

Mother/Daughter Relationship: Psychological Implication of Love in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

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Abstract

Motherhood posed great challenges to African American women under slavery as reflected in literary works by Black writers. Black mothers lost the opportunity and freedom to perform roles of 'caregivers' to their children. Instead, their children's milk was appropriated, under very humiliating and intolerable conditions, to nourish white babies whose mothers were incapacitated. As victims of such humiliating and shameful experiences, the black women, realizing the implication of this situation to their sex, developed survival strategies to protect themselves and their female children. This resulted in some very strange relationships between mothers and their daughters.

This paper re-examines Toni Morrison's *Beloved* to identify an example of the types of mother/daughter relationship that existed between black mothers and their daughters and the implications of such relationship on the Black American society. The paper is a psychoanalytic reading, utilizing Melanie Klein's Object Relations theory to reveal the psychological motivations for the behaviour of the protagonists of the novel in the peculiar circumstances they find themselves. The paper exposes the slave masters' strategies under the slave regime in America and the psychological implication of decimating the blacks and their family institutions on the generation of the Blacks in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the African American society emerging from the slave era produced more assertive and active female characters due to what has been regarded as the emasculation of the men by the slave regime. The slave man irrespective of his desire was unable to prevent abuse to his mother, daughter, sister or wife or take revenge against their brutal treatment. Hazel Carby suggests that the women's helplessness seems to have been accentuated by or linked to threat to, or denial of, the manhood of the male slave. As Carby posits, "Black manhood ...could not be achieved or maintained because of the inability of the slave to protect the black woman in the same manner that convention dictated the inviolability of the white woman." (35). This might explain why the African American woman seems to have taken her destiny into her hands. In the slave narratives written by women therefore:

the authors placed in the foreground their active roles as historical agents as opposed to passive subjects; represented as acting their own visions, they are seen to take decisions over their own lives. They document their sufferings and brutal treatment but in a context that is also the story of resistance to that brutality. (36)

Also, as reflected in several literary works by African American women writers, instead of the valorization and reverence of the black woman's image, which are characteristic of works by male writers, the women themselves advocate for the realistic portrayal of female characters. The image of the African American women, they argue, should reflect realistically black women in their struggles against the challenges posed to them as women and as Blacks. According to Mary Helen Washington:

We need stories, poems, novels, and biographies about black women who have nervous breakdowns not just the ones who endure courageously; stories about women who are overwhelmed by sex; wives who are not faithful; women experiencing the pain and humiliation of divorce; single women over thirty or forty trying to make sense out of life and perhaps no being able to; ... until the sacred cow is killed, these stories cannot and will not get told. (xxxii – ii)

Women Writers and the Girl-Child in American Fiction

Perhaps, it is in response to this clarion call that in the 1980s there emerged novels by women examining aspects of women's lives never contemplated before. Christian Barbara, for instance, in 1985 examines the 'buried lives' of Black lesbians in four novels. These novels include Audre Lorde's *Zami, A New Spelling of my Name* (1982), Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* (1980), Ntozake Shange's *Sassa Frase Cypress and Indigo* (1982) and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982). Alice Walker in an interview confesses the crusading spirit behind her works thus:

I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival the survival whole of my people. But beyond that I am committed to exploring the oppressions the insanities the loyalties and the triumphs of black women" (John O'Brien (ed) interviews with Black Writers. New York: Liveright 1973. 200)

Also, in Lucy Delany's *From the Darkness Cometh the Light, or Struggles for Freedom*, (Autobiography) Lucy relates her mother's fight for her own and her children's freedom after their father was sold down South. The battle culminates in a long court case in which she pleads that as a free woman; she could not have given birth to a slave. She won her case.

Motherhood posed a problematic challenge to African American women under the slave regime. The situation, which did not allow mothers the opportunity and freedom to nurture their children or perform their biological role as caregivers and mothers to their children, and especially their female children, had very debilitating consequences on the psyche of the women. Patricia Collins alludes to the consequences of this unusual circumstance of mothers and daughters in African American society when she argues that Black women's efforts to provide a physical and psychic base for their children affected mothering styles and the emotional intensity of mother-daughter relationships. She contends: "Black daughters raised by mothers grappling

with hostile environment have to come to terms with their feelings about the difference between the idealized versions of maternal love extant in popular culture and the strict and often troubled mothers in their lives.” (127) And as Gloria Wade-Gayles remarks, “mothers in Black women’s fiction are strong and devoted ... they are rarely affectionate” (quoted in Collins 127). Motherhood is a central and defining trope in the reconstruction of the black female. Since many African American women writers preoccupy themselves with the bringing back to life the ‘dead girl’ whose society has willed out of existence, and who male writers have chosen to bury and discard from literary creation, motherhood continues to occupy a distinctively prominent place in the African American literature by women.

Carole Boyce Davies describes Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* as “one of the most deliberate problematizings of motherhood that I have encountered...’ (135). In the novel, *Beloved*’s mother (Sethe) undergoes a torturous journey (symbolic) in order to reconstruct the meaning of her life as woman and mother. This symbolic journey interrogates both morality and convention, and the ideological structures of racism, which implicated the woman. Morrison brings back the dead in the novel to establish that “the living embodiment of Sethe’s mother love and the painful past of enslavement she represents, never is really destroyed” (Davies, 137). The question hinges on the morality, justification and the type of love in killing the baby by the mother.

Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* is a novel by a woman, about women, which mobilizes the narrative form of heroism in the African American fictional world. In the narrative, a protagonist, formerly a slave unwittingly attempts to kill all her children rather than see them enslaved in accordance with the fugitive law of the slave era in the United States. She exhibits in this singular act what Marilyn McKenzie describes as “excesses of mother love.” (228) And this brings us to the main thrust of this paper which is to explore the implication of love in the mother/daughter relationship that exists in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. The questions that agitate our minds in regard to this issue are: What is love? What manner of love relationship existed between black mothers and their daughters in African American society? Should the mother have killed her child? We shall rely on Melanie Klein’s positions in her Object Relations theory and some other love theorists to provide basis for our responses to these questions.

Love and Melanie Klein’s Object Relation Theory

What is love and how does it operate? Erich Fromm points out that love is a masochistic yearning and rooted in the symbiotic need of the person involved (182-3). To him, symbiosis in the psychological sense, means the union of one individual self with another self in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other. Sullivan also posits that ‘Love’ exists when the satisfaction or the security of another person becomes as significant to one as is one’s own satisfaction or security (Lasky and Silverman 20). It is therefore not out of place that sacrifice and the readiness to give oneself up for the sake of another are all the ingredients of love. It is logical too that sacrifice which is the basis for masochism is a step towards sadism. In other words, sadism could appear under the disguise of love. In Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, love exhibits itself through sadistic tendencies. So, between Sethe and *Beloved*, a true state of love exists.

It is imperative to see why Sethe's decision for the child might have seemed the best under the prevailing circumstance. Sethe found the existing circumstance where the black women were literarily forced to willingly offer themselves to their masters in a sexual subordination very nauseous. She perceives the situation as not only that of banality of evil or racial problem, but also a conspiracy by the ideological structure both racial and patriarchal. It is a combination of both political and sexual oppression by the whites and the men (both white and black). Sethe therefore, cuts a picture of the 'emergent woman' in African American literature who according to Tyson, "is coming to an awareness of her own psychological and political oppression and becoming capable of creating a new life and new choices for her self usually through a harsh experience of initiation but makes her ready for the change" (394). She resists the existing order of slavery with its practice of separating mother and child for good, as well as abusing the child sexually. Because of the horrifying experiences, which she (Sethe) had also encountered, she reclaims Beloved from the life of slavery, which is a choice of a new direction.

In a very emphatic way, Morrison uses *Beloved* to show in painful detail one of the ways black women's bodies were "scarred and dismembered by slavery and then salvaged and remembered in the acts of free love." (Ashraf Rushdy 102). The novel is about a love relationship gone awry between mother and daughter. Women as mothers had the greatest psychological blow within the American slave culture. The practice, which denied the women the opportunity and privilege of loving their children, only served to alienate them from their children. Susan Willis avers, "The tragedy of a woman's alienation is its effect on her as mother. Her emotions split, she showers tenderness and love on her employer's child, and rains violence and disdain on her own" (265) The type of love relationship between mother and daughter in this novel is also suggestive of the unusualness and complexity of Toni Morrison's art. She has been credited with creating characters with dual and moral uncertainties. In an interview, she calls her fictional characters "the combination of virtue and flaw, of good intentions gone awry, of wickedness cleansed and people made whole again. If you judge them all by the best that they have done, they are wonderful. If you judge them by the worst that they have done, they are terrible" (McKay 423).

According to Dolan Hubbard, the novel *Beloved* is centred on "the historical fact that there were Black women during slavery who terminated their babies' lives rather than allow them to be offered up to the destruction of slavery" (137). Through the flashback technique "with a sympathetic omniscient narrator", we are presented with the tragic story of Sethe Suggs who escapes from slavery in Kentucky, "but is haunted by profound guilt over killing of her daughter, whose ghost traumatizes the family" (138). Sethe kills her daughter because she loves her so much that she does not want her daughter (Beloved) to 'die' - undergo slavery as she has. This death kills both body and soul. However, the love that imputes this kind of logic in Sethe's head is a strange type of love.

Toni Morrison seems enamored with this type of deadly and pathologically problematic love relations. This type of strange love inspires Cholly Breedlove to rape his daughter in her *The Bluest Eyes*, and Eva Peace to burn her son, Plum to death rather than allow him to live a life that denies him manhood in Toni Morrison's *Sula*.

Margaret's virulent, pathological love for her son, Michael in *Tar Baby*, encourages her to inflict pain on the child by sticking pins in him and burning him with cigarettes. In *Beloved*, Morrison employs two objects that function within the arena of love to explain how it also has the capacity to turn awry. By using 'milk' and 'breast', which represent the plenitude which the child initially takes her mother to be, Morrison relates motherhood to different types of social and economic exploitations and denial for the child. Suffice to say that the appropriation of Sethe's milk to nurse the white baby has dangerous implication for both mother and daughter, as far as love relation is concerned. It is responsible for why the novel is just another manifestation of "horrific love".

The type of love in Morrison's *Beloved* has been qualified with several appellations. It has been referred to as 'pernicious', 'distorted', 'deadly', 'nefarious', 'ruinous', 'ruthless', 'pathological', 'horrific', 'tough' and so on. In an interview granted in 1977, Toni Morrison acknowledges that all her works of fiction are about love. But to Terry Otten, "people do all sorts of things, under its guise. The violence is a distortion of what, perhaps, we want to do." Morrison is also of the view that, "With the best intentions in the world we can do enormous harm, enormous harm" ("*The Seams Can't Show*" 60). These statements underscore the contradictions inherent in love relationship, and which are responsible for the murders and infanticides that pervade Morrison's narratives. In *Beloved*, Paul D describes Sethe's love for her daughter as 'too thick' (*Beloved* 250). But this 'thickness' may be justifiable considering the activities of slave holders, which denied any form of family bonding for the slaves. Within the historical frame of American slave culture, Morrison depicts the capacity for destructive love from a historical truth. Otten points out that "infanticide was a common experience among slave mothers, at times in rage against malefic white fathers, at times in paradoxical acts of mercy directed toward their children" (657). Sethe Suggs' love for *Beloved* is "tough and she back now" (*Beloved* 200). She tries to justify her action by pretending that there is just no alternative to what she does; "How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her" (200). Morrison seems to endorse Sethe's position about the infanticide. However, later in the novel, Morrison seems not to condone the infanticide as she also depicts the retribution that such hideousness exacts. The reentry of *Beloved* into the life of Sethe and their relationship afterward exposes the monstrous potential of love.

On the part of *Beloved*, love means vengeance. Trudier Harris describes her as "a witch, a ghost, a devil, or a succubus" reflective of "the African belief that the demise of the body is not the end of being" (Otten 659). This belief underlies Sethe's optimism that *Beloved* would come back to her:

I knew she would be. Paul D ran her off and she had no choice
but to come back to me in the flesh. I bet you Baby Suggs, on
the other side, helped (*Beloved* 200)

On her second coming, *Beloved* enacts a "spiteful retaliation" for her death. Her murderous intent is discovered by Denver in the Clearing when *Beloved* almost

strangles Sethe. Denver also realizes that Beloved has come back to exact restitution from her mother. Therefore, Beloved's love in this novel is different in a way from that of her mother and more clearly that of Denver. Ashraf H.A. Rushdy compares Beloved with Denver and sees Beloved as "the incarnation of Sethe's guilt and the perniciousness of slavery, the other (Denver) the symbol of hope and transforming love. Beloved accuses while Denver embraces; Beloved is unforgiving while Denver is loving" (583) It is interesting that to save Sethe from the stranglehold of Beloved will require the adoption of a loveless approach suggested by Paul D; "Don't love her too much. Don't" (*Beloved* 206). They have to adopt a risky and dangerous love of a free person with the help of the community earlier rebuffed by Sethe because of her pride and arrogance. It is on the bases of the above background on the type of love in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* that we now read the text from Melanie Klein's perspective to determine whether Sethe's action can ever be justified and what her motivations were. We will attempt to identify the psychological make-up of the individual characters in the novel, which motivated them to certain actions. We intend to also explore how these psychological elements combine with external factors to result in the eventual tragic acts exhibited by the protagonists in the novel.

Object Relations theory is a theory of relationships between people in particular within a family and especially between mother and her child. A basic tenet is that human beings are driven to form relationships with others and that failure to form successful early relationships leads to later problems. Melanie Klein considers the child's relations with the breast as significant. As the child feeds, it feels gratified and satiated when the breast produces sufficient milk, in which case it is loved and cherished. When the child is prematurely withdrawn, or the breast fails to produce sufficient milk or food, the child is frustrated; the breast is hated and becomes the recipient of hostile thoughts. This is the basis for the schizoid and depressive positions, which Klein formulates in analyzing the child's psychology and subsequent adult behaviour. It also explains the ambivalent posture of love and hate of the child towards the mother. Nevertheless, we are interested in how love can turn awry and nullify any dividing line between them in this paper.

Let us reiterate once again that the ability to disregard and to some extent sacrifice our feelings and desires and to put the other person's desires and emotions first, indicates the presence of this life-sustaining force known as love. Love is "the manifestation of forces which tend to preserve life" (Klein 65), and most psychoanalysts seem to believe that it has components of death wishes, since the sacrifice of one's desires includes the possibility of the forfeiture of one's life. It is on this basis that we identify *the effect of unbridled maternal omnipotence, inability to enter into the depressive position and the failure to make reparation* as the unconscious factors, which are responsible for the destructive and smothering love relationship between mother and her daughter in *Beloved*.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, there is a demonstration of the connection between the bourgeoisie American society and repression. Despite criticisms of classical psychoanalysis, for focusing intensely on "the interaction of infant and mother as if this existed as a free-standing relation, independent of economic, political or social conditions, which affect the circumstances of parenting," (FitzGerald 669) 'Object

Relations theory' proposes that the psyche is constructed within a wide system of relationships, offering a model of how social, cultural and political forces become internalized (670). We are therefore interested in how the dominant discourses of slavery, the good mother and the pre-oedipal experiences are at the centre of the repression of love in *Beloved*. In other words, Object Relations theory offers explanation to how the nature of slavery affected the style of motherhood and the pre-oedipal experiences of children in the American slave culture.

Sethe Suggs (*Beloved's* mother) is a mother whose bond with her own mother was severed by slavery. She does not even develop a separate entity or identity before this separation occurs. It is difficult therefore for her to identify the boundary between her and another. As a result she "didn't know where the world stopped and she began" (*Beloved* 164). This means that she has not matured into subjecthood. Consequently, Sethe is still in her pre-oedipal symbiotic stage when its monstrous superego is in control of how she relates with her mother and immediate environment. This explains her aggressivity. Nevertheless, she must find a surrogate mother in order to completely undergo the oedipal circle and assume her subjectivity. This is also at the root of Sethe's inability to separate herself from her daughter, and consequently responsible for the intense love she has for her daughter. Hence, her love becomes the result of the omnipotence of the un-separable mother.

It is the same reason of 'thick love' that "the milk would be there and I would be there with it", and Paul D seems to confirm this inseparability of the mother and child when he says "...a suckling can't be away from its mother for long" (16). Because of this closeness, love, or symbiotic relationship with her baby, Sethe considers the appropriation or expropriation of her milk as defilement. When she tells of the experience, of forcefully being milked like an animal; "her eyes rolled out tears" (17). The repetition of "And they took my milk" (17) indicates how intensely painful this act of defilement is to her, much so because the milk belongs to her daughter who is not separate from herself. Her role and function as a mother is threatened, and must be resisted. Paul D recognizes that; "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" (45).

So, when the slave masters come to take *Beloved*, it is part of Sethe and maternal role that are threatened, and she has no choice, but to fight for freedom, as she has no space for compromised or 'thin' love. Freedom for her is achievable through death of part of her, and this explains the infanticide in *Beloved*. Love for Sethe "becomes a testament of freedom" (Otten 658) and a survival strategy. McKenzie notes that a reader of *Beloved* is enabled to "consider enslavement from a new perspective of how black people were able to endure, to survive, when they did not own their bodies, their children or anything but their own minds" (229). And when they were said to have been freed from slavery, they understood freedom from slavery to mean not only the absence of capricious masters and endless work but regaining the power to "love anything you chose". "Both Sethe and Paul D understood how slavery inhibited their ability to have "a big love" whether for children, for friends, or for each other" (Collins 181).

But the freedom Sethe achieves to 'freely' love her daughter is also potentially

calamitous. Otten notes that “a mother’s freedom to love her child is exceedingly dangerous – it is potentially self-consumptive, capable of producing what Barbara Schapiro calls an “intimacy of destructive rage...incited by feelings of love”” (658). It leads Sethe to commit infanticide, and she believes Beloved would come back for her to explain why she had to do what she did as well as hear Beloved say “I forgive you”. This is why she does not really acknowledge guilt for her action, but rather makes desperate efforts to earn Beloved’s understanding. Therefore, all her investment in mothering is both an attempt to make up for her own loss as a daughter and assert herself as the possessive and powerful good mother. This is what obsessively revives the suppressed memory in her despite her desperate efforts to blot out the memory of the bleeding child she had held in her arms and her basking in her new glory of present love. Deborah Guth reflects, “instead of memory reviving the past, then, it is the resurrected past – the actual presence of Beloved – that slowly summons memory in its wake” (585). But this re-memory is significant because it signals the triumph of love over time and death.

Another important dimension of Sethe’s love for her daughter, Beloved that is relevant in Object Relations theory of the Kleinian school, is the projection of her good aspects on her beloved daughter. In such a situation, the projection of parts of the self, results in the object perceived as having the characteristics of the projected part of the self, which also results in identification. Sethe is presented as projecting all “the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful” (Beloved 163) onto her children. Her instincts are those of a protective mother and she does not want anything to hurt them and therefore; she “collected every bit of life she had made..., and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them” (163). But this is also an indication that like Melanie Klein observes concerning projection that “the projection is now in danger of infecting the good object, threatening to destroy it, or provoking the possibility of retribution” (<http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/elljwp/klein.htm>). One of the aims of projective identification in addition to getting rid of an unwanted part of the self is a greedy possession and control of the object, which turns out also to be part of Sethe’s problem. Because of the fact that she identifies herself in her beloved daughter, Sethe, the next time her child’s security is threatened, attacks the source of the threat, the white man himself, instead of the child for whom she wants to protect. This is an attempt to forget and possibly undo the past. Therefore, in the final scene, she attacks Mr. Bodkin, to annihilate the slave master and preserve forever the daughter she cannot bear to lose again. But Guth avers that “tragically, however, this belated attempt to alter the course of events will be defeated by Beloved herself” (587), as she will not afford the mother the opportunity for reparation. She summarizes the subtext and substance of *Beloved* as:

“the symbiotic union of mother and child, the earth bond that allows no separation even while it kills, and no reparation thereafter; the mother whose terror and love lead to the most terrifying protection, through whom possession and dispossession acquire their most fundamental meaning...” (587).

While the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ position occurs when the infant recognizes only part of the object, like its mother’s breast, the ‘depressive’ position is ushered in when the infant recognizes the mother as a whole object. After the phantasy of having attacked and destroyed the ambivalently loved mother, the anxiety that follows these feelings of pain, guilt and loss of the mother both as an internal and external object results in the need to make reparation. Reparation includes the variety of processes by which the ego feels it has undone all the destructions on the external object by restoring, preserving and reviving the object. This tendency is strongly tied with the feeling of guilt and in the major contribution to sublimation, and to mental health. It is because of the above that we identify Beloved’s behaviour in her smothering love relationship with Sethe as a contravention of the process of reparation and the failure to anchor properly within the depressive position.

Destructive’ Love and the Future of Mother/Daughter Relationship

Toni Morrison suggests that *Beloved* can be read in two ways (Morrison 5): both as a psychically damaged real-life slave girl and as a ghost (fantasy object for the emotions of others). We might as well consider her from perspectives. Beloved is killed at the age of two. According to classical psychoanalysis, children begin at this age to undergo the oedipal crisis, which should instigate their development into separate selfhood. Normally, the oedipal crisis is supposed to properly socialize the child into imbibing the norms of its surrounding family, society and culture. This process always involves repression of unwholesome desires. Certain importunate demands, inappropriate behaviour by the code of the given society are streamlined in this socialization process so that the child should be able to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour in his or her environment. By Beloved’s death at the age of two, this process of psychological development is terminated and she is by implication denied the privilege and opportunity of entry into Melanie Klein’s depressive position, where she would mature properly into culture and make reparation to her mother for her monstrous behaviour.

Another important implication of this failure to enter the depressive position is that Beloved’s psychological development is still within the pre-oedipal stage where there is still a symbiotic relationship with the mother. Beloved still clings tenaciously to her mother and does not therefore have an independent existence. Her dependence on Sethe is such that she expresses aggressivity whenever Sethe fails to align her thoughts with hers:

And it was so much better than the anger that ruled when Sethe did or thought anything that excluded herself. She could bear the hours – nine or ten of them each day but one – when Sethe was gone (100)

Because Beloved is still psychically a pre-oedipal infant, she does not have an autonomous sense of self, but rather “experiences the loss as an existential crisis” (FitzGerald 673). Her excessive dependence results from her paranoid-schizoid position, which Melanie Klein explains as corresponding to the disintegrating tendency

of life, as well as to the symbiosis of mother and infant. In this phenomenon, the child does not yet recognize its separateness from the world, and in particular the primary caregiver: she says of the woman on the ship: "I am not separate from her" (*Beloved* 210). FitzGerald continues to reveal that; "Her insistence that the woman has her face also makes sense in psychoanalytic discourse" (673). She continues to abolish separateness, which started when "Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes..." (*Beloved* 57) until later when she says; "in the night I hear chewing and swallowing and laughter it belongs to me she is the laugh I am the laugher I see her face which is mine" (212)

Beloved's position therefore makes her a prey to ambivalent feelings and behaviour. She fails to mature into that position where a feeling of guilt should encourage her to seek to make reparation. Rather, she lingers within the pre-oedipal stage where love assumes the nature of vengeance. She has come in the guise of love to avenge her death in the hands of her mother, and only Denver who discovers this motive in Beloved.

The American slave system denied mothers the ownership of their children. Beloved is born into slavery and that is why their relationship is warped by the shadow of slavery. Nevertheless, Sethe desires freedom for her baby and this desire is achievable by the killing of Beloved to prevent her from slavery. Having entered into the Free State herself, she cannot allow her daughter to go back into slavery. Beloved however has returned to exact restitution from Sethe. Without Denver who takes it as a duty to save Sethe from the consequences of the fierce love she has feared from the day Nelson Lord first told about her mother's outrageous deed, Beloved would have strangled her to death. It is also through Denver that the community that eventually saves Sethe from Beloved gets involved in the family's affairs. The community which had had nothing to do with Sethe's family since the murderous rage of Sethe understand why she did what she did, but felt that she overreacted to the situation. Ella who is a member of the community:

Understood Sethe's rage in the shed twenty years ago, but not her reaction to it, which Ella thought was prideful, misdirected, and Sethe herself too complicated (*Beloved* 256)

Irrespective of the understanding of the community even in the unacceptability of what Sethe had done, the community appears more uncomfortable with Beloved's re-presence, which is arguably the presence of evil among men. As a ghost, Beloved's presence does not elicit so much revulsion. But to Ella, a member of the community, it is unacceptable:

But if it took flesh and came in her world, well, the shoe was on the other foot. She didn't mind a little communication between the two worlds, but this was an invasion (257)

But the fact is that Beloved is on a revenge mission and her destructive tendencies are as a result of her not being able to identify with her mother as a whole object. In other

words, her ‘introjections’ of her mother is not complete, which is why she still lingers in that position that is usually characterized by violence and destructiveness. The type of love Beloved exhibits in the narrative is understandably of the destructive type. It is deleterious, pernicious, disastrous, ruinous, hideous and above all deadly.

Beloved both idealizes as well as demonizes her mother because of ‘doubling’ problem associated with the paranoid-schizoid position in which Beloved still finds herself. She is all loving and all abandoning. She waits for her after work; “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved’s eyes...As though every afternoon, she doubted anew the older woman’s return” (57). And later, Beloved regales Sethe with accusations; “... of leaving her behind. Of not being nice to her” (241)

FitzGerald opines that “she projects onto Sethe the imago of her internal mother, the woman who was about to smile at her and who then left her behind” (673). It is this woman who Beloved has vehement attachment to who plays the role of her primary caregiver and doubles as the external person who is playing the care-giving role. These both fit into Melanie Klein’s notion of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ mother, but more importantly is responsible for the ambivalent emotions of the infant, and Beloved in this narrative.

This role of the internal mother is transferred from the woman in the ship to Sethe. From the nameless face she had earlier on seen, Beloved now; “See the face I lost Sethe’s is the face that left me Sethe sees me see her and I see the smile her smiling face is the place for me” (213). The implication of her wanting both ‘mothers’ is her projected ambivalent emotions onto each of those mothers, split into ‘good’ feelings, such as love when each of them is idealized and ‘bad’ feelings – when she believes she has been abandoned by any of them. Psychoanalytically, such split projections have been identified as breeding insecurity, which in turn intensifies aggression, known as “the paradigmatic attack on the mother.” It usually results in the feeling that the ego is in bits.

Conclusion

When Beloved enters into sexual relations with Paul D, it is for the purpose of bringing back and keeping Sethe for herself rather than maturing into adulthood. Her infantile dependence and lingering presence in the pre-oedipal stage is prolonged and it affords her the opportunity to smother her mother with her strange kind of ‘sick’ love. Beloved therefore subverts the whole essence of reparation, because she does not re-unite with her mother in a transforming, life-giving, and sustaining type of love. And when the women of the community rally round to drive Beloved away and rescue Sethe from the strangle-hold of death, it is because of the quality of the African American women of always being there for one another. This culture of female bonding becomes the redeeming quality to another example of a mother/daughter relationship in African America society characterized by tension, horror and destructiveness.

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