Dramatizing trauma in resistance to post-colonial hegemonic culture: a magic(al) realist reading of Toni Morrison's Beloved, Love and Frida Kahlo's selected paintings.

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DRAMATIZING TRAUMA IN RESISTANCE TO POST-COLONIAL
HEGEMONIC CULTURE: A MAGIC(AL) REALIST READING OF TONI
MORRISON’S BELOVED, LOVE AND FRIDA KAHLO’S SELECTED PAINTINGS

By

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B.A., Heilongjiang University, 2003
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A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
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A Dissertation Approved on

August 7, 2015

By the following Dissertation Committee:

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Osborne Wiggins

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David Ross Anderson

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Mary Makris
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

my grandfather FENG Ruitian,

my parents FENG Shaowu, TIAN Shulian, my husband JI Anqi and

my daughter JI Ruiling

with love.
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First and foremost, I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my director, Dr. Annette Allen, for her constructive comments and constant support throughout this work. She was always there to talk about my works and to give advice. Additionally, her thorough and meticulous editing of this dissertation was most appreciated.

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ABSTRACT

DRAMATIZING TRAUMA IN RESISTANCE TO POST-COLONIAL HEGEMONIC CULTURE: A MAGIC(AL) REALIST READING OF TONI MORRISON’S BELOVED, LOVE AND FRIDA KAHLO’S SELECTED PAINTINGS

FENG Yi

August 7, 2015

The purpose of this cross-disciplinary dissertation is to explore how magic(al) realist techniques are applied in Toni Morrison’s Beloved and Love and Frida Kahlo’s selected paintings to dramatize the traumas experienced in post-colonial period, and how the artists resist the cultural hegemony through their art works. From the magic(al) realist and Gramscian point of view, the dissertation focuses on 1) the similar situations and cultural hegemony of African Americans and Frida Kahlo had experienced; 2) why and how Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo chose and used magic(al) realist techniques in their art works to dramatize the traumas; and 3) how
Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo resist the cultural hegemony by applying magic(al) realist techniques in their art works.

The results show that in the post-colonial period, African Americans and Frida Kahlo were influenced by the hegemonic culture and the traumas they experienced were caused by colonization and cultural hegemony. Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo aimed at arousing the awareness of the marginalized people in such situation. Therefore, both of the outstanding artists applied magic(al) realist techniques in Toni Morrison’s novels *Beloved* and *Love* and Frida Kahlo’s selected paintings to exaggerate the physical and psychological traumas that African Americans and Frida Kahlo had gone through.

In *Beloved* and *Love*, Toni Morrison dealt with traumas took place on African American women caused by colonialism and Euro-American hegemonic culture. In order to depict the pain to the most, Toni Morrison blended the boundary between the practical world and magical world, to make it possible to the readers to share the sufferings that African American women went through in the colonial and post-colonial period. Toni Morrison did not stop at depicting the traumas, she in fact used magic(al) techniques to bring the dead back to the world to dramatize the traumas and focused on the causes for these traumas, that was, the hegemonic culture in colonialism and pot-colonialism. By writing the novels with these techniques, Toni Morrison resisted the post-colonial hegemonic culture.

Not like Toni Morrison, who described collective traumas of African Americans;
Frida Kahlo portrayed her own physical and psychological traumas by applying magic(al) realist techniques in her selected paintings. She integrated Mexican indigenous cultural heritage and pre-Columbian images in her paintings to resist the influence from the hegemonic culture. She rejected standard western concept of beauty in paintings by combining magical objects with objects in real world.
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Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo are two outstanding figures in their own artistic field, one in literature and the other in painting. Toni Morrison was the first African American woman who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and Frida Kahlo was one of the most influential female painters in Mexico whose portraits of her physical traumas were so strong that they attracted scholars around the world to focus on her and her works. The reason for putting these two major accomplished female artists of the twentieth century together in this dissertation is that they both developed and used their artistic representations of self and history to resist hegemonic culture. Both of them addressed personal and collective trauma through the strategy of magic(al) realism.¹ This dissertation aims at exploring how magic(al) realism became an important avenue to depict and dramatize individual and collective trauma in the post-colonial context, and by using these techniques, they provided the audience new insights about perceiving the prevailing culture.

¹ Maggie Ann Bowers believes that her term ‘magic(al) realism’ is a combination of ‘magic realism’ and ‘magical realism’, and much suitable to use when dealing with different genres of art, such as literature, painting, and even films.
Social and Cultural Background

The topic under investigation has close relationship with what Franz Roh, the inventor of the term, calls magic realism. One century has almost past, but this term blurred ‘magical realism’ and ‘marvellous realism’ when applied to literature most of the time. The subtle difference was carefully examined by Maggie Ann Bowers in 2004 in her book *Magic(al) Realism* and the confusion has been clarified, which provides this investigation with its conceptual tool. As Bowers suggests, magical realism is a term referring to a particular narrative mode (1).² And magic realism is the term translated from the German origin. With its origin from the German art critic Franz Roh, it has its first appliance in the field of painting. Magical realism gets much more popular and focuses on literature when Alejo Carpentier, the forerunner of Magical Realism in Latin America, introduced this term to Latin America and called it “*lo real maravilloso* (the Marvelous Real)” in his article “On the Marvelous Real in America.” The later studies and discussions done by scholars and critics related to magical realism mostly emphasize its literary aspect and its relation to political contributions. Ever since then, magical realism has become more and more popular in the academic field, especially in literary studies. Since the author of this paper will include Toni Morrison, the writer, and Frida Kahlo, the painter, as the research objects, the author will apply Bowers’ term ‘magic(al) realism’ in the paper from here on to indicate the interdisciplinary feature of the

² Maggie Ann Bowers believes that among ‘magic realism’, ‘magical realism’ and ‘marvellous realism’, the term ‘magical realism’ has become the most popularly used one, referring to a particular narrative mode.
Background information on Magic(al) Realism

Magic(al) Realism has a long and complicated history that spans for more than eight decades. It influenced two continents and hundreds of literary and artistic figures. The development of magic(al) realism can be divided into two main periods. The first period is the beginning of magic(al) realism set in the Germany in the 1920s, and the second period started in Latin America in 1940s, continuing world-wide to the present. The most influential figures for the development include German art critic Franz Roh, the Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier, the Latin American literary critic Angel Flores and the Latin American novelist Gabriel García Márquez.

Tracing back to the 1920s, the German art critic Franz Roh proposed the idea of *Magischer Realismus* which was later translated into English as magic realism. The concept of magic realism, in its very root, related to the painting of the Weimar Republic. During the 1920s, a new trend of painting tried to capture the mystery of everyday life behind the surface of reality.

It was called ‘post-expressionism’ at that time. In Roh’s 1925 book, he proposed a list of twenty-two characteristics that differentiate magic realism from...
expressionism, including the expressionist warmth of color and rough, thick texture of the paint surface, the emphasis of the painting process and the spontaneous effect of the expressionist as opposed to the smooth, carefully constructed, cool photographic quality of magic realist painting (Bowers 12).

At first, Roh focused on the ‘new objects’ which could separate the new trend of painting in the 1920s from Expressionism, since the emergence of new objects and even the absence of some objects are important for studying the art. In his opinion, the magic realism, although with the ‘magic’ in the term, is a trend of returning to Realism after Expressionism’s abstract style. The new trend of painting in the 1920s was thoroughly of this world that celebrated the mundane (Zomora 17). Roh used George Grosz and Otto Dix as the examples and pointed out that their thematic focus on everyday life presented the “inextinguishable horrors of our own time” (ibid). In the very beginning of his theory, Roh was not quite definite about the name for the new trend. He sometimes called it Post-Expressionism, which differed from its precedent movements: Impressionism and Expressionism. And sometimes he named it as New Realism to indicate that it is a new trend in the art field.

In Franz’s time, the new trend didn’t have a settled name, and different scholars named it differently, including Magic Realism by Franz Roh and New Objectivity by Gustav Hartlaub. And different names indicate different focuses on the study of the new trend. Hartlaub focused on the idyllic and political aspects of the trend, whereas Franz Roh paid more attention to the aesthetic and stylistic angles of it (Zomora 33).
The widespread of magic realism was due to many scholars besides Franz Roh. The first important person in popularizing magic realism was Italian writer Massimo Bontempelli, who founded the bilingual magazine *900.Novecento*. He was influenced by magic realism and devoted the magazine to magic realist writing and criticism. He applied the magic realistic thought to the writings instead of painting. He has been “cited as the first magic creative writer” (Bowers 14). And because of the bilingual nature of the magazine, his influence and thought was European-wide.

Influenced by this Europe-wide artistic movement, the diplomat and writer, Alejo Carpentier (1904-80) buried himself in European art and literature at the time. After returning from Europe to Cuba, he travelled in Haiti and he encouraged a distinctive Latin American form of magic realism, which he called ‘*lo real maravilloso*’ (the marvelous realism). He clearly realized the differences between European and Latin American context, and saw the need for art to express the non-material aspects of life, which was best suited to compare magic realism with surrealism, which also dominated the European art circle.

He used this term to show his belief that in Latin America the appreciation of reality was extraordinary and unique. In the prologue to his novel *El reino de este mundo* (*The Kingdom of This World*), he expressed his idea of marvelous reality as ‘the heritage of all of America’ instead of belonging to Haiti alone (Carpentier 87). He believed that because of the varied history, geography and politics, Latin America had the virtue of a mixture of different cultural systems and various experiences.
While some of the Western Europe art forms lost their magical evocative power, the contemporary American art forms still embodied the deep ritual sense and maintained the magical power transplanted from Europe. And Carpentier gave a specific example of the folk dance to support his proposal.

With the return of Carpentier from Europe to Latin America, the 1940s witnessed the maturation of many American countries and many writers sought to create and express a consciousness distinct from that of Europe.\(^4\) Carpentier was such a writer, who wrote books such as Cuban musical history to search for origins of their own ‘marvelous reality’.

While both magic realism and marvelous realism intermingled with each other and referred to different genres of art, including paintings and literary works, a new term ‘magical realism’ was proposed in the 1955 essay ‘Magical Realism in Spanish American Fiction’ by the critic Angel Flores. He denied the transportation of magic realism from Europe to Latin America, and believed that magical realism is a continuation of Spanish literature. He believed that Borges’ book *A Universal History of Infamy*, published in 1935, was the landmark for Hispanic American narrative. Also he considered a number of works written by Latin American writers as magical realist ones, and he concluded the common characteristics of them as “a transformation of common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal” (Flores 113). What’s more, to describe the characteristics, he adds that “time exists in

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\(^4\) This is a quotation from Echevarria’s *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* in Bowers *Magic(al) Realism*. The original version is Spanish and the author has to quote second-hand.
a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality” (ibid. 114).

From Roh to Flores, almost thirty years have passed and a formal definition has not been agreed on for magical realism yet. However, Flores did provide some insights in his study and suggested that magical realists

cling to reality as if to prevent ‘literature’ from getting in their way, as if to prevent their myth from flying off…The narrative proceeds in well-prepared, increasingly intense steps, which ultimately may lead to one great ambiguity or confusion…All the magical realists have this in common (116).

Though Flores gave many examples and includes many writers to support his proposal that magical realism was started in Latin America, many scholars did not accept it for the following reasons. First, currently the common accepted origin of magical realism is the art critic Franz Roh, who designated the pictorial output of the Postexpressionist period in around 1925, instead of a later start from 1935, marked by Borges’ book *A Universal History of Infamy*. Second, whether magical realist narrative is influenced by Kafka is not settled. Some scholars, such as Capentier and Flores, believe that Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1916) is an example of magical realism, since Gregor Samsa’s transformation into a cockroach is accepted by the characters in the novel almost as a normal event and arouse very little frightening feelings.
However, as Luis Leal puts it, the key point for being a magical work lies in the attitude, which “can be expressed in popular or cultured forms, in elaborate or rustic styles, in closed or open structures” and “confronts reality and tries to untangle it, to discover what is mysterious in things, in life, in human acts” (Faris 121). Based on his theory, the transformation of Samsa into a cockroach in Kafka’s story is an “invention of intolerable situation” (Borges) and the characters’ attitude toward reality is not magic because they believe the circumstance intolerable and reject it. But in other representative magical realist works like One Hundred Years of Solitude by García Márquez, the characters in the story did not find anything wrong or problematic and took all the magical facts for granted.  

Background information on Post-colonialism

As we all know, the Great Britain exerted its world-wide domination since the fifteenth century. During the nineteenth century, Britain became the largest imperial power and, at the beginning of the twentieth century, it occupied one quarter of the world’s surface, including South America and most parts of Africa. And this occupation did not end until the end of World War II, beginning with the independence of India in 1947. Therefore, from the fifteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, one quarter of the world’s continents were colonized mainly

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5 However, García Márquez did list Kafka and James Joyce among his influences (Connell 1998:98).
by Britain, and some parts by other European countries.

With the independence of former colonized countries, postcolonial criticism became a major focus in literary criticism in the 1990s. As a theoretical framework, postcolonial criticism focuses on the analysis of ideological forces that both pushed the colonized to internalize the colonizer’s value and promoted the resistance of the colonized against the colonizer. Since ideology of colonialism and post-colonialism can be presented in any literary works, a work does not have to be classified as postcolonial literature in order to use postcolonial criticism to analyze it. Therefore this dissertation is not typically using postcolonial research.

Colonization can be classified into two aspects, namely, the actual ruling of the colonized places and the cultural or psychological colonization of the ruled people. The former one is easy to finish, with the removal of the ruling country’s military forces and government. However, what has been left is the latter one. People of former colonies were deeply implanted with the colonizer’s culture and values, and thus they had a negative self-evaluation and alienation from their own cultures, which were forbidden or devalued for many years. And this influence would last for so long that even decades after their emancipation and liberation, people of pre-colonized places still had problems with their self-images and self-identity. One reason for this was that the colonialist thinking was based on the assumption that colonizers were superior to the colonized. The colonizers believed that their Anglo-European culture was the only civilized and developed metropolitan culture
compared with the so-called savage, backward and undeveloped colonized native culture. And this belief, actually, was based on the comparatively more advanced technology that British industry owned at the time. With modern weapons, they rushed into undeveloped regions and countries, announcing that they were the center of the world and the colonized were only marginal. They considered themselves as the civilized and proper representatives of the human, and colonized native people as different and savages. They assumed that those who were different were “others” and this practice of judging the different as inferior is called “othering”. Since the inferior were believed to be less civilized and possibly belonging to another species, sometime they were considered by the colonizers as not-fully-human.

In order to keep their superiority, Britain shaped colonial schools ideologically and pervasively to brainwash the indigenous people with British culture and values. Therefore, the colonized people were taught to believe in British superiority and their own inferiority. Actually, this project was so successful that a large number of colonized persons became what we call the colonial subjects. Many of them tried to imitate the colonizers in dress, behavior, life style and even wanted to have white people’s appearance,6 and this is a phenomenon which is named as mimicry by postcolonial critics. According to postcolonial theory, the colonized usually has double consciousness, that is to say, a consciousness of perceiving the world from within divided cultures: the colonizers’ and their own indigenous community.

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6 Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* is a depiction of such ideology and the tragedy caused by it.
Double consciousness often led to an unstable sense of self. They had problems of belonging, since they were caught between two cultures, rather than in the two cultures. Homi Bhabha and some other theorists called this as “unhomeliness” (1994, 9), which was different from homeless. This feeling of cultural displacement caused trauma to those who were in such a situation. The crisis of self-identity made them feel unhomed even thought they were in their home physically but their psychology was confined.

Colonized writers, who wanted to express this feeling of unhomeliness, either used English which they were taught since their birth, or expressed it in their indigenous language first and then translated it into English. With all those works by native authors, it is unfair to say that the cultural influence was in one direction. Actually, European culture was influenced by the previously colonized cultures by the same token. For example, Picasso’s paintings were greatly affected by his study of African masks. In addition, most cultures changed when different cultures met and collapsed. Therefore, many theorists view the problem of the unstable self or postcolonial identity as a dynamic hybrid of native and colonial cultures. However, in a shrinking world in the last century and now, this hybridity can be both traumatic, productive and a positive force since the world is getting more and more hybrid.

Also, many postcolonial critics noticed that there were a number of similarities between the issues examined by the feminist and postcolonial theorists. Above all, the patriarchal subjugation of women is analogous to colonial subjugation of
indigenous populations (Lois Tyson 370). The subjugated women and colonized people faced almost the same problems, where gaining independence and self-identity and pursuing political power and the right to speak on their own were far more difficult than for the men and the ruling class. Thus, post-colonized women were under double oppressions and the reason was simple. First, they were devalued for their race, and second, they were devalued for their gender.

The colonized people were oppressed as a whole by the colonizers; however, within their own indigenous culture, the society discriminated against the female as well. Women had less access to education, salaries and even international aid programs. Women in postcolonial cultures had to work much harder than the men, but earned much less than them and possessed the least property.

In a word, the problem of cultural identity was analyzed by postcolonial criticism from the perspective of its dynamic and hybrid forms. Although the beginning of postcolonial study focused more on the analysis of ideology and psychology, scholars moved on to the genre of literature, and it soon became an useful tool for interpreting postcolonial literature using the following themes: 1) the topic of mimicry, which means the colonized people wanted to imitate the dress, behavior, speech and lifestyle of the colonizers; 2) the topic of oppression in all forms from the colonizers and the double consciousness of the colonized people, and 3) the topic related to the confrontation of self-identity and hybridity. Besides, the author’s attitude towards the colonization was also a research topic, whether it is
colonialist or anti-colonialist. That is to say, a literary work can either reinforce the colonialism’s oppression or resist the ideological and cultural changes that the colonizers tried to embed into the indigenous people. The latter focuses on the misdeeds of the colonizers, the trauma that the colonizers suffered or the oppression that colonizers brought to the colonized. Homi Bhabha, in his *The Location of Culture*, not only gives an example for the study in terms of national traditions, but also offers a cutting point for the study in terms of postcolonial themes that get through national boundaries. For example, Bhabha suggested that literature could be studied in terms of the different way cultures have experienced historical trauma, such as slavery, or the loss of cultural identity. He said in the book that “the center of such study focuses on the unspoken, unrepresented pasts that haunt the historical present” (12). That is, scholars could study the personal experience of people whose history has been ignored—the marginalized and the unhomed—such as the works of African American writer Toni Morrison, and to reveal the trauma and use them to fight against the prevailing culture.

For example, Bhabha believes that Morrison’s *Beloved* is an unhomely novel,⁷ for the female character, Sethe, lived in between cultures. In order to protect her baby daughter from the abuses of a cruel slave master, Sethe killed her little daughter, who was just an infant then. According to Bhabha, Sethe was marginalized: first as a woman of color living in a period when slavery was legal; second as a sinner whose

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⁷ Homi Bhabha used Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story* as examples of critical explorations that racism and apartheid; they created the unhomely feeling. See the introduction of his *The Location of Culture*. 
actions placed her outside her own community. This traumatic double oppression told the reader that historical reality was not something that happened only on the battlefield, but it came into everyone’s home and affected people’s daily life in the most profound ways. Marginalized people may be the most aware, since they were oppressed by violence and no one could escape when they were there. What many postcolonial literatures do is to bring the “marginalized” characters or regions to the center of the concern.

The slaves were definitely the most marginalized, for what was left to them was a catastrophic injury to the psyche and the struggle to recover individual and collective identities. Thus, Ogaga Ifowodo suggested that postcolonial history was a history of trauma (2013: 2). Because of this, more writers were concerned about the history of post-colonization, and Toni Morrison was the outstanding one.

Toni Morrison herself is an African American, but the history of African Americans had been inadequately addressed before the late 1960s. This demonstrated that African American history was excluded from official versions of American history before that time. Important historical events for African Americans, such as the slave uprising, the numerous slave rebellions on the plantations, and the network for emancipating the slaves developed right under the noses of the slave masters, were not often focused on official history or literary works.

Because of the promotion of racial discrimination by institutionalized racism, the African American’s concept of beauty adhered to the narrow standard of
Anglo-Saxon beauty. Even though African Americans started to call for self-definition from the late 1960s, they suffered from and many of them are still suffering from internalized racism, which was a result of psychological programming by the previous racist society, in which African Americans were taught to believe in white superiority. African Americans were internalized that “black” was less beautiful, less capable and inferior. Thus one would often dream of having the white look or looking like the white in some way. Toni Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) provides us with a vivid portrait of their psychology. The young black girl, Pecola, firmly believed that she would be pretty, happy and loved if only she had blue eyes, and fully ignored her own beauty.

The worst part of internalized racism was that it also caused intra-racial discrimination, which means discrimination within the black community. Some African Americans may be against those who have darker skin or who have lower social statue. This phenomenon can be seen in *The Bluest Eye*. Between Pecola, who was considered to have dark skin, and Maureen Peal, who was believed to have light color skin, the black youngsters in their community treated the latter as if she were superior to them and to Pecola as well.

In addition to different forms of racism which many African Americans feared, there were African Americans who suffered from double consciousness, that is, the awareness of belonging to two conflicting cultures; namely the black culture and the dominant Euro-American culture. Those who experienced this consciousness had to
show different selves in different social and cultural environments. They had their own black cultural self at home and in their black community; however, they also had to express another cultural self in white-dominated environments and spaces, such as the public places and school. And they even used different languages when they acted different selves, for they spoke Black Vernacular English sometimes at home, and they would have to use standard English in public spaces.

Although the previous discussion focused on the literary language and style, it is also a discussion concerning politics, which are the realities of political, social, and economic power. The language and literary style that African American writers choose cannot be separated from their political views or the writer’s role as a member of an oppressed group.

As a methodology, many female African American writers often use a black woman as the narrator in the novel, intending to show that women had the right to tell their own stories. Besides this, women became the authority to express their own history and their own thoughts. In order to suit the black women’s image, writers also liked to set the environment in the places where black women always appeared, such as the kitchen or other locations related to domestic lives. For example, in Toni Morrison’s Beloved, the first talk between Sethe and Paul D happened in the kitchen when they met again almost twenty years later. And in Love, the will was written on a menu, which was unusual as a legal document but suitable to its logic since the narrator L was a chief.
Till now, we have discussed the postcolonial theory and African American literature separately; however, both postcolonial theory and African American criticism can be applied to African American literature for the following reasons. First, the two theories shared some important features, such as the common focus of analyzing the politics and psychology of domination. And they both try to analyze the resistance that the colonized people have politically and psychologically. Scholars can use African American literature as an example to illustrate the above concerns by analyzing them and their writers. Through this process, critics can see some aspects of literature more clearly and deeply, and to understand culture as a way of relating to oneself and to the world. As the most important lesson lies in the most painful memory, many critics\(^8\) believed that the painful history had the most value. Only by studying those who have suffered the painful history, can we understand the most valuable lessons for living, which is the humanity that appeared in the subjugation, domination and displacement.

Hegemony in both Post-Colonialism and Post-Marxism

As discussed in the previous part, hegemony played an important part in sustaining the power of the ruling class in post-colonialist society. Besides the

\(^8\) Ogaga Ifowodo’s *History, Trauma, and Healing in Postcolonial Narratives* and Jeffrey C. Alexander’s *Trauma: A Social Theory* serve as good examples of this belief. The former book provided a psycho-social examination of the lingering impact of imperialist domination and the analysis was centered on primary texts that explore the African, African American, and Caribbean experiences of slavery and colonialism. In the latter book, Alexander carried out a series of empirical investigations into social suffering around the globe.
violence and the political and economic coercion, the control of the ideology of the ruled class is of the same importance, or even more important because if the ruled class internalized the hegemonic cultural values, it was easy to make them work for the interest of the ruling class.

This idea was proposed by Italian Marxist theoretician and politician Antonio Gramsci, who was best known for his theory *cultural hegemony*. During his imprisonment, Gramsci wrote more than 30 books and 3000 pages of history and analysis, and the collection was named *Prison Notebooks*. Among all the theories he proposed, cultural hegemony was one of the most influential theories in the Marxist theoretical system, and later it was accepted and modified by two other important post-Marxist scholars, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. They co-authored *Hegemony and Social Strategies*, in which they widened the concept of hegemony and detached it from class.

By adopting this profound idea, scholars found a new way to voice their different opinions about the hegemonic culture. They could express their dissent and therefore counter the hegemonic culture by centralizing the marginal and dramatizing the trauma that the marginal had suffered.

In Erisk Uskalis’ “Hegemony, Ideology, and Dissent in Postcolonial Studies”, the author provided several examples of literatures identified as expressions of dissent which form or have formed objects to reveal the way dominant discourses remain untouched. All the following examples were drawn from African contexts:
Ngugi Wa Thiong’O’s formulation of Gikuyu codes as national symbols and the way his texts are dominated by nebulous constructions of the people; the way in which Ayi Kwei Armah ignores the particulars of history in favour of a generalized version (*Two Thousand Seasons*, 1973); Chinua Achebe’s reduction of the historically various to the expression of a single myth (*The Anthills of the Savannah*, 1987); Soyinka’s rewriting of history in the form of selective myths to favour an elite and educated class (*The Interpreters*, 1965); …the way metaphor and symbol are deployed in some of this writing to encode a democratic impulse, thus asserting reform as opposed to revolution.

(30)

Uskalis concluded that literature as a cultural form sometimes carries uncomfortable and contradictory traces of the (ideological and hegemonic) materials it is formed out of. This statement is very suitable to the material of this dissertation. However, Uskalis focused on the literature in African contexts and analyzed the authors in African countries. And in this dissertation the author would like to apply this theoretical frame to the writer and the artist beyond this terrain and to the African American writer Toni Morrison and to the painting area which has not been discussed by other scholars in relation with hegemony. The painter whose paintings
resist the hegemonic definition of western beauty is the outstanding Mexican female painter Frida Kahlo.

In fact, African American writers began their written literary tradition during the eighteenth century, which was an effort by African slaves and freed men and women to prove that they were fully human by writing poetry because the slaveholders had considered that the slaves had no ability of doing so with their inferior intelligence. However, they couldn’t write poetry because they had no right to learning or even reading. When they got the chance to be educated, or the right to learn and read, the African American writers wrote poetry or even autobiographical narratives to show their talents. Black authors have gained many top honors, and Toni Morrison, who won the Nobel Prize in 1993, can serve as a good example of this.

The anti-racist politics of early African American writers made their writings confined to the long history of their struggle for justice. And this topic remained popular until now. The black authors in American literary history were marginalized by the Eurocentric definition of ‘great’ literature, and were also excluded from the American canon. Thus whether or not the white critical theories, most of which have European roots, are suitable for interpreting black literature became a concern for scholars. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. points out that it isn’t fair “to deny [African Americans] the process of exploring and reclaiming our [cultural identity] before we critique it” (“The Master’s Pieces” 32). On the other hand, many African American critics believed that elements from any contemporary critical theories could be
applied by African American criticism. As Henry Louis Gates, Jr. proposes, “any tool that enables the critics to explain the complex workings of the language of a text is an appropriate tool. For it is language, the black language of black texts, that expresses the distinctive quality of our literary tradition” (*Figures in Black* xxi).

Although Gates believed all the literatures to be the same since they were all composed by words, or generally, by language, many black writers argued that African American literature had its own distinctive qualities, which can be traced back to its oral tradition of storytelling and oral history. While other critics suggested that this kind of uniqueness was formed by the blending of both African and European American cultural traditions.

However, no matter which roots it came from, black literature tried to answer the psychological need of slaves and African Americans after their emancipation, “the need to compensate for their powerlessness under slavery” (Lois Tyson 388). Despite the different interpretations of explanations to the unique quality of African American literature, critics agree that there are several historical and sociological themes which are focused on by African American writers. And those themes reflect the realities of political and social power that African American has experienced. Among these themes, the quest for freedom from slavery and other oppression; the trauma that African Americans experienced during the Civil War and Reconstruction; survivor of the combined oppression of racism; classism and sexism are popular ones for African American writers. Actually, Toni Morrison’s novels illustrate these
themes as well, and in her novels, characters were in the negative situations and tried to own the positive aspect of life. In order to do so, many writers tried, by using their literary works, to correct the misinterpretation of African American history and omission of pasts of that history. In addition, they tried and are trying to explore the racism and the trauma the slaves suffered from, or even worse, the combination of racism, classism and patriarchy oppression in black community. And African American women mostly suffered from two conflicting requirements which lead to their dilemma. As African American women, they were required to unite with all the African American men against the racism. However, as women, they were required by their instinct and gender independence to fight against sexist oppression, which was given by white men and black men. Therefore, they had serious psychological problems with their identities, and this became one of the most focused themes for many African American women writers. In order to express this theme fully, African American women writers write stories about the role of skin color, the standard of beauty in the black women’s self-perception. Female African American writers pay more attention to these themes than male African American writers. That’s why Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston wrote novels such as *The Bluest Eye*, *Meridian* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to portray the women, who, either had no ability to change the situation of being oppressed by men and society, or who were finally aware of the possibility of creating a new life through a very harsh process. Also there were women images who were not only aware of the ability of
changing the situation they were in, but also put this awareness into action, discovering their abilities, knowing what they needed and trying to get it. For example, in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Denver went out of their house, seeking help from her former teacher and the community, and finally saved her mother and herself as well.

Background information on Trauma

Trauma has transferred from a simple word to a research focus since early 1980s. It first entered the American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic manual in 1980, which was based largely on symptoms of Vietnam War veterans and since then trauma studies has spread to different fields, such as philosophy, literature and social studies.\(^9\)

Trauma was first diagnosed by Freud when he studied the symptom of the wounded soldier back from World War I and he suggested that there might be a gap in between the conscious and unconscious when the victims went through trauma. The feelings and memories, such as extremely sad or fear, might be repressed by the consciousness and could be triggered sometime later by an accident or flashbacks. This feature was called “latency” by Freud.\(^10\) And there can be other symptoms as

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\(^9\) For example, Jeffrey C. Alexander published *Trauma: A Social Theory* in 2012. In the book, Alexander develops an original social theory of trauma and uses it to carry out a series of empirical investigations into social suffering around the globe.

\(^10\) In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud likens the cause of trauma to a catastrophic accident that a victim walks
noted by Robert Jay Lifton, such as the inability to move beyond indelible images of
death, psychic numbing, lack of trust in the world, or struggle for meaning.

From the very beginning of the study of trauma, it was linked with the treatment
of it. With the publication of *Trauma and Recovery* in 1996, Judith Herman brought
the concept of trauma to the clinical field, where how to deal with the traumatic
memory became the center of the debate. The debate will be discussed in detail in
Chapter Two.

As Cathy Caruth pointed out, trauma was “a shock that appears to work very
much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind’s experience of time” (59).
If I understand Caruth correctly, the trauma is seldom simply physical, but always
accompanied by psychological hurt as well. The causes of trauma varied from social
causes, such as civil, ideological, imperialist/colonialist, and world wars, to natural
disasters. Among all the causes of trauma, post-colonialism was a major cause. As
Fanon mentioned in *Black Skin, White Masks*, it causes binary opposition, such as
white/black and the colonized/colonizer.11

In order to express trauma, different forms of arts were used and different
techniques were applied. Since as a feeling, trauma was an extremely miserable one
and in order to express it fully, special techniques are required. In Toni Morrison’s
novels, she chose magic(al) realism among other literary strategies to portray the
traumatic experience that African American women went through. The reason for her

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11 Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* was a sociological study of the psychology of the racism and
dehumanization inherent in situations of colonial domination.
choice was that magic(al) realism could provide her with broader space to exaggerate the suffering to its most while having the true reality at the same time, and Beloved’s reincarnation can be an illustration of the exaggeration. And in Frida Kahlo’s paintings, she used magic(al) realist techniques to express her feeling after she had been hurt in the terrible bus accident and in the dozens of operations after it. Besides, she also wanted to show her psychological traumatic experience of being caught in between American culture and Mexican culture, and of being hurt by her husband, the famous Diego Rivera.

Research Purposes and Research Questions

This dissertation explores the works of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo, in terms of socio-cultural influences on them, their magic(al) realist strategies of expressing the postcolonial experience they—characters in Toni Morrison’s novels and Frida Kahlo—inhabited. Using postcolonial theory as a lens of analysis, I will explore the paintings of Frida Kahlo and the novels of Toni Morrison to examine ways in which each used magic(al) realist strategies to capture and portray trauma that had been experienced either personally or collectively.

Why do I focus on Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo, a writer and a painter, instead of other artists, such as dancers or poets? The reason is that although we
would see the traits of magic(al) realism in children’s culture\textsuperscript{12} and film\textsuperscript{13}, painting and writing are the most frequently studied genres when mentioning magic(al) realism, and they are the first two genres that emerged with the development of magic(al) realism. Among so many writers and painters, the reasons for the choice of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo are as follows,

First, Toni Morrison’s awareness of racism was fundamental to her identity, both as an individual and as an author. She paid great attention to the distortion and denial of African-American women as fully human in her novels. She devoted most of her novels to the traumas that those women had suffered before and even after slavery. In order to depict their traumatic lives more heart-touchingly, she applied an unusual literary mode to tell this story, that is, magic(al) realism. Morrison’s novels earned her great honor and international recognitions. Besides Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and Nobel Prize in Literature, her novel \textit{Sula} won National Book Critics Circle Award in 1975. One of Morrison’s most important novels \textit{Beloved}, is a landmark, which was considered by \textit{The New York Times Book Review} as one of the best American novels published in the previous twenty-five years in May, 2006. And it also won National Book Award, National Book Critics Circle Award and American

\textsuperscript{12} This is drawn from Maggie Ann Bowers’ \textit{Magic(al) Realism}. According to Maria Nikolajeva’s study of magic in children’s literature, \textit{The Magic Code: the Use of Magical Patterns in Fantasy for Children}, magic in children’s literature developed after the influence of German romanticism in the late nineteenth century. And Bowers believes that many magical happenings in children’s fiction occur in ordinary settings for limited periods of time while maintaining a close connection with reality. And it can give children opportunity to explore disruptions in their ordinary world secure in the knowledge that such magic and extraordinariness can be contained.

\textsuperscript{13} This is concluded from Bowers’ book, too. To date, only a few essays have studied the magic realism in films. Fredric Jameson studied magic realism in film in 1986 and he analyzed several Latin American films produced during the 1980s which used the same cold, detailed, close focus approach of magic realist paintings as outlined by Franz Roh, to portray the shocking reality of gratuitous violence.
Book Award when it was published in 1987. Regarding Morrison’s great contribution in literature, which concerned with African-American life in early American history, she was selected to give Jefferson Lecture by the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1996, and this lecture is the U. S. federal government’s highest honor for achievement in humanities. Also in 1996, she was awarded National Book Foundation’s Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. This honor is given to those who enriched the literary heritage over a life of service, and definitely Toni Morrison is well worth it.

Second, Frida Kahlo is one of the most important female painters in Mexican art history. She also played an important part in American painting history. In most of her paintings, she painted herself and herself in pain. She was once categorized as a surrealist by André Breton, the most important initiator of surrealist movement, because he considered Kahlo’s paintings as depiction of dreams and her sub-consciousness. However, Frida herself never approved this classification. She insisted that “I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.” (Andrea Kettenmann 27) As a matter of fact, I strongly believe that Frida Kahlo’s paintings consist of magic(al) realist features in order to express her trauma both psychologically and physically.

Finally, the study on Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo will have two layers. In the first layer, their works will be studies with the support of the relevant post-colonial concepts to see the socio-cultural influences for the characters and images in
paintings by Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo. In the second layer, those works will be
analyzed on the basis of magic(al) realism to analyze how those works express the
trauma that both Frida Kahlo and African American women had gone through.

The following list provide a range of research questions concerning the magic(al)
realist analysis of the trauma expressed in Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo’s work
and how those works resist and contest the hegemonic culture:

Firstly, Toni Morrison, as well as African Americans in her books, and Frida
Kahlo had lived under prevailing cultures and their ideologies and perceptions of
themselves and the ruling class that were influenced by the hegemonic culture;
therefore, in this dissertation, the author will explore 1) the parallels between their
social situations and backgrounds which influence Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo
on their choices of their works, and 2) how the analysis of the works of Toni
Morrison and Frida Kahlo from magic(al) realist approach could help us better
understand the cultural and historical situation and cultural hegemony of their time
and indigenous people.

Secondly, since the novels of Toni Morrison and paintings of Frida Kahlo were
art works using magic(al) realist techniques to resist the hegemonic culture, thus the
author will also attribute a certain length to the question 3) why Toni Morrison and
Frida Kahlo both chose magic(al) realist techniques to dramatize the trauma that
African Americans and Frida Kahlo suffered, and 4) how Toni Morrison and Frida
Kahlo use the magic realist techniques as a tool to express trauma.
What’s more, the dissertation will also examine Toni Morrison’s novels *Beloved* and *Love* and Frida Kahlo’s selected paintings to demonstrate 5) how Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo resist the hegemonic culture by applying magic(al) realist techniques.

**Literature review**

In the previous studies which focused on Magic Realism and magic realist works, Toni Morrison and her work *Beloved* were always one of the representatives to be analyzed. It has been studied from several perspectives, including the poststructuralist feminist critique view by Leah Mogford Spence and a social protest reading by Jennifer C. Rodgers. In “Magic Words: A Reconceptualization of Magic Realism”, Spence employs Judith Butler’s poststructuralist feminist critique of foundationalism to articulate the magic realist epistemology of *Beloved* and to explicate how it shows that reality, rather than being presented *in itself*. It is always represented by/through a discursive system or “matrix of intelligibility” which establishes and maintains the norms whereby reality is constituted (24). And Spence concludes that *Beloved* offers magic realism as a means for contesting hegemonic discourse and reactivating the discourses that it renders absent.

However, Rodgers provides another perspective to the study of *Beloved* by applying magic realist analysis. In her dissertation “Magic Realism and Social
Protest in Spanish America and the United States: These Illusions Called America,” Rodgers explores how magic realist literature is being used to dismantle the monolithic appearance of white U.S. culture in order to make room for other Americas. She uses *Beloved* as an helpful text in addressing the issue of common and divergent influences on the magical realities of the Americas, emphasizing the range of difference included within the broad label of U.S. American and demonstrating significant ties between the social concerns of magic realist authors in Latin America and the U.S (218).

As far as I can find in the previous studies, most scholars tend to combine magical realism with feminist and social studies. Megan Musgrave proposed the link between the current definitions of magical realism and applied it to three women writers from the Americas, including Toni Morrison, to establish her theoretical framework, which Musgrave termed magical activism. In Musgrave’s dissertation “Phenomenal Women: Magical Activism in Postmodern Feminist Fiction”, she argued that women writers use activist modes to reshape magical realist fictions in order to let the female characters to join in contemporary conversations in their communities.

In Theodore Bouabre’s “Magical Realism in Novels of the Black World”, Bouabre enlarged the traditional geographical area of definition from Latin America to the black world. Bouabre suggested a postcolonial reading of selected authors in order to demonstrate that they applied magical realism in their works to show their
wishes of discovering and preserving their African heritage. Besides this, Bouabre also proposed the idea that magical realism can serve as a tool to examine power relationships both in social level and interpersonal perspective.

In Melissa J. Standley’s “‘Go(ing) as Two’: Magical Realism as Mediating Voice”, Standley proposed three permutations of magical realism. The first permutation is dialogic magical realism, which is written from the normative position of the rationalistic culture. The second permutation is representational magical realism, where the rationalistic culture is written as Other. And Beloved is one of the examples for this option. And the last permutation is postmodern magical realism, which emphasizes plurality and resists meta-narratives.

Shannin Schroeder proposed, in “Rediscovering the Americas: Magical realism in our Hemisphere,” that magical realism should not be confined to Latin America geographically only. Schroeder used five novels including Toni Morrison’s Beloved as an example to demonstrate that Beloved is a ghost and Morrison uses magical realism to make multiple pasts come alive for her characters and readers. At the same time, Schroeder also noticed the relationship between the usage of magical realism and expression by marginalized characters and authors in both North and Latin America.

In Michele Janette’s “Dangerous Flesh: Strategic Embodiment and Its Perils in the Novels of Maxine Hong Kinston and Toni Morrison”, she applied the theory of identity construction in order to investigate the consequences of this theory. Janette
took magical realism as a genre permissive of invention, and thus interpreted these
ghost stories—Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Maxine Hong Kingston’s *The Woman
Warrior*—as allowing their authors to imagine history as both real and indeterminate.
She argues that the female body marks a limit to optimistic revisions of identity.

Alison Dara Gallant compared Louise Erdrich with minority women writers,
such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Leslie Silko and Toni Morrison in her dissertation
“‘The Story Comes up Different Every Time’: Louise Erdrich and the Emerging
Aesthetic of the Minority Woman Writer”. Gallant focused on Louise Erdrich’s
ability to incorporate subversive strategies, including plotlessness, metafiction,
magical realism and achronicity. She wanted to argue that Erdrich’s aesthetic was a
result of being doubly marginalized. She mainly developed her project on the basis
of feminist criticism on Erdrich. Besides the analysis of Erdrich’s novels from
feminist theories, Gallant also investigated the use of magical realism in her novels.
She considered magical realism as a tool to “render a life in fiction, especially when
characters’ lives and the events that surround their lives are sometimes incompatible
with the facts of human existence” (16-17). She also believed that magical realism
“has the power to convey complex truths unavailable to realism” (17). However, she
only took Toni Morrison as an example to compare with when applying magical
realism to her research subject, Louise Erdrich.

Besides Louise Erdrich, Toni Morrison is always compared with other minority
writers, such as Maxine Hong Kingston and William Kennedy. These three authors
were compared in Francis Joseph Schaack’s dissertation “Magical Realism in the Narratives of Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, and William Kennedy: Replenishment and Validation for the Luminal Experience in America”. In the dissertation, Schaack argued that magical realism, as a mode, in the narratives of Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison and William Kennedy, is associated with political and cultural implications and is used as a tool to portray the communities of marginalized characters who have concerns. For them, magical realism is the appropriate methodology of expressing their helpless lives and how the society unfairly treated them.

So far as I found, most of the scholars focused more on the identity issues of Toni Morrison’s novels and the subject they select for the study of magical realism is always *Beloved*. However, the trauma those marginalized people have suffered is not emphasized much by the scholars. How they were tortured physically and, especially mentally, have not been paid enough attention yet. Besides, *Beloved* is not the only novel in Toni Morrison’s body of work, which has the characteristic of magical realism. One of her latest novels, *Love*, is also a good example of magic(al) realism literature, in which the past and the present, the real and the ghost are well combined and people can hardly tell the difference between them. And these two aspects would be the main parts of the study on Toni Morrison in my dissertation.

For Frida Kahlo, Bowers is currently the only scholar who applies magical realism to her paintings. In her book, Bowers concludes that “Kahlo has remained
the most prominent magic realist painter and has in fact overshadowed the
prominence of magic realist painters of the Weimar Republic” (120). However, she
only contributed a very few pages to this analysis, which only covered one painting
of Kahlo. To me, her conclusion is not so convincing and needs more evidence to
support it. Thus in this dissertation, I will contribute my effort on providing more
evidence to prove that Frida Kahlo has used magical realist method in her paintings.
In order to do that, I will analyze her paintings in 1930s and 1940s, when her career
was at its peak.

About the Present Study

The interdisciplinary study will fill in the blank that the majority of the research
on Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo has left out. From the literary point of view, it will
focus on 1) how Toni Morrison uses magic(al) realist techniques to depict collective
trauma experienced by discriminated African American women during colonization
and after the emancipation in *Beloved*, and 2) Toni Morrison’s new novel *Love* and
its magic(al) realist reading. From the artistic point of view, the study will focus on 3)
Frida Kahlo’s paintings from 1932 to 1949 from the perspective of magic(al) realism.
The author will use the theories related to postcolonial theory, magic realism,
magical realism, trauma narratives and cultural hegemony as the tools for analysis.
From a cultural studies point of view, this dissertation will illustrate that both of the
two iconic figures, Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo, by dramatizing the collective and individual trauma through magic(al) realist techniques, try to resist the hegemonic culture left by colonization. These theories will be introduced in Chapter II. Before that, it is necessary to first define the key term “magic(al) realism” and “magic(al) realist technique”.

Magic(al) Realism

According to Zamora and Faris, in their introduction to a collection of essays on magical realism, magical realism has claimed to be ‘subversive: their in-between-ness, their all at oneness encourages resistance to monological political and cultural structures, features that had made this mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women’ (6). They believed that ‘magical realism is a mode suited to exploring—and transgressing—boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical or generic’ (5). Therefore, in the postcolonial context, magical realism provides a means to attack the assumptions of the dominant culture. The absolute truth in the traditional sense has been challenged since in the magical realist works many truths existed simultaneously became possible. Also according to Roh, magic realism is ‘mystery [that] does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it’ (1995, 15). Some scholars settled with the definition of magical realism as
literary mode, which includes magical happenings in a realist narrative. However, since this dissertation is interdisciplinary, in which magic(al) realist paintings of Frida Kahlo have been examined, therefore, the working definition for ‘magic(al) realism’ should be—‘magic(al) realism is an artistic genre, combining the magic(al) and the real, which could be used both in literature and paintings. By applying magic(al) realism, the literary works and paintings could express the mystery, magical happening or the supernatural in a realist matter-of-fact cultural context, and lead the readers and the viewers to accept the magical without any senses of surprise. And the magic and the magical can be influenced by both the dominant culture in postcolonial context and indigenous beliefs of the colonized culture.’ According to this definition, magic(al) realism is a catch-all term including the characteristics of both magic realism and magical realism. Thus, the discussion of literary works of Toni Morrison and paintings of Frida Kahlo can be valid under this definition.

Magic(al) Realist Techniques

Franz Roh listed twenty-two aspects of the characteristics of magic realist painting in his book in 1925 and reduced the number to fifteen when he revised his book in 1958, namely “sober subjects, the object clarified, representational, puristically severe, static, quiet, thorough, close and far view, miniature, cold, thin paint surface, smooth, effacement of the painting process, centripetal, external
purification of the object” (Seymour Menton 37). What’s more, the later discussion relating to magic(al) realist painting would include the North American painters such as Edward Hopper (188-1967) and Alex Colville (1920-) whose paintings provided unreal atmosphere rather than using magic contents. Furthermore, the magic(al) realist narrative usually tries to lead the readers to accept both realist and magical perspectives of reality on the same level.

In order to achieve these goal, magic(al) realist technique may be used. Generally speaking, magic(al) realist techniques include 1) the mixture of realist and magical view of life, 2) the supernatural occurrences integrated in ordinary life, and 3) depiction of mysteries in an sober and unsentimental manner. With the help of these techniques, magic(al) realism becomes powerful in Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo’s works when they wanted to express, beyond the boundary of realism, the trauma that African American women and Frida had experienced.

Introduction to the later chapters

Chapter I introduces the social and cultural background; research themes and topics; research questions and a brief literature review. Chapter II introduces the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The major theories used for the magic(al) realist interpretation of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo’s work are post-colonial theory, cultural hegemony, trauma theory and magic(al) realism. Chapter III shows
the detailed analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *Love* from three perspectives: 1) the historical background of the story; 2) trauma in the novel; and 3) magic(al) realist features and narrative in the novels. In Chapter IV, the paintings of Frida Kahlo from 1932 to late 1940s will be studied and the following aspects will be examined: 1) personal experience of Frida Kahlo; 2) the reason for the choice of time span; 3) the magic(al) realist characteristics in Frida Kahlo’s paintings, and 4) the resistance to hegemonic culture. In both Chapter III and Chapter IV, the analysis will be in two layers: 1) the postcolonial influence on Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo, both on the choice of their themes and characters and on their choice of expressive techniques; 2) the magical realist analysis of Toni Morrison’s novel and Frida Kahlo’s paintings, which resists the cultural hegemony through dramatizing trauma.

Chapter V will review the previous two chapters’ analysis of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo’s works and summarizes that magic(al) realist serves as a powerful tool when writers and painters want to depict traumas in postcolonial context. This last chapter claims that magic(al) realism is not only a literary genre, although after 1940s, it is more widely accepted as a narrative mode rather than its painting origins, that magic(al) realism still suits the painting analysis. As a result, the further study can be research on the other artistic genres from magic(al) realism.
CHAPTER II

THEORITICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Addressing Trauma

According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, trauma technically means “a wound”, “an injury” to living tissue; also it means “an unpleasant and upsetting experience that affects you for a long time” or “a mental state of extreme shock caused by a very frightening or unpleasant experience,” and the latter two meanings are in keeping with the glossary of Katherine Jones’s translation of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, in which trauma is defined as “injury, bodily or mental” (178). Also in his study, Freud diagnosed one feature of trauma during his treatment of returned World War I combat soldiers, and he named it *belatedness*, which refers to the absence of full consciousness during the accident. This diagnosis was later recognized as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and first entered the American Psychiatric Association’s diagnostic manual in 1980, which was based largely on the study of the symptoms of Vietnam War veterans. Since then, trauma studies have gradually drawn the attention of scholars from different areas—philosophy, literature
Cathy Caruth believed that trauma was a shattering event “experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and not available to consciousness.” (4) This proposal was in keeping with the feature of trauma diagnosed by Freud. Because of the unexpectedness of the sudden events, the victim was in great difficulty in familiarizing the situation into his/her/their consciousness, which made it difficult to integrate the traumatic experience with the preexisting frame of reference. During this period, the victim found himself in-between the traumatic event and the belated consciousness. This period or feature was named by Freud first as “belatedness” and later as “latency” (Katherine Jones 84). Although Freud used traumatic event and experience interchangeably, Dominick LaCapra was very careful about the distinction between the two. He believed that the former was punctual and situated in the past, while the latter was not punctual and remained in the present or even may block or obviate possibilities in the future (Ifowodo 72). If I understand correctly, if one had a traumatic experience, he or she suffered the accident personally and directly, that is, he or she was in the traumatic event. However, if one had a traumatic event—“had” may not be the proper verb here—he or she may not be the direct victim of the accident, that is, he or she might be the witness of one traumatic event.

With the increasing interests in the study of Holocaust and other collective traumas, debates about trauma have become central and strong, one of which focuses

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14 Concluded from Susan Rubin Suleiman’s ‘Judith Herman and Contemporary Trauma Theory’ from Women’s Studies Quarterly, Vol. 36.
on the relation between trauma and memory. The conflict between the will to deny
horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud is the central dialectic of
psychological trauma. In the long run of the heated discussion, despite the
theoretical debate over the specific aspects of trauma, there are consensuses that
scholars could base their debates on. First of all, most scholars agreed with Herman
on the definition of trauma, which “unlike commonplace misfortunes… traumatic
events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal
encounter with violence and death” (Herman 33). From this definition we could see
that although not using the term traumatic experience directly in her definition,
Herman actually illustrated it by using “a close personal encounter with violence and
death”. However, she did not mention the mental suffering of a person or a group
encountered when he/she went through the traumatic events or traumatic experience.
Nevertheless, in this dissertation, since the research subjects—slaves and African
Americans in Toni Morrison’s novels and Frida Kahlo, especially the latter—mainly
went through the traumatic experience, the difference between the traumatic event and
traumatic experience would not influence the research much. Thus the author will use
traumatic experience when referring to both traumatic experience and traumatic event.

Ever since the publication of Trauma and Recovery in 1996, Judith Herman
brought the concept of trauma to the clinical field, where how to deal with the
traumatic memory became the center of the debate. As mentioned earlier, the trauma


\[16\] In Moses and Monotheism by Freud, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage, 1955), he defined the trauma, from the psychoanalytic perspective, as a cataclysmic event that shatters the individual or collective frame of reference.
can be so strong and sudden, thus the victims will be so shocked and unable to integrate the trauma into their consciousness, or they may repress the feeling unconsciously, which could automatically help them to live an apparently normal life. However, the repressed memory may not stay in the unconsciousness for their whole life, especially when the victim came to the psychiatrist. Here we enter the most debated territory of traumatic theory. On the issue of dealing with the relationship between trauma and memory, there are two camps of scholars who support opposite theories. One camp, including Judith Herman, Bessel van der Kolk and other researchers, believes in the concept of repressed memory or trauma amnesia, and according to their view, the victim will begin to heal or recover only when they remember the repressed memory. The other camp, including clinicians and psychological researchers such as Elizabeth Loftus and Richard McNally can be characterized as “anti-repressed memory” theorists, who strongly proposed that the victims tended to remember the trauma even when they did not want to. They believed that the more violent the trauma was, the more the victims tend to remember it. McNally explained that the victims were not forgetting the trauma because of an unconsciously protective mechanism, but because the subjects were not “able” to remember such trauma due to the normal memory function and they, of course, may

17 The two different camps are summarized by Susan Rubin Suleiman in her paper “Judith Herman and Contemporary Trauma Theory” in Women’s Studies Quarterly, Vol. 36 No. 1/2 Witness (Spring-Summer 2008) 276-281. In the paper, Suleiman actually divided the second camp into two groups. One group is discussed in the body of this dissertation. The other group of researchers went back, researching Freud’s seduction theory, and concluded that “it was not that he gives up believing in his patients’ memories of childhood abuse, but that he stopped trying to force his own theory of ‘repressed’ sexual abuse in childhood down his patients’ throats.” They believed that Freud tried to force another theory onto his patients, which centered on the concept of the Oedipus complex. They blamed Freud for imposing his own unjustified theory on his patients as well as trying to cover it up by making up the Oedipus complex.
someday remember it when encountering some trigger events. In a word, both camps agreed that victims of trauma could forget it, but they differed in the causes of that amnesia. Besides, the differences between the two camps arouse in the clinical field as well, especially when they treated childhood abuse, mostly sexual. Since childhood trauma (i.e. sexual abuse) is not the focus of this study, and since the slaves and Frida Kahlo bore their traumatic experience during their life; the theory of McNally seems more suitable for this research.

From the above analysis, the author would like to define the trauma for this research:

Trauma is an unexpected unpleasant experience, which can be threatening to life or bodily integrity to a person or a group of persons, and will leave the subject(s) with physical or mental suffering for a long time.

**Types, Causes and Art Expressions of Trauma**

According to this definition, the trauma can be categorized into different types based on various criteria. Considering the number of victims, the trauma can be divided into personal trauma and collective trauma. Considering the trauma effect, it can be classified as physical trauma and mental trauma. In most cases, physical trauma would lead to psychological pain as well, while on the contrary, psychological trauma may not cause physical pain at the same time. For example, one strong and
sudden accident will cause great physical injuries to the victim, and at the same time those physical injuries will lead to psychological pain to those survivors at the same time. On the other hand, if one were suffering from the loss of his love, for example, in that accident, he may be in great psychological trauma without the symptom of physical pain. In this research, the author will focuses on both psychological trauma and physical trauma dramatized through the use of magic(al) realism in detail in chapter three and chapter four. The trauma of slavery affected those who suffered physically and psychologically both as an individual and a group, and the trauma of Frida Kahlo caused more by her health and marriage and the cultural conflicts she experienced as a Mexican in the United States as well.

The causes for trauma can be both cultural and natural, and the list can be very long. In *History, Trauma, and Healing in Postcolonial Narratives*, Ifowodo listed a number of traumas:

…intertribal, civil, ideological, imperialist/colonialist, and world wars; genocide and ethnic cleansing; the use of increasingly sophisticated weapons of mass destruction (the atomic bomb, cluster bombs, and nerve gas); the breakdown of family and social mores (rape, incest, child and spousal abuse, and the violent pop culture of film); droughts and famine, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters, and so on… (73)

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18 In “The Concept of the Survivor”, Robert J. Lifton defined “survivor” as “one who has encountered death but remained alive…and this remaining alive leads to psychological themes. He also summarized the different “psychological themes”, including the inability to move beyond indelible images of death; guilt about having survived while others died; psychic numbing; lack of trust in the world and struggle for meaning.
The list can be even longer if we keep on including the unusual disasters in our lives. And this list could bring light to the study of trauma at both the personal and collective, even social levels.

In American history, slavery was an unfortunate existence. Besides the horrible life that slaves experienced, they still memorized it deeply and were influenced by it even after their emancipation. The physical punishments for them were severe, and the mental discrimination was rooted in their minds. They were told they were inferior to the white people, and this influence would not easily be removed after they and the white people became legally equal. Furthermore, this kind of psychological trauma could not easily be described with the tool that realism provides. Magic(al) realism can offer proper instruments for portraying the unspeakable and unbearable miseries beyond the boundary of realism and provide the readers with stronger feelings.

Consider the case of Frida Kahlo, who survived from the deadly street car accidents and dozens of operations, besides these physical tortures, she also endured betrayal from her husband and her sister, and the psychological pain when she was caught in between the cultures of America and Mexico. Thus, according to Robert Jay Lifton, Frida Kahlo can be categorized as a survivor, which Lifton defines it as “one who has encountered death but remained alive…and this remaining alive leads to psychological themes” (Lifton 119). He believed that all those themes had both positive and negative consequences. Take the reoccurrence of death for example; it can either be paralyzing or become a source of creativity (ibid.). This theory could
possibly explain Frida Kahlo’s focus on the expression of death and trauma in her paintings.

From the above example, we can see that the novelist would use novels to express trauma, and painters could use paintings to depict trauma. To depict the trauma fully, the artists would apply different techniques, and among them, magic(al) realism is a suitable mode.

**Post-colonialism and Trauma**

Over the past half century, postcolonial studies have gained more and more attention. However, it is important to make clear at the beginning of this dissertation that this is not a typical postcolonial research topic. The concepts used in this dissertation are heuristic devices to help deepen the understanding of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo’s works, and those concepts discussed in the following part can provide the author of the dissertation with theoretical insights in exploring the reason why they chose magic(al) realism in expressing the trauma. And the answer for this question was that magic(al) realism can help the two artists go beyond the boundary of realism and to magnify the impact that the colonization had on the victims.

In the development of postcolonial theory, there are four names that figure prominently as the thinkers who shaped it into today’s form: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.
Fanon, born in the former French slave colony of Martinique in 1925, was the first one who analyzed the effect of the ‘colonial gaze’—of being seen, defined and stereotyped by the Europeans whose culture was deemed to be superior and to have greater authority than the cultures of Africa and the Caribbean (Innes 6). In his first important book *Black Skin, White Masks*, published in 1952, he analyzed racism and its psychological effects. He tried to understand the causes of racism, and the effects of racism and colonialism on black people, and how to deal with those effects (10). And later in another important book of his, *The Wretched of the Earth*, he focused more on the psychology of the colonizers, which was lacking in his first book. His study on the colonizers and the colonized was set in a particular place at a particular time, that is, a multiracial Caribbean colony ruled by the French. He discussed the ways in which African and Caribbean intellectuals had responded to the ‘colonial gaze.’ In the first phase, they internalized the colonizers’ view that the colonized were inferior to the ruling culture. And in the second phase, the intellectuals realized the discrimination in that view and wanted to fight against that stereotyped image of them, either by proclaiming equality or by rediscovering the buried and glorious history in their own culture. However, Fanon did not believe this was enough, and he suggested that the intellectuals and writers should propose a political program towards liberation.

While Fanon’s focus was specifically on African and Caribbean intellectuals, Edward Said was concerned more about Asia and the Middle East. In his most
influential book *Orientalism* (1978), Said concentrated on the ways in which knowledge was governed and used as a tool to reinforce power, and to exclude the history and knowledge that the colonized countries or regions claimed to have. In 1993 Said published another book, *Culture and Imperialism*, in which he analyzed the presence of empire in different texts and referred to writers such as Achebe, Fanon, and Salman Rushdie.

The study of Fanon influenced another important colonial scholar, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. She brought together Marxist, Deconstructionist and feminist theory to support her analysis of American, Bengali, British and French texts. She was the one who brought the focus to the ignored and distorted presence of colonized women.

A fourth noticeable critic and theorist is Homi Bhabha, whose name frequently recurs in discussions of postcolonial literary and cultural studies. Building his psychoanalytical theory with the supportive theory from Sigmund Freud and Lacan, he has proposed the key concepts of mimicry and hybridity.

All the above scholars formed the development of postcolonial theory and provide the consequent scholars with concepts and inspirations. Since my focus will be on the literary works and paintings rather than the theories, those important concepts will be elaborated in detail and they will recur frequently in the following chapters.
Hegemony—a key concept in both Post-colonialism and Post-Marxism

In postcolonial theory, hegemony works as an important concept which could account for the control of the colonized both in social governing and in ideological thinking. This concept actually was adopted from the Marxist Antonio Gramsci and has become increasingly popular in both the postcolonial theory and the so-called post Marxist theory. His theory of cultural hegemony was accepted and modified by later scholars, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who were classified as post Marxists for their abandonment of Marxist’s traditional economic determinism and class reductionism. Hegemony is not only a theoretical concept but also provides scholars with the insight to analyze how the state maintained its power other than through political control. What is more important is that Laclau and Mouffe did not confine the hegemony to the ruling class, but any class which wanted to voice their own opinions in the power system.  

As an Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci finished most of this writings in the fascist prison and his best-known theory—cultural hegemony—dealt with how states controlled not only through violence, political and economic coercion, but also through ideology, which could be observed in both capitalist societies and colonies controlled by them. Although he proposed several key concepts in his theory, they

19 Eriks Uskalis in “Hegemony, Ideology, and Dissent in Postcolonial Studies” proposed that “the same discourses that marginalize subjects are often the only discourses available to voice dissent against the power systems through which those discourses circulate” (39). Postcolonial Issues: Theories and Readings (Fall, 2001), pp. 29-42
20 This information is drawn from the online Wikipedia under the item Antonio Gramsci.
were not in cohesion or clear, however, some of the theories and discussion were ambiguous;\textsuperscript{21} according to Perry Anderson. This problem was not solved by him, but two scholars, Laclau and Mouffe, who were influenced by his theory, worked together aiming at studying theory and proposing different understandings of it, which was more successful and well organized in their books, including \textit{Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left} (1979), \textit{Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics} (1985).

In postcolonial theory, hegemony was defined to be the ideological tool specially used by the ruling class, Gramsci emphasized the importance of the political and ideological superstructure in both maintaining and fracturing relations of the economic base.\textsuperscript{22} He believed that modern capitalist countries can be divided into political society and civil society. The former is the governmental agencies, such as court, jail and army, which maintain the power of the ruling class by politics and violence. And the latter one referred to those informal agencies, such as church, guild, school and mass media, including newspapers, magazines and academic groups, which were the base for broadcasting the ideology of the ruling class and relied on the “cultural hegemony”.

The colonizers propagandized the idea that they were superior to the colonized in every aspect and brainwashed them with different means. As a result, the colonized,

\textsuperscript{21} Barrett, Michele in “Ideology, Politics, Hegemony: From Gramsci to Laclau and Mouffe” believed that “…his[Gramsci’s] discussions of cultural and intellectual struggle are often somewhat ambiguous” and quoted from Perry Anderson that Gramsci’s use of hegemony is inconsistent, since sometimes he uses it to mean consent; at other times it seems to mean a synthesis of the two. \textit{Mapping Ideology. ed.} Slavoj Zizek. p. 237, 239

\textsuperscript{22} This information is drawn from the online Wikipedia under the item Antonio Gramsci.
especially those who were born in the colonization, naturally internalized the ideology and built their subjectivity accordingly. Therefore, the colonized people would not fight with the ruling class or for their own rights because they did not realize that they could possess equal rights given such an education. And this also explained why in capitalist countries the working class did not rebel against the ruling class.

Compared with Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe’s theory was more systematical and revolutionary, which was considered as a Copernican Revolution in Marxism; therefore, the two were classified as post-Marxists. Influenced not only by Gramsci, but also by Louis Pierre Althusser, Georges Sorel, Bernstein and other Marxist scholars, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, rather than accepting Gramsci’s theory of hegemony totally, believed that the concept of hegemony should be detached from both class and historical laws:

The deepening of a mass democratic practice—which shuns vanguardist manipulation and an external characterization of the relation between class hegemony and democratic tasks—can be achieved only if it is recognized that these tasks do not have a necessary class character, and if stage-ism is renounced in a thoroughgoing manner. (Laclau and Mouffe 58)

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23 Orthodox Marxism believed that in a capitalist society, the working class would automatically lead the battle against the ruling class; however, according to Gramscian theory, the ruling class used the cultural hegemony to make the working class believe that the interest of the ruling class was the interest of all, which means that the working class were working for their own interest in the capitalist society, and the working class did accept this idea. What’s more, Laclau and Mouffe proposed in their *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* that the unity of the working class was a symbolic unity and the class struggle was an invalid concept.
Despite the different definition of ideology, it is axiomatic that in an analysis of capitalism the role and function of ideology was construed in terms of social class (Mapping Ideology 240). In order to detach the hegemony from class, they firstly detached ideology from class. To demonstrate this, they proposed the theory of articulation. Basically, they believed that the ideology in a certain historic period consisted of several elements, some of which had class characters and others were neutral or had no class character. If the class nature of ideology is not predetermined, but determined during the interaction when different elements construct the ideology, which discourse the ideology would be articulated is determined by the struggle of cultural hegemony.\textsuperscript{24} Struggle was seen in military terms and violence terms, and according to Laclau and Mouffe, the struggle of cultural hegemony was the one that determined the dominant ideology and thus maintained the power of the class which won the battle. And in the battle, intellectuals played important parts.

However, based on the previous logic and demonstration, it is natural to infer that the intellectuals who wanted to rebel against the dominant class can start rebelling by expressing their ideology or voicing their own ‘culture’.

Here it is useful to bring Althusser into the picture briefly. Laclau argued that Althusser’s theory of the interpellation process through which ideological subjects were constructed could be applied to the analysis of political ideology (ibid. 241).

\textsuperscript{24} In Gramsci’s work, relations take priority over structures. As Laclau and Mouffe wrote in Hegemony and Social Strategies “for Gramsci political subjects are not—strictly speaking—class, but complex ‘collective wills;’ similarly, the ideological elements articulated by a hegemonic class do not have a necessary class belonging” (p.67).
According to Althusser, how one individual forms his/her subjectivity is through interpellation, including class interpellation and popular democratic interpellation. He believed that ideology was fundamental in the construction of an individual’s subjectivity and the subjectivity formed during the process of unclear interpellation won the hegemony.

Besides, the subject constructed itself through the discourses which underwrite dominant power (Uskalis 38) Through hegemony, the discourse can play a part in sustaining power. Similarly with ideology, discourses do act as determinations of subjectivity, precisely because discourses were marked and traced by relations and interests of power (ibid. 39). So as Uskalis concluded, the same discourses that marginalize subjects were often the only discourses available to voice dissent against the power systems through which those discourses circulate.

Therefore, when we come back to what this author inferred previously, as the intellectuals in postcolonial society tried to decolonize their worlds, they had to rely on the “dominant cultural expressions” to show their counter-hegemonic ideology. Here the author coined this term to refer to language, art genres that are used in the postcolonial society. Only when the intellectuals’ expressive works are accepted and understood by the people in that society, could they use those works to voice their different opinions and to win ideological hegemony.

Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo both lived in the postcolonial period and both of them used magic(al) realist techniques to express their counter-hegemonic effort.
Toni Morrison focuses on the great suffering that African-Americans have experienced by subverting the view of the white-dominated society. Magic realism provides her with a suitable tool to go beyond the boundary of realism and create her own view in light of the experience of trauma that African-American women have suffered. Meanwhile, Frida Kahlo refuses to take the traditional Western view of beauty and portrays beauty in her own way, which is totally different from the standard western view of beauty. The traditional and typical Western way of painting women are mostly nude and soft figures. But Kahlo never beautified herself, and she just portrayed herself as she looked. During most of her life, Frida Kahlo was considered as wife of Diego Rivera instead of a distinguished artist; however, in such a colonial and patriarchal society Kahlo tried to make her vision seen. She adopted the traditional Mexican way of painting, incorporating Aztec features, and painted herself without following the traditional standard of beauty set by white society. Both Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo sought to uncover the trauma created by colonization. Thus the way they create their own work is to use the magic realist methods to express differently from the traditional western realism.

To sum up, under the hegemonic cultural environment both Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo wanted to create their art works to centralize the marginalized group and to contest the hegemonic culture. They chose magic realism as the style to exhibit the hybridity and borders that colonized people have experienced. And in Toni Morrison’s novels, she wants to show that trauma can be created by the mimicry of colonizer’s
culture because those who mimic the colonizer’s culture might meet contradictory ideologies held by those who do not accept the prevailing culture. And this conflicting ideology and world view would bring to them traumatic experiences.

**Magic(al) Realism: A Suitable Expressive Way for Trauma**

Magic(al) realism was emphasized as a new trend in the 1920s and had a close relationship with the social and political situation of the time. The new trend—magic realism—emerged during the German Weimar Republic which lasted from 1919 to 1933. This period followed the German defeat in the First World War. It was the first total war in European history, which not only involved more nations than before, but also killed a large number of civilians. The Weimar Republic was the name given by the historians because the constitutional assembly was held in the city of Weimar. The Weimar Republic was established in the “vacuum of power that was created following the abdication of the Kaiser that was fought over by right wing and left-wing revolutionary groups, including the National Socialist German Worker’s Party of Adolf Hitler, founded in 1920” (Bowers 11). This republic was the first try in Germany to move from Empire to Republic. The foundation of the Weimar Republic was built on the great influence of the defeat in the World War I and consequent political disorder.

Also, at the same time the economic situation was very bad. There were several

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25 The author uses “magic realism” instead of “magic(al) realism” to indicate that it was used as so at that time.
causes for the severe economic condition. First, after Germany’s defeat, the export of the industrial products decreased greatly. Second, the country paid a great amount of reparations to the victors—the Allied Powers. Third, the country, including infrastructures, factories, shops, etc. was destroyed severely by the war since both sides used massive weapons. Fourth, the unemployment rate was extremely high because of the destruction of the economy. After four years of war, people in Germany could not live in peace or find sufficient supplies for their daily lives.\(^{26}\) The whole country was in crisis. Politically this republic government was surrounded by different regimes and distanced from their old world. The uncertainty of the future also influenced the artists.

The art historian Seigiusz Michalski summarizes the mood and the time and its influences on magic realist painting in his thorough study of art in the Weimar Republic, stating, ‘Ultimately, it was a reflection of German society at that time, torn between a desire for and simultaneous fear of unconditional modernity, between sober, objective rationality and residues of Expressionist and rationalist irrationalities’ (Michalski 13) (Bowers 11).

From the above review of the historical background, it is not hard to see that the

\(^{26}\) These reasons were adapted from Bowers.
emergence of magic realism had its very root in pain, the pain of the whole society. When the future was not certain, the artists who, most of the time, were more sensitive than the common people, would have a deeper sense of concern and wanted to find meaning in that hard life. Thus they invented a new painting style, trying to capture the mystery of everyday life behind the surface of reality, which was called “post-expressionism” at that time. This trend got the name of Magischer Realismus, later translated into English as magic realism, when the German art critic Franz Roh proposed the concept of a return to full objectivity, which represented “a truly unending complex” of colors, spatial form, memories of smells and tastes of the thing (Zomora 19).

As painters admitted the magic of the thing (objectivity) and presented the reality with the feeling of the senses, this kind of representation “constituted a magical gaze opening onto … reality” (ibid., 20). Painters drew pictures and wanted to make these pictures as windows on the wall, which meant when viewers saw the pictures as if they were looking through the window to see the real world. In other words, the painters were trying to combine the painted world with the real world, to blur the distinction between the painted world and the real world. The painters aimed at creating a real world in their paintings, rather than simply copy the nature they saw.

What’s more, this style was quite different from its precedent painting styles, such as Expressionism, Futurism and Cubism. The mentioned styles of painting, though different in the way they express the objects, all are depictions of objects in
the real world. However in magic realist painting, the painters return to ‘the dynamics of depth and direction, a sensitivity that is a distinguishing feature of Post-Expressionism’ (Zomora 27).

When magic realism was quite popular in Germany and other countries in Europe, Surrealism was popular in France. To differentiate magic realism from surrealism, Roh suggested that magic realism “focuses on material object and the actual existence of thing in the world, as opposed to the more cerebral and psychological reality explored by the surrealist” (Bowers 12). He believed the “mystery of life and the complexities of the inner-life of human to be perceivable through the close observation of the objects” (ibid., 13). However, surrealism tries to express the subconscious and unconscious aspects that influence the human behavior. Surrealists tend to paint more about human dreams than real world. One of the reasons to compare these two movements is that these two movements occurred in the same period. Franz Roh was influential not only in Germany but also his influence spread to the whole of Europe and later to Latin America and the U.S. with an exhibition called “American Realists and Magic Realists” held in New York in 1931.

It is necessary to briefly compare and contrast magic(al) realism and surrealism here. First, though they appeared at almost the same time, they did not develop in the same smooth roads. As proposed by Bowers in the first chapter, the development of magic(al) realism can be divided into three phases, and between the first two phases there was almost a gap of twenty years. By the 1930s, Magic Realism was
overshadowed by Surrealism because the former lacked the clear definition and description, and as a result, Surrealism attracted more attention in the global academic field. Due to this reason, some artists shifted from magic realism to surrealism (Menton 16). So it was hard to classify some artists clearly. Second, Magic Realism, as it developed in different areas in the world, got different names and different focuses and was used in different art forms, such as literature, films and so on. So did Surrealism and it also affected literature, film, and even music of many countries and languages. Therefore, some artists in different countries were influenced by both movements and sometimes both groups would like to include the same artist into their camps. Believe it or not, Frida Kahlo was one of these examples. She was once categorized as a surrealist by André Breton, the most important initiator of surrealist movement, because he considered Kahlo’s paintings as depictions of dreams and her sub-consciousness. However, in Bowers’ book, Kahlo’s paintings were analyzed from the perspective of magic(al) realism. Besides, Frida herself never approved with this classification by Breton. She insisted that “I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.”

Therefore, the distinctions between magic(al) realism and surrealism are important to be noted. First of all, they were applied to different art genres in the first place. But magic realism was coined to describe a new trend in paintings, and

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27 This conclusion is cited from Lenuta Giukin’s “Cinematic Transgression: Andre Delvaux and the Surrealist Dilemma”.
28 In the book Magic Realism Rediscovered, Menton mentioned the unpromising situation that magic realism faced during 1930s and because of the strong influence of surrealism at the same time, some artists migrated back and forth between the two movements.
surrealism was first used in a play. Second, at the very root, magic realist painters tended to find out the mystery in reality by painting vividly every detail of the nature or what was in the scene. Wilhelm Heise’s *Fading Spring* (1926 Figure 1) was such an example. However, surrealism advocated that the sense of arrangement of their works must be open to the full range of imagination, especially the surrealism leader, André Breton, who was greatly influenced by Sigmund Freud, and led the whole movement to the direction in which the dream became a main theme. Besides, Breton strongly recommended the idea of juxtaposition in his 1924 manifesto, which was to say, “a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and true, the stronger the image will be -- the greater its emotional power and poetic reality.” Therefore, in surrealist paintings, dreams and other objects which were not normally found together were put in one scene to produce an illogical and startling effect. A brief comparison of the representative paintings of the time would illustrate this point clearer. Wilhelm Heise’s *Fading Spring* was one of the representative magic realist painting of the 1920s. In this painting, the painter paid equal attention to everything on the canvas, no matter the main character in the middle, or just the tiny red flowers on the corner. Heise used the same sharpness in portraying the daily scene. However, a painting named *The Persistence of Memory* (1931 Figure 2) by Salvador Dali was totally another story. In the painting, clocks were painted in a melting manner. The dripping clocks were hung

29 The word ‘surrealist’ was coined by Guillaume Apollinaire and first appeared in the preface to his play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, which was written in 1903 and first performed in 1917.

30 This comment was first given by the poet Pierre Reverdy in his 1918 essay, which was published in his journal *Nord-Sud*, March, 1918, and Breton included this idea in his 1924 manifesto.
on the branch, on the edge of “table” and on a creature, which nobody recognized but
is said to be the self-portrait of Dali himself, and a creature that was hard to tell by its
form and shape. And all of those images could only appear in a dream instead of
reality. Last, from the later development, magic(al) realism spread widely and had
great influence in Latin America, where magic was taken as an special feature of their
own culture, and during the development, the characteristics of magic(al) realism
changed a lot, which were discussed in details in the previous chapter, whereas
surrealism kept its influence mainly on paintings. As Luis Leal believed, magical
realism did not use dream motifs, nor did it distort reality or create an imagined world.
Actually it aimed at expressing emotions. In magical realism, the writer confronted
reality and tried to untangle it, to discover what was mysterious in things, in life, in
human acts (Luis Leal 121).

Surrealism or Magic Realism, they had their essential connection with the word
or a trend or a style: Realism. Basically, when we refer to realism as an art form, we
mean that the art work is an attempt to depict subjects truthfully. And the Realism art
movement began in France in the 1850s, a rejection of Romanticism which had
dominated the literature and art in France since late eighteenth century. Realists
sought to depict ordinary and contemporary people and situations in their truth sense,
without exaggerating or dramatizing the scene or beautifying the ordinary or the
unpleasant. Besides, as a literary genre, realist literary works presented the subjects as
they existed.\textsuperscript{31} In a word, as Donna M. Campbell put it, realism is “the faithful representation of reality”.\textsuperscript{32} The difference between Magic Realism and Realism lies in the word magic(al). Take the literature as the example: the setting of a magic(al) realist work can be real everyday life, but mysterious events, magical happenings could take place in that true-to-life environment. What’s more, all those supernatural aspects, mystery and magic could be integrated so well into the real surroundings that the readers would receive them as part of reality. This provided magic(al) realism a broader stage for depicting extreme feeling, such as trauma in this dissertation, without being “romantic”, that is to say, without exaggerating but rather filling the real life with vivid and “truthful” physical and psychological descriptions of the unreal.

Trauma, as defined in this dissertation, is an unpleasant experience caused by cultural and natural disasters. Colonization is one of the causes, among many cultural and social causes, for the African American people to have suffered trauma physically, and more importantly, psychologically. If the intellectuals wanted to fight against the hegemonic culture and depict traumas, magic(al) realism provides them with a suitable tool to dramatize the pain by combing the supernatural with the natural and by forcing the audience to accept this combination naturally.

\textsuperscript{31} The introduction of Realism is concluded from \textit{The Humanistic Tradition}, Book 5: Romanticism, Realism, and the Nineteenth-Century World, written by Fiero, Gloria K.

\textsuperscript{32} Campbell, Donna M. “Realism in American Literature, 1860-1890.”
Implications for this study

From the above review and analysis, it is natural to have the following conclusions.

First, in a postcolonial society, although the hegemonic culture helped the government to maintain power, the marginalized and discriminated class was not ignored by all intellectuals. They used the hegemonic art genres, but incorporated them with their own forms to contest against the hegemonic culture. Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo applied magic(al) realist technique to express the trauma suffered by the colonized group, trying to arouse empathy and sympathy of the reader. By voicing and portraying their different understandings of the historical events and standard beauty, they aimed at countering the hegemonic culture.

Second, a crucial purpose of applying magic(al) realism is to find a deeper and a more true reality than conventional realist techniques would illustrate, which would be the trauma caused by colonization. In a magic(al) realist work, the supernatural is integrated within the norms of perception of the narrator or characters in the fictional world. The supernatural was accepted in the novels without any difficulties and caused the reader to take those magic(al) events for granted, and this action may invite the reader to share similar feelings with the characters in the novels. This feature will be illustrated in the following chapter when the author analyzes the novels written by
Toni Morrison and paintings of Frida Kahlo.

Last, the post-colonial’s ruling of ideology, controlling the people through hegemonic culture, discussed above uncovers the causes for the traumas that African American had suffered, and they also provided the reasons for many writers to focus on the theme of slavery trauma.
CHAPTER III

THE TRAUMA NEVER ENDS. THE RESISTANCE OF HEGEMONIC IDEOLOGY THROUGH TRAUMA PORTRAYAL: A MAGIC(AL) REALIST READING OF BELOVED AND LOVE

A Brief Introduction of Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison’s awareness of hegemonic cultural and its influence was fundamental to her identity and career, both as an individual and as an author, because Morrison saw herself as both as an African-American author and a female author. In Beloved, her fifth novel she wanted to deal with another issue besides race: the nature of a woman’s love. In this novel, she asked herself and all the readers one question: does a mother have the right to kill her baby in the name of love even though her killing was to protect her baby form the traumatic life of being enslaved? Therefore, she applied magic(al) realism to tell the story. She gave the murdered baby the chance of reincarnation, which was impossible in realist novels, besides,
this technique provided Toni Morrison with the tool to portray the pain and resentment of Beloved which was caused by colonialism and slavery. There has not been an American writer who has won this award after her. Beloved was a landmark, which was considered by The New York Times Book Review as one of the best American novels published in the previous twenty-five years in May, 2006, and consequently, many scholars devoted their energy to studying her and her works from various perspectives.³³

One of her latest novel, Love was published in 2003, in which she divided the past from the present, and at the same time, she let a ghost travel between the past and present. In this novel, she used flashback from time to time to show life of Cosey, the main figure of the story, and also she aimed at showing his impact on the women characters in the novel. Both Heed and Christine were forced to accept the lives given by Bill Cosey, who married Heed when she was a little girl and drove Christine out when she was young. His deeds ruined the friendship of the two girls and their lives even after his death. The relationship between Heed and Christine was not cut off even though they were separated for years, besides; they finally found out that they still considered each other the most important person in their lives. One reason for their tragedy was that although after they were liberated, the African American women were still under the repression within the African American community because of the patriarchal influence of the hegemonic culture. However, Toni

³³ In the database Jstor alone, there are more than two thousand articles whose titles have the key words Toni Morrison, and nearly nine thousand articles refer to her in their texts. And there are seventy two articles about Toni Morrison and her novel Beloved.
Morrison tried to express her dissent to this reality and by portraying the miserable lives of Heed and Christine caused by Cosey and the society. In her novel, Heed and Christine finally restored their friendship before death separated them. By designing such a plot, Toni Morrison showed that African American women did not surrender to the hegemony, but from the bottom of their hearts, they wanted to be equal and be treated equally. Although they did not resist the hegemony of the patriarchal society consciously, they did show their unwillingness to accept what they had been treated.

**Everyone Deserved to be Loved—Reading *Beloved***

Memory is but a moment of fear and trembling, a moment that shakes the body, and, like an unexpected storm, shatters its wholeness, disturbs its restless quietness. It is at the difficult moment of training oneself to throw the past behind (“I forget as hard as I can”) that once awakened, hurled back to the past through the ever-persistent pain.

—Abdennebi Ben Beya “The Question of Reading Traumatic Testimony: Jones’s ‘Corrgidora’ and Morrison’s *Beloved*”

The traumatized individuals struggle to rid themselves of the tragic memory and to overcome the effect of their traumatic experience caused by various reasons, including colonialism and the hegemonic culture. The memory was so strong that in *Beloved*, even the dead baby could not get over it and succeeded in coming back to life again to seek answer from her mother.
In an interview by Wayne Pond\textsuperscript{34} for his radio program *Soundings* in February 1991, Toni Morrison expressed her dislike of being misunderstood, and pointed out that “there was a pain in being black next to racist systems and assumptions.” \textsuperscript{35} She said that she enjoyed identifying the process by which one is victimized in order to point the finger at exits—the exit that made it possible for one to go forward honestly.

Also in the interview, when talking about *Beloved*, she admitted that it was hard for her to write about the nineteenth century—the institutionalized horror—since it would be too emotionally vivid. She compared herself to Sethe and concluded that she had some things in common with her, such as being female, an African American, and a single mother. But the most fundamental question that Toni Morrison wanted to ask in and out of the book was “how could you do that?”(ibid. 278)

In order to ask this question, she gave the killed baby a chance to search for the answer herself, who resurrected as a pregnant-like young lady twenty years after her death. It was during the process that Sethe was forced to remember the repressed past, and the past for Sethe was almost a tangible part of the present. Besides the content, Toni Morrison also abandoned the lineal narrative structure for duplicate memories. In the colonial context, the slaves were brainwashed and internalized from their birth that they were inferior. The colonizers did this both by tyranny and by education, epistemology to be specific. And they did it so successfully that even after the

\textsuperscript{34} The interview was transcribed and edited by María Frías and published in the *Atlantis*, Vol. 16, 1994, pp. 273-283.

\textsuperscript{35} In a 1989 interview by *Times*, the title turned out to be “The Pain of Being Black”, which was, according to Toni Morrison, a misleading topic. Because what Morrison meant was the pain of being a racist, or being the victim of racism. And she believed that there was no pain in being black.
political liberation of a nation from imperialist rule as well as the termination of the institution of slavery by the U.S. government, the African-Americans were still in great trouble with defining themselves properly, and willing to “rememory” the traumatic history. Tzevetan Todorov, in his book, _Mémoire du mal, tentation du bien_, suggested that survivors may be rightly tempted to will to forget, for “the infinite cruelty to remember,” or to be forced to remember, as unbearable as the very experience of violence by the victim. To forget, he claims, would be a desired alternative to save oneself from the terror of memory.\(^{36}\) For the slaves, their torments were the personal trauma they went through during and after institutional slavery.

What’s more, Linda Krum expanded the concept of trauma that slaves had experienced. In her studies of _Beloved_, she defined slavery as a “national trauma” (396), and thus the slavery became a trauma not limited to individuals but also to African Americans as a collective, and to a colonialist past and a post-colonialist present. In this situation, Morrison’s focus on the re-memory and redefinition of nationhood broke the boundaries of the past and present and of a powerful imperialism internationally and domestically.

Re-memory was traumatic because it forced the victims to re-encounter the repressed memory and feelings, to consciously face the fact of being defined as “others” and being animalized by denying their humanity in the colonial context. Mr. Garner was a special slave owner because he treated his slaves as human beings and

\(^{36}\) Tzevetan Todorov’s _Mémoire du mal, tentation du bien_ was written in French and published by Robert Laffont in Paris 2000. Since the author could not read French, this part was adopted secondly from Abdennabi Ben Beya’s “The Question of Reading Traumatic Testimony: Jones’s ‘Corregidora’ and Morrison’s ‘Beloved’”, _Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics_. p.88.
also he treated Sethe as equal as other men slaves. However, those treatments were resisted by the schoolteacher and his nephews:

I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up. I don’t want to know or have to remember that. I have other things to do: worry about tomorrow, about Denver, about Beloved, about age and sickness not to speak of love. But her brain was not interested in the future. (Beloved 70)

Sethe did not want to remember not only because she had “other things to do”, but also the act of taking away her milk meant she was treated as an object rather than a subject, which caused her psychic fragmentation and continued to thwart her after running away from slavery. Therefore, even after she was freed from slavery, it took a long time for her to own herself as an independent human, for “freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (95).

To claim the ownership of the freed self was not simply an individual task since it was much harder without the support of the community. But the community she lived in after emancipation can be classified as a “border culture,” which had no

37 The concept of “border culture” was proposed by Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa in her book Borderlands, in which she defined it as “the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third, …a border culture”, and she further explained that a borderland “is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition….Tension…ambivalence…and unrest reside there and death is no stranger.” (3-4)
precedents. Because after being freed from the institutional governing by the United States, the free black community represented two cultures: the black slave culture and the free white slave-owning culture. People in the free black community were caught in between two conflicting cultures, and this lead to tension, ambivalence and unrest as Anzaldúa suggests. In Sethe’s case, the community abandoned her, refusing to visit her house because of the infanticide. And actually before the killing, the withdrawing support of the community indirectly caused Sethe no other choice when the school teacher rode to her house, the 124, with the sheriff. Although Sethe was “in” the free black community, she was not supported as a community member. Therefore, she was forced to save her children all by herself. The past experience in the hands of the schoolteacher and as a slave scared her, and the thought that her little daughter would not only go through the physical suffering of slavery but would also be tortured by being commodified and oppressed because of her black identity left her no other choices but killing her to save her.

Actually, the killing of the child was the pathos that resulted from several causes and a revelation and beginning of “eighteen years of disapproval and a solitary life” (173). The traumas caused by slavery in its time and prolonged because of the colonial ideology and postcolonial epistemology were vividly depicted in the novel and in the following section, the author will explore them one by one.

38 In Mary Jane Suero Elliott’s “Postcolonial Experience in a Domestic Context: Commodified Subjectivity in Toni Morrison’s Beloved”, Elliott proposed the idea that the slaves were commodified and denied their subjectivity. And she analyzed the text to illustrate how the slavery and the rude slave-owner—the school teacher and his two nephews—exploited Sethe as a racial and sexual other in order to re-write her identity as that of a subhuman creature, bestial rather human. Sethe, then, “experiences the fetishization of herself and her body by the schoolteacher and his nephews.” (185)
In the colonial context, slaves internalized the hegemonic culture and accepted the belief that they were inferior to the ruling class, that was, the white people. That was mainly because that in a white dominant society, the western concept of beauty would be the hegemonic standard of beauty. The dominated African American would internalize the idea that their appearances, which were different from the colonizers, were less beautiful. Therefore, they denied their ability to resist as well. This also explained the fact that slaves were tortured without defying the slave owners for a long time although they were actually physically stronger and when there were more slaves than the slave owners in the plantation, that is, the slaves dare not to resist since they “believed” they were inferior to the slave owners. Take “Sweet Home” in *Beloved* for example. There was a period when Mrs. Garner was the only white there and six strong black young man and Sethe were still very obedient. However, most of the slaves were deeply implanted with the idea that they were born slaves and they would be slaves all lives.

The whole ruling class and system of slavery in colonial period gave slaves no chance to form their own identities or autonomy. This aspect was so true especially in the early and middle period of the colonial context. However, with the development of the society, slaves had comparatively freer circumstances on some plantations. Some slave owners started to treat the slaves gently, such as Mr. Garner, whose management
showed some kind of respect to the slaves. Also the slaves gradually changed their “belief” in their own inferiority and started to doubt the ruling of the slave owner and the ruling system. The changes can be found in the fact that Halle used his extra work to “buy” his mother’s freedom, which made Sethe believe that he was better than the other slaves at Sweet Home and so decided marry him. And from this, the readers see that the slave-owner, Mr. Garner, was different from the other precedent slave owners.

However, the kindness of Mr. Garner and the comparatively mild environment in his plantation could not erase the effect of being denied rights as a full human for such a long time by the colonial/slavery system. For example, when Sethe went to Mrs. Garner to tell her that she wanted to have a wedding, the conversation showed the real view and feelings of Mrs. Garner:

“Halle and me want to be married, Mrs. Garner.”

“So I hear.” She smiled. “He talked to Mr. Garner about it. Are you already expecting?”

...

“Is there a wedding?”

Mrs. Garner put down her cooking spoon. Laughing a little, she touched Sethe on the head, saying, “You are one sweet child.” And then no more. (26)

This laughing and lack of response showed clearly Mrs. Garner’s attitude towards Sethe’s request for the wedding. She considered it as a childish remark and thus deserved no more consideration than a touch on the head and one meaningless
comment. This was actually the slightest denial for the personhood of Sethe, an individual slave girl, and for the collective black slaves. Unfortunately, the other denial for slaves and for Sethe specially, was much more severe, such as the denial of her rights as an independent human by treating her as subhuman, sucking her milk and beating her.

First, in the colonial context, the existence of self, together with the self-development was denied and prohibited. As the feminist psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin suggested in her *The Bonds of Love*, the primacy of relationship in self-development primarily depended on the relationship with another subject rather than through relations with its object.39 According to Benjamin’s theory, the mother is the most important other to form the self and develop the self-recognition in a child. The need to recognize and to be recognized are essential needs for a human being. The boundaries and separateness between self and other should be maintained; at the same time, self and other should be in attunement.40

However, in *Beloved* the one who supported the recognition of the black self died, which indicated that Mr. Garner’s perspective could not vanquish the world whose social system built and sustained the denial of self recognition. The mother, though considered the most significant other for a child according to Benjamin, could not be allowed to have a self; as a result, the child had no way to confirm her identity.

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39 *The Bonds of Love* is the book which studies the problem of domination in Western culture from a feminist psychoanalytical perspective, and in the book Benjamin modifies object relations theory to form her own theory, which she named as “intersubjective theory.”

40 The concept of attunement was also emphasized by Benjamin, which was “a combination of resonance and difference” (1988, 26).
through mother-child relationship when the society denied the status of both sides. The twisted relationship between Sethe and Beloved was actually a copy of the one between of Sethe and her mother, who had no chance to take care of Sethe and “since she was a baby girl,” she was “cared for by the eight-year-old girl who pointed out her mother to her” (51). Having no opportunity to express her thirst for her mother, when Beloved came to 124 after her reincarnation, Sethe, for the first time in her life, felt the “unmanageable” hunger and rage for her mother, and perhaps for herself, too. She rushed out of the house to void herself, but “the water she voided was endless…more like flooding the boat when Denver was born…and there was no stopping now”(51). Not until eighteen years after killing her own daughter did Sethe experience her own hunger for her mother’s love when she saw Beloved.

Not only was the desire for the mother—both Sethe and Beloved, which was initial in the recognition of self, was impaired by the social system, the process of self-development was also terminated by the torment of the school teacher and his nephews. When Paul D met Sethe again, eighteen years blanking in between, he remembered Sethe’s eyes before she ran away. “They were like two wells into which he had trouble gazing. Even punched out they needed to be covered, lidded, marked with some sign to warn folks of what that emptiness held”(9). But when Sethe first came to the Sweet Home, what she had was “iron eyes and backbone to match”(9). The emptiness in her eyes indicated what she had suffered on the farm and how terrible it was that she had to flee when she was even pregnant. Sethe kept telling Paul
D that “they took my milk” (17), and when the boys and schoolteacher found out that she told that to Mrs. Garner, they “made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still” (17). What the schoolteacher and the boys did made it impossible to feed her own child, thus breaking the mother-daughter tie in between. That was also one reason for Beloved’s hunger for love and rage. And this nursing dynamic could also explain the relationship between Denver and Beloved. Denver felt she had the responsibility to take care of Beloved, thus she was overtaken by “patience, something Denver had never known” (54). Although the sufferings take place in the colonial context, the effects are prolonged even after the liberation of slaves have formed the free black community and Sethe was denied and excluded by it.

Besides the denial from the white society and system, Sethe could not get the support and recognition from the free black community when she needed help. This denial did not appear until the grand feast Baby Suggs prepared for ninety people—“Ninety people who ate so well, and laughed so much, it made them angry.” (136). They became resentful:

124, rocking with laughter, goodwill and food for ninety, made them angry. Too much, they thought. Where does she get it all, Baby Suggs, holy? Why is she and hers always the center of things? How come she always knows exactly what to do and when?
Who had not even escaped slavery—had, in fact, been bought out of it by a doting son and driven to the Ohio River in a wagon…

The scent of their disapproval lay heavy in the air. (137)

Baby Suggs could feel there was something wrong but could not tell what might be that something. In her mind she had already lost everything, including her youngest son Halle. All seven out of eight of her children were gone or dead. And she was already fully prepared for the news of Halle’s death. But she smelled the “coming thing,” the dark and the disapproval and the hunch became true when “the four horsemen came” (148) to the Bluestone Road 124.

The four horsemen—schoolteacher, one nephew, one slave catcher and a sheriff—arrived at 124 and the road was so quiet. But at the beginning the sheriff was very alert because in the past the “niggers with his head hanging and a little jelly-jar smile on his face could all of a sudden roar, like a bull or some such, and commence to do disbelievable things” (148). But what they worried about, the violent resistance from the black community did not happen, for there were only “six or seven Negroes … walking up the road toward the house” (148). Without communal support, Sethe became desperate and thus the tragedy happened. When the sheriff decided to take the charge, he commandeered a cart from Sethe’s neighbor and ordered Stamp to drive and no one disobeyed. Even when Baby Suggs meant to run after the cart, what
she wanted to scream was “don’t let her [Sethe] take the last one [Denver] too.” Like the other neighbors, they ignored what was happening and the white boy with a pair of shoes in one hand came to Baby and insisted that Baby Suggs should fix them before Wednesday and Baby said “I beg your pardon. Lord, I beg your pardon. I sure do” (153).

The killing and bloody scene was like the dust blown away by a gust of wind, and nobody ever cared about that. The life of a baby and injuries of two sons of Sethe probably weighed less than fixing a pair of shoes. And even after Sethe and Denver came back to 124, for the following eighteen years, no visitors arrived and even the passers-by would speed up to avoid staying near it. Denver had no friends at all and that was the communities’ attitude towards the unbearable fact of Sethe’s act.

The outside denial gradually infiltrated into the psyche of the slaves and the most terrifying result that Sethe feared was the psychic death her children would encounter if they were taken back to the Sweet Home. She would rather kill her children by her own hands than let the slavery system torture them. But this experience was so horrible that Sethe was not willing to share with others, even if it was Paul D. So she told him that Beloved was dead (10) and she was in prison with Denver but she would not tell Paul D the reason for it. She was definitely afraid of telling the whole story and her worries turned out to be true, for when Paul D found out how Beloved died, he left Sethe. He denied the trust and all the memories between them and left.

Being denied personhood and even the possibility of claiming ownership of the
self were the primary causes for the trauma of both Sethe and other slaves. The tragedies did not end with the termination of slavery, but went on in post colonial society. Examples of this will be explained in the analysis of *Love*.

**Trauma of Being Abandoned**

The denial of both self-recognition and self-development in the colonial system and the impact afterwards served as the fundamental scar of slavery, and also it lead to other disasters, among which being abandoned was the bitter one that characters in Morrison’s novel, especially Sethe went through.

Sethe was abandoned several times by different people and group. First, as a child her mother did not take care of her. There was no clear evidence to show that her mother did that on purpose. Actually, the mother-daughter relationship was broken due to the system. For example, her mother had to work all day long and it was impossible to take care of her own child, which was the fate for almost every black female slave. But for the little Sethe, when she wanted to have the same mark as her mother’s, she was slapped. Her mother knew it was the symbol of humiliation, but little Sethe just wanted to have a connection with her mother. The fragmented memories of her mother left Sethe knowing that she was abandoned somehow although as a mother herself she firmly believed that a mother would never abandon her children.
The feeling of being abandoned by her mother added more fuel to her own love for her children, taking her children as her own and trying to keep them with her instead of being sold or exchanged. And the strong love for her children soon became the intense mother-kids relationship, especially when Denver was the last to accompany her. So when Denver asked how long Paul D would “hang around” with them, which hurt him a lot, for he “missed the table. The coffee cup hit the floor and rolled down the sloping boards toward the front door” (43). Paul D considered the words as unkind remarks but Sethe could not agree. Sethe would rather apologize to Paul D than ask Denver to say she was sorry to him in person. This kind of love Paul D thought was “risky,” especially for a “used-to-be-slave woman” (45). But for Sethe, love for her children was the only thing she could do to fill the hollow in her own heart left by having no mother’s love of her own.

Second, Sethe thought she was abandoned by her husband, too. Halle was the one she chose rather than have a husband appointed by white slave owners. And she chose him mostly because he thought highly of freedom, for he gave five years of Sundays in exchange for Baby Suggs freedom. Sethe wanted the marriage very much and even thought of the wedding, though denied by Mrs. Garner. Nevertheless, “Sethe made a dress on the sly” (26), and it could serve as a wedding dress for her. She described it vividly to Beloved and how hard it was for her to collect every piece of cloth and she worn it although it was “the worst-looking gown you could imagine” (59). But she was disappointed when she was beat and robbed of her milk, and Halle did not come
to save her.

When Paul D told her that Halle was in the loft in the barn over her head when she went through the misery, Sethe became furious, saying “He saw them boys do that to me and let them keep on breathing air? He saw? He saw? He saw?”(69) and she firmly believed that “if he is alive, and saw that, he won’t step foot in my door. Not Halle.”(69) These thoughts reflected Sethe’s disappointment and sorrow because her husband was not the hero she expected. She was more courageous than Halle for she decided to resist the torture by contacting the underground and running away while expecting. But Halle was destroyed by witnessing the whole violence and broke under it. When Paul D saw him the last time, “he had butter all over his face” (69).

That was truly understandable for a repressed slave to react in such situation because they were accustomed to unjust treatment and torture. If they resisted or revolted, they would be severely punished, such as having the bit put in the mouth. Sethe knew and saw many slaves being punished like that. “Men, boys, little girls, women”(71). No one could escape or escape the wildness in their eyes. Paul D commented on the lives of men in Sweet Home: “One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me”(72). When compared with a cock, slaves were even less free than it, who was allowed to be and stay what it was. In such situation, Halle was incapable of saving himself from the shocking view of his wife being treated as an animal, let alone be able to save Sethe.
Knowing the truth eighteen years later was too late. The reality did not comfort her or save her from the feeling of being abandoned. Because of this, she knew for sure that she had lost him forever and had no chance to be compensated for her emotional loss of her husband. By then, the colonial system had been abolished for years, but the trauma lasted far beyond in the “post”-colonial era.

In her novel, Morrison focuses more on the portrait of the lives and the wakening desire for self identity. The female characters are often described as more strong-minded than the male ones when they were repressed in the unjust system. In *Beloved*, Sethe forced herself to forget the unbearable past and move forward. However, neither her husband Halle nor her two sons Howard and Buglar could endure the similar miseries; therefore, Halle was mad and Howard and Buglar “had run away by the time they were thirteen years old” and neither of the boys “waited to see more”(1). They abandoned their dying grandmother, tortured mother and little sister without a second thought in the dead of winter. Sethe did not talk about them too much after they left and Denver felt lonely in that gray and white house with her mother after Baby Suggs’ death.

The trauma of being abandoned did not occur only to Sethe. Her sisters and brothers were abandoned by her mother too. When Sethe recorded her memory of her

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41 In the interview by Wayne Pond for his radio program *Soundings* in February 1991, Morrison comments “I enjoy identifying the process by which one is victimized in order to point the finger at exits. Not as escape hatches based on fantasy and wishful thinking, not as escape hatches based on re-inventing the world the way you would desire it, but real ones. Ones in which the knowledge of the past—wide-eyed, confrontational—makes it possible for one to go forward honestly, carefully.” The interview was transcribed and edited by Maria Frías, p.276.
own mother, she remembered what Nan told her about her siblings’ tragedy. Nan told Sethe how her mother treated them:

“She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The others she did not put her harms around. Never. Never. Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe.” (62)

Nan was the one taking care of Sethe and she was transported to America together with Sethe’s mother from the sea. What she told was a miniature of the whole society, or as Morrison said “sixty million and more.” Numerous children suffered the same fate of being abandoned by their parents, willingly or being forced. The experiences and memories of growing up without parents’ nurturing care left lifelong scars for the abandoned children in and beyond colonization. Sethe and Beloved were just the representative figures for the pathos.

Trauma of Being Injured
Apart from the psychological traumas endured by Sethe discussed above: 1) being denied of their personhood, self-identity, self-recognition by both the dominated white society and free black community and 2) being abandoned by family members—mother, husband, sons, mother-in-law and the old friend Paul D, which left her empty and starving for love which could hardly be comforted afterwards, what she had gone through was inhuman humiliations and physical tortures.

Physical traumas and psychological traumas in slavery share similarities and differences. First, physical traumas can recover in a shorter time. Wounds stop bleeding, new skin grows to cover them, and the body gets used to the scars on the surface; then seemingly the pain passes. But the healing of the psyche cannot be accomplished at one stroke, or it may never take place. Second, the colonial system destroyed the indigenous culture and epistemology of African American people more thoroughly than their bodies, and the result of the destruction for their mind has been discussed above. Take Sethe’s infanticide, for example. She was scarred more by the psychic death of being enslaved than by being punished physically. Last, for strong-minds, the psychological traumas can be healed after great struggle and self-development. On the contrary, even after the physical pain stops or when the individuals get used to the pain from time to time, the scars last lifelong and keep the survivors of what they had been through.

Physical traumas were the most common and usual tortures that slaves suffered. When Paul D arrived at 124 and came into the house, Sethe told him that she had a
tree on her back, for when the two boys found out that Sethe told Mrs. Garner about what they had done, “schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree” (17). She could not feel her back, even when Paul D’s cheek was pressing it. And when the white girl Amy saw it, she formed the conclusion: “I can see by your back why you didn’t [stay there]” (79). The death of the skin was both literal and metaphorical. Literally, the large wound on the back destroyed her nerve system, making it impossible to feel. Metaphorically, the colonial hegemony numbed her and this numbness still influenced her life in post-colonial time.

In *Beloved*, every black slave could tell the readers how they were destroyed physically. Baby Suggs offered her heart to the free black people because as she said that “slave life had ‘busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue’ she had nothing left to make a living’”(87). In her life, she gave birth to eight children, among whom “four taken, four chased”(5). In the scene of Baby Suggs ceremony in the Clearing, she vividly voices despair over the horrible treatment from the whites:

Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don’t love your eyes; they just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. … What you say out of it [mouth] will not heed. What you scream from it they do not hear. What you
put into it to nourish your body they will snatch away and give you leavins

instead. (88)

Every torture can be exemplified in *Beloved*. A few examples here are necessary to illustrate the brutality of “punishment” for the slaves. Paul D suffered no less physical torments than Sethe. He had the bit in his mouth which made it impossible to say anything and his hands were tied cross behind him when he saw Halle sitting by the churn and had butter all over his face. When he was sent to dig the feldspar with forty-five other slaves, he lived in the small “quarter”(106) which he called a grave. All forty-six only communicated through eye contact and they were chained together to walk, work and sleep. The reason Paul was there was that he tried to kill Brandywine, the man to whom schoolteacher sold him. All forty-six had run away in a big rain at risk of being drowned and killed without mercy. Fortunately they succeeded.

Other slaves did not have a sweeter life or experience. Halle’s madness was clear evidence. Sethe’s mother was raped by different white men, which was common to almost every slave women. And she was hanged. Meanwhile, Sethe witnessed the body after she was put down on the ground. Nan, the woman who took care of Sethe had only one arm. The other one was amputated by some white man. When Stamp aimed at telling Paul D what happened eighteen years before from a newspaper, Paul D analyzed that it was very rare to have a Negro’s face in a paper. Because in his
opinion, a Negro’s face would appear in the paper only when “the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated, since that could hardly qualify as news in a newspaper. It would have to be something out of the ordinary” (156). From here we could conclude that for white people, all the crimes mentioned above were just ordinary and were not worth a few minutes attention. But in fact, this was brutal news in normal society, but since the victims were “negroes” that news became ordinary. The white people consider those deeds as natural when they punished their own “things”—their slaves.

Nevertheless, the most dreadful tragedy was not the direct tortures given by white slave owners, such as the schoolteacher. Killing one’s own baby was the most frightening nightmare that colonization and slavery left to them. Sethe realized that if her children had been caught by the schoolteacher they would be treated like animals. The fear that her babies would suffer what she had gone through became intolerable, which finally triggered the mother to commit the infanticide. She would rather kill her children rather than keep them alive in such dehumanized situation. Ironically, death, the most serious consequence of being injured, became the salvation for the repressed slaves and slaves-to-be. All of them were victims of the slavery and hegemonic culture of the time. What Toni Morrison wants to express is the doubt for the existence of those traumas and she aims at arousing the readers’ awareness of those long ignored and marginalized issues of slavery and the traumas caused by slavery.

It is a convincing conclusion that in slavery system in colonial society, under the
influence of cultural hegemony, the white dominators considered the slaves inferior and punished them to show their superiority and power as ruling power. Because of the cultural hegemony and its institutional and educational ruling system, slaves internalized the ideology that they were inferior, of little importance and can be treated as commodities or animals. As a result, they were denied, abandoned and injured psychologically and physically. Unfortunately, the trauma did not end with the abolishment of slavery. The effect of the destruction of the psyche and bodies continued in postcolonial period. Beloved came back to Sethe after their emancipation, which was a sign to show that even the dead could not bear what they had been given before death. This shows Toni Morrison’s attitude to the issue of slavery, that is, the dead should not be forgotten and the cultural hegemony should be swept away.

Though Sethe was lucky to have her dead daughter back to compensate for the painful loss for the past eighteen years, Sethe and her children all suffered both psychological and physical traumas during and after the period of slavery. As Baby Suggs said before her death: “not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief”(5). Her thought indicates what happened to Sethe also occurred to the other “six millions and more.” But they did not have the chance to be made up after they were freed and kept on suffering from the hard-to-end psychological traumas and born the scars of physical traumas after their emancipation for slavery.
Love is the Cure—Reading Love

Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. The loved one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lover’s inward eye.

---- Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye*, 206

Love is an eternal topic in literary history. Everyone offers different kinds of love and desires love from others. However, offering love is easier than seeking love. No matter what kind of love they offer, they believe that the love is the best gift they could give to the one they love. But for the beloved it may be a different picture. What they receive may not be what they want. Many African American women encountered such situations. The love they got was far less than what they desired, but they were subject to the hegemonic culture—the patriarchal culture, which lead to their traumatic stories.

Trauma of Being Repressed and Humiliated

Bill Cosey, the former owner of Cosey’s Hotel and Resort in *Love*, was a wealthy and powerful man. And his acts of love and violence, generosity and cruelty, set the
whole story. As Sethe’s love took Beloved’s life, Bill’s love and his legacy ruin the lives of the women in his life. Years after Cosey’s death, the women still believe that death did not stop loving or separated from them. Instead, he was “nowhere and everywhere” (189) in the Hotel and in the women’s lives. Meanwhile, since he was dead, the women asserted that they could love freely and openly. The interesting point in Morrison’s work is that love of the dead is tricky, for it is hard to maintain the balance between remembering and forgetting the past.

Though the women could love the dead freely and openly, this did not bring them happiness or peaceful life. On the contrary, they still lived a misery life because what have done to show their love or to protect their love did mislead them to wrong direction in their lives. Sethe lost her husband, mother-in-law, two sons and her beloved little girl. And years later, her little daughter came back and sought and even squeezed love from Sethe. Heed the Night, the child bride of Bill Cosey, and Christine Cosey, his granddaughter, were best friends as children and bitter enemies at their current home because of Cosey’s unclear will.

However, sharing so many similarities do not suggest that the two novels share the same plot and setting. Unlike Beloved’s more magical realist reincarnation, and physically tried to find out the answers from her mother, Bill was more like a flowing spirit roared above the house. In each chapter, he was referred as “Portrait,” “Friend,” “Benefactor,” “Lover”, “Guardian”, “Husband” and “Father”. All those names suggested Cosey’s continuation of functioning in the roles of husband and father, and
so on, even after he died twenty-five years ago. The presence of both being and non-being forced the readers to sink into the magical realist atmosphere and considered the question of whether one ceases being a lover or a cause for trauma after death.

Not like the only one baby ghost who later came back to life in _Beloved_, there was another compelling figure L, who can matched Cosey’s strong presence. Her voice full of animation and opinion, overshadowed the fact that she was dead too, as Cosey, who, as a phantom, hunted Up Beach (73). Considering Morrison’s tricky naming that L is actually for _Love_, and the fact that she spoke after death was a sound support for Morrison’s choice of magical realism, which gave the freedom of expressing what she wanted to convey and the realism could not offer. From the novel, we knew that L was the cook in Cosey’s Hotel and Resort and later at Maceo’s Café Ria, and she witnessed the prosperity and decline of Cosey’s family, as well as friendship and resentment between Heed and Christine. Morrison made her a cook on purpose. First, many scholars believed that “it was the slaves themselves, who commonly emerged as the major food producers, working in family groups and on their own time, producing the bulk of the food of free people, and their own as well” (Mintz 41). The owners of the slaves were served by them and relied on their cooks to feed them. However, the irony was that those who cooked and provided food were the ones who were often without the food and even died of hunger. The problem was that both pre- and after-emancipation, food cooked by African Americans was
considered as essential for survival, both physically and mentally. L played an important role in the restaurant and outside of it, because with her cooking and the food, the reader could connect food with healing and soothing. Once after a heated quarrel between Heed and Cosey, Heed set fire to Christine’s bed. L used sugar to douse the flame. “they found L smothering the blackened sheets with a twenty-pound sack of sugar, caramelizing evil” (134). From this scene, readers could draw the connection between the cook and the role of a healer and savior, who tried to help the two women get rid from the trauma caused by Cosey.

Trauma of Being Controlled

Cosey’s women suffered not only mentally destruction by his vague will, but also went through physical trauma. Heed’s hands were deformed, burned and arthritic, which reflected the pain in Cosey’s women’s lives. As Cosey’s child bride—her poor family was happy to make the deal—Heed was thrust into adulthood, had no access to education, lost her best friend Christina, suffered the humiliation of Cosey’s affairs, and was broken-hearted that the man, for whom she considered leaving Cosey, did not respond her affection. Even if we only take a close look at Heed’s hands, we could find that through Toni Morrison’s comparison between Heed’s hands with “fin” or “wings… that fold” (99), the women was disclosed with her power by the description of animal image.
However, even though Heed and Christine were not under the same brutal humiliation as the little girl Faye experienced, raped by six boys and released by Romen, they were subject to the Cosey’s control or influence before and even after his death. The reason for Heed and Christine to battle against each other was Cosey’s will, which stated that Cosey’s possessions belonged to his “sweet Cosey child”. Both women believed that it was referring to herself: Christine was Bill Cosey’s blood while Heed, who called her husband Cosey “Papa”, proposed that the term was her husband’s term of endearment for her. Other than possessing Cosey’s wealth, each women actually wanted to hold the position of Cosey’s sweet child: “the process of will making operated in a context in which the transfer of property was interpreted as a communicative event: the giving of gifts made statements about past, present and future relationships and was, therefore, implicated in the reproduction of relationships beyond the grave” (Hallam and Hockey 164). This action really suggested that both women believed in the connection between live people and those who had died. Therefore, it was not surprising that the competition for Cosey’s affection was fierce though he could not physically be with them. Nevertheless, it seemed that they still treated his sprite as a real existed person, and believed that the ghost of his was still with them.

However, the name “Sweet Cosey Child” was actually coined by L, which was a ridiculous irony, because the will that Heed and Christine believed as real was coined by L. The reason why L did so was because she witnessed Cosey’s authentic will, in
which he gave all his wealth to Celestial, a “sporting woman” with whom he has been engaged in a long-time affair. And she forged the will on the menu so as to protect the two girls she was with for many years. L’s good intention led her to murder Bill Cosey, the destruction of his authentic will, and the forge of its substitute. While comparing Love and Beloved, we could argue that L’s murder was in some way similar to Sethe’s killing of her little daughter. First, their actions happened because they want to protect, either their daughter or their loved ones. Second, their actions were a fight against the oppressive power. Sethe did this because she would rather let her daughter die than remain alive and be enslaved. L’s deed could be considered as a fight against a larger pattern of oppressive power. Last but not least, both of their protecting actions were not morally supported by their communities or society. Supported or not, one point was sure that these women used their wit and their own behavior to protect their loved ones, even though they may bear the severe consequence and spiritual pressure.

L forged Cosey’s will, trying to protect Heed and Christine, however, they were bond together ever since, hating and torturing each other, and at the same time, depending on each other. Before Cosey’s death, Christine was the princess of the family, who had servants and comfortable life. But after the will was released, Heed incapacitated her from performing daily tasks after Christine came back home from several years of vagrant living. Christine cooked and served Heed’s food every day, of course, grudgingly. It seemed as if both of them had lived a quiet life in Cosey’s house. However, both of them hatched a plan for taking Cosey’s possessions for their own.
Christine hired a lawyer and Heed paid an assistant, Junior. Heed even asked Junior to forge a second will, to write on another of L’s menu by imitating Cosey’s handwriting, which identified herself as the sweet Cosey child, without any doubt. It was fitting that Heed’s trip to this memorial deed would end with her death, a noteworthy combination of love and death. Only when the death of Heed and Christine came to them, these former best friends would confront the ghosts of their pasts, their love and its continuation after death.

Though the dead man haunts the novel, the story was an in-depth narration of Heed’s and Christine’s relationship, or to be specific, friendship. It may seem strange at first that except for the description of their sudden establishment of their friendship as: “It’s like that when children fall for one another. On the spot, without introduction… If such children find each other before they know their own sex, or which one of them is starving, which well fed; before they know color from no color, kin from stranger, then they have found a mix of surrender and mutiny they can never live without. Heed and Christine found such a one. Most people have never felt a passion that strong, that early”(199). However, their friendship was suddenly stopped by the marriage between Cosey and Heed, as one became another one’s “grandma”. Through their lives, they lived in the hatred for each other apparently and searched for the proof of being loved by the man, and even after his death they still wanted to be his “sweet Cosey’s child”. However, only when the death came to them, they realized that they strongly desired each other, not the man. At the end of Heed’s
life, Christine invited Heed to “hold my … [her] hand” (194). Only at this point, is their anger toward each other transformed into sadness and understanding. Only at this point do they realize their strongest desire and bond with each other. Christine and Heed communicated about friendship when one of them was dying and their conversation even extended after Heed’s death. Through a life time, the two women lived in misery because of a man, and a misunderstanding of their own affection. Only death could be the redemption, which did not come late in a novel like this. For magical realist writing could give writers more space to describe life after death and people after death could just behave as normal alive people, which is meaningful to dissolve the hatred and trauma by love and affection even after death. Another reason for their near-death realization was that only the approaching of death could force the people to unlock their true selves and discover the freedom of being true to themselves.

Why do the two women have problems with facing themselves truly or being free of expressing their deep-from-heart affection to each other instead of “looking for Big daddy everywhere” (189)? Only when death came to separate the two suppressed women, did they find out and show their hidden love for each other, not only by words, like “we could have been living our lives hand in hand” (189), but also by their postmortem embrace: “Both look asleep but only one is breathing. One is lying on her back, left arm akimbo; the other has wrapped the right arm of the dead one around her own neck and is snoring into the other’s shoulder” (195). This death pose shows both
desperation and hope. Through their whole life, they lived under the shadow of their Big Daddy; they were suppressed by the patriarchal society and the white society. This kind of suppression was the root of their lifelong psychological trauma. Nevertheless, they finally use this embrace as the last rebellion against their Big Daddy; also it is a resistance against the hegemonic power. Although they did not suffer the traumatic experience caused by slavery like Sethe did, Heed and Christine are the miniatures of the repressed African American women who were equal with men according to law but actually suffered ideological repression from the dominant culture, which showed discrimination against African American and African American women.

In *Love* Toni Morrison focused on the issue of post-colonial discrimination, especially the stereotyped conception of African American women after the emancipation. Heed and Christine wanted to control their lives, however, when Cosey wanted to marry Heed, no one could refuse him. Another example was when Junior ran away from her uncles’ because they asked her why she brought a cottonmouth to school, the uncles drove a truck and “the front fender knocked her sideways the rear tire crushed her toes”(58). Junior could only watch “her toes swell, redden, turn blue, then black, then marble, then merge” (59). From those vivid descriptions, readers could form a clear picture of African American women’s traumatic experience in a post-colonial period, one hundred years after their liberation.

Morrison wanted to show that African American women were not subjected to the
hegemonic culture. They used their ways to resist the hegemony. For example, Junior ran away from her home where her mother could not protect her. Although Heed and Christine were influenced by the hegemonic patriarchal society, they unconsciously resisted the repression by staying together. They thought it was hatred that kept them together. It was love that actually connected them and Toni Morrison believed that love can connect the repressed African American women to resist the hegemonic culture.

**Magic(al) Realist Portraits of Postcolonial Traumas**

Amaryll Chanady states that magical realism is an ‘amalgamation of a rational and an irrational world view’ (Bowers 21). Lois Zamora and Wendy Faris’ book *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* suggests that many magical realist texts tended to admit the existence of plural worlds, which means in those texts writers usually “situate them on luminal territory between or among these worlds” (21). From the above remark and the previous study, it is not hard to conclude that beginning with *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, one special characteristic that distinguished magic(al) realist novels from realism or fairy tales was the integration and connection of two worlds—the real world and the magical world. What’s more, writers influenced by different or contradictory cultures are more likely to adopt it to express the conflicts that arise with the contact and collision of two cultures,
especially in the case when one culture wanted to dominate the other, and to express the trauma caused by those conflicts. The attempts to dominate the subordinate culture through brainwashing, trying to convince the inhabitants of the superiority of the dominating culture and their inferiority, usually caused more severe traumas and affected the slaves after their emancipation.

At the same time, the writers are also influenced by the conflicting cultures and become aware of the cultural hegemony. Toni Morrison was influenced by the dominant American culture and the African American culture. The American culture had its origin of European culture, which recorded and perceived the slavery from their white dominant perspectives. However, this perspective and history neglected many aspects of slavery, which were important for the African Americans to approach and claim the ownership of their selves. As Morrison claimed, magical realism provided her with another way of knowing things, that was, to connect the two worlds of reality and magical together, and to allow the ignored history to be expressed in a way other than the “authoritative” history as written by the Europeans and Americans. By using the magic(al) realist techniques, Toni Morrison meant to create a cultural context in which the African Americans can have the chance to recognize what they had gone through and who they were after such experiences and how they become who they were at the time. The cultural context Morrison created was not a simple one, but a mixed and hybrid one, in which both European American

42 This is also a second-hand citation from Bowes’s book, p.86. The origin of the citation was from Mari Evans’ *Black Women writers: Arguments and Interviews*, which was published in 1985.
cultures and African indigenous myths were woven together.

As discussed earlier, the boundaries between the past and present, colonization and post-colonization did not separate the binary oppositions as distinctive as it is supposed to be. The psychological and physical traumas still hurt in the post-colonial context since the pain was not easily erased; even though the system was abolished, its influence still lasted. The former slaves were liberated from the colonization governing but the hybrid culture they were in after the liberation still affected them and continued causing traumas in their lives. As this author mentioned in the previous chapters, magic(al) realism was used as the very suitable tool to reveal the traumatic experiences of African American people. In the following part the author will illustrate how magic(al) realism helps express torture and how the magic(al) scenes were integrated with the realist environments.

Supernatural is Natural

Both Beloved and Love showed the reader the unusual atmosphere from the very beginning to establish the magical setting for the whole story. The little ghost in 124 on the Bluestone street and the “Police-heads” in the sea near Cosey’s resort appeared for different purposes. The baby’s venom became stronger and stronger with its desire for love, and its sorrow was heavy. Beloved desired to be loved and she desired to get the answer about why her mother murdered her. Meanwhile, Mr. Cosey and L exist
for different aims. Mr. Cosey wanted to control while L was trying to save. No matter what they desired, they lived with other people in a practical world and all the others accepted the supernatural as natural.

First, as Baby Suggs believed that every house in the country was spiteful and filled with Negro’s grief. She even suggested that they were lucky since the ghost in their house was just a baby, which indicated that they knew clearly who the ghost was and why it was there and did all those resentful deeds, like shattering mirror, putting two tiny hand prints in the cake, making the sideboard’s take a step forward, or the pitching of the house when Paul D touched Sethe. The baby ghost did those things to scare away her brothers and keep her mother and sister alone in that grey house. She did so to show her affection. And the baby ghost’s actions were accepted by her family members. For example, when Paul D entered the house, he felt “a wave of grief soaked him so thoroughly he wanted to cry”(9). At that time, Sethe told him that was her daughter, which served as a clear evidence to show their awareness of the identity of the ghost. Beginning with the very first chapter, the two worlds bent and wove together and human beings could communicate with the ghost (Sethe and Denver held hands and said, “Come on. Come on. You may as well just come on.” And the sideboard took a step forward.) and those two parts could even fight (Paul D whipped the table and fought against the baby ghost, chasing it out of the house.)

There were other signs of the co-existence of beings from two worlds. Once, Denver saw a white dress holding Sethe and they discussed how the dress looked like.
Denver said “It looked just like you. Kneeling next to you while you were praying. Had its arm around your waist” (35) However, Sethe was not frightened by the scene Denver described but surprised at the fact it was like her. And in the discussion, Sethe expressed her belief in memory:

Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it’s not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it’s gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don’t think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened. (36)

In Beloved, as Morrison dedicated to “six million and more”, the number is not simply a number, but six million and more stories, miserable stories. Probably millions of ghosts are there in the country, roaming around in the place their memories stayed, such as the “headless bride back behind Sweet Home”(13). Memories never die. What’s more, as Sethe believed, the memory had the power to create the “concrete” picture and reality, which could exist even after the death of the creator. And those memories of the tortured slaves were evidence of the slavery history
overseen by the dominant European American culture.

Second, in *Love* the ghost did not appear until the middle of the story when Junior’s monologue showed that she considered Mr. Cosey her “good man.” She knew he was dead but she believed they recognized each other the first night she arrived in his big house. She felt his feeling and smelled his smell. She even saw “the cuff of a white shirtsleeve, his hand closing the door” (119) when she left his office.

Taking the magical as reality for granted is one of the characteristic of using magic(al) realist techniques in novels. In *Beloved* the most obvious and quick acceptance was Sethe and Denver’s attitude to the emergence of Beloved. On the way back from the carnival in town, they saw Beloved for the first time and at the sight of her face, Sethe’s body reacted before s consciously realized who that girl was, and her bladder filled the capacity and the water she voided was endless. When Denver realized the young lady was the ghost in flesh, instead of being frightened, or feeling hurt because of not being the main reason for Beloved’s return, she begged Beloved to keep the secret from her mother (75). The same situation occurred with Sethe. In the Clearing, when Sethe was choked, she thought it was Baby Suggs in the beginning. Gradually she recognized the similarity between the hands choking her and the touches given by the little ghost, though she was not sure about the identity of Beloved, she convinced herself it was good for both Denver and Beloved, who loved each other’s company.

When Sethe finally identified who Beloved really was, she slept with a smile.
“She looked at Beloved’s face and smiled. She looked straight at the shed, smiling, smiling at the things she would not have to remember. Thinking, ‘She ain’t even mad with me. Not a bit’” (181-182). A devoted mother, who loved her child more than herself, never having to be scared of her ghost baby, was so happy to see her dead daughter came back to her, seeking love. In the second part of the novel, the chapter of Sethe’s monologue showed her ecstasy. The sentences “She my daughter. She mine” (200) appeared four times in the same chapter, which served as a sign of the afterward rationing and fighting with each other (239). Beloved became more and more greedy for love, and Sethe spoiled Beloved with all her love and patience. Even when she was so weak and Denver tried to save them both, Sethe aimed at protecting Beloved with ice pick when she believed that the slave-hunter came again. Though in the past several months Beloved and Sethe were in a situation that made Denver believe that Sethe was going to be destroyed by Beloved, so when Sethe thought that someone would hurt her daughter, she decided to protect her daughter by killing the hunters rather than the hunted. She already took the resurrected ghost as her beloved daughter and even loved her more than Denver.

We have concluded that both in Beloved and Love the attitudes towards the magic of the ghostly figures was natural. They tended to believe the afterlife world could connect with the real world in which they lived and thus took the ghost as just another form of being, which shared similar feelings and bonds with them. This attitude also affected the readers to react naturally to all the supernatural scenes in the novels and
to share the trauma of the African Americans.

Structures Specially for Resisting

As Rimmon-Kenan suggests that “Beloved is narrated by an extradiegetic narrator who, on the whole, delegates the role of focalizers—and sometimes also that of second-degree narrators—to various characters in the novel.”\(^\text{43}\) Instead of an omniscient narrator, Morrison adopted another narrating method in both Beloved and Love. In the two novels, the stories were told by different characters from their own perspectives and what they told was limited, incomplete and biased, and those fragments combined. They sometimes supplemented with each other while at other times they contradicted with each other. No matter how those fragments related with each other, they gradually formed a whole picture of the untold history that caused Sethe’s tragedy of killing her beloved daughter and Heed’s death after she and Christine finally forgave each other and made it clear that they did love each other.

For example, the narrations for the infanticide were quite different from different narrators. It was firstly described from the perspective of white people who came to catch the ran-away slave and her children. When they came into the shed, what they saw was “two boys bled[ing] in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in

\(^\text{43}\) Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in his “Narration, Doubt, Retrieval: Toni Morrison’s Beloved”, discussed the characteristics of narration in the novel. According to Rimmon-Kenan, only when Beloved’s identity was discovered did the characters become the first-degree narrators by revealing their interior monologues.
the other...she simply swung the baby toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time…”(149). Even in such terrible scene, the schoolteacher did not feel sorry about the death of the child, but about missing labors for his farm because his nephew beat the “horse” or “hound” too much. And the policeman probably believed that the “nigger” was crazy; nothing sympathetic in his attitudes. When Stamp talked about it with Paul D after he moved out of the house, he did not consider Sethe as mad, but believed that “she loved those children. She was trying to outhurt the hurter”(234). So in Stamp’s point of view, what Sethe did was to revenge. However, in the memory of Sethe, when she recognized the hat of the schoolteacher, what in her mind was

No. No. Nono. Nonono… Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away over there where no one could hurt them. Over there. Outside this place, where they would be safe(163).

She just wanted to protect her children from being enslaved, from being classified as animal, being raped in the open air, in one word, from experiencing what she had experienced as a slave. Only after character expressed their feelings and told their stories could the readers piece together the whole and real picture of the past.

Similar examples can also be found in *Love*. When Heed and Christine were still
good friends and they played on the beach, Heed was asked to go back to the resort to get their toy. On the way back, she was touched by Mr. Cosey which made her feel humiliated. Thus when she came back and found Christine had vomited, she believed it was because of her. She did not have the courage to ask why she vomited. Meanwhile, Christine did not want to explain that she vomited because she saw her grandfather masturbating. The misunderstanding was the first gap that appeared in their friendship and much more emerged along the way as they grew. One misunderstanding leads to another misunderstanding. As a result, the two friends separated and were driven apart because of the existence of Cosey and his influence.

Cosey was also a symbol of a successful African American businessman “when Cosey’s Hotel and Resort was the best and best-known vacation spot for colored folk on the East Coast” (Love 5). After the slaves were liberated, it seemed that African American and the white people were treated equally. However, Heed and Christine were not beneficiaries because they were still under the oppression from the patriarchal society.

The use of fragmented narrations was suitable to the themes of the novels. Because as mentioned in the previous chapter, survivors would not wish to remember the traumas they had experienced and even when they were in the process of remembering, they probably resisted it and felt painful in it. The ambivalence was caused by the struggle between forgetting and rememorizing, and the structure Morrison applied to the novels helped the characters to illustrate their personalities
and reveal their traumatic memories. Thus she successfully portrayed the physical and psychological traumas caused by the colonial system that continued in the post colonial period.

Conclusion—Same Traumas Spanned a Century

From the above analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *Love*, it is not surprising to find out that although the backgrounds for the two novels are separated by almost a century, the traumas that heroines in the novels experienced are quite similar, no matter in colonialism or post colonialism.

First, both novels dealt with the problem of developing and recognizing the relationship between women. *Beloved* focused on the mother-daughter relationship and *Love* concerned itself with friendship between two women. Although the two stories had different social backgrounds, both novels talked about the search for love, understanding and memories. The relationships between the main characters were both destroyed by men, which proved Morrison’s opinion that African American women were repressed not only by white society, but also by the patriarcha system within the black community. Sethe, Beloved, Heed and Christine were all victims of this repression and fortunately they did not surrender to the social system but fought against it. The searches for self, recognition and recovery were traumatic and the battles against discrimination were brutal. What they gained after all those traumas
was a whole self and the ownership of these new selves.

Second, both heroines and their houses were abandoned by their communities. Sethe and Denver lived alone in Bluestone 124 after Baby Suggs died and nobody ever visited them, even the cart that passed by would speed up, until Paul D came and drove away the baby ghost. They had male company for a short while before Beloved came back in the flesh. Heed and Christine lived together at One Monarch Street for years, hating each other, until the young girl Junior arrived, who came searching for the job advertised by Heed. But even after the arrival of Junior, people in Silk or Up Beach did not like to talk about it. Those, who had various relations with Bill Cosey, such as Sandler Gibbons, who had gone fishing with him for years, or Vida, who worked for Cosey, did not like Christine or Heed. Unlike the ending in Beloved, in which the women in the free black community decided to save Sethe and Denver by praying together, the community Heed and Christine lived in was less willing to connect with Cosey’s women. Only Romen, who was sympathetic with the black girl Faya when she was raped and he was supposed to be the one to hurt her but did not, came to help Christine and Heed when Junior left them two in the deserted hotel, where they established their friendship and the friendship was destroyed by the powerful male, Bill Cosey.

Last, in both novels, the female characters experienced the feeling of being denied. It was explained in detail about Sethe’s being denied as a human in the context of the colonial system. But almost a hundred years after African Americans
were liberated, black women would also suffer the similar trauma of being denied. Heed was married to Cosey when she was only eleven. Her family was so happy that she had the chance to marry such a famous and wealthy old man. Cosey chose her because he wanted to make her the one he wanted. Nobody asked her for her opinion before the marriage took place and everybody believed she led a happy life in her marriage, including Christine, who believed her best friend in childhood stole the love of her grandfather and that the life of a princess her childhood friend had should have been hers. And also during the years when Christina was with Dr. Rio, she was treated like a soulless object, which could be “manhandled out of her (his) apartment after a two-minute supervised reprieve to get her purse” (91). From Love it is obvious to conclude that in the postcolonial context, African American women were still being discriminated against by both white people and black men.

All in all, after the analysis from magic(al) realist perspective of the traumas in Beloved and Love by Toni Morrison, this author would like to draw the conclusion that in a postcolonial context, the traumas caused by colonization did not cease as it was hoped, but continued to affect the African Americans, especially African American women physically and psychologically. In order to depict those traumas to the most, Toni Morrison adopted magic(al) realist techniques to go beyond the boundaries of realism, blending the practical world with the magic world, and thus made it possible for the readers to share the sufferings that African American women went through in the colonial and the post colonial context. The hybrid culture they
dwell in was influenced by the former dominant European American culture and their own indigenous culture. Toni Morrison did not stop at depicting the traumas; she in fact aimed at using these magic(al) realist techniques to exaggerate the traumas and raise readers’ consciousness about the hegemonic culture which influenced the post-colonial African Americans. From the above analysis in this chapter, we could conclude that in her novels, the ghosts, the super natural and the formation of the novel are all tools to show Toni Morrison’s awareness of the resistance to the hegemonic post colonial culture.
CHAPTER IV

TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE, DRAMATIC PAINTINGS: A MAGIC(AL)
REALIST ANALYSIS OF FRIDA KAHLO’S SELECTED PAINTINGS

Here is a woman who should have been utterly crushed by external event,
and instead she imposed upon life’s cruelty and indifference her own values and her
own beauty.

--Jeanette Winterson

Frida Kahlo (1907-54), one of the Mexican avant-garde female artists in the
Mexican renaissance,\(^{44}\) was considered “the only woman who has expressed in her
art the feelings, functions and creative power of women”\(^{45}\) by the leading artist of the
period and her husband, Diego Rivera. She gained posthumous celebrity especially
after Hayden’s exhaustively researched biography of her was published in 1983.
Throughout her life, her intelligence and paintings were eclipsed by her much more
famous husband. However, with the refocus of Mexican art to a feminist perspective
in the 1970s, this self-taught female artist has drawn more and more attention in the
academic field and the whole world.\(^{46}\) The turbulence of her life did not crush her and
the agonies and oft-impaired mobility were turned into creative and impressive
images which had the power to transfer the feelings of the painter to the viewers.

Labeled as a surrealist painter by André Breton and supported by later scholars,\(^{47}\)

\(^{44}\) Tatiana Flores in “Strategic modernist: women artists in Post-revolutionary Mexico”, discussed the paintings of
six women artists including Frida Kahlo, Lola Cueto, Tina Modotti, Rosario Cabrera, Villaseñor and Nahui Olin.
In the passage, Flores adopted the concept that the 1920s was the decade regarded as a renaissance in Mexican art
because it witnessed the rise of the mural movement, important innovations in the graphic arts, the consolidation of
photography as a fine arts medium, and dramatic advances in art education. Flores adopted the concept from
\(^{45}\) This is a second-hand citation from Dina Comisarenco Mirkin’s “Images of Childbirth in Modern Mexican Art”
\(^{46}\) The film Frida released in 2002 is so far the only film that concerned itself with a non-white female painter in
the film industry.
\(^{47}\) Take David Craven’s “The multiple identities of modernisms from Mexico in the early twentieth century” for
example, the author analyzed Kahlo’s “My Dress Hangs There” and claimed that the elements in the painting can
be characterized as displacement and condensation, which could constitute the concept of Freud’s unconscious
Kahlo herself never approved that title, and she actually resisted it by saying “I didn’t know I was a Surrealist till André Breton came to Mexico and told me I was” (Wolfe 64). She insisted that “I never painted dreams. I painted my own reality.” Influenced by traditional Mexican art and modern art, Kahlo’s works were combinations of past and present, reality and fantasy, agony and bravery.

In previous studies, most scholars tended to accept Breton’s classification of Kahlo and analyze her paintings accordingly. And with the flourishing of feminism and nationalism, Kahlo’s paintings have been studied from these perspectives. In “Frida Kahlo’s Spiritual World: The Influence of Mexican Retablo and Ex-voto Paintings on Her Art,” Maria A. Castro-Sethness specified the iconographical sources as the influential factors for Kahlo’s paintings, and she included four of her paintings. 48 By comparing and contrasting Kahlo’s paintings and *Mater Dolorosa* and *Ecce Homo* retablo, the author concluded that Frida Kahlo’s artistic vision was rooted in the very Mexican soul and that identification reinforced the mysticism in her work (24). As Evelyn Torton Beck suggested in her “Kahlo’s World Split Open,” Kahlo’s images of “bloody wounds” originated in her experiences of growing up female in a highly patriarchal culture. 49

Based on the consensus of Mexican traditional art influence on Frida Kahlo’s career, and the physical and psychological traumatic experience she suffered, previous studies tended to propose that the images used and techniques applied include the mysticism (mentioned above) and fantasy (Udall 10). So far as this author could gather from the academic field she has covered, only one scholar, Maggie Ann

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48 The four paintings are *Henry Ford Hospital* (1932), *Itzcuintli Dog with Me* (1938), *Roots* (1943) and *Xochitl* (1938).

49 This assertion is the part that I am allied with. But in the following part, Beck tried to illustrate that Frida Kahlo did so because she was sexually abused by her father, and this is the proposal that I hardly find convincing. However, the study of Frida Kahlo from various perspectives is the point the author would like to exemplify.
Bowers, has considered Frida Kahlo’s works from the perspective of magical realism. The analysis only occupied three pages in the book *Magic(al) Realism*, which mentioned three paintings of Frida Kahlo, namely *The Broken Column* (1944), *The Two Fridas* (1939) and *Tree of Hope* (1946). Bowers believed it would give rise to strong arguments to include Frida Kahlo in the group of the magic realist artists group (118), and she supported her proposal by bringing forward 1) the characteristics of smooth and photographic images in Kahlo’s paintings, which were also unique features of magic realist paintings; and 2) the horrifically real and the extraordinary magical aspects of life which are combined visually in the very image of the event that was to dominate the rest of Kahlo’s life (119).

This chapter offers a more detailed reading of the “extraordinary magical aspect” of Frida Kahlo’s paintings, aiming at providing more substantial evidence for studying Frida Kahlo from the magic(al) realist perspective. I do not intend to include Frida Kahlo into the group of magic(al) realist artist because it is beyond the scope of this comparatively short chapter.

**Traumas in Frida Kahlo’s Life and Their Impacts on Her Art**

Frida Kahlo was born in Mexico City, and her home was known as the Blue House, where she left the world forty-seven years after her birth. She was born in 1907, however, when she grew up, she wanted her birth to be the same with the beginning of Modern Mexico. Thus she changed her birth date to be July 7, 1910, which was the beginning of the Mexican Revolution. From this we could see her appreciation for the development of her own culture, which was colonized by Spain

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50 All the information about Frida Kahlo can be found in Hayden Herrera’s extremely inclusive *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. 1983
centuries before.

She was diagnosed with polio when she was six years old, and this left her crippled. That’s why she always wore long, colorful skirts later. However, her physical trauma did not end there. When she was eighteen, she suffered from a severe street car accident, in which she received a broken spinal column, broken ribs, eleven fractures in her right leg, besides a iron handrail pierced her uterus, leaving her unable to have babies in her entire life. Although she conceived three times, none was successful. This accident was almost fatal and all the broken bones and internal injuries caused her enormous pain. She underwent more than thirty-five operations at the time to regain her ability to walk. In order to keep her spine functioning, doctors used some metal medical nails in her body, which gave her intense pain and also provided inspirations for her paintings.

Actually, this bus accident was the turning point for her career. Since she had to be immobilized from time to time after the accident; she began painting instead of going on studying medicine. During the recovery period after the bus accident, Kahlo painted many self-portraits in bed with the help of the infrastructure which could make her drawing in bed possible. Probably because of the time and hardship for this young girl, the main subject for her painting, from the very beginning, carried the suggestion of pain.

In May 1929, a nationwide student strike was triggered because of the revengeful closure of law school by the president of Mexico, Emilio Portes Gil. After two months of student movements, the Congress approved the law, which established the National Autonomous University. This success was partially due to the students’ leader, Alejandro Gómez Arias, who was elected president of the National Student Confederation.
Alejandro was Frida’s love after she entered the university, and their affair ended in 1928 when he fell in love with her friend Esperanza. Frida could not let it go easily because she considered him a part of herself. She wrote to him “Now as never before I feel that you do not love me anymore. But, I confess to you, I don’t believe it. I have faith—it cannot be—Deep down, you understand me, you know I adore you! That you are not only a thing that is mine, but you are me myself!—Irreplaceable!” (Herrera 80) Nevertheless, two or three months later, Frida joined the Communist party through Tina Modotti, Campo’s lover, and met Diego Rivera, who replaced her “irreplaceable” old love quickly.

Twenty years older than Frida, Diego Rivera was one of the most famous Mexico’s artists. He began studying art when he was ten years old. In order to have a better education in art, he went to Europe in 1907 and stayed in Paris for about fourteen years. He returned to Mexico in 1921, leaving numerous loving affairs back in Paris. His philandering was constant his betrayal of her was not surprising, which caused psychological trauma for Frida.

Frida always admired Diego Rivera and he considered her as a talented painter with a quick, unconventional mind. Diego influenced her and in the years 1928 and 1929, Frida’s paintings had strong marks of Rivera’s manner. For example, early in 1928 she painted Portrait of Cristina Kahlo (Figure 3). From the painting, it is clear to see the traits of Diego’s influence—“hard, slightly wooden outlines delineate forms, a small stylized tree in the background contrasts with a larger branch in the foreground to define space in a naïve and rudimentary manner” (Herrera, 95). However, with the development of her painting, the Riveraesque style disappeared. Frida’s paintings were, more primitive than Diego’s. Her sharp insight and Mexican life gave her more focus on the indigenous symbols and objects, which separated her
paintings from Diego’s. She was more familiar with the Mexican past and its traditions. In her paintings, she painted as an “intermediary between past and present, myth and reality” (Udall 12).

After they married, they enjoyed a short happy time together. Diego was appointed Director of the Academy of San Carlos and Frida would visit and take care of him when he was sick. But she did not paint in those months. Then things changed. Diego was expelled from the Party and they accepted the invitation from the American ambassador Dwight W. Morrow and went to Cuernavaca to finish the murals in the Cortes Palace. There Frida started to paint again. However, comparing the _Self-Portrait_ (Figure 4) in 1929 and _Self-Portrait_ (Figure 5) in 1930, subtle differences can be noticed. The later self-portrait showed a less happy lady and she explained to her friend that the first year of marriage was filled with sorrow due to one miscarriage and one betrayal. As a result, Frida’s dream of ending her misfortune with her childhood by marrying Diego was broken. And the wish for a happy married life was surpassed by miseries in her adult life. During their marriage, both Diego and Frida had affairs. Frida even had affairs with women, and Diego once had an affair with Frida’s younger sister Cristina, which was intolerable for Frida. They divorced in 1939, but remarried the next year. This ten years of marriage and the reunion afterwards resulted in Frida Kahlo creating dozens of paintings depicting the various traumas she encountered.

First, she painted her physical trauma, including the childhood illness, the fatal street car accident, miscarriage and dozens of operations in her life. For example, in Detroit in 1932, Frida conceived again. Neither the doctors nor Diego were optimistic about the pregnancy; however, she tried her best to keep the baby. She stayed in the apartment, lonely. She endured the pain from her spine and uterus alone. In spite of all
the suffering, she lost her child five months later in 1932. *Henry Ford Hospital* (Figure 6) and *My Birth* (Figure 7) were works done in that year. From the previous painting, she started her unique bloody self-portraits which made her one of the most original painters of her time. In order to express the trauma she experienced, she incorporated truth, reality, cruelty and suffering in her paintings. Those paintings were considered masterpieces by Diego because he believed that there had been no precedent in the history of art. Actually the reason that distinguished Frida Kahlo and the previous female painters or even the subsequent artists was that she used the technique of magic(al) realism and it gave her the power to express the traumas she had gone through in a way which could give the most striking effect to vision. And since that was the first work of such technique, the author of this dissertation chooses the year 1932 as the beginning point for the study of Frida Kahlo’s paintings.

Second, Frida’s traumas not only came from their troubled marriage, but also from the cultural shock she experienced when she was in the United States with Diego. The couple did not spend their entire time in Mexico. In 1931 Diego accepted the invitation to have a retrospective exhibition at New York’s fledgling Museum of Modern Art. That was a great honor for an artist because it was the museum’s second one-man show. Therefore, he and Frida, with some of their best friends, sailed to New York in November that year. They were warmly welcomed by high society and invitations for lunches and parties were numerous. Diego enjoyed all this while Frida could not fit in from the very beginning. It seemed that she attended those activities happily but she complained to Dr. Eloesser in one letter that she was in “a bit of rage against all these rich guys here.”

51 In a letter to Dr. Eloesser dated November 26, 1931, Frida talked about her impressions of New York City: “High society here turns me off and I feel a bit of rage against all these rich guys here, since I have seen thousands of people in the most terrible misery without anything to eat and with no place to sleep, that is what has most impressed me here, it is terrifying to see the rich having parties day and night while thousands and thousands
Although Frida missed her life back in Mexico, Diego did not return to their hometown. Instead, in April 1932, Diego and Frida took on the train to Detroit where he painted murals on the theme of modern industry. Just as in Manhattan, Frida found herself in the same dilemma. She was not happy for herself since she did not like Detroit at all, but she felt happy because Diego was working happily there. She always believed that things in the United States may be interesting, but were still “ugly and stupid”.

The above two classifications are manifestations of Frida Kahlo’s trauma, and to depict them in the way that she felt them, she chose to use a very special artistic technique—Magic(al) Realism—to express her personal trauma, to dramatize the pain for others to understand and feel. Throughout her career, Frida was situated in the hybrid and conflicting cultural context between European dominant culture and indigenous Mexican culture. She resisted the standard European concept of beauty and in her paintings she used many Aztec figures around her to show a typical Mexican woman. What’s more, magic(al) realist techniques were suitable for her to express her trauma to the most and thus we can conclude that she was not influenced by the hegemonic white culture. In fact, she applied magic(al) realist techniques in her paintings to resist American and European artistic domination.

And in the following part, this author will analyze Frida Kahlo’s paintings since 1932 from the perspective of magic(al) realism to illustrate this point in details.

52 In another letter to Dr. Eloesser dated May 26, Frida wrote: This city seems to me like a shabby old village. I don’t like it at all, but I am happy because Diego is working very happily here, and he has found a lot of material for his fresco that he will do in the museum. He is enchanted with the factories, the machines, etc., like a child with a new toy. The industrial part of Detroit is really most interesting, the rest is, as in all of the United states, ugly and stupid. P.135
Images Depicting Trauma Caused By the Accident

If there had not been for the street car accident, Frida Kahlo would probably have lived an entirely different life, finishing her school in her early twenties and even if she became an artist, her painting skills would not be the same. However, accidents sometimes make a person. The year 1925 marked the beginning of a grueling battle against Kahlo’s slow decay, and also witnessed the birth of one of the greatest female painters in Mexico.

According to Olga Campos, Frida’s lifelong friend, from her childhood to her death, Kahlo had gone through at least thirty-two surgical operations, most of which were on her spine and right foot. In her close friends’ words, Frida Kahlo “lived dying” for the rest of her life. This accident left Frida Kahlo with lifelong physical trauma and she depicted this in several of her paintings.

The Broken Column (1944; figure 8) was one example, which created an unbearable tension, a feeling of paralysis in the painter and viewers. Agony was made vivid by nails piercing into her naked body. The open body represented the surgery and the steel orthopedic corset symbolized the confining of her torso and to a certain extent, her immobilization. From the open torso, we could see the cracked column in the place of her spine, which could give the viewers a feeling that her body was falling apart and even though it was kept together with the help of the corset, her own body was in the situation of being tortured. Besides the cold presentation of the steel column and corset, Frida also painted the naked body perfectly with the beautiful breasts. The more beautiful the breast was, the uglier the broken column and the nails seemed. By using the nakedness, physical pain and the technique of magic(al) realism,

53 Andres Henestrosa, a writer, was a close friend of Frida Kahlo for many years. He once wrote of Frida that “she lived dying.” (qtd. in Herrera's Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo p.454)
the message of the psychological suffering was conveyed to the viewers in its strongest possibility. What’s more, the broken column was in the shape of the Ionic order which could be found in ancient Greece architectures, which indicated a European image in Kahlo’s painting. The combination of the dark skinned naked body and grey concrete broken construction can also be interpreted as the combination of the cultural influences that Kahlo experienced in her career. She had close relationships with many European artists, including Breton and Lupe, who brought European painting genres to Mexico and certainly left traces on artists there. The image of falling column reflected the resistance of Frida Kahlo to the European impact on Mexican art. The column in Frida’s body was an ionic column from ancient Greek temple. Its failing into parts shows Frida’s disbelief in western culture’s supporting her body up intact. This kind of resistance can be seen in more paintings in the second part of the analysis in this chapter, which focuses on the trauma caused by the influence of hegemonic culture.

In the 1940s’, Frida’s health worsened and she had to be confined at home, wearing a different corset to support her body. The pain in her spine and foot was increasing, and even worse she was diagnosed with syphilis and had to go through a series of blood transfusions and a treatment with bismuth. Some doctors suggested that she should have operations to reinforce her spine, but it was not performed considering her delicate health. Nevertheless, she had to wear an orthopedic corset for a long time after 1944 and she described that succession as “punishment.” Her way to express her pain and to impress others was to portray herself with wounds in the most dramatic form, such as footless, headless, cracked open and bleeding. Those paintings were like silent crying and she showed how intense her suffering was. She projected her pain onto the canvas and thus it was easier for Frida to pretend to be an objective
onlooker, who was strong and healthy in spite of her own trauma. *Without Hope* (1945, Figure 9) and *The Little Deer* (1946, Figure 10) were representative works of that “punishing” period.

*Without Hope* (1945) vividly showed Frida’s suffering in a horrifying manner in a magic(al) realist method. The background was quite similar to that of *The Broken Column*, which was in a cracked and arid land. The gaps and infertility symbolized the violent pain Frida had to tolerate and the influences on to her body, which made it split. In the dull sky were the sun and the moon, which were close to the earth but could not help the land become fertile. Also the blood-red sun and pale moon were also projection of Frida’s misfortune, which also by using magic(al) realist method Frida extended her physical pain to the universe and solar system. Frida lay weeping in bed, holding the tip of a huge funnel, containing a pig, a chicken, brains, a turkey, beef, sausage, a fish and a skull with “Frida” written on its forehead. All those things were vomited to the easel that straddled her bed, referring to the instrument which helped her paint while she was confined to the bed. This image probably symbolized the cry of rage and horror. On the back of this painting, Frida wrote “not the least hope remains to me…Everything moves in time with what the belly contains.” She was so thin all those years because of her poor health, and after several operations the doctor told her to eat pureed food every two hours to keep her fit. But it was really difficult for her to keep on eating. However, even in such circumstance, the sheet that covered Frida’s naked body was decorated with round pattern that looked like cells or eggs waiting to be fertilized. This probably indicated the crush of hopes of having Diego’s child. In addition, considering the preference of Aztec elements in Frida’s paintings, the sun was painted like a huge reddish orb and according to Aztec belief
the sun was nourished by human blood.\textsuperscript{54}

*The Little Deer* (1946) provided the viewers with another testimony for her spinal fusion, another self-portrait to illustrate the magic(al) realist application in her paintings. In the painting, Frida presented herself as a creature whose body was that of a young deer and whose head was her human head with antlers. The atmosphere of *The Little Deer* reminded the viewers immediately of the book of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, in which people had pig tails and it was taken as natural. Frida Kahlo combined the deer with her own head and put it in the glade, nine arrows pierced its body, which caused continuous bleeding and led to the deer’s death. The dying deer symbolized Frida Kahlo’s own deterioration of health and inevitable death. A friend of hers believed that “the arrows signify Frida’s suffering due to male oppression” (Herrera, 357). The author agrees on this remark. Women in Frida’s time were still under the influence of patriarchal society, and Frida tried to depict her pain as being an oppressed female. The contrast of the bleeding wounds and calm face of Frida’s showed her strong-will and also was proof to show that she was accustomed to the pain in her life. As magic(al) realism operates in literary works, the real world and magic(al) world are usually connected, and this connection is so natural that the readers would also accept the supernatural without doubt or questioning. The same characteristic appeared in *The Little Deer* as well. The deer-body Frida can be perceived as a representation of her physical trauma. Also the connection between the human head and the deer body was smooth and natural that it seemed the Frida-headed deer was just injured and ran into the woods for protection. The expression of the face shows no sign of pain which was also Frida’s attitude towards her trauma, that was, even when she was confined in bed, she tried to draw pictures

\textsuperscript{54} See Hayden Herrera, p. 356. *The Little Dear* was owned by Arcady Boytler, who had spinal problems as well. Herrera believed that the painting uses simple metaphors to show that Frida is a prey to suffering. The painting points to psychological suffering, as well.
with the help of certain facilities, such as shelf on the bed. Same attitude can be seen in *The Broken Column*, though the tears were shed, her facial expressions was quite similar with most of the expressions of her other self-portraits. Therefore, it is not strange to conclude that all hope was not lost in Frida’s mind, so she faced the death calmly and this showed her determination to convey hope along with her trauma.

A similar attitude can be seem in *Tree of Hope* (1946, Figure 11) too, but in a different form. In this painting, there were two Fridas, which was not unique but appeared in other paintings, such as in *The Two Fridas* (1939, Figure 12) as well. *Tree of Hope* showed a red-Tehuana-costumed Frida, weeping next to a half-naked Frida, who was lying on a hospital trolley, probably still unconscious because of the anesthetization after one operation. The seated Frida held a pink corset, showing her desire for getting rid of that, which was impossible and ironically, even the seated one was wearing one, judging from the two braces that are around her chest. Words on the green flag, held in her hand, which can be translated into English as “Tree of Hope, keep firm,” (Herrera, 355) showed her determination to be tough. From the magic(al) realist view, this author interprets the seated Frida as the spirit of Frida, who guarded the unconscious Frida. The red color of Tehuana and the red pointed tip on the flagpole were metaphorically representing blood dripping from the wound on the recumbent Frida’s back, which didn’t heal after the operation. Also, the background was day and night, and on the night side seated the healthier Frida, which in accordance with the traditional belief that spirit usually appeared at night.

In the four paintings mentioned above, there was one noticeable element that appeared and reappeared; these were the cracks and gashes in the background. In *The Broken Column, Without Hope* and *Tree of Hope*, the ground in the paintings all suffered from drought and huge cracks went deep into the surface of the earth.
Although the ground in *The Little Deer* was intact and green, the tree trunks were full of scars and knots, which was analogous with the gashes in the other paintings, indicating the painful recollection of Frida’s physical trauma. On the other hand, all four paintings showed influence from Aztec heritage. The Tehuana and brown-skin nude image of Frida Kahlo can be deciphered as her resistance to the hegemonic Euro-American culture by sticking to nature and Mexican tradition. Also, she adopted the elements from the Pre-Columbian arts, such as “the composite creatures and half human and half animal to symbolize the idea of continuance and rebirth” (Herrera, 357). As Carpentier proposed, in Latin America the appreciation of reality was extraordinary and unique, as was the Aztec heritage. The Aztecs believed in the magical power of certain animals, such as the parrot, which was depicted in many of Frida’s self-portraits, as a supernatural creature that symbolized a man-headed bird (358).

Images Depicting Trauma Caused by Miscarriage

Frida Kahlo once said “I suffered two grave accidents in my life, one in which a streetcar knocked me down… The other accident is Diego” (Herrera, 107). Diego Rivera played an important part in Frida Kahlo’s painting. Diego was the greatest painter in Frida’s belief, so for a short period during their courtship Frida expressed herself in a Rivera’s painting style. The paintings in this period were quite different from her later works which had strong Frida manner, in which magic(al) realist techniques had been used. One of the reasons why her style changed can be found in the disappointment she felt about her marriage soon after she got married.

A lasting problem in their marriage was the inability to have a baby. Besides the
fact that it was very hard for Frida to conceive, Diego was not eager to have another
baby at his age. Therefore, every time Frida conceived and had serious physical
problems, Diego would have a different opinion on the issue of keeping the baby. So
she fought against the fear of losing the baby during her pregnancy, and suffered a lot
from the abortions which were almost fatal. Although Diego did comfort her and
accompany her, she still went through physical and psychological trauma alone.

Take *My Birth* (1932) for example: although the street car accident reduced her
ability to conceive, she miraculously conceived three times but without even one
success. This painting was believed to be one of the memorials for one of the
miscarriages and the strong desire for the inheritance of herself. In the middle of the
painting, there is a naked woman lying on the bed, giving birth to a baby. The viewers
can see the head of the baby, but the head and the upper body of the mother is covered
by a piece of white cloth. However, on the wall there hangs an image of the *Mater
Dolorosa*\(^55\) and the Mater Dolorosa added the mourning atmosphere to the whole
scene, mourning the death of her dead baby and herself. From the Aztec myths that
life came out of death and sacrifice, *My Birth* fully elaborated this point. The birth
symbolized the death of the bond between the fetus and the mother, and in the
painting, the newborn referred to Kahlo’s miscarriage as well as herself according to
the title of the painting. The color of the painting was dark and had strong contrast. In
the middle of brown floor was a big bed with white sheet, on which lay a woman with
brown skin. Under the new-born’s head was blood. All the colors were contrasting
shapely. The scene in the painting was very smooth and photographic, however, the
combination of smooth manner and strong contrast colors showed a strange

\(^{55}\) Maria A Castro-Sethness in her “Frida Kahlo’s Spiritual World: The Influence of Mexican Retablo and Ex-voto
Paintings on Her Art” proposed the idea that Kahlo’s paintings incorporated Aztec imagery and the *Mater
Dolorosa* was evidence that shows she was also influenced by Christianity. Castro-Sethness also believed that in a
magical dimension, the Virgin’s influence extends to the objects in the room (23).
juxtaposition. It seemed to say that for a woman, she does not need to show her face or identity in the process of keeping the family or race to grow and last. Or if we read this painting from the perspective of Kahlo’s personal experience, it may have a different interpretation. Throughout her life, she never gave up the hope of having a baby, although the hope was really small. And even though she conceived three times, each time it turned out to be a miscarriage. These miscarriages not only brought her intense physical pain, but more seriously psychological trauma.

*Henry Ford Hospital* (1932) and *Frida and the Abortion* (1932 Pl. 1) were Kahlo’s memorial for her unspeakable agony for losing her baby and suffering physically and psychologically. In *Henry Ford Hospital*, Kahlo presented herself naked on a hospital bed bleeding. She held, through vein shaped ribbons, six objects, which symbolized different meanings in this tragedy: a male fetus symbolized her unborn child, whose size was similar with Kahlo’s and possibly at that time in Kahlo’s mind it indicated the same or even greater importance of the baby than herself; a snail, referred to the slowness of the miscarriage (Herrera, 144) and also symbolized conception and pregnancy in some Indian cultures (Castro-Sethness 22); a pelvis, of course symbolized Kahlo’s own pelvis and failed in keeping the fetus; an orchid, which represented fertility in ancient times; a machine, symbolized industry and everything mechanical that related with pain; and a flesh-pink torso in the shape of a swollen belly and spinal columns on it, which can be regarded as Kahlo’s projection of her own body and the main cause for her miscarriage. The identification with the magic(al) was twofold: the floating bed and objects were representations and recollections of Frida’s emotion at the miscarriage, indicating her loneliness when she went through the trauma, and the background of the industrial constructions showed
her resentment of the life in Detroit.\footnote{In a letter to Dr. Eloesser on May 26, 1932, Frida wrote “I don’t like it [Detroit] at all…”}

_Frida and the Abortion_ (1932) was a lithograph, expressing the similar emotion that expressed in _Henry Ford Hospital_. The lithograph was a tool that Diego used to keep Kahlo occupied after her miscarriage. However, Kahlo’s lithographic work was not as well received as her paintings and she returned to her canvas later, but the lithographic work remained. There are similarities between the two art works. Both Kahlos were naked, bleeding, and connected with a masculine fetus with a vein. Kahlo seemed unwilling to accept the facts that she had lost her baby, which could be seen from the depiction that in _Henry Ford Hospital_ the lying Kahlo still had a swollen belly and in _Frida and the Abortion_, there was a small embryo in her womb.

Second, both works included symbolic objects. As in _Frida and the Abortion_, cells were carved on the slate to symbolize different development of her baby; weeping moon showed her psychic situation during the period; a third arm holding both a heart shaped and palette shaped shield to indicate her unsuccessful attempt to self-protection. Last but not least, the technique she used to express her extreme trauma was the same, namely magic(al) realism. In _Henry Ford Hospital_, the floating bed, vein shape connection and different symbolic objects created the magic atmosphere, in which two worlds, Frida’s and the one of the lost baby’s, were connected together, and helped to express her agony in its most power. Meanwhile, Frida painted the day and night together and a third arm and fertile soil with plants whose shape echoed to the eyes and hands. All those images made the whole lithograph a powerful emotional impact on the viewers.

To conclude, Frida’s every attempt to keep Diego by having a baby failed, and this not only left her with physical trauma but also psychological trauma. However,
from the examination of her life we could see that she did not surrender to all those traumas. She transferred those tragedies into inspirations in her painting life and fought against those traumas.

Images Depicting Trauma Caused by Conflicting Cultures

The traumas depicted in Frida’s painting and discussed above were mainly caused by the physical injuries. However, the patriarchal influence and the hegemonic cultural influence of the Euro-American also played a part in causing her traumas. The time of the Mexican revolution, mainly the first two decades in the beginning of the 20th century, was characterized by a confrontation of conflicting ideologies regarding the regime and national identity, and was also a time full of competing modes of representation, during which Frida Kahlo was one of the avant-garde artists whose paintings reflected the combination of indigenous Mexican art and European artistic techniques. However, Frida Kahlo did not show a positive attitude towards this combination, especially not towards the more developed industrial world. The reason for her resistance was partly due to her physical condition at the time, but also, this author believes that Frida resisted the Euro-American culture and its standard conception of beauty on purpose. For example, the nude image in Frida’s painting was far from the nude image in European artists’ paintings. Representative works of this kind of trauma included Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States (1932, Figure 13) and My Dress Hangs There (1933, Figure 14).

As mentioned in the previous part, Frida and Diego were in Detroit in 1932, where Frida suffered another failed pregnancy. Actually, that was an additional trauma

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57 Most of the nude images in European artists painting were representations of goddess like figures, who have beautiful faces, blond hair and perfect shape of body.
to her unhappy life in America. She wrote to her friends several times to express her unhappiness. She missed her home country so much and *Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States* fully represented her feeling at the time. Frida was dressed in a long pink dress and lacy gloves, which was not quite common in her self-portraits. The pink dress was probably suitable attire for the party she attended in Detroit; therefore, she changed her usual Mexican Tehuana into western dress. In the background, Frida placed the sun and the moon together in the sky on Mexican side.

The painting showed the great influence of the Aztec notion of war between light and dark. The idea of duality in Mexican culture can be seen clearly in this painting. First, the Aztec-Mexican culture is in contrast to the industrial North America. The color of both sides reflects Frida preference. In Mexican side, the sky is blue; the ground is fertile; the flowers are colorful with deep roots. The temple has its unique cultural traits. On the contrary, for the American part, the cloud of industrial smoke covers an American flag and the scene was full of representations of modern world: skyscrapers, factories and machines. All of them are in sharp contrast with the images of ancient agrarian Mexico. Second, Frida depicted the objects of two cultures differently. Every object in the Mexican part was painted with care. The stairs of the temple, the stones in a pile, the pre-Columbian statues and different kinds of flowers are all shaped as they look. But all the modern objects in Frida painting are more like tombstones. The skyscrapers are windowless; the four industrial chimney stacks are replicas of numerous similar constructions in the U. S. Although their shapes are similar with the pre-Columbian idols, they have no soul. Third, in the foreground, the objects in two sides are contrasting each other, showing another duality: life-death and

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58 In one of her letters to Dr. Eloesser written in July, she wrote, “*no me hallo!* [I am not happy here!] as the kitchen maids would say, but I have to pluck up my courage and stay because I cannot leave Diego.” (Herrera, p. 154)
nature-industry. On the Mexican side there are several rooted plants and on the American side there are three round machines, which have electric cords instead of roots.

From the contrasting depiction, we could see Frida’s attitude towards the industrialization. First, though Frida dresses in European style attire, she turns her face to the Mexican side, which showed her longing for her home country. Second, from the painting, we can see Frida combines Aztec symbols and natural plants in the Mexican side. This represents her belief in the indigenous history and dislike of the industrial society which has no “root” as she depicts. Third, her painting shows her resistance to the Euro-American culture and industry. Positioning herself between two distinct worlds, Kahlo highlights her role to introduce Mexican culture to the outside world.

Despite her homesickness, she went to Manhattan to accompany Diego and she did not paint regularly there but only produced one painting which was not finished when she left there. Frida was Diego’s most loyal defender when Diego was fired by Rockefeller because of sketching Lenin on the mural. However, Diego never approved Frida’s request for going back to Mexico in almost four years. Frida wanted to absent herself from America and this desire can be seen clearly in her painting *My Dress hangs There.*

Unlike in *Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States,* Frida didn’t show a contrast between two cultures. She simply presented her Tehuana costume in the center of many representations of Manhattan. Manhattan, in the Depression years, was considered as the capital of capitalism and the center of protest. At the first sight of the painting, the viewers will be attracted by numerous similar skyscrapers and other buildings representing Euro-American culture and economy. On
the window of a Trinity Church was a red S that turns the cross into a sign of American dollar. Also the marble steps of Federal Hall are transferred into “a graph showing ‘weekly sales in Millions’” (Herrera, 174). These represent that the European tradition has been changed by capitalism. Though the society as a whole appeared to be fine, the common people did not benefit from it. Frida showed this by portraying hundreds of tiny figures at the bottom of the painting.

Compared with the huge objects of modernization such as telephone, toilet, billboard, trash can and factory chimneys, the size of the human showed the dehumanization by the industrial society, and also Frida realized it. She desired to go back to Mexico so much because the indigenous culture can nurture the human beings.59 Besides, the dehumanization can be seen in the vivid depiction of the huge garbage pail, which contains bottles, daisies, cloth smeared with blood, a bone, an object in the shape of a human heart and a bloody hand. Frida wanted to show that in a capitalist society the human wasted so much and they became waste as well.

The female character in the painting was symbolic, too. Mae West was considered by Rivera as “the most wonderful machine for living I have ever known.” (Herrera, 175). However, Frida saw it another way. She put the billboard of Mae West next to the dollar-sign, which indicated that in her mind the film star played similar role in the capitalism. Mae West was a symbol of vanity and luxury, but not the ideal of beauty. Frida always believed in the Mexican perception of beauty. So she painted the billboard above a burning building and the edges peeling away.

Frida’s homesick can be seen not only in the absence of herself from the dress, but also from the depiction of the steamship puffing away from the harbor. The ship

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59 In the painting My Nurse and I (1937), Frida painted herself as an infant with an adult’s head, suckling in her dark Indian nurse’s arms. This is a declaration of her faith in the continuity of Mexican culture, and in the idea that Mexico’s ancient heritage is reborn in each new generation, and that Frida, as an adult artist, continues to be nourished by her Indian ancestry. In it she has literally placed her being within the bosom of her Indian past, melding her feeling about her own life with pre-Columbian culture’s stress on magic and ritual, its cyclical view of time. (Herrera, pp. 219-220)
may head for Mexico where Frida always wanted to return.

There are two special features in this painting. First, Frida chose over twenty fragments of photos and other cut-up papers and stuck them to the canvas in the bottom part to show that all the persons were draw from real world. She deliberately put the fragments of human photos under the huge modern buildings and objects to combine the real world with her painting and to suggest that it is a representation of millions of people lived in such economic and cultural situation. Second, the characters in the painting are representative of the capitalism, namely George Washington, the statue in the front of Federal Hall, and Mae West, the film star. George Washington represented the revolutionary spirit of the past. However, with the economic development, people in capitalism chased fame and glamour rather than revolution. This also revealed Frida’s disagreement with modern American society. She painted all those details to show her love for Mexican culture and to resist the Euro-American ideological influence.

Conclusion

Influenced by both European and Mexican indigenous heritage, Frida devoted her life to painting and portraying her physical trauma and psychological trauma. She adopted magic(al) realist techniques to depict her great pain. And she integrated Mexican indigenous cultural heritage and pre-Columbian images in her paintings to resist the hegemonic Euro-American culture.

First, in the selected paintings, Frida adopted magic(al) realist techniques to dramatize and exaggerate her pain. As this author defined in Chapter Two, magic(al) realist techniques include the mixture of realist and magical view of life, the
supernatural occurrences integrated into ordinary life, and depiction of mysteries in a sober and unsentimental manner. The life-threatening accident at age eighteen, the miscarriages in her life and the cultural conflicts she experienced caused tremendous trauma both physical and psychological. As Laurie Schneider Adams said, “Visual artists’…most truthful biographical statements are their images” (Beck 55) Frida depicted herself in pain because she lived in pain for most of her life. Her traumas were intolerable and thus common realist painting techniques could not provide her with powerful tool. Magic(al) realist techniques were suitable for dramatizing her pain and showing it to the viewers.

In *The Broken Column*, the body of Frida was split. According to common sense, people will die in such situation. However, Frida is alive and suffering this deathly pain for many years. Viewers can feel the desperation when they see the broken column and dozens of nails in her body. In *Without Hope* and *Tree of Hope*, the bed and hospital trolley was placed in wild field, where the ground was dry and cracked. The combination of everyday objects with imagined environment produced strong contrast and revealed Frida’s actual situation: she lived in actual world and her body and psyche were tortured in another world. Magic(al) realism allows her to combine the two worlds together and to show it to the viewers. In *The Little Deer*, Frida adopted magic(al) realist technique to the most. A deer with a Frida’s head was supernatural and it was depicted in such an unsentimental manner and was integrated with the surroundings so naturally. Viewers accept this combination without doubt and consider this as natural.

Second, Frida was very familiar with Mexican indigenous culture and she loved pre-Columbian heritage. We can easily find traditional traits in her paintings. Take the juxtaposition of the sun and the moon for example. It represents the Aztec notion of
an eternal war between light and dark; therefore, the idea of duality in Mexican culture: life-death, day-night, past-present, can be shown in the paintings too. These images appear several times, such as in *Without Hope*, *Tree of Hope* and *Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States*. There are other pre-Columbian objects in her paintings, such as the snail in *Henry Ford Hospital*, the childbirth depiction in *My Birth*, and pre-Columbian idols in *Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States*. No matter where she was, she always wanted to express the Mexican culture and in ordinary life, she always wore traditional costumes to show her Mexican identity.

Last but not least, she adopted the previous two elements on purposes. Although Mexico gained its independence even before Frida’s birth, it was still under great influence of Euro-American culture. As she developed her drawing, she met many important western artists and she lived in the United States for almost four years. This experience influenced her but did not change her attachment to her indigenous culture, but actually strengthen her loyalty to her own conception of drawing true to her heart. She did not paint herself in perfect form nor beautify the capitalism. Instead, she painted herself as she was, the wing-like eyebrow, the imperfect body, the bleeding nude image. When she painted the United States, either she absented herself from the painting to show her desire of leaving, or she depicted the center of industry into a cold, dehumanized city, compared with a warm place which had long history and tradition. By dramatizing her trauma caused by the conflict between hegemonic culture and indigenous culture, she showed her resistance to the hegemonic Euro-American culture.

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60 The stripped-down image of pain also recalls a famous Aztec stone sculpture of parturition that depicts a squatting woman giving birth to a full-grown man’s head, her face set in a forbidding grimace of pain. The woman in childbirth is, in Aztec religion, the equivalent of a warrior capturing a sacrificial victim; she represents the birth of an era. Frida surely knew the sculpture, and it is likely that she also knew its meaning; for her, as for the Aztecs, the idea of birth was full of portent. (Herrera, 158)
CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this dissertation with a discussion of the concepts of magic realism, magical realism and marvelous real, and explained the reason for applying magic(al) realism to the art of Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo. When Franz Roh introduced this term for the first time, he might not have thought how influential it would be and how widely it would be applied in the following century. It provided artists in different fields with the tool to go beyond the boundaries of realism to dramatize the subjects and feelings they wanted to express in their art works. In the art works, which have been applied the magic(al) realist techniques, the boundaries between the reality and the magical or supernatural have been broken down; thus the supernatural objects or existence can bring stronger power to the art works than those realist art works, which depict the reality as they looked. What’s more, the combinations of the reality and the supernatural in the art works with magic(al) realist techniques are taken for granted by the readers and viewers, therefore, the audiences can experience the powerful feeling that the artists want them to feel.

Review of the Relationship among Trauma, Magic(al) Realism and Hegemony

As Chantal Mouffe pointed out, “the unifying principle of an ideological system is constituted by the hegemonic principle which serves to articulate all the other ideological elements. It is always the expression of a fundamental class.” (194) In the
colonial period, the ruling culture marginalized the dominated group and circulated the idea that they were superior to the ruled people. According to Gramscian theory of cultural hegemony, the capitalist countries maintained its power not only by politics and violence, but also by informal agencies, such as mass media. The ruling of the ideology and through ideology is what Gramscian theorists call cultural hegemony. When the colonizers succeeded in planting this idea in the colonized, it became easier to force the colonized to obey and work for the colonizers. As a result, the oppressed class internalized this idea and tragedies took place, tragedies like Sethe’s killing her beloved baby and Heed’s and Christine’s suffering life-long love-hatred relation.

The first half of nineteenth century America witnessed the most catastrophic hegemony: the slavery system. This human-made traumatic situation placed the African Americans in misery physically and psychologically. The oppression on the individual psyche made the liberation hard to realize even when they were legally equal with the white people after the emancipation. The internalized colonial paradigm, which was an evidence of the hegemonic cultures, has lasted to post-colonial period. The national trauma cannot reach resolution until those African Americans could decolonize themselves from the influence of the hegemonic culture.

The national trauma of the African Americans is the main theme in Toni Morrison’s novels. Especially she paid attention to the double oppression that African American women had suffered in and after the colonialism. She depicted different female figures, and all of them had something in common, that was, that all of them desired love and freedom. They may chase them from various ways, but most of them failed.61

61 Although my dissertation focuses on Beloved and Love, Toni Morrison’s other novels are also inspiring for my work. Her first novel The Bluest Eye showed clearly how the hegemonic culture would lead a girl in conceiving what beauty is. In her second novel Sula, she focused on the friendship between two African-American women. Until then, no one had ever created a novel that centered on the friendship between two women. Her strong sense
But on their way to decolonize themselves, the African Americans gradually realized the roots and causes for their traumas. The ruling of the mind is the fundamental cause for the traumatic experience of African Americans. If they want to gain the true equality, to get rid of the hegemony of ideology, they must rely on their skills and talents to resist the hegemonic culture and cultural hegemony.

Not only did writers adopt trauma narratives, but artists in other fields depict traumas as responses to this century’s awareness of the catastrophic effects of wars, poverty, colonization, and oppression on the individual psyche. Mexico, with the geographical position next to the United States, once was in the Mexican-American war between 1846--1848 and has been influenced by the Euro-American culture since. Mexico yielded nearly half of its land to the States.\(^{62}\) Also in 1862 France invaded Mexico but had to retreat in October, 1867.\(^{63}\) During the occupation of France, European fashion, literary work, music, paintings appeared in Mexico and new theories and thoughts were brought to and spread in Mexico. Those gradually gained popularity there. When Frida Kahlo began her painting career, Mexico had already gained its independence. Even the Mexico art became more popular in the Euro-American society. This can be proved by the facts: 1) Diego was invited to the United States to paint murals in Detroit and Manhattan; and 2) Diego couple and many European artists and politicians, such as Andre Breton and Trotsky, were close friends. Frida was also praised by artists in and out Mexico. Influenced by both Euro-American culture and Mexican culture, Frida always goes back to her identity gave her the courage to firmly base her writing on the African-American tradition, an entirely different way of looking at the world from the white male perspective. Her third novel *Song of Solomon* was a challenge to herself that she tried to describe the story from a male angle. *Jazz* tells a story of an African American woman who destroyed her own life when she tried to win the love of a white man who was blonde. The internalization of the white concept of beauty and values was the cause for all the tragedies about which Toni Morrison wrote.\(^{62}\) Mexico already lost Texas in the 1830s. When the Mexico-American War broke out, Mexico was in an economic depression and the number of the population was seven million, compared with the twenty million of the United States. The defeat was fatal.\(^{63}\) In 1867, the American Civil War ended. Then America intervened in the Mexico-France war and Napoleon decided to end the war.
indigenous cultural heritage. Her traumas were partly caused by the cultural conflicts she experienced during the years in the United States, and also by the accident, the life-long endurance of pain and miscarriages she went through. Her traumas were tremendous and those were the most familiar experience she had.

Both Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo are outstanding figures in their own artistic field. The theme they focused on was the trauma that both African Americans collectively and Frida Kahlo personally suffered. From the analysis above, it can be concluded that both of them used magic(al) realist techniques respectively to dramatize the traumas. In *Beloved* and *Love* Toni Morrison allowed the existence of ghosts with human beings. The reason for the ghosts’ staying in the real world was that they had different desires from the alive. Beloved was reincarnated to ask her mother the question why she was killed and if she was loved by her mother. Cosey’s ghost stayed in his resort because he was so influential in the women’s lives around him and actually he destroyed Heed’s and Christine’s lives. In those two novels the real world and the supernatural coexist so naturally that the readers would take all those for granted without surprise. That’s exactly how magic(al) realism works in artistic works.

Frida Kahlo applied magic(al) realist techniques to her paintings which portrayed her traumas to the extreme to arouse the similar feelings of the viewers. In her paintings, the Frida she portrayed exhibited her wounds, shed tears, and her facial expressions were always calm and the juxtaposition of the great pain and the calmness on her face present a strong contrast to the viewers.

As Evelyn Torton Beck suggested, the reason for Kahlo’s images of “bloody wounds” was that she had grown up “in a highly patriarchal culture in which girls and
women have historically not ‘owned’ their bodies.”(56) The author believes that the influence of patriarchal society played a part in her strong belief that if she could have a baby she would be able to keep Diego with her. Besides, the cultural conflicts she experienced when she was in the United States and caught in-between also played an important part. The fast-developed industrial culture in America was so different from Mexican indigenous culture and Frida Kahlo felt quite uncomfortable in America. In her paintings *Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States* and *My Dress hangs There*, she clearly showed her resentment toward the industrial society and development and missing her home country.

Both Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo applied magic(al) realist techniques to dramatize the traumas they depicted. But that was just one reason for their applications of these techniques to stress trauma. Another reason was more fundamental. Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo focused more on the marginalized people and thought highly of the indigenous culture of their own. They believed that in post-colonial period, the hegemonic culture still influenced the previously dominated people and were circulating their Euro-American ideology home and abroad. Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo used magic(al) realist techniques to dramatize the trauma in order to arouse the awareness of the cultural hegemony in post-colonial period and to express that only when the oppressed people realized how they were manipulated, could they find a way to resist the hegemonic culture. Morrison and Kahlo resisted the hegemonic culture by integrating their indigenous cultural elements with magic(al) realism.

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64 I agree with this part of the idea Beck proposed. But Beck went on to extend the idea that girls were frequently objects of sexual abuse that not only in the public sphere, but also within the confines of the family. And Beck suggested that Frida was such a victim. This is the part that I cannot agree with the statement.
Contributions and Implications

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore how magic(al) realist techniques were applied in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *Love* and Frida Kahlo’s selected paintings in dramatizing the traumas caused by post-colonialism, and to show how they resisted the culture hegemony through their works. From a magic(al) realist and Gramscian point of view, the dissertation focused on 1) the similar situations and cultural hegemony of their time and on the indigenous people; 2) why and how Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo chose and used magic(al) realist techniques in their works to dramatize the trauma; and 3) how Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo resisted the hegemonic culture by applying magic(al) realist techniques.

This study on the art works of traumas in Toni Morrison’s and Frida Kahlo’s from magic(al) realist perspective and their resistance of the cultural hegemony has made the original contributions to knowledge in the following three aspects:

First, although magic(al) realism is popular in the literary field, the studies of paintings from that period are seldom touched. Most research on Frida Kahlo is from surrealist point of view and feminist point of view. This is partly because she was close friend of Breton. Through the magic(al) realist interpretation of her selected paintings, this study demonstrates the magic(al) realist character in both Toni Morrison’s literary works and Frida Kahlo’s paintings.

Second, none of the previous research had been done through a cross-disciplinary approach. This study incorporates three different disciplines- magic(al) realism, trauma studies and Gramscian cultural hegemony –in the process of analyzing Toni Morrison’s novels and Frida Kahlo’s paintings. In addition, this study is cross-disciplinary also because the hermeneutic interpretation concerns several other disciplines, i.e. literature, painting, and post-colonialism.
Third, the study doesn’t stop at the point of hermeneutic interpretation of the artistic works. It goes one step further, to question the motive why they dramatize the traumas that African Americans and Frida Kahlo went through by using magic(al) realist techniques. They both use it as resistance to the hegemonic culture that continues influencing the once-marginalized group and is the cause for their traumas. In Toni Morrison’s novels, after the slaves were liberated, they still had problems getting rid of the memories of being denied, tortured, and abandoned. And under the double oppressions: hegemonic culture and patriarchal society, African American ordinary women and Frida Kahlo were all victims, subjected to the ruling system. However, as outstanding artists, Morrison and Frida realized the cultural hegemony in post-colonial period, and they wanted the masses to realize this too. Therefore, they used their artistic works to awaken such awareness of the oppressed people. In order to make it strong enough, they both adopted magic(al) realist techniques to exaggerate the pain beyond the boundary of realism.

Due to the limitation of time and space, this research cannot offer a complete picture of the resistance of culture hegemony through trauma narratives in Toni Morrison’s and Frida Kahlo’s artistic works. More research should be done in the future on the following three points. First, more detailed analysis is needed for the minor characters in both novels studied. Their stories could also work as evidences to show how traumatic African Americans suffered. Second, the paintings in and beyond the period of my choice should be included in the study to find more traits and evidence of magic(al) realist techniques in Frida Kahlo’s paintings. In this sense, it may be safe to include her into the group of magic(al) realist painters instead of providing a magic(al) realist analysis of her paintings. Third, the relationship among trauma depiction, cultural hegemony and magic(al) realist technique can be discussed
in more details when the scholar include more theorists in those fields. For example, the study of hegemony can be traced back to Marxism and more post-colonial concepts can be applied in the study such as mimicry and hybridity.

In conclusion, Toni Morrison and Frida Kahlo both adopted magic(al) realist techniques in their artistic works, i.e. *Beloved*, *Love* and the selected paintings. Magic(al) realism provides them with the tool to exaggerate and dramatize the physical traumas and psychological traumas that the African Americans as a collective and Frida Kahlo personally went through. By depicting those traumas caused by cultural hegemony and colonialism, they try to resist the hegemonic culture and arouse the marginalized group’s awareness of the national trauma and thus work together to resist the post-colonial rule from the ideology.
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Figure 1. Wilhelm Heise, “Fading Spring” 1926.
Figure 2. Salvador Dali “The Persistence of Memory” 1931, oil on canvas. 9½×13in. The Museum of Modern Art. New York.

Figure 3. Frida Kahlo, “Portrait of Cristina Kahlo”, 1928, oil on wood, 39.25×32(cm). University of California, San Diego.
Figure 4. Frida Kahlo. “Self-Portrait” 1929

Figure 5. Frida Kahlo, “Self-Portrait”, 1930, oil on masonite, Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 6. Frida Kahlo, "Henry Ford Hospital", 1932, oil on metal, 12¼ ×15½. Collection Dolores Olmedo, Mexico City.

Figure 7. Frida Kahlo, “My Birth”, 1932, oil on sheet metal, 12½×14. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 8. Frida Kahlo, “Broken Column”, 1944, oil on canvas. 40×31cm. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 10. Frida Kahlo, “The Little Deer”, 1946, oil on canvas. 22.4×30cm. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 11. Frida Kahlo, “Tree of Hope” 1946, oil. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 12. Frida Kahlo, “Two Fridas”, 1939, oil on canvas. 67×67. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.

Figure 13. Frida Kahlo, “Self-Portrait on the Borderline between Mexico and the United States”, 1932, Oil on metal, 11¾×13½, Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.
Figure 14. Frida Kahlo, “My Dress Hangs There”, 1933, oil and collage on masonite. Fine Art Library, The University of Texas, Austin.
Pl. 1. Frida Kahlo, “Frida and the Abortion”, 1932, lithograph. 32×23.5cm.
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