



FACULTY OF ARTS
OF CHARLES UNIVERSITY
IN PRAGUE



Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

SUPERVISOR'S REPORT
BA THESIS
Elements of the Grotesque in the Novels of Toni Morrison
Bc. Victoria Hädler

The thesis aims to discuss Toni Morrison's use of the grotesque in three of her early novels, namely *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Beloved*. Various features of the grotesque are identified in these novels. Perhaps the most difficult question that underlies the project concerns the very employment of the grotesque by an African-American writer like Morrison, given that much of the tradition of the grotesque and the Gothic emerged through the demonization of the non-Western Other, the black Other including. Drawing on the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, Wolfgang Kayser and Susan Corey, among others, the thesis argues that the grotesque allows Morrison not only to criticize the norms of the dominant white American society (such as in *The Bluest Eye*) but, despite there always being a negative side to the grotesque, it has a redemptive role as well. The ambiguity of the character *Beloved* is cited as one example.

Although at times Ms. Hädler could have presented her argument more clearly, I think she has chosen a difficult theme and addressed it very well. One thing she could discuss during the defense, perhaps to strengthen her argument about the redemptive motive behind Morrison's use of the grotesque, is African-American folklore. Does Morrison draw on any African-American folktales? Second, the thesis hints at a development in Morrison's fiction but eventually, this is not addressed. (How) does the author work with the grotesque in her later works? And if there is a marked departure from her early employment of the grotesque, how could this departure be explained?

Depending on the defense, the thesis may be graded as "výborně" (1).

Pavla Veselá

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