

Teleportation in *Beloved* and *Kindred*: Magical Realism, Sacred Realism, or Black Enchantment?

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*Two thousand seasons of restless, sleep/Beneath, the destroyer's
fragmented image/We used their definitions of ourselves/ To
disconnect our consciousness/ Lines drawn in denial of deeply
textured souls... Okra/Ka /Se
(Life/Force/Energy)*

Nyama

*We work in the dark – we do what we can – we give
what we have. Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is
ours our task. The rest is the madness of art.*

Henry James

Abstract: Speculative fiction has been a genre that is traditionally seen as a Western endeavor, reinforcing colonial ideas since its appearing. On the other hand, magical realism is a mode of writing commonly understood as subversive and decolonial. This study tries to understand the work of magical realism or even sacred realism within speculative fiction, especially as it relates to modes of decolonization. In a movement towards feminist decolonization, magical realism works through the speculative trope of physical transformation within Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Beyond its aesthetic appeal, magical realism works in these texts as a method of subverting the Western gaze and questioning assumptions pertaining to Western history and science. Notwithstanding, one particular trait of this analysis is the case of teletransportation in both novels by two African-American writers. Due to the specific writing of these women as Black writers, could one say that this supernatural phenomena occurs in both works as magical realism, sacred realism, or black enchantment?

Keywords: speculative fiction, magical realism, sacred realism, enchantment.

I. Introduction

The pleasure afforded by supernatural narrative to us reader stakes its fuel from remnants of our ancestral fears, repressed by our vain philosophy. Canonical laureate writers explored their narrative potentials in such a field from the Victorian Age Gothicism to the menacing futurist novels of present day. Respecting African-American literature, there are equally many works which deal with the theme, but two of them impressed me more for the strength of their appeal to a symbiosis of natural/supernatural happenings: *Kindred* (1979), a novel by the senior College teacher Octavia Butler, and *Beloved* (1987), by the newly passed away Toni Morrison. Both their plots contain elements that can be explained by the light of quantum physics and facts that turn out to be nonsense unless considered under the context of African innate supernaturalism that belongs to the realm of the unusual, the magical realism commonly found in Black literature.

The main purpose of this work is to confront the role of Teleportation in these novels, verifying in each one passages of time travelling and other non-earthly phenomena. Perhaps this analysis may give us the key to understand what occurs to the main female characters (*Beloved* and Dana, respectively): Would that be simply the use of magical realism by both authors, or an incantation proper of the magic traditional African life and culture?

Antonio P. R. Agatti (1977) assures that the modern man, heir to two thousand years of Christian civilization

that impregnated him until the marrowbones with the breeze of the supernatural, was then characterized as a confused being, totally deflated by technology. The contemporary man witnessed, with nostalgic astonishment, the quick development of the sciences and the consequent contempt of the values and creeds that had accompanied him for centuries. The epoch in which we live is the triumph of the concrete. Technology managed in translating pure science, the principles, and the systems in goods of daily use that humans can see, eat, and enjoy. This way, conscious of the lack that exists between the world of facts and the one of values, my main contribution to the discovery of a route to what underlies the happenings and actions presented in the chosen novels, is to analyze and discuss the relationship that parallels a narrative branch of realism to the supernatural world of the mystic spell that permeates black life and literature. As magic realist authors present the reader with the supernatural and extraordinary set against the backdrop of the real world, some magical elements are here revealed in the real settings created by these two African-American women writers. Like Agatti, I personally refuse to corroborate the "truculent" division of the concept of "understanding" by sharing the task between the philosopher and the scientist, conferring to the first the task of answering the questions and significances, and to the second the thoughtful duty of discerning how, when, and where, besides controlling and predicting it. In my view the inter-relation between these two kinds of tasks is inconclusive, because in the very unit of the person there co-exist these two orders of preoccupations. This is a great challenge to pervade the Human Sciences. As Agatti says,

We believe we can discern in this paradox an artificial
division within a natural unity, one more example of the
classical dichotomies with which human spirit fights.

Dichotomy and contradiction between the theoretic and
between the order of knowledge and the
spiritualism,

the practical,
one of reality, materialism and
theorization, and cognitivism, understanding and
consideration, analysis, and intuition.

(AGATTI, 1977, p.13) ⁱ

Scarcely read in Brazil until a couple of years ago, Octavia E. Butler is one of a few contemporary African American science fiction writers. Her literature often focuses on gender and race which evolved out of colonialism and slavery in America. She uses the past and present experiences of African Americans to explore these issues by creating alternate worlds, as Morrison also does. Her novels, as estrangement science fiction, examine societal issues and their effects on humanity, and her narratives are comprised of the fantastic, the mystic, and the supernatural which are elements also found within the literary modes of the America Gothic and magical realism. These literary styles are known historically for discussing topics of race, gender, class slavery, and colonialism. So does Toni Morrison in *Beloved*. She makes use of magical realism to explore these topics and their effects on group's identities. Taking examples from Butler's novel *Kindred* and Morrison's *Beloved*, I will illustrate how they have used elements of magical realism and the American Gothic to examine themes that their audiences often have difficulty to discuss and accept.

On the other hand, we must pay close attention to elements that seem to be proper of black female fiction, as a method of reclaiming a special identity within the frame of the magical realism gender in general, and African-descendant women's writings in particular. These elements are crystalized in works that deal with a kind of African spell, such as the fluctuation of the Igbo people over the sea in *Praise song for the Widow* (1983), by Paule Marshall; the portraying of the immortal Doro, an entity about 4.000 years old whom must move his essence to different bodies to keep surviving in Octavia Butler's *Mind of my Mind* (1977); the gossip of Oya, the African orisha of the wind and storms, who speaks inside the heroine's head, and may have her own ulterior motivations in P. Djèlí Clark's *The Black God's Drums* (2018); the appearing of the baby's phantom in *Beloved* (1987), by Toni Morrison; and scenes of teleportation in Butler's *Kindred* (1979). All these aspects of African-descendant women fictionists make us believe in their especial status within the context of black texts.

Particularities in Octavia Butler's writing

Octavia Butler's speculative fiction makes use of magical realism as a method of subverting the Western contemplation and questioning assumptions pertaining to Western history and science. It is a mode of writing commonly considered as subversive and decolonial. It is taken also as a mode of reclaiming the space that has been stolen by the white colonizer who tries to accomplish decolonization through a re-appropriation of historical timeline and the truth that is attached to it, and most important: it works through a movement towards feminist

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decolonization. This way, we can say that magical realism acts by means of the speculative trope of physical transformation. This is evident in *Kindred*, for example when Dana assumes an androgynous appearance under the form of a woman wearing male pants in the XIX century, which seems to remove the colonial influence over the female body.

As Jonelle Frazier says in her Master of Arts thesis (2018 p.14),

Speculative fiction has been a genre that is traditionally seen as a Western endeavor, reinforcing colonial ideas since its Golden Age. On the other hand, Through the analysis of the fluctuation of Butler's work, which moves fluidly from science fiction to magical realist, this paper looks at the ability of magical realism to work as a method of reclaiming identity within science fiction. Magical realism uniquely challenges conventional perceptions of science fiction literature by reclaiming power and redirecting existing systems of understanding in order to subvert expectations and outcomes.ⁱⁱ

It is largely acknowledged that the colonizer lionizes the act of colonization and dehumanizes the colonized and science fiction as a genre has long been under his/her primary influence. Works such as H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and other dystopian novels have long operated in favor of the colonizer, strengthening myths of white supremacy and compassionate colonialism. As a genre fundamentally belonging to the realm of the colonizer, science fiction has been enacted upon the colonized, turning them into mere objects of their plots. Octavia Butler manages in changing this view, creating a kind of alternative fiction that explores worlds outside of the white, male, Christian hegemonical field of science fiction. Her works encourage the examination of ideas that are strange to hegemony, emphasizing the exploration of subjects from an anti-hegemonic perspective, as illustrated by this passage in *Kindred*:

I stared at him in revulsion. "Is that what you call love?" He was on his feet and across the room to me before I could take another breath. I sat where I was, watching him, feeling frightened, and suddenly very much aware of my knife, of how quickly I could reach it. He wasn't going to beat me. Not him, not ever. "Get up!" he ordered [...] I didn't move.
(BUTLER, 2003, pp163-4)

Butler sustains a decolonial focus, challenging the presence of Western male hegemony represented by Rufus within the space of her speculative fiction. She works to create a powerful image of the colonized, breaking free from accepted conventions, offering us a decolonial feminist view of the American Southern female black slave when Dana promptly defies her master. In the process of decolonizing genre holes and stereotypes, many other situations like the above are narrated in the book.

Finally, another important aspect to highlight is that Butler focuses on the decolonization of space through a travel back in time, where magical realism is explored as a method of decolonizing thought about time and history. Her subversion of history seeks to recover methods of understanding time that run counter Western culture. By intervening in happenings, facts, and customs in the history of Old South, Butler views time and history as fluid and able to be changed. The worldview portrayed in *Kindred* challenges the idea of history as being linear and set in stone, encouraging a re-envisioning of the past and acknowledging decisions that can be made to affect the upcoming.

Toni Morrison's fiction

Toni Morrison's novels are not just art for art's sake, but they are political as well. Indeed, she even used to say that the best art was political and purposely provoking. Her works are tools for the dissemination of cultural knowledge, filling a void once occupied by storytelling. Replacing classical, mythological, archetypal stories heard by her ancestors, she is responsible for engendering cultural coherence and cohesion by retrieving and interpreting the past, as much as Octavia Butler does.

To achieve this goal Morrison integrates life and art by fastening her works in the folkways that echo the rhythms of African-American life. Her stories encode myths about flying Africans - as does Marshall in *Praise Song* - and tales of tar babies, simulating the ethos of folk communities that seem so familiar to most readers. While identifying with her readers Morrison achieves intimacy

with them. She wants her audience to dialogue, to join her in the labor of constructing meaning in her writing by soliciting a dynamic response. She seems to write especially for black women, since they are the sufferers of the triple discrimination of class, gender, and color. By the way, most black women writers, past and present, have this characteristic in their fiction. Like Avery Johnson in Paule Marshall, Shug Avery and Sophia in Alice Walker, Miss Blue Ray in Sapphire, Lena and Beneatha Young in Lorraine Hansberry, Dana in Octavia Butler, Janie Starks in Zora Neale Huston and many more, each of them writes within a decolonizing perspective.

Another important trait in Morrison's fiction is motion. Her characters speculate, take risks, and seek. They are always moving away. As Jan Furman says,

Sometimes the movement follows the historical migration
of blacks out of slavery, out of the postwar South to the
industrial North, or the movement may be in reverse, from
the North to the
South. They [...] in search for something. [...] Yet seldom is the object of their
quest realized. More often than not the journey ends in isolation and
alienation. (1996, p.7)

In Morrison's fiction mythic truths are re-energized, examined, and passed on, keeping the reader in touch with black American and African traditions - in the same way Marshall does in *Praise Song for the Widow* - as if she wants to say that only through conscious historical connection self-reliant people can attain happiness and completeness. In African-American tradition, the primitive, animistic beliefs originated in Africa were mixed to the Western scientific positivism and thus gave birth to a new kind of crossbreeding reality. Morrison's most useful tool in finding the truth beyond the merely phenomenally and sensorially perceived reality is imagination. The fiction writer acts as a sort of mediator, arbitrating between the community of the living and the transempirical reality. Notwithstanding, this type of literature will not be simply fantastic. Although supernatural phenomena are proper of Morrison's novels, the stories are based on the characters' ordinary lives, and it is only through the writer's narrative artistry that these lives are involved in a magical atmosphere to intrigue and surprise us as much as if we were dealing with fantastic elements. As Begoña Simal González observes, "Morrison does not set the realistic thesis (the possible) against the fantastic antithesis (the supernatural), but goes further, towards the "magic reality" (the strange and untoward), that is, the synthesis beyond that opposition." (1996, p.314)

As to the thematic sphere, literary and cultural values are de-centralized or de-colonized, and, without totally casting aside the Western heritage, Morrison gives preeminence and voice to marginal cultures, and to anything considered unpredictable, exceptional, or weird. The choice of her characters itself bears witness to this tendency, even collectively they give us the variety, color, and spontaneity that she could see in her youth. My perception is that Magical realism, contrary to what Morrison believed and once said, mirrors a revolutionary attitude, both linguistically and thematically, enforcing the idea of the author's political engagement. It stands up for the counterculture of imagination that creates new visions of the world and leaves no room for oppression and imprisonment. The genre, therefore, channels and conjures up the birth of a collective conscience which is both more mature and more deeply committed to change the readers' perception of reality, with the goal of transforming history.

Kindred, Beloved, and teleportation

the phenomenon known as teleportation is the transfer of matter or energy from one point to another without traversing the physical space between them. It is just considered as hypothetical since no one has ever managed to do this. Until presently it has not yet been implemented in the real world. There is no known physical mechanism that would allow such an endeavor. Scientific papers and media articles with the term teleportation typically report on so-called "quantum teleportation", a scheme for information transfer. This is a common theme in science fiction literature, movies, video games, and television, being often compared to time travel.ⁱⁱⁱ

Both *Kindred* and *Beloved* have teleportation as their key magical, supernatural phenomenon. In *Kindred*, Dana - a young black journalist who lives in the 1970's Los Angeles - is teleported back in time to an early 19th century slaveholding plantation in the Pre-War South. In *Beloved*, the homonymous character - the phantom of a baby girl killed by her own scaping mother to prevent her of being recaptured and taken to slavery again - comes back in time and reappears home eighteen years later, looking like the young woman she would be if she were alive.

Both novels use elements of magical realism to tell their stories but for sure time-travel is used with the purpose of looking at slavery from a modern perspective, and to illustrate the clear difference between being free and being a

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slave, especially if you are a black woman. The use of ghosts and other supernatural elements, mainly in *Beloved*, brings to light a disturbing feature, but you are so mesmerized that you cannot really overthrow it.

I absolutely agree to González (1996) when she says that *Beloved* expects a lot more out of you as a reader than *Kindred*. I think that part of this assumption is because Morrison's heroine, Beloved, was a real victim of slavery in the South while Dana, on the contrary, was just supposed to be a slave in her moments of teleportation; as she herself says next page, they (she and Kevin) "weren't really in" slavery times (p.98). Both books are heavy in their subject matter, and cause you to think about facts, characters, and conceptualizations that you would not normally think about, and this way both books are succeed in their goals.

Kindred has a very enthralling storyline, and you are so fascinated in reading it that you want to keep reading until the last page just to know what happens. *Beloved*'s plot moves slowly, and gloomier, though it is equally as fascinating. The language used in *Beloved* is engaging, perhaps more than anything else in the book. Although its dialogues are complex, the words seem to portray a kind of spell for themselves, with that sad tune in which every sentence, nearly every word is a work of art, even when they are having quite simple conversations. In her dialogue with Paul D on the death of Baby Suggs, her mother-in-law, Sethe says that

"Well, long enough to see Baby Suggs, anyway. Where is she?"
"Dead." "Aw no. When?" "Eight years now. Almost nine."
I hope she didn't die hard." Sethe shook her head.
alive was the hard part. Sorry you missed her though. Is that what
you came by for?" (MORRISON, 2012, pp 3-4 emphasis added)

In *Kindred* the ideas, abstractions, and concepts stated have the power to enchant the reader as well. Let us look examine the passage below, in which she gives us a neat idea of what is to be a mere spectator of slavery:

And I began to realize why Kevin and I fit so easily into this
time. **We weren't really in.** We were observers watching a
show. We were watching history happen around us. And we were actors.
While we waited to go home, we humored the people around us by
pretending to be like them. But we were poor actors. **We never really got**
into our roles. We never forgot that we were acting.
(BUTLER, 1979, p. 98. Emphasis added)

Once again, I subscribe to González's words (1996) when she says that she sees a lot of connections between *Kindred* and *Beloved*, from their use of female black protagonists to the incorporation of supernatural elements - and here I would add hints of magical realism and African incantation as well - not to mention the fact that both narratives take place in similar settings. On the plot level, it is important to observe that both Dana and Sethe are put under circumstances or situations where they are forced to make sacrificial decisions, whether they are on their own expense or on those they love. In *Kindred*, teleportation appears to me not only an aspect among others of magical realism, but, more than this, the feeling of some African incantation, what makes African-American women writers such as Butler, Morrison, Marshall, and others transport themselves to past history, to revive the customs and traditions of their African ancestry, as if they wanted to impregnate themselves with that magic aura:

...I began to feel dizzy, nauseated. The room
seemed to blur and darken around me. "Something
is wrong with me", I gasped. [...] The house, the books,
everything vanished. Suddenly, **I was outdoors** kneeling on the
ground beneath trees. It was in a green place. I was at the edge of a woods.
Before me was a wild tranquil river, and near the middle of that river was
a child splashing, screaming... Drowning!
(Op. cit., p.13. Emphasis added)

In *Beloved*, though in a more intriguing way, Sethe, Denver, and Paul D. encounter the spectrum of Sethe's murdered baby girl Beloved, this time as a fully dressed young woman that had simply walked out of the water:

"What might be your name?", asked Paul D. "Beloved", said she, and
her voice was so low and rough that each one looked at the other two. They

heard the voice first – latter the name. “Beloved. You use a last name, Beloved?” Paul D asked her. “Last?”, she seemed puzzled. Then “no”, and she spelled it for them, although the letters were being formed as she spoke them [...] In the middle of Sethe’s welcome, Beloved had fallen asleep again. [...] Sometimes, when Beloved lay dreamy-eyed for a very long time, saying nothing, licking her lips and heaving deep sighs, Denver panicked. “What is it?”, she would ask. “**Heavy**”, murmured Beloved, “**this place is heavy**”. (MORRISON, 2012, pp. 30-2 Emphasis added)

Apart from the unnatural phenomenon of teleportation, both novels feature the brutal reality of being a black woman in the slavery era, however, as I told previously, *Beloved* does this in a deeper, more sobering way. I think that Beloved really does not hold back when it comes to portraying slavery, and the desperate measures that a person undergoes to make sure their children will not have to become slaves again. With *Kindred*, Butler is intentionally giving us a picture of a plantation that is not the most brutal imaginable, even to create or introduce some ambiguities or because Dana is not, as says, “really in” (p. 98). The plantation Sethe and her children escaped from was not supposed to be the worst imaginable place, either, but since we’re getting the perspective from a slave, and not from an outsider taking on the “light version” of slavery, it seems a lot worse, mainly if we remember the brutality of Sethe’s rape.

Another feature to take note is that, as I told before, both authors present situations in which the main woman characters must take difficult decisions and make hard choices, mainly for the wellbeing or safety of others. In *Kindred*, to save Alice and her mother from being caught and hurt by the patrollers, Dana offers to help them, even under the imminence of being captured as a slave or hardly slashed, as she actually was:

I would be sold into slavery because I didn’t have the stomach to defend myself in the most effective way. [...] He reached out and ripped my blouse open. Buttons flew everywhere, but **I didn’t move**. [...] “They were my ancestors. Even the damn parasite, the patroller, saw the resemblance between me and Alice’s mother.” [...] I’ll tell you... **I wouldn’t dare act as though they weren’t my ancestors. I wouldn’t let anything happen to them,** the boy or girl, if I could possibly prevent it.” (BUTLER, op. cit., pp.42-7. Emphasis added)

In *Beloved* things do not happen so differently. The extraordinary capacity that black women must sacrifice in the name of love is evident in both novels. In Morrison’s narrative, indeed, Sethe kills her baby girl aged only two and tries to do the same to her other three kids because in an extreme paradox of motherly love, she wants to put them in a place where “no one could hurt them, where they would be safe” (MORRISON, 2012, p. 163) What woman would be able to do such a choice? What woman would be daring enough to act like her? Through Sethe’s characterization, Morrison comes back to the first flashes of insight awakened by the fragments: She is the kind of woman that loved her children deeper than she loved herself. She put all her life’s value in something of her own, her children.

Thus, she picks up “every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious, and fine, and beautiful” (p.163) and takes them to the woods. At last, everyone would be there, out of this world, in the only place where they could be safe. It is necessary to love so deeply as to kill her own flesh and see them go away in the name of their safety, although one knows that his/her heart will be broken forever. Sethe’s own suffering does not matter for her. She refutes all commitment to her motherhood: she gave them birth and they are her exclusively property. She will not see them back into slavery. They are the best thing she has ever had. Whites may even dispose of her, humiliate her, injure her; everything is acceptable, but they will not have her best part. Her purer part, the holiest part, the most beautiful and magical thing she has ever owed. (p.251) Morrison’s works, as she remarks in her essay “The Site of Memory”, “frequently falls in the minds of most people, into that realm of fiction called fantastic, or mythic, or magical, or unbelievable” (ZINSSER, 1987, p. 112). For her, though, these narratives are thought as black “enchantment”, that she uses to be more trustworthy to the world and lives of black people. In addition to the special way in which black folks do things and survive things, there is the innate knowledge, or perception, always discredited but still there, which informs their sensibilities and clarifies their activities. *Beloved* contextualizes the above comments, but in my opinion, *Kindred* does not contemplate these aspects in so passionately a way. In Morrison’s novel, an ambling child who is reincarnated as a young woman with new skin, rudimentary language, breath that smells of fresh milk, and the yearnings and moods of

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an infant is indeed fantastic; but it is also likelihood. It endorses Sethe's claims that she is a strong mother who will protect her children in life and in death. When she killed her baby girl, she meant her not to merely disappear, but to another dimension from which she turns back of her own free desire. As Furman (1996) observes,

This scenario saves the novel from becoming a melodramatic tale of murder and pathos (although one could not imagine Morrison authoring such stuff). Sethe transcends the limitation placed upon her in slavery and becomes the agent of her own fate. In this plot Sethe is not subject to any authority outside herself – not Schoolteacher's, Paul D's, Stam Paid's or anyone else's in the community. **By the same token she is also not subject to any conventional punishment.** (pp. 81-2. Emphasis added)

Launching the inner lives of her characters, carries with it enormous responsibility for the author. She is maintaining an ongoing script of slavery that begun over three centuries ago by the first slave narratives, and this is to be made in a straightforward way. Morrison's characters take the place of all those slaves and preceding slaves who were buried without funeral ceremonies, remembrances, or recognition. It is on this point that *Kindred* diverges from *Beloved* a little bit. Butler's narrative, although sustaining traits of the fantastic and magical reality, do not attain the complex task Morrison's work does in recovering the past by inserting those unbearable, unspeakable memories absent from her ancestors' real narratives. The enchantments of *Black Life*, broadly speaking, mean the essence of joy and pain, love and hate, power, and weakness within the shells of blackness that walk this Earth. Butler, but especially Morrison, have this intense ability to feel the feelings deep inside the Black Community core.

Final words:

Maybe the cause through which African spell is more evident in Morrison is the fact that she writes to revive the history of chattel slavery, while Butler writes from a more contemporary point of view, without so many decolonial insights. Teleportation in both novels is a resource used by both authors to intercede in future actions enacted by their respective protagonists: "I'll tell you... I wouldn't dare act as though they weren't my ancestors. I wouldn't let anything happen to them, the boy or girl, if I could possibly prevent it" (BUTLER, 1979, p.47).

"Just ahead, at the edge of the stream, Denver could see her silhouette, standing barefoot in the water, lifting her black skirts up above her calves, the beautiful head lowered in rapt attention". (MORRISON, 1987, p. 105). The first story mixes the impossibility of Dana's time travel with the factual history of the slave era in the antebellum south. In some respects, it reminds me of Toni Morrison's novel. Although these stories are very different, they both mix the factual elements of slavery in the United States and the mystical characteristics of time travel. In *Beloved*, Beloved mysteriously appears at Sethe and her daughter Denver's house. She is believed to be a reincarnation of Sethe's daughter who was killed many years earlier because Sethe's previous owner came to bring her back to the south. Throughout *Beloved*, the main characters struggle to understand Beloved's real identity and begin to question the situation around them. Beloved, if she is even Sethe's daughter, acts as a constant reminder that Sethe can't ever really escape slavery and the impact it has had on her life. *Kindred* reveals us a Dana who is also forced to understand and confront her own distant history through being physically thrown into the middle of it. Both books highlight the inescapable impact that slavery has had on American history and those involved, even if it happens generations later. Also, as a reader, you are attempting to understand the time travel as well as the main characters do. Even at the end of the novel, Beloved's identity is still unclear, leaving the reader with some questionings.

Even some time before the final chapter Dana is gradually discovering the ways of her time travel, while the reader is trying to grasp it so far in the book. This, contrasted with the historical aspect of each scenario, is what draws the reader into the texts and forces him/her to be always alert, constantly trying to figure out what is real.

As Morrison herself assures, to the eyes of the public, the work she frequently does pours out into the realm of the fantastic, the mythic or the magic, or even into the unbelievable. She doesn't seem to be at ease with these labels because they suggest a rupture with truth and her main responsibility is not to lie. She prefers to call this aspect of her work "enchantment", because it seems to her a more appropriate term to express not only her worldview, but also the view of the negroes with whom she lived all her life. These raids that break out the natural law of things and tend to provoke hesitation in the reader may lead him/her to a possible reading of these books via a westernized criticism, framing them as fantastic literature by the occurrence of the unusual.

To my understanding, however, the construction of such hypothesis is founded on other pillars, if one takes into consideration the force of the elements of nature, the changing of the phenomena that modify the natural order of

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things, the creed in entities able to intervene in the characters' routine etc. They are strategies conceived by *amodus operandi* that reveals the way of thinking, being, and existing of a certain community whose origins come from the African Diaspora.

The insertion of unpredictability, that is, of the strange element in these novels, seems to get closer to what one conceives as "realismo animista", a term created by the Angolan writer Pepetela which is dealt in several African narratives.¹ Garuba sees the necessity for an "African proper concept" for such classification, since the African writers have their own conception of world, death, life, and time different from that brought by the colonizer between the 15th and 20th centuries. He uses the term "realismo animista" to nominate a tendency in African fiction that, in his view, is much broader than magical realism:

If magical realism is characterized by an attempt to capture reality through a multidimensional view of the world, visible and invisible, the animist logic subverts and destabilizes the hierarchy of Science over the magic and the secular narrative of modernity reabsorbing the historical time in the matrices of myth and magic, animism explains the African world, where the "natural" lives with the "supernatural", being both real for various African peoples, but, one visible, and the other not.² (GARUBA, 2003. P.284)

This way, the post-colonial African writer assumes the role of a neo-historian, neo-anthropologist, and neo-ethnologist, spokesperson for his/her ethnicities, nations, and of his/her own continent. Not always the looks and concepts brought by foreign colonizer adequate properly to the colonized realities, indeed different. The African authors, through their enunciative locus, allow themselves the role to suit elements whose concepts vary between the viewpoint of dominators and dominated. The proposal of a new specific concept for the African literatures in front of other concepts, namely the Fantastic, the Magic, and the Marvelous, started to be discussed in Brazil with the advent of post-colonial studies, around the 90's. Since then, the notions and the look of African texts centered around a European theoretical bias and aesthetics began to have a differentiated theoretical basis and were eventually questioned as such.

Notes:

ⁱ This and the subsequent citations were translated from Portuguese by me.

ⁱⁱ "Subversive realities: Magical realism as a decolonial agent in speculative fiction" - Texas Tech University. Available at <https://ttu-ir.tdl.org/handle/2346/73795>, Access in June 3, 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ The term "teleport" is used to describe the movement of material objects between one place and another without physically traversing the distance between them. It has been documented as early as 1878. American writer Charles Fort is credited with having coined the word "teleportation" in 1931 to describe the strange disappearances and appearances of anomalies, which he suggested may be connected. The achievement of this phenomenon is

¹ The term encompasses the idea of a specific literary genre proposed to be applied to the African literatures facing concepts as fantastic realism, magical realism, and marvelous realism. The expression was created by the Angolan writer Pepetela in his novel *Lueji* (1989). African scholars, like the Nigerian critic Henry Garuba (2003) and the Angolan Henrique Abranches study the theme. In the English language criticism, authors like Mark Mathuray (2009) understand the term for the African anglophone literatures as "sacred realism".

² Se o realismo mágico caracteriza-se por uma tentativa de capturar a realidade através de uma visão multidimensional do mundo, visível e invisível, a lógica animista subverte e desestabiliza a hierarquia da ciência sobre o mágico e a narrativa secular da modernidade, reabsorvendo o tempo histórico nas matrizes do mito e da mágica. O animismo explica o mundo africano, onde o mundo 'natural' convive com o 'sobrenatural', ambas sendo realidade para vários povos africanos, porém, uma visível e a outra não.

questionable because any transfer of matter from one point to another without traversing the physical space between them violates Newton's laws, a cornerstone of physics.

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