

Beloved and the holy trinity: a literary analysis

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Christianity is one of the main themes in Toni Morrison's spellbinding novel, *Beloved*. Since sacrifice is at the root of the Christian faith and that Jesus' sacrifice is the primary reason the Christian religion exist, one can see why Morrison utilizes an extended biblical allusion pertaining to the Holy Trinity to show how sacrifice is an integral part of the lives of the protagonists in her text. As a prideful matriarch and an unequivocal devotee to her children, Sethe is essentially a symbolic representation of God or, ironically, the "Father" in the Holy Trinity described in the Bible.

Through this biblical allusion, Morrison conveys the concept of the ultimate sacrifice by likening Sethe to God who also felt the need to willingly offer something as precious as an offspring with the belief that something of higher value would be given in return. Though in contrast, God's sacrifice was bilateral, while Sethe's was unilateral. *Beloved* had no choice in her death, while Jesus made the decision to sacrifice for the sins of humanity according to Christian beliefs. In Sethe's case, there seems to be a sense of sole ownership in regards to *Beloved*. Sethe controlling states multiple times that " She [*Beloved*] is mine.

" as though *Beloved* had no say so when it came to her very own life. Though Sethe has good intentions, being that she never wants her children to face the horrors of slavery, she unreasonably concludes that slavery is worse than death. However, this is illogical seeing that she thinks that no life is better than a life enslaved. Also, there appears to be no tangible benefit from the slaying of her daughter other than a " spiteful" ghost roaming her house and terrorizing her surviving children. Therefore, one could reasonably conclude that Sethe's cruel act was a mere murder and not a love-guided sacrifice.

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However, Morrison weaves another allusion to Christianity that shows how Sethe's sacrifice is more than a murder.

If one compares God and Sethe, one can see a significant similarity between these two. Sethe sends her daughter to the spiritual world only to return to the physical world, while God sends his son to the physical world only to return to the spiritual world. It seems Jesus and Beloved seemed to be a greater benefit to society in the realms in which they did not originate. Jesus arguably did more good on Earth than he did in heaven, while Beloved did more good in the spiritual world than the physical world. Therefore one could justify the claim that Sethe's sacrifice was sincerely more than an unjust murder. In addition, Morrison's biblical allusion to sacrifice in relation to the Holy Trinity is also fundamental in Beloved's life in that it likens the physical Beloved to Christ (The Son) and the spiritual Beloved to the Holy Ghost.

This allusion elaborates on the concept of sacrifice by differentiating between voluntary and involuntary sacrifice. Unlike Jesus, Beloved is at the mercy of her overbearing mother. She has no ownership of herself even though she claims that "I am Beloved. And she is mine." She is nothing more than property of a woman with poor judgment that took her innocent life. In contrast, Jesus was sacrificed by his Father, but Jesus' pivotal sacrifice in order to rescue humanity from sin was ultimately up to him not God.

This was a bilateral sacrifice in that it required two people to sacrifice instead of one person. Beloved, on the other hand, was given by a giver. Jesus was the giver and the given. Also, one can also see that the allusion extends to a deeper degree. Christianity was forced on the slaves.

They, like Beloved, were not allowed to determine his or her own fate. Though Jesus was supposedly destined to lose his life, it still made the final decision in regards to his life. In conclusion, sacrifice is an integral part in the lives of the protagonist of Morrison's *Beloved* because sacrifice is an integral part of Christianity. Biblical allusions are woven through the text beautifully, but seem to have a bitter-sweet effect. Involuntary and voluntary sacrifice, and fate versus free will, are at the epicenter of the Bible and *Beloved*, and are therefore intertwined in themes and motifs.