FREEDOM AND SECLUSION IN THE LEGACY OF SLAVERY PORTRAYED IN *BELOVED* BY TONI MORRISON

LIBERDADE E ENCLAUSURAMENTO NA HERANÇA ESCRAVAGISTA RETRATADA EM *BELOVED* DE TONI MORRISON

Recebido: 10/10/2025 Aprovado: 05/11/2025 Publicado: 30/12/2025
DOI: 10.18817/rlj.v9i2.4393

Michel Emmanuel Felix Francois[1]
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5570-576X

Abstract: In *Beloved*, people are imprisoned within memories of the past which prevent them from realizing other ways of life. For Morrison (1998), the legacy of slavery is not limited to the socioeconomic onus, based on forced labor and its dehumanizing treatments. A major liability, according to the author, resides in the psychological seclusion, when old wounds are reopened. In fact, the violation of the feminine body, loss of dignity and the brutish treatment have taken their toll and left deep scars that can last trough generations. For Morrison (2019), the reproductive capacity of Black women was a critical form of social and economic capital, for they were forced to procreate to increase the number of enslaved laborers. In this regard, it is necessary to inquire whether African American women have inherited the legacy of slavery or not, since they are directly harmed by policies, practices, and beliefs that still oppress them. It is impossible to ignore the hedious legacy of institutional racism that, according to Burnham (1987), is a distorted national personality and a twisted color consciousness which permeates every part of our lives.

Keywords: Freedom; Seclusion; Black Motherhood.

Resumo: Em *Beloved*, as pessoas permanecem aprisionadas em lembranças do passado que as impedem de perceber outras formas de viver. Para Morrison (1998), a herança escravagista não se limita ao ônus socioeconômico, baseado no trabalho forçado sob um regime desumano. O maior ônus, segundo a autora, reside no enclausuramento psicológico, quando se reviram as chagas do passado. De fato, as violações do corpo feminino, a perda de dignidade e o tratamento animalesco deixam sequelas irremediáveis e cicatrizes psicológicas profundas que perpassam gerações. Para Morrison (2019), a capacidade reprodutiva da mulher negra era uma forma crítica de capital social e econômica, já que as mulheres eram forçadas a procriar para aumentar a mão de obra escravagista. A esse respeito, faz-se necessário indagar se a mulher afro-americana não herdou o ônus da escravidão, já que é diretamente prejudicada pelas políticas, práticas e crenças, que continuam, até hoje, oprimindo-as. Não se pode ignorar o legado hediondo de um racismo institucional que, segundo Burnham (1987), consiste em uma personalidade nacional destorcida e uma consciência de cor perversa presente em cada parte de nossa vida.

Palavras-chave: Liberdade; Enclausuramento; Maternidade da Mulher Negra.

[1] Graduação em Letras Inglês Português pela Universidade Estadual do Ceará. Mestre em Linguística Aplicada pela Universidade Estadual do Ceará. Doutor em Estudos da Tradução pela Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Experiência na área de Letras, Tradução, com ênfase em Literaturas Estrangeiras Modernas. Professor da Universidade Federal do Ceará. E-mail: francoismichel769@gmail.com

The present paper aims to interweave a primary analysis on slavery and the resulting suffering of such practice on human history channeled through the traumatizing experience of the diverse characters that populate the novel. Plainly put, slavery was not just an economic system, it was a moral catastrophe. It was, indeed, the uncompassionate means of exploring human beings, annihilating their spirits, and brutalizing their bodies. As Montesquieu (1844) incisively argued in *L'esprit des Lois*, slavery unravels the self-contradictory justifications of enslavement by confronting the moral absurdity of the essence of human being and its resulting subjugation. Rousseau (1893), in his assertion of natural freedom, further amplifies this condemnation, denouncing the institutionalized bondage that corrodes human dignity and social harmony. This straightforward philosophical assertion is clearly depicted through literature. Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, for instance, takes the abstractions of oppression and renders them overexplicit, translating theoretical rejection into the lived anguish of the enslaved, whose trauma lingers beyond the pain inflicted by their shackles. In this convergence of intellectual reflection and literary evocation, the legacy of slavery emerges not merely as a historical misdeed but as an ineclutable fate, haunting both past and present, an excruciating experience which has left indelible painful memories. As a matter of clarity, the following paragraphs shall provide a bridge between the philosophical approach on slavery through the lens of Montesquieu and the friction between freedom and seclusion as portrayed in *Beloved*.

Montesquieu's argumentation, as presented above, unfolds through multiple dimensions, one of which interrogates the moral contradictions of slavery within an economic framework. His analysis suggests that slavery was perceived as a necessary mechanism for the expansion of the Americas, particularly in sustaining agricultural production. To rationalize the enslaved labor system, Montesquieu invokes the scarcity of agrarian workers, contending that such conditions justified the subjugation of Black individuals by European colonizers. Following the decimation of Indigenous populations and the escalating European demand for commodities such as sugar and spices, the transatlantic trade grew increasingly dependent on the forced labor of African captives—an institution not merely driven by economic necessity but perpetuated by ideological constructs that sought to legitimize human bondage.

Secondly, Montesquieu highlights the role of religion in legitimizing its own expansion, positioning it as a central pillar in the establishment of slavery. From his perspective, religious doctrine was not merely an accessory to colonial rule but an ideological mechanism that sanctioned the subjugation of enslaved Africans. This mode of thinking provided moral justification for the annihilation of the enslaved African workers, framing their suffering as a necessary sacrifice in the relentless pursuit of unprecedented economic gains. The European colonizer's insatiable quest for exorbitant wealth was thus intertwined with theological reasoning, forging a narrative in which enslavement was not only permissible but apparently divinely ordained. Under the guise of spiritual redemption, African captives were forcibly displaced, their subjugation rationalized as a promise of conversion and ultimate salvation. Montesquieu, however, reveals the contradictions embedded within this ideology—on the one hand, the enslaved were deemed morally corrupt, their customs regarded as inferior and deviant compared to European virtues; yet, on the other, their exploitation was justified by the very civilization that professed moral supremacy. This paradox underscores the hypocrisy of colonial dominion, where religious dogma and economic ambition converged to uphold the injustices of slavery.

Beyond justifying slavery through economic and religious arguments, Montesquieu resorts to a deeply prejudiced characterization of Black individuals, reinforcing stereotypes that sustained their dehumanization. In *L'Esprit des Lois*, he ironically presents arguments that, at first glance, seem to validate their inferiority, describing them as grotesque figures whose physical traits supposedly render them unworthy of pity. He even questions whether God could have placed a soul in a Black body, exposing the racialized worldview that permeated European thought at the time. On a moral level, Montesquieu suggests that Black people possess corrupt customs, far removed from European virtues, reinforcing the notion that their subjugation was not only economically necessary but also morally justifiable. While his intent may have been satirical—aiming to expose the hypocrisy of slavery's defenders—his words ultimately contributed to racist discourses that endured for centuries.

As discussed above, Montesquieu, in his examination of slavery, reproduced racial stereotypes that contributed to the dehumanization of Black individuals, predicated on the assumption of the Negro inferiority—an ideology that not only legitimized slavery but also shaped enduring racist narratives. This racist discourse is

widely represented in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, which exposes the psychological and social scars left by slavery. The aim now is to demonstrate how Morrison, in contrast, deconstructs these narratives by giving voice to those who were silenced. In the novel, the protagonist Sethe carries the trauma of slavery, revealing how institutionalized violence not only destroyed lives but also fractured identities and familial relationships. The novel shows how structural racism, rooted in discourses like those of Montesquieu, continued to impact generations, evolving into a legacy of pain and resistance.

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison delves into the darkest dimensions of human experience through the excruciating story of a woman who, in her desperate escape from slavery, is forced to commit the unthinkable—infanticide. According to Selfridge (2018), this brutal separation between mother and child is not merely an act of despair but a manifestation of the profound psychological rupture inflicted by slavery. The institution of slavery did not only dehumanize individuals; it systematically dismantled familial bonds, transforming maternal love into an agonizing moral dilemma. Morrison, in narrating this tragedy, underscores how institutionalized violence extended beyond the physical suffering of the enslaved, infiltrating their psyche and reshaping perceptions of identity, belonging, and survival. Beloved was indeed sacrificed by her mother to prevent her enslavement. The return of a spectral daughter, as an enigmatic figure, futher reinforces the idea of guilt, trauma and the legacy of slavery. Through this lens, Morrison not only exposes the horrors of the past but also interrogates how these historical wounds continue to reverberate across generations, perpetuating, as observed in the previous paragraph, an inheritance of hardship and defiance.

The legacy of slavery functions as a straitjacket that binds both body and soul, its invisible restraints preventing freed Black individuals from fully exercising their freedom (Morrison, 1998). This structural persistence is evident in the continued dominance of the descendants of former slave owners over those of the enslaved. To be freed and to claim the right to freedom are not synonymous, as the apparent emancipation of Black individuals does not exempt them from the confinement imposed by the inheritance of slavery, deeply embedded in social relations. For Morrison, breaking these barriers is essential for Black individuals to finally reclaim their full freedom. True liberation requires not only distancing oneself from the shadow of slavery but also dismantling its ideological and institutional tutelage. Even after

abolition, the imbalance of power persists, perpetuating the exploitation of Black labor under conditions often resembling slavery and relegating Black individuals to second-class citizenship.

Morrison presents a harrowing depiction of the exploitation of the Black body under slavery, illustrating how systemic oppression reduced individuals to mere instruments of labor. The intense physical demands of forced labor were accompanied by deep psychological and moral degradation, which systematically denied enslaved individuals their sense of dignity and personal autonomy. Slavery's logic equated Black individuals to animals, rendering their existence valuable only in terms of economic gain. Morrison intensifies this critique by incorporating unsettling references to the bestialization of Black people, portraying them in distorted expressions of desire—engaging in acts of copulation with animals, fantasizing about sexual violence, and exhibiting compulsive behaviors. These depictions serve not merely as shocking imagery but as a profound indictment of the slave system, which imposed a dehumanized and pathological sexuality upon Black bodies. By exposing these representations, Morrison underscores how slavery's violence extended beyond physical exploitation, embedding itself in the psyche and perpetuating racist ideologies.

Morrison's portrayal of sexual violence underscores the intersection of race, gender, and power within the institution of slavery. Violence against the Black body originates both in physical punishment and in lust. Among enslaved Black men, this violence was often perceived as an opportunity to satisfy sexual instincts. For white enslavers, however, enslaved Black women were subject to a dual form of exploitation, both as laborers and as objects of sexual gratification. This way, the novel exposes how the commodification of Black bodies extended beyond economic production, infiltrating intimate and psychological spaces. According to Selfridge (2018), Sethe's experience exemplifies this trauma, as she is forced to raise her children alone, navigating the consequences of systemic abuse, being stripped of her dignity while attempting to reclaim her autonomy and motherhood. Selfridge (2018) further emphasizes that the three main female characters of the novel endure violent deaths and emotional tragedies, which ultimatly lead to their psychological fragmentation.

Francois (2019) critically examines the systemic violence inflicted upon enslaved Black women, highlighting how their oppression extended beyond forced labor to encompass sexual exploitation and dehumanization. Enslaved Black women

were subjected to relentless physical and psychological abuse, often regarded by white enslavers not only as economic assets but also as instruments of sexual gratification. Their children, too, were denied autonomy, either seen as future sources of profit or discarded as financial burdens. In Latin America, particularly in Brazil, Francois notes that young Black girls were frequently coerced into prostitution, a practice that generated substantial wealth for enslavers. These women were adorned and stripped of their dignity, commodified as objects of exchange within a system of sexual exploitation. Morrison's *Beloved* poignantly reflects this historical reality through Sethe's desperation, as she chooses death for her daughter over a life condemned to the same suffering she endured. The novel underscores the enduring legacy of slavery, demonstrating how its violence transcended generations, shaping identities and perpetuating systemic oppression long after its formal abolition.

In the novel, Toni Morrison (1998) emphasizes the utilitarian function of sex within the institution of slavery, portraying it as a mechanism for reproduction rather than an act of intimacy or personal agency. Enslaved individuals were denied the autonomy to experience sexual pleasure, as their bodies were commodified solely for labor and procreation. As Morisson puts it in the novel, "Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that, but they have to have as many children as they can to please whoever owned them. Still, they were not supposed to have pleasure deep down. " (Morrison, 1998, p. 209). Morrison exposes how the oppressive system stripped enslaved Blaks of their humanity, reducing their relatiosnhips to transactions dictated by economic and social control, a loathsome practice that she exemplifies as follows:

> The Garners, it seemed to her, ran a special kind of slavery, treating them like paid labor, listening to what they said, teaching what they wanted known. And he didn't stud his boys. Never brought them to her cabin with directions to "lay down with her," like they did in Carolina, or rented their sex out on other farms. (Morrison, 1998, p.140).

Jill C. Morrison (2019), in her seminal article on the reproductive oppression of the Black women, examines how historical and systemic structures have commodified Black women's bodies. Morrison's concept of use rights refers to the ways in which enslaved Black women were exploited for both labor and reproduction, treated as instruments for economic gain rather than autonomous individuals. For Jill C. Morrison, Black women's reproductive capacities, through the concept of use rights, were

manipulated to sustain the enslaved workforce, with little regard for their personal agency or well-being. Morrison (2019) also highlights how Black women were, through the exclusion rights, systematically denied control over their bodies, subjected to forced pregnancies, sexual violence, and restrictions on their reproductive choices. As Morrison (2019) puts it, “This particular form of objectifying Black women was an integral part of how they were controlled during enslavement. As property, they were merely to be acted upon, with their owners holding all rights over them” (Morrison, 2019, p. 48). In Morrison’s perspective, the institution of slavery not only commodified enslaved Africans as property but also extended such right to their sexual and reproductive capacities. Morrison signalled that Black women were not granted the prerogative to act on their body, which was rather regarded as an instrument of economic utility. In fact, Black women’s ability to bear children was tied to their value as labor, as their children were seen as future assets to sustain the enslaved workforce. For Morrison, Black women’s existence was merely reduced to a cycle of forced reproduction and labor, propelling the dehumanizing structures of slavery.

As previously discussed, Morrison (2019) offers a new perspective on the absence of the enslaved individual's right to autonomy over their own body. In *Beloved*, for instance, Sethe is denied this right by the slave system, which reduces the Black body to a mere material asset. According to Francois (2019), the material use of the Black body generated immense economic gains exclusively for white enslavers, while for the exploited individuals, it represented an endless abyss of suffering. In this dynamic, white enslavers exercised the privileges of their class at the expense of the enslaved, who were relegated to a state of bestiality. The economic exploitation of Black bodies reinforced social disparities, erecting both visible and invisible barriers between enslavers and the enslaved. White enslavers, on one hand, had the freedom to acquire all forms of wealth, including ownership over Black bodies. Enslaved Black individuals, on the other hand, were systematically deprived of their freedom, with the absence of autonomy translating into an imminent threat of death. Like animals, they were captured, restrained, confined to restricted spaces, and abandoned in dehumanizing asylums, their sole purpose being labor from early childhood. Morrison (1998) makes it clear in the novel that the white enslaver always assumes the right to possess the Black body, leaving escape as the only possible path to liberation, as

quoted here: “If a Negro got legs he ought to use them. Sit down too long; somebody will figure out a way to tie them up. ” (Morrison, 1998, p. 10).

Jill C. Morrison (2019) critically examines the systemic denial of bodily autonomy among enslaved individuals, particularly in relation to parental rights and familial bonds. Enslaved parents lived under the constant threat of losing their children, as their offspring were treated as commodities rather than autonomous beings. This perpetual uncertainty fractured emotional connections, making affection a precarious and often painful experience. The enslaved world, stripped of warmth and stability, offered little space for genuine emotional fulfillment. Francois (2019) traces the origins of this familial disintegration to the process of detribalization, wherein enslaved Black individuals were forcibly removed from their kin, severed from their collective identity, and deprived of their cultural heritage. However, the most profound anguish stemmed from the forced separation of parents and children, as enslaved infants were sold without any guarantee of reunion. This trauma is poignantly reflected in *Beloved*, where characters avoid forming deep attachments, recognizing that under the logic of slavery, no relationship was truly theirs to claim. The pervasive sense of dispossession eroded the fundamental meaning of family, and Morrison’s novel *Beloved* powerfully illustrates the fear of forging familial bonds in the face of an uncertain and oppressive future, as quoted below.

> Risky, thought Paul D, very risky. For a used-to-be-slave woman to love anything that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love. The best thing, he knew, was to love just a little bit; everything, just a little bit, so when they broke its back, or shoved it in a croaker sack, well, maybe you'd have a little love left over for the next one. (Morrison,1998, p. 45)

The quote above vividly portrays the profound psychological trauma of forced separation and the resulting systematic dismatling of familial bonds. Sethe’s heartfelt grief refuses to heal, as she is forced to relinquish her children to the brutal machinery of slavery. Separation, in this sense, is not depicted as a singular moment but as a relentless erosion of identity, love, and belonging. Through Sethe’s desperate attempt to protect her daughter—even at the cost of her life—Morrison underscores the devastating consequences of a system that denies the enslaved the right to love, belong, and maintain familial connections, the pestilence of a world deeply inpregnated with hatred and in which attachment is fleeting, and survival often means learning to

live with absence. Family bonds, as depicted in the novel, spell more trouble than wellness, as presented in the quote below.

> It made sense for a lot of reasons because in all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby's eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children. Halle she was able to keep the longest. Twenty years. A lifetime. Given to her, no doubt, to make up for hearing that her two girls, neither of whom had their adult teeth, were sold and gone and she had not been able to wave goodbye. To make up for coupling with a straw boss for four months in exchange for keeping her third child, a boy, with her--only to have him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and to find herself pregnant by the man who promised not to and did. (Morrison, 1998, p.23)

In an interview with Maya Jaggi, published in *Brick A Literary Journal* (2005), Morrison provides insight into how *Beloved* portrays the compromised ability of enslaved women to love freely. She states that the act of claiming responsibility for one's children could be seen as anarchy, revolution, or sabotage, emphasizing how motherhood under slavery was fraught with systemic barriers. She also claims that

> Everything in the society was designed to destroy the family, because you can't successfully have a slave society with marriage and passing on property and wealth. So they had to develop new relationships; black women took in children. It was life under duress, but new forms came. Women having children without stable fathers present was key for slaveholders because you had a piece of property that could reproduce itself—the children were slaves. (Morrison apud Jaggi, 2005)

Additionally, scholarly analyses of *Beloved* reinforce this idea. Kaplan's work on Black feminism and Morrison's novel explores how sexualized racial violence and reproductive labor were defining elements of slavery, positioning the enslaved maternal body as the subject of social death. This aligns with Morrison's assertion that enslaved women were denied the ability to nurture their children without fear of separation or punishment. In her approach on maternity and death, Kaplan claims:

> Because the status of human property was inheritable only through the mother, forced sex and coerced reproduction were not secondary aspects of slavery in the Americas. The material and ideological conditions of production—the social death of the slave—were reproduced literally on and through the enslaved woman's body.

> But at the same time that the enslaved mother was constructed as the essential element through which social death was reproduced, chattel slavery's reliance on biological lineage required as the slave's total « natal alienation"— the violent delegitimation of the enslaved's past, present, and future kinship networks. Legally severed from any legitimated social order or "conscious community of memory, » captive Africans were denied any claim of parentage upon their offspring or membership in a recognized cultural or political community, past or present. The simultaneous biological centering and social alienation of enslaved women rendered them not simply units of labor, but a unique form of property: a fetishized biocommodity; a nexus of production and reproduction devoid of social meaning; a cipher. (Kaplan, 2007, p.111-112)

Freeman (2020) expands upon Kaplan's analysis by examining the profound rupture between enslaved Black women, their offspring, and their own bodily autonomy. Her study focuses on the systemic denial of maternal agency, particularly through the practice of forced wet nursing, which deprived enslaved women of the ability to nourish their own children. Freeman references Morrison's *Beloved* to illustrate the psychological trauma of this separation, emphasizing how the novel exposes the cruelty of a system that stripped enslaved women of their most fundamental maternal function—the ability to feed and nurture their children. Sethe's experience exemplifies this injustice, as she clings to the belief that her ability to provide milk for her children remains untouched, the one aspect of her motherhood that white enslavers cannot steal. However, Morrison highlights the devastating reality that even this last vestige of maternal agency is violated, as Sethe is subjected to physical abuse and forced to witness the usurpation of her body's most intimate function. The novel thus presents the exploitation of Black motherhood as a central mechanism of oppression, revealing how the denial of reproductive and maternal autonomy served as a tool for dehumanization and control, as presented below.

> I had milk, » she said. «I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl. I hadn't stopped nursing her when I sent her on ahead with Howard and Buglar ».... «All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl. Nobody was going to nurse her like me. Nobody was going to get it to her fast enough, or take it away when she had enough and didn't know it. Nobody knew that she couldn't pass her air if you held her up on your shoulder, only if she was lying on my knees. Nobody knew that but me and nobody had her milk but me. »...«I told that to the women in the wagon. Told them to put sugar water in cloth to suck from so when I gotthere in a few days she wouldn't have forgot me. The milk would be there and I would be there with it. ...
>
> Men don't know nothing much, » said Paul D, tucking his pouch back into his vest pocket, «but they do know a suckling can't be away from its mother for long.

> Then they know what it's like to send your children off when your breasts are full.
>
> After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Them boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still.
>
> They used cowhide on you?
>
> And they took my milk.
>
> They beat you and you was pregnant?
>
> And they took my milk! (Freeman, 1998, p.16-17)

In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is evident that African American women have inherited the enduring legacy of slavery, sustained through systemic policies, practices, and beliefs that continue to shape their experiences. As Morrison herself asserted in the interview with Maya Jaggi, this is a “cursed inheritance” with far-reaching and detrimental consequences for the structure of the Black American family. The design of slaveholding societies, which lacked legal frameworks for marriage among the enslaved, inhibited the formation of enduring familial ties and obstructed the intergenerational transmission of property and wealth. Burnham (1987) further elucidates that enslaved Black women were not only left unprotected by law but also instrumentalized within an economic model that prioritized productivity and reproductive capacity. According to Burnham, slave owners arranged unions between enslaved individuals based solely on economic rationale, assigning enslaved women the dual function of sustaining agricultural labor and reproducing the enslaved workforce. Within this mode of production, the wealth of the enslaver derived from the reproductive potential of enslaved women, thus perpetuating a system in which Black motherhood was unsupported and the family unit remained institutionally fragile, as quoted below.

> The economic value of the master's slave holdings depended in part on the proven reproductive capacities of his bondwomen. As her "increase" was his property, the female slave was priced for both her labor-producing and reproducing ability. Fertile women brought a higher price on the market, but sterile women were often sold. (Burnham,1987, p.198).

This article offers insight into how the Black body has remained imprisoned within the legacy of slavery. The introductory paragraphs briefly examined slavery through the philosophical prisms of Montesquieu and Rousseau, juxtaposed with the

literary representation of trauma in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The novel presents slavery not merely as an institution of historical oppression, but as an injustice which has left permanent scars. The excruciating subjugation of enslaved people transcends the confines of the physical and economic spheres, severely impacting the identity, familial structure, and collective memory of an entire community. As seen in this article, Morrison's narrative is not only a severe criticism of bondage, it testifies the legitimate grievances of the Black bodies, by giving them voice and exposing the seclusion that persists long after emancipation.

Morrison underscores the persistent state of existential and structural uncertainty that permeates the Black community. The characters in *Beloved* inhabite a tense atmosphere, a kind of existential limbo in which freedom and seclusion are indistinct. They remain deeply troubled and preoccupied by memories of past experiences. The shackles of slavery left a lasting imprint on their perception and behavior. As depicted by Morrison, this uncertainty is not only psychological, it permeates all social relations and obliterate the institutional practices that promote racial equity. Sethe, for instance, experiences simultaneousy freedom and fearing, the permanent guilt of a murdered child and her return as a spectral entity. Her life is captured in a haunting memory, one that offers a glimpse into the past and present vulnerability of the Black community and the uncertainty of the future. Notwithstanding the fragility of the communal experience of a race, imbued with anguish and distress, Morrison unveils the potential of fullfilment of a new generation, as quoted below.

> Spores of bluefern growing in the hollows along the riverbank float toward the water in silver-blue lines hard to see unless you are in or near them, lying right at the river's edge when the sunshots are low and drained. Often they are mistook for insects - but they are seeds in which the whole generation sleeps confident of a future. And for a moment it is easy to believe each one has one- will become all of what is contained in the spore: will live out its days as planned. This moment of certainty lasts no longer than that; longer, perhaps, than the spore itself. (Morrison, 1998, p. 85)

References

BURNHAM, Margareth. An Impossible Marriage: Slave Law and Family Law. **Minnesota Journal of Law & Inequality**. Volume 5 Issue 2 Article 1, June 1987.

FRANCOIS, Michel Emmanuel Felix. Tradução comentada: Marginalidade em três contos de Afonso Henriques de Lima Barreto. Tese submetida ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Tradução da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Florianópolis, 2019.

FREEMAN, Andrea. **Skimmed Breastfeeding, Race, And Injustice**. Redwood City: Standord University Press, 2020.

JAGGI, Maya. An Interview with Toni Morrison. Brick A Literary Journal – From Brick 76, Toronto, 2005.

KAPLAN, Sara C. Love and Violence/Maternity and Death: Black Feminism and the Politics of Reading (Un)representability. **Black Women, Gender, and Families**. Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring, 2007, University of Illinois Press, p. 94–124.

MONTESQUIEU. L'Esprit des Lois. Paris: L'Avigne Libraire Éditeur, Livre XV, Chapitre IV, p. 165 -166, 1844.

MORRISON, Toni. **Beloved**. London: Penguin, 1998.

MORRISON, Jill. Resuscitating the Black Body: Reproductive Justice as Resistance to the State's Property Interest in Black Women's Reproductive Capacity. **Yale Journal of Law and Feminism**, 2019.

ROUSSEAU, Jean-Jacques. **The Social Contract or THE Principes of Political Rights**. Translated by Rose M. Harrington. Google Books, Book III, Chapter III, p. 101-104, 1893.

SELFRIDGE, Janeen. Beloved: The Physical Embodiment of Psychological Trauma. **Duquesne University Midwest Journal of Undergraduate Research**, Issue 9, 2018.