

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Toni Morrison is a twentieth century American black writer who gives a big contribution to the literary world because she “... has often been regarded as the premier promoter of African American Literature” (Dan). In her essay entitled “Toni Morrison” Holly Hedge says, “With seven extraordinary novels and four major literary awards, including the 1988 Pulitzer Prize and the 1993 Nobel Prize under her belt, Toni Morrison is in the midst of a more than fulfilling career as a master novelist” (Hedge).

Beloved, which was published in 1987, is “... considered Morrison's masterpiece” (“Toni Morrison Biography”) and “[i]n 1988 it won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction” (Bois). In Beloved, Morrison “... writes about the cruelty of slavery and the strong will her characters must possess in order to escape from it” (Shay). The novel mainly tells about dehumanization, such as sexual abuse and violence towards black people and the effect of the slavery, which influences slaves’ life although they become free. The novel itself is “[i]nspired by the story of Margaret Garner” (“Toni Morrison Criticism and Essays”). Garner is “... a

fugitive slave from Kentucky, [who] killed one of her children rather than permit her to be returned to slavery” (Coffin).

Knowing that the focus of the novel, Beloved, is on the effect of slavery, I will analyse the protagonist, Sethe, who is a slave character in the novel. Protagonist is “[t]he main character in a drama or other literary work” (“Protagonist”). In spite of the title of the novel that refers to another character in the novel, Beloved, I am of the opinion that the story itself centres around the mother figure of Sethe, her past, her struggle, and eventually her effort to cope with her traumatic past. The protagonist will be analysed by using formalism.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problems are stated as follows:

1. How does Toni Morrison portray the protagonist of Beloved?
2. What is the author’s purpose of creating such a protagonist?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the statements of the problem above, this study is done:

1. To show how Toni Morrison portrays the protagonist of Beloved.
2. To show the author’s purpose of creating such a protagonist.

METHOD OF RESEARCH

The method of research used for this thesis is library research. I start by reading Toni Morrison’s Beloved as the primary text. Then, I analyse the

protagonist of Beloved, Sethe. I also read some texts taken from the Internet. The texts are compiled to relate to the analysis of the protagonist.

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This thesis consists of three chapters, preceded by the Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, which consists of the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Analysis of the Protagonist of Toni Morrison's Beloved. The last chapter, Chapter Three, is the Conclusion. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices, which contain the synopsis of the novel, Beloved, and the biography of the author, Toni Morrison.