



# *BELLOVED*

**TONI MORRISON**



# TONI MORRISON

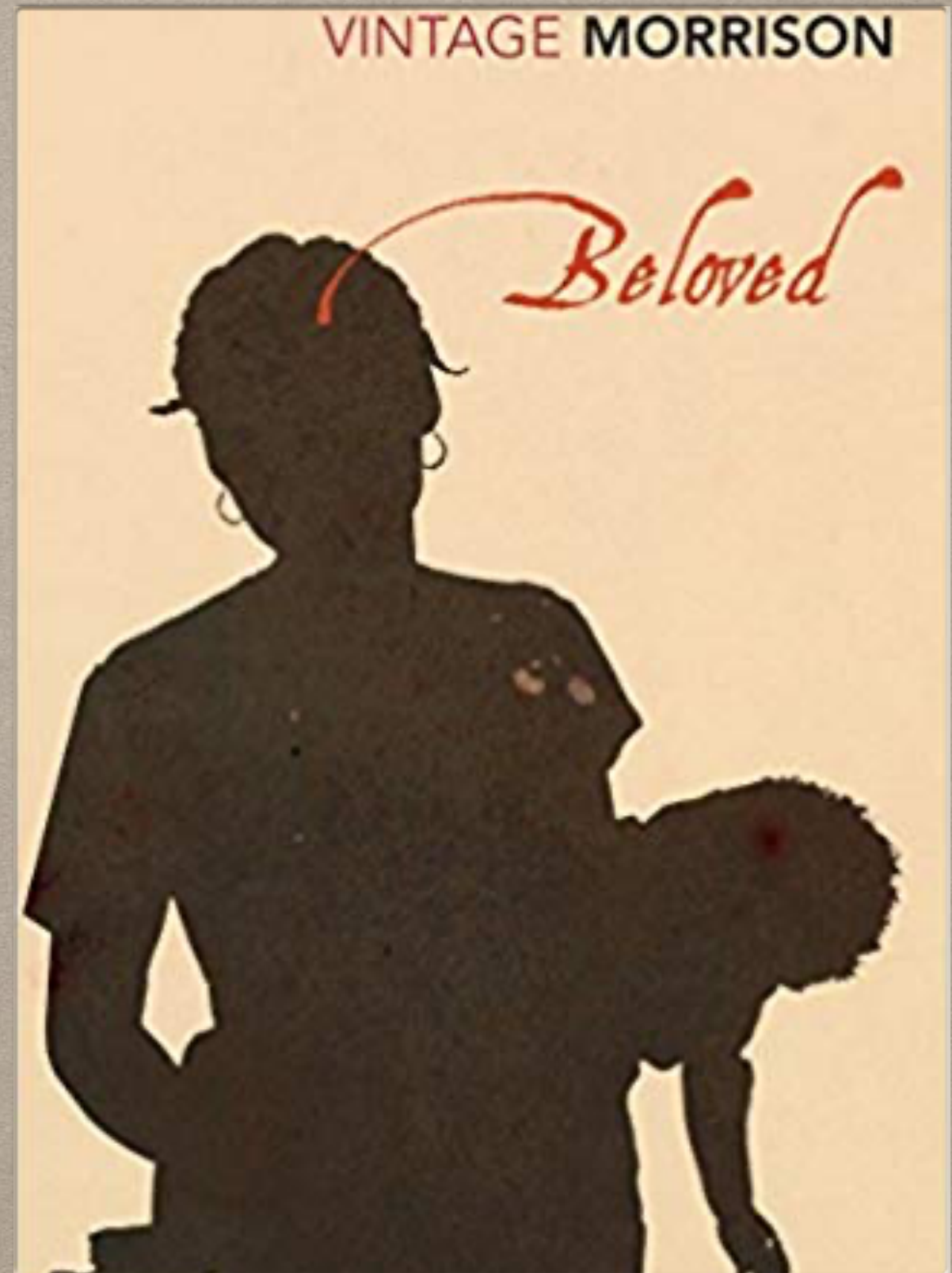
- \* The first African-American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, in 1993
- \* her novels are characterized by visionary force and poetic import, through which she "gives life to an essential aspect of American reality."
- \* her works explored the black identity in America, especially the crushing experience of black women.
- \* her plots are dreamlike and nonlinear, spooling backward and forward in time as though characters bring the entire weight of history to bear on their every act.





# THE NOVEL

- \* *Beloved* is a story about America's relationship with slavery, but it's also a story about rebirth and redemption. It closely examines the destructive legacy of Slavery.
- \* first published in 1987, the novel sealed Toni Morrison's reputation as one of the best American authors ever. It was so popular that it won the Pulitzer Prize, and played a big role in the decision to award Morrison the Nobel Prize.





The novel is based on the true story of a black slave woman, Margaret Garner, who in 1856 escaped from a Kentucky plantation with her husband and their children.

## ***Sethe***

## ***Beloved***

## ***Denver***

***Sweet Home***

*(pre-Civil War)*

*The Garners*  
*Schoolteacher*

*The Slaves:*

*Paul D*

*Paul A*

*Paul F*

*Sixo*

*Halle*

***124 Bluestone***

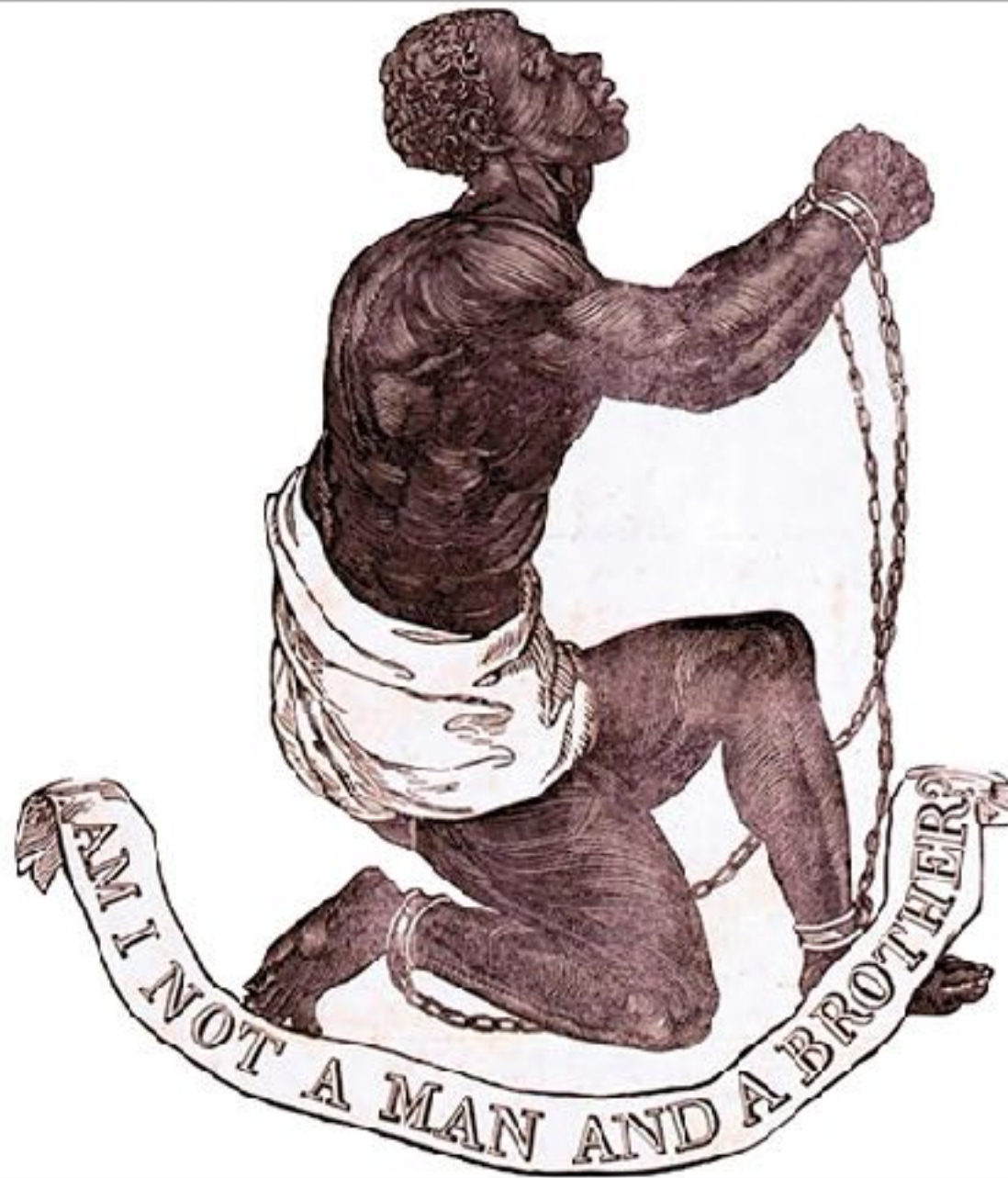
***(1873)***

*Howard*

*Buglar*

*Baby Suggs*

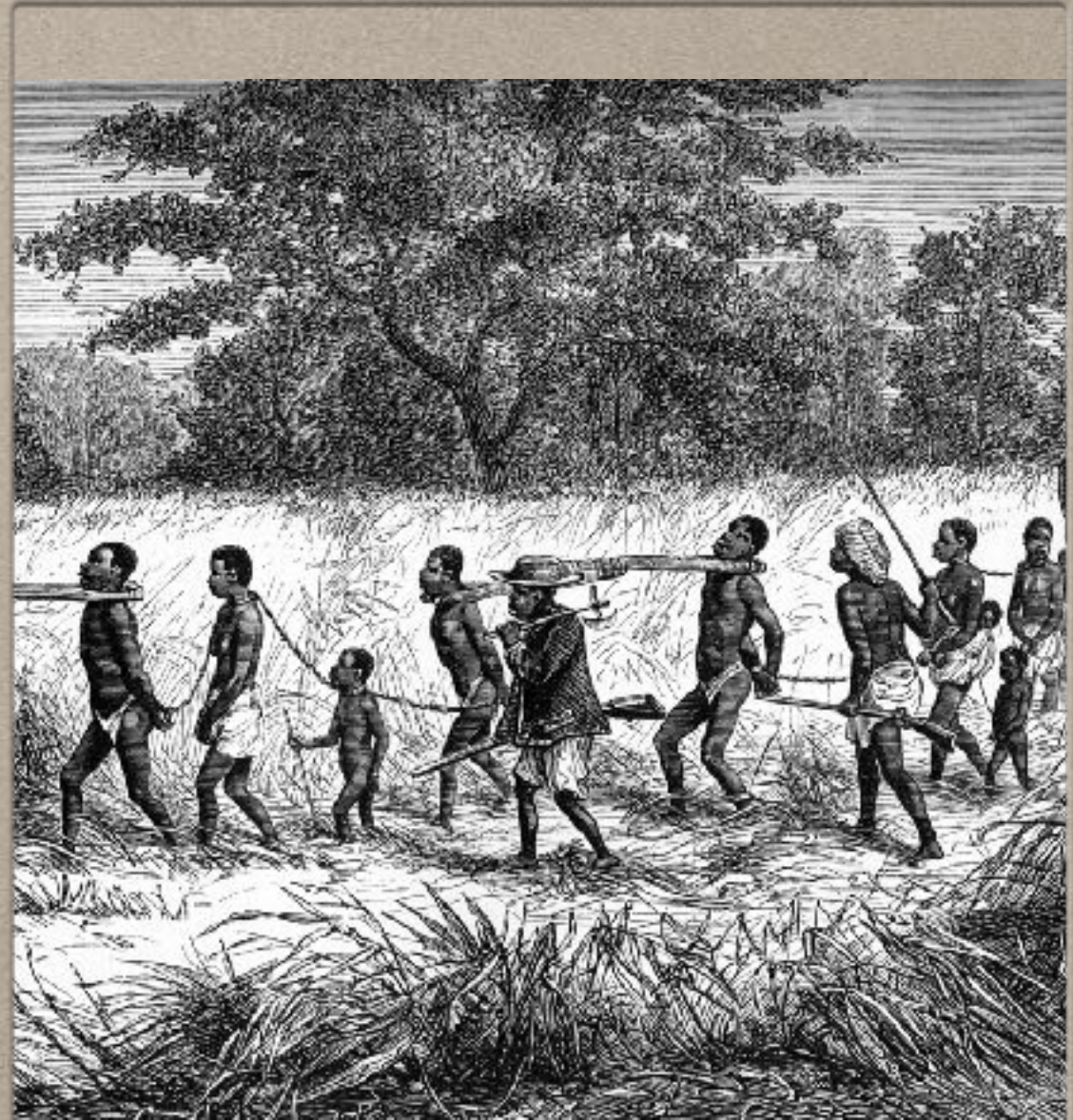




# REVISITING HISTORY

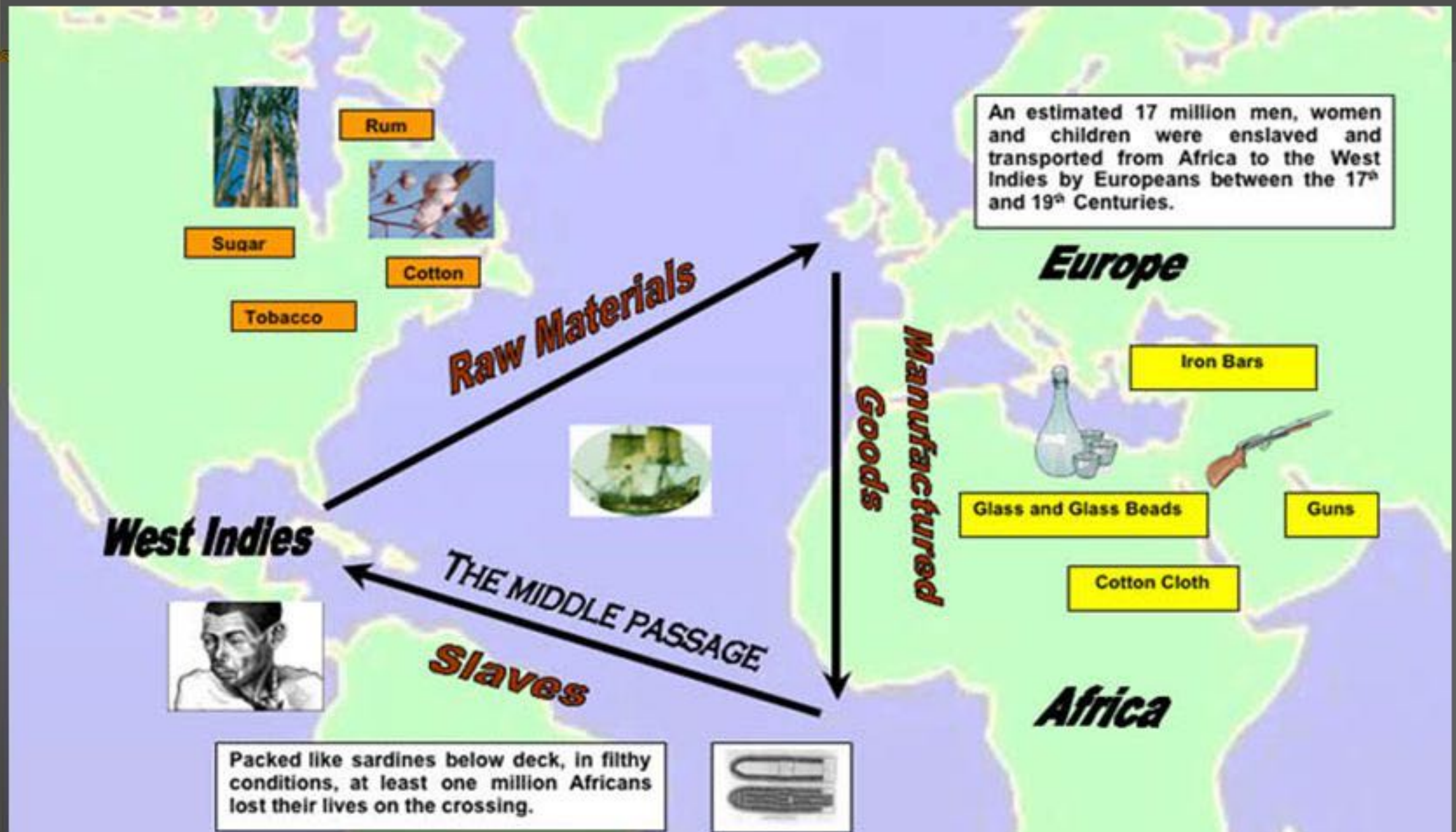


- **Slavery**
- **The Atlantic Slave Trade**
- **The Middle Passage**
- **The Civil War**
- **The Fugitive Slave act**
- **Margaret Garner**





# Atlantic Slave Trade



## The Atlantic Slave Trade



*Sixty Million  
and more*



**"daylight comes through the cracks and I can see  
his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not  
wait for us to sleep someone is thrashing but  
there is no room to do it in"**

**"Heaps. A lot of people is down there. Some is  
dead"**

**"Nothing to breathe down there and no room to  
move in"**

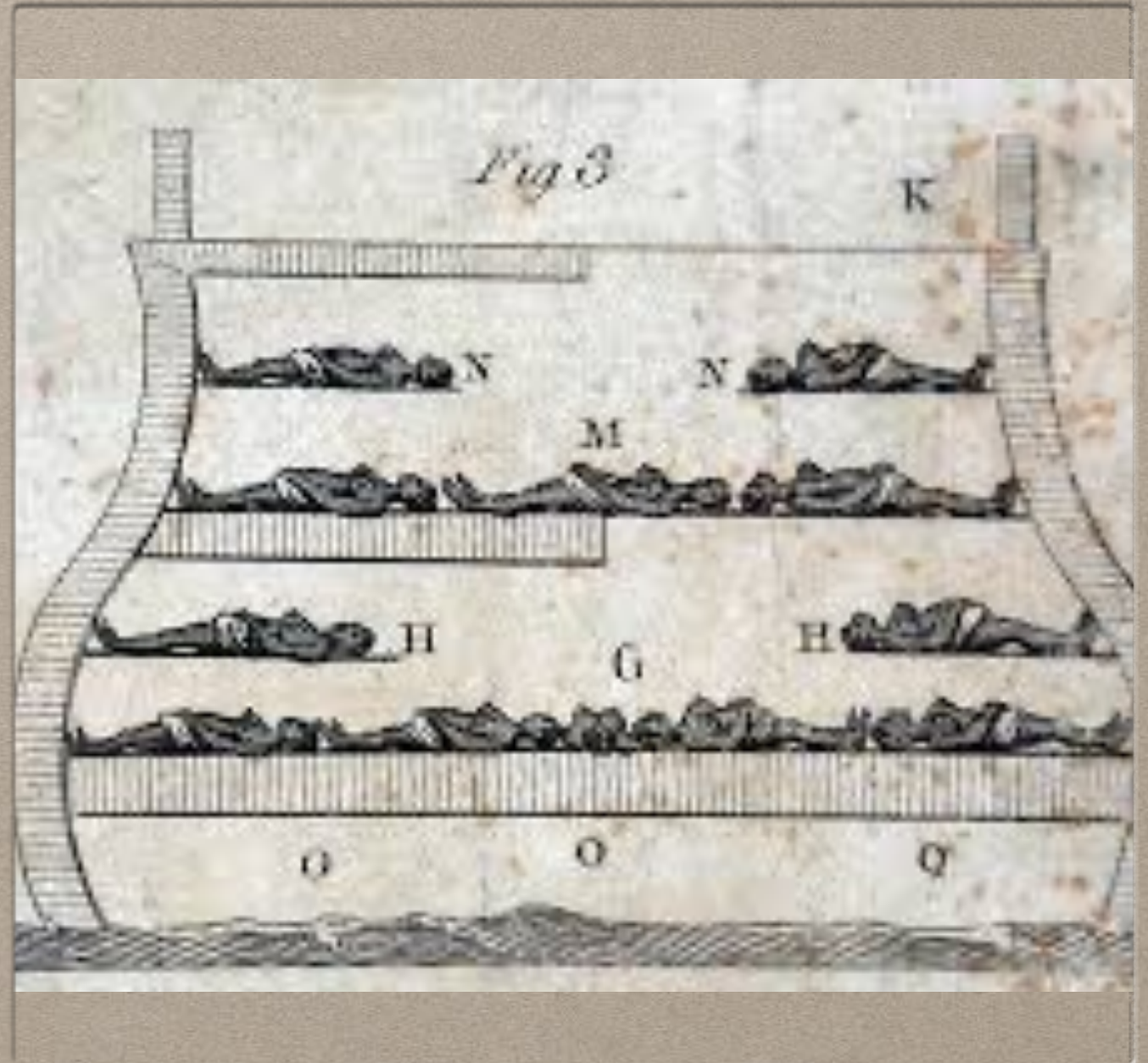
**- *Beloved* -**



# MIDDLE PASSAGE

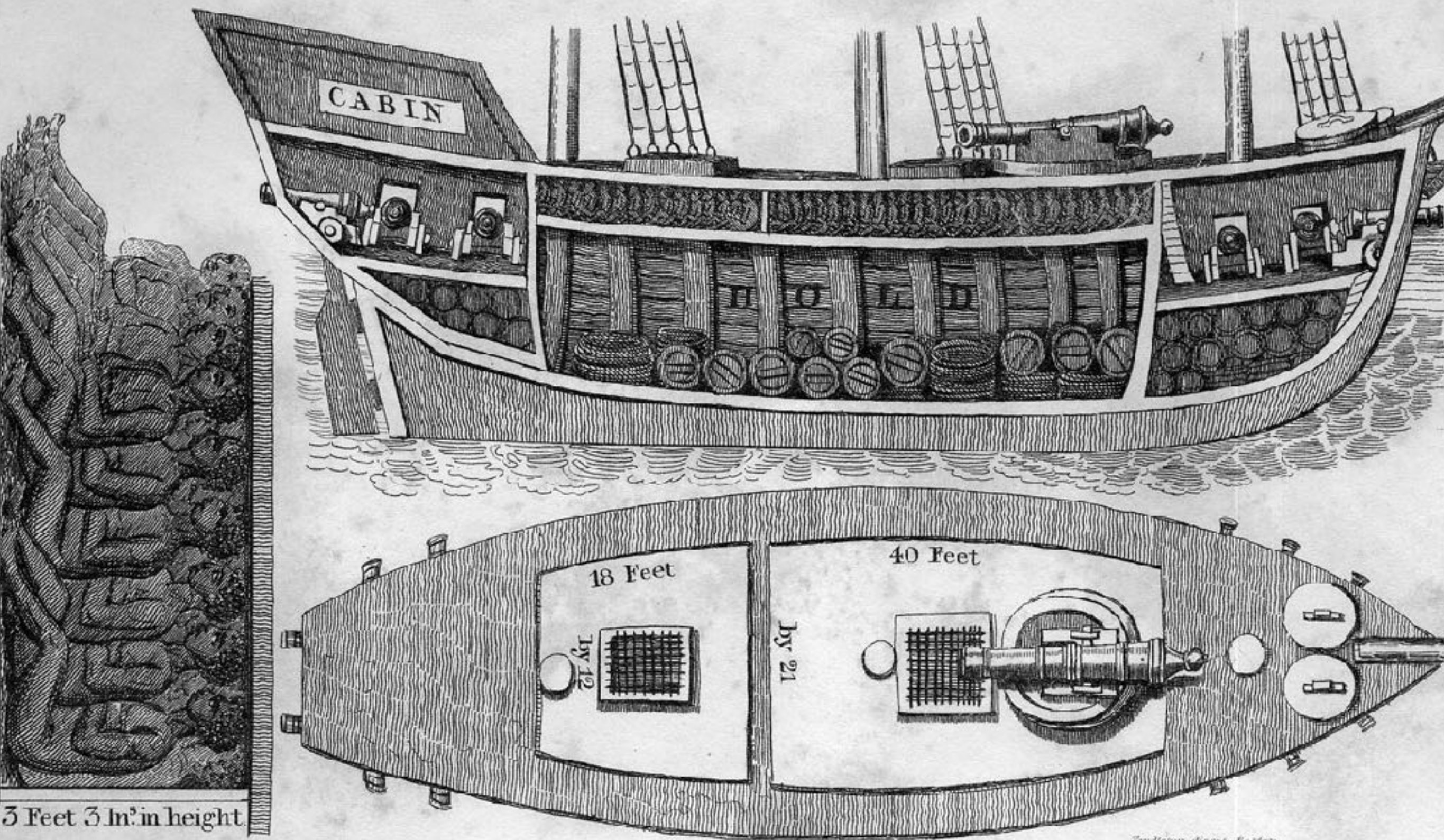
Beloved describes the journey known as the Middle Passage. she provides enough details of the cramped quarters below deck, the surrounding waters

She channels the experiences of her ancestors on the slave ship as if she were there. Her sentences are disjointed as is the narrative and the events.

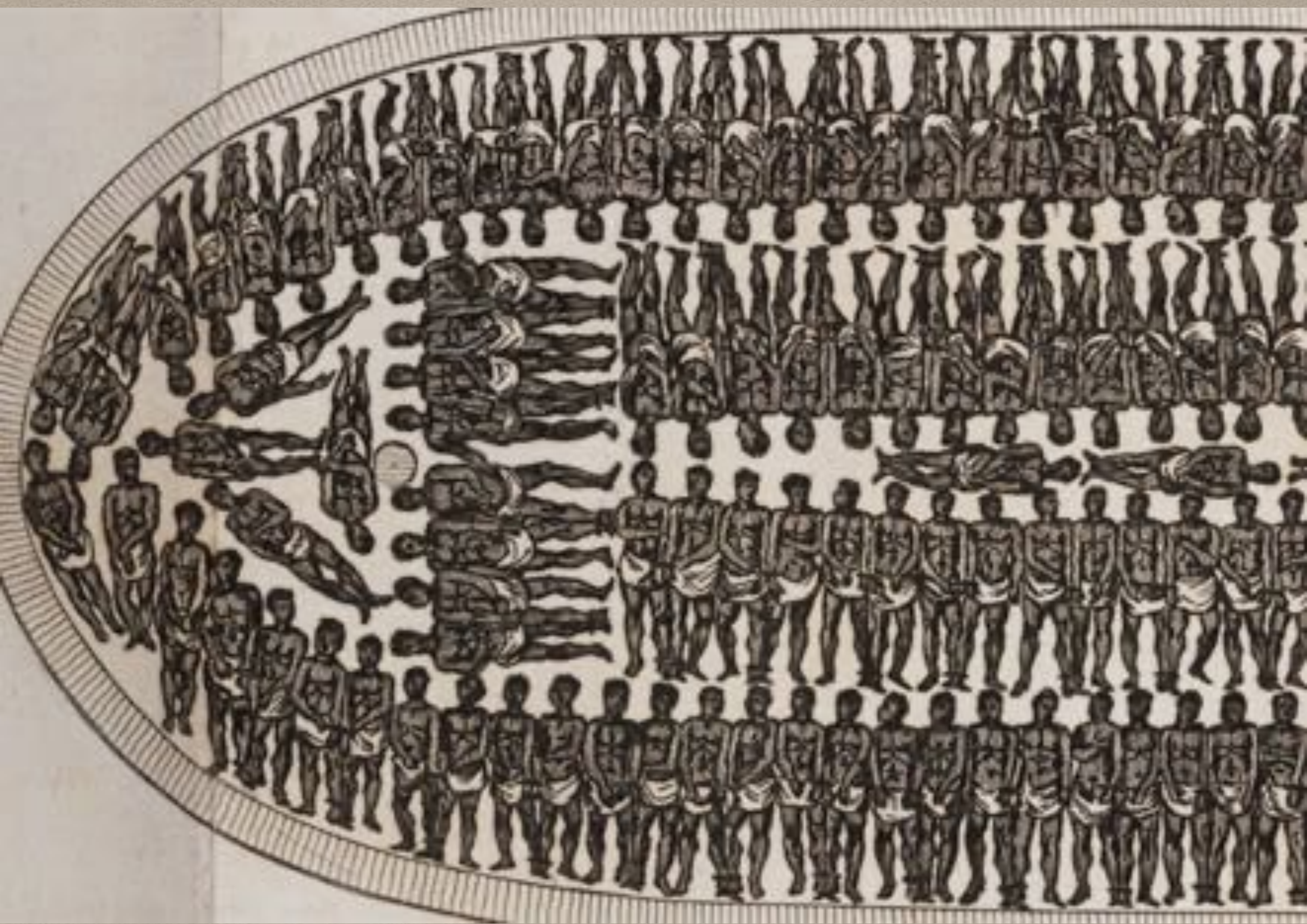




# SECTIONS OF A SLAVE SHIP.









# MARGARET GARNER AND THE FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT

**Margaret** killed her two-year-old daughter with a butcher knife rather than see the child returned to slavery. She had wounded her other children, preparing to kill them and herself, when she was subdued then taken to jail.

The act required that slaves be returned to their owners, even if they were in a free state. It also made the federal government responsible for finding, returning, and trying escaped slaves.

From the Cincinnati Gazette, Jan. 29.

## ARREST OF FUGITIVE SLAVES.

A SLAVE MOTHER MURDERS HER CHILD  
RATHER THAN SEE IT RETURNED  
TO SLAVERY.

Great excitement existed throughout the city the whole of yesterday, in consequence of the arrest of a party of slaves, and the murder of her child by a slave mother, while the officers were in the act of making the arrest. A party of seventeen slaves escaped from Boone and Kenton counties, in Kentucky, (about sixteen miles from the Ohio,) on Sunday night last, and taking with them two horses and a sled, drove that night to the Ohio river, opposite to Western Row, in this city. Leaving the horses and sled standing there, they crossed the river on foot on the ice.





# POSTMODERN HISTORY



- Much of postmodern fiction is still strongly invested in history, but more importantly in revising our sense of what history means, and to question grand historical metanarratives.
- Morrison is more interested in **origins, cycles**, and reconstructing agency than with **decadence and self-parody**.
- It is an attempt to fill a gap neglected by historians, to record the everyday lives of the “disremembered and accounted for”
- Morrison describes the project of writing beloved as one of fictional reconstruction or “literary archeology”
- History as life-lived” not as the documented.



# PRIVATE VS. PUBLIC HISTORY

- Morrison renders national and public history as a minor and inconsequential event in the private daily lives of slaves.
- She attempts to reconstruct an authentic African American history of the slaves, and a past **as-life-lived** rather than **documented history**.



**WHY?**



# RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY

- **Author as Anthropologist:**  
recording and rewriting the history and origins of a race
- **Author as Archeologist:**  
recovering and reconstructing history through fragments and remains of the past.





**Is History reliable?**



# HISTORY AND REPRESENTATION

- history is a fictional construct
- All history is imagined and all knowledge of the past is derived from representations.
- There is a gap between representation and reality
- she recognises that no totalling truth can ever be reached
- historical documents are often written from the perspective of the dominant culture
- Distinction between reality and its representation is distorted.





# TRAUMA NARRATIVES



# REPRESENTING TRAUMA

- **Cultural Trauma**

- Slavery as a cultural trauma
- The Middle Passage

- **Personal Trauma**

- Slaughtering Beloved
- Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs





- **Symptoms of trauma:**

Physical

Psychological

- **Ghosts and Haunting**

*The apparition of Beloved is the embodiment of the history, both Public and private, in the body of Beloved.*

*It is the apparition of the repressed past that haunts the character's lives and the need to confront both personal and cultural traumas.*





# MAGIC REALISM



## *What is Magic Realism?*

- It is a narrative technique that **represents the magical as real**.
- "One of the most effective artistic media to represent **extreme events**, it copes with the absence of the real by trying to represent its structural symptoms"
- It is used to represent **trauma**, in an attempt to **contain something within representation** that invariably exceeds it, lies forever out of reach.



***"When the victim is devalued she may find the most traumatic events outside the realm of socially validated reality. The experiences become unspeakable"***

***-Judith Herman***



# WHY MAGIC REALISM?

**Because both trauma and magic:**

- exceed established symbolic systems and concepts of reality.
- they are uncontrollable
- They are beyond explanation



**Trauma**

**Magic Realism**

**The Supernatural**

**Memory**

**Collective Vs. Individual**

*The ghost of Beloved*  
*The Return of the repressed*

**Rememory**  
**Disremembering**



"I was talking about **time**. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my **rememory**. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do...Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the **picture of it**—stays, and not just in my **rememory**, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head."



"By and by all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the water too and what it is down there. The rest is weather. Not the breath of the disremembered and unaccounted for, but wind in the eaves, or spring ice thawing too quickly."

*-Beloved- Toni Morrison*



"Everybody knew what she was called, but  
nobody anywhere knew her name.

Disremembered and unaccounted for, she  
cannot be lost because no one is looking for her,  
and even if they were, how can they call her if  
they don't know her name? Although she has  
claim, she is not claimed."

*-Johnny Appleseed*





# STYLISTIC ELEMENTS



# THE QUILTING MOTIF

- Patchwork **quilt**
- **narrative device**
- African American **Heritage**
- Female Solidarity
- Identity (Color, fabric, design)
- Healing



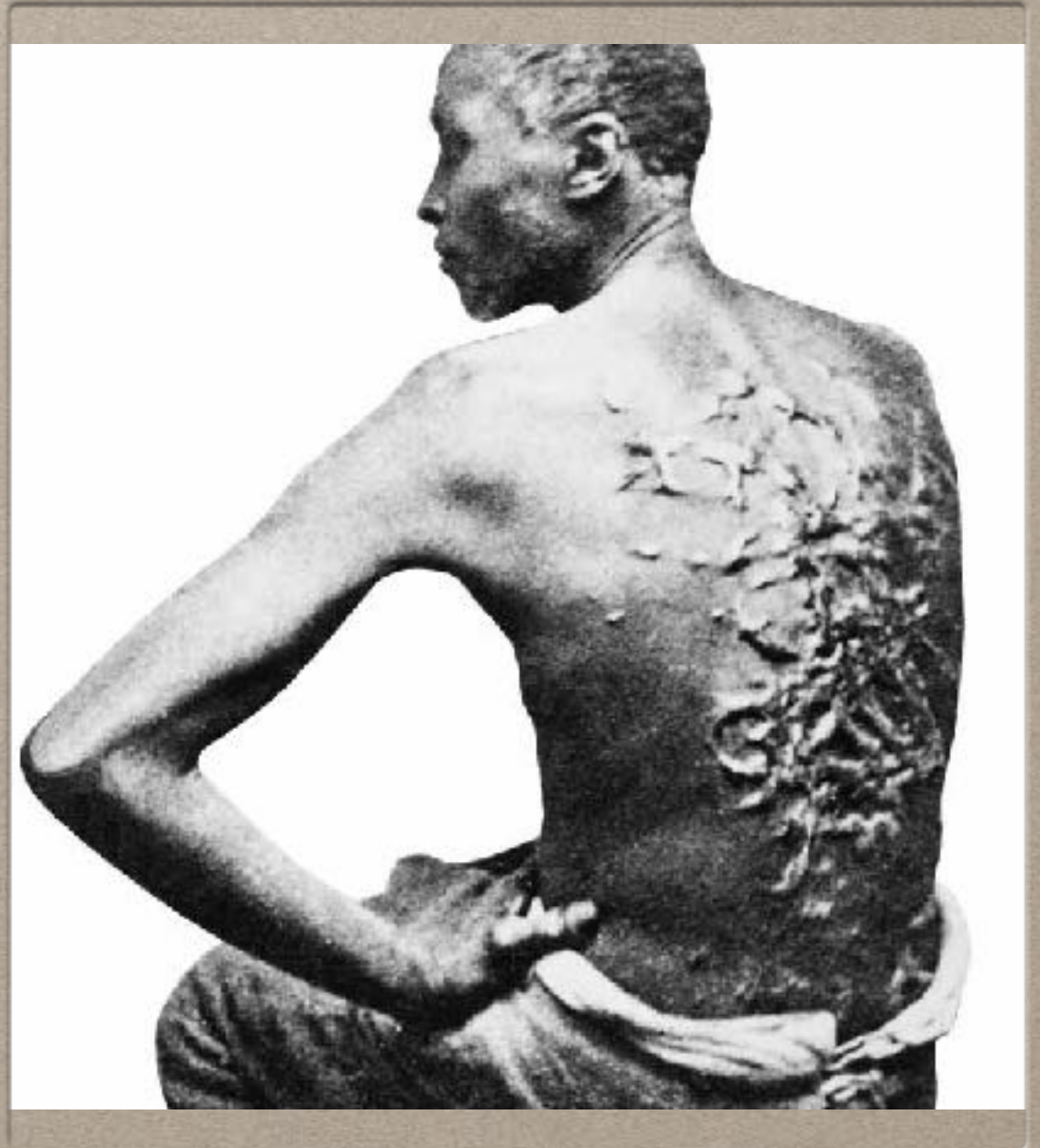


# THE TREE ON SETHE'S BACK

*Trauma*

*Body as text*

*Nature and Nurture*





- Fragmented Narrative
- Cyclical
- Temporal and spatial displacement of characters
- poetic and symbolic language
- Use of the mythical and supernatural