

Thesis Abstract

In my thesis I focus on the application and role of magical realism in Toni Morrison's two novels, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*. Because the supernatural elements in these two stories serve mainly as catalytic forces that reveal hidden and submerged realities of the characters' lives, my goal was to discuss and determine Morrison's motivations for the use of magical realism, its purpose, and possible final results of the writer's literary effort.

I began by analyzing Morrison's own critical work in which she focuses on her position as a writer being confronted with the dehumanized picture of blackness the way it was created by white Americans in order to preserve their own humanity in the wilderness of the New World. As for the literary language, the writer argues that the said point of view and the literary tradition that stems from it offer only two possible approaches: incursive glorification of the minority, or defensive conformity. These nevertheless appear to be metaphorical blind alleys to her attempts, as none has a potential to create an authentic picture of African Americans.

A relevant hindering obstacle to mention is that a lot was lost through the process of dehumanization. My attempt was to demonstrate that by the application of magical realism, Morrison tries to re-humanize (to re-member) black history by creating a picture different from and independent of the tendencies of the dominant culture regarding the depiction of African Americans and their slave ancestors. Through a comparison of *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* with the magic-free *The Bluest Eye*, my goal was to show how the sole realistic rendering of what can be traced through reason dooms the characters to be psychically broken and void of personal and collective confidence, as is the case of the Breedloves and specifically their daughter Pecola from *The Bluest Eye*.

One can only assume that this lack of confidence has its roots in the racist conduct and the dominant social behaviour of whites. Nevertheless, *The Bluest Eye* does not answer what exactly the black characters are missing. It is in *Song of Solomon*, where Morrison, ushers

the character called Milkman into a world of southern blacks which suddenly appears to him much more valuable than the money-driven illusion of freedom to which he used to adhere and it is the supernatural forces as for example the ghost of his grandfather, that guide this way for him. In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison stresses the importance of familial folklore and at the same time its absence in the lives and the memory of the characters, as it can be recreated only with a little help from beyond.

In *Beloved*, dead people are brought back among the living in order to recreate the bonds between mothers and daughters which were often brutally severed and their presence ignored during the history of slavery. It does even more than that. Because the maternal bonds in the novel are severely maladjusted by an act of infanticide, *Beloved* not only addresses the pain associated with not having control over the lives of one's own children, but it also shows how these essentially emotional bonds can be deformed: the mother, by a murder which is supposed to be freeing, ironically enslaves the daughter, who comes back to avenge it in the same manner. Looking back at *The Bluest Eye*, the reader can notice how Pauline's attitude towards Pecola and the home as such is negatively determined by material comfort - or rather the lack of it. In *Beloved*, Morrison uses a ghostly character to identify possible roots of this problem.