

**The Negative Consequences of Love in Toni
Morrison's Beloved (1987)**

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**العواقب السلبية للحب في محبوبة توني موريسون
1987**

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تمت معالجة كتاب "محبوب توني موريسون" من زوايا مختلفة. وقد تناولت عدد من الدراسات السابقة مثل الجوانب الأخلاقية والمعنى والدينية والتحليلية النفسية؛ والبعض الآخر درس الأمومة ومفهوم حب الأم والتجسيد الجسدي ومفاهيم أخرى. لقد تناولت المزيد من الدراسات صراع السود، والعبودية، والألم والشفاء، والرائع مع الواقعي؛ الحب كسلعة، الحب فيما يتعلق بالمجتمع، الموت، الديمقراطية والتعليم، تحقيق الذات، الواقعية السحرية، الحزن والصدمة، الحرية، العدمية والسلطة، الهوية الثقافية، الأنوثة، قتل الأطفال ومفاهيم أخرى مماثلة. ومع ذلك، لم تتناول أي دراسة - على حد علم الباحث - العواقب السلبية للحب في الرواية. ولذلك تهدف الورقة البحثية الحالية إلى دراسة النتائج المترتبة على جميع أشكال الحب في الرواية محل الدراسة. وسوف يستكشف كيف يمكن أن يؤدي الإفراط في الحب - وخاصة حب الأم - إلى نتائج كارثية.

Abstract

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has been addressed from a variety of angles. A number of previous studies have treated ethics, meaning, religious and psychoanalytic aspects; others have studied motherhood, the concept of motherlove, physical embodiment and other concepts. More studies have examined black struggle, slavery, pain and healing, the fantastic with the realistic; love as a commodity, love with relation to community, death, democracy and education, self-realization, magic realism, grief and trauma, freedom, nihilism and power, cultural identity, womanhood, infanticide and other similar notions. However, no study—to the best knowledge of the researcher—has ever addressed the negative consequences of love in the novel. Therefore, the current research paper intends to investigate the consequences of all forms of love in the novel under study. It will explore how too much love—especially a mother's love—could bring about disastrous outcomes. Key Words: Love, Negative, Consequences, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

Introduction

In the majority of her narrative production, Toni Morrison pays special attention to the problems, issues and worrying anxieties of African Americans, more particularly of women. In *Beloved*, Morrison addresses slavery as the chief complication behind the misery, suffering and wretchedness of African Americans in general, and African American women in particular. She illustrates the various problems and difficulties African American women face because of slavery and how it impedes them from leading the simplest form of life, choosing to desire and love the least of things, or embrace attitudes of the most ordinary nature.

Toni Morrison published her novel *Beloved* in 1987 and won the Pulitzer Prize a year after for writing the same. The novel traces and relates the sad life events of a black slave woman named Sethe. Sethe is born a slave to a slave black woman whom she has never known. She lives a great portion of her life as a slave and suffers all the miseries a slave has to endure. When Sethe falls in love with a black slave, gets married and becomes a mother of three children. Yet, she continues to be victimized by the slave system and the masters running it for their own interest. Hence, Sethe decides to liberate herself and her family from the fetters of slavery and flees to Bluestone Road, in Cincinnati, Ohio, where she acquires a self-effacingly humble house and lives a life of scarcity and seclusion. Nevertheless, her former master hunts her down and is intent upon bringing her and her children back to their former place and thus to slavery. Intent on not going back whatsoever, Sethe kills her baby girl, *Beloved*, to save her the wretched fate of slavery. Her two sons Buglar and Howard have also left her leaving her with her daughter Denver. In addition, her murdered child returns as a poltergeist and haunts her for the rest of her life. In the novel, readers become quickly acquainted with the mounting difficulty black women face in attempting to build and maintain whatever form of relationships, in their midst and with other people. The context of slavery imposed on black women is so severely confining, repressive and persecuting that almost no black woman can escape it unscarred. *Beloved's* key character, Sethe, is the archetypal example of all black women whom slavery leaves scarred for life, mentally, psychologically and emotionally as well. Further pursuing the reading of the novel provides more familiarity with how slavery complicates the lives of black women in, for example, establishing relationships. Sethe, the novel delineates, epitomizes that kind of suffering and reflects such difficulties. She seems like a scarred person who is hindered and held back by a certain cause in establishing and maintaining relationships and love with her daughter *Beloved*, her daughter Denver, her lover Paul D., and even with *Beloved's* ghost. In addition to slavery and its memory, inhumane and unspeakable experiences of black slaves, death, and history; Morrison's *Beloved* could also be perceived as a love narrative, and as a story of unconditional love. Toni Morrison in *Beloved* introduces the readers to the diverse types of love: thin, healthy and thick love. Nonetheless, it seems like she purposely blurs the limits, frontiers and categorizations of love as a concept: "What are the limits of love? As we can see in this novel, there is no clearly defined border between





love and hate nor is there a clear-cut distinction between filial love and sexual love,” (Vega-González 282). In addition, Morrison assumingly negotiates the postulation whether or not slave people have the right to love and the prospective outcomes of such right once they do. According to Malmgren, Morrison’s novel can also be considered “a love story, exploring what it means to be ‘be-loved,’” (Malmgren 100). Hence, readers could observe a variety of types of love in *Beloved*. The novel depicts love as one of the strongest and most motivating passions man can ever experience. The novel vividly portrays how love is an indispensable form of sensation of any man/woman’s life, even for a slave woman like Sethe. The novel demonstrates that love, for Sethe, is not just an emotion of a distinctively exceptional nature, but also a magnificent, powerful and destructive force. The love Sethe feels and exhibits is profound, energetic and motivating so much so that it in a diversity of ways affects and even shapes her life and the lives of her children as well. In the case of Sethe and her children, they have experienced a kind of love that their souls have really soaked up; a kind of love that has categorically formed them, hurt and healed them, directed their lives and eventually has destroyed them, literally and figuratively speaking. It could thus be observed that love as presented in the novel highlights mental states and fathoms deep into the characters’ souls and psychology thus underscoring sensitive issues that indeed shapes one’s life. *Beloved* reveals love in a diversity of forms; it presents love as destructive force but one that possesses a destructive energy, love as a magnificent emotion but one with an immense power that could make a difference between life and death. Therefore, the novel describes love as intensely driving force that motivates and directs most of the narrative events and generates fundamental changes in the lives of almost all characters. By its opening, the novel introduces Sethe craving for her mother’s milk, which assumingly suggests her emotional lack of and desperate need for love, probably because she was fed, nurtured and brought up by other black women not her mother. As readers, we might show a certain kind of confusion perceiving the novel as a love fiction because we usually establish positive associations with, and expect constructive outcomes out of love. People thus distance love from tragedies and sad occurrences like death, loss or negative realities. However, Toni Morrison in *Beloved* brings to the spot light the inescapability of the contrasting binarity of love thus defamiliarizing our traditional cognition of love and its true nature. Some people might conceive love and a human being loving another as an embodiment of a highly spiritual act, some may receive it in equal terms with freedom and/or individual fulfillment, while some others would consider love an impediment, a weakness and even a fantasy. Hence, such plurality of the meaning and conception of love is what might further intrigue readers into not perceiving love in Morrison’s *Beloved*. The current research paper is nonetheless intended to argue that love with its variety of forms and amounts, its diversity of definitions and conceptions is an incredibly powerful force that can both save as well as destroy people and their lives. Through Sethe, *Beloved*, Denver and other characters in the novel, we could realize—completely or relatively—what love truly is and how it effectively manifests itself both ways; as a positive and negative life force.

Negative Consequences of Love as Portrayed in *Beloved*

It is argued that Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) portrays how love—especially in its purest maternal form—might result in negative consequences such as fatal violence. Besides, the novel also depicts certain negative impacts of other types of love. One obviously negative consequence of love and love-oriented acts is the alienation of Denver and Sethe, too, after the murder of *Beloved*. When people in the school like Nelson question Sethe’s actions and ask Denver about that, Denver confines herself to the house. Hence, she becomes totally engrossed in her sister’s ghost as “it held for her all the anger, love and fear she didn’t know what to do with,” (Morrison 121). The ghost is originally a consequence of an act committed in the name of love. In a case of abnormality, though *Beloved*’s ghost has caused Denver to miss many things, it has occupied the huge portion of her life. A further example of an undesirable outcome coming out of love is Halle. The novel presents Halle not simply and solely as a ‘bad guy’. Readers soon come to realize that Halle is a traumatized child who has been hurt severely. Apparently out of love for Sethe, Halle is traumatized by her rape and maternal violation. As a result, Halle loses his sanity and his sense of selfhood seems to have smashed. Sethe herself has also been a victim of love. After killing her own child apparently out of love, she has become traumatized and afraid to love again. Besides, the only people she has left and whom she holds dear to her heart desert her; her two sons, Denver and Paul D. Sethe is also faced with the burden of forgiveness as she could not forgive herself for what she did. She is therefore unable to lead a normal life or have healthy emotions. The case of Paul D and Sethe and the kind of love they have shared is a further instance. Although Paul D. and Sethe have shared a kind of good and healthy, it has also ended negatively with Paul D. deserting Sethe as a result of that same love. Paul D. represented Sethe’s true love; he is even her shelter at the time of need. In the beginning, his love “is like a breeze of fresh air and Sethe seems to be prepared to give herself an opportunity to enjoy the little things in life,” (Portillo 13). It is an





illustration of a healthy love for both Sethe and Paul recognizes as such. Only to Paul does Sethe have the courage to speak about her past, and Paul feels the same for her: “she [Sethe] is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It’s good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind,” (Morrison 321). However, even such healthy and true love could not survive as Paul D. gets eventually scared by Sethe’s thick love and leaves her. When Paul D. comes to know what Sethe has done to her child out of love, he realizes the amount of love she is capable of and the possible consequences of that. Therefore, he leaves Sethe at a time “when he probably should have stayed,” (Miner 57). Still, Paul’s departure from Sethe manifests itself as nothing but a negative consequence of love. The kind of love Sethe as a mother has felt and demonstrated for her children is, according to Paul D, too ‘thick’ and extreme. Hence, that type of love has helped Sethe overcome all obstacles on the way to save her children. Still, as “mother love is also a killer,” (Malmgren 101), that same motherly thick love has led Sethe to take the toughest action imaginable; to kill her own child. It is worth noting, however, to mention that the subsequent argument is dedicated to the analysis of Sethe’s murder of her baby daughter, Beloved, as a tragic consequence of love. This approach is directed by the observation that this act overwhelms almost the whole narrative and overshadows other events. Hopefully, the ensuing discussion might eventually help us realize how the violent act committed by Sethe in killing her child arguably manifests itself as an extreme form of mother’s love—or a negative consequence of it in the least. In view of that, it is argued that Sethe has presumably killed her daughter out of love so as to protect her against a wretched life of slavery she herself has undergone. Nonetheless, there is no denying that killing a child for whatever reasons remains a highly condemnable act of terror and atrocity. And this fact proves that too much love might very possibly bring about destructive outcomes as in the case of Sethe and her child. Although the story in the novel might seem to reflect a mother-daughter love, the writer could attract the readers’ attention into understanding how dangerous and negative even a mother’s love for her child might sadly turn: I was big, Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved them more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn’t love them proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t mine to love. But when I got here, when I jumped down off that wagon—there wasn’t nobody in the world I couldn’t love if I wanted to. You know what I mean?” (Morrison 190) In view of that and given the circumstances of slave women of the time, it could be observed that other characters have sensed the risk of such amount of love Sethe has demonstrated to her child and is ready to offer. Paul D., for instance, has conveyed such assumption. He could sense the vulnerability of too much love demonstrated by a slave woman to her children. This could be so because as a slave woman, Sethe—or any other slave woman for that matter—does not have the privilege of owning a possession of any sort and thus lacks the freedom of loving her children that much or of loving anything at all: Risky... very risky. For a used-to-be-slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love. The best thing, he knew, was to love just a little bit; everything just a little bit, so when they broke its back, or shoved it in a croaker sack, well, maybe you’d have a little love left over for the next one. (Morrison 54) Still, Sethe seems to have shown such awareness, but at certain places and for a temporary period of time. Hence, the novel shows that Sethe’s passing awareness of her position as a slave woman has only been forced by the current circumstances of her slavery. Therefore, Sethe herself confesses that she “couldn’t love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn’t [her] to love,” (ibid 190). Sethe realizes that as a slave woman she and her children lack the freedom to love and be loved. Thus, once Sethe begins to enjoy a certain margin of freedom, she exhibits all the love she has been harboring for her children. In her case, we could thus assume that “freedom is linked to the ability to love,” (Rice 106). Accordingly, Sethe has apparently been brooding a different conception of love that still is a mother’s love nonetheless. In that order, the novel shows how Sethe has developed a different understanding of a mother’s love in which she as a mother has to be responsible for her children, not only love them. Usually, a mother’s love entails responsibility as well; however, Sethe’s love as a mother is different than that of other mothers as it is more extreme and consequently more dangerous: She loved far more than she was ‘allowed’ to – and yet her love led her to behavior that other mothers, even those who felt far less passionately about their children, saw as a complete failure of maternal care. Sethe’s maternal voice spoke in extremes, never having been tempered by interaction with others. (Cullinan 99) Therefore, Sethe’s love for her children entails responsibility, which in turn involves protection and ensuring their wellbeing. That is to say, Sethe’s love for her children—according to her own understanding of a mother’s love—also requires her to make sure they never go through the misery and wretchedness of slave life, and to protect them against any similar possibilities. Then, in order to fully accomplish her mission as a mother, Sethe decides that she has to “rescue the lives of her children from the ghost and horrors of slavery” as well, and hence “the slave mother, Sethe has to make the tragic rough choice,” (Bhatt 236).





Besides, it could also be suggested that Sethe's "harsh treatment to her children comes out of her blind love and self-devotion as a mother," (ibid). As a mother, Sethe could possibly have never murdered her child out of any other motivation than love. As a slave woman, slavery has deprived Sethe of a great many things any ordinary human being in normal settings would take for granted. Slavery has "robbed [Sethe] a center within her to anchor herself" (Suprajitno 63), and has even demanded her to get a "permission for desire," (Morrison 199). Hence, once Sethe gets a taste of freedom and rids herself of the shackles of masters' permissions, she dedicates herself entirely and wholeheartedly to her children, to "her best thing" in a form of an extremely motherly love of her own perception, (ibid 200). Such extreme form of love has generated negative outcomes, the worst of which is ending the life of her baby girl, Beloved. Most critics agree that killing Beloved is a result—a disastrous one though—of Sethe's "motherly love which has displaced herself, and despair" (Suprajitno 63), imaged in "the humming birds sticking their needle beaks into her hair and beating their wings," (Morrison 200). Although no one could feasibly imagine that a mother could inflict any harm upon her child, Beloved's imprudent death is widely perceived as a product of love. In addition, the novel shows that Sethe does not reconsider her decision of killing her innocent child. According to Sethe and her understanding of love, she has killed her child out of a mother's love, responsibility and protection. She never questions her decision or the extremity and abnormality of her motherly love. Thus, soon after Beloved's death, she "returns as a grown-up ghost", and "Sethe does not hesitate to raise her, brazenly choosing her and Denver over Paul D," (Miner 57). What Sethe possesses and exhibits is a kind of love that is assumingly 'too thick' because for her "Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all," (Morrison 193). For Sethe, love is either all-inclusive or it is not. The return of Beloved in the form of a ghost is a solidly further testament that killing Beloved is just an act of love. It seemingly encourages Sethe's resolution to love, to continue exercising her motherly love and even fulfil her love responsibilities all over again, if needs be: Beloved, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be. But my love was tough and she back now. (Morrison 236) Apparently though, the writer seems to suggest that Sethe's suffering as a slave woman—no matter how bad and consequential it has been—is eventually a positive experience because it has freed Sethe from her past burdens and enabled her to decide how and what she should feel and desire for herself. Sethe should thus desire love for her children: The center of the suffering in the novel is finally exposed as true love, a kind of love that produces suffering and even death. What the characters have refused to face until now is their loving feelings, to really feel human again after their shocking experiences. The slaves' consign was: 'Don't love nothing' and, even after slavery was over, this is what they have been trying to keep up. Their past has shown them that loving is dangerous, too risky, because of the emotional involvement it implies. (Durán 14) Though culminating in a tragedy, Sethe's love for her children with its greatness and intensity, has demonstrated that she could break the master-slave codes of conduct and of living. In an act of extremely and intensely motherly love, Sethe has felt, lived and exercised the freedom of dispensing with her children's lives. She has done what she had to because she loves her children too much to hesitate or hold back indeed. Sethe has killed Beloved and is prepared to do the same to her other children because "she did not want them to suffer as much as she had and her great love was the justification for her action," (ibid). In so doing, Sethe holds the conviction that she has "collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them," (Morrison 163). Yet, it remains valid to argue that Sethe's love is way too much, has far gone beyond all traditional confines of a motherly love and has thus generated tragic effects. Similarly, a keen reader could observe that Sethe's maternal love has also gone far beyond public cognition and understanding of love. Though remains unarguably love, Sethe's love has presumably grown into "a sort of possessing and belonging, a kind of responsibility of ego, and a type of love that is excessively heavy, lost and unpleasant" (Zhang 95), that has terminated in radical conclusions. In essence, Morrison's Beloved narrates the life account of a slave family made up of Sethe, her husband and her three children. Despite the fact that Sethe's marriage is a product of love, this love could not defend her against various master abuses including sexual ones. Sethe becomes psychologically traumatized as well. Such background might therefore have been a primary motivation behind Sethe's diverse understanding of love and the acts following that conception. Most probably, Sethe might not have killed her own child had she not been hunted down by her former master when she ran away for freedom. In that respect, Sethe's murder tends in almost all probabilities to be driven by love and thus results from it. That is presumably why Beloved after initially showing up as "a poltergeist in the home, soon appears as an adult woman, driving a wedge between Sethe and an old lover and building a relationship with her sister, Denver," (Selfridge 69). In an overall critical assessment for Sethe's relationship with her children





and the consequent acts she has done, some critics like Putnam still argue that what Sethe has done—as extreme and abnormal as it is—is simply an outcome of love, a negative one though Even Sethe herself, they further argue, has learned “that maternal violence...can be an expression of possession and even love,” (Putnam 40). The lines: “no more powerful than the way I loved her” (Morrison 5), could be said to provide a further demonstration to “the paradoxical combination of violence and love” as they represent “the contrast between Sethe’s expression of passionate devotion,” (Putnam 40). Besides, it is argued by others that though “Beloved questions those limits” her mother has reached “by freeing Sethe from her remorse”, but such questioning is “thus validating [Sethe’s] acts,” (Durán 14). On Sethe’s part, it could also be argued that “the act of the ghost leaving the house symbolizes Sethe letting go of her past and her guilt,” (Daniel 45). It is therefore maintained that such assumption further supports the ongoing argument that Beloved’s death is an act of love, a negative and questionable one nonetheless. Denver, for instance, understands—through Beloved, too—that what her mother has done is a tragic consequence of too much love: “Denver was seeing it now and feeling it-through Beloved,” (Durán 14). However, Denver seems to have lost trust and the intimacy of a mother-daughter with Sethe. It is apparent, the novel portrays, that Denver understands her mother’s feelings and reasoning by now, and even sympathizes with her. Still, she has come to the realization that in her case “loving has been too risky for her too because it could mean her undoing” and “that fear has then blocked the natural flow of feelings towards her mother,” (ibid). Sethe, too, helps Denver and her other children to understand the nature and immensity of her love: “I have felt what it felt like, and nobody walking or stretched out is going to make you feel it too. Not you, not none of mine, and when I tell you, you mine, I also mean I’m yours. I wouldn’t draw breath without my children,” (Morrison 203). Denver—and Sethe’s other children, too—truly understands the intensity of her mother’s love for her children, but she also reveals more awareness of and caution against such destructive passion. Besides, Sethe seems to have grown full awareness of the nature, power and extent of her love. The instance in which Beloved first appears as a poltergeist at Sethe’s 124 Bluestone Road house clearly demonstrates Sethe’s alertness of her love. This is shown in an exchange of words between Sethe and Denver when Denver exclaims: “for a baby she throws a powerful spell”, and Sethe responds: “No more powerful than the way I loved her,” (Morrison 5). What Sethe has not realized yet is that freedom has changed her as a mother and thus has transformed her conception of a mother’s love as well: “Sethe does not realize that during her twenty-eight days of freedom, her definition of a mother becomes extreme and possessive,” (Daniel 31). Therefore, while agreeing that Sethe’s murder of her child holds as a demonstration of a mother’s love, it remains valid to indicate that the cognition of such love has more feasibly been inadvertently distorted. In that order, no matter how much pure and true Sethe’s love for her children is, Denver deeply believes that such love is very likely to bring about disastrous results. Denver still loves her mother in spite of what she has done, but she is now as more scared as she is more cautious of her mother and her love: “I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I’m scared of her because of it,” (Morrison 242). Therefore, the reappearance of Beloved even in the form of a ghost has enchanted Denver. She is pleased to have a friend in the house or rather a confidante, so to speak. However, she soon realizes that her mother is still head over heels in loving Beloved, even as a poltergeist, and so is Beloved. Sethe’s love in particular grows from passion to possession and then to obsession. Hence, Denver regains her sobriety as she starts to discerningly determine two things for sure: one thing is that her mother has not changed or learned her lesson, and the second is that her mother’s love will culminate in a tragedy, again. Thus, she decides that it is time and that “there was a need of rectification,” (Fang 159). Though deeply terrified, Denver “in the end, to save her own mother Sethe and herself”, she “overcame the fear of the outside and sought help from the community,” (ibid). This time, Denver succeeds in stopping her mother from committing yet another love-related tragedy. She saves her mother, her mother’s love, and she saves herself as well. One possibly further explanation of the immensity of Sethe’s love is her fear of loss and her hunger for love; she fears losing her children, her love and herself, and she is desperately in need for love. For Sethe, it could be observed that the “need of a love-relationship is the fundamental thing” in life, and “the love-hunger and anger set up by frustration of this basic need must constitute the two primary problems of personality on the emotional level,” (Guntrip 45). In addition, Beloved’s return in the form of a ghost could feasibly be interpreted within the same understanding. Such fear of losing creates a craving for love, which sadly leads to undesirable and greatly damaging consequences. According to Carabi, such fear for loss eventually “generates a hunger for love. Beloved is so hungry for love that she destroys Sethe”, and once “you become possessive about the person you love you end up destroying him or her,” (Carabi 112). Fortunately however, Denver steps in and manages to break up this cycling chain of damage between Sethe and Beloved. Sethe is a mother, and like any mother she must have put her children and their safety as a priority. For



instance, when Paul D., blames Sethe for not allowing Denver to grow as an adult normal person, she—like any mother—protectively responds: I don't care what she is. Grown don't mean nothing to a mother. A child is a child. They get bigger, older, but grown? What's that supposed to mean? In my heart it don't mean a thing." "It means she has to take it if she acts up. You can't protect her every minute. What's going to happen when you die?" "Nothing! I'll protect her while I'm live and I'll protect her when I ain't" [. . .] "Maybe I should leave things the way they are. (Morrison 45) Nevertheless, it could be presumed that her rebellion against slavery and its system has unconsciously caused her to think that what she did to her child was for her own good. That is probably why Sethe preserves a mental image of Beloved as she returns in a spiritual form as a ghost and lives a life of freedom and dignity. Still, it remains a fact that Beloved has physically ceased to exist, which might indicate the shocking reality of Sethe's inconsiderately selfish and horrendous act, even if it is driven by love: "the truth that Sethe's character selfishly avoids is the actual physical death that she has inflicted upon her child," (Bauer 3). It seems like Sethe is refusing "to recognize the absurdity of the murderous act," (ibid). In so doing, Sethe is seemingly attempting to shift the blame of and responsibility for killing her child onto the institution of slavery, instead of her own doing: [Her] love for her children does not preclude her responsibility for Beloved's death. Indeed Sethe's selfish fault lies in the fact that she has shifted the locus of responsibility from herself to the institution.... Ultimately [she] is responsible for her child's death not slavery. (Bauer 3) Thus far, critics and readers alike would come to agree that what Sethe did to her child, Beloved is driven by love, but one that is "a form of frustrated, murderous love," (Schapiro 197). It is a kind of love that has produced negative consequences, complicated Sethe's life and the lives of her three children; Denver, Buglar and Howard; and has eventually led to the murder of a child by her own mother. Beloved's death is thus a sadly tragic outcome of a true but beyond-limits motherly love. She is a murdered child but a haunting daughter who carries on living with her mother and her sister as a poltergeist. Beloved is "the daughter made of murderous love who returns to love and hate and free herself. Her words are broken like the lynched people with broken necks; disembodied, like the dead children who lost their ribbons," (Bhabha 25). Denver could, too, be a likely victim of such excessive love and she is aware of that. Though Denver lives with her mother, she is constantly terrified at Sethe's motherly love and the possible damage it can do to her. She keeps having "monstrous and unmanageable dreams about Sethe", fearing that Sethe would "cut [her] head off every night" when she braids her hair, (Morrison 103, 206). Yet, Denver's caution and alertness to her mother's dangerous love has helped her survive and has ultimately helped her save her mother as well.

Concluding Remarks

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has presented love as a book of one title but numerous other subtitles. It has presented various forms and diverse kinds of love. The novel has also shaken people's conventional conceptions of love and thus defamiliarized its cognition in our minds. Hence, it seems like the moment Sethe has murdered her own child time has ceased to move and all other manifestations of passion have fallen short in explaining or justifying. Though we have all realized by now that Sethe has been cornered by her former master, no one would have expected her to take the life of her own child out of love. Sethe has killed her crawling daughter, Beloved, to protect her from the misery, wretchedness and suffering of slavery life that could have awaited her had she lived. Hence, Beloved is a victim of her mother's disproportionate and feasibly selfish love, and her death is the most exotically negative consequence of that motherly thick love. The novel and the argument carried out herein have revealed how Sethe's thick love for her children has generated disastrous effects on their lives and on Sethe's life, too. Despite the fact that we as readers—and after all as human beings—have come to understand Sethe's reasons for killing her child, without necessarily approving it though; neither us nor the coming generations of readers and of humanity at large could imaginably justify it. Therefore, while agreeing that killing Beloved unusually resolves as a negative consequence of too much love, deciding whether it is right, reasonable or valid would remain the disputable undertaking of individual, subjective future readers and critics alike. Although the story concludes "with a resolution which delivers Sethe of her long-repressed and tantalizing guilt", it skillfully "dramatizes Sethe's murderous act in a way that resists easy polarizations," (Birouk 124). Hence, it could be concluded—according to the novel and the present argument—that Toni Morrison has in *Beloved* succeeded in challenging and defamiliarizing people's traditional notions of love, thus causing them to recognize and face up to its diverse realities and feasible outcomes, more particularly with connection to some other variations such as slavery and levied power.

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