

USE OF MAGICAL REALISM IN THE NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON

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Abstract

The present paper is to know about the magical realism in the novels of Toni Morrison who is Nobel Prize winning African-American writer and thinker. Toni Morrison, who is quite frequently labeled as amagic realist. The present paper also focuses on the techniques of Toni Morrison. The paper also shows the relevance of magical realism in the novels of Toni Morrison.

Keywords:- magical realism, techniques, relevance.

Introduction:

The present paper highlights the writerly techniques of Toni Morrison who is a well known magical realist. She is African-American Nobel Prize winning novelist. Her novels bridge between reality and fantasy. As we all know the term “magic realism” first appeared in the context of art, more particularly in the vocabulary of a German art critic Franz Roh, who used it to describe the work of post-Expressionist artists in the mid-1920s. Since the 1950s and 1960s, the term magic realism has been increasingly associated with literature, more particularly with Latin American fiction, namely writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Alejo Carpentier, Julio Cortazar, Jorge Luis Borges, but also Günter Grass, Salmon Rushdie, John Fowles, or the Caribbean writer Derek Walcott. Magic realism in literature is perhaps best described by “amalgamation of reality and fantasy” (Hegerfeldt 2004) or, as Lori Chamberlein puts it, “writing that works both within and against the aesthetics of realism”. In other words, the basic prerequisite is almost seamless coexistence of the supernatural and natural, the fantastic and dream-like visions cohabiting alongside everyday events. Magical realism is used by Morrison in her novels with bit sharpness so that her novels in search of characters, situations or writerly approaches that might have earned the author the magic realist label.

What is Magical Realism:

The following two basic artistic maxims are most frequently associated with magic realism. Magical realism shows that ordinary life may also be the scene of the extraordinary these two things suggest that magical realism is no less real than traditional realism. The intention behind

this is to “show reality more truly with the marvellous aid of metaphor”. In terms of distinctive features of this genre, it is generally held that magic realist fiction combines fantastic or dreamlike elements with reality, the recognizably realistic merges with the unexpected and the inexplicable, and it combines elements of dreams, fairy story, or mythology with the everyday (Drabble 2000). The fantastic elements tend to be left unexplained and the fantastic situation or event is treated realistically. A magic realist piece often leaves the readers uncertain as to which interpretation they should believe in – the magical or the realist interpretation. Magic realist works tend to produce detailed sensory input and are characterized by abundant use of symbols of imagery. They invert cause and effect, for instance, whereby a character may suffer before a tragedy occurs (Wikipedia). They draw upon the energies of fable, folk tale, and myth (Baldick 2004) or even incorporate legend or folklore (Wikipedia), which invade the realism and change the whole basis of the art (Harmon 1992:113). Interestingly enough, purely magic elements are generally not included as distinctive features of magic realism, or at least not singled out as a special item. By “magic” I do not mean the sorcery of the intellectually rather downplayed fantasy genre, but something I chose to call “voodoo,” which subsumes everything verging on black magic, root medicine, voodoo, wood magic, tree-worshipping, druidic rituals, but all of these in realistic settings (such as the pagan tree-worship found in John Steinbeck’s *To A God Unknown*). This category obviously walks a very thin line, because some of these elements are quite frequently deployed and occasionally misshapen by the fantasy genre.

Use of Magical Realism in *Beloved*:

Toni Morrison’s work definitely abounds in detailed sensory input and symbols and imagery; in addition to this some of her work does at times contain unexplained and inexplicable fantastic or dream-like elements and combines these with reality and, what is more, ostensibly treats these as normal.

Morrison in her novel, *Beloved* which is her most famous novel. In this novel the character is of same name *Beloved*, who is the haunting or haunted child. Her mother, *Sethe Garner*, a runaway slave, chooses to kill her baby-girl rather than giving her back to the slave owner. When the child later rises from then dead, first in the shape of poltergeist, then in the shape of a ghostly teenage girl, the first three interpretations that come to mind are that she has come to set the record straight, to reconcile, or to try to understand what reasons led her mother to do what she did. Here the reader can easily understand that it is the scene of ghost-like appearance which is one of the characteristics of magical realism. Such scenes provide that Morrison has interwoven magical realism in her novels.

Magic Realism in *The Bluest Eye*:

An extract from *The Bluest Eye*, one of the widely read novels of Morrison, is a good example of magical realism. In *The Bluest Eye*, whose main protagonist *Pecola* seeks the local palmist and interpreter of dreams, the name of *Soaphead Church*, and asks him to give her blue eyes, with the directness and credulity of a neglected child.

“What can I do for you, my child?” [...]

“My eyes.”

“What about your eyes?”

“I want them blue.”

Soaphead [...] thought it was at once the most fantastic and the most logical petition he had ever received. Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty. This may qualify as magic realism because beauty can not be given and taken.

Conclusion

The novels of Toni Morrison are fine pieces of literature for readers to study one of the most interesting genres of literature. The novels of Morrison such as *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, etc travel us between fantasy and reality. Finally while concluding I say here that Toni Morrison is a Magical Realist.

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