

ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND RESISTANCE: A MARXIST READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND HARRIET JACOBS' *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

Muhammad Shayan Bine Irshad

Graduate Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, University of Chitral,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Kifayat Ullah

Department of English Language and Literature, University of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,
Pakistan. Email: kiffayat@gmail.com

Habib Ullah Nawab

Department of Sociology, University of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email:
habib_soc@yahoo.com

Abstract

*This study reveals how both works criticise the institutionalised exploitation of enslaved people under the capitalist system of slavery. Marxism offers a prism through which to view how class relations and economic institutions supported slavery while also illuminating how enslaved people rebelled against these repressive regimes. A vital part of Marxist criticism is the commodification of Black labour and bodies, which is highlighted in both pieces. People who are enslaved are presented as valuable commodities that are used to maintain the wealth of the ruling elite. The study looks at how Black women are affected by this commodification, as their reproductive potential is also used for financial advantage. Morrison and Jacobs use striking descriptions of the psychological, emotional, and physical toll that slavery takes on its victims to demonstrate this. The research also highlights the special function of gender in these texts by demonstrating how enslaved women experience double oppression—sexual and class exploitation. While *Incidents* depicts Linda Brent's battle against sexual violence and her will to exercise agency over her body and destiny, *Beloved* shows the tragic effects of slavery's dehumanisation through Sethe's effort to keep her children from becoming commodities. Both writers use these stories to examine how gender oppression, class, and racism connect.*

Keywords:

Economic Exploitation, Marxist Theory, Slavery, Class Struggle, Commodification, Black Women, Labour Exploitation, Capitalism, Gender Oppression, Psychological Trauma, Resistance

Introduction

Economic exploitation lies at the heart of many oppressive systems (Arnold, 1994). Slavery in the United States represents one of the most brutal manifestations of this exploitation. Far beyond a system of racial subjugation, slavery functioned as an economic enterprise, commodifying Black bodies and extracting their labour for the enrichment of white slaveholders. In both Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), the authors expose the economic underpinnings of slavery and illuminate the various ways in which the enslaved resisted being reduced to mere instruments of profit.

This paper employs a Marxist critical framework (Devetak, R., George, J., & Weber, M., 2012) to examine how economic exploitation influences the lives of enslaved individuals in these two texts. Drawing from Marxist concepts such as class struggle, labour alienation, and material power, this study examines how Morrison and Jacobs depict the enslaved not only as victims of physical and emotional violence but as labourers whose exploitation formed the foundation of capitalist growth. At the same time, both narratives foreground resistance—both overt and subtle—as a challenge to the economic systems that sought to dehumanise them.

According to Marxist theory, the relationship between the bourgeoisie, or owners of capital, and the proletariat, or the working class, is one of exploitation. The capitalists take the surplus value, or profit, from workers, paying them less than the value they create. Because workers are not being appropriately compensated for the full value of their labour, this is regarded as exploitation (Adams, 2003).

The underlying tenet of capitalism is that labourers create things and services that are valued higher than the income they get. Surplus value is the amount that workers create over what they are paid; it is retained as profit by the capitalists who own the means of production (Michal Polak, 2013).

From Marx's perspective, the basis of the capitalist system's inequality is economic exploitation. Under this system, the ruling class benefits from the labour of the working class while the latter is denied the full value of their labour. Marx argued that only revolutionary change could end the economic and social disparities perpetuated by the capitalist system through class conflict, alienation, and the extraction of surplus value (Yoshihara, 2022).

The industrialisation and marginalisation of enslaved individuals, especially Black women, for financial benefit, is revealed in both works as the fundamental driving force behind the institution of slavery. While Jacobs provides a clear, eyewitness account of how slavery exploited Black women's unpaid labour and reproductive potential to boost the riches of slaveholders, Morrison concentrates in *Beloved* on the mental and generational pain that results from being seen as property. This study shows how slavery's capitalist structure overlooked human life, turned people into inanimate objects of labour, and restricted women's ability to procreate by looking at how both texts depict slavery as a system of economic exploitation. However, they take different methods to the topic; Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* both tackle issues that are essential to the experiences of African American women in slavery.

The trauma of exploitation (Collins, F. L., & Stringer, C., 2022) is a prominent theme in both *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, particularly as it relates to women and motherhood. *Incidents* is a more direct narrative that centres on the actual experiences of imprisoned women. In contrast, *Beloved* is more symbolic and employs the paranormal to address themes of memory, remorse, and the legacy of slavery. Both pieces explore the issue of individual and group resistance to slavery in detail. Still, *Beloved* goes deeper into how slavery affects a person's sense of self on a psychological level, whilst *Incidents* focuses more on the immediate fight for survival and freedom. When taken as a whole, these pieces offer a sophisticated examination of the interlocking oppressions of class, race, and gender under slavery.

Both themes revolve around the heroes' resistance to exploitation and their search for independence. For Linda Brent, liberation is achieved through tenacity and perseverance, especially during her prolonged period of concealment, whereas for Sethe, resistance is tragically linked with violence. In both books, regaining one's humanity and experiencing bodily and emotional liberation are synonymous.

The research examines the economic exploitation and class struggles as depicted in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* from a Marxist perspective. Both texts portray the experiences of African American women under the brutal institution of slavery, where their labour, bodies, and identities are commoditised and exploited for economic gain. Despite the abolition of slavery, the legacies of economic exploitation persist, with both works highlighting the intersections of race, class, and gender oppression. This study will explore how both authors portray the commodification of enslaved people, the use of violence and coercion to maintain economic power, and the psychological and social impacts of such exploitation. The research will aim to highlight how

Morrison and Jacobs critique the capitalist structures that underpin slavery, reflecting on the broader implications for contemporary understandings of race, class, and economic justice. Additionally, the study tries to explore how *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* depict the economic exploitation of enslaved individuals through a Marxist perspective, and in what ways do both texts use the narratives of enslaved women to critique the capitalist structures underpinning slavery?

Ultimately, this research argues that *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* critique the capitalist logic of exploitation embedded within slavery and offer powerful portrayals of resistance, autonomy, and the reclaiming of selfhood through both individual and collective acts.

Literature Review

Marx claims that the essential evil of capitalism, as well as any other class society, is that it is fundamentally exploitative. One of the reasons socialist and communist societies will be superior in some ways is that they will (necessarily) not be exploitative. We must define precisely what Marx means by "exploitation" and what aspects of exploitation Marx deems objectionable to comprehend such assertions. Marx is sometimes misunderstood to mean that exploitation only refers to an uneven distribution of social wealth. Because they get a far smaller portion of the pie than capitalists, workers are exploited (Bandyopadhyaya, 2002).

Karl Marx (2024) and Friedrich Engels (1997) created the social, political, and economic philosophy known as Marxism. It centres on the notion that there are two major groups in society: the proletariat, or working class, and the bourgeoisie, or ruling class. The working class sells their labour to make ends meet, while the ruling class owns the means of production (factories, land, and resources). Marxism claims that this results in exploitation and inequality, as the ruling class benefits from the labour of the working class. Marxists anticipate the eventual replacement of capitalism by socialism, in which the working class controls production and creates a society that is more egalitarian and classless. (Sibley, 2008) We believe that the core concept of sociological Marxism is "class as exploitation," and the accompanying proposition is that the dilemmas and dynamics of the reproduction and transformation of capitalist institutions are broadly explained by class. The primary causes of the most prominent characteristics of capitalist development—the progressive expansion of its worldwide reach, the growing concentration and centralisation of capitalist production, and the constant increase in its productive capacity—are worker exploitation and capitalist competition. However, there are intrinsic inconsistencies in this evolutionary cycle, which indicate that capitalism has a natural tendency to produce recurring, more severe economic crises. According to traditional Marxist crisis theory, the disruptions of capitalist accumulation can be explained by a wide range of causal mechanisms. The long-term trend for the aggregate rate of profit to decline and, especially as stated by Engels, are the two most significant of these for the ultimate destiny of capitalism in classical Marxism (Michael Burawoy, 2000).

A key concept in Marxist theory, class struggle refers to the ongoing conflict that exists between different social classes. The inherent exploitation and inequality of a capitalist economic system give rise to this battle. According to Marxist theory, there are two main groups in society: the proletariat, or working class, who sell their labour to make ends meet, and the bourgeoisie, or ruling class, also known as capitalists. The struggle between these classes fuels changes in history and society (Fernandez, 1997).

Marxist theory views ideology and false consciousness as instruments employed by the ruling class to hold onto power and subjugate the working class. The promotion of ideologies and ideals that rationalise the fundamental exploitation of capitalism is aided by false

consciousness, which blinds workers to their actual class interests. The proletariat must transcend false consciousness and cultivate class consciousness to realize their collective power and launch revolutionary change directed at overthrowing the capitalist system and establishing a society free from exploitation (Aronowitz, 1973).

A study conducted by Nawab et al. (2022) investigated how these Marxist dynamics were seen in the peasants' uprising in North-Hashtnagar in the late 1960s. It highlighted the role of feudal landlords, the bureaucracy, and military regimes in resisting peasant mobilisation. The North-Hashtnagar uprising gained the support of Marxists like Afzal Bangash. Peasants formed their Kissan associations, new bylaws, and peasants' courts. That was the reason that Mazdoor Kissan Party succeeded in abolishing absentee landlordism and promoting land redistribution for the benefit of the working class. The study concluded that there was a strong correlation between political mobilisation and the peasant uprising.

From a Marxist perspective, opposing the capitalist system and its exploitation of the working class necessitates resistance and subversion. Collective action that actively opposes capitalist exploitation, such as protests, strikes, and political movements, is what is known as resistance. Subversion is the process of challenging bourgeois ideology and power structures, whether via revolutionary tactics, legal challenges, or cultural critique. In the fight for class awareness and the ultimate destruction of capitalism, which will result in a society free from exploitation and class oppression, both subversion and resistance are crucial (Bieler & Lee, 2016).

A Marxist reading of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* reveals the novel's critique of the capitalist system, particularly in its examination of how slavery—a profoundly exploitative form of capitalism—dehumanizes people to maximize profits. The novel examines how the system of slavery led to the exploitation of labour, class inequality, alienation, and the commercialisation of people. In *Beloved*, the enslaved people become alienated from society and live far away from the community. Like Sethe and her family are alienated from their community of slave-owners, and they live in Cincinnati (Mehmood, 2021).

In contrast to the warped images reflected in the mirror, *Beloved* displays an entirely different image. The narrative reorganises the shattered mirror fragments by demonstrating hope and fresh life. It was possible to turn the suffering and anguish of those exploited and enslaved slaves into hope for the future. By reconstituting the African American presence, the work reflects the author's goal to reclaim the emotions of individuals who were previously overlooked in mainstream discourse. Sethe's racial independence and psychological completeness, the effects of slavery, the devil kid, and the ghost story are all topics covered in *Beloved*. To free herself from slavery, Sethe murders her child, *Beloved*, but *Beloved* returns to her mother as a ghost that represents the memories of slavery (Morrison, 1997).

In *Beloved* Sixo, the schoolteacher executes an enslaved person. Despite putting his life in danger, he refuses to submit to the master's authority. Because "there was no future in it," he declines to speak English (Morrison, 1997, p. 25). Sixo rejects the language of the dominating group, which imposes its ideals while denying the oppressed people's culture and philosophy. His resilient spirit endures and spreads to other members of his community. *Beloved*, the young ghost, is a destructive force that is out to blow up Sethe's family, which is where Slavery and Sethe have their terrible history. The roles of mother and daughter are inverted in *Beloved*. Denver, Sethe's daughter, first wants to shield *Beloved* from Sethe, but ultimately, she wants to shield her mother from *Beloved*. The women in Sethe's community sing and pray for her, helping her to recover from the trauma of having committed infanticide and being eaten by *Beloved*. After being gradually kicked out of the house by *Beloved*, Paul

D. comes to Sethe with consoling words. By claiming relief and repression, personal history and past, and the reunification of Sethe and *Beloved* (Morrison, 1997).

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is primarily concerned with the economic exploitation and class conflict that are intrinsic to slavery, with a focus on the commodification of enslaved women and the confluence of gender, racial, and class oppression. Jacobs' tale, written under the pseudonym Linda Brent, provides a thorough explanation of how the economic structure of slavery serves to enrich the ruling class—white slave owners—at the expense of the labouring class—enslaved African Americans, particularly women (Brent & Jacobs, 2009).

Research Methodology

This study employs a Marxist theoretical framework to analyse the economic exploitation depicted in *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs. The research focuses on the concepts of economic exploitation, class struggle, and the dynamic between the oppressor and the oppressed, drawing on the foundational works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. The novels are analysed as representations of the slave system as an economic structure that benefits the bourgeoisie (the slaveholders) at the expense of the proletariat (the enslaved individuals).

The research centres on three primary areas: the commodification of labour, class struggle and oppression, and the lived experiences of the protagonists. **Commodification and Labour** examines how enslaved individuals' bodies and labour are exploited for economic gain, drawing on specific excerpts from *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In *Beloved*, Sethe's recollections of working on the plantation and her master's ownership of her body serve as significant examples. Similarly, in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Linda Brent's experience as both a labourer and victim of sexual exploitation illustrates the commodification of enslaved women.

Class Struggle and Oppression addresses the control exerted by slaveholders over the enslaved class to maintain economic dominance. The study identifies specific passages in both novels that depict the economic and social dominance of slaveholders, focusing on how this control sustains the capitalist structures of slavery.

The **Character Experiences** section focuses on the lived experiences of Sethe and Linda Brent as case studies for economic exploitation under slavery. Through their narratives, the study explores themes of alienation, commodification, and resistance. These individual experiences serve as qualitative data for understanding larger Marxist themes in the context of slavery.

Data Collection for this study is centred on the primary texts *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Key passages that highlight the economic exploitation of enslaved individuals will be carefully analysed. In *Beloved*, this includes Sethe's forced labour, the commodification of her body, and the psychological impact of slavery. In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, attention is given to Jacobs' depiction of the economic control over enslaved women's labour and reproduction, particularly through Linda Brent's struggle for autonomy.

Secondary Sources, such as historical records, critical essays on Marxist theory, and research articles on the selected novels, will complement the primary textual analysis, providing context and supporting arguments related to the Marxist reading of the texts.

By systematically analysing textual evidence from both primary and secondary sources, this study aims to illustrate the centrality of economic exploitation in both *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, all through a Marxist perspective.

Discussion

Introduction

In this section, the researchers focus on the analysis of the two novels “*Beloved*” and “*The Incident of Salve Girl*.” For this, the researcher has taken texts from the two novels. In the way characters are viewed as commodities or workers, as well as in the economic structures that influence their lives, commodification and exploitation can be examined. Here in the Novel, the characters have been treated as property for the economic benefit of their owners.

Economic Exploitation in *Beloved*

In *Beloved*, Toni Morrison presents slavery not only as a system of racial violence but as a deeply entrenched economic institution rooted in the commodification of Black bodies. The enslaved characters, particularly Sethe, are subjected to a logic of ownership where their labour output and reproductive potential determines their value. Schoolteacher’s cold calculation of Sethe’s “human characteristics” and “animal characteristics” exemplifies the dehumanising objectification central to capitalist exploitation (Morrison p. 228). From a Marxist perspective, this reflects the process of commodification, where individuals are stripped of agency and transformed into tools of production—objects with use-value and exchange-value. Morrison intensifies this critique through the recurring motif of debt and ownership; Sethe reflects, “They stole my milk,” reducing her maternal and bodily autonomy to a form of unpaid reproductive labour. Her breast milk, meant for her child, is redirected into the capitalist machine, a violation that captures both literal and symbolic exploitation. Moreover, Sweet Home is portrayed not as a home, but as a labour site— “a business”— where the façade of civility masks systemic violence. These elements collectively expose slavery as an economic apparatus in which human lives are instrumentalized for profit, aligning closely with Karl Marx’s theory of alienation, wherein laborers become estranged from their bodies, products, and sense of self (Marx, 1844 Manuscripts). By embedding economic critique within her narrative structure, Morrison dismantles any romanticised notions of slavery and reveals its function as a violent pillar of early American capitalism.

Sethe’s commodification and exploitation can be seen in the following lines: “Teachers wrap that string around my behind, cross my nose, and wrap it all over my head.” Count the teeth I have. I believed him to be a fool. Moreover, the most ridiculous questions of all were those that he asked.” (Morrison p. 226).

A fundamental Marxist idea, the commodification of enslaved beings, is reflected in this quotation. The teacher views Sethe as just another piece of property, reducing her humanity to her physical attributes and treating her more like livestock. Artistically speaking, Sethe is separated from her body, as the ruling class owns and controls it, valuing her labour and procreation. The False consciousness and ideology can be seen in these lines, “At night, Sixo wandered in the trees. He said, “For dancing, to keep his bloodlines open. (Morrison p. 30).

One of the guys who is enslaved at Sweet Home, Sixo, represents a complicated connection with false awareness. There is an underlying acquiescence to his lot, even if he rebels against slavery in small ways, such as dancing and making his getaway at night. In addition to serving as a means of self-preservation, his modest actions of resistance show that he accepts the constraints placed on his life by his status as a slave. Here is where false consciousness manifests as the idea that one can only undertake modest, covert acts of rebellion while the greater system remains in place.

Economic Exploitation in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

In *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Harriet Jacobs reveals the intimate relationship between slavery and economic exploitation, emphasising how enslaved women were doubly commodified—as sources of labour and as objects of sexual control. From a Marxist perspective, Jacobs’s narrative illustrates the mechanisms by which enslaved people were

treated as property— “articles of merchandise” whose value was defined entirely by their capacity to generate profit (Jacobs, p. 41). The enslaved were not only denied wages but were systematically excluded from any form of ownership over their labour, bodies, or offspring. Jacobs’s master, Dr. Flint, attempts to assert absolute control over her reproductive and sexual autonomy, further highlighting how enslaved women’s bodies were sites of both economic and patriarchal domination. This aligns with Karl Marx’s theory of alienation, in which labourers become estranged from their bodies and identity, especially when their labour and reproduction are appropriated by others (Marx, p. 328). Jacobs’s decision to hide for seven years in a crawl space, denying her enslaver the ability to profit from her body or labour, is a radical act of economic and bodily resistance. Her narrative functions not only as testimony but as a direct challenge to the capitalist ideology that justified and perpetuated slavery. By documenting her life in economic terms—referring to being bought, valued, and pursued—Jacobs positions the enslaved not merely as victims but as active resisters within a brutal system of exploitation. The commodification of enslaved women can be seen when she says, “My heart was heavier than it had ever been when I learned that my newborn baby was a girl. Although slavery is horrible for males, it is far worse for women. (Morrison p. 205). The ideology of the ruling class perpetuates gender norms under the slave system. Linda Brent knows full well that her daughter will be abused sexually in addition to being used as labour, and that this will amount to even more severe exploitation. By portraying this double exploitation as a regular aspect of the social structure, the false consciousness in our society normalises it. The way the ideology of slaveholders attempts to conceal the cruel reality of slavery—especially for women—is revealed by Jacobs: “She was noble and womanly at heart, but in name, she was a slave. I adored her as she reminded me of my mother. (Morrison p. 23). Jacobs speaks to her mistress, a woman who initially shows her tenderness. This demonstrates how internalising favourable thoughts for one’s oppressors is a prevalent characteristic of false consciousness among those who are enslaved. Although Jacobs adores this woman as if she were his mother, the truth is that her mistress continues to profit from and support slavery. Here, Linda’s devotion to someone who, despite her generosity, is participating in her servitude is complicated by the false consciousness that hides the genuine exploitative relationship between slave and master.

Comparative Analysis

Beloved and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* both demonstrate how slavery operated as a cruel kind of economic exploitation that turned people into commodities for financial gain when viewed through a Marxist viewpoint. Morrison and Jacobs show the human cost of using individuals as financial instruments by illustrating the psychological, bodily, and emotional toll of this exploitation. Their writings show how enslaved people struggled and attempted to recover their humanity, underscoring the dehumanisation that comes with such a system. By doing this, both novels provide a compelling depiction of the moral and social shortcomings of slavery while criticising the economic system that permitted such exploitation.

The capitalist strategies that supported slavery are criticised in *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* for commodifying women’s bodies, sexualizing and exploiting them, causing long-lasting psychological damage, and treating them like nothing more than financial resources. Morrison and Jacobs demonstrate the brutality and inhumanity at the core of a profit-driven system by concentrating on the exploitation experienced by enslaved women. This highlights how capitalist exploitation under slavery dehumanised people and harmed entire generations. Through the prism of gendered oppression, the authors use these stories to not only highlight the atrocities of slavery but also to provide a more comprehensive critique of capitalist systems that put profit before people.

Marxist analysis of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved* demonstrates both parallels and divergences in their examination of resistance, commodification, class conflict, and power. Marxism provides a framework for understanding how class and economic institutions shape the lives of those who are exploited in these systems.

Similarities

Commodification of Human: The dehumanisation that results from slavery, in which people are treated as property and only valued for their labour, is revealed in both texts. Sethe kills her child in *Beloved* because she will not let slavery, an institution that deprives individuals of their humanity, turn her children into commodities. Jacobs explains how she and her family are viewed as property in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Particularly vulnerable to sexual commodification is Linda Brent (Jacobs's alias), whose enslaver, Dr. Flint, tries to limit her ability to procreate.

Both pieces criticise slavery's foundational capitalist structure, which uses the exploitation of slave labour to enrich the ruling elite. Morrison explores the generational pain of slavery in his book, showing how labour—especially that of Black women—was taken to help white slaveholders become wealthy. Jacobs emphasises the financial reasons for the dehumanisation of enslaved people by explicitly addressing how the plantation economy and institutional oppression maintained their subordination.

These writings show how Black women under slavery experienced forms of oppression because of their gender, colour, and class. Sethe's dual roles as a mother and a worker in *Beloved* demonstrate how the system of slavery physically and psychologically abused her. Linda Brent's account in *Incidents* highlights how enslaved women's vulnerability to sexual exploitation exacerbates their social struggle against gendered oppression.

Both novels' acts of resistance reflect Marxist criticism of repressive structures. In *Beloved*, Sethe radically rejects the monetisation of her children by killing them as infants. Jacobs's escape and refusal to submit to Dr. Flint's authority are acts of defiance against the system that abuses her and resistance against her commodification.

Differences

The story of *Beloved* frequently shows how the brutality of slavery caused communities to break apart. The isolation caused by slavery is reflected in Sethe's internal battle with shame and her incapacity to completely assimilate into the community. *Incidents*, on the other hand, underscore the importance of unity and collective resistance. The narrative of Linda Brent often emphasises the solidarity of other Black people, enslaved and free, demonstrating how community can serve as a powerful antidote to oppression.

With a focus on how people, particularly women, are plagued by the memory of their exploitation, *Beloved* focuses more on the personal costs of stolen labour. The system's emotional and spiritual wounds are the focus of the book. *Incidents* criticise the systemic nature of the exploitation and the financial advantages it offered the ruling class, addressing the economic mechanisms of slavery in greater detail.

In *Beloved*, Morrison uses a fractured, multi-perspective narrative that reflects the collective trauma and splintered history of slavery. In *Incidents*, Jacobs tells a personal, chronological story that aims to convince readers—particularly white women in the North—to support the abolitionist cause. The focus here is on protest and direct appeal.

Conclusion

In both *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, economic exploitation emerges as a central mechanism through which slavery dehumanized and commodified Black bodies for capitalist gain. By applying a Marxist framework, this study reveals how slavery functioned not simply as a system of racial oppression but as a capitalist enterprise that extracted value

from enslaved labour while alienating individuals from their bodies, identities, and autonomy. Morrison's *Beloved* exposes the psychological and generational scars inflicted by this exploitation, portraying how commodification penetrated the most intimate aspects of enslaved life. Similarly, Jacobs's narrative uncovers the gendered dimensions of economic exploitation, emphasising how enslaved women resisted by reclaiming agency over their labour and bodies despite oppressive capitalist structures. Both texts affirm that resistance—whether through physical defiance, psychological resilience, or narrative reclamation—is crucial to challenging the economic logic that underpinned slavery. Through this Marxist lens, *Beloved* and *Incidents* offer powerful critiques of capitalism's historic entanglement with racialized exploitation and provide enduring testimonies to human resilience and dignity.

It is clear from reading *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs that both novels offer a thorough examination of slavery's lasting effects, especially as seen through the lives of enslaved women. Despite their differences in genre, style, and historical focus, both writings have a dedication to revealing the moral, psychological, and physical costs of slavery. One can have a greater understanding of the familiar and distinctive ways in which these writers depict the atrocities of slavery and the tenacity of those who survived it by comparing these stories side by side.

Morrison and Jacobs provide a sophisticated critique of the patriarchal and enslaving structures by highlighting the confluence of race, gender, and oppression. Motherhood is a significant motif in both pieces, which highlight the sexual exploitation and dehumanisation experienced by enslaved women. While Linda Brent's sacrifices in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* show a mother's unwavering commitment to win her children's liberation, Sethe's act of infanticide in *Beloved* illustrates the extraordinary steps taken to shield children from the horrors of slavery. Because they expose the tough decisions forced by slavery, these mother narratives force readers to reevaluate accepted notions of morality and love.

Trauma and memory are also essential elements in both plays. In *Beloved*, Morrison employs magical realism to represent the unavoidable burden of slavery's past through the spirit of Sethe's departed daughter. A comparable weight is brought to light by Jacobs' direct, realistic story in *Incidents*, where Linda candidly describes her subjective experiences. Both writings serve as a reminder that the horrors of slavery go well beyond mere physical misery, leaving behind severe psychological wounds that endure for centuries.

Morrison's book encourages reflection and healing in the context of slavery, whereas Jacobs' story was an urgent call to action. Together, they provide a link between the first-hand narratives of the enslaved and the imaginative reinterpretations of their descendants, demonstrating the many ways that African American literature has addressed the legacy of slavery.

In the end, *Beloved* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* are complementary works that help us better comprehend the effects of slavery, especially on Black women. They highlight the human spirit's tenacity in the face of unspeakable adversity by focusing on motherhood, trauma, and resistance. In addition to serving as a poignant reminder of the atrocities of slavery, these works also serve as a constant reminder of the value of narrative in recovering and preserving historical facts.

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