

MAGIC REALISM AS REWRITING POST-COLONIAL IDENTITY: THE POST-COLONIAL APPROACH TO TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the works of Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison, including her novel, Beloved, through the lens of post-colonial theory. It focuses on how colonialism affects the African-American community and the experiences of Sethe, who lived in Cincinnati, Ohio. The traumatic events of Sethe's past, such as the murder of her infant child, continue to affect her and her family, as they try to rebuild their lives following the effects of colonialism and slavery. Through the study, Morrison explores how these issues can be addressed through a critique of the legacy of colonialism and slavery. This study explores the ways in which the novel draws on various African-American spiritual and cultural traditions. It also studies the supernatural elements and Magic Realism in order to understand how these traditions influence the present. This study aims to provide a deeper comprehension of the intersection of magic realism and postcolonial theory, as well as the ways in which Toni Morrison's works challenge conventional narratives about American history. It also calls for a reevaluation of how colonialism has affected marginalized groups' lives.

Keywords: Post-Colonialism, Magic Realism, Slavery, Supernatural elements.

INTRODUCTION

One of the world's most celebrated authors is Toni Morrison. She is known for her work in children's books and plays, as well as for receiving numerous honors, such as the Presidential Medal of Honor from Barack Obama. Although Morrison worked for a publishing firm, she did not start publishing her first book, "The Bluest Eye," until she was 39. Toni Morrison's second novel, *Sula*, was nominated for a National Book Award. Three years later, she released her third book, *Song of Solomon*, which was also critically acclaimed. The success of her work has encouraged her to become a full-time author. After leaving her publishing company, Morrison continued to write plays, essays, and novels. In 1987, she released "Beloved," which was a bestseller for several weeks. It won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. In 1993, she became the first African-American woman to receive a Nobel Prize. In addition, she received the Jefferson Lecture award from the National Endowment for Humanities. She was also given the Medal of Distinguished Letters.

Toni Morrison's works have continued to influence artists and writers, as her insistence on the African-American experience and her examination of race relations have been acknowledged by the Pulitzer Prize. Her 1987 novel, "Beloved," is a Pulitzer Prize-winning book that explores the destructive

effects of slavery. The story of Sethe, which begins in Kentucky before the Civil War and ends in Ohio, is told through the perspective of a Black woman who lived in Cincinnati during the 1870s. Sethe, who is a free woman, is held captive by her memories of being a slave. The 1998 film adaptation of Toni Morrison's "Beloved" featured Oprah Winfrey as its star. In her novels, Morrison has successfully depicted the marginalized's condition. The best depiction of this is in her 1987 book "Beloved."

Over the past couple of decades, a vast number of studies and essays about the aftermath of colonialism have been published. Despite the varying perspectives and subject-matter that these studies and texts have, they all share a common objective: to provide a comprehensive analysis of the world's response to imperialism. These are all related to the experiences of people who were subjected to subjugation, exclusion, and resistance under colonial rule. Postcolonialism aims to address the multiple cultural, historical, and textual aspects of the interaction between the West and non-West since the 16th century. The body of literature known as post-colonial refers to works that deal with colonization's discourse. It often tackles issues related to the de-colonization of former colonies and the cultural and political independence of those who were enslaved by the colonial regime. This section focuses on the critical analysis of various

aspects of history, literature, and culture, and it is dedicated to examining the former colonies of France, England, Spain, and Italy. Postcolonial literature has been focused on third world countries, and this is also a critique of works that are written with colonial or racist biases. The works of post-colonial literature attempt to criticize the current state of discourse regarding colonialism. Some of the prominent individuals who have contributed to this field include Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, J.M. Coetzee, Chinua Achebe, and Gayatri Chakravarti Spivak.

Magic Realism is a type of imagination and mythical events, while realism refers to real life events. The phrase Magic Realism was first used by German surrealist artists during the 1920s. It was then used to describe works by other writers, such as Salman Rushdie, George Luis Borges, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. These writers utilize a combination of realistic elements and fantastical elements to create their works. Magic realism was first introduced to the research community as an object of study. Nowadays, the term is being used in various forms of media. In 1992, Soukhanov claimed that magic realist works combine elements of reality and mysticism. One of the most important features of magic realism is the utilization of folklore, myths, and legends. The author has used this term to emphasize the cultural and aristocratic backgrounds of African-Americans, taking a break from western ideas about culture.

According to the author, she is very happy to hear that her works are regarded as haunting. She said that she worked incredibly hard to make her characters realize their past and accept their present. According to the Toni Morrison Encyclopedia, the African tradition's mythic elements contribute to the stories' spiritual and cultural connection.

The theme of reincarnation was used by Morrison in his works, which is unlike anything else in literature. He utilized the magic realism technique to depict the pain and resentment that is caused by colonialism and slavery. In his narration, Abdennebi states that memory is like a moment of fear that breaks the body's rhythm and leaves it feeling like it is experiencing a storm. It is a difficult moment to throw away the past and start afresh. It involves constantly pushing yourself back into the past through painful experiences.

In her novel, *Beloved*, Morrison explores the unspoken horrors and stories of slavery that are not included in the usual slave narratives. She also

noticed that the discourse of contemporary African-American groups does not provide enough insight into the past. As a result, she reminds her readers that the development of identity and the construction of a civilization can only be achieved through the recognition of the past.

The novel *Beloved* provides a horrifying depiction of the dehumanizing effects of slavery, including how it can affect the senses of self of former slaves. The book also features several instances of self-alienation, which makes Paul D insecure about his own identity. In her novel *Beloved*, Morrison illustrates this predicament through the various characters, such as Paul D, Sethe, Stamp Paid, and Halle.

Schoolteacher treatment leaves Sethe with a sense of disbelief and alienation. She also feels like she is being held back by Denver. Meanwhile, Baby Suggs has experienced the same trauma as Sethe, but unlike her, Paul D has developed a coping mechanism to fight slavery's emotional pain.

The novel features Sethe, who killed her daughter to protect her from the harmful effects of slavery. It is also notable that the dangerous consequences of slavery are not limited to the African-American community, but can be felt by the whites who praised it. In her book, Morrison suggests that the country's identity must be rebuilt. After confronting her past, Sethe managed to secure a future with Denver and Paul D. A post-colonialist narrative is appropriate for depicting the hidden history of a society. In this work, Morrison provides a unique perspective on the lives of Baby Suggs, Paul D, Stamp Paid, and Sethe.

In Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, Denver is the protagonist, who represents the African-American readers who are not aware of the atrocities committed in the past. A historian, teacher, and author, Denver seeks to use the white power to establish the African-American experience in a way that strips their humanity and past. Sethe's depiction of Denver represents the suffering of slaves past, who were treated poorly in the traditional tradition. The schoolteacher represents the Eurocentric white stereotype of a cruel and sadistic individual. Mechanical man, who treated slaves as animals, taught his pupils about the former's features.

In the novel, various forms of supernatural exist, and they have an irrevocable impact on the character. The characters are forced to confront their past through magic and ghost. The author has used a tree known as the Mulberry to symbolize

rebirth. The writer seeks to describe the wound that she suffered on her back during her time in slavery through the tree. In one scene, Sethe's teacher opens her back and discovers a tree flourishing. As her memory grows, she begins to lose track of the tree's existence, and she eventually puts herself in its place. A chokecherry tree is described as having a trunk, branches, and tiny leaves. Sethe says that she could have cherries now, eighteen years after her frightening past. She went back in time to reflect on her painful experiences. Through the tree's detailed depiction, the readers can draw a picture of the character inside their head. Although it brings mixed emotions, the tree also offers some positive energy and tries to find some light in the dark moments. It is connected to her past, which is deeply rooted in her memories.

CONCLUSION

The powerful and complex novel by Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, explores the devastating effects of

colonialism and slavery on African-American communities. It also shows how magic realism can be used to create a more realistic depiction of black people. By utilizing post-colonial theory, Morrison draws attention to the ways in which marginalized groups' identities and experiences are affected by systemic oppression. She also emphasizes how reclaiming one's identity and history can be a way of fighting against colonialism's legacy. Through this study, she draws on the spiritual and cultural traditions of African Americans to show how these can help individuals overcome their oppression and trauma. It also demonstrates how postcolonial theory can be used to study African-American literature. By addressing these issues, Morrison encourages readers to reflect on the current social justice struggles and the significance of acknowledging the painful history of slavery and colonialism.

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