

# Interplay of Magical Realism and Postmodernism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Zoya Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights*: A Comparative Study Based on Epistemological and Ontological Concepts

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## Abstract

This study aims to explore the complex and multilayered interaction of magical realism and postmodernism in the novels *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* by Zoya Pirzad, regarded as two prominent examples of contemporary literature. Employing a comparative analytical approach and relevant literary theories, this research examines how these two authors utilize magical and postmodern elements to represent the complexities of identity, memory, history, and power. The findings indicate that the intersection of these two literary schools plays a significant role in creating polyphonic and polysemous narratives, enabling the authors to challenge traditional concepts of reality, time, and space. In Pirzad's novel, there is an emphasis on depicting the everyday lives of women and their socio-cultural challenges in post-revolutionary Iran through the use of symbols and multilayered narratives. A deeper analysis reveals that such elements in both novels function not only as aesthetic devices but also as tools for critiquing power structures and discrimination. Focusing on concepts such as multiple identities, historical memory, and language as a tool of power, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the formation of social and cultural identities in complex conditions. The outcomes of this research not only expand knowledge in comparative literature and women's studies but can also serve as a model for analyzing other literary works and for a better comprehension of how social and political issues are represented in contemporary literature.

**Keywords:** Magical Realism, Postmodernism, Toni Morrison, Zoya Pirzad, Multiple Identities, Historical Memory

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Historical and Social Context

The novels *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* by Zoya Pirzad were created within specific historical and social contexts. *Beloved* addresses the painful experiences of slavery and racism against African Americans in the United States and reflects the social and political struggles of African Americans during the 1960s and 1970s (DuVall, 2000). These

novel examine the profound and lasting effects of history on both individual and collective Black identities and depicts their cultural and social challenges.

On the other hand, *I Will Turn Off the Lights* narrates the everyday life and challenges of Armenian women in Abadan during the 1960s, who experience complex conditions shaped by the social and cultural changes surrounding the Iranian Revolution.

Composed in a lucid yet unembellished narrative style, the novel delves into the existential ennui and emotional constraints of domestic life, foregrounding the lived experiences of housewives as a lens through which the socio-cultural positioning of women is examined from both personal and familial dimensions (Rahimi, 2003). Zoya Pirzad critiques the social position of women, restrictive family roles, and cultural norms while gradually revealing through the increasing awareness of the protagonist the possibility of transformation and breaking free from constraints. These two novels, as prominent examples of contemporary literature, represent the social and political concerns of their respective societies.

### 1.2. Definition of Concepts

Magical realism emerged as a literary movement in Latin America during the 1940s and 1950s before spreading to other literary traditions worldwide, including Africa and Asia. The movement blends real and unreal elements to represent complex social and cultural realities (Faris, 2004: 1). In *Beloved*, magical elements are used as tools to depict bitter historical realities. Postmodernism, as an intellectual and artistic movement of the 1960s and 1970s, focuses on challenging traditional notions of reality, time, and space (McHale, 1987). In *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, the author employs multilayered narrative techniques and simple, feminine language to explore identity, daily life, and female experience, articulating the cultural and social challenges women face. Unlike dynamic and eventful narratives, this novel offers a patient portrayal of the inner states of individuals and society, using an introspective language to express identity conflicts and the social roles of women. Thus, the novel creates a new space for understanding the complexities of female identity amid social transformation.

### 1.3. Significance of the Study

This study offers a theoretically grounded exploration of the intersection between magical realism and postmodernism in the works of Toni Morrison and Zoya Pirzad, contributing to contemporary literary discourse by illuminating how socio-political realities are encoded within narrative structures and symbolic systems (Mehrpouyan & Zakeri, 2025). Through a comparative lens, the research foregrounds the nuanced representation of women's lived experiences in post-revolutionary Iran and African-American contexts, revealing how literary texts negotiate identity, agency, and resistance within patriarchal and culturally restrictive frameworks.

In *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, Pirzad articulates the existential tension of domestic life through the protagonist Clarisse, whose internal conflict—oscillating between traditional maternal expectations and the pursuit of personal autonomy—is rendered through evocative symbols such as silence, light, and domestic space. These motifs function not only as narrative devices but also as critiques of entrenched gender norms and socio-cultural constraints.

From the vantage point of magical realism, the deployment of elemental symbols—water as a metaphor for fluidity and renewal, fire as an emblem of passion and defiance—infuses the narrative with layers of meaning that transcend realist representation. Such symbolic richness enables a reconfiguration of female subjectivity and challenges rigid binaries of gender and power.

By engaging with themes of multiple identities, historical memory, and language as a mechanism of control and transformation, this research advances literary theory through the development of interpretive frameworks that bridge Western and non-Western paradigms. It not only deepens our understanding of the epistemological and ontological dimensions of postmodern fiction but also offers a transferable model for analyzing transnational literature, thereby enriching the fields of comparative literature, feminist literary criticism, and cultural studies.

### 1.4. Research Questions

This study investigates the interplay between magical realism and postmodernism in the novels *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* by Zoya Pirzad, with a focus on how these literary modes articulate identity, memory, and historical trauma. Drawing on feminist, psychoanalytic, postcolonial, and poststructuralist frameworks, the research seeks to understand how narrative form and symbolic language shape epistemological and ontological conceptions of selfhood in culturally distinct yet thematically resonant contexts.

The central research questions are:

- How do Morrison and Pirzad employ magical realist and postmodernist techniques to negotiate the boundaries between memory, identity, and historical trauma?
- In what ways do narrative fragmentation, polyvocality, and symbolic language reshape epistemological and ontological understandings of selfhood in *Beloved* and *I Will Turn Off the Lights*?
- How do these novels critique patriarchal and socio-political structures through the representation of female subjectivity and domestic space?
- What interpretive frameworks emerge from the comparative analysis of these texts, and how can they contribute to broader debates in comparative literature, feminist theory, and cultural studies?

### 1.5. Literature Review

This study examines the intersection of magical realism and postmodernism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Zoya Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, two works that offer distinct yet complementary approaches to representing identity, memory, and

historical trauma. Both novels contribute to contemporary literary discourse by engaging with epistemological and ontological questions through symbolic language and fragmented narrative structures.

Recent scholarship has deepened our understanding of magical realism in *Beloved*, particularly in relation to trauma and spectrality. Scholars such as Ashraf H. A. Rushdy (1999) and Elizabeth B. House (1990) have explored how Morrison uses ghostly figures and non-linear temporality to represent the psychological scars of slavery. More recent studies, including Huber (2023) and Bhardwaj & Menon (2023), argue that magical realism in *Beloved* functions as an ethical mode of representation, allowing Morrison to confront the excesses of traumatic experience beyond mimetic realism.

While some critics have questioned whether magical elements compromise the historical authenticity of slavery's depiction, others contend that Morrison's fusion of the supernatural with historical narrative intensifies emotional resonance and challenges dominant Eurocentric historiography (Swarnkar, 2021; Shalom & Dubey, 2024).

In contrast, *I Will Turn Off the Lights* has received limited scholarly attention in terms of its engagement with magical realism and postmodernism. Earlier studies (e.g., Rahimi, 2003) focused primarily on psychological realism and feminine domesticity. However, recent work by Mehrpouyan & Zakeri (2022) situates Pirzad's narrative within broader debates on female subjectivity and symbolic resistance, highlighting how metaphorical motifs—such as light, silence, and water—function as tools for negotiating identity within patriarchal constraints.

This study differentiates itself methodologically by integrating feminist criticism, postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis, and poststructuralist narratology. Feminist approaches illuminate the gendered dimensions of domestic space and silence; postcolonial theory contextualizes Morrison's critique of racialized history and Pirzad's depiction of Armenian-Iranian identity; psychoanalysis decodes unconscious drives and symbolic repression; and poststructuralism interrogates the instability of meaning and the fragmentation of selfhood. Mehrpouyan (2025) highlights how identity negotiation within constrained environments often unfolds through symbolic interactions and role ambiguity—an observation that aligns with the subtle resistance and self-redefinition portrayed in Pirzad's narrative, where domestic space and silence become tools for reclaiming agency.

Contrary to claims that narrative fragmentation in these novels leads to reader alienation, this research argues that such stylistic choices reflect the chaotic nature of historical memory and invite readers to engage actively in reconstructing meaning. By bridging Western and non-Western literary paradigms, the study contributes to ongoing debates in comparative literature, women's studies, and trauma theory, offering a transferable framework for analyzing transnational narratives of resistance and identity.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

In this study, psychoanalysis serves as a lens for interpreting the internal conflicts and unconscious drives of characters, particularly in relation to trauma, repression, and identity fragmentation. It enables a deeper reading of symbolic elements—such as silence, spectral figures, and domestic space—as manifestations of psychological tension and unresolved memory. Feminist and postcolonial theories complement this approach by situating these internal struggles within broader structures of gendered and sociocultural oppression. They reveal how female subjectivity is shaped and constrained by patriarchal norms, racial histories, and cultural expectations, especially in the domestic and post-revolutionary contexts depicted in Pirzad's narrative and the legacy of slavery in Morrison's.

Poststructuralism further interrogates the instability of meaning and identity in both texts, emphasizing how language, narrative fragmentation, and symbolic ambiguity disrupt fixed notions of selfhood. Through polyvocality, nonlinear temporality, and layered symbolism, the novels challenge conventional epistemologies and ontologies, linking personal experience with ideological and discursive formations. Together, these theoretical frameworks provide a multidimensional foundation for analyzing how literature constructs, deconstructs, and reimagines identity under conditions of historical trauma and cultural constraint.

### 2.1. Related Theories

*Psychoanalysis:* Psychoanalysis examines the unconscious aspects of characters and their influence on behavior and decision-making. In this theory, symbols and signs serve as tools for a deeper analysis of characters and their psychological experiences. In works of magical realism and postmodernism, these symbols can represent internal conflicts, identity struggles, and the collective unconscious (Freud, 2016).

*Feminism:* The feminist approach analyzes the role of women in society and literature, focusing on how gender, power, and female experience are represented. In the novel *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, a critique of patriarchal structures and the depiction of women's limitations can be examined from this perspective (Karachi, 2015).

*Postcolonialism:* Postcolonial theory analyzes the impact of colonialism and racism on identity and language, revealing the cultural and social challenges arising from these influences. In works such as *Beloved*, which relates to African American history, this perspective leads to a meaningful reinterpretation of identity and language (Seyed, 2018).

*Poststructuralism:* This approach studies language, meaning, and how linguistic structures influence power and identity. In postmodern works, language is viewed both as a tool of power and as a factor in shaping individual and societal identity, affecting behavior and thought (Dari, 2019).

### 2.2. Key Concepts

*Magical Realism:* Magical realism is a literary style that combines reality with magical and supernatural elements in a way that this fusion naturally and unquestioningly deepens the representation of social, cultural, and historical realities. In this style, social and cultural conflicts and challenges are symbolically and mythologically presented. The novel *I Will Turn Off the Lights* exhibits these characteristics, using symbols such as water and fire and an eerie atmosphere to reflect women's concerns and social conditions (Aragon, 2014).

*Postmodernism:* Postmodernism is a multifaceted, interdisciplinary approach that critiques and reconsiders modernist concepts and structures, emphasizing diversity, complexity, and cultural and intellectual plurality. In literature and art, this approach gives rise to new forms and multi-layered narratives that portray multiple realities and meanings in parallel rather than presenting a single truth (Balu et al., 2018; Mousavi, 2017).

*Identity:* Identity is a complex concept referring to a set of individual and collective traits, beliefs, and experiences. It serves as a basis for analysis and critique in contemporary literature, especially within cultural and educational contexts. In the novel *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, the challenge to female identity in a restrictive social setting is highlighted (Ahmadi, 2022).

*Individual, Collective, and Multiple Identities:* Identity encompasses both individual and collective dimensions, and under shifting social conditions, multiple identities emerge, reflecting the interactions and conflicts between various personal and social roles and affiliations (Alizadeh, 2020).

*Memory:* Memory in literature is a key concept, including historical, individual, and collective memory, which examines the impact of the past on the formation of identity and human experiences. In *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, women's historical memory regarding social and familial transformations plays a significant role (Rahmani, 2021).

*Time:* Time in literary narrative has linear and cyclical dimensions and can influence the way a story is told and the personal experiences of characters. In this novel, time is portrayed cyclically and retrospectively, profoundly affecting the understanding of identity and memories of the characters (Mahdavi, 2022).

*Space:* Space, besides being a physical place, can also appear as a character and symbolize history, culture, and identity in the narrative. The home and social environment in *I Will Turn Off the Lights* become symbols of the limitations and stimuli for the growth of the protagonist, Clarice (Fakhri, 2023).

### 3. Analysis

#### 3.1. *Beloved*

##### 3.1.1. Elements of Magical Realism

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* clearly incorporates elements of magical realism. These elements are particularly embodied in the character of Beloved, who represents a spirit from the past. Beloved functions as a symbol of the scars caused by slavery and historical amnesia, and her return to Sethe's life—the novel's protagonist—reflects the emotional and historical burden that Sethe carries (Duval, 2000). This return not only helps to recall painful past experiences but also serves as a representation of the social and cultural realities of African Americans.

In addition to Beloved's character, other magical elements appear throughout the novel. For instance, Morrison's descriptions of nature and the environment, especially scenes where trees and water symbolize the characters' past and identities, delve deeply into their emotions and experiences. In one scene, trees are described as the "silent witnesses" of Sethe's past, bearing the heavy weight of history (Morrison, 1987: 45). These descriptions allow readers to connect more intimately with the inner world of the characters and thus gain a better understanding of social and historical realities (Rahimi, 2003). Where Morrison refers to the trees as "silent witnesses," a more detailed depiction can emphasize their impact on Sethe's emotions—for example: "The trees, as silent guardians of history, whispered the unfinished stories of past generations with every gust of wind" (Morrison, 1987: 45).

The magical elements in *Beloved* also function as a means to critique power structures and discrimination. The spirit of Beloved not only reminds Sethe that she can never escape her past but also challenges the social and cultural institutions responsible for these wounds. This illustrates the literary power to depict the bitter yet magical realities of African American life.

##### 3.1.2. Elements of Postmodernism

Postmodern elements are also distinctly observable in *Beloved*. One prominent feature is the novel's polyvocality. By employing multiple narrators and diverse perspectives, Morrison enables readers to view the story from various angles. This multiplicity reflects the diversity of African American experiences and the challenges they face in confronting history and identity (McHill, 2013). For example, in parts of the novel, the narrative shifts among characters to portray this diversity: "Each of us had our own story, but we all converged at one point: that dreadful day in Sethe's house" (Morrison, 1987: 78). Additional quotations from various characters could be included in the polyvocality section, such as: "Each of us carried a story entwined with pain and suffering, yet ultimately, we all arrived at a shared truth" (Morrison, 1987).

Furthermore, Morrison's play with language and skepticism toward reality represents another postmodern trait in the novel. By using varied languages and non-linear narrative structures, she questions traditional concepts of reality and time. This invites readers to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of identity and history (Faris, 2004). For instance, Morrison's descriptions of reality provoke doubt and uncertainty about what the reader perceives and reads: "Reality hung like a dark cloud over our heads, yet we continued to live" (Morrison, 1987).

While magical realism and postmodernism are often treated as distinct literary modes, their intersection in *Beloved* and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* reveals a dynamic interplay that deepens the representation of trauma and identity. Magical realism contributes to postmodern narrative fragmentation by introducing supernatural or symbolic disruptions that destabilize linear temporality and singular truth claims. In Morrison's work, for example, the ghost of Beloved functions not only as a magical element but also as a postmodern device that fractures narrative coherence and forces a re-examination of historical memory. Conversely, postmodern structures—such as polyvocality, non-linearity, and metafictional layering—intensify the emotional and symbolic resonance of magical motifs, allowing trauma to be expressed through ambiguity, repetition, and spectral presence. This reciprocal relationship enables both authors to challenge dominant epistemologies and construct alternative ontologies rooted in lived experience, cultural hybridity, and symbolic resistance.

### 3.1.3. Analysis of Sethe's Character

Sethe's character in *Beloved* symbolizes the pain and suffering caused by slavery and discrimination. Through her harsh past experiences, Sethe represents multiple generations of African Americans grappling with deep historical wounds. Her development throughout the novel—from a traumatized woman to a strong, independent individual—demonstrates the power of reconstructing identity and memory (Duval, 2000). A particular scene illustrates Sethe's realization of her strength: "When Sethe looked at herself in the mirror, for the first time she felt that she was not only a survivor but the heroine of her own story" (Morrison, 1987: 120).

Sethe's struggle with the spirit of Beloved can be seen as a fight against the past and an effort to reclaim her identity. By recalling bitter experiences, she achieves a deeper understanding of herself and her collective identity. These transformations show the strength of Black women confronting social and historical challenges, conveying a message of hope and reconstruction (Rahimi, 2003).

In a key scene, Sethe recalls how, during slavery, her identity and humanity were stripped away: "They wanted me to forget, but I cannot forget" (Morrison, 1987: 120). This statement clearly underscores the power of memory and identity in Sethe's character and allows the reader to engage with the depth of her emotions.

### 3.1.4. Analysis of Time and Space

Time and space play crucial roles in the narrative of *Beloved*. Morrison's use of non-linear time enables readers to penetrate deeply into the characters' experiences and better understand the historical impacts on their identities. For example, at one point in the novel, time is presented cyclically to show how the past influences the present: "The past weighed over our lives like a shadow; we could not escape it" (Morrison, 1987: 150).

Space functions as a key narrative element as well, with Sethe's home symbolizing her past and identity (Faris, 2004). This setting operates not only as a physical location but also as an emotional and symbolic space, allowing the reader to connect with the characters' inner worlds. Consequently, time and space in *Beloved* contribute to shaping the characters' identities and experiences and to representing social and cultural realities.

## 3.2. *Will Turn Off the Lights*

### 3.2.1. Elements of Magical Realism

*I Will Turn Off the Lights* subtly and delicately employs characteristics of magical realism. In this work, myths and natural elements such as water and fire merge with the social and cultural realities of post-revolutionary Iran. For instance, water is used as a symbol of life and psychological and social transformation: "Water flowed through the veins of the earth like the veins of life, carrying life wherever it went" (Pirzad, 2001: 67). In another scene, the protagonist's encounter with the sea is depicted as a symbol of freedom and liberation from social constraints: "The sea water, like a warm embrace, washed away all social bonds and carried her into a new world" (Pirzad, 2001: 90). This symbolism reflects both the power and vulnerability of women in a society heavily influenced by political and cultural changes (Alizadeh, 2020). The use of these magical elements enriches the narrative and aids in critiquing gendered and cultural structures.

*I Will Turn Off the Lights* subtly engages with motifs reminiscent of magical realism, though it does not fully conform to the genre's conventional use of overt supernatural elements. Instead, Pirzad reinterprets magical realist imagery through metaphor and psychological depth, creating a sense of emotional rather than supernatural transformation. Myths and natural elements such as water and fire are woven into the narrative not as literal magical occurrences, but as symbolic devices that reflect the protagonist's inner world and the broader socio-cultural realities of post-revolutionary Iran. For instance, water is employed as a metaphor for vitality and psychological renewal: "Water flowed through the veins of the earth like the veins of life, carrying life wherever it went" (Pirzad, 2001: 67). Similarly, the protagonist's encounter with the sea becomes a symbolic act of liberation from social constraints: "The sea water, like a warm embrace, washed away all social bonds and carried her into a new world" (Pirzad, 2001). These images, while evocative of magical realism, operate within a framework of symbolic realism or psychological allegory, emphasizing the emotional and existential dimensions of female subjectivity. As Alizadeh (2020) notes, such symbolism captures both the resilience and fragility of women navigating a society shaped by patriarchal and political forces. Thus, Pirzad's narrative strategy enriches the text's aesthetic texture while offering a subtle critique of gendered and cultural structures.

### 3.2.2. Postmodern Elements and Psychological Symbolism

*I Will Turn Off the Lights* is a prominent example of psychological realism with a postmodern narrative style. Unlike classic magical realism, this novel lacks overt supernatural elements and focuses on a subtle and precise representation of the daily life of an Armenian-Iranian woman, Clarice Ayvazian, in 1960s Abadan. Clarice is caught in an internal struggle between her social roles as mother, wife, and homemaker, and her desire for independence and self-awareness.

Pirzad employs postmodern narrative techniques such as a limited first-person point of view, emphasis on repetitive details, and meaningful silences to create a space that guides the reader into the hidden layers of the protagonist's psyche. Symbols such as the house, lights, darkness, and illumination function as acts and resistances of women against social and cultural structures. The novel's title itself is a metaphor for the desire to extinguish external voices and focus on the inner world.

Time is narrated linearly with mental flashbacks to the past, and the story's structure relies on memories, inner dialogues, and daily repetitions, which, instead of magical elements, serve as constructive narrative devices reflecting Clarice's turbulent mindset in confronting individual and social transformations.

From an epistemological perspective, the novel explores the formation of female knowledge about self and the world through silence, observation, and lived experience. Ontologically, it highlights Clarice's effort to redefine her existence within restrictive feminine frameworks. This endeavor, though quiet and unobtrusive, is transformative and profound.

Despite stylistic differences from *Beloved*, this novel provides a suitable foundation for analyzing concepts of identity, memory, and power in women's literature and demonstrates that literature can critique social structures and represent women's lived experiences without relying on magical elements.

### 3.2.3. Character analysis: Clarice Ayzavian

Clarice Ayzavian in *I Will Turn Off the Lights* symbolizes middle-class women in southern Iran during the 1960s. She is an Armenian homemaker engaged in routine life, family responsibilities, and suppressed emotions. With the arrival of a newcomer to the neighborhood, Clarice undergoes inner changes that lead her to reconsider her identity, desires, and social roles.

Clarice's transformations occur not through external actions but through mental reflections, meaningful silences, and internal dialogues. Gradually, she realizes that her life has been defined within traditional confines and that her longing for independence and inner meaning prompts her to rethink her roles as mother, wife, and woman. This transformation, though quiet and silent, is deep and fundamental.

Clarice represents women who, within a limited social space, use tools such as observation, silence, and memory to reconstruct their identities. She is not an overt activist but a silent agent who resists patriarchal structures by redefining her lived experience.

### 3.2.4. Time and Space

In *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, time and space play significant roles in shaping the narrative and character identities. Time is mainly linear but operates psychologically and reflectively through mental flashbacks and memories, allowing readers to access the hidden layers of Clarice's mind and understand the influence of the past on the present.

Space is also a key narrative element. The house, kitchen, rooms, and neighborhood function not only as physical locations but also as symbolic and emotional spaces. Clarice's home is both a site of daily routine and a space for inner reflection. Turning off the lights, sitting in silence, and looking out into the outside space are all symbols of the desire for solitude, control, and self-redefinition.

Overall, time and space in this novel contribute to an accurate representation of the female experience within a particular social context, providing a framework for analyzing the protagonist's existential and epistemological dimensions.

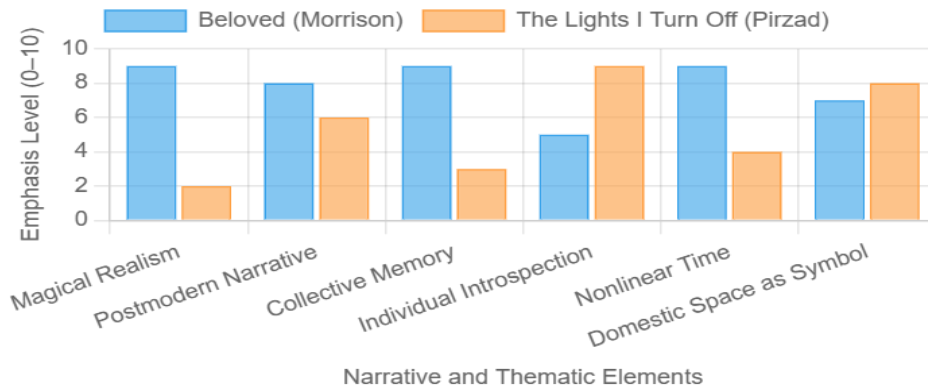
### 3.3. Comparative Analysis

To deepen the comparative analysis, additional textual evidence from both *Beloved* and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* reveals how symbolic and psychological motifs function within postmodern and magical realist frameworks. In *Beloved*, Morrison's use of spectral presence and fragmented memory is exemplified in the line, "She was certain that Beloved was the white dress that had knelt with her mother in the keeping room..." (Morrison, 1987, p. 35). This moment blurs the boundary between the real and the supernatural, embodying trauma through a ghostly figure that disrupts narrative coherence and evokes suppressed memory. Similarly, the closing line—"It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison, 1987, p. 275)—underscores the postmodern refusal of linear historiography, inviting readers to confront the instability of truth and the ethics of remembrance.

In Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, the narrative employs symbolic realism rather than overt magical elements. The protagonist's act of turning off the light—"I turned off the light. Silence filled the house. Only the children's breathing could be heard"—functions as a metaphor for emotional withdrawal and introspection, signaling a retreat from societal expectations into the interiority of female experience. Elsewhere, water becomes a vehicle for psychological transformation: "The water in the sink swirled. It seemed to carry something away. Perhaps myself." These images, while not supernatural, echo magical realist motifs through their emotional resonance and metaphorical layering. They reflect the protagonist's desire for liberation and self-redefinition within a domestic space shaped by cultural constraint.

Together, these textual moments illustrate how both authors deploy symbolic and psychological strategies to explore trauma, memory, and female subjectivity. Morrison's spectral realism and Pirzad's metaphorical allegory converge in their challenge to dominant narratives and their construction of alternative modes of knowing and being.

This section presents a comparative analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Zoya Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights*. The comparison enables an examination of key elements in both works concerning postmodernism, characterization, time and space, and social representation. Although the style and settings of these two novels differ, both employ literary capacities to critique power structures through depicting women's lived experiences within specific social contexts.



**Figure 1. Comparative Emphasis of Narrative and Thematic Elements in *Beloved* (Blue) and *I Will Turn Off the Lights* (Orange). Higher Values Indicate a Stronger Presence or Centrality in each Novel.**

The visual comparison above illustrates how Morrison's *Beloved* foregrounds collective memory, nonlinear time, and supernatural symbolism, while Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights* emphasizes psychological introspection, linear temporality, and domestic silence. These contrasting approaches reflect their distinct cultural contexts and literary strategies in representing women's resistance and identity formation.

### 3.3.1. Comparison of Magical Realism and Postmodernism Elements

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* distinctly employs magical realism elements, with the character Beloved symbolizing historical memory and psychological wounds caused by slavery. These magical elements serve as devices to represent harsh historical realities and critique racial structures (DuVall, 2000). The novel's polyvocal narration, nonlinear structure, and linguistic play are prominent postmodern features that illustrate the complexity of African American identity (McHale, 1987).

In contrast, Zoya Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights* lacks overt magical elements and is written in a style of psychological realism and minimalist postmodernism. Pirzad uses limited first-person narration, emphasis on everyday details, and meaningful silences to evoke female experience within a patriarchal society (Rahimi, 2003). Postmodern elements in this work include mental repetitions, uncertainty in decision-making, and internal conflicts of Clarice, enabling a critique of traditional gender roles and a search for meaning in daily life (Alizadeh, 2020).

### 3.3.2. Comparison of the Two Authors' Approaches to the Concepts of Identity, Memory, Time, and Space

Both authors address the concepts of identity, memory, time, and space but with different approaches. Morrison, in *Beloved*, focuses on Black identity and the historical impacts of slavery, portraying the psychological and social wounds of the past. Memory in this novel appears collectively, historically, and sometimes supernaturally, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination (Fariss, 2004). One profound scene depicts Sethe's confrontation with the past and the haunting presence of her deceased daughter; the statement "I don't want my children to be taken from me" symbolizes the struggle against historical tragedy and the desire for autonomy (Morrison, 1987, p. 120).

In contrast, Pirzad in *I Will Turn Off the Lights* explores female identity within the specific social context of 1960s Abadan. Memory here is individual, reflective, and internal, represented through memories, silences, and observations of everyday details (Rahmani, 2021). Time is predominantly linear but enriched psychologically through mental flashbacks. Space, particularly the home, functions as an emotional and symbolic arena that embodies both the repetition of daily life and silent female resistance.

Through Morrison's use of polyvocal narration and multiple perspectives, the complexities of African American identity are reflected. The diverse voices of characters create a rich fabric of experiences that challenge one-dimensional interpretations. The narrative structure aligns with postmodern principles and emphasizes the plurality of truth (McHale, 1987).

Overall, *Beloved*, with its magical elements and polyvocal narration, critiques the legacy of slavery and reconstructs collective identity, while *I Will Turn Off the Lights*, through minimalist narrative and psychological symbolism, represents women's lived experience within a constrained social space. These differences illustrate the diversity of literary methods employed to engage with ontological and epistemological concepts.

## 4. Conclusion

This study has examined the intersection of magical realism and postmodernism in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Zoya Pirzad's *I Will Turn Off the Lights*. The main findings indicate that both novels utilize postmodern elements to represent the historical, social, and psychological experiences of female characters within different cultural contexts.

In *Beloved*, magical elements serve as tools to depict harsh historical realities. The character Beloved symbolizes the past and the psychological wounds caused by slavery, physically manifesting in the narrative and blurring the boundaries between reality and memory (DuVall, 2000). In contrast, *I Will Turn Off the Lights* lacks explicit magical elements and employs first-person narration, psychological symbolism, and meaningful silences to portray the lived experiences of middle-class women in 1960s Abadan (Rahimi, 2003).

Sethe in Morrison's novel represents Black women confronting a history of violence and discrimination, whereas Clarice in Pirzad's novel symbolizes women who, within constrained social spaces, redefine their identities through reflection, observation, and silence (Alizadeh, 2020). Despite cultural and historical differences, both characters engage in reconstructing personal identity and resisting social structures.

Regarding memory, Morrison uses magical elements to embody collective and historical memory, while Pirzad emphasizes individual and reflective memory, exploring the psychological effects of the past on the female subject's present (Rahmani, 2021). These differences highlight the diversity of literary approaches in addressing identity, memory, and time.

This research holds significant importance for comparative literary studies and women's studies. By analyzing the interplay of magical realism and postmodernism in Morrison's and Pirzad's works, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how social and psychological issues are represented in contemporary literature. The findings can serve as a model for analyzing other literary works and advancing knowledge in related fields.

Another important aspect of this research is its emphasis on literature's role in representing marginalized and oppressed experiences. Since both authors address the identity and social challenges of their female characters, this study enhances our understanding of literature's function in shaping social and cultural identities.

The implications of this research are crucial for a better comprehension of contemporary literature and social issues. The analysis of postmodern elements in these two works sheds light on the formation of individual and collective identities under complex and changing conditions. This analysis can provide scholars, students, and cultural policymakers with a framework to gain more precise insight into human and social challenges through literature.

For future research, it is recommended to conduct comparative analyses of other literary works using similar approaches. Additionally, exploring the cultural and social influences on contemporary literature across different countries, along with deeper analyses of women's experiences in literary narratives, can further expand knowledge in this area.

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