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Magical Realism in Toni Morrison's
Beloved and *Song of Solomon*

MA Thesis

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii
PREFACE	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
ABSTRACT	v
ÖZET	vi
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. MAGICAL REALISM	3
II. 1. History of Magical Realism: From the 1920' to the Present.....	3
II.2. Magical Realism Distinguished from Other Literary Movements.....	17
III. REFLECTIONS OF MAGICAL REALISM ON TONI MORRISON'S <i>BELOVED AND SONG OF SOLOMON</i>	24
IV. CONCLUSION	48
WORKS CITED	51
BIOGRAPHY	53

PREFACE

As the first African-American writer to win the Nobel-Prize, Toni Morrison is one of the most successful black writers whose voice has been silenced by imperialism and racism for many years. Born in Ohio in 1937, Morrison's real name was Chloe Anthony Wofford. Her parents had moved to Ohio where "the free states of the North and the slave states of the South were brought together under one umbrella", in order to escape from the Southern racism (Peach 2). After her education at America's best black university Howard University in Washington, she received a master's degree at Cornell University. She wrote her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970 when she was a mother at home teaching at Howard University. Under the pseudonym of Toni Morrison, in her first book she narrated the story of a small black girl whose only desire is to have white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. Her second novel *Sula*, in which she portrays the friendship of two black women and their lives from childhood to death, was published in 1973. After the publication of *Song of Solomon* Morrison gained an international reputation. In *Song of Solomon* she depicts the journey of a young rich African American boy who is searching for his origins. It is true that her third novel led her to success, but it was *Beloved* that won her the Pulitzer Prize. Published in 1987, *Beloved* is the book about a slave woman who prefers to kill her baby rather than let her grow up to be a slave. In 1992 *Jazz* was published although it had been written long before. It is widely accepted that *Jazz*, *Beloved* and *Paradise* are a trilogy though they were published as separate books. In *Jazz* Morrison explores the city life of blacks and a murder at the same time. The third novel of the trilogy *Paradise*, is about different women whose lives have intersected in a small black community called Ruby. Morrison's final novel, *Love*, published in 2003. Today Toni Morrison is a successful writer and a teacher with an international reputation.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines magical realism in literature and its reflections on Toni Morrison's two novels *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*. As an African-American writer whose aim is to represent the reality of black people in America, Morrison not only narrates the realistic events and people but also ghosts, magical characters and extraordinary events. Combining rational stories that are considered as the reflections of her American heritage and magical ones that are derived from her African heritage, the author narrates the reality of African-Americans from different aspects.

In the first part of the thesis the history and meaning of magical realism is explored. Then the movement is compared with other literary movements such as; realism, postmodernism, surrealism and the fantastic. The second part seeks to prove that there are magical realist elements in Morrison's novels. In order to display the realistic events that have been recorded or experienced and the supernatural characters, events and myths in Morrison's novels, the books are observed in details. Moreover, the narration of Morrison and the important themes of her novels are also emphasized.

Finally, this thesis explains how and why Morrison uses magical realism in her two novels and suggests that through magical realism the writer portrays the expanded reality of African-Americans that is not only realistic but also magical.

ÖZET

Bu tez, edebiyatta büyü gerçeğiliğinin rolünü ve onun Toni Morrison'ın *Sevgili ve Süleyman'ın Şarkısı* adlı romanlarındaki yansımalarını inceler. Amerika'da yaşayan siyahların gerçeklerini yansıtmak amacı taşıyan Afro-Amerikan yazar Morrison kitaplarında sadece gerçekçi olay ve kişileri değil aynı zamanda hayaletleri, büyü karakterleri ve gerçeğışı olayları ele alır. Yazar Amerikan kökeninin yansıması olan mantıklı hikayelerle Afrika kökeninden kanaklanan büyü hikayeleri birleştirerek, Afro-Amerikan gerçeğini farklı açılardan kaleme alır.

Bu tezin ilk bölümünde büyü gerçeğiliğinin anlamı ve tarihi açığa çıkarılmaktadır. Daha sonar bu akım gerçekçilik, postmodernizm, fantastik ve gerçeğüstücülük gibi diğer edebiyat akımlarıyla karşılaştırılmaktadır. İkinci bölüm ise Toni Morrison'ın romanlarında büyü gerçeğilik öğelerinin var olduğunu kanıtlamayı amaçlar. Kitaplardaki daha önceden kayıt edilmiş ya da deneyimlenmiş gerçekçi olayları ve gerçeğ olmayan karakter ve olayları göz önüne sermek için Morrison'ın kitapları detaylı olarak bu bölümde incelenmektedir. Buna ek olarak, Morrison'ın yazım stili ve romanlarındaki önemli temlar da bu bölümde vurgulanmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, bu tez Morrison'ın iki kitabında büyü gerçeğiliğinin neden ve nasıl kullandığını açıklar ve büyü gerçeğilik sayesinde yazarın sadece gerçekçi değil aynı zamanda büyü öğeler içeren Afro-Amerikan gerçeğini tam anlamıyla irdeledeğini savunur.

I. INTRODUCTION

Today magical realism is a literary term used by various writers around the world. As an international phenomenon it refers to a kind of fiction which presents magical happenings in a matter-of-fact way. By combining real life and dreamlike elements this technique offers a rich story to the reader in a realistic tone. Due to its complicated history and multiple characteristics, it is hard to find an exact definition of the term. However, magical realism hides a clue about its meaning in its name. The term consists of two disparate perspectives: the magical one that is mysterious, supernatural, and extraordinary; and the realist one that is scientific, material, and rational. In magical realist works, all these opposites exist together as one, the supernatural mingles with everyday, and ordinary events appear with fantastic or extraordinary situations. Instead of preferring only the world of reality or the world of fantasy, magical realism creates a gray area where the reader can witness not only the common experiences of ordinary people in a recognizable setting but also myths, folk tales, ghosts, miracles, and fairy tales. Erasing the boundaries between the real and the supernatural, magical realism reflects a reality in which the familiar and the fantastic are present together. In other words the dualism between the real world and the world of dreams has come to an end with magical realism since magical realism is the reflection of both the real and the fantastic. As a result magical realism creates a different view of reality where magical elements are supposedly part of the reality that surrounds us and even seems a natural component of the reality itself.

Among the writers who use magical realism in their works Toni Morrison is one of the most well-known, especially for her book, *Beloved*. However in her all novels there are many magical realist elements. As an African-American writer Morrison mostly deals with the experiences of black people in America in her novels. Focusing on the lives of black people Morrison probes their culture, history and life-styles. Her books are the reflections of African-American people who have been trying to keep alive their own culture in a white man's world. In her books the reader can find the unwritten history of black people, their sufferings, their joy, their beliefs, their fight to survive, their problems in a white-

dominated society. Yet, these are not the only things that the reader witnesses in Morrison's stories. He can also see ghosts, supernatural events, fantastic legends, myths and magical characters. In other words, in her book it is quite usual to see the real and the supernatural together side by side. On the one hand Morrison narrates the realistic events that can be explained by reason and logic or events that really happened in the past. On the other hand she creates ghosts, unusual events and extraordinary people that are considered as parts of African-American culture. As an African-American writer Morrison has a hybrid cultural background. Her novels are products of both her American and African heritage. Blending these two opposite cultures, Morrison presents stories that are both reflections of the rationalist and realist American culture and spiritual African culture. Thus, through magical realism Morrison reflects the African-American reality that is different from the American reality which trusts in logic and rationality. Contrary to American culture that favors traditional realism, African culture embraces not only the logical events but the ones that are seen as irrational within white culture. Since Morrison is an African-American she portrays a different kind of reality that is both realistic and magical at the same time and for this reason she uses magical realism that brings the material and the spiritual world together.

II. MAGICAL REALISM

II. 1. History of Magical Realism

‘My most important problem was destroying the line of demarcation that separates what seems real from what seems fantastic’.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez

In order to understand the purpose and the features of magical realism, we have to focus on when and how the term emerged and how it evolved into its present state. It is hard to find the origins of the term. Yet, many critics have different ideas about the history of magical realism. For instance the critic Maggie Ann Bowers in her book *Magic(al) Realism* claims that the term magical realism was born in Germany. According to her, as we find magical realism mostly in Latin American works presently, it is naturally assumed that the movement emerged from the same place. However, as Bowers mentions the term emerged, quite unexpectedly, in the not so distant Germany of the 1920's. In her book she focuses on the development of the term and states that there are three important periods in which magical realism evolved throughout history:

The first period is set in Germany in the 1920s, the second period in Central America in the 1940s and the third period, beginning in 1955 in Latin America, continues internationally to this day. (Bowers 8)

For Bowers magic realism emerged in Germany during 1920s and it was the German art critic Franz Roh who used the term for the first time.

Another critic who suggests that magical realism was first used in Germany is Irene Guenther. In her essay *Magical Realism, New Objectivity, and the Arts during the Weimar Republic* she argues that magical realism was first appear in the Wiemar Republic where

economic difficulty and political violence was at its peak. For her, during 1920s people in Germany found themselves in the middle of a modern world with harsh realities since they were defeated in the First World War. She adds that during this time the fantastic views of Expressionism were not enough to depict that era and the painters needed reality and rationality to express themselves and to reflect the contemporary world. Finally, Guenther concludes that the artists chose to reveal the familiar, the everyday and the magic behind it by trusting a new art which was labeled as magic realism by Franz Roh who used the term magical realism for the first time:

In 1920, leading critics and artists perceived Expressionism as having nothing more to say. It was resolutely pronounced “*tot,*” dead. The “child” anxiously awaiting to take Expressionism’s place, however, needed a “real name.”...The child did not even embody one coherent style, but instead comprised numerous characteristics, new ways of seeing and depicting the familiar, the everyday. It was, in effect, *ein neuer Realismus* (a new Realism).

To complicate matters, the child was not given a simple name to connote its chronological place in art history...it was baptized twice within a very short timespan-*Magischer Realismus* (Magic Realism) by the German art historian Franz Roh. (Guenther 33)

In short, in her essay Guenther defines magical realism as an art term that was born after the World War I as a reaction to Expressionism:

...Roh’s Magic Realism...denoted...a mode of art that had come into being with the demise of Expressionism and the aftermath of World War I. It was an art that was firm in compositional structure and was, once again, representational. In reaction to Expressionism’s apocalyptic visions, heated color palette, utopian message, and the shattering disillusionment which followed the war, this post-Expressionist art concerned itself with the tangible real, the familiar. (Guenther 37)

Both Bowers and Guenther agree that magical realism’s history goes back to 1920’s Germany and say that the German art critic Franz Roh is the one who introduced the term magical realism. In order to understand Bowers and Guenther it is better to focus one of Roh’s article and see his ideas about magic realism.

Even though in his article *Magic Realism: Post Expressionism* Roh says that he attributes “no special value to the title magic realism”(Roh 15), he focuses on some characteristics by pointing out its differences from its predecessor; Expressionism. According to Roh unlike Expressionism which favors “fantastic, extraterrestrial, remote objects” (Roh 16) the new model of art is interested in the familiar and the real. For him, in magic realist works neither traditionally realist elements nor fantastic elements are dominant since they look at the real world “with new eyes” (Roh 17). With the phrase “new eyes” Roh implies that the new art does not copy what is seen, it reveals the real world and “the mystery that does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it” (Roh 17). In other words, Roh claims that the new art of the Weimar Republic didn’t believe in a utopia as the expressionists had done before, it was neither based only on the ideals nor was a simple representation of the external world; the new style was a compromise between the ideal and the real, between the spiritual and the material. In other words, Roh implies that Post-Expressionism was a new experience for the artist who had lost his connection with the real world as a result of Expressionism.

It is quite obvious that Roh describes a new kind of art that appeared after Expressionism by focusing on the differences between Expressionism and the new art. However he does not use the term magic realism very often in his article. Instead of magic realism he prefers the term Post-Expressionism to identify the new art that came into being in Germany after the World War I. It is true that Roh uses the term to identify a new kind of painting that was a return to Realism after the abstract style of Expressionism. Yet, it is not fair to say that magical realism was born in Germany since there other critics and writers who believe that the origins of magical realism are not found in Germany.

One of the people who opposes the idea that magical realism’s roots can be found in Europe is a Latin American writer Alejo Carpentier. In his essay *Marvelous Real in America* Carpentier assures that magical realism is closely linked with Latin America rather than Europe. He uses the term marvelous realism instead of magical realism in order to identify a form of magical realism that is unique to Latin America. In *Marvelous Real in*

America Carpentier describes marvelous as “everything strange, everything amazing, everything that eludes established norms” (Carpentier 104). Then, he argues that marvelous in America and marvelous in Europe are different from each other. According to him, the marvelous in Europe is an infertile and a manufactured style of the West. In his essay his aim is to prove that marvelous in European literature can only be a literary use whereas the history of Latin America is full of marvelous events and characters:

After having felt the undeniable spell of the lands of Haiti, after having found magical warnings along the red roads the red roads of the Central Meseta, after having heard the drums of the Petro and the Rada, I was moved to set this recently experienced marvelous reality beside the tiresome pretension of creating the marvelous that has characterized certain European literatures over the past thirty years. The marvelous, sought in the old clichés of the Brocelianda jungle, the knights of the Round Table, Merlin the sorcerer and the Arthurian legend. The marvelous, inadequately evoked by the roles and the deformities of festival characters...The marvelous, manufactured by tricks of prestidigitation, by juxtaposing objects unlikely ever to be found together: that old deceitful story of the fortuitous encounter of the umbrella and the sewing machine on the dissecting table...Or even now, the literary marvelous: the king in Sade's *Julieta*, Jarry's supermacho, Lewis' monk, the horrifying machinery of the English gothic novel: ghosts, immured priests, lycanthropes, hand nailed to a castle door. ...the problem here is that many of them disguise themselves cheaply as magicians. forgetting that the marvelous begins to be unmistakably marvelous when it arises from an unexpected alteration of reality, from a privileged revelation of reality, an unaccustomed insight that is singularly favored by the unexpected richness of reality...To begin with, the phenomenon of the marvelous presupposes faith. Those who do not believe in saints cannot cure themselves with the miracles of saints, nor can those who are not Don Quixotes enter body, soul and possessions into the world of Amadis of Gaul or Tirant le Blanc...Marco Polo allowed that certain birds flew while carrying elephants in their claws. Even Luther saw a demon face to face and threw an inkwell at his head. Victor Hugo, exploited by sellers of marvelous books, believed in apparitions because he was sure that he had spoken with Leopoldina's ghost in Guernsey. For Van Gogh, his faith in the sunflower was enough to fix his revelation upon the canvas. Therefore, it seems that the marvelous invoked in disbelief was never anything more than a literary use, just as boring in the end as the literature that is oneiric “by arrangement” or those praises of folly that are now back in style...All they do is to substitute the tricks of the magician for the worn-out phrases of academics or the eschatological glee of certain existentialists. But clearly there is no excuse for poets and artists who preach sadism without practicing it, who admire the supermacho because of their own impotence, invoke ghosts without believing that they answer into incantations, who establish secret societies, literary sects, vaguely philosophical groups with saints and signs and arcane ends that are never reached, without being able to conceive of

a valid mysticism or to abandon the most banal habits in order to bet their souls on the terrifying card of faith.

This seemed particularly obvious to me during my stay in Haiti, where I found myself in daily contact with something that could be defined as the marvelous real. I was in a land where thousand of men, anxious for freedom, believed in Mackandal's lycanthropic powers to the extent that their collective faith produced a miracle on the day of his execution. I had already heard the prodigious story of Bouckman, the Jamaican initiate. I had been in the Citadel of La Ferrière, a work without architectural precedent...I breathed in the atmosphere created by Henri Christophe, a monarch of incredible zeal...I found the marvelous real at every turn. Furthermore, I thought, the presence and vitality of this marvelous real was not unique privilege of Haiti but the heritage of all America...(Carpentier 85,86,87)

Not only in this passage but also in other parts of his essay Carpentier keeps repeating that the true marvelous can be found in his continent, his history and his people. Besides, he supports the idea that the marvelous in Europe is a fake one whereas the marvelous in Latin America is natural and pure because the strange, the magic, the mysterious has always existed as a part of common life in his continent. He defends this statement in his essay *On The Marvelous Real in America* and says that "the marvelous real that I defend and that is our own marvelous real is encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent, in all that is Latin American" (Carpentier 104). In his essay Carpentier also writes that away from the rational and industrial Europe, true marvelous real has always been an integral part of the everyday of Latin America. He concludes that due to its history and its cultural diversity the marvelous of Latin America is not a creation of its writers, it is a reflection of the real life itself:

Because of the virginity of the land, our upbringing, our ontology, the Faustian presence of the Indian and the black man, the revelation constituted by its recent discovery, its fecund racial mixing, America is far from using up its wealth of mythologies. After all, what is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvelous real? (Carpentier 88)

Consequently, Carpentier explains magical realism by distinguishing the marvelous real of Latin America from European definition of magic realism which is a poverty of imagination for him. In his discussion, his entire aim is to present magical realism or in his term marvelous real as a part of Latin American culture rather than European culture.

Another person who observes that magical realism is belonged to Latin America is the critic Angel Flores. In his essay *Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction* in which a new term, beside magic realism and marvelous realism appeared, Flores talks about the history of magical realism in Latin America and says that Jorge Luis Borges was the first magic realist in the continent. Flores determines 1935, the year when Borges published his collection *Historia Universal de la Infamia (A Universal History of Infamy)*, as the milestone for magical realism. He adds that it was Borges who directed other Latin American authors to magical realism. Like Carpentier, Flores also affirms that magical realism is an expression of Latin American experience. He also claims that in Latin American fiction romanticism, which, according to the critic Amaryll Chanady, “was not characterized neither by speculative self-reflection nor by the questioning of hegemonic models, but by sentimentality and detailed observation of nature” (Flores 125) and realism “seem bound together in one afflatus” (Flores 110). That is to say, Flores believes that Spanish romantic realist literature and the influences of Europe gave birth to the magical realism of Latin America. Yet, in his opinion magical realism flourished in Latin America as he makes a reference to the years between 1940 and 1950. He says that these decades were the golden age of magical realism in Latin America since many writers who depended on this style produced excellent works. He is sure that as a result of the “transformation of the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal” (Flores 114), Latin America has rediscovered a style which is the spokesman of the continent:

Never before have so many sensitive and talented writers lived at the same time in Latin America-- never have they worked so unanimously to overhaul and polish the craft of fiction. In fact their slim but weighty output may well mark the inception of a genuinely Latin American fiction. We may claim, without apologies, that Latin American is no longer in search of its expression, to use Henriquez Urena’s felicitous phrase-- we may claim that Latin America now possesses an authentic expression, one that is uniquely civilized, exciting, and, let us hope, perennial. (Flores 116)

Another critic who deals with the origins and development of magical realism is Luis Leal. Event though he is a Latin American, in his essay *Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature* Leal indicates that magical realism’s roots can be found in Germany in 1920s when the term was used by the German critic Roh for the first time. He adds that in Latin

America Usler-Pietri introduced the term via his book *Letras y hombre de Venezuela (The Literature and Men of Venezuela)*:

The term “magical realism” was first used by the art critic Franz Roh to designate the pictorial output of the Postexpressionist period, beginning around 1925...In Hispanic America, it seems to have been Arturo-Uslar Pietri who first used the term in his book *Letras y hombre de Venezuela (The Literature and Men of Venezuela)*. (Leal 120)

In his work Leal especially focuses on the meaning of magical realism and says that magical realism narration should explore the mysterious relationship between the character and his surrounding. In his essay he also mentions that magical realism’s only goal is to identify reality and the mystery that exists behind it:

Magical Realism is, more than anything else, an attitude toward reality that can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures. What is the attitude of the magic realist toward reality? I have already said that he doesn’t create imaginary worlds in which we can hide from everyday reality. In magical realism the writer confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts. (Leal 121)

Regarding this explanation of the term, the critic considers Arturo Usler-Pietri, Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, Lino Novas Calvo, Juan Rulfo, Félix Pita Rodriguez as the true magical realist writers. He concludes that instead of being just a report of reality like traditional realism is, magical realism displays the marvelous and the common together as a whole.

According to Bowers, among these writers and critics who have written their ideas about the term magical realism including its history and meaning Carpentier, Roh and Flores have important roles in the development of the term. In her book *Magical Realism* Bowers claims that Roh’s magic realism, Carpentier’s marvelous realism, and Flores’ magical

realism contributed the development of today's magical realism that aims at exposing the common world and the mystery behind it. Furthermore, she writes that especially after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, magical realism has developed into a style that is defined as the "matter-of-fact depiction of magical happenings" (Bowers 18).

Like Bowers, Philip Swanson in his book *Latin American Fiction* also believes that the Cuban Revolution has an essential role in the development of the term magical realism. However, contrary to Bowers, Swanson explains the importance of 1960s in the history of magical realism in his book *Latin American Fiction*. For him, in 1960s, during the Boom, magical realism gained an important role in the literature of continent. He explains that throughout this era, more books were published and read, Latin American literature became known in the international arena for the first time. He also mentions that after the Cuban Revolution the literature and the culture of the continent took interest and Latin American fiction took its place in the world market. According to Swanson, a magazine that was concerned with the New Novel of Latin America, called *Mundo Nuevo* (*New World*) helped the Latin American fiction take attention during the Boom. Besides, Swanson reminds that many great writers wrote their great novels in this period. Among them Swanson points out the most famous one are called Big-Four: Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, Garcia Marquez and Julio Cortazar. Although there isn't an exact event that ended the Boom, Swanson mentions that "the suspension of that prize" (Swanson 69) finished the period. In short, Swanson observes that the Boom period in Latin American literature supported the growth of magical realism in Latin America. Regarding the information that we get from Swanson's book we can conclude that during 1960s, Latin American writers were seeking for new ways to interpret Latin American experience not only to their own people but to the whole world. So, magical realism became one of the favorite narrative modes they used. Unifying the realist fiction and fantasy, magical realism was an opportunity for the writers whose purpose was to rediscover Latin American reality. During this time many important writers such as Marquez and Carpentier produced their magical realist works and their books supplied magical realism that became more mature in Latin America and that became more well-known through Latin American fiction.

Whereas Swanson suggests that in 1960s great writers like Marquez, Llosa wrote their masterpieces and contributed the development of magical realism in Latin America, Dr. Jorge Paredes claims that without the Sacred Book of the Maya Quiche *Popol Vuh* magical realism would not have survived in Latin America. In his paper *Post-Colonial Writing in Latin America: 500 Years of Tradition* Paredes discovers that in books of the famous Latin American writers the influence of *Popol Vuh* are apparent:

Critics from both within and without Latin America have applauded the literature produced in the continent...especially the master narratives published in the 1960s and 1970s. Unfortunately, both groups have failed to acknowledge that a great percentage of the narrative resources and literary techniques used by the master narrators(Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Miguel Angel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier) and the new generation of the post-modern novelists(Manlio Argueta, Gioconda Belli Sergio Ramirez, Luis Sepulveda) of Latin America is a borrowing from the Sacred Book of the Maya Quiché. (Paredes 7)

For Paredes, *Popol Vuh* has become a model for Latin American writers and many magical realists borrowed their techniques or sources from that book. In other words Paredes believes that the great magical realist writers of Latin America owe their success to *Popol Vuh*, a book that was written in 1550 by Maya Quiché people “in order to keep alive their language, their culture, their religion and their worldview”(Paredes 4). In short, Paredes makes us look at the term magical realism from a different point of view as he claims that the roots of magical realism go back to Maya Quiché people of Guatemala.

It is quite difficult to talk about the origins and development of magical realism in certain terms because the critics and writers who study magical realism have different discoveries and ideas about the term. However, Maggie Ann Bowers in her book *Magical Realism* examines the growth of magical realism and concludes that at the beginning the term was labeled as magic realism in the Weimar Republic in order to refer a kind of painting that “tried to capture the mystery of life behind the surface reality” (Bowers 2). Later, it occurred as marvelous realism in Latin America to signify the “expression of the mixture of realist and magical views of life in the context of the differing cultures of Latin America

expressed through art and literature” (Bowers 2). Finally, magical realism emerged in Latin American fiction in 1950s and since then it has been used as a term that indicates all kind of fiction that “includes magical happenings in a realist matter-of-fact narrative” (Bowers 2). According to Ann Bowers, although these three terms are related to each other, they also have some distinguishing features. For her, magic realism focuses on the description of reality that includes mysterious elements and it is mostly connected to art of 1920’s Germany. Marvelous realism grew up as a literary term in Latin America. The last term magical realism is an international term that is used for the works that represent a kind of reality that narrates the unusual and realistic events together in the same matter-of-fact tone.

It is also important to mention about the reasons why magical realism boomed in this continent. In the book *Magic Realism Volume 5* that was edited by Joan Mellen a quotation of Garcia Marquez explains why Latin America became home for magical realism:

I suddenly realized that I wasn’t inventing anything at all but simply capturing and recounting a world of omens, premonitions, cures and superstitions that is authentically ours, truly Latin American. Remember those men in Colombia who get worms out of cow’s ears by saying prayers, for example. Our day-to-day life in Latin America is full of this kind of thing.

I was able to write *One Hundred Years of Solitude* simply by looking at reality, our reality, without the limitations which rationalists and Stalinists through the ages have tried to impose on it to make it easier for them to understand. (Marquez qtd. by Mellen 4)

Marquez also argues that the mixed culture of the continent was also a good source for the magical realist narration. Mellen also makes a reference to the best known magical realist writer Marquez to suggest that the magic in the continent is:

.....a magic brought by black slaves from Africa but also by Swedish, Dutch and English pirates who thought nothing of setting up an Opera House in New Orleans or filling women’s teeth with diamonds. Nowhere in the world do you find the

racial mixture and the contrasts which you find in the Caribbean. I know all its islands: their honey-colored mutates with green eyes and golden handkerchiefs round their heads: their half-caste Indo-Chinese who do laundry and sell amulets; their green-skinned Asians who leave their ivory stalls to shit in the middle of the street; on one hand their scorched, dusty towns with houses which collapse in cyclones and on the other sky-scrappers of smokes glass and an ocean of seven colors....(Marquez qtd. by Mellen 8)

Marquez's thoughts make us conclude that the fantastic world of Latin American people for whom mystery is a part of reality offered a wealth of stories from different cultures. Latin American writers reflected irrational, superstitious but real tales of their community and magical realism found a suitable soil to expand. Among the Latin American writers who had a hand in the progress of magical realism Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Jorge Luis Borges, Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso are the important ones and Marquez's *One hundred Years of Solitude* is the best known magical realist novel and regarded as a classic. Born in 1928 in a Caribbean village and raised by his grandparents, Marquez was highly affected by his culture and his grandmother's stories including ghosts, miracles, and legends. In my opinion, in *One hundred Years of Solitude*, Marquez narrates the foundation of a town called Macondo, its development and finally its destruction and also one hundred years of history of Buendia family whose race has come to an end. As a magical realist text, Marquez's book is a construction of the perceived reality and fantastic events. Through the story of Buendia family and the village Macondo Marquez presents lives of the common people of Latin America by emphasizing the effects of colonialism on Latin Americans. While he reflects the Latin American experience, he does not leave out the fantastical elements that are parts of his own culture. In the novel Marquez portrays the history of Macondo by emphasizing what happened in here when the village met the world outside its borders and the outcomes of its people's encounter with capitalism and modern world. It is not hard to understand that Macondo represents the countries that endured the colonial period in Latin America. Between the lines, Marquez tells the isolated lives of these countries before colonialism, their suffer during the time of colonial period and the destruction of the countries as a result of capitalist economy and the influences of the colonizer. Beside the unpleasant realities of the colonial period; Marquez also presents magical elements in his novel. Anything can happen in the novel: carpets fly, a man dies and returns to life, a woman rises to heaven, a priest levitates after drinking a cup of

chocolate, people go through a plague of insomnia. I believe all these extraordinary elements are surprising and fascinating for the reader who has experienced violence, war, the effects of North American capitalism, and injustice in Latin America.

In *One hundred Years of Solitude* Marquez makes his reader see the magical elements from two different point of views. For the people of Macondo the inventions of the West such as trains, ice, magnets and false teeth are magical. Coming out of a reality that Macondo does not aware of, these items are seen as extraordinary, supernatural in Macondo where the effects of Western civilization, rationality and science are not supreme powers. This is the one side of magical in *One hundred Years of Solitude*. On the other side; for the people who relies on logic and reason, the ghosts or the flying characters of the novel are supernatural as Stephen Hart says in his essay on magical realism:

What for the inhabitant of the First World is magical (a woman who ascends to heaven, ghosts who return to earth, priests who can levitate, gypsies who can morph into a puddle) is real and unremarkable for the inhabitant of the Third World. (Hart 4)

As Hart mentions the two sides of magical elements prove that something that is extraordinary for a community can be the reality of another one. In other words reality has no singular definition, it can be explained through plural ways by various people. In his book Marquez depicts the everyday of Latin America through the people of Macondo and their story and at the same time embraces incidents which are supernatural for the Western people. Combining the brutal realities of a developing country such as its poverty, violence and dishonesty with outrageous events and extraordinary people, the novel presents multiple perspectives for the reader who witnesses Latin American experience. As a writer who intermingles political realities with the improbable, Marquez presents misery and joy all at once. David K. Danow in his book *The Spirit of Carnival* describes the interaction of the fantastic and the real:

Thus we find depicted two parallel insurgencies: one affords a telling account of the blood and gore and horror yielded by the unrestrained use of guns and bullets; the other, ...provides a carnivalized sense. (Danow 89)

As Danow mentions, in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* the reader witnesses a kind of prose that not only depends on the truths that can be explained by logic and reason but also a kind of prose that embraces different creations of imagination. Therefore, the book reveals an extended reality that is valid for humanity and becomes a typical magical realist novel. In his essay *From Aracataca to Macondo*, Mario Vargas Llosa focuses on the reality in the book and mentions that the reader can see different levels of it because there is no boundary between reality and unreality:

In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* we witness a prodigious enrichment. The mathematic, contained and functional prose became a style with volcanic breath, capable of communicating movement and grace to the most audacious creatures of imagination. Fantasy has broken its chains and gallops wild and feverish, permitting itself all excesses, until it has outlined in space and time the life cycle of Macondo, through its most conspicuous inhabitants: the family of Buendias. The novel does not leave out any of the levels of reality in which the history of Macondo is recorded: it includes the individual and the collective, the legendary and the historical, the daily and the mythical. (Llosa 17)

It is certain that Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a masterpiece in magical realism. However, beside him there many great writers who uses this movement in their works in different ways. No matter how they use the techniques of magical realism, they have a common point that there is no singular reality. Through magical realism writers represent different aspects of reality.

To sum up; critics have different ideas about the history of magical realism. Some of them suggests that magical realism prospered in Latin America due to its oral culture and folklore although its roots can be found in 1920s German art. The others claim that magical realism is peculiar to Latin America. Although it is hard to trace magical realism back to its origins, it is certain that today magical realism is adopted by many writers from various

writers around the world. Among these authors the Indian writer Salman Rushdie, the Egyptian writer Naguib Mahfouz, African-American Toni Morrison, Angela Carter, William Kennedy and Ben Okri are the famous ones. In our century magical realism is:

... a global, invading and setting up colonies in the literary and visual landscapes of, additionally, Africa, Asia and Australia. There is no stopping it. It is everywhere. It is in Arabic, Chinese, English, German, Italian, Japanese, Persian, Portuguese, Spanish, Tibetan and Turkish, to name but a few languages. It is in fiction, film and the arts. (Ouyang 15)

II. 2. Magical Realism Distinguished from Other Literary Movements

As a movement magical realism has relationships with other literary movements and the critics mostly compare this genre with surrealism, fantastic literature, realism and post modernism. Although magical realism shares some narrative strategies with these genres, it has many subversive strategies that differentiate it from other movements. The critic Luis Leal explains magical realism and its differences from other genres in his essay *Magical Realism in Spanish American Literature*. He notices that magical realist texts are not a copy of the exterior world like the realist works. They are neither a reflection of an imaginary world like fantastic literature is. Nor do they have psychological explanations for the actions or characters like psychological novels, and they do not favor dreams as surrealism does:

Magical realism cannot be identified either with fantastic literature or with psychological literature, or with...surrealist or hermetic literature...Unlike super realism, magical realism does not use dream motifs; neither does it distort reality or create imagined worlds, as writers of fantastic literature or science fiction do; nor does it emphasize psychological analysis of characters, since it doesn't try to find reasons for their actions or their inability to express themselves. (Leal 120)

As Leal points out surrealism and magical realism are two genres that are frequently confused with each other because both of them were fostered in 1920s. In the Penguin's *Dictionary of Literary Terms* surrealism is defined as a movement originated in France in 1920s, as a development of Dadaism. In the dictionary, we can also find the information that in 1924 the poet André Breton broadcasted the first manifesto of surrealism in which he indicates that mind should be free from reason. From the definition of surrealism in *Dictionary of Literary Terms* we can also learn that, according to Breton and all the surrealists, surrealism's main purpose is to reveal the products of the unconscious mind. Surrealist works cultivate not illogically but non-logically in order to explore the unconscious, the secret territory of the human mind. Having been influenced by Freudian analysis, surrealists are interested in dreams and in the conscious and unconscious mind. In his manifesto Bréton explains that the surrealist idea suggests that if the secret territory in

the human mind is revealed, the person's consciousness will be made plain. According to him, a point in human mind provides a different knowledge beyond realism. According to him, a point in human mind provides a different knowledge beyond realism. Regarding the definition of Bréton, it is apparent that surrealism rejects a traditional realist attitude and an assured view of life. As Bréton suggests according to the surrealists, strict materialism or realism is the enemy of intellectual improvement. Besides, in his manifesto he asserts that under the tyranny of civilization and reason, everything that is fantastic is exiled from the human mind. For him, this prevents people from grasping the supreme reality. In order to reach the absolute truth surrealists probe the unconscious mind through dreams because they contend that complete reality lies in the secret parts of the human mind accessed through the meaning of dreams.

In light of the manifesto of surrealism, it is understood that magical realism and surrealism intend to go beyond the real and reach a new kind of reality different from the apparent one. Maggie Ann Bowers in her book *Magical Realism* explores the differences between magical realism and surrealism and discovers that although the two genres focus on irrational, unpredictable experiences they have many differences. In her book she claims that relying on the idea of Freud who had faith in the effects of unconscious mind in everyday life and the power of dreams, surrealism, as a narrative mode of fiction, combines reality and dreams in order to find an absolute reality, surreality. For her, the purpose of magical realism is similar; by uniting the real and the magical, it enlightens the real and the fantastic aspects of reality. That is to say, it aims to discover a reality which is both familiar and strange. According to Bowers, in spite of the fact that surrealism and magical realism have common features, they differ from each other. She claims that in surrealism, the human mind, dreams, and psychoanalysis are essential to go beyond the knowledge of the given. Besides, she adds that surrealists use the abstract whereas magical realists focus on material things. Bowers also suggests that in magical realist fiction, dreams are not seen as tools to portray the supernatural elements because that would harm the reality of the scene and the novel. Consequently, the supernatural in magical realism is not present “in the form of a dream or psychological experience because to do so takes the

magic out of recognizable material world and places it in the world of imagination“ (Bowers 38).

Another movement that is confused with magical realism is the fantastic. Fantastic elements in magical realism can cause a misunderstanding that magical realism can belong to fantastic literature. Ignoring that unrealistic elements in magical realism are not abnormal for those who have really experienced them in their lives or those whose culture embraces magical events or people, magical realism can be regarded as a part of fantastic literature. However, magical realism differs from the fantastic mainly because of its use of fantastic elements. Thus, it is essential to explore the relation between the fantastic and magical realism.

In her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* Rosemary Jackson observes that both magical realism and fantastic literature are free from traditions of realism. Instead of concentrating on a single observation of reality or depending on the unity of time, space and character, fantastic literature and magical realism offer an alternative reality by combining the contradictions such as living and non-living things or the real and the unreal.

Literary fantasies have appeared to be free from many of the conventions and restraints of more realistic texts: they have refused to observe unities of time, space and character, doing away with chronology, three-dimensionality and with rigid distinctions between animate and inanimate objects, self and other, life and death. (Jackson 2)

For Jackson, fantasy and magical realism delineate happenings that do not take place in the routine of everyday. These fantastical elements are like pauses in the circulation of ordinary life since they disturb the accepted order of the everyday. Yet, their role is different in these two familiar movements. Jackson also observes that in fantastic texts, supernatural reigns over the entire novel as characters can exist as monsters from beginning to the end of the novel or the setting can be a utopia. In her book Jackson

declares that fantastic literature does not favor realistic representation or descriptions of the probable since it refuses the requests of realism. In fantastic novels extraordinary characters or eccentric events are common. However, this is not possible in a magical realist narration. Fantastical elements appear and go quickly so that the reader returns quickly to the material world. In fantastic literature, the supernatural descends to the familiar world where logic is dominant. On the contrary, in magical realism there is mystery that breathes behind the real world. That is to say, magical realism is not an escapist mode of narration. It does not carry the reader to a fantastic world where he can forget the pain of the material world. It is true that the fantastic is closer to the unreal, improbable, fanciful dream world. But, magical realism does not create imaginary characters or places: it explores the mysterious relationship between man and his surroundings.

In his book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov clarifies that in fantastic texts, when the characters come across supernatural events they have two options to explain the situation. They can conclude that this extraordinary situation is “an illusion of the senses or a product of their imagination” or they can believe that what they are experiencing is really happening (Todorov 25). According to Todorov this is the point which the fantastic occupies:

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer to the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (Todorov 25)

Todorov adds that if the supernatural is explained by regarding logic and reality or if “the laws of reality remain intact”, the fantastic becomes the uncanny (41). But, if “new laws of nature must be entertained”, the fantastic becomes the marvelous (41). Therefore, hesitation that is caused by uncertainty is a crucial aspect of fantastic literature and the characters and the reader feels this hesitation which dominates the fantastic texts. Unlike fantastic literature, in magical realism neither the reader nor the characters face such a

hesitation. Relying on the matter-of-fact narration, the narrator never makes an explanation for the supernatural in magical realist texts. Instead, he presents them as natural events and the reader perceives the extraordinary as real. Even though it is hard for First World countries to accept the reality of fantastical elements, the detailed objective narrative style of magical realism makes them believe that the bizarre events are actually happening. In short, the reader or the characters never question the reality of what is being narrated.

From Jackson's and Todorov's ideas we can conclude that in magical realism fantastic elements serve different purposes: for presenting the reality of the writers' community or for political interests. It is a fact that magical elements in magical realist texts belong to the culture of the writers and they are the representatives of reality that is unique to the writers' societies. Displaying extraordinary events and characters in their novels, magical realist authors intend to say that reality is not limited to the Western civilization. These writers try to confirm that although their oral culture is considered as magical by First World Countries, they own a different kind of reality that includes the magical. In my opinion, through magical elements magical realists aim to create a national unity. By narrating the history of their countries or communities and by depicting their present situations, magical realists encourage the unity of their people. Moreover, the fantastical elements that are peculiar to their culture also distinguish them from other cultures and emphasize their unity. Through magical realism these writers claim an identity and voice after the years of misrepresentation and deprivation.

Another important movement which has to be compared with magical realism is realism. Bowers in her book *Magical Realism* defines realism as the representation of life, the everyday, the common. For her, it is the exact documentation of the external world and its facts. Basing on the idea that the external world is real, realism supposes that reality can be perceived by the individual through his senses. Therefore, as Bowers says, the realist novel is interested in the observation of the daily life, ordinary people and their relations with the environment. Using the everyday language, realist texts document reality with all its details in a declarative voice. It is obvious that realism is an objective view of reality, a kind of

response to the immediate environment. Bowers also notes that realists' main duty is to interpret the things which are happening and magical realism is not less real than realism. Concerning with the familiar, magical realism also reflects the everyday of ordinary people. Similar to realism, magical realism is concerned with the political, historical and social changes in the society. As Bowers mentions, these two movements agree on the idea that it is better to narrate the stories of average people in a recognizable setting in an objective point of view. In magical realist and realist novels it is quite usual to come across people, historical or political events that are parts of common knowledge.

In her book Bowers points out that although the real time, setting and characters of magical realist novels can be accepted as rational by the realists, the fantastical elements of magic realism depart the movement from traditional realism. Since the realists' goal is to narrate the true-to-life tales, their primary concern is the representation of the normal and rational. For this, in their texts they exclude every kind of extremity or the exceptional because they are not seen as real in the context of conventional realism. For Bowers, unlike realism, magical realism portrays the extraordinary or the extreme. In addition to the normal characters or events that are suitable to the idea of the probable of the world, abnormal things can appear in magical realist narration. It is because of the fact that for magical realists the eccentric can also be considered as a part of reality and it must be also depicted in order to give a whole picture of reality. At that point, magical realism and realism go their separate ways due to their understanding of reality.

According to Bowers, the main difference between realism and magical realism is that realists are based on a single reality. For them, everything that can be explained rationally is real and all the bizarre events that are irrational are unreal. Seeking for a scientific or logical explanation in all the things in life, their reality becomes narrow and so do their works. Unlike realists, as Bowers implies, magical realists present an alternative reality, reality that includes all elements of life whether they are verifiable or not. Both the reasonable and illogical facts are parts of reality in magical realist texts. In the light of this contrast between realists and magical realists, it is obvious that reality of realist writers

serves communities governed by scientific rules, such as industrialized societies. I think the realist version of reality is limited since it neglects the societies whose culture and reality involves fantastic experiences. On the contrary, magical realist works provide a complete presentation of reality that welcomes all the versions of reality. A magical realist attitude combines the reality of all societies without classifying them as rational or irrational. In other words, the realistic narration fails to speak for all the countries in the world and to reveal the complete reality. However, magical realist writers present reality that does not leave their culture outside and depict a more expansive reality. In short, realism and magical realism introduce different kinds of reality to the reader. Realism observes reality from one point of view that is rational whereas magical realism detects reality in various aspects.

III. REFLECTIONS OF MAGICAL REALISM ON TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND *SONG OF SOLOMON*

It is certain that Morrison's novels are the representatives of the black experience in a white-dominated society. Exploring black history and culture, she portrays Afro- American reality with all its aspects. As a member of the black community in America where blacks went through a lot of struggles in the past, Morrison uses language to enlighten the reality of African-Americans in the United States where white men are privileged. In her works she mainly explores the roles of African Americans and their family, history and community issues. *Song of Solomon* is a novel based on the search of a young black man, Milkman Dead, for his legacy. Brought up as a pampered boy because his father is a businessman and his mother is the daughter of the first black doctor in the city, Milkman is initially indifferent to the community of African-Americans and he has no aim and interest in life. But a journey changes his life and Morrison narrates how this rich African-American boy becomes an adult. The novel has two parts, the first one is about Milkman's life before his quest and the next part tells of events during his journey. In the first chapters, Milkman is portrayed as a party-man who has failed to grow up. As a son of an obsessive capitalist father he owns only the belongings of a material world. He spends his time with his friend Guitar or his girl friend Hagar hanging around. He is so bored with his family and his life that he is looking for a chance to go away. In the meantime Milkman starts to hear stories about his family history from his aunt, Pilate. Pilate tells him the story of her father getting shot when she was a child. According to her story, after her father's death, Macon and Pilate hid in a cave and there Macon found gold and wanted to take it. Pilate prevented him from taking it and he ran away. When he came back Pilate and the gold were not there because Pilate thought they had lost one another. Yet, according to Macon, Pilate had taken the gold. As Macon believes that Pilate has still got the gold wrapped in a tarp in her house, he urges his son to steal it. With the help of Guitar, Milkman steals the tarp. However, what they find inside the tarp is only some rocks and a human skeleton. This event triggers the beginning of Milkman's journey and he goes to the South in order to find the gold that might be hidden somewhere. At that point the novel's first part that provides preparation for Milkman's quest and the second part starts. While he

is searching for wealth that would set him free from his family, he discovers his past and his ancestors. When he learns that his great-grandfather was the legendary flying American Solomon, he becomes not only an adult but a part of his own community, the African-American community.

Morrison's other novel, *Beloved*, is about an African-American woman who has escaped from slavery in the South. An ex-slave Sethe and her daughter Denver live in a small house that is haunted by the ghost of Sethe's dead child. Her mother-in-law has died and her two boys have left home since it is hard to live with a disturbing ghost in their house. Sethe is a woman who seems to be overwhelmed by the bitter memories of slavery, her murder of her child and her husband who has failed to escape from Sweet Home. Her house and her life are haunted by the ghost of her daughter and her past. Since she has to live with a ghost and a painful past, Sethe fails to become a free African-American. Thus, she and her daughter Denver live an isolated life that is frequently disturbed by the ghost of the past. One day an old friend from Sweet Home, Paul D, comes to Sethe's house, 124 Bluestone Road. His presence reminds Sethe of old memories that have been silenced by her for a long time. After Paul D and Sethe become lovers they start to share their stories about the past. As their past becomes clear, Sethe faces her memories. In spite of the power of the past and the ghost Beloved, Sethe becomes free from her old life with the help of Paul D. At the end of the novel the ghost vanishes and Sethe finally accepts her past with all its painful experiences.

In these two novels, Morrison narrates the stories of Milkman and Sethe and at the same time the story of the whole black community. As a woman who is aware of the inadequacy of American history that is mostly invested in the success of white men, Morrison reflects the history of African-Americans in her works. For her, the past of black people is an important story for the history of the whole American nation. Thus, she narrates all the heartbreaking and charming memories of the black community. While she is portraying the black experience, she mostly depends on realistic events that have been experienced by real people. In other words, Morrison rewrites the historical events or their versions. For

instance, *Beloved* provides a lot of historical information about slavery in American history. First of all, the novel is actually based on the true story of a slave, Margaret Garner, who escaped from slavery. Like Sethe, she also tried to kill her children and even herself in order not to be a slave again. Worse than that, she was not accused of murder but for stealing her master's property. As Linden Peach in an essay on Toni Morrison records, Morrison was deeply affected by Reverend P.S Bassett's 'A Visit to the Slave Mother Who Killed her child', an article that was about Bassett's meeting with Margaret Garner. Peach claims that Morrison's character Sethe and Margaret have common features:

His [Basset's] portrait of Margaret Garner seems to have inspired the characterization of Sethe: she is about 25 years of age, and possesses 'all the passionate tenderness of a mother's love', 'an average amount of kindness', together with 'a vigorous intellect, and much energy of character'. His observation that Margaret Garner's mother-in-law had been a professor of religion for about twenty years was undoubtedly the inspiration behind Baby Suggs, herself the spiritual centre of *Beloved*. The separation of Sethe and Paul D appears to have been inspired by Margaret Garner's mother-in-law's story, as reported by Reverend Bassett, of how her husband was once separated from her for 25 years, during which time she did not see him and did not want him to return to witness her sufferings. But it is the history in Reverend Bassett's account which has most evidently influenced *Beloved*. The source of the novel's version of how mothers were separated from their children under slavery was probably the mother-in-law's story of how she was the mother of eight children, most of whom had been separated from her. The delineation of the physical violence inflicted on black women slaves in *Beloved* is clearly indebted to Reverend Bassett's report of how Margaret Garner spoke to him 'of her days of suffering, of her nights of unmitigated toil' and of how Margaret Garner's mother-in-law told him that she had been a loyal slave and had never thought to escape until, as she got older and became more and more exacting and brutal in his treatment [of her].' (Peach 106)

Besides, at the beginning of the novel Morrison refers to sixty million and more people and she dedicates her masterpiece to these beloved ones. Peach assumes that these people are the ones who died during the Middle Passage, the voyage of slaves from Africa. As Peach recalls during their journey, they were put into ships and chained together at their hands and feet. They had no space for movement. Almost one half of the slaves died during their journey and many committed suicide by jumping into the sea.

Another historical event that Peach discovers in the novel is the Fugitive Slave Law, passed in 1850. According to this law it was a crime to help a fugitive slave in a free state and it gave slaveholders from Southern states the right to search for and take slaves back to slave state. For this reason fugitive slaves who had escaped to the north were in fear of recapture. According to Peach, The Underground Railroad is another historical reality portrayed in the novel. Originated in Ohio, the underground began in 1819. Then, it quickly spread to help slaves gain their freedom. With the help of the Underground Railroad black men, women and children travelled at night and approximately 100,000 slaves escaped from slavery and went to Northern states where they gained their freedom.

As Jill Matus points out in her book on Toni Morrison, *Beloved* gives a very realistic picture of slavery. In her novel Morrison also displays the harsh realities of slavery and its effects on African-Americans. When Sethe and Paul D were slaves back in Sweet Home, they were treated like animals; their living conditions and punishments are the most striking scenes of the novel. Moreover, they are not just made up by Morrison: they are the stories of African Americans who suffered in terrible conditions. The book shows the cruelties of slavery as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. *Beloved* is actually the story of Sethe, her past and her memories: her sufferings in Sweet Home, her marriage, her escape, her recapture, the infanticide of her child, her imprisonment, her life in 124, the ghostly return of her dead child, and the actual return of an old friend Paul D. In fact, her story is not unfamiliar for anybody who has experienced the life of the plantations of the South where blacks endured hard labor, the destruction of their families, and violence. Throughout the novel there are also examples of tortures inflicted on slaves. *Beloved* is the description of plantations, the suffering of slaves, the escape, and life in the North.

Through *Beloved* Morrison narrates the physical and psychological abuse of black slaves and also reflects black people's lives during the Reconstruction period. *Beloved* does not only reflect the traumatic effects of slavery during the time of slavery but also after it. The sorrowful past continues to possess the lives of the slaves even after they become free. In short, *Beloved* is a book that serves as a "monument" (Matus 30) for African-Americans who experienced slavery as Jill Matus quotes from Morrison in her book:

There is no place you or I can go, to think about or not think about, to summon the presences of, or recollect the absences of slaves; nothing that reminds us of the ones who made the journey and of those who did not make it. There is no suitable memorial or plaque or wreath or wall or park or skyscraper lobby. There's no 300 – foot tower. There's no small bench by the road. There is not even a tree scored, an initial that I can visit in Charleston or Savannah or New York or Providence, or better still, on the banks of the Mississippi. And because such a place doesn't exist (that I know of), the book had to. (Matus 30)

As Susan Willis says in her essay on Morrison's works in her other book, *Song of Solomon*, Morrison "focuses on the 60's, when neighborhoods are perceived from the outside and called ghettos, a time of urban black political activism and general counter – cultural awareness (Willis 115). The novel enlightens the periods 1930s, 1950s, 1960s and early civil right movements. Morrison focuses on the civil rights movement and in her novel she makes references to some events of that period as Linden Peach observes:

Song of Solomon, for example, makes specific reference to the brutal killing of Emmett Louis 'Bobo'Till, a 14-year old, who was flogged, mutilated, lynched, shot in the head, and thrown into the Tallahatchie River with a 70-pound cotton gin fan round his neck for allegedly whistling after a white woman. Secondly, the event which triggers Guitar's search for Money is the bombing in church of four little African girls on 15 September 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama. (Peach 6)

In both *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* I discover that Morrison relies on verifiable events and characters and represents the real world as it really is. On the other hand she does not neglect the supernatural elements of her culture that are doomed to filter through Western rationalism. In her books she narrates her community of Afro-Americans with all its realities, including the historical facts that are verifiable, its conflicts, superstitions, folklore and oral culture.

One of the main supernatural elements in her novels is the appearance of ghosts. Although ghosts are regarded as dead souls by many people, especially in the Western culture, in magical realism they have essential roles. In fact, going beyond its literary meaning, a ghost can be a symbol of something important or it can become a character in magical

realist novels. Lois Parkinson Zamora in her essay *Magical Romance/Magical Realism: Ghosts in U.S and Latin American Fiction* focuses on the roles of the ghosts in magical realism:

Some literary ghosts serve their creators as carriers of transcendental truths, as visible or audible signs of Spirit. Other ghosts carry the burden of tradition and collective memory: ancestral apparitions often act as correctives to the insularities of individuality, as links to lost families and communities, or as reminders of communal crimes, crises, cruelties. They may suggest displacement and alienation or, alternatively, reunion and communion...They, too, are often bearers of cultural and historical burdens, for they represent the dangers, anxieties, and passionate forces that civilization banishes. They may signal primal and primordial experience, the return of the repressed, the externalization of the internalized terrors...They mirror, complement, recover, supplant, cancel, complete. Which is to say: literary ghosts are deeply metaphoric. (Zamora 497)

In magical realist texts, ghosts are the ancestors of Afro-Americans who are known as experienced people. They are mostly called as wisemen or wisewomen as they become the guides of many who have no idea about what to do or how to do it. At this concept, using their past experiences these ghosts enlighten the present of the characters. For example, in *Song of Solomon* there are two important ghosts; one is the dead father of Pilate and the second one is Circe. The dead father of Pilate is described as an essential character who has a great effect on his daughters' life. Born without a navel, symbolizing the sense of not belonging to anywhere, Pilate is portrayed as a woman feeling isolated from the society. However, despite her loneliness, she is one of the strongest and bravest characters of the novel since she has a tendency to defend her family and her past with her offbeat specialties such as beating men and also talking to her dead father. While she is trying to protect her family and her identity in a white dominated society, her father guides her in many ways. His presence is one of the best things that support her:

I saw Papa shot... but not only did I not see him die, I seen him since he was shot...It's a good feeling to know he is around. I tell you he's a person I can always rely on. (*Song of Solomon* 140-141)

Besides a father figure as a ghost, there is also a female figure who plays an important role in the lives of Pilate and Macon. This is Circe who helped them survive the first few days after their father was killed. In the story, she appears as the woman who leads Milkman to find out his family roots. In order to encourage Milkman complete his spiritual journey, Circe becomes his guide and helps him connect his past and future. With the help of Circe's hints and information, Milkman accomplishes his journey. Through these older ghosts, Morrison emphasizes the importance of ancestors. She also implies that older generations are stronger and wiser than the younger. As the older generation are more aware of their African heritage, they are more mature. On the contrary, the younger generation are more assimilated by American culture and they are not as strong as their ancestors.

In *Beloved* the reader sees another ghost, the ghost of the dead child of Sethe. *Beloved* is the story of a house which is haunted by a ghost and an African-American woman who has escaped from the South and the institution of slavery. Actually, this is not a simple ghost story, but something more than this. According to Rimmon-Kenan, although some critics claim that Beloved can be a real person who "herself suffered the horrors of slavery and who, haunted by the loss of her dead parents, comes to believe that Sethe is her mother" (Rimmon-Kenan 117), in the novel there are some clues about her supernatural being. If the details are observed, it becomes clear that Beloved is a ghost that returns to life. For example, her name Beloved is the only word written on the tombstone of Sethe's dead child. Besides there are three scratches on her forehead and Sethe later explains that these scratches are her fingernail prints. The scar on Beloved's neck can be considered as a hint since it is just like a cut that appeared when Sethe killed her child with a handsaw.

Another key event that implies the connection between Beloved and Sethe's dead daughter appears when Beloved asks Sethe about her earrings which were given as a wedding present by a lady. When Beloved asks where are Sethe's diamonds Sethe wonders how she knows about her diamonds. Finally, when Sethe hears Beloved singing a song that Sethe

used to sing for her children, both Sethe and the reader becomes sure that Beloved is the ghost of the dead daughter of Sethe.

Beloved is not only the dead child of Sethe but also her past, the past of slavery which Sethe wants to reclaim. At the beginning of the novel Beloved is portrayed as the ghost of Sethe's dead daughter who was killed by Sethe in order to save her from slavery. Then she becomes ghost in the flesh. Once Beloved comes into the house in the flesh, the magical ghost becomes real. Moreover, it becomes more dominant and powerful in Sethe's house, life and also in the narrative. The supernatural becomes a part of everyday life. When Sethe and Beloved confront each other Sethe and all Afro-Americans face their past and guilty feelings. Until that day both Sethe and Paul D have refused to confront their past because that would bring back their painful memories. For them it is hard to talk about the past as Sethe explains to her surviving daughter Denver:

...Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm--every tree and glass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there--you who was never there--if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over--over and done with--it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what. (*Beloved* 36)

It is obvious that Sethe and Paul D deny their past and their traumas and they fail to realize that the past has an effect on their present lives. After the return of Beloved the forgotten past is released. Here Morrison wants to emphasize not only that Sethe has to confront her past but also their America has to confront what has been done to African-Americans in its history.

Although Beloved is a ghost of a little girl, she disturbs the members of the family in many ways and makes them feel her presence in the house. Especially Sethe is badly affected by the existence of her daughter since she cannot be relieved of her unpleasant past. The more

her dead daughter's ghost appears, the more she is chained by her past, as if chained like a slave. The past is a burden for Sethe, it possesses her house and her soul through the ghost of her dead child. Even though Sethe attempts to forget her sufferings, the past never leaves her. When Paul D arrives, he evicts the ghost and the reader sees a hope for their future. They try to become a family by pushing the past back. After Paul D's arrival, Sethe starts to her past since they talk about Sweet Home. In my opinion, it is obvious that they are ready to forget their bitter memories and make plans for the future. But, the past does not set them free even though they are physically free. In short, Beloved is not only a ghost who is sometimes a lonely affectionate girl and sometimes cruel and ruthless. She is the symbol of the past of all slaves. Through her Morrison reminds the reader the history of slaves, their sufferings and their memories. In other words, Morrison's Beloved is a ghost:

...who suggests a number of possible identities but resists particularization. Beloved is Sethe's dead daughter and more; as a choric and composite character she recalls the capture of slaves in Africa, the horrors of the Middle Passage; the sexual enslavement of young black women by white men...Whatever Beloved's multiple identity, she intrudes, an ungovernable past, with her own impossible agenda. (Matus 115)

Finally, the return of the baby ghost as a living person also reminds the reader of the history of slavery. She comes from the sea with wet clothes, just like the African who were brought to America on ships. She is thirsty and hungry and that remind the reader the poor conditions of the journey of Africans. This ghost not only represents the dead child of Sethe but 60 million who have died because of slavery.

Beside ghosts in Morrison's novels there are many extraordinary events. For instance, in *Song of Solomon* the reader comes across unusual events with deep meanings between the lines. First of all, one day Milkman sees his mother in the garden making roses and tucking something that looked like a small onion in them:

...as she stood there, mindlessly watching, tulips began to grow out of the holes she had dug...The tubes were getting taller and taller and soon there were so many of them they were pressing up against each other...Milkman thought she would jump up in fear--at least surprise. But she didn't...she fought them off as though they were harmless butterflies. (*Song of Solomon* 105)

In the quotation above, the reader not only notices the suppressed emotions of Ruth but also of Milkman. This extraordinary event takes place after Milkman learns the weird relationship between his mother and grandfather. In a clear way, Milkman has no intention of saving his mother from the danger of these tulips since he is very angry with what she has done. According to the narrative voice of Morrison, this is a way of punishment not in the real world but in the fantastic world. Using such a motif, Morrison lets her readers see the conflict of the inner worlds of her characters.

The second unusual event takes place during Milkman's journey when he experiences a haunting at night. In the huge dark forest where his eyes cannot see anything he hears the sobbing of a woman's voice. This mysterious sound, as the hauntings explain, is caused by the wind that blows through a rock called Ryna's Gulch:

If he was to grow accustomed to the dark, he would have to look at what it was possible to see. A long moan sailed up through the trees somewhere to the left of where they were. It sounded like a woman's voice, sobbing, and mingling with the dog's yelps and the men's shouts...He heard the sound of the sobbing woman again and asked Calvin, "What the hell is that?"
"Echo," he said. "Ryna's Gulch is up ahead. It makes that sound when the wind hits a certain way."
"Sounds like a woman crying," said Milkman.
"Ryna. Folks say a woman named Ryna is crying in there. That's how it got the name." (*Song of Solomon* 274)

As the story unfolds, Milkman learns that Ryna is the name of the woman Solomon, Milkman's legendary grandfather, left behind in his flight to Africa. Hearing the moaning

of Ryna, Milkman for the first time hears his ancestor's voice. Alone in the woods without all his materials--his car, his money, his suit-- Milkman experiences a spiritual world:

There was nothing here to help him – his money, his car, his father's reputation, his suit or his shoes. In fact they hampered him. Except for his broken watch, and his wallet with about two hundred dollars, all he had started out with on his journey was gone: his suitcase with the Scotch, the shirts, and the space for bags of gold; his snap-brim hat, his tie, his shirt, his three-piece suit, his socks and his shoes. His watch and his two hundred dollars would be of no help out here, where all a man had was what he was born with, or had learned to use. An endurance. Eyes, ears, nose, taste, touch – and some other sense that he knew he did not have: an ability to separate out, of all the things that were to sense, the one that life itself might depend on. (*Song of Solomon* 277)

Beside the moaning of Ryna, Milkman also realizes that men and dogs are talking to each other in distinctive voices:

The dogs, the men – none was just hollering, just signaling location or pace. The men and the dogs were talking to each other. In distinctive voices they were saying distinctive, complicated things...And the dogs spoke to the men: single shot barks – evenly spaced and widely spaced – one every three or four minutes, that might go on for twenty minutes...It was all language. An extension of the click people made in their cheeks back home when they wanted a dog to follow them. No, it was not language; it was what there was before language. (*Song of Solomon* 278)

Being deprived of his materialistic values of the Western world, or white men's culture, Milkman learns how to make connection with the natural world. Hearing and understanding the world of nature makes him closer to the spiritual world and makes him wise. He feels himself a part of that rural area where his ancestors lived. From then on, everything has become easier for him:

...he becomes connected with the earth, no longer imagining a tilted, limping relationship...As a result, everything works for Milkman: he is accepted by the hunters; no longer weighted down with excessive jewelry...and he finds loving companionship with Sweet. Having placed himself in harmony with community

and cosmos, Milkman becomes the model human being--he shares the chores with Sweet, he solves the remaining puzzles of the riddle, he feels "connected", he confronts Guitar in "the complete absence of fear", and he revises his attitudes toward his family and Hagar, realizing his previous self-centeredness and lack of empathy. He is transformed, in short, into a hero ready for apotheosis. (Page 114)

His transformation starts in the woods of the South where he finds his family roots. There with the help of magical elements such as ghosts and magical nature he discovers his past.

In magical realist texts these extraordinary happenings are not chosen arbitrarily. Rather, they all have essential roles and meanings. For example, when Paul D touches Sethe's body Sethe feels free from the burden of being a mother, being an ex-slave, the house begins to shake. The house does not let Sethe feel relief even for a short time because she cannot be independent from her past, her motherhood and her crime. As the constant reminder of her past, the ghost disturbs her again. These incredible events are as important as the realistic ones in the plot. They are not from an imagined world. Instead, they are the parts of the reality of a community.

While paying attention to the magical events, Morrison also creates magical characters. In her novel *Song of Solomon*, her character Pilate is a magical character who was born without a navel:

After their mother died, she had come struggling out of the womb without help from throbbing muscles or the pressure of swift womb water. As a result, for all the years he knew her, her stomach...interrupted by a navel. It was the absence of a navel that convinced people that she had not come into this world through normal channels...(*Song of Solomon* 27,28)

To be sure, Morrison is excellent at combining the fantastic elements with real life situations and by creating such a deficient character she portrays only one of the African-American woman who has the sense of belonging to anybody or anywhere. In the novel Pilate is the symbol of knowledge and the spiritual world that is neglected by the male

characters of the book such as Macon Dead or Ruth's father and even Milkman. Macon Dead's only aim is to gain property and status while Ruth's father is a successful doctor who ignores his own community and favors white men. On the contrary, Pilate is devoted to her past, her ancestors as she carries bones in a bag and names in a box. Thus, I think Pilate is more close to an African culture that is spiritual, communal. She is rootless and searching for a place where she can feel herself a part of. Pilate is the symbol for oral history of African-Americans, their traditions and past that have not been written down but passed on through oral story telling. Moreover, Pilate is also the counselor of Milkman who has grown up with a materialistic father and a silent mother figure. Pilate teaches him spiritual values that are contrary to his father's beliefs. With the help of Pilate, Milkman finds out a new reality that is totally different from his immediate family's. Pilate introduces him to spirituality through her songs and tales. She changes the concept of reality for Milkman. Milkman respects her although she does not have a navel and moreover he learns many things from her. As Carolyn Denard points out in her essay *Toni Morrison*:

Despite his father's warning, Milkman finally does meet his aunt Pilate and spends many wondrous afternoons crushing grapes for her bootleg wine, listening to family stories, and falling in love with his cousin Hagar. It is Pilate who offers Milkman the most wholesome avenue toward self-affirmation. She, with her love for her family, her desire to maintain connections with the past, is responsible for the journey that he finally takes. (Denard 219)

Pilate offers Milkman an alternative life that is totally different from Macon's values. Without her it would be impossible for him to discover his heritage and the potential in himself. As a spiritual guide, she "teaches him the values of a spiritual, Afro centric, nature-centered, nonlinear perspective as opposed to Macon's material one (Page 106).

As Susan Willis says, lack of a navel causes the alienation of Pilate. When Pilate was a child, she believed that navels, like penises, are parts of only men's body, not women's. Having seen only his brother's and father's navels, she thought it was quite normal to lack

a navel for a woman. However, as she grows up she finds out that her body is unique. Without a navel Pilate has been deprived of a community, a lover and thus she becomes an African-American who has been regarded as the other not only by the white men but also by her own community:

Born without a navel, Pilate is a product of an “unnatural birth.” In social terms, her father dead and having never known her mother, she is an orphan. Her smooth, unbroken abdominal skin causes her to be shunned by everyone who either befriend her or comes to be her lover. Consequently, she has “no people.” Because no clan claims her, she is outside all the potentially limiting aspects of blood relationships and traditional forms of social behavior. (Willis 122)

In Morrison’s novels the character’s reactions against supernatural occurrences, magical characters or ghosts, are different from each other. In *Song of Solomon* Milkman does not believe in Freddie’s ghost story or he listens to Pilate’s extraordinary tales without reaction, he even denies that he has seen his mother surrounded by the tubes as Morrison writes:

...he began to describe to Guitar a dream he had had about his mother. He called it a dream because he didn’t want to tell him it had really happened that he had really seen it. (*Song of Solomon* 104)

However, during his journey he talks to Circe who had died many years ago and becomes very happy to learn that his grandfather was the legendary Solomon. Since his quest changes Milkman, his attitude toward supernatural things becomes more positive. Although Milkman is a materialistic man at the beginning of the novel, when he goes to South he accepts the supernatural and mythic as a part of his past and his identity.

In *Beloved* everyone at 124 Bluestone has a different reaction to Beloved. Denver sees Beloved as a companion for herself. She takes on the role of nursemaid and cares for Beloved during her recovery. Sethe feels tender towards Beloved because she reminds her of her own dead daughter. Paul D is the only one who does not like Beloved. He is

bothered by her presence in the house. Although all the characters have different feelings for *Beloved*, the presence of a ghost in 124 is not considered as something extraordinary among the characters. For them, it is a common thing to live with a ghost. When Sethe suggests to her mother-in-law Baby Suggs that they move to another house in order to be away from the ghost, Baby Suggs answers:

“What’d be the point?” asked Baby Suggs. “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to is rafters with some dead Negro’s grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby...” (*Beloved* 5)

Her reply indicates that it is normal for African-Americans to share their houses with a ghost that comes back from an annoying past. It is so familiar for them that when Paul D comes to 124, he immediately realizes the presence of a ghost, he feels it:

Paul D tied his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood.
“You got company?” he whispered, frowning.
“Off and on,” said Sethe. (*Beloved* 8)

In Morrison’s novels it is also quite usual to come across myths which are about her community. It is a fact that these myths include magical elements. Through the use of myths the writer, reader and characters can go back to the origins of a culture. Moreover myths also function as the creators of a prestigious past. Jonathan Brennan records Malinowski’s discussions of the role of the myth in *When Brer Rabbit Meets Coyote*:

Myth can act as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events. (Brennan 2)

In *Song of Solomon* readers witness the myth of the flying African-American. When Milkman discovers that he is a descendant of Solomon Sugarman who flew back to Africa in order to escape from slavery, he becomes very happy as he finds out that his ancestors did something good in the past:

Yeah. That tribe. That flyinmotherfuckin tribe. Oh man! He didn't need no airplane. He just took off, got fed up. All the way. No more cotton! No more bales! No more orders!...Vow! Guitar! You hear that...my great grandfather could flyyyy...(Song of Solomon 328)

Milkman is very proud of his great-grandfather since he is the symbol of freedom, liberty and self-confidence. In fact, Morrison praises African-American ancestors as she also does in the epigraph of the novel:

The fathers may soar
and the children may know their names.

As Micheal Wood explains in his essay on Toni Morrison The flying African is a famous tradition in African- American culture and its presence in *Song of Solomon* is obvious:

The metaphoric link between flying and sorcery (or magic) is of vital importance to the entire Afro-American literary canon. There are numerous tales about and allusions to flight in Afro-American folklore, all of which are, in one way or another, versions of what is commonly known as the myth of the flying Africans. "Once all Africans could fly like birds; but owing to their many transgressions, their wings were taken away. There remained, here and there, in the sea-lands and out -of- the- way places in the low country, some who had been overlooked, and had retained the power of flight, though they looked like other men." In this sense, those who have retained the gift of flight are the guardians of Afro-America's cultural tradition. These keepers of traditional values and beliefs are the sorcerers and conjure- (wo)men, almost archetypal figures of notable prominence in Afro-American literature. (Wood 173)

The story of Solomon is also told by Pilate through a song at the beginning of the novel. As Milkman finds out that he is a part of such a myth, he is not a self-centered Milkman anymore. Another flight also appears during Milkman's birth when an insurance salesman flies from the top of the hospital. However this flight cannot be regarded as a myth or a legendary event because the insurance salesman does not have a sacred mission to fly and he cannot accomplish his flight. The reason for his failure can be that the myth of flying is related to older generation, the younger cannot achieve this sacred mission because they are not close to their heritage and because they are more assimilated in white men's culture. Using such a scene, the unsuccessful flight of the insurance salesman who is just a minor character in the novel, may have a reason. It can be considered as a reference to Milkman's mythical ancestors. In her book on Toni Morrison, Linden Peach reflects the possible meanings of the flying myth:

In the traditional European quest narrative, there is usually an omen, either during or before pregnancy, against a birth which seems as if it will endanger the father in some way. Before he is born, Milkman is compared to a little bird and he is the first child born in Mercy hospital. His birth, accompanied by Pilate's Song of Sugarman, is also marked by the insurance salesman's leap from the top of the hospital. But once again it is important not to see the circumstances of Milkman's birth only as an appropriation of a European literary convention. The circumstances around Milkman's birth serve to emphasize key myths. The myth of flying African is appropriated as is the notion of the sacredness of ancestors. Singing is an essential part of the Gospel church and Pilate's 'powerful contralto' also suggests that the events that are occurring are in some way sacred. Indeed, her song proves to be a significant clue in Milkman's identification of his father. (Peach 73)

And Jill Matus agrees "As Morrison shows in *Song of Solomon*, even though the story of the flying African entails paternal loss and abandonment, it is also a celebratory and inspiring myth" (Matus 27). The flying father abandons his family and his children experience the trauma of the loss of their father that is one of the essential themes of the novel. Solomon leaves his son Jack in order to escape from slavery and his son Jack, the father of Macon Dead and Pilate, is shot by white men. In both occasions the children have grown up without a father figure and this causes traumas in the children's lives. Besides, after her husband's flight, Ryna was left alone mourning for her husband. Ryna's weeping

also symbolizes the distress of the families that experience the sense of loss. Solomon's victorious flight causes Ryna's sorrow. Just like his ancestor, Milkman's journey also makes him a hero in the second part of the book. As he discovers his origins, Milkman becomes mature. But, again like Solomon his triumph causes another mourning, Hagar's. Ryna is the cost of Solomon's glorious flight and Hagar is the cost of Milkman's discovery of his past and himself. In *Song of Solomon* men are in action; Solomon flies to escape and Milkman goes on a journey. As Matus says, the women and the children left behind pay the price. In short, the myth of flying Solomon does not only symbolize the celebration of the ancestors but also the absence of fathers in African-American families:

In the light of ongoing debates about fatherlessness in relation to African-American families (debates initiated to a large extent by the Moynihan report of the 1960s and manifested in 1990s in Louis Farrakhan's orchestration of a 'million man march' on Washington) Morrison's novel speaks to concerns about male commitment and responsibility. In some ways, *Song of Solomon* can be characterized as a mythologizing of desertion. Solomon gives leaving a good name because his reasons for escape are inarguable and his mode of leaving is spectacular enough to command awe, inspiration and celebration. Rather than pathologize the father who leaves, Morrison recovers the history of good reasons for taking flight. The flying African myth also functions here as a consolatory myth--men leave, but they do so in response to intolerable pressures and constraints. (Matus 78-79)

Another aim of myths is to reconstruct a community and cause the feeling of unity. By focusing on myths that belong to their African heritage, Morrison reminds her people of their origins and the reality that they have a different culture from white Americans. As a result she challenges the dominant culture by using the motifs of their oral culture which is based on folk tales, legends, and myths.

All the realistic and unrealistic events take place in Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* through her unique narration. In her novels Morrison uses multiple narrative voices that shifts from first person to third person in every chapter. As a result reality is not presented from a single voice that would cause a limited perception of reality. Each time the narrative voice changes, the reader finds out new things about the story. Every voice in the novel presents his or her version of truth. These fragments provide new interpretations

for the reader. So, the writer enables the reader to see the story and the reality from different perspectives. For example, in *Song of Solomon* when Macon Dead tells his son that he saw his wife, Ruth, in bed with her own father naked kissing him, the reader and Milkman hears one version of Ruth's story. However, Ruth tells another version of it. For her, she is just a lonely person who needed the support of her father:

It was important for me to be in his presence, among his things, the things he used, had touched. Later it was just important for me to know that he was in the world.
(*Song of Solomon* 124)

Ruth also claims that her husband Macon Dead tried to kill her father and their son Milkman and confesses that she is a woman who did not make love with her husband. In other words, in *Song of Solomon* the reader has the chance to perceive reality from different point of views. The shift of the narrative is also clear in *Beloved*. The past is reconstructed not only through Sethe's version but also through those of Paul D, Baby Suggs, Denver and Beloved's stories of the past. Employing such a technique, Morrison collects information from different characters and as a result represents reality from different point of views.

In addition to the shift in narrative voice, the declarative tone of her books is also important. As a result of her matter-of-fact tone the reader does not question the validity of what they read, he accepts all bizarre occasions as normal. Even though the reader does not belong to the community of Afro-Americans, due to the narration of Morrison he does not question the reality of the extraordinary events. The reader and the characters perceive the magical as normal and natural. The writer does not explain the supernatural occurrences or comment on them and the reader does not require an explanation because these events are described as natural in an objective way. For the reader who belongs to a culture that has a belief in ghosts it is easy to imagine these supernatural events. However, for a reader who has a different cultural background it is hard to feel himself in the world narrated in Morrison's books. It is not a problem for magical realist texts or magical realist writers because they do not intend to make the reader perceive the story from a singular point of

view. On the contrary, its purpose is to show that there are different kinds of reality and there can be differences among readers.

Susan Willis speaks of another characteristics of Morrison's narration which is that she, like many magical realists, does not concentrate on a single character. Her main goal is to reflect a whole community, African-Americans. Giving the significant part of individuals' lives, the narrative intends to convey the history of the community in general. This is what Morrison bases her works on:

There is a sense of urgency in Morrison's writing, produced by the realization that a great deal is at stake. The novels may focus on individual characters like Milkman...but the salvation of individuals is not the point. Rather, these individuals, struggling to reclaim or redefine themselves, are portrayed as epiphenomenal to community and culture; and it is the strength and continuity of the black cultural heritage as a whole which is at stake and being tested. (Willis 120)

Even though Morrison's writings have a personal story at the center, Willis argues that her main goal is to reflect a greater community. For example, in *Beloved* the main event is Sethe's killing her baby in order to protect her from slavery. In *Song of Solomon* the quest of Milkman, through which the party man becomes a matured African-American, is at the center. However through the personal history of Sethe the writer narrates the stories of all slaves. What Sethe experiences in the novel has been experienced by many slaves. Milkman's story tells the reader not to forget their mythical origins. In other words with the help of each character's story Morrison aims at creating a community identity to strengthen community consciousness.

Marilyn McKenzie draws attention to another important element in Morrison's narration is her use of time. In her novels time is not linear, the events are not written in an order. Her novels move from present to the past and then to the present again, and this happens frequently and fast. In addition to multiple voices in her novels, the circular time also

causes fragmentation and discontinuity. Instead of using linear time Morrison prefers narrating her stories by combining the experiences of past and present:

Moving back and forth in time, narrating the novel through the aesthetics of memory rather than the chronology of linear time, the reader enters into the emotional past of slavery without denying the reality of its more familiar brutal dimensions. As a result, the novel enables readers to consider enslavement from a new perspective of how black people were able to endure, to survive, when they did not own their bodies, their children, or anything but their minds. (McKenzie 229)

In *Song of Solomon* from Milkman's birth to his leap that takes place after 33 years, time goes backward and forward. On the one hand as the time progresses the reader sees the developments in Milkman's life. On the other hand as the time goes backward the reader learns about the past that has important effects on the present:

This double temporal movement creates a circular form, a plurality-in-unity, as the present and past mirror each other in the parallels between Smith's leap and Milkman's leap, between the singing of Solomon's song at the beginning and at the end, and between Milkman's birth and Pilate's death. (Page 103)

In *Song of Solomon* through the flashbacks Milkman and the reader go back to the past. As the characters tell a story about the old days, Milkman becomes more familiar with his family history. For example, Pilate and Macon recount their childhood memories at the Lincoln's heaven, Ruth let Milkman know about her father's death and Milkman's birth, Guitar talks about his father's tragic death. All these fragmented past stories inspire Milkman's desire to discover his heritage.

As a result of this technique Morrison erases the boundaries between past and present. Past becomes an essential part of reality in her novels because it becomes material for the characters and the reader. Her method also reminds the reader of Black history. Since African-Americans do not have written, formal history they depend on their memories and

collected stories of blacks. Like African-American history Morrison's novels are the reflections of fragmented history of blacks. In order to explore their origins and their past Morrison and all African-Americans need to collect these pieces in order to make a united history and a united community just like Pilate collects rocks from wherever she goes. As her rocks make her feel connected to somewhere, the fragmentations provide the reader and the characters rediscover their past as a whole. There is no distinction between past, present and future. They are depicted as a whole and that is used as a means of creating a unity in African-American community.

Consequently, Morrison uses multiple voices to tell her stories and she depicts time as a cycle. In order to understand her novels, the reader should consider all the voices and time periods not as separate things but as a whole. None of the narratives nor any periods of time is free from another. Rather, they are depended on each other and reality is revealed totally and truly when all the voices of the story plus past, present and future become one. This is also true for African-American community. Through shifts between narrators and the periods of time Morrison emphasizes the sense of community which the white men do not let. In *Beloved* if the reader manages to put together the experiences of Sethe, he can understand the whole novel. That is to say, the fragmented style of Morrison's novel reconstructs the history and makes African-American history a whole. Finally, in her narration Morrison favors open-ended stories. In *Beloved* it is highly difficult for Sethe to overcome her terrible experiences in the past as it seems impossible for her to confront the past. The more she struggles with Beloved, the weaker she becomes and the more Beloved disturbs her mother the stronger she becomes. Even though it is hard for Sethe to have peace in the future, with the help of townspeople she leaves Beloved behind after her confrontation with her past and her guilt. When townspeople perform an exorcism like a ritual, they drive Beloved away:

Standing alone on the porch, Beloved is smiling. But now her hand is empty. Sethe is running away from her, running and she feels the emptiness in the hand Sethe has been holding. Now she is running into the faces of the people out there, joining them and leaving Beloved behind. (*Beloved* 309)

At that time Sethe and the reader feel hope, great hope for Sethe's future. Calling Beloved as her best thing, Sethe has difficulty in believing the total loss of Beloved, that is her past. However, Paul D reminds her that "You your best thing Sethe. You are"(323). Beloved ends with the question of Sethe "Me? Me?" because she cannot believe that she is her best thing as Paul D tells her. At the end of the story there is not an exact event that ends the story. However, the reader feels a hope that Sethe can recover and become totally independent. Like the positive resolution of *Beloved*, at the end of *Song of Solomon* Milkman's flight is not completed and the reader is not sure whether his flight ends with a success or not. Yet, the reader is hopeful for the future of Milkman as he has discovered his past.

It is clear that Morrison uses narration in the reconstruction of the history. All of her works recall the past of African-Americans and *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved* are no exceptions. This recall does not only involve the recorded events of the history, but also its spirit, untold stories, its values. Retelling the history of the black community, Morrison identifies a past that is useful for the present and the future. The author in her two novels retells the history of African-Americans and focuses on the importance of the past. Sometimes she refers to verifiable events of the history and sometimes she uses myths, ghosts to remind the past that is both painful and glorious. In *Song of Solomon* the past is optimistic, celebrated and hopeful. During Milkman's journey in the South he loses his connections with the material world as he gradually sheds his watch, shoes, and suit. Finally, he finds wealth that he needs to be a self-efficient man, in his past and community. Milkman finds his identity and feels himself a part of his community through the knowledge of his ancestors and his past:

Milkman's quest enables him to recapture his ancestral and cultural past by embodying the essences of his family ghosts. He reaches the womb of his family (the cave) by embracing the terrifying but guiding Circe, who models Milkman's quest by fusing Western and African-American cultural traditions, life and death, and present and past. He becomes Jack as he rediscovers the lost paradise of Lincoln's Heaven in Shalimar. He then becomes Solomon as he achieves the spiritual equivalent of flying, first in his "dreamy sleep all about flying" and then in his final leap. (Page 112)

In *Song of Solomon* ignoring the past means being alienated from the African-American community. For instance, Macon Dead believes that he has successfully left the past behind. However, he has forgotten his past as he cannot even recall his father's real name. Leaving behind all the values of the past, he becomes a materialist man who worships money. For him, the only inheritance of the past is the gold. As he ignores his past he becomes closer to the dominant white culture.

In *Beloved* Morrison teaches her reader that we cannot live in the past and we cannot abandon it either. The best way is to face the memories no matter how painful they are and accept them as they really are and then it is possible to have a valuable present and future. It is not possible for Sethe to have a future unless she faces her past. As Carolyn Denard concludes:

The kind of reconciliation that Sethe experiences, Morrison suggests, is the same kind of reconciliation with the slave past that blacks in general must face in order to move forward in contemporary society. They must bring slavery, the starting point of their injustice, back to life, must come to terms with that past, must mourn for those lost ancestors, must finally face the horror and the grief on a personal level before they can let go of the ghost of slavery and move forward into the future with hope and wholeness. (Denard 224)

IV. CONCLUSION

By using magical realism, Morrison illuminates the African heritage of African-Americans and their reality. Through magical realism Morrison discovers a culture that has flourished in American culture but that originated from African culture: the culture of African-Americans. Her novels are fusions of these two opposite cultures: the American one with its material and logical values and the African one with its spiritual values. What Morrison does is to prove that African-Americans are a community who has a past, a memory and a culture of their own. Although slavery tried to destroy their community, families, ancestors by prohibiting their beliefs and traditions, they can take back their belongings from the white men by bringing their memories together and by remembering their past and their African culture as well. In other words, Morrison in her novels narrates real events that can be verified and also the ones that are not recorded but have passed through generations in an oral tradition.

As a magical realist, Morrison not only probes her African heritage but also proves that reality is not limited as the Western world suggests. She denies that reality is limited to the portraying of the knowable, verifiable and controllable. The ghosts, magical characters and extraordinary events in her novels show that reality can be beyond rationality. For her, reality can also include the things that cannot be identified by the logic of the West. Like a realist Morrison narrates the events that are possible for everyone to experience. But, what makes her different from a realist is that she does not write a singular reality. Instead she claims that there are multiple versions of reality.

In Morrison's novels all the things that are considered as irrational in the Western world are regarded as normal and ordinary by the characters, the reader and the community in the novels. Her readers witness the reality of African-Americans even though this reality can be different from theirs. In other words the myths, ghosts, magical characters and extraordinary events of Morrison's novels prove that these books are not written according to the logical rules or the concept of reality of the Western world. What Morrison does is to

reflect African-American reality although it is not the same as the Western reality. While she is defining African-American history and culture by depending on black values, she also suggests that, in order to understand black reality, the reader must go beyond the logical, scientific and objective reality of the West that is embodied in the character of the schoolteacher in *Beloved*. As a character who is related to documentation, the Schoolteacher is the symbol of reason and rationality. His instructions are so wicked that Sethe says to Beloved they had to leave Sweet Home as they heard these instructions:

Schoolteacher made his pupils sit and learn books for a spell every afternoon...He'd talk and they'd write. Or he would read and they would write down what he said. I never told nobody this. Not your pap, not nobody. I almost told Mrs. Garner, but she was so weak and getting weaker. This is the first time I'm telling it and I'm telling it to you because it might help explain something to you although I know you don't need me to do it. To tell it or even think over it. You don't have to listen either, if you don't want to. But I couldn't help listening to what I heard that day. He was talking to his pupils and I heard him say, "Which one are you doing?" And one of the boys said, "Sethe." That's when I stopped because I heard my name, and then I took a few steps to where I could see what they was doing. Schoolteacher was standing over one of them with one hand behind his back. He licked a forefinger a couple of times and turned a few pages. Slow. I was about to turn around and keep on my way to where the muslin was, when I heard him say, "No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up." (*Beloved* 227-228)

Being compared with animals makes Sethe so terrified that this instruction becomes unspeakable for her. She thinks that schoolteacher's words and thoughts are more dangerous than all the other elements of slavery. The scientific observation of schoolteacher who has no soul at all, seems like the worst terror to her. In this passage the reader can see how the blacks were dehumanized by the white men and also understand that the logical point of view of the white men lacks spirituality. Through her schoolteacher character Morrison emphasizes the inadequacy of a recorded history. In order to understand African-American experience it is not enough to depend on the written documents.

Finally, Morrison aims at creating a separate African literature that is different from American's by emphasizing folklore and oral tradition that have been ignored by American literature. She does it through magical realism by blending her African and America

heritage in this style. Through magical realism Morrison in a way proves that African American culture is open to African, American, European cultural traditions as well as oral traditions and folklore. Through the supernatural Morrison gives voice to the African heritage of the blacks in America.

Adopting the “traditional Western literary forms and African-derived oral forms” (Graham 4), Morrison creates African-American novels in which “the world may be real or imagined, history can continue to haunt and anger” and these works “question both the objective and subjective reality, recognizes both the discontinuities and continuities in traditions, and considers the relationships between oral and written forms of discourse” (Graham 4). Morrison narrates her stories in such a way that supernatural things and reality exist in a harmony. She writes the reality without limitations but never takes the risk of not telling the truth. While she is narrating the realities of black men, she not only uses the realistic events, characters, setting and time but also irrational ones. In other words, she looks at the reality of her community from two different perspectives. The myths, ghosts, supernatural occurrences and magical characters in her novels are the representatives of her African culture which is full of magical elements. According to the Western culture all these things seem supernatural as they cannot be explained by logic. Yet, Morrison relies on her African heritage and gives a response to European rationalism by proving that reality can have different versions for different cultures. Fusing European and African culture, magic and realism Morrison narrates black experience.

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BIOGRAPHY

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