

The Copy Devours the Original: Morrison's "Beloved" as Simulacrum and Embodiment of Historical Trauma

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Abstract

This study examines Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) for its distinctive narrative approach to representing race, slavery, and their psychological consequences. Morrison deliberately blurs reality and the supernatural to create a space where unrepresentable trauma manifests. Her postmodern techniques position *Beloved* as an ideal text for observing how fiction personifies historical trauma beyond traditional historiography. Applying Baudrillard's simulacrum model and trauma theories from Caruth, LaCapra, and Hartman, the character Beloved is interpreted as a simulacrum functioning as tangible historical trauma. The novel transforms depicting atrocities into an interactive reader experience, revealing that horrors like slavery resist traditional historiography and demand embodiment as lived trauma. The study concludes that through *Beloved* as simulacrum—enabling direct confrontation with unresolved pain—Morrison's novel demonstrates literary fiction's capacity to embody the trauma of slavery. This framework should extend to other atrocities, with future research pursuing interdisciplinary work between literary studies and trauma psychology.

Key Words: Baudrillard, *Beloved*, hyperreality, Simulacrum, Trauma, Toni Morrison.

النسخة التي تلتهم الأصل: رواية "محبوبة" ك محاكاة وتجسيد للصدمة التاريخية

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الخلاصة

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية توني موريسون "محبوبة" (١٩٨٧) لما تتميز به من نهج سردي فريد في تمثيل قضايا العرق والعبودية وعواقبها النفسية. تتعمد موريسون طمس الحدود بين الواقع والخرق للطبيعة لخلق فضاء يمكن فيه للصدمة غير القابلة للتمثيل أن تتنفس وتتجلى. إن تقنيات ما بعد الحداثة التي استخدمتها الكاتبة تجعل من "محبوبة" نصاً مثالياً لمراقبة كيف يمكن للأدب أن يجسد الصدمة التاريخية بما يتجاوز الدراسات التاريخية التقليدية. تطبق الدراسة نموذج بودريارد عن المحاكاة (النسخة بلا أصل) ونظريات الصدمة عند كاروث و لأكابرا و هارتمان. و من خلال التحليل النصي، يُفسّر شخصية محبوبة على أنها محاكاة تعمل ليس كصدمة رمزية بل كصدمة تاريخية ملموسة وفورية يحول الرواية معضلة تمثيل الفضاء إلى تجربة تفاعلية للقارئ. علاوة على ذلك، تشير النتائج إلى أن بعض أهوال التاريخ - وخصوصاً العبودية والتمييز العنصري - تقاوم الوصف الكافي عبر التأريخ التقليدي، وتستدعي بدلاً من ذلك أن تُختبر على أنها صدمة متجسدة. تخلص الدراسة إلى أنه من خلال رواية "محبوبة" ك محاكاة - التي تتيح مواجهة مباشرة مع الألم التاريخي غير المحلول - تظهر موريسون كيف يمكن للأدب الروائي أن يجسد حقاً صدمة العبودية. وينبغي تطبيق هذا الإطار على فضاءات تاريخية أخرى، وأن تتجه الأبحاث المستقبلية نحو العمل متعدد التخصصات بين الدراسات الأدبية وعلم نفس الصدمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الصدمة ، الواقع المفرط ، بودريارد ، توني موريسون ، محاكاة ، محبوبة

1. Introduction

In her attempt to criticize the long history of slavery presented in the work of many writers as weak and devoid of detailing experiences that would make white people feel uncomfortable concerning unusual violent cases and atrocities, Toni Morrison, in publishing her novel *Beloved* in 1987, declared her determination "to rip away the veil hiding the horrors of American history" (Grabes, 2005, p. 233). The idea of Sethe's deceased child coming back to life as a young woman has produced many literary discussions regarding issues such as memory and trauma and their ethical implications. At the same time, it is unclear what exact status does *Beloved* hold, what kind of existence she represents: Is she a ghost, an apparition, a supernatural entity, or rather an entity much more complicated than one can define by means of conventional terms?

In this study, it is argued that the concept of simulacrum by Jean Baudrillard is especially applicable to *Beloved's* role in the novel. According to Baudrillard, the simulacrum is neither an image nor a symbol; rather, it is an image that replaces its referent to such an extent that it actually "eats up" the referent. The concept of simulacrum exists in what Baudrillard terms as the "hyperreal," where simulations do not represent any reality; they become reality and become more real than the reality they replaced.

The above theory provides an explanation as to why Morrison is able to create a character that does not only represent the horrors of slavery but is herself the horror. *Beloved* is not a representation of those who suffered from slavery; she is the very act of suffering turned into a personification that consumes all traces of representation in favor of the real. As it will be shown, Morrison's success is achieved through the creation of a simulacrum that eats its original in order to resolve the problem of representing historical trauma.

Central to this study is the interrelated work of trauma theorists Cathy Caruth, Saidiya Hartman, and Dominick LaCapra. Caruth's (1996) notion of "unclaimed experience" illuminates how traumatic scenes and events resist direct narration, manifesting instead belatedly through dreams and nightmares that become embedded in human psychology. Hartman's (1997, 2008) work exposes the violence embedded in the archives of slavery, revealing gaps that conventional historiography cannot fill—gaps that demand speculative and performative approaches to recovery. LaCapra (2001) builds his trauma theory around "empathic unsettlement," an ethical term that renders trauma purposeful. He insists that historical trauma should not overwhelm the critic but rather serve as a cornerstone for working through it. Together, these three theories enrich the world of Morrison's novel,

positioning Beloved as a simulacrum that resists symbolic resolution and instead demands direct, unsettling confrontation with the trauma of slavery.

2. Theoretical Framework: Simulacrum, Hyperreality, and Trauma

2.1 Baudrillard's Orders of Simulacra

The concept of hyperreality in the post-modern age has been developed in Jean Baudrillard's "Simulacra and Simulation" (1981). In it, Baudrillard traces a historical trajectory of representations that result in hyperreality. There are three "orders" of simulacra that pertain to specific historical periods and have a particular copy-to-model relationship.

The first order, which belongs to pre-modernity, is based on the concept of counterfeiting. In the first order, representations make their nature of being copies evident by acknowledging the original work that precedes them. For example, a portrait admits its derivative nature by recognizing the existence of the individual that it represents outside the portrait itself. This phase is called by Baudrillard as "the natural law of value" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 84). in which signs have no any attention to be real but they strongly emphasis the reality that they are imitating the real as well.

The second order, developing with the onset of the Industrial Revolution, works via production. In this case, copies abound without any identifiable originals. An assembly line makes the same objects; there is no specific object that can be considered the "original," from which other objects are made copies of. According to Baudrillard, "The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory" (Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1). The process of production is set to pave the way to the complete loss of the original during the third and final phase of the simulacrum: the order of simulation. In this order there is no original or real substance to imitate or compare with, Baudrillard presents an example taken from the industrial era to clarify this order. The example is the production of a robot which is detached from any relation to human. Unlike humans, it is functionally more efficient and more competent than the real (Baudrillard, 1983: 95).

The third order, typical of the postmodern era, works on the principle of simulation. In the third order, the copy comes before the original and creates the original. The representations are no longer symbols for anything; rather, they create their own realities, referred to as the "hyperreal," by Baudrillard. The map no longer stands for the territory but becomes the territory itself. For Baudrillard, Disneyland is not an image of America but a simulation that creates a referent called "America": "Disneyland is perceived as imaginary so

as to convince us that the rest is real, while in fact Los Angeles and the whole American surrounding reality have ceased to be real and become hyperreal"(Baudrillard, 1994, p. 12). Thought the phase of simulation, which comes as a result of a society that attributed of a huge consumption, there will be no difference between what is original and what is copy. They totally dissolve to be no more than parodies of the previous factual as a simulacrum.

At the heart of Baudrillard's third order lies the idea of the simulacrum proper – a reproduction that has no original and one which has devoured and substituted its referent. Simulacrum neither refers nor represents; it simply simulates. In representation, there is an equation of terms, an equation based on the difference between sign and referent. However, simulation functions according to the logic of absorption, whereby the sign absorbs the referent and renders any distinction moot. As Baudrillard puts it, "it is no longer a matter of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a matter of substituting signs of the real for the real thing itself"(Baudrillard, 1994, p. 2). The notion of simulacrum destroys the line drawn by Plato between what is real, original or imitation "the counterfeit" . Baudrillard declares that the simulacrum doesn't hide the truth, yet it is the truth itself that hides the fact that there is no other truth(Baudrillard, 1993, p. 194). Baudrillard illustrates that simulacrum is used as reality but it has no strong association with normal facts and of what had happened in real situations and for this reason it represents a threat to the differences between what is true and false and what is real and fake matters(Baudrillard, 1993: 195). In this sense, simulacrum is used to present a new and more vivid reality by destroying and eliminating the actual reality. It reveals the deception of reality through adding additional illusions(Baudrillard, 1993: 194).

2.2 The Devouring of the Original

The most terrifying aspect of the simulacrum for Baudrillard is the power to substitute and devour the original. The substitution itself is violent in nature since it entails the simulacrum's "devouring" of the original through rendering it irrelevant, unavailable, or outdated. Rather than referring to the original, the copy does not just become more real than the original but creates a hyper-reality that makes the original dispensable.

The mechanism of this consumption works on the basis of something known as "the precession of simulacra", which Baudrillard talks about in his theory. In other words, "simulacra precedes and dictates the real". With this phenomenon, the real ceases to act as a source of representation since, in fact, the real itself becomes "that which can be replaced by some sort of artificial reproduction"(Baudrillard, 1994, p. 3). The copy does not destroy the

original but instead makes it inaccessible through its own medium, swallowing it up without erasing it.

The most striking illustration provided by Baudrillard is that of an event of terrorism. According to him, the act of terrorism is not a symbol of political outrage but is, in fact, a hyperreality of that outrage. It swallows up all of the political reality associated with it and stands alone as the sole reality worth considering. Likewise, it can be argued that *Beloved* is not a symbol of slavery but is a hyperreality of it.

2.3 Trauma Theory and the Problem of Representation

Indeed, Baudrillard's theory appears especially useful when discussing the theme of slavery in relation to *Beloved* because slavery has been both fundamental and taboo for American history. Slavery is something that is well-recorded but impossible to talk about. Indeed, conventional forms of representing history have failed to convey its horrific dimensions.

Cathy Caruth is regarded to be one of the prominent contributor in the studies of trauma. In her master piece *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), she redefines trauma as "a missed encounter" that has a heavy effect on life in general: "The story of trauma as the narrative of a belated experience, far from telling of an escape from reality – the escape from a death, or from its referential force – rather attests to its endless impact on life"(Caruth, 1996 p. 7).

Caruth asserts that trauma develops through a sequence which begins with the initial traumatic experience but continues until its eventual resolution through flashbacks and nightmares and other repetitive processes. Caruth defines trauma as the human reaction to violent events which people cannot comprehend during their occurrence but which torment them through constant flashbacks and nightmares and repetitive dream patterns which she calls the "unclaimed experience" in the sense that one can't say that these events happen to him or her in a particular moment of time but the past events possess individuals in the present(Caruth, 1996 p. 91).The structure of belatedness in trauma prevents its direct representation, so people must examine it through its resulting effects. For Caruth, Trauma allows the creation of a better understanding of history since it is presented in a new language that "exceeds the symbolic" and history can be belatedly seized through the effect of trauma. In his book "*Writing History, Writing Trauma*" from 2001, Dominick LaCapra expands on the issue with historiography. According to LaCapra, there are two forms of trauma – "historical trauma," the events that have taken place, and "structural trauma," the very existence of

which allows for historical trauma to happen. What LaCapra suggests when dealing with historical trauma is what he calls "empathic unsettlement." (LaCapra, 2001, p.41). LaCapra believes that the goal should not be about overcoming the trauma but rather about "working through" it in order not to forget it or to be overwhelmed by it. He claims it to be a healthier and more effective procedure that can be translated into a meaningful critical historical description.

However, LaCapra strongly criticizes Cathy Caruth and other trauma theories for their insistence on the principle of "belatedness" which leads to no healing but to what he calls "A re-traumatizing effect" which in turn leads to a kind of political stagnation through concentrating on repetition without presenting any method to how to take advantage of trauma itself as a psychological factor that can be overwhelmed (Yad Vashem, n.d.).

As Saidiya Hartman asserts in her book *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (1997), there exists a particular challenge to the representation of slavery. The writer notes that representations of slavery could lead to the recreation of the violence being depicted because of the transformation of the depiction into a spectacle of suffering. To represent the slave's body is to risk turning it into an object of representation. As Hartman asks: "What are the limitations of identification and empathy with respect to the sufferings of the enslaved? How does one consider the fragility of black life without making spectacle of suffering?" (Hartman, 1997, p. 4).

Morrison solves this problem through refusal. Instead of representing slavery in a traditional sense, Morrison generates in *Beloved* a simulacrum that reproduces the trauma of slavery in her characters, without trying to represent any particular event in history. *Beloved* does not represent the Middle Passage; rather, she is the incarnation of the Middle Passage. She does not symbolize the child who was killed; instead, she is the reincarnation of the child, who has surpassed the status of the child into something else. This strategy echoes that of LaCapra's "empathic unsettlement," but transcends it in the sense that Morrison generates an embodiment of unsettlement.

3. Beloved as Simulacrum: Close Reading and Textual Analysis

3.1 The Ambiguous Ontology: A Copy Without an Original

In the description of *Beloved*, Morrison states that "the purpose of making her [Beloved] real is making history possible, making memory real _ somebody walks in the door and sit down on the table so you have to think about it". So, for the writer, *Beloved* is the very materialization of the history of that era (Henderson, 1991, p. 81). She is difficult to

classify right from the start. This mysterious woman who pops out of the water—a universal representation of both creation and destruction—is described by the novel's narrator with ambiguous language that shows how Beloved acts and then a depiction of her physical existence:

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. The fully clothed figure of a woman emerged from the water. Before long, she had managed to crawl onto the muddy bank of the stream and sat down, leaning against the trunk of a mulberry tree... The skin was newly made and without wrinkles or lines. Her hair was bitter as soot.(Morrison, 1987, p. 60)

This quote defines the ontological uncertainty of Beloved. She is not a born entity; rather, she just manifests herself. Her skin is “new” and “lineless,” implying that her physical presence defies time. Her hair “tasted like soot,” recalling the imagery associated with the Middle Passage where slaves were transported in ships laden with soot. She embodies a duality of being both a woman and not a woman.

Beloved is viewed by the characters of the novel as a flesh-and-blood woman, or as a returning ghost, or even as something beyond those two classifications. Paul D, who suspects something supernatural about Beloved, experiences a reaction that can't be explained rationally: "The scent of her, the warmth of her, the sparkle in her eyes—all was strange. Why? He did not know. What? He did not know. But one thing he knew—she who lived in his house was not the same woman who came from the water".(Morrison, 1987, p. 143)

Beloved becomes the filter through which the internal suffering of the slave is made plain, and the novel itself becomes the vehicle through which a nation sees itself. Morrison has said that Beloved is a filter that becomes “another kind of dead which is not spiritual but flesh, which is, a survival from the true factual slave ship”(Henderson, 2002, p. 83-88).

By making Beloved real flesh, Morrison tends to make this part of the historical moment more tangible and the physical appearance of the girl becomes a symbol of millions of black people whose lives were terribly vanished between the seas of Africa and America. Beloved becomes a hyberreal figure for she makes real and vivid memory of those silenced men, women and little girls(Henderson, 1991, p. 89).

Paul D's uncertainty—"something was off"—captures the simulacral nature of Beloved. She produces the sensations of presence (smell, heat, light) but these sensations do not cohere into a recognizable form of presence. She does not exist as a traditional ghost

because ghosts exist to show things that have disappeared from view. Beloved presents an excessive form of presence which surpasses all the established methods used to understand presence.

Importantly, Beloved does not have a definitive original. Although the reader knows that she is Sethe's dead daughter whom Sethe had killed, this is never established. In fact, Beloved is unable to define herself in terms of her past; all she can say about herself is that she existed before language developed. When questioned about her identity, she can only say "Beloved". (Morrison, 1987, p. 63) The fact is that she simply is Beloved.

It is in this sense that the Beloved fits into the definition of a simulacrum according to Baudrillard because it is not an image of reality but an image with no relation to reality since the historical referent in question is dead, if not lost. Beloved is not an image of the lost child; she is rather a hyperreal presence as the name of the real thing incarnated in her. As stated in the last page of the book: "It was not a story to pass on".(Morrison, 1987, p. 274)

3.2 Hyper-Embodiment: The Body as Simulation

The body of Beloved functions in a manner that brings about hyperreality since this body is submitted to the conditions whereby imitation or production of reality acquire more legitimacy, value and power than the original themselves(Taylor & Winqvist, 2001, p.182-183).While conventional ghosts tend to lack embodiment as they are described as insubstantial and lacking in corporeality, Beloved's embodiment is described to be excessive: "Her feet were as sweet as the soles of a newborn baby. Her skin was so soft it made an impression on the touch of a finger. Her hair was the longest and most beautiful hair in the world. Her teeth were as white as pearls".(Morrison, 1987, p. 60)

This excerpt describes a body that is both physical and perfected. In likening the body to a "newborn baby" and "pearls," there is an implication of a body that is beyond the realm of physical existence, a body that does not show signs of aging, of decay, or of time. It is not the body of a slave from history, subjected to hard labor and brutality, but a replication of that body, creating the notion of the body without embodying it.

The connection between Beloved and the concept of food is another factor that highlights her super-embodied nature. For example, she eats all the time and feeds on sugar in specific cases: "She took the plate, studied it, and instead of eating she filled her mouth with its sweet content. With her eyes shut, she allowed it to move throughout her body. ... She ate it all. Every last crumb. Then she licked the plate".(Morrison, 1987, p. 62)

The pattern is repeated throughout the novel, with Beloved's appetite growing more and more insatiable. She eats not for sustenance but for pleasure, for the feeling of being full. It is not her sustenance that she seeks but an abundance, something superfluous. This superfluity defines the hyperreal: she doesn't eat for the sugar itself but for the taste of the sugar. Beloved is a new original that has no counterfeit. She represents the simulacrum that, as Baudrillard claims, stands for the reality which has no connection with any tangible or actual existence and for this it threatens the variance between "true" and "false" or "real" and "imaginary"(Baudrillard,1994. p. 3).

As the story proceeds, it is observed that Beloved starts becoming larger in size whereas Sethe becomes smaller. The above statement is used by Morrison to depict the literal process of the simulacrum consuming the original: "She wanted to protect herself from her but Beloved was growing. Growing big, strong, while she, Sethe, was diminishing – getting small, weak. As if Beloved were eating her from the inside out".(Morrison, 1987, p. 270) In the statement given above, the words "eating her from the inside out" indicate the method adopted by the simulacrum to consume the original. It is not only replacing her but she is consuming Sethe. Sethe herself becomes the container for Beloved.

3.3 The Consumption of Sethe: Devouring the Original

The most direct example of Beloved as a simulacrum is Sethe's slow disintegration by way of Beloved. On three levels, the disintegration takes place. On a physical level, Sethe deteriorates as Beloved develops, as described directly by Morrison: "The flesh of her body was so soft and new that her touch made an impression, and it dented. She was losing weight. Her clothes fell off her. Her face became thin, her eyes sunken. She was being eaten away".(Morrison, 1987, p. 271)

Here, the use of "soft" and "new" mirrors the former description of Beloved's overly embodied skin. It indicates a loss of substance and density for Sethe, a dissolution rather than hyperembodiment.

Psychologically, Sethe loses herself to Beloved, who becomes so intertwined with her mother that she cannot tell them apart anymore: "She was licked, tasted, eaten alive by Beloved's eyes. ... Beloved knew her better than anyone. Beloved saw through her better than anyone. Beloved could feel her better than anyone".(Morrison, 1987, p. 68)

Through this passage, the process of consumption takes form. In the case of Sethe, her identity relies solely on the awareness of her identity on behalf of Beloved. Sethe exists as

much as Beloved recognizes her existence, knowing her and giving her life. This dynamic has shifted: This dynamic has reversed: Beloved is no longer a part of the family. She transforms from Sethe's daughter into Sethe's property.

Ontologically speaking, Sethe's consumption is the replacement of original with copy. Sethe serves as the original, the mother who lost her child through murder, the historical agent of action upon which the narrative of the novel hinges. By the novel's end, however, Sethe no longer functions as the mother of her child but rather becomes an extension of Beloved, the receptacle of the copy that has consumed her. According to Morrison, Beloved: "Was the one who had the power. She was the one who could make them do what she wanted. She was the one who could make them forget. She was the one who could make them remember". (Morrison, 1987, p. 272)

Seth, who is supposed to find her identity through focusing on the idea of the house through which women could "work out their salvation and define their identities", devoted her life and efforts to the house for the sake of rescue from the suffering of losing identity (Lakshmi, 2017, p. 69). Yet, she found herself blocked out by the strong presence of Beloved who also devours Seth's whole existence. It is worth to mention that rendering to the West African traditions and belief there is always a cohabitation between past represented by the dead, present represented by the living and the future represented by the unborn. In Beloved case, the past devours the existence of the living that represents Seth's life. Beloved now holds all the power of representation in terms of memory. She controls what is remembered and forgotten, what is made present and absent.

3.4 The Fragmented Monologue: Trauma as Language

However, Beloved's internal monologue, broken into three segments towards the end of the narrative, is arguably the most revolutionary aspect of Morrison's novel as far as form goes. While this monologue is usually thought to reflect the experience of the Middle Passage, its relevance for the simulacrum paradigm is derived from its very form, since it possesses neither syntax nor chronology nor reference: "I am Beloved and she is mine. Her face comes through the water to me. She looks like that and I look like this. But we are the same. I am not distinct from her. I have no place where I end. She has no place where she begins. We are one. I am she". (Morrison, 1987, p. 210)

However, this excerpt does not give an account of the Middle Passage; rather, it seeks to capture the consciousness of the one who has undergone this ordeal. The disintegration itself serves as the medium of representation; in fact, it represents the simulacrum, which swallows any opportunity for coherent representation. The breakdown of the boundaries separating self from other, 'I' from 'she', also reflects the breakdown of the boundaries between original and imitation that defines the simulacrum.

Another part of the monologue also recalls the ordeal of the slave ship with almost hallucinatory power:

Everything is here now, and it always will be. There is no point in time when I am not crouched in darkness, watching the light come through a crack. ... The men without skin poke them through with their sticks. But they don't poke me. I'm not there. I am not apart from them. I am one of them.(Morrison, 1987, p. 211)

"The men without skin" is a reminder of the dehumanized state of the slaves, how they have been stripped of their humanity, and thus their skins, boundaries between themselves and the outside world. The breakdown of grammar "I am not different from them. I am the same as them" mirrors the breakdown of individuality, the erasure of identity, experienced during the Middle Passage. However, this is not a description of the Middle Passage but its experience in the now.

According to Baudrillard, the simulacrum always exists in the present tense, where the past and the future collapse into an eternal present. Exactly this effect has been achieved by Beloved's monologue; the Middle Passage is no longer something from history but a reality existing in the present moment. The copy (the monologue of Beloved) has erased the original (the historical Middle Passage) because the only way to experience it is through this simulation.

4. Historical Trauma and the Revival of the Past

4.1 The Middle Passage and Unspeakability

The Middle Passage – the journey across the Atlantic Ocean where enslaved Africans made their way to the New World – is a particularly interesting phenomenon in historical memory. On one hand, it is central to American history; on the other hand, it has been actively suppressed from this same history. Millions were oppressed and lost their lives, and yet, there is practically no firsthand documentation of their suffering.

Such a gap in evidence poses what Hartman calls "the problem of the archive": how to tell about a historic event when there is no archival material that could be utilized in its depiction? and he puts a proposal that the way to remediate the problem of "the archive as tomb"(Hartman,2008.p.2). is to adopt reality and visually narrate the suffering and lives of the enslaved. Hartman advises those who are responsible of telling the history of slavery not to be "fanciful", depending on their imagination of telling truths nor "utopian" of being overly creative or presenting unrealistic hopeful. This, as she supposes, will lead to misunderstanding of the whole suffering of the meaning of being slaves and will create a sense of incompleteness within us because we, as the new generations, give miss confrontation to the previous history.

This proposal of Hartman is magnificently applied by Morrison through introducing *Beloved* as a living embodiment of the missing testimonial – as the document that never existed.

It is clear that Morrison links *Beloved* and the Middle Passage directly via the dedicatory page at the start of the novel: "Sixty Million and more." The latter number refers to an approximation of how many Africans lost their lives in the slave trade, and it places the story of *Beloved* into that enormous, incalculable background. *Beloved* is not just a reappearing daughter but also one of "the sixty million," representing all those who were killed by the trade in slaves.

Moreover, Morrison uses some physical features of *Beloved* to connect her character with the slavery period. Her skin has no lines: it is lineless and smooth, referring to the body of someone who had died before time could make its marks on it. Her hair tastes like soot, alluding to the coal burnt in slave ships during the trading process. She breathes out sweet air, reminiscent of the sugar made on plantations using slave labor.

4.2 Trauma as a Historical Revival

The idea of historical revival is regarded a new development and proper narrative form that can reinforce cultural nationalism and permit for the immediate presence of national personality and the progressive logic which drives the character of nations. Worth to say that in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M. Synge* (2009) Matthews examines how Synge's plays revive historical trauma — bringing Ireland's painful colonial past into vivid, unresolved presence on the stage(Matthews, 2009, p.139-140). This same principle is applied to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The novel does not simply describe the trauma of slavery; it

actively resurrects it through the ghost of the murdered infant, Beloved, who forces Sethe, Denver, and the community to relive what they most wish to forget. As Synge's work does for Irish history, Morrison's fiction insists that historical trauma cannot be buried — it will always return, demanding acknowledgment.

This notion of historical revival is crucial for the theory of trauma because it involves the phenomenon of belatedness: the trauma occurs not in the moment but reappears later on through repetition and flashback. The concept of belatedness plays an important role in *Beloved* because it reflects the return of the trauma of slavery after slavery itself is over.

It is obvious that Sethe herself was driven by trauma when she killed her child: it was her way of ensuring that her children would not be brought back into slavery. As Sethe tells Paul D about her act: "I took and put my babies where they'd be safe. ... I stopped him. I took them to the other side. I didn't give him a chance to take them. I took them myself". (Morrison, 1987, p. 174)

The act performed by Sethe symbolizes an effort to gain control of the uncontrollable – namely, bringing back the reign of slavery into her life. However, this effort to gain control also results in another kind of trauma – infanticide – which makes its presence felt in the figure of Beloved. Beloved is not only the child who comes back to her family but also the trauma itself, incarnated in the person of Beloved.

The idea of the trauma making a return is consistent with the definition of trauma offered by Caruth, which states that it is "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped at the time they occur, but later return repeatedly in flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena"(Caruth, 1996, p. 91). Indeed, Sethe did not fully realize the nature of the traumatic experience that she went through when committing that act. She performed it in the condition of what Morrison terms "rememory," i.e., being completely immersed in the memory of the past.

4.3 Rememory: The Collapse of Past and Present

In her essay *Mouth Full of Blood: Essays, Speeches, Meditations* (2019), Toni Morrison writes: "History versus memory, and memory versus memorylessness. Rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past".(Morrison, 2019, p.323)

The definition set by her is so dense and poetic and has purposefully layered. She is not only giving the meaning of “memory”, but she also presents a philosophy of how the past is working together with the present to form the personality and life especially for those who have suffered from a severe trauma. According to Morrison, historical narrative contains two intertwined layers, “the official history” which is set by the dominated power and which is widely used in narrative and the “alternate History” of the slaves, the silenced and the marginalized people that reflects their true life and experiences. It is also called the “underneath history” for it much deeper and expresses hidden facts. And she makes a difference between “history” and “memory”; “history” is the “external experiences” . It is linear, passive, emotionless, can be fortified and is presented as a form that erases and eliminates the culture of historical trauma, whereas “memory” is the “internal experiences” and the ultimate painful course of “remembering” of what we really grasped and shared from generation to another that will form our own future identity. The act of “Memorylessness”, according to Morrison, is so dangerous because it willingly leads to cut the relation with the past and thus it leaves persons with no identity and feels no horror for their future since they don’t feel that past mistakes might be repeated again and this what Morrison wants to avoid in *Beloved*. She wants to show the horror of moving on slavery without recognizing its consequences.

“Rememory”, therefore, is a kind of recollecting and remembering. It is simply the act of actively and passively bringing the past back into your conscious mind. It is not just passively recalling a sad fact. It is an active, creative, and restorative process of “remembering”.

Morrison develops the notion of "rememory" in order to describe how the past remains in the present, neither in the form of memory, which suggests the existence of the past and the present as two separate realities, nor as an actuality that continues to exist in the present. Sethe defines rememory for her daughter Denver:

Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. ... But it's not because some things aren't remembered because they continue, and some things are not continued because they happen only once—like when you're hanged. What I mean is, some things happen once in a while and others only once. Like being hanged, for instance. Or being born.

Once you see it, it stays with you forever. Even if it doesn't happen very often. (Morrison, 1987, p. 43)

Sethe tries to "rememory" her dead daughter by confronting the trauma. The Beloved is a literal, painful "re-membered" part of her past that she cannot ignore. Morrison is saying that for descendants of any great trauma (slavery, genocide, war), you cannot just do "history" and you cannot accept "memorylessness." You must do the harder, more radical act of Rememory — you must *re-member* (Kovács, 2021, 163-164).

Rememory is the simulacrum of the past—an endlessly reproducible duplicate without an original that remains even when the original occurrence no longer exists. Rememory "hovers" above the world, separate from any one consciousness, ready to be stumbled upon by anyone who finds themselves in the right spot. This is exactly how the simulacrum works; the duplicate exists apart from its original and becomes autonomous, existing independently of the original but affecting the present without reference to the past. Beloved is rememory given flesh. She is the "picture" of what Sethe did, "hovering outside of [Sethe's] head" before returning to reclaim her place. According to Denver: "She wasn't a ghost. She was something else. Something that had been waiting for a long time. Something that had been waiting for Sethe to be ready for her". (Morrison, 1987, p. 145)

This "something else" is trauma as simulacrum—the past that refuses to pass, that lingers as a living presence, always ready to return. Beloved doesn't stand for the past; she is the past, incarnated as an autonomous presence within the present.

4.4 The Community's Role: Collective Trauma

However, one of the most significant contributions of the novel to trauma theories is that Morrison argues that trauma is not only a personal matter, but it can be communal. Sethe's trauma becomes communal because of the former slaves who have gathered around 124 Bluestone Road. Because they did not give Sethe any warning about Schoolteacher's return, they were forced to commit the infanticide act. The isolation of the former slaves from Sethe becomes an attempt to distance themselves from their own trauma.

The trauma of the community is evident in their attitude toward Beloved when she first appears. The former slaves sense something unusual about her but refuse to help her: "We didn't know. We didn't know she was that kind of woman. We didn't know she had that kind of daughter. We didn't know she had that kind of past. We didn't know. We didn't know". (Morrison, 1987, p. 275)

The recurrence of "we didn't know" points to the willful ignorance, the desire on part of the community to distance themselves from the trauma that they all shared. However, such a move to create distance is untenable. With *Beloved* consuming Sethe, the community members come to terms with the fact that they are as responsible for what happened to her just as she was responsible for her children. The act of exorcism depicted towards the end of the novel, in which thirty women outside 124 come together to sing and pray and chase *Beloved* away, signifies the awareness of the community members regarding their shared involvement.

The community of former slaves in *Beloved* stands for the notion of "structural trauma" as described by LaCapra. As he puts it, being human and subject to historical traumas means being part of the very structures in which the historical traumas occur, thereby making everyone involved, perpetrators, bystanders, witnesses, etc., even future generations. The community of former slaves in *Beloved* is both victimized by slavery and a part of the specific trauma of Sethe's murder of her child. (LaCapra, 2001, p. 43-44)

5. The Ethics of Representing Atrocity

5.1 Morrison's Critique of Traditional Historiography

The novel attacks the traditional historical discourse through its incapacity to convey the trauma of slavery. Firstly, it does so via the form of its narrative: non-linear and cyclic, the novel presents an event through several different versions and adds some details at each turn. The history of the protagonist's infanticide unfolds throughout the whole novel but is not disclosed before the very end. Such form imitates the nature of trauma: repetition rather than resolution is its essential characteristic.

Secondly, Morrison casts doubt on the very possibility of objective historical cognition. Those characters who seek to document the experience of slavery, such as the schoolteacher and a reporter, prove to be participants rather than observers of the process. In this case, the scientific discourse used by the schoolteacher to document Sethe's human and animal features becomes a pervertive tool enabling slavery itself, as Morrison remarks:

"He had said to schoolteacher that she was animal and human. Her head had been measured and compared to that of the head of the white man. Her teeth and her limbs had been measured. All of it was recorded in his notebook". (Morrison, 1987, p. 197)

Measurement in this case is used as a tool for violence because the information collected by Schoolteacher is used to construct a new reality where Sethe is seen as a less-

than-human being. In writing about the enslaved, traditional historiography might risk engaging in such violence since, according to Morrison, it will inevitably reproduce a certain position of superiority(Kovács, 2021, 162-163).

Ethically, however, the novel does not treat Sethe's trauma as something spectacular. Infanticide is never described directly; it only comes up in indirect references made by Sethe herself, by her relatives, or by witnesses of that particular crime. This approach is what makes Morrison respond to Hartman's dilemma: "How does one attend to the precariousness of black life without reproducing the spectacle of suffering?"(Hartman, 1997, p. 4). Thus, by constructing a character like Beloved, Morrison achieves two goals at once: she evokes the memory of trauma while leaving room for speculation and imagination.

5.2 Beloved as Ethical Simulacrum

It is said by some critics to the notion of the simulacrum that it has endured a "subsequent demonization" and is generally associated with negative implications within Baudrillard's theoretical framework(Merrin,2001, p. 85). And is also characterized by having a "murderous capacity" as "murderer of the real" and "murderers of their own model" (Baudrillard, 2001, p.194). However, Hyperreality is characterized by loss and the absence of reality. However, the use of the simulacrum within Morrison's narrative opens up an ethical ambivalence. Beloved is destructive; she destroys Sethe, isolates Denver, and pushes Paul D away. Still, she is needed at the same time. She forces the characters to face their fears.

Ethical ambivalence is represented through the following description of Beloved from the novel: "This is not a story to pass on. ... They forgot her like a bad dream. ... They did not tell anyone about her. They did not have to. It was not a story to pass on". (Morrison, 1987, p. 274)

In the repetition of "it was not a story to pass on", we witness an interesting paradox. Indeed, the very act of writing that book is a process of passing the story on. What is interesting about this paradox is how it encapsulates the ethical dilemma inherent to the representation of trauma. One needs to represent the trauma, yet one cannot do so. In other words, the simulacrum is precisely what the failure of representation looks like. Beloved is not a story, yet one must tell her story all the same.

What sets Morrison's work apart is that this simulacrum understands the limitations of representation. Beloved's hyperreal presence does not succeed because she is able to represent the trauma; rather, she fails in her attempt at representation by devouring herself. It

seems like this self-destruction is ultimately what generates the possibilities for confronting trauma. Indeed, as shown by the final images of the novel, it is only by confronting the simulacrum and driving Beloved out of 124 that the community is able to survive and move forward.

6. Conclusion

This study argues that Toni Morrison's *Beloved* employs the concept of the simulacrum to challenge how historical trauma is represented. By analyzing both Morrison's text and Baudrillardian philosophy as well as modern-day trauma theory, the current paper shows that *Beloved* is, indeed, a work of art which creates its own reality without any original and which consumes the historical events that it may seem to represent.

In terms of historiography, trauma theory, and representation ethics, the implications of such analysis may have more consequences than simply revealing a deeper meaning of one particular book. Indeed, if some historical events are too complex to be presented in any traditional way, maybe it would be the most ethical approach to change our understanding of representation itself, thus creating our own simulacra. That is precisely what Toni Morrison did in her famous work. By creating a simulacrum that consumes its original, she proves that Some histories cannot be transmitted as linear stories; rather, they must be felt as an immediate, haunting presence.

Beloved herself, in the end, is still both an absence and a presence. She is forgotten, but Morrison ensures she will never be. She is not a tale to be told, but the novel tells her tale. In this contradiction lies not the inability to represent, but rather the perfection of representation. The unspeakable for Morrison is not what is spoken clearly, but what is spoken in recognition of its unspeakability. The act of reproducing trauma's architecture gives rise to *Beloved*—a simulacrum so potent that it consumes the original, becoming more real than reality itself. In this incarnation, trauma is finally made accessible for release.

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