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Toni Morrison's Beloved

The Black Body and American Wounds

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Method

My methodology was an interpretative approach largely using qualitative measures which consist of a close examination of materials that highlight the social and historical impact of American slavery. I have presented a holistic understanding of the effects of slavery on America through analysis of *Beloved*, one of the most prolific neo-slavery narratives. I specifically focused on how Morrison molds the bodies of her characters to expose the chronic injury that slavery inflicted on American society. In support of my interpretation, I searched for the meaningful impact of slavery within correlating scholarly journals that investigate or are in conversation with Morrison's work.

References

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"Anything dead coming back to life hurts"

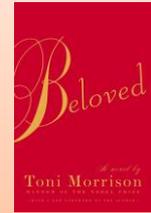
Research Questions

How does Toni Morrison use the bodies of her characters to express the unspeakable horror of slavery? How does Morrison create a holistic view of the collective wound that slavery left on America?

Introduction

My research of the novel *Beloved* registers in two ways. I have explored how Toni Morrison crafts the bodies of her characters as a space that physically maps out the historical impact of slavery on America. I examined how she used keloids, scars, or lack thereof to create a chorus of the voiceless trauma dedicated to exposing the extreme crime against humanity that slavery in America was, and the lasting impact it has. I have also analyzed the ambiguous spaces that Morrison uses to expose how slavery's effects are not isolated within the black population, but how they extend to all Americans who share in this collective bodily wound.

Character Analysis



- **Beloved:** The character of *Beloved* is a conductor of this chorus of voiceless trauma. Morrison shows the healing power that comes with expressing the physical wounds imprinted on the black community because of slavery
- **Sethe:** When *Beloved* is reborn the internal trauma that Sethe has repressed for years is given an external physical form and autonomy, which *Beloved* uses to force Sethe into confronting the past
- **Six:** Sixo embodies the black and native relation in pre civil war America. His final words as he's being killed is "Seven-O! Seven-O!". Morrison uses this as an equivocal reference to the Iroquois confederacy's seventh generation principal.
- **Garners:** Morrison deconstructs the neo-slavery narrative by naming the owners of the Sweet Home plantation the Garners, as an illusion to Margret Garner.