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Magic, Mysticism, and Race in Toni Morrison's Beloved

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1. Introduction

Literature is a reckoning of history; an opportunity to shape the narrative of global

events, define social orders, and rebuild reality. Magical realism is a literary device used to

explore identity, social structures, and reality, working as a "mode suited to explore boundaries,

whether ontological, political, geographical, or social."[1] By knitting together the antithetical

realms of the imaginary and the real, magical realism forces a reader to abandon logic and accept

new rules of reality.[2] Subversive by nature, magical realism is a vessel of postcolonial discourse,

drawing on the two dialogues of the oppressors and the oppressed to reconstruct historical and

contemporary narratives. A term first applied to Latin-American literature, magical realism has

been widely acknowledged for its use of magic in challenging preconceptions of reality; a

literary strategy also used by African, Afro-Caribbean, and African American writers to assert

narratives of Black identity in reaction to colonial abuse.[3] Author, professor, and editor Toni

Morrison (1931-2019) brilliantly introduced elements of magic throughout her work. Her novel

Beloved is a ghost-story that brings to life the collective memory of generational trauma endured

by African Americans in postbellum America. The supernatural images she depicted, such as

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[1] Vandana Saxena, "Magical Worlds, Real Encounters: Race and Magical Realism in Young
Adult Fiction," *Virginia Tech University Library,* Volume 38, Number 3: Summer 2011.
https://doi.org/10.21061

[2] Vandana Saxena, "Magical Worlds, Real Encounters: Race and Magical Realism in Young
Adult Fiction."

[3] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, October
24, 2017. https://literariness.org/2017/10/24/postcolonial-magical-realism/

those of ghosts and resurrection, both subvert conceptions of reality and illuminate the insidious

nature of racism in America. As evident in her novel *Beloved*, author of the African Diaspora

Toni Morrison utilized extraordinary images of discursive magic and mysticism to transcend the

oppressive reality of enslavement, and give voice to an essential narrative of Black collective

trauma.

II. Literature Review

Largely a Latin-American and Carribean narrative strategy, magical realism has become a

popular mode for commenting on a variety of social constructions concerning identity politics

and power. Magical realism emerged in the mainstream as a "dialogue between the centre and

the margins, the dominant and the repressed," working as a literary device associated with ethnic

and racial narratives, and the stories of people who have experienced oppression and

disenfranchisement.[4] Subversive by design, magical realism grew out of postcolonial writing, a

response to the duo-realities of the conquerors and the conquered in the colonial system.[5] As

colonialism was not just political and economic coercion, but an attempt to reconstruct beliefs

and cultural attitudes, magical realism creates space for writers to reclaim their own narrative

and question existing social norms and institutions. By introducing magic into otherwise realistic

stories, authors of marginalized identities explore the boundaries of race, ethnicity, gender, and

sexuality through a postcolonial lens. In this paper, I utilize Nasrullah Mambrol's definition of

post-colonialism: "the political and social attitude that opposes colonial power, recognizes the

effects of colonialism on other nations, and refers specifically to nations which have gained

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[4] Latham, "The cultural work of magical realism in three young adult novels," *Children's Literature in Education*, 38, 59–70, Accessed March 30, 2021.
[5] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, October 24, 2017. https://literariness.org/2017/10/24/postcolonial-magical-realism/

independence from the rule."[6] Mambrol also uses postmodernist critic Stephen Slemon's term

"postmodernism" to explain the necessary tension between the "magical and the real" in magic

realists' "model of dialogic discourse."[7] Stephen Slemon remains an essential voice in the

literature on magical realism and postcolonialism, as he discussed magical realism as

revolutionary against central narratives of society in his piece, "Magic Realism as Post-Colonial

Discourse."[8] His writings focus on the discourse of magical realism as a "way of effecting

important comparative analyses between separate post-colonial cultures...that enable us to

recognize continuities with individual cultures that the established genre systems might blind us

to."[9] Both Mambrol and Slemon situate magical realism as a unique literary genre in its ability to

reflect the tension between the "ever-present and the ever-opposed colonized and colonialist

discourses in a postcolonial context."[10] For this reason, many scholars have situated Toni

Morrison's work within the genre of magical realism, a choice that fails to fully encapsulate the

specificity of Morrison's use of magic.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* has inspired a niche of scholarship focused on dissecting the

messages and themes of her writing, particularly in regards to race and America. Heavily cited

authors like James Berger and George Shulman argue that the novel addresses the historical

legacy of slavery, where the illusions of time compel the modern reader to address the necessity

of redemption and reparation.[11] Berger suggests that Morrison wrote Beloved to counter the

1980s neoconservative arguments of "Black cultural pathology" by demonstrating that "law and

[6] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism," *Literary Theory and Criticism*.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Stephen Slemon, *Magic realism as postcolonial discourse*. na, 1988.
[9] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, October 24, 2017. https://literariness.org/2017/10/24/postcolonial-magical-realism/
[10] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism," *Literary Theory and Criticism*.
[11] Zamalin, Alex, "Beloved Citizens: Toni Morrison's "Beloved", Racial Inequality, and American Public Policy," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1/2 (2014): 205-11. Accessed April 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24364924.

science, power and official knowledge continue to violate African American lives."[12] Both

Berger and Shulman focused on the central plot of the story to draw these conclusions.

Richard Perez's "The Debt of Memory: Reparations, Imagination, and History in Toni

Morrison's *Beloved*" focuses on the images and ideas on the periphery of the novel, believing the

ghost story to be a call for reparations.[13] He writes that Morrison used fiction to compel the

reader to reimage a reparative historical timeline that both illuminates the haunts of America and

initiate a conversation on the debts still owed.[14] Scholar Aelx Zamalin takes an adjacent

approach to the novel, believing that *Beloved* is an examination of the economic and cultural

isolation of postbellum America. However, Zamalin hesitates to call it a political novel. She

writes, "as a work of literature rather than of political theory, Beloved does not provide direct

arguments about politics."[15] Though Zamalin is correct in the sense that Morrison did not write

the novel with specific political goals in mind, I argue that its subversive motifs and

revolutionary impact in the field of contemporary literature positions it as an inherently political

novel.

The welding of literature categorizing *Beloved* as magical realism and the function of the

novel as political commentary is essential, but we first must acknowledge the contention with

classifying *Beloved* as magical realism. Toni Morrison was hesitant to locate her work in any one

genre, wishing to define her work as different from the literature unique to Latin American

identity politics. Because of this, I inform my analysis of *Beloved* in relation to magical realism

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[12] (Berger 1996, 411).

[13] Richard Perez, "The Debt of Memory: Reparations, Imagination, and History in Toni Morrison's "Beloved,"" *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1/2 (2014): 190-98.

[14] Richard Perez, "The Debt of Memory: Reparations, Imagination, and History in Toni Morrison's "Beloved,"": 190-198.

[15] Zamalin, Alex, "Beloved Citizens: Toni Morrison's "Beloved", Racial Inequality, and American Public Policy," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 1/2 (2014): 205-11. Accessed April 15, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24364924.

not because of its original intention, but because of the likely perspective of the reader. Similarly as to how *Beloved* can be read as a political narrative without Morrison classifying it as such, the novel is often read and perceived within the perspective of magical realism, as its inception of ghosts into the lived reality of postbellum America creates a duo-reality reminiscent of the genre. Agneiska Lobodzeic argues that while the novel is congruent with definitions of the genre, Morrison's subversion of "magic" itself adds a significant layer of complexity. To Morrison, "magic" is the "extraordinary capacity of enslaved African Americans to transcend the oppressive reality."[16] I agree with this notion: although Morrison's work does fit well into the category of magical realism, embodying the postcolonial assertions of magic and reality often credited to the genre, Morrison deepens the idea of magical realism by subverting the idea of "magic" itself. I draw on Lobodzeic's article "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic- Magical Realism in *Beloved* Revisited" to understand this categorical discourse, furthering her argument by analysing Morrison's intensification of magic as specific to the narrative of racial trauma and enslavement. A collective pain that goes beyond the bounds of the human experience, Morrison's discursive magic is essential to naming trauma.[17]

A deeper understanding of *why* Toni Morrison utilized magic to create a political commentary on racial politics and identity in postbellum America is essential to understanding the correlation between literary magic and marginalized stories. While the central narratives of the story are present in the scholarship, a close textual analysis of the images and motifs of the supernatural are vital to understanding the role of magic in Morrison's portrayal of reality.

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[16] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.
[17] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic- Magical Realism in *Beloved* Revisited."

III.   Methodology

To bridge the gap between literature on the political nature of *Beloved* and the significance of magic and mysticism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, I will inform my close textual reading of the novel with research focused on the connection between magic, magical realism, and postcolonial expression. I will be drawing on literature by Łobodziec, Faris, and Slemon, among others, to examine how Toni Morrison's writings have become a part of the literary genre of magical realism, but unique in her subversion of magic itself in giving voice to the narrative of Black America, which has long been silenced. I will examine how Toni Morrison utilizes images of magic to express a perspective in opposition to dominant cultural discourse, and create a transgressive and subversive dialogue that critiques modern conceptions of history and reality. By analysing the motifs and characters in *Beloved*, I will explore how her story engages, mimics, and critiques historical accounts of enslavement and racial identity in America. I will begin with a background section that will summarize the novel itself, and contextualize the historical relevance of the story. I will then inform my close textual analysis of the novel with both existing scholarship and interviews and statements by Toni Morrison herself to explore why elements of the supernatural were essential to her narrative as a Black, female author. By delving into the reasons for Morrison's literary expressions of magic, I will demonstrate that while magical realism is a literary genre beneficial to understanding popular readings of her literature, it is incomplete in explaining her intentions as an author. Rather, Morrison utilized the duality of magic and reality as a subversive tool that illuminates the extraordinary history of Black identity in America, and is vital to the expression of collective trauma.

IV. Background

In order to contextualize the subject of this paper, I will begin by summarizing the plot of *Beloved* and identifying the historical context of the novel.[18] The story begins in 1873, on 125 Bluestone Road, Cincinnati, Ohio. Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman, lives in the house with her daughter Denver. Her two sons- Howard and Buglar- ran away after the death of her mother in-law, Baby Suggs, a series of tragic events Sethe attributes to the abusive ghost haunting their home. The book opens with the reintroduction of Paul D, a man Sethe has not seen since they were both held captive at Sweet Home, a plantation in Kentucky, twenty years prior. The two reconnect, bonded by their lived experiences and trauma. Enter Beloved, a young woman who slowly reveals herself as the reincarnation of Sethe's dead daughter. Overwhelmed by the guilt and grief Sethe feels for her responsibility in the loss of her daughter, she develops a relationship with the increasingly manipulative Beloved. The story spirals into two essential planes- one of the present, and one of the past- as the concept of rememory forces Sethe to address her traumas, and reckon with the ghosts of her past.

Beloved is a beautiful yet devastating novel that utilizes elements of the supernatural to retell the true story of Margaret Garner. Garner was an enslaved African-American woman who stood trial for murdering her own daughter rather than to see her enslaved.[19] Garner and her family had fled captivity in 1856, but were apprehended under the conditions of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.[20] Knowing the fate of her child, Garner saw death as the kinder alternative.

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[18] Toni Morrison, *Beloved*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print
[19] "Margaret Garner, 1834-1858," *Guide to African American Resources at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives,* Accessed April 15, 2021. library.cincymuseum.org/aag/bio/garner.html
[20] "Margaret Garner, 1834-1858," *Guide to African American Resources at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives*.

Memorialized by Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Garner's story is a solem reminder of the brutalities of slavery, and the trauma endured by Black people in post and antebellum America.

IV. Images of Magic in *Beloved*

Re-Imagining Magic Itself

Morrison's *Beloved* seeks to reclaim a narrative of Black identity, depicting the "discredited magic of discredited people" to express the construction of identity in a nation determined to dehumanize Blackness.[21] Morrison expressed her initial hesitation with accepting the label of magical realism for her novels, as she wanted to draw a distinction between the roots of African American folklore and Latin American magical realism.[22] She spoke of the relationship between the development of African Diaspora and magic, as Black individuals and communities had to "invent their magic in the midst of a new American reality."[23] Morrison speaks to their "discredited magic," observing the effects of dehumanization in America's treatment of African, Afro-Carribean, and African American magical and religious practices.[24] Systems and cultures of white supremacy function through a practice of collective dehumanization, which effectively forced individuals to reconstruct and readdress their own existence and humanity. The system of enslavement was only justifiable due to the white assertion of a "truth" to a racial hierarchy, an invention that demanded global reconstruction to remain legitimate in the eyes of the oppressors.[25] Identity, both individually and communaly, was

[21] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.

[22] Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," p. 103-21.

[23] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited."

[24] Ibid.

[25] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism," *Literary Theory and Criticism*, October 24, 2017. https://literariness.org/2017/10/24/postcolonial-magical-realism/.

robbed in the name of white supremacy, a disruption experienced by many of the characters in *Beloved*.

Morrison illuminates the systematic cultivation and disruption of Black identity through the inclusion of "discredited magic," complexifying magical realism by "rendering the ordinary magical, the real miraculous."[26] Beyond the apparent supernatural elements of the novel, Morrison inverts the conception of magic through references to both resurrection, and the day-to-day occurrence of magic. Magical realism is unique in its ability to introduce elements of magic into reality in an ordinary manner. Wendy Faris writes that magic is presented as "an everyday occurrence- admitted, accepted, and integrated into the rationality and materiality of literary realism."[27] Morrison also asserted that the ordinary treatment of the supernatural leaves space for the Black experience. She stated: "My own use of enchantment simply comes because that's the way the world was for me and for the black people I knew...there was this other knowledge or perception, always discredited but nevertheless there, which informed their sensibilities and clariđed their activities."[28] The ordinary treatment of magic is therefore not only a feature of magical realism, but specific to Morrison's narrative of the Black experience in colonial America. In addition, it illustrates how the social construction of normative reality, which excludes supernatural phenomena, was developed in the image of a white, Western society. Morrison experienced the world differently, emblematic of the duo-reality cultivated by magical reality.

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[26] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.

[27] Wendy B Faris and Zamora (Ed.), *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community,* London: Duke University Press, 1995. 501.

[28] Jasmina Murad. Magical Realism in Toni Morrison's Beloved and Ana Castillo's So Far from God, Munich, GRIN Verlag, 2006. https://www.grin.com/document/61300

Morrison expresses the discredited magic of the African-American reality by asserting magic into the ordinary parts of *Beloved's* plot, merging the two antithetical planes of the imaginary and the real to embody the experiences of the characters. Little moments of "magic" are expressed in the birth of Sethe's daughter, Denver.[29] When Sethe escapes the Sweet Home plantation, she is pregnant, injured, and terrified. As she lies in the wilderness, she imagines herself "stretched out dead," and her moans miraculously summon a white woman who cares for her.[30] The woman "did the magic: lifted Sethe's feet and legs and massaged them until she cried salt tears."[31] She gives Sethe a warning, saying"Anything dead coming back to life hurts."[32] This theme of resurrection also foreshadows the appearance of Beloved, the reincarnated daughter of Sethe. Seemingly miraculous moments of resurrection invert the ordinary into moments of magic, and foreshadow later assertions of supernatural phenomena.

Reconstructing Time and Space in Rememory

Throughout *Beloved*, Morrison disrupts conceptions of time and space to present a fragmented narrative of collective and personal trauma, a significant characteristic of magical realism, which questions "received ideas about time, space, and identity."[33] Morrison's distortion of time and space represents the omnipresent pain endured by the enslaved characters, as both Sethe and Paul D. are forced to reconcile with their rememories. The distinction of "rememory" and "memory" is significant: as literary journalist Elizabeth Palmer writes, "memory is a constant knowledge and represents the moments we willingly recall. "Rememory" addresses the

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[29] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.
[30] Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin, 1987. Print, 34
[31] Morrison, *Beloved*, 34
[32] Morrison, 34.
[33] Faris, Wendy B. and Zamora (Ed.). *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community.* London: Duke University Press, 1995. 501.

recollection of the things that a person has forgotten."[34] In the novel, Sethe is quite literally

haunted by rememory, experiencing moments long forgotten, tucked away for so long that they

are almost foreign. Both the ghost in her house and Beloved are embodied rememories, ghosts of

violent trauma that have disrupted notions of linear time and death. Sethe's rememories are often

written in flashbacks, though sometimes they insert themselves into the present narrative. In

addressing her rememories, Sethe says:

> I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass
> on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some
> things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still
> there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place – the picture of it – stays, and
> not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world.[35]

Sethe's trauma is not conditioned by the rules of linear time, and it speaks to the wider notion of

generational trauma. Morrison's manipulation of time, space, and memory constructs two

narratives- one of the past and one of the present- that illuminate the role of historical memory in

contemporary generation trauma endured by Black individuals and the African-American

community. Literary scholar Lobodzeic interprets this quote as evidence of Sethe's metafictional

qualities, a common character construction in magical realism.[36] Łobodziec writes on the overlap

of metafictional dimensions as essential to constructing the fragmented narrative unique to

Morrison. Wendy Faris, author of *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community,* writes that

metaphysical dimensions are common in magical realist texts, as they provide commentaries on

themselves, empowering fiction itself as a "magical" force.[37] Magical realism is significant in its

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[34] Elizabeth Palmer, Manifestations and Memory: A Look At Trauma, Hauntings, and
"Rememory," *Ghosts and Cultural Hauntings, The Digital Literature Review,* Accessed 12 April
2021.
[35] Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin, 1987. Print, 35–36.

[36] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved
Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.
[37] Faris, Wendy B. and Zamora (Ed.). *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community.* London:
Duke University Press, 1995. 501.

ability to bend rules of reality, a tactic Morrison uses to expose the way that collective trauma subverts normative conceptions of time, space, and identity, a product of oppression in colonial America.

Paul D's experience with the natural phenomena of everlasting rain is another literary representative of timeless trauma, as he is tortured by his memories as a prisoner in a chain gang. For Paul D, his imprisonment is described as a "death-in-life" experience, where time is controlled by those who control him, and measured by labor, not hours.[38] The only constant is the rain, pouring down with no end for weeks, disrupting nature and all living things.[39] Morrison's disruption of time and space creates a sense of dislocated-ness, both for the characters in the novel, and for the reader. In doing so, Morrison effectively exposes the duo-reality of systematic enslavement, where time is both experienced and expressed differently to the oppressors and oppressed. Morrison creates a tangible expression of racial trauma that goes beyond the confines of normalcy, identifying the persistence of trauma and the legacies of violence that remain unaddressed in America.

The Ghosts

The most obvious supernatural expression in *Beloved* is in the appearance of ghosts, each of which create a fragmented postcolonial narrative that represents the haunting of Black collective trauma. By embodying trauma in physical bodies both invisible and visible, Morrison draws attention to the insidious nature of the racial trauma caused by colonialism and the systematic enslavement of African people. This literary choice illustrates the political and postcolonial nature of magical realism. In summarizing her opinion of magical realism's correlation to postcolonialism, Elleke Boehemer writes that authors,

[38] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.
[39] Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin, 1987, 109

express their view of a world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement…[T]hey combine the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures to represent societies which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation, and political corruption. [40]

The disembodiment of Morrison's ghosts creates a fragmented expression of the cultural displacement experienced by those enslaved. The invisible nature of the ghost in Sethe's house and Beloved herself demonstrate the traumas both visible and invisible in postbellum America. Morrison's use of ghosts inserts a supernatural element into a reality both historicalized by the 19th century setting of the novel, and contemporary, due to the timeless nature of literature, subverting linear notions of time and space, and demanding recognition and retribution.

Morrison's reconstruction of Black trauma in *Beloved* "echoes those forms of postcolonial thought which seek to recuperate the lost voices and discarded fragments, that imperialist cognitive structures push to the margins of critical consciousness."[41] Morrison created the character Beloved to represent the "lost voices and discarded fragments" of those affected by colonialism and the system of mass enslavement. Although it is rightfully assumed in the novel that Beloved is the reincarnated daughter Sethe had killed to save her from slavery- Sethe states "Beloved, she my daughter, She mine" in chapter twenty of the book- Beloved embodies far more than the violent grief of her mother.[42] As Morrison transitions the narrative of the book into the stream of consciousness of Beloved, it is revealed that the girl carries the memories of those incarcerated on the slave ships in the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. She recalls "heaps of people" spilling into each other, the lack of space and language, and as she talks of the violence endured by those held captive, she switches between the collective "we, " and her recurring statement, "I

[40] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*, October 24, 2017. https://literariness.org/2017/10/24/postcolonial-magical-realism/
[41] Nasrullah Mambrol, "Postcolonial Magical Realism." *Literary Theory and Criticism*.
[42]Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, New York: Penguin, 1987, chapter 20.

am Beloved."[43] By embodying the collective trauma of enslavement in the ghost of Sethe's lost daughter, rememory is defined as a collective haunting. Morrison breaks rules of logic and identity by creating a character that embodies the communal trauma of the violence and depression endured by kidnapped people in the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. Both the child of Beloved and the victims of the slave trade "have the same root cause of slavery, both being inseparable parts of the whole story of slavery and the memory of the enslaved."[44] Morrison's assertion of a supernatural trauma exposes the insidious nature of colonial racial hierarchies that lie at the foundation of the American experience, forcing the reader to reckon with contemporary inequity through the lens of historical grief. By characterizing such grief, Morrison reclaims a postcolonial narrative of Black grief that subverts the hegemonic historical accounts that reduced the violent realities of enslavement for the benefit of white nineteenth-century abolitionists.

V. Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* goes beyond the genre of magical realism, introducing images and themes of "discredited" magic to create a postcolonial Black narrative that resists hegemonic historical accounts of enslavement, and reclaims an essential narrative of collective trauma.[45] She left an undeniable legacy of artistic expression, using her writing to stretch the boundaries of literature and reality itself. Morrison's preface in *Beloved* exemplifies her intentions as an author. She writes

> In trying to make the slave experience intimate, I hoped the sense of things being both under control and out of control would be persuasive throughout...that the order and quietude of everyday life would be violently disrupted by the chaos of the needy dead;

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[43]Morrison, *Beloved*, chapter 22.
[44]Morrison, *Beloved*, chapter 22.
[45] Agnieszka Łobodziec, "Toni Morrison's Discredited Magic - Magical Realism in Beloved Revisited," *Brno Studies in English* 38, no. 1 (2012): 103-21.

that the herculean effort to forget would be threatened by memory desperate to stay alive. To render enslavement as a personal experience, language must first get out of the way.[46]

Morrison did not write *Beloved* as a teaching moment for a white audience. She wrote *Beloved* to give voice to a Black narrative long silenced in America, and tell a story about the racial traumas embedded in American culture. Her utilization of the supernatural moved language out of the way to create an "intimate" visual element essential to personalizing historical events. Authors of magical realism create universes that hybridize the real and the imaginary: a postcolonial expression of the duo-reality of this world, and a space for a new narrative of history. Toni Morrison may have passed, but her legacy will live on, demonstrating the necessity of literature in giving voice to the spirits of history.

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[46] Constance Grady, "Toni Morrison's immortal legacy, explained in one passage" *Vox*, Aug 6, 2019,https://www.vox.com/culture/2019/8/6/20756895/toni-morrison-obituary-legacy-beloved-editor

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