the American society. For this reason, including mythology in writing helped to bring to light the experiences of the African American people in the American community, in order to make the whole world know about it.

#### **I.4. Cultural Haunting and Myths in Contemporary African American Literature**

This section of the study is about using the concept of the cultural haunting in relation to the use of myths, in the contemporary African American Literature. This relation shows how the use of myths, especially, the rebirth of a dead person as a ghost can help the reader of the novel to go deeply in the story. So, the haunting, which is related to the past of the African American people comes through their past of slavery, culture, and identity. In the Contemporary African American literature, like in Toni Morrison's novel of *Beloved*, this cultural haunting is revealed through the use of the myth or the imagination of the ghost's existence, which haunts people as if it is their past of slavery, which has come back to affect their present, and even their future. The use of myths in this genre of literature strengthens the literary work, and makes the reader really experience the haunting of their history, which the African Americans have faced. This is what Toni Morrison has noted in an interview for the

Paris Review magazine, "And in the same way I wanted to show the reader what slavery felt like, rather than how it looked."

Gordana Antolović, in her paper "Myths and Stereotypes in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*", notes that one step enabled the reader of the Contemporary African American literature face and experience history is through understanding it with the help of those storytellers. She adds that people around the world cannot really feel the others' history, like the African Americans' history of slavery, without the stories, which tell about their real painful past. In addition, she says that the main tool, because of which history becomes alive and preserves its importance, is the use of myths. This latter shows the real image of the slavery period, through comparing between the characters, who have faced slavery and those myths that are used in storytellings. For example, comparing Sethe's suffering from slavery as a mother, who wants to protect her children, to the Medea myth of mother, makes the reader feel the real pain of slavery. In other words, the use of myths in literary writings can help the reader to know the reality of the past that haunts the African Americans. For example, the rebirth of *Beloved* symbolizes the return of the memory and the past to haunt the inhabitants of the house 124 and the African Americans. According to her,

In order to be able to face history, we need the help to understand, the help of storytellers to break the line into manageable portions, for compassion to take root. Without creating a face, and a story that goes with it, humans somehow skip the ability to relate [...] These stories help history to become alive and important again. The tool that captures imagination while delivering a strong message is the mythical method [...] History is not about numbers but about individual



stories made universal. Morrison bring[s] them home, and we listen. (03)

## **Chapter Two: The Exploration of Cultural Haunting in Morrison's *Beloved***

This chapter that is entitled « The Exploration of Cultural Haunting in Morrison's *Beloved* », is analytical. First, it tackles the narrative structure of Toni Morrison in her novel *Beloved*. Then, this chapter talks about the cultural haunting and its psychological impact. This title is divided into two parts: the first talks about the psychological effects of slavery in *Beloved* in general, and the second deals with the psychological effects on the Relationship between the mother and the daughter. After that, the second chapter discovers the appropriation of the haunted house in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Finally, the significance of the ghost of daughter in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is what the chapter tackles, in addition to the relation between the ghost of Beloved and her mother, Sethe, and the relation between Beloved's ghost and the African American community.

### **II.1. The Summary and the Narrative Structure of *Beloved***

*Beloved* is a novel by Toni Morrison, published in 1987. It is about the destruction caused by slavery, and touches the life of a black woman named Sethe. This woman has lived as a slave in Kentucky, then, she has escaped to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1853. Although she lives there as a free woman, she has lived as a prisoner by memories of the trauma of her life as a slave. In the novel, Sethe is a mother who loves her children, and in an act of a big love and sacrifice, she tries to kill her children to save them from slavery. She succeeds only in killing her baby girl Beloved. Sethe has gone to live in Ohio with her daughter Denver, where the ghost of the child Beloved, who Sethe has killed, haunts their house. The hauntings took place with the appearance of Paul D, a man who is so destroyed by his past as a slave. One day, the ghost of Beloved has appeared. She knows the song that only Sethe and Denver share. Sethe is obsessed with easing her guilt after killing her daughter, and she wants to take the

opportunity to love *Beloved*. This novel and narrative story is written in a way, which makes most of the characters ambiguous, like *Beloved* herself. However, Toni Morrison's beautiful language and nice imaginations make the reader excited to know the story and go deeply through its events.

The narrative structure in *Beloved* is based on shifting from the past to present. Sometimes the narrator tells about events that happened in the past as flashbacks, sometimes as past stories, and other times she comes back to tell about events that are happening in the present. This shifting in telling about the story's events, from the past to the present, can make the novel as well as complex for some readers. However, other readers see that shifting as a way, which helps them to fill up the gaps, put the pieces together to have a coherent story, may enjoy this kind of a narrative structure. Because when they go back to past events as flashbacks, it may help them to understand other events in the present, in which they find some ambiguities.

In the Contemporary African American literature, there are several narrative structures, which are related to different authors. Among them, Toni Morrison is one of the most famous writers with her narrative structure in her work of *Beloved*. About the narrative structure of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, many articles and essays that tackle this issue. The writers of an article « *Beloved by Toni Morrison* » identify the events of *Beloved* as a story that, sometimes, goes back to past events as flashbacks, and other times tells about events which happen in the present. This novel is written in fragmented pieces, between the past and the present, and the reader is the one who relates them together in order to understand it. In the novel, the use of relating the past to the present is a way which reinforces the idea that the past is still alive in the present. By using these fragmentations, and relating them to each other, Toni Morrison makes the story as one piece which cannot be separated. In addition to making the reader

relate the fragmented pieces with each other, Toni Morrison, makes him to think about them and about their values.

## **II.2. The Psychological Effects of Slavery in *Beloved***

The writers of an article « Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: The Effects of Slavery on Family Bonds » show how the cultural haunting is all what affects the African Americans' life with relation to their culture and identity. It is the effect of the past on the present and the future of the African Americans in the white American community. The most important thing that causes haunting is the issue of slavery. The latter is one of the big problems which African Americans are faced within the American society, and Toni Morrison includes in her novel of *Beloved*. Toni Morrison analyzes the effects of slavery on the lives of the African Americans in a specific way. Instead of telling a story about the violence of the white Americans on slaves, and about the suffering of the black people, Toni Morrison reviews the way in which slavery affects African Americans' culture and identity. According to Özcan Aksak in the article entitled « *Beloved*: Showing the Dehumanizing Effect of Slavery on Sethe »,

Morrison shows us what it means to live as a slave and what destructions have been brought to lives of slaves in this work. In *Beloved*, Morrison sheds light on the painful past of African Americans and reveals the buried experiences for a better understanding of African American history. *Beloved* is a real life story, an event from African American history where special importance has been given to the horrors and tortures of slavery has been given in order to remind the reader about the past. In *Beloved* Morrison reinvents the past and wants the reader not to forget what happened in African American history. (250)

Toni Morrison, according to Aksak, wants to show how difficult slavery is. She shows the lives of slaves in America and the pain they face. The issue of slavery, according to her, is a past that has destructed the African Americans' lives and haunts them all the time. In addition, she wants to say that *Beloved* is considered as a real story which talks about real events that tell about the real life of the African American people. For more understanding of the African American history, Toni Morrison goes back to talk about the past and, especially, the issue of slavery, its haunting and its effects on the African American's psyche.

The African Americans have faced the pain of slavery. They, always, remember this experience that they have faced for a long time. The issue of slavery is considered as the most important thing that affects their lives, history, and families. According to Toni Morrison, for example, " The past of slavery was deeply rooted in the history of the African Americans, and her job as a writer is to investigate this past "(qtd. in Deyab 14). The African Americans have suffered from the issue of slavery and its consequences, which affect their past, present, and future. From a psychoanalytical view, slavery is a ghost of the past for the African Americans, which comes back to haunt them and intrude their daily lives in their present and future. Toni Morrison, in her novel *Beloved*, is one of the writers, who write about slavery and its ghost which has a great impact on the African Americans' psyche. Mohammad Shaaban Ahmad Deyab states,

Morrison is among many African American writers who are interested in the past of slavery and its impact on the present and, subsequently, on the future of African Americans. Morrison once said, "If we don't keep in touch with the ancestors... we are, in fact, lost" (8). Morrison's statement seems to resonate in all of her works where the past always looms in the background as a ghost that haunts and torments the present and the future

other people. Morrison believes that it is important to revisit the past in order to live the present [...] her novel records the history and cultural response that no other group shares. Although many other racial and ethnic minorities experience discrimination, however, no other group was forcibly brought to the United States or enslaved. (14)

According to Mohammad Shaaban Ahmad Deyab, Toni Morrison considers the past of slavery as a ghost. This ghost haunts the African Americans, exists inside them, and affects their present and future. Furthermore, Toni Morrison addresses the issue of remembering the African Americans' past of slavery through her novel *Beloved*. In addition to that, Morrison is a writer who thinks that Slavery is a ghost that will be back to haunt The African Americans, because it is not totally forgotten from the memory of those people (14).

The novel of *Beloved*, deals with the issue of slavery that haunts the African Americans as a ghost. It is about the pain of slavery and the bad circumstances that the African Americans have experienced in their lives, which are stocked in their memories. According to Kristin Bourdreau in her article « Pain and the Unmaking of Self in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* », she has a quote, which discusses the African Americans psyche in relation to their memories, "Most people have not lived-nor could it, for that matter, be said that they had died-through any of their terrible events. They had simply stunned by the hammer. They passed their lives there after in a kind of limbo of denied and unexamined pain" (450). This quote summarizes the idea of how people deal with bad experiences in life. It means that people want to get rid of the pain, but they never escape it because it is always in their memory. It is known that it is easy to forget happy moments in life, but the painful memories are the ones that a person remembers more.

Literary narratives like novels are a best way to show that the cultural haunting caused psychological trauma within the African Americans. In addition, African American history of slavery helps us to discover the experiences of the African Americans and their traumatic memories. *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison, is one of the most important novels of the Contemporary African American literary works, which sheds light on the psychological trauma that is caused by the cultural haunting and the past memories of slavery. According to Emma Parker in her article which is entitled « A new hystery: History and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* », "The novel is based on the true story of Margaret Garner, an escaped slave who killed her daughter in a desperate bid to save her from the misery and indignity of slavery when threatened with recapture" (01).

The African American psychological trauma today is a part of the African Americans' history, past, and memory that are shown in *Beloved*. The past of slavery is the big point that should be talked about, because it is the main cause of the psychological trauma that the African Americans have suffered from. According to Lori.L Cook in her thesis which is entitled « Exploring Psychological Territoriality Through the Domestic Gothic in *Beloved* and *Mama day* », "Morrison utilizes memory flashbacks in order to reiterate the haunting of slavery and how memory enables and reveals the behaviors of individuals, families, and communities " (09). In *Beloved*, Morrison returns to tell about past stories and events to show the trauma, which is caused by the haunting of slavery and the past memories, and that has traced psychological problems from the individual to the community.

Slavery and the bad circumstances, which the African Americans have experienced inside the white American society, play a significant role in destroying the African Americans' lives and relationships. One of the most important relationship that is badly touched by those circumstances is the mother and daughter relationship. Priya.E, in her article that is entitled « Psychological Trauma of Slavery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* », states that,

The viciousness of the baby's unsatisfied needs colors the mother daughter relationship in *Beloved*. A baby's unsatisfied needs not only refer to physical needs but also psychic and emotional ones [...] The children have been denied to their basic need and their birth right, which is the lap of the mother that is essential for the psychic growth of the child [...] Seth unable to have the love and care of her mother develops into an overprotective mother whose selfish love takes away the life of her own daughter. The predicament, of the novel is Sethe's murder of her baby daughter *Beloved*. But a deep study exposes the paradoxical nature of the murder [...] Her experience of slavery is so worse that she prefers to kill her daughter instead of leaving her to the cruel institution of slavery. (02)

The main issue that would be discussed through a psychoanalytical approach would be the section of the novel where Sethe murders her baby. This act represents the most horrible event because of the bad slavery, which the African Americans have faced. If a woman cuts the throat of her own child, the mind of that woman will be totally damaged. This part also allows the reader to enter the mind of Sethe, to be in her position, and to imagine what she has done. In other words, the way in which Morrison explains slavery, makes the reader to feel bad for Sethe, and apologize for her killing the child. One of the contemplative quotes that may represent Sethe's love to her daughter, and her guilt after killing *Beloved* is "the breathing is gone, only the teeth are left" (216). In the same page, in a block of sentences, when Sethe has seen her daughter again, she argues:

*Beloved*

You are my sister

You are my daughter

You are my face; you are me

I have found you again; you have come back to me

You are my Beloved

You are mine. (Morrison 216)

However, how is that possible when this woman tried killing all her children? From this event, the psychoanalytical approach can be related to the other important aspects of the novel. For example, Sethe wants so much for Beloved to forgive her for what she has done, that she will diminish her own health because it is what Beloved wants. These events also show just how much Sethe cares for her children. It shows how much Sethe loves and has always loved her children, and she never wanted them to suffer in any way. After all, the love a parent has for his or her child is the greatest love in the world.

### **II.3. The Appropriation of the Haunted House in *Beloved***

The Contemporary African American literature is a genre of literature that tells about the experiences, which the African Americans have faced within the American community, for a long time. For a well description of those bad experiences, the writers and the novelists of the Contemporary African American literature use fiction and imaginations, in order to make the reader get a clear image about their lives during the slavery period. Among those writers, Toni Morrison, in her literary writing of the novel of *Beloved*, uses fiction to describe the pain which the African Americans have faced. In her masterpiece, *Beloved*, Toni Morrison uses Beloved's ghosts, for example, as a symbol of the past of the African American history, which always haunts those people's present and future. In addition to that, the theme of the haunted house is one of the most important themes that reflects the past of slavery haunting the African Americans' lives.



According to Monica Michlin in her article, which is entitled «The Haunted House in Contemporary Filmic and Literary Gothic Narratives of Trauma », one of the causes of the use of the haunted house's theme, in the Contemporary African American literature is the emergence of the ethnic minorities' voices. For example, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a novel which forces the living persons and the readers to face the history of the racial violence, because the use of the haunted house makes them remember the painful past that the African Americans have experienced. According to her, haunting is the most important point that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is based on. However, the haunted house is the concept and the theme which adds vitality to the novel (02).

When talking about the theme of the haunted house, the first idea that comes to the reader's mind is that this haunted house is the setting of the story. That is to say, the haunted house is the place where the haunting of the ghosts horrify people who have entered to it. After reading the story of *Beloved*, the haunted house is the setting or the place where the ghost of the daughter *Beloved* haunts her mother who murdered her, and haunts all her family members. This is what is clearly understood from Toni Morrison's starting words of the novel, when she talks about the haunted house and says, "124 was spiteful. Full of baby's venom" (03). From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that Toni Morrison wants to say that this haunted house is the setting of the most events of the story, in which this house represents a place where the fear and the horror are dominating. Mohammed Shaaban Ahmad Deyab clarifies what are the elements in the ghost story in *Beloved*, and he writes,

The main conventions of a ghost story are the setting and the existence of supernatural elements which contribute mainly to the story's main objective. In this sense, one can argue that Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) starts as a typical gothic story, where, the setting, 124 house, "was spiteful. Full of a baby's

venom” (03). Sethe’s house has been described in a gothic manner. In one sense, it is a house “peopled by the living activity of the dead” (29). In another, it is “a person rather than a structure [...] As the setting is contributing to the sense of *Beloved* (1987) as a ghost story, the idea of the supernatural is quite evident as well. Right from the beginning of the novel, we are introduced to a poltergeist; that is, a ghost who is just making noise but “never hurt anybody” (76). This poltergeist, Sethe’s baby ghost, made tricks over the residents of Sethe’s house, especially the male ones, to force them out. (15)

The theme of the haunted house in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* signifies the place where a ghost of a girl haunts her mother, who murdered her to be safe from both slavery and the white enslavers. In addition, it refers to a setting in which the past history of slavery haunts the African Americans who are living there, and who share the same past, present, and future. Reading the novel of *Beloved* makes the reader to understand two things: The first is the return of the daughter Beloved in the 124 house, to show the pain that an African American can face after making a wrong decision, like Sethe’s murdering her daughter, because of the bad circumstances which a slave can pass through. The second thing that can be understood is that all the family members are haunted in the same house where they live together. So, the idea of sharing the same house, in which the family members are all haunted, makes the reader to understand that all the African Americans are haunted by the past of their history of slavery, and that they share the same pain of a dark period which they have faced.

#### **II.4. The Significance of the Ghost of Daughter in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved***

The most important point in the story of *Beloved* is about haunting. The latter is related directly to the past memories of slavery which haunt the African Americans’ present and even

the future. However, from the events of the story, the haunting, also, comes from a ghost of a girl. This ghost is the soul of Sethe's daughter Beloved, who has come back in the house 124 to haunt the living people in this house. In other words, Beloved comes back to haunt her family members because she wants to know the cause of her murdering by her mother, Sethe. The appearance of Beloved's ghost in the most of the events of the story, according to Toni Morrison, has a significant meaning in relation to the main characters of the novel who are Sethe, Paul.D, and Denver. Sethe, who is the mother of Beloved, symbolizes the present generations, who dream about a better future, and want to get rid of slavery and racism. Paul.D, who wants to live with Sethe, symbolizes the African American men, who are always haunted by their past of slavery. Denver, Beloved's sister, symbolizes the future by her desire to forget the past, live the present, and look for a better future.

Toni Morrison, in this novel, shows that Beloved's ghost appearance is not only significant to the main characters. However, it has influenced African American community, who have faced the same past of slavery within the American society. In addition, each character's inner self is reflected through his or her response to Beloved's ghost. For example, Paul.D's response to Beloved is different from Denver's and Sethe's responses. Paul.D sees that Beloved is an evil who wants to haunt and to hurt them, because of the bad memories he has about his past of slavery and the bad humiliation he faced. However, Denver does not consider Beloved's ghost as an evil, but she sees that Beloved is sad and lonely girl. In addition, Sethe considers that Beloved is a ghost who does bad things because she is mad, crazy, and she is a little girl who wants to take the others' attention by her actions, like doing noise and breaking things, not because her loneliness, when she says, " I don't know about lonely...Mad, may be " (13).

## **II.5. Beloved's Ghost Relation to Sethe and to the African Americans**

From the story of *Beloved*, by Toni Morrison, the first two characters who have a relationship with Beloved are her mother Sethe and her sister Denver. For Sethe, from the beginning, she feels that Beloved is her daughter who has come back to her. Especially when Beloved said her name, Sethe is sure that she is her baby girl, and this is when Toni Morrison says, "Sethe was deeply touched by her sweet name; the remembrance of glittering headstone made her feel especially kindly toward her" (53). Sethe does not only realize that Beloved is her daughter from the name, but her reaction when she sees Beloved for the first time indicates that Sethe is giving birth to Beloved. This is when Toni Morrison says,

For some reason she could not immediately account for, she got close enough to see the face, Sethe's bladder filled to capacity... Right of its door she had to lift her skirts, and the water she voided was endless... It went on and on she thought, No, more like flooding the boat when Denver was born... there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now. (51)

After that, Sethe has known her daughter, Beloved. This helps her to remember the painful past that she has experienced. Beloved has come back to her mother's life to see if her mother really loves her because she is the one who killed her, and her return has forced Sethe to remember her history as a slave mother who wants the best for her children. However, she has found herself in bad circumstances that have put her into difficult situations. Specifically, Ralph.D Story explains the point further in his article which is entitled « Sacrifice and Surrender: Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* », when he explains:

Sethe's inner quest was for completeness; her destiny was to fulfill her promises as a mother: to love, to cherish, to protect, to teach, and to give. But Sethe needed to be a mother under normal

circumstances. Just like other mothers, she needed to be able to raise her children without the specter of slavery haunting them every step of the way, destroying them inside, making it impossible for them to dream of anything beyond freedom. (22)

The relationship between Beloved and Sethe may symbolize the relationship between the dark past that tries to dominate the present and affect the future. Sethe tries to put an end to the memories of murdering her daughter and to forget everything about her past life as a slave at Sweet Home. Sethe cannot ignore this haunting past which has come back in the form of Beloved's ghost who is ready to haunt her. Beloved is ready to haunt and to be related to Sethe again, because she is the one she wants; she is the one who is responsible for her death. Beloved states clearly the purpose of her coming back, when she says, "Sethe's is the face that left me... her smiling face is the place for me it is the face I lost... she is my face smiling at me... now we can join" (213).

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a novel that talks about the haunting past of slavery, which is symbolized in the ghost of the baby girl Beloved. This ghost haunts the main characters of the novel like her mother Sethe and Paul D; in addition to them, it haunts the whole African American community. Like Sethe and the other characters, who are haunted by Beloved's ghost, the African Americans believe about the existence of this girl's ghost. This is clearly stated when the news are spread within the African American community about Beloved's coming back to life, when Toni Morrison says, "Sethe's dead daughter, the one whose throat she cut, had come back to fix her " (255). The belief of the African Americans in the coming back of Beloved as a ghost, shows that they, traditionally, believe in ghosts and they come back to punish those who have hurted them. In addition, according to Toni Morrison's previous quote, the African American community thinks that Sethe has made a mistake by killing her baby daughter and that is why this ghost is coming to haunt her.

The ghost of Beloved influences, not only the main characters like Sethe, but also, the African American community, on the personal and the collective levels. On the personal level, this ghost makes each member of the African American society remembers his personal past. From the ghost's haunting, each one remembers his or her youth and happiness in the past. However, on the collective level, "It took them days to get the story properly blown up and themselves agitated and then to calm down and assess the situation" (Morrison 255). According to Morrison's quote, the African American community members have reexamined their understanding of Sethe's act of killing her baby girl, and they have understood her situation as an African American slave who wants to save her children. So, they have accepted her as a member of the African American community, because she has done something because of the bad circumstances of slavery, which is the past that they all share.

As a result, from a psychoanalytical view, all the African Americans should accept the ghost of Beloved as a part of their history of slavery. Furthermore, the ghost of the girl Beloved is used by Toni Morrison as a symbol of the dark past of slavery, in order to make the African Americans remember and hold it. According to Toni Morrison, the ghost of Beloved plays a double role: the first role is that it makes sense to the present. It means that when the African Americans remember their past of slavery, it pushes them to challenge the present difficulties, and learn more about what they are facing in the present. The second role is that it reshapes a better future. In other words, when the African Americans do not forget the pain of their history of slavery, it will be as a motivation to them, in order to have a desire to live a better life in the future. In relation to the past of slavery, which affects the African American characters, such as Sethe, and the whole community, this novel is written to make the African Americans remember their past history of slavery. Thus, the African Americans can face their past directly, and accept the negative parts of it, only when they discover the truth about their history.

### **Chapter Three: Myths and its Role in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

This chapter, which is entitled « Myths and Its Role in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* » is another analytical one. First, it discusses the use and the inclusion of myths in the Contemporary African American literature in general. Then, it goes to deal with the inclusion of myths in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. In this part, some major myths that Toni Morrison includes in her novel, are tackled. Those myths are: the mother myth, the trickster myth, and the rebirth myth. Finally, this chapter explains the role of myths in Toni Morrison's novel of *Beloved*.

#### **III.1. Myths and the Contemporary African American Literature**

The Contemporary African American literature is a genre of literature, which mainly discusses the past history of the African Americans. It talks about the past of slavery, that the African American people have faced within the American community. The writers of this literature, like Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Alice Walker, have tackled the issue of the African Americans' suffering in their writings like poetry, oral narratives, and novels. By their literary writings, they give the readers an opportunity to know about the real suffering and pain which the African Americans have experienced during the period of slavery.

For this reason, in order to make the readers go deeply in their stories, and to make them feel what the African Americans have felt, Toni Morrison employs some freaky spiritual presences and alludes to mythic tales, to make the reader aware about the reality of slavery, like using the ghost of the baby girl Beloved in her novel, as a symbol of the past history of slavery, which haunts the African American people. Also, the use of myths has a great effect in defining and interpreting the past history of slavery within the American community. According to Aparna Halpé,

Myths can be stories about ancient events that define and sustain notions of community [...] myth is an ideologically weighted

narrative about figures or events from a remote past which shape contemporary ideologies comes down to us from about the seventh century BC [...] Myths are, by nature, both untrue and true. (03)

In Aparna Halpé's words, myths are the narratives which come from a traditional view. Those narrative can be both, true and untrue stories. Stories about myths are very old, which come from many centuries ago. In the Contemporary African American Literature, myths are still exist in the narrative stories, and each one conveys a specific meaning to the reader. They may symbolize, mainly, the haunting caused by the past history of slavery, mothers' love and relationships with their children, and African Americans' sacrifice to face the life's difficulties within the American society. Those myths are remembered because they are passed through generations by oral transmissions, in addition to make them as written stories, like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

### **III.2. Myths in Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

#### **III.2.1. The Mother Myth**

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, mothers are not viewed as totally good persons, but they show a great love for their children. The author sheds light on motherhood's conditions, which show how the existence of the black woman is badly touched by the slavery's circumstances. In *Beloved*, Sethe is the mother who purely loves her children. She is the mother who wants to protect her children from slavery and racism. She is the woman, who has killed her own baby girl, because the bad circumstances of slavery. Paul.D is amazed when he realises what Sethe has done when she has killed her girl Beloved,

This here Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw. This here new Sethe didn't know where the world stopped and she began



[...] More important than what Sethe had done was what she claimed [...] "Your love is too thick," he said... "Too thick?" she said... "Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all. ""Yeah. It didn't work, did it? Did it work?" he asked. "It worked" she said. "How? Your boys gone you don't know where. One girl dead, the other won't leave the yard. How did it work?" (164-5)

Therefore, Sethe embodies the role of brave and audacious mother who bears any spiritual pain for the sake of saving her children,

The one with iron eyes and backbone to match. [...]  
 A face too still for comfort; [...] a mask with mercifully  
 punchedout eyes. [...] her eyes did not pick up a flicker of light.  
 [...] They were like two well. (09)

The experiences of slavery and its difficulties, which Sethe has faced, have left their marks on Sethe and have made her to be seen as an object in the eyes of the white American enslavers. An example of Sethe as an object is when she has heard the enslavers saying: "I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up " (193). Slaves are supposed only to work and give children. They are not considered as totally humans because of the slavery's circumstances, and this is what Sethe does not realize until she has heard the enslavers saying that. After marrying, she has been waiting to live a good life with her husband and keep her children with her as a family at Sweet home. However, she has realized that she is like the other slaves and her children will face what Baby Suggs' children have faced, when she has heard the enslavers talking about her characteristics as an animal, "nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her childre" (23).

Furthermore, Sethe has recognized that she and her children are considered as an ownership of the enslavers, which makes the schoolteacher can do what he wants with them. According to Toni Morrison, "say it don't pay to have my labor somewhere else while the boys is small [...] The question now is, Who's going to buy you out? Or me? Or her?" (Morrison 196). Sethe wants to save her children from the ghost of slavery and to escape from it. Her great love to her children and because she is human being, not an animal like what the enslavers consider, she has a big desire for different and a good life for her family, "No notebook for my babies and no measuring string neither" (Morrison 198). Sethe believes that her children should live a good life like the free persons, and they deserve to have mother and father, who can protect them from others.

During slavery, the mothers do not have the right of motherhood. However, Sethe is not like the most of the slave women. She gives herself the right of motherhood, and she loves her children, a love which is strong that makes her to prefer to see her children dead in an easy way, like killing them by herself, than seeing them dying because of the bad circumstances of slavery. In the novel of *Beloved*, Toni Morrison tries to show the similarities between the mother Sethe and Medea, the Greek mother who is the origin of the mother's myth. Sethe by her murdering of her baby girl Beloved, and trying to kill all her children, to make them safe from the future of slavery, is like Medea, who kills her children to keep them away from being refused from their society, and "to inflict pain on her unfaithful husband" (03).

Slave mothers are persons who have faced many difficulties in their lives. They are women who love their children, and want a better life and future for them. They are who want to protect their children from the ghost of slavery, in order to have the opportunity to live a better life. In *Beloved*, especially through the mother Sethe, Toni Morrison wants people to be proud of their mothers. She wants people to put in their minds that mother is the soul of the society, because of her wisdom and her important role in shaping the generations. Morrison wants to

say that the mother is the person, who always reminds us about the importance of the community, which is in all over the world held together by the woman, who is the mother.

### **III.2.2.The Trickster Myth**

In addition to the mother myth, the Contemporary African American Literature is the genre of literature, which contains the use of another one, which is the trickster myth. The novelists and the storytellers use the trickster myth to tell about their past history of slavery. They use this myth, in addition to other ones, to make the reader aware about the change and the shift of the characters from one case to another, in relation to the situation. According to Margaret F. Crawford:

Africans who were transported to the southern United States and the Caribbean West Indies brought trickster characters and tales with them [...] However, while maintaining essential elements of their old life, they also created new characters to express their reactions to their new situation and environs. While some of the characters were new, the storytellers during slavery maintained many of the traditional characters and stories; one of these was the African trickster tale. (09)

From its name, the trickster is a word, which comes from the word trick. For its definition, a trickster is a character, who shifts and escapes from one characteristic to another. He is not constant; for example, sometimes he is good, and other times he is bad. According to Gordana Antolović, "As its name implies, Trickster is a figure still escaping definition. It is bad, yet good, profane and sacred, intelligent and naïve, female and male " (31).

It is known that Toni Morrison is an African American writer, who depends on using myths in her writings about the past of the African Americans. Furthermore, Morrison is

considered as a trickster storyteller herself, because she uses it to mislead the reader through her writings. According to The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia, "The works of Toni Morrison reflect more than her mastery of folkloric figures, most especially that of the trickster; her stories also exhibit her ultimate skill of author as trickster "(355). As a Contemporary African American writer, Morrison employs the trickster myth in her works, and *Beloved* includes a myth of the trickster.

*Beloved* contains the trickster figure, that includes many characteristics, such as sadness, happiness, love, hate, jealousy, shape shifting, and other emotions, which could be expected by the reader. Though, Beloved is the character, who relates all the community together, she teaches them the humanity and how to be kind with others. She is the one who saves Sethe, when she makes her facing the past, in order to get power to live her present. In addition, she is the one who puts love in Paul.D's heart, after being an African American man, who is guided, only, by his dark past of slavery. Also, she is the one who pushes her sister Denver out of the door, in order to make her more courageous. According to Jung words, when he says that a figure like that is both "subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being" (263). Here, Jung wants to say that a character like Beloved is a trickster who shifts from one characteristic to another. Beloved, sometimes shifts from subhuman, to be something super than a human, and other times, she plays a role of a cruel character.

Beloved is a childish and naive character. At first, she is the soul of the evil who is totally angry about the inhabitants of the house 124, when Toni Morrison says, "the baby's spirit picked up Here Boy and slammed him into the wall hard enough to break two of his legs and dislocate his eye, so hard he went into convulsions and chewed up his tongue " (12). Because of the arrival of Paul.D to the house 124, Beloved has transformed from the baby girl to be a character who exercises her power over Paul.D. For example, when Toni Morrison says, "But she moved him nonetheless, and Paul D didn't know how to stop it because it looked like he

was moving himself. Imperceptibly, downright reasonably, he was moving out of 124" (114).

Also when she states:

She moved closer with a footfall he didn't hear and he didn't hear the whisper that the flakes of rust made either as they fell away from the seams of his tobacco tin. So when the lid gave he didn't know it. What he knew was that when he reached the inside part he was saying, "Red heart. Red heart," over and over again. (117)

For Denver, she immediately knows that Beloved is her older sister, who loves her and does not let her alone anymore. After a period of time, Denver recognizes that she is alone, because her mother Sethe's emotions have returned to her sister Beloved. She has leaved the house, she is forced to do that because of her need for food, and she starts to see her sister, who saves her and her mother, as she is. Beloved, as a trickster character in the novel, is like a therapist with her patient. She tries to do things like embracing her mother Sethe, singing a song, which only Sethe knows, because she sings it to her children, in order to make her remember the past. Beloved, with her power and menace, she does good things. She relates the whole community together, especially the women, and this is shown when they are unified against the child, who is beating his mother,

“But, Ella –” “But nothing. What's fair ain't necessarily right.”

“You can't just up and kill your children.” “No, and the children can't just up and kill the mama.” It was Ella more than anyone who convinced the others that rescue was in order. She was a practical woman who believed there was a root either to chew or avoid for every ailment. (256)

So, Beloved as a trickster character in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, changes her role, from the ghost who haunts people, to the saviour of her family and the African American community. This change is not exactly shown to the reader, although, all people are influenced by the presence and the actions of Beloved, because she does not hurt anyone. By this change in the role of Beloved as a trickster character, there is a message, which Toni Morrison wants to convey. According to the change of Beloved, this message has two parts: The first, Morrison wants to make the African American people remember their past of history and its pain, without hurting them. The second is that Toni Morrison wants to change the African Americans' point of view about their past, in other words, she wants them to avoid seeing it as an obstacle to their life, but to see it as a motivation to live a better present and to look for a better future.

### **III.2.3. The Rebirth Myth**

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* involves the myth of rebirth. From the word rebirth, the first thing that comes to the mind is that something is dead and comes back to life. In the world, there are people who consider it as an impossible thing, that a person dies and comes back to life, but, there are also who believe in it. *Beloved* is a novel, which talks about the concept of rebirth, and the idea of the transformation of a soul to a body. The appearance of Beloved is interpreted as that of an "*abiku* child, from the West African Yoruba mythology, who returns to be born again to the same mother" (Bowers 86). Her mother, who has killed her baby girl, in order to express her big love, is the one who has renamed her daughter. She knows that her Beloved will come back again and she will ask her about her murdering. In addition, Sethe is the one who has made the burial place and the gravestone for her daughter. According to Toni Morrison,

Who would have thought that a little old baby could harbor so much rage? Rutting among the stones under the eyes of the

engraver's son was not enough. Not only did she have to live out her years in a house palsied by the baby's fury at having its throat cut, but those ten minutes she spent pressed up against dawn-colored stone studded with star chips, her knees wide open as the grave, were longer than life, more alive, more pulsating than the baby blood that soaked her fingers like oil.

(05)

Sethe does not tell about the real name of her daughter, in order to protect her from the evil spirits, although she knows that her baby girl will become an evil. In the novel, there is a quote, which confirms that the house 124 is haunted by the spirit of the child, when Toni Morrison says: "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom" (Morrison 03). The spirit of evil in the body of the girl Beloved wants to distract the inhabitants of the house 124, by haunting them. This haunting leads to the escape of her brothers from the house, because they can not live with the spirit of their dead sister. Concerning Beloved's rebirth, Kelly Norman Ellis says that Beloved's return comes from the myth of the child's spirit, who comes back to revenge, and Beloved is the spirit of a child, who died and reborn again to the same mother. It is said, also, that those spirits are the souls of those who want to haunt their parents through their rebirth (90).

When she emerges from water, Beloved is fully dressed and everything shows that it is the rebirth of this girl:

A fully dressed woman walked out of the water. She barely gained the dry bank of the stream before she sat down and leaned against a mulberry tree. All day and all night she sat there, her head resting on the trunk in a position abandoned

enough to crack the brim in her straw hat. Everything hurt but her lungs most of all. Sopping wet and breathing shallow she spent those hours trying to negotiate the weight of her eyelids.

(50)

She has signs, which indicate that she is from another world: "She had new skin, lineless and smooth, including the knuckles of her hands [...] Sethe saw that her feet were like her hands, soft and new " (50-2). The main cause of Beloved's transformation, from the spirit of evil, who haunts the inhabitants of the house 124, to the young girl, who plays the role of a saviour of her family, may be her mother's inability to face memory and the past. Sethe's second experience of her daed daughter's rebirth, has given her a chance to be born again. Beloved wants her mother Sethe to die, in order to raise again. By the pain, which Beloved causes to her mother, Sethe approaches to die, but the community interferes by doing a magical rituel with songs, in order to bring her back:

Denver saw lowered heads, but could not hear the lead prayer – only the earnest syllables of agreement that backed it: Yes, yes, yes, oh yes. Hear me. Hear me. Do it, Maker, do it. Yes [...] and then Ella hollered. Instantly the kneelers and the standers joined her. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like. (258-9)

With this act of the community, Sethe comes back to life, and this is shown through Toni Morrison words when she says:

The voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of words. Building



voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound wide enough to sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash. (Morrison 261)

### **III.3. Myths' Role in *Beloved***

Toni Morrison is the writer who has grown up reading for famous storytellers like Jane Austen, Leo Tolstoy, and the French writer Gustave Flaubert. Besides her love of reading, she has experienced the history of her family and the African American people during the slavery period. So, reading for famous writers, and experiencing history of slavery, in addition to other elements like the black language, the black music, and all the myths of the black culture are very important elements, which have an influence on Morrison's writing career (McKay 03). In order to tell the story of *Beloved*, Toni Morrison includes some myths, and by their significance, she wants to give a clear image about the past history of the African Americans. Reading *Beloved*, as a story, which includes the use of myths, and understanding their significance, can enhance the reader's thinking and understanding of the African Americans' past history. Through the use of myths in *Beloved*, Toni Morrison describes a clear perspective about the African Americans' life during slavery, where there is no separation between reality and fiction. Thus, in *Beloved*, Toni Morrison wants to tell the readers about the truth of the slaves' life, by the use of some myths in the story.

The inclusion of the myth of rebirth by Toni Morrison in her novel *Beloved*, represents the rebirth of the past painful memories of slavery. This return of memories is symbolized by the coming back of the girl Beloved to life, to haunt people, especially her mother Sethe, who has murdered her. Beloved's rebirth as a ghost is expected to be dreadful for women rather than men. However, Toni Morrison uses to mislead the reader and makes him deduce that the male characters have taken some characteristics of women, like kindness and gentleness; however,

the female characters are the opposite, they are aggressive and they are women, who do not scare from the rebirth of dead persons as ghosts. This is shown by Toni Morrison when she says:

124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children. For years each put up with the spite in his own way, but by 1873 Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grand mother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old—as soon as merely looking in a mirror shattered it (that was the signal for Buglar); as soon as two tiny hand prints appeared in the cake (that was it for Howard). Neither boy waited to see more; another kettle full of chickpeas smoking in a heap on the floor; soda crackers crumbled and strewn in a line next to the doorsill.

(01)

Morrison uses the African myths into the narrative, and brings in cross-cultural significations; thus connecting Sethe to her racial past. These myths make the novel come from the root and the origin of the African tradition, and provide a cultural and spiritual relation between the history of the characters of the novel and the African American people, who have faced the past of slavery within the American community. The use of myths by Toni Morrison, has the role of making the African Americans' real past history of slavery clear to all over the world. One of the most important myths is the rebirth of Beloved as a symbol of the rebirth of Sethe's memories that haunt her, and to show how slavery's memories are difficult,

I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my memory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my memory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened. (35-6)

The inclusion of myths in *Beloved* has an important role in changing people for the better. Toni Morrison uses myths to embody the past of slavery, which the characters should face in order to grow up. Through understanding and learning from their past history, and relating it to these myths and their significance, the African Americans are able to know their identity, and who they are. The understanding of their heritage, traditions, and values is important for their identity and for their desire to be effective persons in their societies. The use of myths in *Beloved* has an impact on the characters and the African American people, which makes them tightly related to their traditions. It allows them to become members in their communities and get rid of their painful memories, and allows them to make the past as a tool to help them grow and looking for a better life.

## Conclusion

Toni Morrison's novel of *Beloved* is one of the most important works of the Contemporary African American literature. It talks about the difficulties, which the African Americans have faced during the period of slavery in the American community. This novel shows how the African Americans have experienced the bad circumstances of life like racism, oppression, and the loss of identity. In order to have an idea about their suffering, this study examines Toni Morrison's use of the concept of the cultural haunting to indicate the impact of the past history of slavery on the African Americans. In addition to that, this study demonstrated the use of myths in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to get a clear idea about the power of African Americans to fight the haunting past of slavery, and to show how they are affected by their past history, which makes them as symbols of some myths in the story.

As a conclusion, the first chapter « A Window on Cultural Haunting and Mythology in Contemporary African American literature » gives a clear definition of the Contemporary African American literature, and according to its characteristics, it shows how *Beloved* is a Contemporary African American novel. In this chapter, the study has investigated that the exploration of the cultural haunting in *Beloved* is one of the ways, by which Toni Morrison makes the reader know about the reality of the past history of slavery. This haunting comes from the painful past of the African Americans to affect their present and future. In addition to the exploration of the cultural haunting, there is another way that Morrison uses to make the reader go deeply through the story, which is the use of myths. According to the first chapter of the study, Toni Morrison uses to include some myths in the story to show the African Americans' power of facing the past to protect their children and live a better life.

The cultural haunting is related to the past history of the African Americans. This haunting comes through their memory about what they have faced during the slavery period to affect their present and future. Furthermore, this cultural haunting has a psychological impact on the

relationships between the African Americans, who have experienced slavery. One of the most important relationships is the relationship between mother and daughter, which is shown through Sethe and her baby girl Beloved.

The third chapter of the study that is entitled « Myths and its Role in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* » discussed the incorporation of myths in the Contemporary African American literature and mainly in *Beloved*. Morrison includes some myths in the story to make the reader feel what the African Americans have felt, and goes deeply through the events of the story to understand the real life that they have lived. This chapter is the resurrection of the African Americans' history of slavery, in which Morrison includes some myths like the mother myth, to emphasize the mother's role in protecting her children. In addition, she includes the trickster myth, and the myth of rebirth, to show the shift of the African Americans from one characteristic to another according to the situation, which they face.

This study, that is entitled « The Exploration of the Cultural Haunting and the Inclusion of Mythology in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* » has an important role in giving a clear idea about Toni Morrison's use of the cultural haunting and myths in her novel of *Beloved*. The study examined the cultural haunting by focusing on a psychoanalytical approach. The cultural haunting is all what the African Americans remember from their past of slavery, which haunts them and affects their relationships with each other. In addition, the use of myths is an imagination that Toni Morrison uses in her novel of *Beloved*, to influence the reader, and make him feel the life of the African Americans during the slavery period within the American society. This work explained the concept of the cultural haunting and the inclusion of myths in a literary work. After discussing the exploration and the inclusion of these two important concepts in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, this study is beneficial for the future studies and literature in general, because it gives them the right meaning of the cultural haunting and the use of myths in the novel. It makes future researchers understand them more and take a

clear idea about their significance. Furthermore, in a future work, this study can help the researcher in finding the deficiencies and the mistakes in other people's research. In addition, the researcher can take this study as a reference in order to correct those mistakes, and get a right information for his future research.

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## ملخص

يخوض هذا العمل في مناقشة ثقافية وأسطورية لرواية محبوبية لطوني موريسون، بحيث يتحرى عن وجود عناصر ورموز لمطاردة شبحية وكيف يعكسون معضلة البطل في الصراع مع عبودية الماضي، ومعركتها من أجل حماية أبنائها من سادة العبيد. علاوة عن ذلك، تظهر الدراسة استخدام الكاتبة للأساطير مثل أسطورة الأم، وأسطورة الخداع، وأسطورة الولادة الجديدة من أجل تفسير تأثيرها الواسع وعلاقتها بتاريخ الأمريكيين الإفريقيين في العبودية. حصرت طوني موريسون هذه الأحداث الأسطورية لأنها تريد تمجيد صورة الأم الأسطورية المستعدة للتضحية من أجل أطفالها وإنقاذهم من تبعات حيونة العبودية.

## **Résumé**

Ce travail se lance dans une discussion culturelle et mythologique du bien-aimé de Toni Morrison afin qu'il explore l'existence d'éléments et de symboles de hantise fantomatique et comment ils reflètent le dilemme du protagoniste à lutter contre l'esclavage du passé, et son combat afin de protéger ses enfants de leurs maîtres esclaves. En outre, l'étude montre l'utilisation par l'écrivain de mythes comme le mythe de la mère, le mythe du filou, et le mythe de la renaissance afin d'expliquer leur large effet et leur relation avec l'histoire des Afro-Américains de l'esclavage. Toni Morrison inclut ces manifestations mythologiques parce qu'elle veut glorifier l'image de la mère mythique qui est prête à scarifier pour ses enfants et les sauver des conséquences déshumanisantes de l'esclavage.