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**What women Want or Need? Writing the female Self.**

**Case Study: Spivakian Reading to Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

The words cannot be found to express the love, gratitude, and appreciation we owe to our families and beloved ones. Their hard work, support, encouragement, unconditional love that served greatly in shaping our identities and our characters. THANK YOU for believing in us and our capacities when no one did. This simple work is our gift to our wonderful parents To my sweet, beautiful, lovely mother, I made it. Just as I promised you. May Allah bless your soul. Rest in peace. Love.

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## **Abstract**

The current study aims to analyze the work of Toni Morrison “*Beloved*”, and mark the various signs of subalternity contained in the novel through the use of the principles of the Spivakian theory of writing the female self. The study represents a qualitative analysis which adopted an analytical method to examine the novel and extract signs and examples of subalternity and constructing the female self. The work aims to unravel the tragic realities and stories of the minorities and deliver their voices and pain to the world. The study reveals that the aspects of subalternity and essentialism are vivid in the novel through the experience of the women characters in the corpus. Yet, their experiences created a sense of resistance through which the same women characters refused their reality and wrote their own destinies.

**Keywords:** *Beloved*, Spivakian theory, Subalternity. Toni Morrison, Writing the Self

## Table of Contents

Dedication .....	I
Acknowledgements .....	I
Abstract .....	III
Table of Contents .....	IV
General Introduction .....	1

### Chapter One: Spivak Theory: Theoretical Overview

Introduction .....	5
1.1 Spivak: Autobiographical Overview .....	5
1.2. Postcolonial Theory.....	7
1.3. Spivak’s Participation in Postcolonial Theory .....	9
1.4. Spivak’s Theory .....	10
1.4.1. Key Concepts of Spivak Theory.....	10
1.4.2. Essentialism.....	11
1.4.3. Essentialism and Identity.....	13
1.4.4. Subalternity.....	15
1.4.5. Subalternity and Representation .....	16
1.5. Subaltern and Feminism.....	17
1.6. Critique of Spivak’s Theory .....	18
Conclusion.....	20

## **Chapter Two: Writing the Self: Spivakian Analysis to Toni Morrison's Beloved**

Introduction .....	21
2.1. An overview of the “Beloved” by Toni Morrison.....	21
2.2. Exploring Subaltern Women in Beloved .....	23
2.2.1. Subalternity in Sethe.....	24
2.2.2. Subalternity in the character of Baby Suggs .....	27
2.2.3. Subalternity in the character of Denver .....	29
2.2.4. Subalternity in the character of Beloved .....	31
2.2.5. Subalternity in the character of Amy Denver.....	32
2.2.6. Subalternity in the character of Ella .....	33
2.3. Essentialism and the Self in Beloved .....	34
2.4. Feminist Resistance as Writing the Self in Beloved .....	35
Conclusion.....	36
General Conclusion .....	38
References .....	41

## **General Introduction**

1. Background of the Study.....	1
2. Significance of the Study .....	2
3. Statement of The Problem.....	2
4. Research Questions .....	2
5. Research Hypothesis .....	3
6. Aim of the Study .....	3
7. Methodology .....	3
8. Structure of the Study.....	3

# **General Introduction**

## **1. Background of the Study**

Postcolonialism stands for the period and the state of colonies after the end of Western colonialism. Postcolonial theory, on the other hand, refers to the Western and European influence and impacts around the world politically, historically, socially, economically, and religiously. Spivakian theory is a postcolonial theory named after Spivak Gayatri. Gayatri is a theorist and an activist in many fields including postcolonialism, deconstructionism, and feminism. Her work “Can the Subaltern Speak?” was published in 2009. It was a turning point in the study of Third World societies. Thus, it deals with the study of minorities and inferiors around the world. Thus, Spivak aimed to deliver the untold stories and tragedies of subalterns in the Globe South and give a chance for these individuals to speak for themselves and fight for their rights.

Toni Morrison is an American writer with African roots. The vast majority of her novels retell the stories of slavery in America. Hence, she seeks to portray the life of slaves and unravel all the criminal acts, injustice, oppression practiced on African Americans. *Beloved*, as one Morrison novels, speaks of the story of a woman who chose to end her life and the lives of her children and not go back to the hell of slavery. All the characters in this novel entail horrifying stories of slaves, and describe the crimes and heartless behaviours of the white individuals. Nevertheless, all the pain and torture experienced by the characters served as the fuel for resistance and fight against injustice and subalternity. These individuals resemble the outstanding battles of slaves and their survival in the darkest moments when death was the only way out.



## **2. Significance of the Study**

This dissertation is an analysis of Toni Morrison's novel "*Beloved*" to mark signs for subalternity and oppression in regard of Spivakian theory. The result of this research contributes greatly in the field of knowledge. Firstly, the outcomes of this work can serve as ground for other literary work in the same theme. Moreover, other disciplines can benefit greatly of the research results in the process of conducting approximate analysis. Next, this analysis might open the path for other researchers and students to analyze the same novel in the light of other theorists and other theories. Furthermore, the results of this dissertation are not merely limited to research academics, rather teachers and students can make use of the outcomes to read, teach, present, analyze, study Toni Morrison's work. Therefore, the dimensional contributions of the following work are vast and limitless.

## **3. Statement of The Problem**

The Spivakian theory has been an analytical of many literary critics. As, scholars and critics have followed Spivak's theory and beliefs to interpret and analyze different topics, novels, articles in similar themes. Nevertheless, there has been almost not a single work conduct on the use of Spivakian theory to analyze the signs of subalternity in the work of Toni Morrison's novel "*Beloved*". As, this novel entails various examples and resemblance of subalternity in relation to different matters including race, gender, class, age and more.

## **4. Research Questions**

- 1- How does Spivakian theory represent women?
- 2-How does Toni Morrison portrayed women in *Beloved*?
- 3- To what extent Morison's women wrote their self?

## **5. Research Hypothesis**

The hypotheses of this research are formulated as follows:

- 1- The Spivakian theory represents women as oppressed and subaltern
- 2- Morrison portrays women as oppressed, illiterate and subaltern.
- 3- Morrison's women wrote their self through resistance.

## **6. Aim of the Study**

This study aims to adopt the principles of the Spivakian theory in the analysis of "*Beloved*" by Toni Morrison. Accordingly, the analysis examines the lives of subaltern women and highlight all the unpleasant, painful, and breaking events that happened to them. Moreover, this study is set out to provide an image of the brutal slavery and criminal acts applied to these minorities.

## **7. Methodology**

The study is qualitative analysis. It follows the analytical method to study the literary work of Toni Morrison. This research makes use of principles of Spivakian theory and its definition of "Subalternity" to capture and analyze the various aspect of her theory in the novel. As, it explains the base and aspects of the Spivakian theory. Then, examine the novel for possible aspects of subalternity within the characters. In correspondence, the research would extract these aspects and examine each one separately to narrow down to the closest portray of these women lives and tragedies and their way to write the self. .

## **8. Structure of the Study**

The dissertation is presented into two chapters. The first chapter is entitled "the Spivakian Theory: A theoretical overview". It provides a historical background of the Gayatri Spivak and an overview of the Spivakian theory. Whereas, the second chapter

is entitled “Writing the Self: Spivakian Analysis to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*”. It presents an analysis of the subalternity entailed in female character including Sethe, Baby Suggs, Denver, Beloved, Amy Denver and Ella. Moreover, it explains the essentialist part of the novel and highlight the essentialism contained in the characters perspectives of life.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Spivak Theory: Theoretical Overview**

## **Chapter One: Spivak Theory: Theoretical Overview**

Introduction .....	5
1.1 Spivak: Autobiographical Overview .....	5
1.2. Postcolonial Theory.....	7
1.3. Spivak’s Participation in Postcolonial Theory .....	9
1.4. Spivak’s Theory .....	10
1.4.1. Key Concepts of Spivak Theory.....	10
1.4.2. Essentialism.....	11
1.4.3. Essentialism and Identity.....	13
1.4.4. Subalternity.....	15
1.4.5. Subalternity and Representation .....	16
1.5. Subaltern and Feminism.....	17
1.6. Critique of Spivak’s Theory.....	18
Conclusion.....	20

## **Introduction**

The Spivakian theory is one of the representative theories in postcolonial theory, named after Gayatri Spivak, which studies the voice of the subalterns. This theory analyzes the lives, situations, and the injustices faced by minorities in each society. Its goal is to give recognition and a voice to these individuals by sharing their messages, emotions, stories, and sufferings around the world. This chapter provides an overview of the Spivakian theory; covering various topics such as Spivak's autobiographical and postcolonial theory. It also discusses Spivak's involvement in postcolonial theory and highlights the fundamental concepts of Spivak's theory including essentialism, essentialism and identity, subalternity, subalternity and representation, subaltern and feminism. Finally, it provides a critique of Spivak's theory.

### **1.1 Spivak: Autobiographical Overview**

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is an Indian Theorist. She was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1942 in Calcutta, India. Spivak is a critical theorist, feminist, and postcolonial theorist. She is one of the influential critics in the field of Postcolonialism, Feminism, Deconstruction and Marxism.

Gayatri finished her education in Calcutta and graduated from the University of Calcutta, Presidency College in 1959. (Landry & MacLean,1996). After graduation, Spivak worked as an English tutor. In 1961, she finished her studies in English at Cornell University, U.S. However, she was forced to shift specialties due to financial problems to join a new program "Comparative Literature". Later, Gayatri studied for a year at Girton College, Cambridge as a research student in 1963. By the end of the year, Spivak married Talbot Spivak in 1964. Nevertheless, she was divorced in 1977 to find herself marrying for the second time to Basudev Chatterji; yet, she remained with no children. (Smith,2002).Gayatri has served as a professor of comparative literature in various universities from the University of Iowa, Texas, Pennsylvania, to the

University of Columbia. To be later officially given a position as a professor at Columbia in 2007.

In 1976, the iconic figure of Deconstructionism emerged with the publication of “Of Grammatology”, an English translation of French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s work “De la grammatologie”. Hereby, Deconstructionism is an intellectual movement emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which had an impact several fields, including philosophy, literature, and social sciences. The main purpose of this movement was to eliminate or change the traditional binary system prevalent in Western academic work and adopt a more comprehensive approach towards literary analysis. (Antonio,2005). The binary-system is a way of contrasting between two units or elements as subject/object, and left/right. The major tool utilized by Spivak in writing her critics was through publishing critical essays. Some of her well-known essays are “In Other worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics 1987” and “The Post-Colonial Critic 1990”. However, it was her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” that brought her global recognition.

In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak discussed the issue of women in the Global South who are left out and incapable of speaking for themselves and their interests. The term “Subaltern” here stands for the minorities, marginalized, and inferior individuals worldwide. The question of whether the subaltern has the ability to speak is not in doubt. However, Gayatri’s intention was not to inquire the physical capacity of speaking, rather, the opportunities available to these people to express their thoughts, concerns, needs to the world. Moreover, Spivak argued that the history of “Subaltern” raises questions of what technique that would assist in avoiding the use of this term a deceptive connotation. When it comes to the ‘figure’ of woman, the only one that can speak of the relationship between “woman and silence” are women themselves. Additionally, in case racial and classification differentiates are included within that charge. (Spivak& Riach, 2020).

Gayatri's professional experience was formulated from various institutions. The former worked in different departments and fields. In 1978, Spivak served as a professor of National Humanities at Chicago University. During the same year, she shifted to the University of Texas to teach Comparative Literature. Later, in 1991, Spivak was a faculty member in Columbia University's Humanities Department until 2006. A year later, Gayatri was appointed as a professor of Humanities and remains in the same position until today. Moreover, most of her academic efforts were dedicated to displaying and unravelling the inequality against women in India in the postcolonial period. Hence, a large number of educational programs were designed by Spivak, concentrating on the case of women in rural and agricultural communities. Gayatri has received multiple prizes in her career to appreciate her massive work including: the Kyoto Prize in Arts and Philosophy in 2012, and the Padma Bhushan award. (Britannica,2023)

## **1.2. Postcolonial Theory**

Postcolonialism is a term used to refer to all the changes that had an impact on cultures as a result of the colonization. Moreover, it is related to the everlasting issues and conflicts between East and West ever since the imperial process emerged. The postcolonial analysis is a process which aims to examine the leftovers of colonization in the colonies. This process attempts to repair the identity of the Independent oriental countries through the detachment of the false image of the Orientals. Hence, it is assembled in the literature of nations such as Canada, Australia, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Jamaica and other countries which were once part of the British colony. (Ambesange, 2016).

According to Ambesange (2016), Postcolonialism includes: Edward Said's concept of 'Orientalism', and Gayatri Spivak's concept of 'Subaltern'.(p. 47). The term



“Orientalism,” coined by Edward Said, refers to Europe’s perception of the “Orient,” which broadly encompasses the Middle East, North Africa, and Asia. This term is used to describe the people of the East. In his book, Said argued that the concept of Orientalism originated in Europe as a means of exerting control over the East. European politics created a divide between the East (“Orient”) and West (“Occident”) in order to shape perceptions about the East. (Said,1985)

Edward’s positions tends with the idea that “*Orientalism*” or the analysis of the “Orient” was a complete political vision of reality. This vision promoted a binary contrast between the well-known Europe and the outcast orient. Orientalism is, as Ambesange (2016) referred to it, a Western fantasy. In other words, the Western vision of the Orient, instead of being based on facts about the Oriental lands, are based on Western dreams, and fantasies. (p. 48). Said explains that Orientalism describes the East and the Orient indiscriminative stereotypes. While West is thought of as a modern community, scientific progression, rational, and familiar; the East was believed to be traditional, backward, and strange. Moreover, Orientalism was connected to disparity. Hence, Arabs were displayed as murderers and Indians were assumed to be lazy Indians. Interestingly, Oriental discrimination was not only limited to race or classes, rather it exceeded to set stereotypes about gender. Furthermore, the East was viewed as effeminate with womanlike qualities. Specifically, a man was seen as not manly enough. In contrast, a woman was portrayed nude and was seen in a sexual manner. (Said,1985)

In the same vein, Gayatri’s concept of the “Subaltern” refers to the marginalities and inferiors. Her aims were beyond exposing flaws and errors instead to unravel the truth and analyze how it is constructed. Morton(2003) argues that Spivak showed in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” how postcolonial politics impacted the voice of the

subaltern groups as women, tribal people, the Third World, and the Orient. Consequently, these two concepts “Orientalism” and “Subaltern” formulate what is known as Postcolonialism.

### **1.3. Spivak’s Participation in Postcolonial Theory**

The core of Gayatri’s Postcolonial Theory is the concept of the “Subaltern”. This concept is extracted from military discourse which means lower ranking. She was inspired by the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and identified herself as a “practical Marxist-feminist-deconstructionist”. (Bulan, 2011, Para 1). Moreover, Spivak became known globally due to her best-known essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. She views herself in different roles from a Third-world woman, a marginal American Professor, and a middle-class Bangali woman, to a success story of a woman that changed her fate and fought against social oppression. She exposes in her work the paradoxical state of the subalterns, and how they became fully conscious of their own rights. Moreover, these individuals have started movements and actions to express their voice and fight against injustice and inequality.

Spivak’s work was not dedicated merely to Subalterns as a whole. Rather, she speaks heavily of the injustice and harm oppressed against women in general and Third World women and non-Europeans in specific. She expressed her desire to deliver and possibly give a voice to the subalterns who cannot speak or are silent. (Spivak, 1993). Additionally, she stresses an unproven hypothesis made on widow sacrifice of their lives after the death of their spouses. The impacts of Spivak go beyond giving a voice to minorities, but to restore the presence of female writers in literatures; with whom male fellow male writers have overlapped.

The former theorist criticized a great deal the Western attitudes. She believes that knowledge is not unbiased, but rather influenced by those in power. This notion has

been the source of inspiration of both Gayatri and Edward Said. (Loomba, 1998). Furthermore, Spivak views knowledge as another impact of the West over the Third world. The majority of the western scholars and their writings claim that their knowledge about the Eastern cultures is neutral and objective. Nevertheless, it always displays the Western political and economic interest in the Third World. In correspondence, Western writers, including Foucault, for their cooperation with capitalism and imperialism. Similar to Said, Spivak attacked Western writers for their representations of the Third World. Thus, the two writers serve as the pioneers of postcolonialism literature.

#### **1.4. Spivak's Theory**

Spivak Gayatri is one of the outstanding theorists and an active participant in various fields, including postcolonialism, and feminism, and a literary critic. Her name is associated with the term "Subaltern" which Spivak first used in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Nevertheless, she adopted the concept from the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci. He first utilized the term "Subaltern" to describe the lower ranks of the Soviet army. Gayatri's essay was a turning point in the history of the inferiorities or what Spivak called the "Global South". Hence, these individuals were given a voice and their stories were heard around the world.

##### **1.4.1. Key Concepts of Spivak Theory**

The term "Subaltern" is clearly explained in relation to ideologies of superiority and power, democracy, and citizenship. According to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, the state of being a subaltern is the case of possessing no identity. She adds that it is a position "where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action"(Spivak, 2005, P. 476). Antonio Gramsci (1971) was the first one to use the term "Subaltern" in literature. As, it was originally used in

reference to lower status. However, it is currently used in a metaphorical manner to analyze and report the political and historical” dynamics of lower social classes. The analyzed groups are referred to as subalterns and include slaves, religious groups, women, and people from different races.(Loomba, 1998)

Gayatri Spivak grew up in India and lived in a society, where she was surrounded by various perspectives from silent, suppressed, and denied rights to narrate history. Correspondingly, she introduced what is known as “Subaltern Theory” to represent the tremendous impacts and changes the colonization of Indian history. Her work “Can the Subaltern Speak?” is a seminal essay published in 1985. She argued in her essay that colonial deconstructionism reformulates the history of the colonies. Hence, every empire leaves its language and culture in postcolonial societies. These aspects remain in these countries even after they gain independence. Therefore, the power and impact of Western society never disappear or diminish. Hereby, the lower class i.e., subaltern, is the most affected by the power of the West, which keeps them silent and oppressed. (Spivak. 1985). The conclusion of this essay narrows down to the idea that these minorities suppressed by the superiors whether con or protocolization would not manage to restore their voices or change their positions unless the historiography narration was to be done differently without any interference of the Western power. (ibid)

#### **1.4.2. Essentialism**

It refers to a person or a group of people based on a certain feature or characteristic such as Japanese are smart, French are romantic, and Russians are humourless.

Essentialism is a term utilized in philosophy which refers to “essence”. This concept holds the argument that every individual, item, and group possess a set of

attributes essential to the subject's identity. (Ashcroft. Et al, 1998). The essentialism idea can be found in various disciplines from philosophy, sociology, and biology, to the study of gender, language and cultures. Although, it was initially associated with language and culture, essentialism, was adopted in Literature to address individuals coming from different societies and countries. This type is known as Racial Essentialism. Here, essentialism might participate in the reinforcement of inequality and bias. (Erikson, 2001).

Essentialism studies of racial or gender related manners led to the promotion of a binary system. This binarity conception was established around superiority, inferiority, the colonial subject, and women. Interestingly, the establishment of these discourses was crucial for the preservation of the “patriarchal and colonial hegemony”.(Eide, 2019, P. 1).This hegemony oppressed subaltern by defining their roles. The subalterns were judged by their identities which became their differences. This movement follows a simple paradigm to study human identity. Therefore, the assumption of the identity and attributes of an individual or a group of human beings based on ethnicity, culture, or gender is an act associated with essentialism.(1)

Women being part of this puzzle, have suffered for ages, and are still suffering, from discrimination and categorization within their societies. Throughout history women's organizations have fought to secure female essence. They believed that women should possess the right to nurturing and care while getting parental leave and protection at work. According to Simone, women have been viewed as the “second sex” and men as the “first sex”. This binarity entails within its core a degree of diversity. Thus, members of the “other” sex find themselves deprived of their individualities and abilities. She concluded that certain crucial strategies are required to solve these types of over generalizations. (De Beauvoir, 2007).

Nevertheless, the struggle of fighting for women's rights might sometimes interwind with the struggle for equal rights of "other" position. This collision may overlap the demands of the rights of women. Therefore, minorities under the "women" category i.e., lesbians, transsexuals, ethnic and religious minorities, find themselves soucasted by majority discourses and priorities. (Eide, 2019). In the same regard, Spivak tackles this issue by highlighting the experiences of the Subaltern Studies Group. Thus, she seeks to rewrite the history of India based on a version of the subaltern and deconstruct the imperial version of Indian history, unravelling all the deep untold stories of these minorities. Moreover, Spivak argues that the Western side tends to utilizes historiography strategically as a "positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Spivak, 1996, p. 214). The former managed to align the use of strategic essentialism with deconstructionism. Therefore, she claimed that she, herself, uses the deconstruction ideology, yet it does not necessarily make her a deconstructionist. The idea here is that what makes essentialism possess a deconstructionist feature is merely depending on the intentions behind this application. Thus, the strategy of essentialism can be seen as pragmatic. Spivak argues that essentialism entails a certain political practice, rather than being merely limited to theory. She asserted that "I think we have to choose again strategically, not universal discourse, but essentialist discourse ... In fact, I must say I am an essentialist from time to time" (Grosz, 1984, P. 184)

#### **1.4.3. Essentialism and Identity**

Essentialism is a concept which refers to a set of detectable and objective attributes of a particular group of individuals which are inherent, external, and unchangeable. These individuals would be categorized into various categories, which means discrimination on an external basis such as gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Essentiality preference entails antiauthoritarian essence causing hierarchal

order of the powerful and powerless lower classes. The hierarchy promotes social issues from sexism, racism, and ethnic categorization. (Jarach, 2004). Essentialism can be considered as a powerful defensive and contradictory narrative tool. Therefore, essentialism can be used within the political context to oppress identity, reserve the negative image of historical oppression and turn it over into a filtered image for celebration. In other words, descriptive labels and insults would be more acceptable; even honorable.

Throughout history, women have suffered from counter-essentialism, which falls under the category of gender oppression. Unfortunately, females have been subjected to various forms of unfair treatment, including discrimination, rape, harassment, suppression, physical and verbal violence, and other injustices. To combat these types of oppression, various movements have emerged to fight for women's rights and eliminate illegal behaviours and practices. However, it is important to be cautious about the application of essentialism, as it may lead to identity discrimination and the use of individual attributes to determine special acceptance. Spivak and other theorists warn about these risks and stress the importance of strategic essentialism in differentiating between individuals. (Eide, 2019)

In an interview with Grosz(1984), Spivak urges the “need to take a stand against the discourses of essentialism ... but strategically we cannot. Even as we talk about feminist practice, or privileging practice over theory, we are universalizing – not only generalizing but universalizing.”(p.184)In this context, Spivak recommends that one should be wide awake and aware of its own practice and use it as much as he/she can; instead of making “the totally counterproductive gesture of repudiating it”.(ibid) Therefore, strategic essentialism may be considered as a political tool. Hence, social differences are reduced significantly, and unity gets promoted for political goals. More

specifically, the use of essentialism strategically to defend and fight against oppression in all its forms is recommended. Similarly, the fight against theories and discourses that set limits and borders to individuals inside categories; which is narrowing.(Eide, 2019)

Strategic essentialism, if used correctly, might eliminate oppressive social applications and diminish the suffering of subalterns. Nevertheless, the use of essentialism to fulfill political ambitions might alter global vision and encourage suppressive perspectives against human identity; although, strategic essentialism in its theoretical dimension cannot function as intended. It is necessary to mark the difference between Essentialism and Strategic Essentialism. The first, was according to its usage, which can imprison or liberate. The second entails a political essence at its core. Thus, this type can be used to alter and formulate global views to achieve political goals instead of a universal way of solving political issues.(Eide, 2019)

#### **1.4.4. Subalternity**

Subalternity, or the study of the subaltern is a modern subcategory of postcolonial theory. As aforementioned, the concepts and features connected with the subalternity witnessed dramatic changes as a result of socioeconomic interests. The globalization happening in Third World countries spot the light on conceptions of Subaltern, Postcolonial, and critics. Hereby, theorist and writers interested in Subalternity dedicate their work and efforts to give recognition to the repressed cultures based on their historical settings, which are often overlooked by historiography. (Jambhulkar& Vivek, 2022). Subaltern studies emerged from Marxism and Poststructuralism and have been adopted into the discipline of postcolonial criticism. Subaltern refers to a person who comes from a lower or subordinate class. Antonio Gramsci explained that a Subaltern is a position of being oppressed lower class within the society where the government holding authority is dominant. In his essay, he concentrated on developing a methodology to analyze subaltern historiography and



formulate altering political policy, where the basis depends on the evolution of subalterns and their stories through history.(Thomas, 2018)

Subalternity is a modern term which has been adopted in various studies. The use of the term goes beyond colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and gender studies. Hence, critical theory, postcolonialism, Marxism, Deconstruction, Phenomenology, imperialism, poststructuralism, and colonialism are all types of studies that fall under the large entity of “subaltern”. Subalterns gained much interest during postcolonial literature; it stresses the colonial power and imperialism efforts to marginalize and silence native people. Herein, the Eurocentric ideology promoted the concepts of “strange” and “inferior” to describe individuals of the global south. In this context, Subaltern literature is the process of analyzing oppression, marginalization, and subordination perpetrated against the subalterns be it lower and working classes, women, poor classes, or racial and caste discrimination. (Chakrabarty, 2002)

#### **1.4.5. Subalternity and Representation**

As mentioned earlier, the subaltern is a term closely linked to power. Power on the other hand is related to representation. Thus, the question is which representations hold power and authority and which do not. (Beverley, 1999). In his book, Beverley (1999) examined the relationship between subalternity and representation throughout analyzing this relationship within Latin American Studies. According to Spivak, if the subaltern is able to speak, not physically, but in a way that mattered to others, he/she would not be considered a subaltern. (Barrett, 2004). The representation of the subaltern remains a vague process. As they lack the power and authority to represent themselves and their stories to the world. Shohat(1995) argued that “representation of underrepresented group is necessarily within the hermeneutics of domination, overcharged with allegorical significance” (p. 170). More specifically, the

representations of the dominant group, whether negative or positive, are simply viewed as a different perspective. However, for some minorities their representations are explained based on the dominant class.

### **1.5. Subaltern and Feminism**

In her essay about Feminism and Critical Theory, Spivak defined woman claiming that “it rests on the word man as used in the texts that provide the foundation for the corner of the literary critical establishment that I inhabit”. (Spivak,1978, P. 241). This definition might be seen as a “reactionary position”. In this regard, Spivak argues that it is inconceivable to reach an accurate definition of anything. Therefore, making the contradiction between man and woman can display the binary opposition which displaces itself. Nevertheless, she withheld this dichotomy in defining as a deconstructivist herself. Spivak provides critics of different writers and theorists’ ideas and representations of a woman. In one dimension, she speaks of the work of Marx and Freud. These two names are Marx the theoreticians of textuality. Marx is the theorist of the world (history and society), a text speaking about the forces of labor and production. Whereas, Freud is a theorist of consciousness(‘being’ or the psyche) a text about consciousness and the unconscious. (Spivak,1978)

In her critics, she focused on the idea of alienation of Marx and the idea of normality and health of Freud. On the one hand, Marx’s notion of use-value speaks about a thing directly consumed by itself. On the other hand, based on Marx’s work, Spivak argues that when it comes to traditional social situation a woman produces more than she receives. Therefore, the woman here is a relentless resource for producing excesses for the man. She adds that contemporary woman demands altering the use-value into the exchange-value in case of housework financial recompenses.

The Marxian model displays a narrow vision of feminism. Spivak explains that the view of Marxian of women labor is not complete, as, it does not include “the physical, emotional, legal, custodial, and sentimental situation of the woman’s product, the child”. Hence, if the Marxist model included a feminist perspective, the issue of sexuality would be fully introduced even beyond the borders of overt socio-sexual politics.(p. 244). Moreover, Gayatri discussed the of matter the legal possession of the child. It is a known fact worldwide that the legal possession goes to the man who ‘produces’ the child. Nevertheless, women possess more capacity to take care of children. Herein, the man is given legal property rights over what woman’s body produces, i.e., a child.

Furthermore, Freud studied the nature of pain as the source of pleasure. Spivak makes use of Freud’s spectacular types of pain to speak about woman’s production. She argues that pain is not transmitted similarly in men and women. And once again, it will become much harder to devise the rules and once again, the interests of deconstruction will be served. In one of his essays contained in the New Introductory Lectures, Freud presented his argument regarding femininity. He posited that a little girl only becomes a girl upon discovering sex, and before that, she shares similarities with a little boy. However, Freud’s argument was met with criticism from many quarters, who pointed out that he failed to recognize the significance of the womb. Spivak, for instance, highlighted that woman not only “Confront the womb” but also bear it. She further emphasized that both Marx and Freud overlooked the fact that the womb is a place of production. (p. 245)

### **1.6. Critique of Spivak’s Theory**

Spivak is one of the famous and phenomenal theorists. She is an active participant in many disciplines including feminism, postcolonialism,

deconstructionism, essentialism, and literary criticism. Her Spivak critics have been widely known in postcolonial writings, because most of her writings have been published in a form of an essay. Although most of her criticisms were logical, achromatic, and based on facts, the responses were not in her favour.

One of the responses to Spivak was published by Vivek Chibber (2014). In his work he focused on postcolonial views on the structure of the Global South society, its politics, and its historical evolution. Vivek represents a criticism of Guha's work with references to Spivak's writings. In this regard, Guha argued that the difference between East and West can be traced to the divergent characters of the bourgeoisie on the two sides. Therefore, Vivek criticized Guha's argument of Western-Eastern diversity, claiming that Guha's argument is "empirically and theoretically flawed". He explained that Guha's historical narrative of the bourgeois revolutions lacks sustainability, and his idea of universalizing capitalism is flawed. However, his criticism of Guha's work was not approved by Spivak. Hence, she critiqued his argument and asserted that the work Guha's work is a 'primary text', and he or anyone should not criticize primary texts. According to her, there is a class of scholarship known as "primary texts", where it is only possible to memorialize and interpret the members but never assess them. (p. 620)

Vivek criticized Spivak's essay, pointing out that it lacked specific points to engage with. He also argued that Spivak did not carefully read the text to identify any flaws, and instead simply demonstrated why the argument was viewed as incorrect, making her an unreliable critic. Moreover, he stressed how Spivak tends to mention certain facts about writers as their age, stories, and their fame, to show the contradiction between writers like herself and Guha and Vivek. Whom, she referred to

as “‘boyish’ critic who is obsessed with ‘correcting everybody’, a ‘correct-fetishist’”(p. 623)

Additionally, Vivek explained that he is known for not making any distinctions of the ones he criticizes. Interestingly, he claimed that the use of a superior tone and mention of statues should not be witnessed in academic work. He explained that in India, the aforementioned qualities were employed to remind servants and children of their social status, which he links to Spivak’s insufficient evidence and logical reasoning in her arguments. He also notes that Spivak’s writing conveys that she tends to view those around her as “supplicants, not colleagues” (p. 624). He concludes that Spivak’s writing style and approach to engagement would likely not be tolerated in other fields.

## **Conclusion**

The postcolonial study is a discipline which aims to study and analyze the impact of colonialism over the Third World. One of the prominent theorist and critics of this field is Spivak Gayatri. She is an Indian theorist and activist in many global fields including deconstructionism, feminism, postcolonialism, and essentialism. Her work has been dedicated to represent the lower class and give a voice to the “Subalterns” in the Globe South. Hence, she fights for the rights of minorities around world who have been through racism, sexism, and oppression. This chapter presented a historical overview of Spivak’s theory and tackled the various concepts intertwined with her work on postcolonialism, essentialism, subalternity, and feminism. Finally, it provided a neutral view of other theorists’ critiques and arguments against Spivak’s work.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

**Writing the Self: Spivakian Analysis to Toni Morrison's**

*Beloved*

## **Chapter Two: Writing the Self: Spivakian Analysis to Toni Morrison's Beloved**

Introduction .....	21
2.1. An overview of the “Beloved” by Toni Morrison.....	21
2.2. Exploring Subaltern Women in Beloved .....	23
2.2.1. Subalternity in Sethe.....	24
2.2.2. Subalternity in the character of Baby Suggs .....	27
2.2.3. Subalternity in the character of Denver .....	29
2.2.4. Subalternity in the character of Beloved .....	31
2.2.5. Subalternity in the character of Amy Denver.....	32
2.2.6. Subalternity in the character of Ella .....	33
2.3. Essentialism and the Self in Beloved .....	34
2.4. Feminist Resistance as Writing the Self in Beloved .....	35
Conclusion.....	36



## **Introduction**

Beloved, is a novel written by Toni Morrison and was published in 1987. The novel won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988 as a work of fiction. In her novel, Toni Morrison describes slavery that happened to African-Americans in the U.S.A during the Civil War. The novel presents various types of injustice and oppression faced by the lower class. During that time, African-Americans were merely viewed as black slaves who were treated as nothing near human-like. These subalterns were slaves to the white and upper classes in America. Consequently, this novel provides a perfect case to analyze slavery based on subalternity. This chapter seeks to study and analyze Morrison's work, "Beloved, and highlight the various symbols, themes, and signs of subalternity, essentialism, and feminism concerning identity and writing the female Self. In addition, it aims to highlight the acts of women's resistance and fight against slavery and injustice to restore their rights.

### **2.1. An overview of the "Beloved" by Toni Morrison**

Toni Morrison was an American female author who was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, USA. Her works are known to tell stories about African Americans and their fight against slavery. Morrison was born and raised in an American African family, where traditional tales and songs was a huge part of her upbringing which had obvious and strong influences on her writing style. Her novels are highly known for the use of fiction to deliver untold stories of Black slavery historiography.

The author attended class at Howard University to later obtained her master's degree at Cornell University. Toni Morrison received several awards for her work such as a Pulitzer Prize in 1988, and a Nobel peace prize in 1993. Morrison was one of the remarkable authors who exposed the horrifying criminal acts performed against

African Americans in America. Her work had incredible impacts around the world and made a significant contribution to Literature. Before her passing on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019, she wrote various novels, starting from her first work "The Bluest Eye" in 1970 to her last publication, "The Source of Self-Regard," in 2019..

Beloved 1987 by Toni Morrison, is a literary work that falls in the fiction genre. This novel portrays the slavery endured by African Americans after the Civil War in the U.S.A .The novel is named after the late soul of a girl. Beloved, is written in her gravestone. Initially, her mother intended to write "Dearly Beloved". but she could not afford both words as each word cost her master ten minutes of pleasure. Consequently, "Beloved" was the only word on her gravestone, and thus, the novel was named after her. The main story happened in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1873. Where about, the event switches back and forth between the present time and 20 years in Kentucky prior. The story revolves around Sethe, an African American woman who was living in Kentucky and was suffering from the cruel and criminal acts of a man known as the Schoolteacher. Although Sethe was sold to a couple, the owners were overly kind despite being slave owners. The Schoolteacher was the brother of the owner. After her husband's death, she asked for his help to run the farm. Sethe, along with four male slaves, were living on the farm. Later on, Sethe married Halle one of the slaves, and had four children.

The story is told through flashbacks of the main character, Sethe, every now and then. Although in the present time Sethe was living with her daughter Denver and was not a slave anymore. However, through memories the author explains what happened to her and why she escaped. Sethe was abused by the Schoolteacher and his nephew while she was pregnant. Her husband witnessed all the abuse happening to her, yet he did not interfere. Rather, he became mentally unstable. Sethe had no other solution but to escape the torture with her children and go to Ohio; which turned out to be

successful. Nevertheless, it was not long before she was caught. In an act of love and motherhood, Sethe tried to murder her children and kill herself so that they would not be back to that cursed farm. Sadly, only her young daughter died, and she survived with her other children. Once the Schoolteacher saw her actions, he changed his mind and did not take her back.

Sethe was living alone in the present time in Ohio with her daughter. The house was believed to be haunted by the soul of her later daughter. Sethe's two sons run from the house because of the horrifying events happening in the house. Moreover, Halle leaves Sethe after he discovered that she had murdered their daughter. Later on, one of the slaves that left the farm Paul D reaches out to Sethe and decides to help her after all the terrifying things which happened to her. The events go by to reveal a new character coming to their house named by Beloved. Sethe believes that it must be the soul of her late daughter as a form of reincarnation. Denver and Paul were suspicious of Beloved; nevertheless, Sethe's regrets and sorrows over her later daughter, cause her to overlooked all Beloved's attitudes. Beloved tries to seduce Paul, yet, she fails to achieve her goals. Inconsequence, she runs away and leaves the house. Whereabouts, Paul learns of Sethe's murder and dedicates his life to stand by her and help her overcome her trauma.

## **2.2. Exploring Subaltern Women in Beloved**

The novel was written by Toni Morrison an African American writer. Morrison described through her novel "Beloved" the tragedy and oppression of black women in the U.S.A. Toni Morrison states at the beginning of her novel that liberation made her think of "What 'free' could possibly mean to women". (p. 1). She explained how during the 1830s, freedom was about "equal pay, equal treatment, access to professions, school ...and choice without stigma. To marry or not. To have children or not". (1) She

further explains that this modern debate triggered thoughts about the lives of black women in the same country. The history of these minorities where “marriage was discouraged, impossible, or illegal. birthing children was required, but “having” them, being responsible of them “Was as out of the question of freedom”. (2). Moreover, Toni explains how she decided to retell the story of Margret Garner. Margret was a black female that escaped slavery and chose to kill herself and her children rather than return to live under the mercy of her owner. This individual was a “célèbe” in the Fugitive Slave Laws. She gained huge fame for her courage, strength, and “willingness to risk everything” for her freedom. (Morrison, 2004, p. 2)

The novel is based on the true story of Margret Garner which took place in 1856 in Kentucky. This novel is a representation of the tragedy of a woman murdering her daughter out of love and to protect her and herself from the horrible actions of the upper class, and the white society. *Beloved* tells the story of slavery post the Civil War. These stories revolve around significant female characters who lived through slavery until they secured their freedom. Sethe, Baby Suggs, Denver, *Beloved*, Lady Jones, Ella, and Amy Denver are all women with crucial roles and mysterious past lives that served in the formulation of their identities.

### **2.2.1. Subalternity in Sethe**

Sethe is a mother of four children Denver, Howard, Buglar, and baby *beloved*. As the novel narrates the present life of the character, both sons had run away and Sethe was left to live with her only daughter Denver, after she had killed her girl *Beloved*. The flashbacks that passed through Sethe’s mind displayed the huge and deep impacts of her past life and the pain she went through in her free life. The first memory she recalls from the start of the novel is the voice of her owner saying “ten minutes . . . you got ten minutes and I will do it for free” (Morrison, 2004, p. 6). As she

had to have sex with her owner for him to write the name “Dearly Beloved” on the gravestone of her dead girl.

The poor woman had to murder her own daughter, slit her throat with her own hands and watch her bleed to death, so that she could escape slavery. Nevertheless, she went back to the same owner and had slept with him for ten minutes for each word. Only, so could write an expression on the gravestone of her daughter hoping that such action might take away some of her sorrow and regrets. Unfortunately, Sethe could not last for more than ten minutes. Although, Beloved was written on her infant's grave stone, she continued to be haunted by the regrets for not lasting for twenty or half an hour.

In the line of Spivak Subaltern theory, this character resembles women in subalternity. When Sethe was sold at an early age to be a slave for a white couple. As the novel narrated that Sethe was “thirteen when she came to Set Home” (p. 10). She one female and other five boys were slave for the Garner couple. Later, Sethe married one of the slaves in the same farm and had four children with him. Only when things were peaceful, Mr. Garner passed away and his brother-in-law came to help his late wife to manage the farm. After this moment, Sethe started to suffer. Hereby, another aspect of oppression can be seen in the life of Sethe. She was raped while pregnant by the schoolteacher; the brother of Mrs. Garner. Sethe while speaking with Paul D about her husband argued “He saw them boys do that to me and left them keep on breathing air? He saw? He saw? He saw?” (p. 61). Halle, her husband, witnessed the schoolteacher and his nephew raping his wife and all he could do was watch. This terrible scene described by Morrison depicts the brutality and pain Sethe went through. She was a subaltern who was raped, oppressed and could not speak or stand up for herself. Even worse, her man could not speak or act. Thus, one can mark the

subalternity and oppression of minorities Spivak spoke of. The actions can be categorized as racism, sexism, and oppression. These characters could not speak or fight against injustice.

“Unless carefree, mother love was a killer” (p. 116). Sethe who was sold young and had no memories of her mother’s face, let alone love, served as the pure representation of mother love and mother sacrifice. Sethe told Baby Suggs in a moment of regret “I would not draw breath without my children” (p. 156). Hence, this woman escaped from the slavery and oppression of her owner and took her children with her. Once about to get caught, Sethe chose to kill herself and her children with her to go back to that cursed farm and heartless owner. Sethe explained Paul D “. . . I could not let all that go back to where it was, and I could not let her nor any of them live under the schoolteacher. That was out” (p. 142).

She further explained to him that her decision was “a selfish pleasure” but she could not have returned with her children to live with such a monster. This decision cost her the life of her daughter, which haunted her till her present day. Her regret and sorrow persisted with her after gaining her freedom. The loss of her daughter was not the only sad part in her life. After she was free, her house was haunted by the ghost of her dead girl. Therefore, here two sons chose to ran away and leave the house. Her husband left her after he found out about the murder. Sethe was left alone to live with Denver and Baby Suggs.

Every aspect of her life, in the past and present, represents a living example of female subalternity. This character was unfortunate loving mother, a lonely wife, and a slave. She witnessed rape, pain, tears, injustice, brutality in all forms. Thereby, she exemplifies every aspect of Spivak theory of how inferiors and slaves were treated in every way but human-like. The individuals that were beaten, killed, burned, murdered,

raped, sold, and oppressed due to their colour, gender, and class. Sethe, in this matter falls into all of these categories. Hence, she is black, female, and a member of the lower class. Her story and suffering can be classified as work of racism, sexism, and oppression.

### **2.2.2. Subalternity in the character of Baby Suggs**

Another female actor with African American qualities. She is the mother of Halle and Sethe's mother-in-law. She was born into slavery and lived through to witness freedom by the age of sixty. Baby Suggs had eight children, all of whom were sold to slave owners except her son Halle. As she explained to Sethe, Baby Suggs stated "I had eight. Every one of them gone from me. Four taken, and four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil" (p. 6). Only Halle stayed her, and both endured slavery at the Sweet Home. Baby Suggs was a woman who had eight children from six men, yet never experienced love. She always argued that "a man was nothing but as man" explained further that "They encourage you to put some of your weight in their hands and soon as you felt how light and lovely that was, they studied your scars and tribulations, after which they did what he had done: ran her children out and tore up the house" (p. 21).

Therefore, this female never allowed herself to love or to trust any man. She always stood up alone and survived alone. Subalternity can be seen clearly in the painful past of Baby Suggs and the loss of her eight children to slavery. Hence, she did not remember any of them, arguing "My first-born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember". (p. 6). Baby Suggs told Sethe with bitterness in her heart that she should be thankful for her kids, for knowing them, naming them, living with. In the same line of Gayatri's theory, this female had no saying in the fate of her children or her own. Baby

Suggs lived sixty years in slavery, and that after her so Halle bought her freedom from her owner in exchange of working extra work. But, her freedom at this age was pointless, she claimed “What for? What does sixty-odd-year-old slave woman who walks like a three-legged dog need freedom for?”. (p. 124). Herein, it is clear for readers how slaves lose ambition and desire for freedom after their long, miserable, and tragic lives in slavery.

The remaining years of Baby Suggs life were dedicated to helping people similar to her, slaves, heal their pain and overcome the painful memories of their past. Toni Morrison described how Baby decided to become a cure for others’ pain. Thus, she was known to be “Unchurched preacher”. She stated “Who decided that, because salve life had ‘busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb, and tongue,’ she had nothing left to make living with but her heart” (p. 76). Morrison, in this part, explains the terrible things that happened to Baby Suggs, and how she did her best to help others with her broken heart. This character resembles the torture and pain that subalterns went through. Hence, these people lost everything from their freedom, children, husbands, lives, peace, to their past and present.

Sethe and Baby Suggs could not even think or dream of the future. Toni expressed how Sethe felt “. . . But her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine, let alone plan for the next day”. (p. 63). Baby Suggs thought of Sethe as her own daughter and felt sorry for her and her grandkids. After she know about the death of Beloved, Baby Suggs was heartbroken. Yet, she understood Sethe’s reasons. Hence, she stated “The heart that pumped put love, that mouth that spoke the Word, didn’t count. They came in her yard anyway she could not approve or condemn Sethe’s rough choice. One or the other might have saved her, but beaten up by the claims of both, she sent to bed”. (p. 155).



This lady was the cure and the path to peace for everyone. However, she couldn't find peace herself. No one did for her what she did for them.

Morrison described the unfortunate life of Baby Suggs, where she wrote "In all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers". (p. 23). As, no one whom Baby Suggs knew or loved was not "run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized" (ibid). Hence, one can sense or imagine the dark times and sad events that these characters went through, which, in turn, highlights the past lives of slaves and the current lives of subalterns around the world. Call them slaves, minorities, inferiors, women, children, poor, or black, no human should live or be treated like an animal.

Even the death of Baby Suggs was the best part of her life. As when Paul D asked Sethe about her death, if it was hard, she replied "Soft as cream. Being alive was the hard part". (p. 8). The story of this remarkable woman, who never witnessed a happy moment in her life, is devastating and a killing venom to every reader. Moreover, it is a perfect portrayal for subaltern lives, so perfect that it is hard to miss, hard to overlook. After the death of Baby Suggs, people in Ohio still remembered her and prayed for her. Hence, her impact on them and their lives remained alive after her soul left the world.

### **2.2.3. Subalternity in the character of Denver**

Denver is the daughter of Sethe. She is the only child left living with her. After her sister's death, Denver lived with her mother, two brothers, her father Halle, and Baby Suggs. Not long after their escape from the Sweet House, the house began to be haunted by the ghost of the dead child. Therefore, the two sons ran away and Halle left

after he knew about Sethe's crime. As a result, Denver was left to alone with her mother and grandmother.

The character is a loving, precious daughter. But she has always felt alone, lonely. After the death of Beloved, the loss of her brothers, and the death of Baby Suggs, Denver was the loneliest she had ever been. Morrison described her as “Hot, shy, now Denver was lonely. All that leaving: first her brothers, then her grandmother-serious losses since there were no children willing to circle her in a game or hang by their knees from her porch railing”. (p. 13). According to the novelist, Denver never had or experienced a childhood, a social life. Her life revolved merely around her mother and grandmother.

Denver was named after a white girl, Amy Denver, who helped Sethe during labor. While speaking to Paul D, Sethe told him that “Nothing bad can happen to her. Look at it. Everybody I know dead or gone or dead and gone. No her. Not my Denver. Even when I was carrying her, when it got clear that I wasn’t going to make it either-she pulled a white girl out of the hill” (p. 40). Accordingly, Sethe decided to name her after the girl that helped her give birth to her daughter.

Toni Morrison described the character of Denver, where she wrote that “she had almost a whole year of the company of her peers and along with them learned to spell and count. She was seven, and those two hours in the afternoon were precious to her”. (p. 90). This description shows how much of a clever and innocent girl Denver was. Nevertheless, this little girl was not given her basic right to be educated, to have friends, to live like a child. Rather, she had to carry the weight of her mother’s choices, and her father’s weakness to stand up for them. This character can be categorized as a part of subalterns. She suffered form pain in silence by herself.

Thereby, Spivak's theory of subalternity can be applied in the case of Denver. She was an innocent child that had to bury the mistakes, decisions, fears, pain of her parents and loved ones. Thus, in one scene she thought to herself that "All the time, I'm afraid the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again. I don't know what it is, I don't know who it is, but maybe there is something else terrible enough to make her do it again". (p. 178). Her mother's actions haunted her even after all of these years. Moreover, she was concerned about her mother and whether she would go back to the same person she was when she killed her own daughter. Denver loved her mother but her thoughts could not be controlled. As, Morrison wrote ". . . I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and as tender as she is with me, I'm scared of because of it. She missed killing my brothers and they knew it" (ibid). In these lines, any soul can sense the fear and worries trapping Denver and haunting her every day. The kind of thoughts that she could not express aloud and only kept to herself. This poor girl was oppressed by her own past, and had no power to alter it.

#### **2.2.4. Subalternity in the character of Beloved**

Beloved as explained earlier, is the name given to Sethe's late infant. Before her death, she was referred to as "already crawling baby" because she crawled early. After her death, her mother intended to write the words "Dearly Beloved" on her gravestone". Unfortunately, the price of these simple words was so expensive for her mother. As, she only lasted for ten minutes, which paid only for "Beloved". Therefore, the little girl was named Beloved. Later on, this name was associated with the ghost haunting the house where Sethe, Denver, Baby Suggs lived in Ohio. Morrison stated in the beginning of her novel "124 was spiteful. Full of 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 daughters Denver were its only victims" (p. 4).

On the other hand, Beloved was also the name of a young woman that appeared in the 124 house. The character joined the story shortly after Sethe and her family escaped the Sweet House. The moment she entered their lives, everything changed. “Beloved” she told them, when they asked about her name. In that moment “Sethe dropped the shoes; Denver sat down and Paul D smiled” (p. 48). It was a shock to everyone, but to Sethe, it was a second chance. To her, it was the reincarnation of her late daughter. As, her regrets kept torturing her, she claimed “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” (p. 173). This character contributed greatly in explaining the deep dimensions of the psychological damage inside Sethe due to slavery, more so than the character of Beloved herself. She was so broken, shattered, lost that the slightest, most illogical hope of her daughter’s rebirth made her believe that this woman carried the soul of her dead baby.

The idea of this woman being the soul of her late daughter made Sethe delusional, that should could not see through her and her intentions. When Denver confronted her, Sethe argued “She is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have” (p. 67). Hereby, one can see the deep psychological impacts of slavery on Sethe. As the idea of having her daughter back ruins her sanity. In reference to Spivak’s theory, Sethe is a Subaltern that suffered of slavery greatly, and the consequences still had control over her present. Thus, the consequences were not merely physical but mental. She almost lost herself and her family for an illusion.

#### **2.2.5. Subalternity in the character of Amy Denver**

Amy is a white girl who helped Sethe during giving birth to her daughter. That is the reason behind calling the baby Denver. This character is that presents a different picture of a white individual. As she helped Sethe in her lowest moments. The common

thing between Amy and Sethe is that they were both owned. Sethe was a slave, whereas Amy was a servant. Amy introduced a different type of subalternity. Thus, she was white, she was not a slave, yet she was not free. Amy first met Sethe when she was found laying on the ground after she ran away from the Sweet Home. Where she helped her through her pain. (Morrison, 2004).

#### **2.2.6. Subalternity in the character of Ella**

Ella was a black female that worked with Stamp Paid. Ella first met Sethe during delivering her daughter, Denver. This character is another woman that suffered from subalternity and oppression in her story. Sethe told Denver “Something like that had happened to Ella except it was two men-a father and son- and Ella remembered every bit of it. For more than a year, they kept her locked in a room for themselves”. (p. 105). Ella herself told Sethe “You couldn’t think up . . . what them two done to me”. (p. 105).

This female was locked, raped, and oppressed for a year alone by two men. Such terrible actions once again highlight how these characters are the perfect examples of subalternity in its different types and forms. Once again, the Gayatri's theory can be explained by the terrifying events this female character went through and how she was tortured day after day for a year, and she could not refuse, stop them, speak for herself, or defend herself. None of these things were possible in her case. Similar to every female character mentioned above, these women were the victims of racism, sexism, torture, rape, and oppression with no opportunity to say NO! Because they were black, women, inferior, weak, and poor, it was justified for white, superior, men, and rich individuals to abuse them in the worst possible ways.

### **2.3. Essentialism and the Self in Beloved**

A brief reminder, essentialism, as argued earlier, refers to the study and categorization of individuals based on “essence”. The essence stands for personal, individual attributes that differentiate them from others. Many scholars used this study to analyze individual differences and categories people in different groups, divisions, and subdivisions to facilitate different function. For example, specific male/female areas and age limits. (Spivak, 1996, Ashcroft. Et al, 1998, Erikson, 2001)

Regarding Toni Morrison’s “Beloved”, signs of essentialism can be found in different parts of the novel. Thus, essentialism can be strongly found in the discrimination between white and black. Baby Suggs is one of the characters with the most essentialist mindset. As, she blamed white people for every problem in the world. In the course of events, Baby Suggs argued that “There is no bad luck in the world but white folks”. (p. 78). For her, every problem that happened to her or to any of her loved ones was because of white people. From losing her children, being a slave, the escape of Sethe, the death of Beloved, the misery of every slave was related to white individuals. Baby Suggs’s point of view was not a one to be blamed for. As Morrison wrote “White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle” (p. 172). Thus, people with white skin thought and believed all their brutal crimes done to black people was justified due to their colour. These individuals were convinced that their skin colour made them superior, strong, dominant. Unfortunately, it was true.

Another essentialist signs can be found in the image white individuals hold of dark-skinned people. The schoolteacher, being one of these people, argued “. . . I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right”. (p. 167). Hence, they believed that black slaves were animal-like and were not considered to be

human. Baby Suggs told Sethe and Denver speaking of white men “they don’t know when to stop”. (p. 92). As, they did not hesitate, regret, or second-think their heartless actions. This kind of perception is the negative application of essentialism that Spivak warned others about. Hence, it promoted for discrimination, subalternity, racism, sexism, and oppression.

However, despite its accuracy, the image that all whites are brutal heartless was not always true. Some characters in the novel broke the rule. Mr and Mrs Garner and Amy Denver were the kind of people that provided great assistance and support to Sethe, her children, Halle, Baby Suggs, Paul D, Sixo, and Stamp Paid. These individuals thought of blacks as human as they were and treated them as such .

#### **2.4. Feminist Resistance as Writing the Self in Beloved**

Although the story behind the novel describes the painful, dark, unjustified, criminal, tragic lives of female and male subalterns, it narrates the resistance and fight of women for their rights. One of the outstanding act of resistance was portrayed through the story of Sethe. The woman who escaped slavery and chose death over living in hell. When Baby Suggs asked Sethe about killing her daughter she said “if I hadn’t killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her”. (p. 173). Hereby, Sethe meant that if her Beloved was still alive, she would have been sold or murdered by slave owners. The idea of killing her with her own hands seemed more merciful than seeing her abused and killed by someone else. After all, that was the cursed unfortunate fate of every black person .

Another example of feminine resistance can be found in the story of Baby Suggs. She gave birth to eight children, yet only got to live with one, Halle. Moreover, she endured the most terrifying events that no one can survive. As, everyone in her life was killed, burned, ran off, sold, or hanged. (Morrison, 2004). Nevertheless, despite all the

darkness she witnessed, Baby Suggs maintained her pure heart and dedicated her last years as a free slave to helping others heal and overcome their painful memories and pasts. One of her statements was “Freeing yourself is one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another”. (p. 83). Therefore, she put all her time and power to help those with shattered souls to take control of their minds and bodies. She told them to “the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it. ‘here’, she said, ‘in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh, they despise it” (p. 77).

Feminine resistance can be observed in other characters. Denver, in her fight through loneliness and worries, and surviving after losing her sister, her brothers, her father, and her grandmother. Amy Denver, in her great help to Sethe through labor. Ella, in her survival through a year of rape, oppression, and lockdown. All of these characters hold inside of them fighting spirit that does not expect slavery but seeks freedom.

## **Conclusion**

Subalternity is a crucial part in the body of the novel *Beloved*. This novel was written by a subaltern to deliver the voices and stories of subalterns. The previous chapter sought to present an overview of the Toni Morrison and her novel *Beloved*. Moreover, it analyzed the aspects of Subalternity in relation to women characters in the novel including Sethe, Baby Suggs, Denver, *Beloved*, Amy Denver, and Ella. Also, it sought to highlight signs of essentialism within it. Finally, it provided examples of Feminine resistance within female characters in *Beloved*. In every line, slavery was found in every aspect of the characters and their lives. Toni Morrison’s novel represents a living example of the terrifying crimes that were done to the black people.



These crimes had strong and deep impact that cross the physical torture to wound the psychological, spiritual, and self-image of slaves. Thus, even while living freely the characters suffered still from slavery. Nevertheless, it was clear through the novel how strong and resistant these people were. They fought for their lives, rights, families with every breath. Even if it cost their souls. The signs of subalternity, essentialism, and feminism were present in every aspect of the novel. *Beloved* served as the most adequate literary work that delivered honestly and fully the lives of subalterns.

## **General Conclusion**

Gayatri Spivak is Indian theorist, post colonialist, feminist, essentialist, and literary critic. She represents the hard reality of minorities around the world. Spivak's writings and criticisms are written in a form of essays. In her essay, she speaks of the injustice and oppression happening to the lower classes. Gayatri Spivak gained huge attention after the publication of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". The work was introduced to the world in 2009 causing a long debate. As, the question was not about the physical ability of the subaltern to speak, rather, about the psychological power to speak and stand up for themselves. Subaltern here includes every individual that was thought of as a minority including women, children, black, poor, low class and more. Hence, these inferiors go through oppression and suppression due to their differences. These actions are included in racism, sexism, and ethnic discrimination.

Toni Morrison, similar to Spivak, aims to shed the light on the unravelled agony of slaves in America. However, Morrison uses her novels and fiction to portray her message. *Beloved* is one her novel that speaks of brutal crimes of white society done to slaves. *Beloved* is the name of a little baby that was murdered by her own mother. *Sethe* a former slave, was raped, humiliated and tortured. She challenged slavery and escaped with her children from the oppression of her owner. Unfortunately, she was caught. Yet, before they got hold of her, she attempted to end her life and her children lives. Sadly, *beloved*, her little girl was the only one to die. Although the story speaks of the present of these character living freely, their past and pain hunted them still. All the characters in the novel possess their own stories, scars, and pain. Each one displays a different type of criminal acts done the slave in the U.S. Nevertheless, the message intended from this work, is to show how these people lived and survived slavery. Thus, they crossed their pasts and learnt to live with their wounds.

This dissertation presents an analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* in the line of the Spivakian theory. The work is organized in such way to obtain the desired outcomes. It is divided into two chapters. The first chapter was dedicated to display a theoretical overview of the Spivakian Theory. As, it provided an autobiography of Gayatri Spivak and an explanation of her theory. Moreover, it analyzed the participation of Spivak in different disciplines including subalternity, essentialism, feminism. Finally, it described the different critiques of Spivak and her theory by fellow scholars. The second chapter was dedicated to analyze Toni Morrison's novel using the Spivakian theory. Hence, it displayed an analysis of subalternity in each female character including Sethe, Baby Suggs, Denver, Amy Denver, and Ella. Moreover, it highlighted the aspects of essentialism portrayed in the novel. Lastly, it concluded by describing the feminine resistance of female characters against oppression and slavery.

The following work revolved around there questions. The first question asks about the Spivakian theory tenets. The second inquires about Toni Morrison's portray women in *Beloved*. The third ponder about the extent to which Morrison's workmen wrote their self in the corpus. For the purpose of answering the proposed question three hypotheses were suggested. First, The Spivakian theory represent women as oppressed and subaltern. Second, Morrison's women were oppressed and subaltern. Lastly, women in the corpus could wrote their self through resistance.

For the purposed of achieving the research aims, a qualitative analysis was adopted. The methodology followed in the carrying this study was an analytical method to analyzed the novel of Toni Morrison. As, the researchers examined the novel in depth to spot the various forms of subalternity and oppression described by the novelist in the basis of Spivakian theory.

By the end of the study, several outcomes were extracted. These outcomes served in the description of subalternity portrayed in Toni Morrison's book. Thus, it displayed how badly and brutally women were treated by their owners. The characters of the novel showed to the readers the stories and losses of slaves. Moreover, it showed criminal acts and behaviours were justified by superior class. As, women slaves were viewed merely as properties of white owners. Yet, the women at the end wrote their self through resistance of their realities by refusing the circumstances and create their own destiny.

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## الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى تحليل أعمال توني موريسون "الحبيبة" ، وتمييز مختلف علامات التبعية الواردة في الرواية من خلال استخدام مبادئ نظرية سيبفاكيان لكتابة الذات الأنثوية. تمثل الدراسة تحليلاً نوعياً اعتمد منهجاً تحليلياً لفحص الرواية واستخراج علامات وأمثلة على التبعية وبناء الذات الأنثوية. يهدف العمل إلى كشف الحقائق والقصص المأساوية للأقليات وإيصال أصواتهم وألمهم إلى العالم. تكشف الدراسة أن مظاهر الصدفية والجوهرية حية في الرواية من خلال تجربة الشخصيات النسائية في المجموعة. ومع ذلك ، خلقت تجاربهم إحساساً بالمقاومة رفضت من خلاله نفس الشخصيات النساء واقعهن وكتبن مصائرهن.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الحبيبة ، نظرية سيبفاكيان ، التبعية. توني موريسون ، كتابة الذات



