

THE GENRE OF MAGIC REALISM IN TONY MORISSON'S NOVEL "BELOVED"

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Abstract. In Tony Morrison's novel *Beloved*, magic realism acts as a counter to the dominant and destructive Euro-centric narratives of a society, which silences the voices of the oppressed. The ghost-figure *Beloved* works as an intensification of 'magic' and a representation of the 'past' and 'trauma' in the novel. The present study delves into how magic realism highlights and then resolves trauma, otherwise repressed in the mind of the protagonist.

Key words: magic realism, trauma, plot, personage, novelist, dominant.

Magical realism which originated as a Latin-American and Caribbean narrative strategy focuses on the handling of trauma generated by the politics and power dynamics of colonized societies and the resulting divisions. It works as a bridge between various binaries like the dominant and the depressed and the center and the margins. It is a tool used by writers like Toni Morrison to highlight the loss of voice and identity when faced with terrible trauma, in the context of the horrific experiences of slavery faced by many African-Americans.

Toni Morrison is a Nobel Prize- and Pulitzer Prize- winning American novelist. Among her best known novels are *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*. The 1987 novel, "*Beloved*", won the Pulitzer Prize and led to Nobel Prize for Literature.

Beloved is based on fact, which makes it all that much more horrifying. Morrison's inspiration for the story was Margaret Garner, who killed her two-year-old daughter in 1856, to keep her from being returned to slavery. Before she could kill the rest of her children and herself, slave catchers pried the knife from her fingers. On the backbone of this gruesome story, Morrison builds *Beloved*, a novel of a baby who haunts the mother who killed her [3].

The style of narration

The story unfolds through a constantly changing lens, giving voice to a wide array of characters, including the dead and those barely clinging to life. Each character offers their unique perspective, contributing to the overall narrative. For example, Paul D and Sethe's individual flashbacks intertwine in Chapter 2, creating a merged memory. Furthermore, the narrative briefly adopts the perspectives of four white individuals, exposing the deeply ingrained biases of men who view enslaved people with callous disregard, considering them akin to domesticated beasts. This range of viewpoints creates a complex, multifaceted view that depicts individuals linked, through past traumas or present realities, into a unified community.

Most readers will immediately notice the unconventional structure of "*Beloved*". Eschewing a linear narrative, the novel weaves together different time periods, from the horrors of the slave ship to the relative safety of Sweet Home, all impacting the present. The past is revealed through flashbacks, stories, and direct narration, often blurring the lines between then and now with a striking use of present tense. The novel is built from fragments, challenging the reader to assemble the shattered pieces. This deliberate juxtaposition of past and present emphasizes the past's continuing power. By forcing active participation, Morrison prompts readers to thoughtfully consider the meaning and worth of each fragment. Her artistry, particularly her use of verse and stream of consciousness when most effective, is breathtaking. Recognizing that simple storytelling cannot fully express human feeling, she captures those feelings in landmark passages of modern literature.

The elements of magical realism in the novel

In Morrison's *Beloved*, the title character is not a typical spectral figure. Despite being interpreted as a re-embodiment of Sethe's deceased daughter, *Beloved* is presented as a person of flesh and blood. While the novel becomes increasingly mystical and mysterious after her arrival, she isn't the source of this supernatural feeling. Instead, elements like the number given to the house, 124, and Sethe's relationship with it create a foreboding, dense atmosphere. 124 is

portrayed as more than just a location; it functions as an active participant in the novel's drama. Phrases and dialogues like 'when 124 was alive...', '124 was quiet', 'I just hope you'll pardon my house' makes 124 come to life. It is more likely to be a counterpart to the ghost-figure, evident through various incidents and appearances like "white staircase climbed toward the blue-and-white wallpaper of the second floor" [6].

The novel also features a strong and compelling focus on "colors," evident in descriptions and the characters' fascination. As Baby Suggs nears the end of her life, she becomes preoccupied with colors. The phrases "colored people" and "colored ladies" are frequently repeated throughout the narrative. This may be interpreted as Morrison's subtle yet powerful commentary on the prejudice faced by Black individuals due to the color of their skin. Through these elements, Morrison presents the story with a seemingly ordinary, yet deeply meaningful, approach as a "narrative of the Black experience in colonial America." Her work examines the impact of colonization on the culture and the psychological state of Africans, not only on an individual level but also on a broader cultural scale. The colonizers not only exploited the economic resources of these countries but also imposed ideological dominance. Consequently, the novel navigates the complex interplay between the importance of "community" and the autonomy of "personality" [7].

Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* acts as a voice for the unheard and the silenced. The character *Beloved* not only acts as a reminder for the characters of the novel but also as a mouthpiece for the whole history of slavery and the blacks. Authors like Morrison bring together the real and the imagined in a bizarre combination of the duo-real world. Though considered as a masterpiece in the realm of magical realism, it still seeks to question its utility in the process of healing. The work not only talks about the past struggles and violence but also paves way for a better, united and equal world in which every single voice holds the same trust and respect.

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