

THE SYNTHESIS OF MYTH AND HISTORY IN POSTCOLONIAL WRITING: THE POETICS OF TONI MORRISON'S "BELOVED"

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Abstract. This article examines magical realism as a narrative method that combines the supernatural with a detailly crafted reality. Originating in art criticism and popularised in Latin American literature, it challenges Western rationalism. The analysis focuses on its role in English-language postcolonial contexts, particularly in the work of Toni Morrison. Morrison revives lost tales and reimagines the anguish of slavery in books like *Beloved* by utilizing magical elements derived from African American tradition. She used magical realism, which goes beyond a mere literary device to become an act of historical justice, to restore marginalized voices and shape cultural memory by supporting the cultural truth of these myths.

Key words: magical realism, narrative mode, genre, phenomenal world, folklore.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqola sehrli realizmni g'ayritabiiy hodisalarni nozik ishlab chiqilgan haqiqat bilan uyg'unlashtiruvchi hikoya usuli sifatida o'rganadi. San'at tanqididan kelib chiqqan va Lotin Amerikasidagi adabiyotda ommalashgan bu uslub G'arbiy ratsionalizmga qarshi chiqadi. Tahlil uning ingliz tilidagi postkolonial kontekstlardagi, xususan Toni Morrison ijodidagi o'rniga qaratilgan. Morrison "Beloved" kabi kitoblarda Afrika-amerikalik an'analardan olingan sehrli elementlardan foydalanib, yo'qolgan hikoyalarni qayta tiriltiradi va qullik azobini qayta tasavvur qiladi. U sehrli realizmni, oddiy adabiy vositadan tashqari, tarixiy adolat amaliyotiga aylantirib, chetga surilgan ovozlarni tiklash va bu afsonalarning madaniy haqiqatini qo'llab-quvvatlash orqali madaniy xotirani shakllantirish uchun ishlatgan.

Kalit so'zlar: sehrli realizm, narrativ uslub, janr, fenomenal olam, folklor.

Аннотация. В данной статье рассматривается магический реализм как повествовательный метод, сочетающий сверхъестественное с детально проработанной реальностью. Возникнув в художественной критике и популяризовавшись в латиноамериканской литературе, он бросает вызов западному рационализму. Анализ фокусируется на его роли в англоязычных постколониальных контекстах, в частности, в творчестве Тони Моррисон.

Ключевые слова: магический реализм, повествовательный модус, жанр, феноменальный мир, фольклор.

Magical realism (further MR) is a distinctive and complex narrative mode in contemporary world literature, characterised by an organic combination of extraordinary or supernatural events with carefully reproduced reality. Conceptually originating in German art criticism of the 1920s and receiving widespread literary development thanks to Latin American writers, MR has had a profound impact on English-language literature, especially in postcolonial, intercultural, and feminist contexts [Bowers: 15].

Magical realism explores the complex space of one of the most popular genres in contemporary literature, art and cinema. Since the 1980s, the related concepts of "magic realism" (magical realism) and "marvellous realism" have simultaneously gained popularity and become controversial (Rajabi et al., 2020). The main difficulty in

studying this concept lies in its oxymoronic nature, which expresses the forced combination of mutually exclusive categories — the magical and the real. Maggie Ann Bowers defines her research approach using the generalising term 'magic realism', which encompasses all these related concepts, while acknowledging that excessive and loose use of these terms by critics has often reduced them to vague clichés [Bowers: 17].

Magical realism has a long history that began in the early 1920s. In 1925, German art critic Franz Roh coined the phrase to characterize a new post-expressionist painting trend known as *Magischer Realismus* [Kostadinović: 35]. However, the term's meaning changed significantly when it was used to define narrative writing in Latin America in the middle of the 20th century. Thanks to authors like Gabriel García Márquez, the phrase gained international recognition [Zamora & Faris: 8].

In literary criticism, magical realism is better understood as a specific narrative mode rather than as a rigidly defined genre. This mode is especially important for the late 20th and early 21st centuries since it provides the opportunity to comprehend different ways of viewing reality that go beyond Western rationalist philosophy.

This article aims to outline the defining poetic features of this mode and explore its unique function in English literature, focusing on the works of Toni Morrison.

Works classified as magical realism typically possess a number of specific structural and thematic characteristics. Wendy Ferris has identified the key characteristics of magical realism as a global narrative mode, which include:

1. **The inescapable element of magic** — the presence in the text of phenomena or events that cannot be explained by rational logic.

2. **A strong presence of the phenomenal world** — a detailed, almost documentary-like reproduction of reality, into which miraculous elements are organically woven.

3. **The presence of disturbing doubt in the reader**, arising from attempts to reconcile contradictory interpretations of events. [Zamora & Faris: 8].

4. **The merging of different spheres of existence** — such as life and death, the physical and the metaphysical, the real and the imaginary.

5. **A tendency to undermine established notions of time, space and identity**, opening up possibilities for a multi-layered perception of reality [Camayd-Freixas: 13].

Toni Morrison is one of the many intercultural women writers in the United States who have embraced magical realism. Her books, like *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*, frequently trace their roots back to West African cultural heritage and heavily reference African American oral culture and mythology.

She uses magical realism to explore a deeply political and historically significant issue: the problem of 'silenced' narratives that are deprived of a voice in the dominant historical discourse. Her work aims to shape the cultural memory of African Americans, helping them to understand their past, achievements and circumstances, especially in the context of the trauma of slavery.

The magical elements in her works — the appearance of a ghostly figure (*Beloved*) or men who can fly — are rooted in African-American folklore. For example, the motif of the 'flying African' goes back to the myth of slaves who returned to their homeland after death, flying across the ocean.

Morrison justifies the use of such myths by appealing to their cultural authenticity. Similar to Gabriel García Márquez's statement: "I am a realistic writer because I believe that in Latin America everything is possible, everything is real" (García Márquez &

Vargas Llosa, 1968), Morrison expresses her belief in the reality of the myths of her own culture. She noted that stories about black people who can fly have always been part of the folklore of her life, saying:

"I don't care how silly it may seem...everywhere...people used to talk about it, it's in the spirituals and gospels. Perhaps it was wishful thinking... But suppose it wasn't?" [LeClair: 122].

Thus, Morrison uses magical realism as a way to restore historical justice and bring back the memory of the lost cultural experience of the African American community.

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