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**SYMBOLISM OF THE COLOUR RED IN TONI
MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND ITS ESTONIAN
TRANSLATION**

BA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison's slave narrative *Beloved* (1987) can be called a stem text of American literature and has been studied extensively. Nevertheless, the gap in research concerning the translations of *Beloved* as well as the use of symbols such as colour in the novel is apparent. Thus, this thesis examines some of the meanings of red in *Beloved* and compares the original to the Estonian translation by Krista Kaer and Kalevi Kvell *Armas* (1997). The aim is to see whether the translators' choices might influence the meaning of colour symbolics found in *Beloved* and this way have an impact on the readers' perception of the importance of the red symbols.

Previous papers analysing *Beloved* from various viewpoints are discussed in the first subsection of the literature review. As red is the colour of interest in this paper, works concerning both, the sources of red dye as well as potential meanings of the colour are examined in the second subsection. Methodology and analysis can be found in the second chapter. The phrases for empirical analysis were selected using close reading and the method applied in analysis was developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002). The English phrases and their Estonian counterparts were first analysed separately and then compared to discuss the effect of potential changes on readers' understanding of the symbols and occurring differences in the assigned value of the reds. The findings are highlighted in the conclusion of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* that was published for the first time in 1987, may henceforth be considered a stem text of American literature. *Beloved* is a slave narrative in which the troubling past of slaves manifests itself in the form of a ghost. The narrative starts with events just after the American Civil War in the state of Ohio near Cincinnati. Sethe, a young slave, who is also a mother to three children in addition to being pregnant with the fourth one, decides to escape and leave slavery behind for good. The novel follows Sethe's story 18 years after the escape when Paul D., the only other surviving slave from Sethe's plantation, appears in her yard. The setting changes as Sethe and Paul D. remember and tell fragments of their time as slaves in a plantation called Sweet Home in the state of Kentucky. As Sethe and Paul D. struggle to come to terms with their past, Paul D. finds out that Sethe murdered her infant daughter to save her from suffering the way she had in the hands of slave owners. The infant daughter, known as Beloved, comes back to the house in flesh as a 20-year-old young woman and Sethe sees an opportunity to redeem herself.

Despite Sethe's willingness to undo the past and save her daughter, Sethe fails and her other daughter Denver, the only child of Sethe who survived to adulthood, needs to guide her mother through her past to reunite her with the community and save her life. *Beloved* is a story of African Americans, who, having survived slavery and their escape to freedom, must learn to accept their past to have a future. The story is written through the eyes of slaves themselves rather than the white slave owners. The perspective switches as four main characters share their memories. In addition to the perspectives of Sethe, Paul D., Denver and Beloved, there is another, omniscient narrator who sees the inner world of each character.

As a novel that is built on a collection of motifs occurring in the memories of slaves, it has provided plenty of material for research papers and articles. Trauma, history, and

culture are doubtless the topics most thoroughly researched. Often it seems that history is intertwined with other important topics, such as culture. Culture and history are inseparable, and many authors have chosen to look at *Beloved* through returning to the roots of the African American community and their cultural heritage. Another set of topics in the *Beloved* revolves around trauma and healing. The trauma the slaves had to live with, often resulted in psychological disorders. This aspect can be viewed both in combination with other aspects, such as historical and cultural, but also analysed completely separately (see Koolish 2001).

In addition to history and trauma, previous research has focused on important symbols found in *Beloved* that add layers of meanings to the narrative (see, E.g. Terrill 2014). The concepts that acquire symbolic value in Morrison's text often represent or refer to violence and trauma, so it is hardly surprising that ethics is discussed even when it comes to the readers of *Beloved*. According to Handley (1995: 700): "The reader becomes responsible for this failure to read the gap between the living and the dead; there is no recourse to anything outside the reading experience, to anything—history, Truth—that transcends language." This failure of readers, however, is what makes the telling of and listening to *Beloved* even more important.

The importance of the topics covered in *Beloved* is globally visible, as Morrison's *Beloved* has been translated into various languages, for example Greek, Turkish, Italian, Serbian and Dutch (Goodreads n. d.), often by different translators even in one language, studies of these translations form a part of the research on *Beloved*. Papers concerning the comparison of three different Persian translations and the original (see Alinouri 2023) and the comparison of Spanish, Brazilian-Portuguese and French translations (see Martins 2023) will be discussed. Even though research concerning translating and comparing the translations of *Beloved* is there, the number of such papers is still scarce, especially taking

into consideration how many times *Beloved* has been translated into languages other than English.

Nevertheless, there is one aspect of the novel that has received less attention from scholars. That aspect is the symbolic use of colour in the novel and its multiple meanings. According to Bast (2011) the colour red is used as a symbol in the novel in multiple different ways specifically for expressing and emphasising the trauma inflicted by slavery.

Bast (2011) emphasises the need for further colour-related studies of *Beloved*, therefore, in this thesis, I will focus on the symbolic meanings the colour *red* carries in the *Beloved* and compare the original to the Estonian translation *Armas* (1997) by Krista Kaer and Kalevi Kvell. Colour semiotics is, according to Westland (2013: para. 5), the study of “meanings that colours are able to communicate.” The methodology used in this thesis is based on Kress and Van Leeuwen. To demonstrate how *colour semiotics* works Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) base their analysis on home decor and fashion related articles and show that grammar and colour have more in common than is generally thought and that colour can be viewed as a separate means for communication purposes.

I will make use of the ‘grammar of colour’ established by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002) and analyse five phrases from *Beloved* where *red* carries symbolic value and meaning that helps to create a more multi-layered and nuanced meaning in the narrative. As previous research shows a gap in both colour-related studies of *Beloved* and papers concerning the translations of the novel, I will compare the symbolics of *red* in the Estonian translation *Armas* to the original. The aim is to see how the value of *red* symbols is transferred into Estonian.

The thesis consists of an introduction, the main body which is in turn divided into two chapters: the literature review and my own analysis of the novel, followed by a conclusion. The literature review takes a closer look at the previous papers concerning

Beloved as well as provides the reader with an overview of the historical background and denotations related to *red* colour. This structure should lead me to the answer, or rather one possible answer to the question: Is there a change in the use of *red* in the Estonian translation *Armas* compared to the original *Beloved* and what are the possible implications of the translators' choices?

CHAPTER ONE: PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON *BELoved* AND THE COLOUR RED

1.1 Previous Research on *Beloved*

Morrison's *Beloved* is a complex novel discussing sensitive topics. Most often the focus of the research has been on the historical placement of this work and the trauma slavery survivors must learn to live with. Moglen (1993: 18) aims to show how Morrison changes both the way readers see the consequences of slavery on social status as well as on the psychological well-being of the slaves. This is done by looking at the history and roots through the character of "the primal mother" (Moglen 1993: 22). After discussing the different mothers and their roles in the novel, Moglen (1993: 36) concludes that the double mother figure can be perceived as the device Morrison uses to change the connection between psychological and social statuses of the slaves. Krumholz (1992: 395), similarly to Moglen (1993: 21) who states that history is in the core of her analysis, has chosen to discuss the historical healing process portrayed in *Beloved*, while intertwining it with psychology by looking at the healing of individual characters as well.

Others have chosen a different approach and studied the book with the core of their research being the historical hardships of the African American community and the traces of African culture, mostly oral traditions, in that history. Handley (1995: 679-680), for example, examines the roots of African American community to investigate the aim that this novel is meant to hopefully accomplish when it comes to the readers. Handley (1995: 681) presents a duality: slavery on one side and the roots of the whole community of African Americans in the shape of *nommo* on the other. *Nommo*, in short, is "the magic power of the word to call things into being /.../." (Handley 1995: 677). However, it is because one side of the duality that *Beloved* consists of is slavery that Handley (1995: 688) discusses ethics of reading the novel as well. Ethics of reading is in part the answer to the question of what

the readers do with the novel after they have finished reading, how they represent the history, that they themselves can never experience in any other way than through written words, to others (ibid).

Koolish (2001: 173), however, has taken a purely psychological approach to Morrison's *Beloved* and focuses on the aspects of the main characters that indicate they suffer from psychological illnesses due to their experiences as slaves. Others, such as Rushdy (1992: 576) have chosen one of the most important relationships in the book, that of a mother and daughter(s) as their focal point. Although, the characters and their relationships have been discussed by authors other than Rushdy, Rushdy's (1992: 578) approach to the mother-daughter dynamic is significant because both of Sethe's daughters, Beloved and Denver, are given a responsibility: Beloved is all about leaving the past in the past and Denver, in contrast, enforces the need to remember it. According to Rushdy (1992: 578), the two daughters are just one of the examples of double perspective in *Beloved*.

Only a few analyses of the translations of the *Beloved* exist, although it has been translated into numerous languages. Three papers that made the translations of the *Beloved* their focal point will be explored in this literature review. These three papers discuss topics from the translation process to comparisons of translations. It is, however, important to note that although these papers will be discussed here, their source is not entirely trustworthy, but other papers concerning the translations of *Beloved* could not be found.

Ho (2013: 7), who translated *Beloved* into Chinese, argues that since Morrison attempts to mimic the fragmented memory trauma victims often may experience, *Beloved* is a difficult novel to translate. Throughout his paper, Ho (2013) discusses the problems that occurred during translating *Beloved* into Chinese. The first problem, for Ho (2013: 13), was the title, as the word 'beloved' signifies a whole character in the novel and is not only an adjective, which is the case in Chinese. Despite the various hurdles Ho (2013: 23) faced

during the process of translating *Beloved* from English into Chinese, he admits that the hardest challenge was translating the monologues of the characters in the second part of the novel.

While Ho (2013) discusses the translation process of *Beloved* from the viewpoint of being the translator, Martins (2023: 2) looks at the choices four translators of *Beloved* have made and how French, Brazilian-Portuguese, and Spanish versions of Morrison's *Beloved* are impacted. Martins (2023: 4) views the comparisons of the original and the three translated versions of *Beloved* as a conversation. While concluding the paper, he (Martins 2023: 9) briefly comments that all the translators, despite the strategies they have chosen, work on pragmatic, semantic, syntactic levels of the text to ensure that the chosen translation strategy is realised to its potential.

Similarly to Martins (2023), Alinouri (2023: 118) discusses the choices translators have made while translating *Beloved*, but she looks at three different Persian translations. Contrary to Martins (2023), Alinouri (2023: 125) determines that all three Persian translators have chosen domestication as their strategy.

It is hard to say what is the cause of the lack of published academic papers when it comes to the translations of *Beloved*, but as this thesis looks at the Estonian translation of *Beloved*, it is necessary to have an overview of works related to other translations. That being said, the papers discussed here do not analyse the colour aspect of the novel and its role in translation.

Translations are not, however, the only field of research, where a gap can be seen concerning *Beloved*. Bast (2011: 1069) suggests that colour has a significant, but underestimated role in this stem text. While focusing on how Morrison has used the colour to express and visualise the extent of trauma inflicted on the characters, Bast (ibid) notes that a similar study has not yet been done on Morrison's *Beloved*. While concluding his paper,

Bast (2011: 1082) emphasises that red is used on multiple levels to reconstruct the traumatic events and free the victims from their burden. Bast's (2011) findings of red on multiple levels in *Beloved* are significant proof of *red's* importance in *Beloved*.

Symbols used in *Beloved* have been discussed to various extents. Terrill (2014: 133) discusses the trees and their role as symbols in *Beloved* and the shift in what these trees symbolise. According to Terrill (2014: 142) the trees regain at least some of their positive value towards the end of the novel, with the banishing of Beloved (2014: 144).

As this thesis concentrates on the *red* symbols in *Beloved*, the second subtopic of the literature review will be dedicated to the history of *red*. This forms a base for my own analysis of *red's* meanings in *Beloved*. To successfully combine *Beloved*, translations and colour into this thesis, the next subsection will provide an overview of how and where *red* has historically been found.

1.2 The Colour Red

Red is a colour that has had various meanings throughout Western cultural history. It can symbolise life, birth, fire, fertility, and blood (Phipps 2010: 5) as well as wealth, status (Phipps 2010: 26), danger (Wreschner et al 1980: 633) and beauty (Hemming 2012: 323).

From this array of various examples, it is apparent that *red* has always been valuable. According to Phipps (2010: 5), the value of red may to some extent lie in the history of obtaining the colour which was notoriously difficult. The sources of the *red* pigments or *hues*, in other words "the different colours themselves" (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 351) come in many forms and some of these sources have had more value than others.

One of the most valuable sources for red were different insects. Authors like Phipps (2010: 8) mention the important role these insects had in obtaining colour. Out of these insects, the American cochineal seemed to have the most value since the dye obtained was

“permanent bright red” (Bucklow 2016: 30). The cloth dyed with cochineals was expensive as the price of the dye exceeded the price of the actual original garment itself (ibid). The value of these insects was so high that it was traded by Europeans to various countries outside Europe (Bucklow 2016: 31).

Aside from insects, other ways of producing red included obtaining it from plants. Mostly, red was obtained from plants collectively known as Madder that were slightly easier to obtain and the dyeing process took place in peoples’ homes. (Bucklow 2016: 47). Processed insects and plants were not the earliest sources of red: both yellow and red were sourced from ochre. Wreschner et al (1980: 632) note that the use of ochre in burials was increasing in Europe during the Mesolithic period, replacing shells and bones whereas McNeill (1972: 24) mentions the use of both red and yellow ochre in Navaho art. Ochre was widely used around the world and valued for an extended period, however only certain minerals “almost magically” changed colour when combined with fire (Bucklow 2016: 65).

The reason why *red* was so important from early on is hard to pinpoint. Wreschner et al (1980: 632) admit that it is not known whether red ochre was connected to blood in the Stone Age. Later Wreschner et al (1980: 633) note that in more contemporary, but still non-literate cultures the connections between the colour red or red ochre and life, for example, have been distinguished. The example shows that where a colour is found, might be the basis on which it is connected to the meaning of it.

As was mentioned before, *red* as a colour has many different meanings and these meanings often depend on the role the colour has for certain groups of people. According to Hemming (2012: 312), in European cultural landscape *red* is often associated with the ambivalent idea of sexual maturity, while authors like Phipps (2010: 45) point out that “/.../ the colour red /.../ denoted both luxury and sensuality /.../”, both, agreeing with Hemming (2012) and adding an important concept signified by the *red*: wealth and status. This is

exemplified by the fact that in the Roman Empire, for example “For the higher ranks, purple reigned /.../” (Elliott 2008: 181).

Among the associations that *red* carries, aside of sexual and status-related, is the association to blood. The association to blood may seem obvious since blood is typically *red*, but Hemming (2012: 317) argues that *red* is not necessarily a noteworthy colour because of blood. Others as well, point out that the use of *red* and the importance of it may not have always been connected to blood. In some cultures, for example in China, *red* denotes happiness (Phipps 2010: 40) and in Israel there are communities where marriage is celebrated by women wearing *red* dresses (Wreschner et al 1980: 633).

There is an aspect, other than associations to *red* and what it symbolises: colour names. McNeill (1972: 26) claims that in the English language, many colour names have been derived from the names of other objects and these objects, more often than not, are things we encounter and use on the daily basis. Among the examples given are salmon from fish and cherry from fruits (ibid). McNeill (1972: 27) continues by listing some examples of words that are all used to mark red, examples include crimson and maroon. The connection between everyday items and the naming of colours is perhaps not very surprising. These items all have a colour to them that bears resemblance to the colour named after them.

Names given to the colours, in turn, do have a significant role in what associations and symbolics are connected to the colours. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 363) discuss the significance that colour names have in advertisements of clothing: the name ‘myrtle’ brings forward the associations with something exotic and desirable while other names, like ‘plum’ connect to different words, concepts, and fields of meanings.

However, meanings and symbolic values that we attribute to colours are constructed and engraved in colours over time, not something the colours have “inherited”. Elliott (2008: 175) investigates how the meanings have been engraved into the colour purple, thus giving

the colour a communicative value. Although purple was known significantly earlier, Elliott (2008: 181) notes that it was in the second century, when the importance of purple colour started to show in a structured manner. In addition, Elliott (2008: 182) points out that beside the physical source of purple, theory that colour is a function of whatever it is found on, has had a significant influence as well.

As can be seen from this literature review, *red* has been a significant colour for humans for a very long time. The colour symbolises a wide selection of characteristics that differ for communities and even for individuals. The meaning of colour is often connected to where, when, and how the colour was encountered. The question 'where?' and the names of colours, specifically have an important role in my own analysis of *red* found in *Beloved* as well as in the Estonian translation *Armas*.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Methodology

According to Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2002: 350) colour may be viewed as a *semiotic mode*, as a means for communication. They establish certain features of colour and divide these features into two categories according to the effect these features have on people when they interact with colours (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 355). The first is called *association* (ibid). In that case, the meaning of a certain colour depends on the context around the colour: where it was found, what are the connections of this colour to history, community etc.

The second type of affordances consists of six features every colour has. These features are represented as scales: *hue*, a scale that contains all colour shades (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 357), *saturation*, that is the brightness of a colour (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 356), *value*, the scale from lightness to darkness (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 355), *purity*, that determines the level to which colour has been mixed (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 356). The last two scales are: *modulation* that is concerned with the texture of a colour (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 356-357) and *differentiation*, which is the variety of colours in use (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 357).

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 354), “/.../ any colour can clearly be associated with different sources or carriers of that colour.” The question ‘Where?’ will therefore help limit the number of connections the *red* in *Beloved* can be a part of through establishing a context and allow for more focused further analysis of the five selected instances. The authors (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 358-366) demonstrate how meaning is derived from colour by analysing different images as well as text and highlighting how the colour signifies different qualities and ideas through combinations of these features. This means that the method is not designed to analyse literature and might make it more difficult

to apply to a text without an image next to it. In case of analysing literature, the colouring of the symbols cannot be seen, but only imagined. As *Beloved* is a text without an image attached to it, it is important to remember that every reader imagines a different visual in different colours when reading the text. Thus, the interpretation of colour in *Beloved* cannot be generalised to a broader readership.

In this thesis, the phrases chosen, contain an important symbol that adds layers to the narrative. Each phrase contains a notion of the colour *red* which amplifies the significance of the colour in this novel. To choose the phrases I used the close reading method, focusing on instances where red was mentioned or implied to in the novel. The next step was examining the context around the phrase and whether the symbol in this phrase is recurring or not and what value does it have. The symbols are connected to characters and to each other, becoming a web that forms the base of Morrison's narrative. Most of the phrases containing these symbols occur in different contexts throughout the narrative. In addition, the Estonian translation was considered when selecting the phrases.

As Terrill (2014: 137) notes: "In many ways, Sethe's chokecherry scar is emblematic of the jungle planted in all slaves by their white masters /.../." The jungle is the wildness in slaves that has the power of driving them insane, the chokecherry tree on Sethe's back being the only visible part of that jungle and therefore symbolising the hardships of slaves throughout the whole book and becoming the core of the narrative. Terrill (2014: 138) continues: "Beloved's murder was a result of the whitefolks jungle that Schoolteacher and his pupils planted in her mother, both physically, with the chokecherry scar that convinced Sethe she would never return south, and mentally, with Sethe's self-destructive animalistic behaviour." The connection of the murdered baby to the jungle and the chokecherry makes *red* the prominent colour in the whole narrative, which is the main reason why *red* is the colour that will be examined in this thesis.

The different tones of *red* may have different meanings as a result of various combinations of the features mentioned by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002). Both, the original phrases, and their Estonian counterparts will be analysed and then compared.

2.2 Empirical Analysis of The Example Phrases from *Beloved*

2.2.1 The Chokecherry Tree

The “chokecherry tree” (18) *Prunus virginiana*/ translation: “*toomingas*” (20) *Prunus padus* is a recurring symbol throughout the whole slave narrative. The tree is first mentioned on page 18 in the original¹, after Denver has pointed out to Paul D that her and her mother’s life in their house has become intolerable. “I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms.” (18). The tree describes the injury to Sethe’s back, and is repeated throughout the entire narrative, signifying the fact that however extreme the physical injuries of slaves were, their emotional scars were worse. From there, Paul D. interrogates Sethe until Sethe elaborates on the injury that resulted in the “tree” growing on her back.

“Whitegirl. That’s what she called it. I’ve never seen it and never will. But that’s what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Could have cherries too now for all I know.” (18)

The tree becomes a symbol that is present throughout the entire narrative. The bark of chokecherry is scaly and grey-toned, while the young leaves may be reddish-green and branches reddish brown (Hilty 2020: para. 1). The berries of chokecherry can appear in a range of red shades when mature (ibid). The appearance of the bark and the berries alone provide an explanation as to why Morrison may have chosen a chokecherry to be compared to Sethe’s back injury scar. In addition, according to Hilty (ibid) “While Chokecherry is easily top-killed by fire, it is able to resprout from its root system with little difficulty.” This

¹ The English version *Beloved* used in this thesis is not the original, but the edition that was reissued in Vintage in 2016.

is almost a parallel to Sethe, as a former slavegirl, who has had to endure various horrors as a slave but survived.

These horrors have resulted in injuries that, naturally, can be bloody. Bast (2011: 1072), after mentioning several examples from the novel, including the tree that refers to Sethe's injury, states: "Throughout the entire novel /.../ red is used to clearly mark and even amplify the occurrences of slavery's painful influence on its victims /.../." The *red*, in case of the chokecherry, is present in the form of possible "cherries" (18) on the tree that grows from Sethe's back, and in the tree trunk, as noted by Amy Denver, the white girl, who came to Sethe's aid: "It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk-it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got a mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms." (93)

Although chokecherry as it is, does not usually evoke a connection to blood and violence, by the end of this novel, it has become a clear symbol of the latter. This may be caused by the first type of affordances that Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 355) attribute to colours, called association. In this case, the encounter of colour evokes the question of "where we have seen it before" (ibid) and, thus, as the tree is mentioned throughout the novel as a consequence of violence, the chokecherry, and the notions of the colour *red* around it are associated to blood, injuries, and scars. This association is strengthened by Baby Suggs, who, without any knowledge of the "tree", sees "roses of blood" (109) on the blanket that covers Sethe's back, meaning that it was still heavily bleeding a while after Amy helped her deliver Denver in the boat.

The equivalent of chokecherry in the Estonian translation is *toomingas*, which is first mentioned on page 20. As in the original, the context surrounding it is Paul D. wanting to know more about the tree on Sethe's back:

"Valge tüdruk. Ta nimetas seda puuks. Ma pole ise seda näinud ega saagi kunagi näha. Ta ütles, et see on puu moodi. Toominga moodi. Sel olla tüvi ja oksad ja isegi lehed. Tillukesed toomingalehed. Aga see oli kaheksateist aastat tagasi. Nüüd on võib-olla marjadki külge tulnud." (20).

According to Hilty, (2020: para. 8) “The native Chokecherry is very similar in appearance to an /.../ Eurasian species that is /.../ Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*).”, which might be a reason why the translators chose *toomingas* as their equivalent. The berries of the bird cherry are black as opposed to *red*, but the trunk has many branches to it and is grey in colour (bio.edu n. d.), which is similar to the chokecherry. The lack of *red* colour in the translated version is apparent as the possible berries on the tree have not been translated with a colour reference added to them as in the original but have been referred to simply as “*marjad*” (20).

Despite the lesser amount of *red*, this choice of *toomingas* made by the translators means that other aspects of the injury are highlighted. For example, the texture of Sethe’s skin as a consequence of that injury and the way in which the injury affects most of Sethe’s back as the trunk of *Prunus padus* normally has many spreading branches to it. However, it would be wrong to claim that the colour *red* and thus the association to blood is not present in the Estonian version of the tree on Sethe’s back: “See on puu, Lu. Toomingas. Siin, näed, on tüvi - punane ja laialt lõhki ja mahla täis, siit aga hargnevad oksad. Sellel on palju-palju oksti. Näib, et palju lehti ka, ja ma võin pea anda, et need siin on õied.” (75)

The injury is described with the words “*punane*”, “*laialt lõhki*” and “*mahla täis*” (75), which refer to blood and the amount of blood as in the original. Additional *red* is added, in the form of “*punased vereroosid*” (88) which are seen by Baby Suggs.

As the colour *red* is not intertwined in the species of the tree nor in the fruit of the tree in the Estonian language the description does not emphasise the blood and its *red* colour as much as the original one does. The injury is still *red* and bloody, but other features of the “tree” are emphasised as well, for example the leaves - “*palju-palju lehti*” (75), which might refer to the nature of differences in the texture of Sethe’s skin, for example welts. The

Estonian version builds the significance of the injury “tree” on the physical features of *Prunus padus*, rather than on the colour of these features. The tree being a chokecherry in original, *red* is present as cherries that are usually thought of as *red*, despite, the berries not being actual cherries. The *red* is present in the Estonian version nevertheless, and as the tree is mentioned repeatedly throughout the whole narrative, the possibility of asking the question “ ‘where we have seen it before’ ” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 355), is still there and the value of the colour *red* is still likely to be similar to that in the original.

2.2.2 The Red Gums of Snakes

“The red gums” (234)/ translation: “*punane suu*” (180) is, contrary to other phrases analysed in this thesis, not a recurring one in the novel. While describing the way white people see the coloured, Stamp Paid describes the jungle that, for them, grew inside every black individual despite their appearance: “Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood.” (234)

The jungle symbolises the side of them that stays wild and dangerous despite everything. The jungle is connected to Sethe’s tree-shaped scar as well. According to Terrill (2014: 137) the jungle is represented through the scar(s) on Sethe’s back. The jungle has different fauna in it, including snakes that sleep, but still have *red gums*. These may be *red* because gums normally have pinkish or reddish hue to them naturally, but also because the snakes have just finished eating something and their gums are covered with the blood of their prey. In *Beloved* that is the blood of white people.

The slave owners are afraid that the jungle will start growing in themselves as well, resulting in them becoming wicked and those *red gums* taking over their bodies. As can be seen from multiple incidents, such as the burning of Sixo where the slave catchers were not trying to kill Sixo. They did not want the blood of the black people on their hands despite

seeing them as livestock that can work and earn money for them. “The fire keeps failing and the whitemen are put out with themselves at not being prepared for this emergency. They came to capture not kill.” (266) Whites are afraid that if they treat the coloured too bad, they themselves become as wild as their slaves are.

The snakes, and specifically their gums in the jungle are the symbol of the repressed side of slaves that can cause them eventually to fight against the power of slave owners. The *red* of the gums of these snakes has a value attached to it - danger. That indicates a difference in the combination of features, used to embed meaning into this *red*. As according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 355): “/.../ [T]hese features [are] not /.../ merely distinctive, /.../ merely serving to distinguish different colours from each other, but also /.../ meaning potentials.” So, although the question “ ‘where we have seen it before’ ” (ibid) may have a similar answer to that in the case of the chokecherry - something related to blood, this *red* likely has a different level of saturation since, as Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 356) have noted on saturation: “Its key affordance lies in its ability to express emotive ‘temperatures’/.../.” The gums of snakes are potentially a brighter *red* as saturation is “a scale that runs from maximum intensity of feeling to maximally subdued, /.../, indeed neutralized feeling.” (ibid), to signify the extent of slave owners’ fear.

“Valged uskusid, et olgu neegril kui tahes head kombes, on tema tumeda naha all ikkagi dzungel. Kärestikuliste mittelaevatavate jõgede, liaanidel kiikuvate kisavate paavianide, tukkuvate madudega, kelle *punane suu* on valmis nende, valgete heledat verd nautima.” (180)

In the Estonian version, the mouths of the snakes, that, for whites, represent the wild side of their slaves, are less threatening. The general term *suu* does not indicate bleeding as it is not directly connected to teeth that may draw blood. The context surrounding this phrase, for example the use of the word *tukkuvate* instead of *magavate* to denote the snakes’ sleeping, might render the snakes from a dangerous creature to something more harmless, which decreases the level of presumed danger to the slave owners. *Suu* is something that is used for a wide array of activities, not all of which are potentially harmful. Contrary to gums,

which hold in place teeth that are used to destroy the food item. Therefore, despite the snakes being thirsty for the blood of whites in the translation as well, the symbolic value of this phrase decreases.

The symbol itself, although not occurring repeatedly, is an important one as it helps the reader understand the situation and feelings of the slave owners. However, the understanding must happen through the eyes of a former slave, who managed to escape. In the original, the use of gums instead of a mouth paired with the adjective *red* not only adds some additional *red* colour to this symbol, but the connection to blood is easier to form. This is important as the jungle as an image occurs only once and, thus the snake remains just another creature in the translation and the meaning of this jungle with its red-gummed snakes is harder to realise when reading the novel.

2.2.3 The Red Heart of Paul D.

Paul D.'s "red heart" (86) / translation: *punane süda* (109) is an important symbol throughout the narrative. It is often described as just Paul D.'s "red heart" (86), or else referred to as a "tobacco tin" (86). "He would keep the rest where it belonged: in that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be." (86).

The red heart of Paul D may often be described just as *red*, but the value it carries is different from other *red* symbols analysed in this thesis. Again, the feature of saturation is important, as it helps to express feelings (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 356). That may signal of Paul D.'s efforts to build an armour around his heart, thus losing its *red* quality that could be interpreted as loss of love. Admitting that this armour is "where [his] red heart used to be." (86) indicates that it is not as if Paul D. is incapable of loving, but rather his experiences as a slave have made loving intolerable for him.

The heart of Paul D. is a symbol that, unlike others, keeps changing throughout the whole narrative and therefore, has various symbolic values attached to it. When Paul D.

admits that in the beginning there is “/.../ no red heart bright as Mister’s comb beating in him.” (86) then after an unexpected sexual encounter with Beloved he is chanting “Red heart. Red heart. Red heart.” (138) and through that encounter, the change in the symbolic meaning of this heart has started as Paul D. considers, perhaps, loving again. This repetition of the adjective *red* may be a device Morrison uses to emphasise the intensity of Paul D.-s love prior to being a slave. The repetition is used again, when in a conversation between Stamp and Paul D. “the loss of a red, red heart” (277) is mentioned. Furthermore, other than comparing the heart to a rooster’s comb one time (86) and using the adjective bright or repetition to describe its qualities, the colour is described with only the word *red* in the original.

In the Estonian version the hue of the *red* colour changes when the heart is described. The heart is first mentioned on page 70. “Ülejäänut tuleks tal hoida seal, kus on selle koht: tema rinnus tubakatoosis, kus kunagi oli olnud punane süda.” (70) While the phrase is often translated into *punane süda* in Estonian and the device of repetition is used as well, there are a few instances, when the adjective that describes the colour of the heart is not simply *red*. For example, when “the loss of a red, red heart” (277) turns into “tulipunase südame kaotus” (212) in Estonian.

The mention of fire, that is *tuli* in the Estonian version might make it feel like the *red* of the heart is vibrant but has a slight hint of orange in it as well that is not present in the original. When Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 364) discuss the significance and meaning of colour names, they note that “Each of these names brings with it the meanings of the domain from which it derives for the namer of the colour.” This, and the change in the purity of the colour *red*, means that symbolic value of Paul D.-s heart may change as well - from intense love, signified by the *red* heart when it was first mentioned to a heart that carries

with it a burning passion, because it may be assumed that the tint of fire in Paul D's heart saturates the colour of it.

This is a symbol that through translating has gained another layer to its already multifaceted meaning. The most noteworthy difference is that in the original, the repetition of the adjective *red* is used to emphasise the brightness of Paul D.'s heart as it opens again, and he becomes vulnerable after years of shielding his heart in order to survive. The *red* heart in the original is once again open both to love and to bleed when Paul D.'s feelings are hurt. In Estonian, the same kind of effect is achieved using different *reds* that have various levels of saturation and purity. According to McNeill (1972: 27) in the English language as well there are various *reds*: “/.../ red, rubicund, russet, auburn, crimson, carmine, scarlet, vermillion, maroon, and many others /.../.” The repetition of the adjective *red* in case of Paul D's heart, however, may be a choice made by Morrison during the writing process to keep the narrative as colourless as possible.

2.2.4 The Red Comb of Mister the Rooster

The rooster named Mister was mentioned throughout the narrative when Paul D. remembered the hardships he faced as a slave. First mentioning of the rooster is on page 85. While he himself was described as “smiling” (125), “bloody” and “evil” (85), the comb of Mister was “as big as [Paul D.'s] hand and some kind of red” (85). The bright comb is compared to Paul D.'s *red* heart (86) as well as is the one detail that Paul D. constantly remembers when thinking about the rooster. The *red* comb, for Paul D., seems to symbolise freedom that he himself did not have. This is different from other *red* symbols that signify the violence the slaves had to endure.

To distinguish this *red* from others, the feature of colour that is modified is the purity, as hybridity may be a positive quality (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002: 356) and purity is perhaps combined with the value of modulation, which is supported by the notion that “/.../

modulated colour is specific colour /.../.” (2002: 357). In case of Mister’s comb, the positive quality marked by hybridity would be freedom, although, at the time of his encounter with Mister, Paul D. is anything, but free. Nevertheless, Mister’s taunting appearance may have been a reason, why Paul D. finally managed to escape as it gave him some motivation. Since there are many notions of colours that can be classified on the spectrum of *red* in *Beloved*, modulation is necessary to embed the meaning of freedom in that specific, although nameless *red*.

However, Bast (2011: 1072) points out that Mister is linked to the colour *red* twice. Mister, being described as “bloody” and “evil” (85) leaves almost no doubt that he simultaneously carries freedom in his comb and bloodshed in his personality.

In the Estonian version Mister is described as “*muigav*” (100), “*verejanuline*” ja “*tige*” (69) and his comb as: “suur nagu [Paul D.] kämmal ja isemoodi punane” (69). It indicates that although Mister’s comb was clearly red, the colouring cannot be pinned down and given a specific name. The value attributed to the *red* of Mister’s comb is evident in the translated version as well as the more sinister value that is embedded into Mister’s “*red*” personality. The scales of modulation and purity can be applied to the symbol in the translation as in the original version.

The value given to the comb of rooster in both, the original and the translation is evident when Paul D. explicitly connects the rooster to freedom. “Mister, he looked so ... free. Better than me. Stronger, tougher.” (86). In Estonian: “Mister näis nii ... vabana. Minust paremana. Tugevamana, sitkemana.” (69). This connection of Mister to freedom or *vabadus* is one of the more positive values attributed to *red* throughout the whole narrative and it is unanimously understandable in both the original and the Estonian translation. His secondary connection to blood is present as well, but it seems that his main symbolic value is that of freedom as it is mainly in focus.

2.2.5 The Pink Tombstone of Beloved

The pink tombstone of Beloved is first mentioned on page 5 when the tombstone Sethe chose for Beloved is described as “pink as a fingernail and sprinkled with glittering chips” (5). The tombstone is important because the pink tone of it was the last colour besides that of blood that Sethe remembered after she ended the life of her infant daughter. However, it seems that sometimes Sethe remembers the colour of the “pink gravestone chips” (47) even more vividly than that of the stone itself. The pink of these chips, however, is not specified like the tone of the tombstone as a whole is. This might be because the narration style of *Beloved* is similar to a fragmented memory. When Sethe thinks about how she has been colourblind since the murder of her daughter, she mentions that the “pinkish tone of her headstone” (237) was the last colour she knew. It seems then that she means the fingernail colour of the headstone. Possibly because the headstone reminds Sethe of the death of her child, the qualities of its colour come to her in turns, like the guilt and regret that overwhelm her in waves.

The Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 356) scales that could be used to describe the pink are modulation that refers to the texture of colour, “the different shades and tints” and perhaps differentiation, which for Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002: 357) does not have a positive value when on the lower side of the scale. In the case of Beloved’s tombstone too, low differentiation does not have a positive value as it signifies death, loss, and guilt.

In the Estonian translation the stone itself is coloured pink as a fingernail. “Kivi oli küüneroosat värvi.” (10) and it seems uncertain whether Sethe remembers the stone or its pink chips which are referred to as “roosad hauakivikillud” (40). Something that differs from the original slightly, however, is the certainty of the tone of the entire headstone, which in Estonian has been translated into “hauakivi roosa toon” (182) signalling certainty that is not present in the original.

However, in both cases, the effect of a fading world of colours that Sethe experiences after the murder is present as her world goes from *red* to pink to colourless. The original colouring of the stone might add more uncertainty, but the overall value ascribed to that pink tone- death, shock, and guilt, is present, nevertheless. The colours start to fade as Sethe starts to shut down and removes herself from the world in both, the Estonian version and the original.

The findings of this analysis show that there are doubtless differences in how red is used in the *Beloved* and in its Estonian translation. These changes, in some cases, might influence the readers' perception of the symbols' meanings. The differences in the use of colour names or in the emphasis on features other than colour, for example, may have an impact on how the readers visualise the text in their head. That being said, the broader ideas these symbols carry, remain similar to the original ones.

CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a slave narrative that has been thoroughly researched from historical and psychological perspectives, yet the use of red colour in the novel has scarcely been discussed. Furthermore, despite having been translated into many languages, papers concerning translations of *Beloved* are basically non-existent. For that reason, this thesis aimed to investigate the possible changes that may have occurred during the process of translating *Beloved* from English into Estonian, focusing on five phrases containing red. An overview of papers concerning *Beloved* showed that due to the themes of the novel being sensitive, responsibility is the keyword. Authors of both, papers related to the original (eg. Handley 1995) and translations (Martins 2023; Ho 2013) emphasise the responsibility that comes with either translating or reading *Beloved*.

For the analysis, the five most significant phrases that used red as a symbol were selected and analysed and compared to the Estonian translations. Using the method developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2002), the red in each phrase and in its Estonian equivalent was examined and a possible meaning attached to it before discussing in a comparative manner. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2002) method was not designed for analysing literature, therefore, applying it to the text without visuals in order to study the changes in the meanings of red was, at times, complicated. Nevertheless, the findings show that although red is used to express trauma in *Beloved*, as mentioned in the one colour-related former study of the novel (Bast 2011), not all meanings of red symbols in *Beloved* are necessarily negative.

The meanings of red symbols addressed in this thesis vary from blood and violence to passion and freedom. Each symbol has a different engraved meaning that could likely be expressed by changing the red colouring of the carrier of that colour if the symbols were visualised.

However, since *Beloved* is only a text where colour is rather often expressed only by the most generic *red*, the interpretation of its various meanings depended largely on the context surrounding each symbol, supporting the theory that the meaning of a colour depends on where it is found (Elliott 2008; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2002).

The question Where? helped to establish whether the value of the red was positive or negative and based on the context Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2002) scales were used to assign a combination of values that helped to express meanings. Even though most symbols were used to signify something negative, as expected, there were a few instances where the meaning of a symbol changed as the narrative progressed or there was a duality of meanings in one red symbol throughout the narrative – a positive and a negative both. For example, the red in the gums of the snakes denoted danger, while the red in rooster's comb signified freedom.

What concerns the choices of translators and their impact on the meaning of these *red* symbols, it is important to note that the changes were there. For example, the choice of *suu* instead of *igemed* when describing the snakes, might make the importance of the symbol's red quality less obvious to the reader as it is only mentioned once in the novel. Despite this, and other choices in wording or emphasis that affected the presumed hue of *red* of these symbols, the general importance of these symbols was transferred from one language into another rather well.

The work of translators has an impact on the readers' interpretation of the text, however with colour in focus, it is especially important to remember that without images in the text, preferably colour photographs, the colour of what is described in the text is dependent on the individual reader's imagination and can vary from person to person. In this case, the choices of translators might have a slightly smaller role in how the readers sees the

colour, regardless of what colour names or literary devices are used to describe it on paper.

The true colour of the red symbol, in case of *Beloved*, is known only to the author.

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RESÜMEE

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ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

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Symbolism of the Colour Red in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Punase värviga seotud sümbolism Toni Morrisoni novellis "Beloved"

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Annotatsioon:

Selle bakalaureusetöö eesmärgiks oli punase värviga seotud sümbolite tähenduse ja võimalikke erinevuste uurimine Toni Morrisoni novellis "Beloved" ja võrdlus eestikeelse tõlkega "Armas" (1997), et näha, kas punase värvi tähendus erinevates sümbolites muutub tõlkjate valikute tulemusel ja hinnata tekkinud muutuste võimalikku mõju lugemiskogemusele. Originaal ilmus aastal 1987, kuid antud töös kasutatakse 2016. aastal ilmunud versiooni. Töö koosneb sissejuhatusest, kus tehakse kokkuvõtte "Beloved" sisust, töö eesmärgist ja lühike ülevaade eelnevatest uurimustest seoses "Beloved"-iga, mis juhatab sisse kirjanduse ülevaate.

Kirjanduse ülevaate esimeses osas antakse põhjalikum ülevaade novelliga seotud uurimustega kaetud erinevatest vaatenurkadest: psühholoogia, ajaloo, kultuuri, eetika ja sümbolismiga seotud töödest. Kuna "Beloved" on orjanarrativ, siis orjandusega seotud traumast ning selle perioodi ajaloolisest tähtsusest aafrika ameeriklaste eludes on rohkesti töid, kuid "Beloved"-i tõlkeid ja ka värvi kasutust novellis ei ole palju uuritud. Kirjanduse ülevaate teine osa käsitleb punase värvi ajalugu ja tähendusi puudutavaid töid, mis juhatab sisse empiirilise analüüsi. Metoodika eelneb analüüsile ja selles sektsioonis defineeritakse ka vajalikud värviga seotud terminid.

Analüüsitavad viis fraasi, mis sisaldavad sümboleid, valiti lähilugemise meetodit kasutades ja seejärel rakendati meetodit, mis on välja töötatud sisekujunduse uurimiseks (Kress ja Van Leeuwen 2002). Valitud sümbolite punase värvi tähendus tõlgentati sümbolit ümbritseva konteksti abil ning punastele omistatavate erinevate tähenduste leidmiseks rakendati eelmainitud meetodit. Nii inglise- kui eestikeelseid fraase analüüsiti eraldi ning seejärel võrreldi omavahel, et leida võimalikud erisused ja anda ülevaade nendest tulenevatest võimalikest mõjutustest lugejatele.

Tulemused kinnitasid, et igal punasel sümbolil on erinev tähendus, hoolimata ühisest värvinimest, mida kirjeldamiseks kasutatakse. Enamasti on tähendus negatiivne, kuid leidub ka erandeid. Samuti selgus, et kuigi tõlkijate valikute tõttu oli sümbolite kirjeldustes märgatavaid erisusi, mis võivad lugejate arusaama või ettekujutust mõjutada, anti ideed üldiselt siiski hästi edasi. Antud tulemuste puhul on oluline meeles pidada, et iga inimene kujutab värvi ette erinevalt ning seetõttu pole ka võimalik olla kindel, et ettekujutatav punane kõigile samasugune välja näeb, kuna "Beloved"-i puhul on tegemist tekstiga, mis ei sisalda visuaale.

Märksõnad: Toni Morrison, Beloved, Armas, värvisemiootika, punane, sümbolism

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