

Tribhuvan University

A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony, and  
Carnival

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Letter of Recommendation

Mohan Kumar Chaudhary has completed his thesis entitled “A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Carnival” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2072/009/15 B.S. to 2074/10/10 B.S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Prof. Dr. Ram Chandra Paudel

(Supervisor)

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Carnival” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mohan Kumar Chaudhary has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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### Abstract

*This thesis analyzes Toni Morrison's Beloved using a detailed examination of the Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia, polyphony and the carnivalesque to investigate the points of mutual illumination and confirmation between Bakhtin's ideas and Morrison's novel. Therefore the method of analysis is divided between a close study of Beloved and an equally close examination of Bakhtin's ideas. The Bakhtinian concepts studied in this thesis are central to his idea of language and theory of the novel and their analysis in Beloved reveals that while these concepts shed light on the stylistic, structural and thematic complexities of the novel, the novel also verifies the working of these concepts in practice. As this thesis shows, Morrison's Beloved is a dialogic novel in this regard, with its foregrounding of dialogic relations between heteroglot languages, characters' voices and social classes. This thesis ends with a discussion indicating postmodern aspects of Bakhtin's ideas and Morrison's novel, which include intertextuality, the problematization of truth, and the blurring of boundaries between opposites.*

**Keywords:** Heteroglossia, Polyphony, The Carnavalesque

## A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Carnival

This thesis analyzes Toni Morrison's *Beloved* through Bakhtinian concepts of heteroglossia, polyphony and the carnivalesque with the aim of investigating the dialogic nature in the novel. Morrison's *Beloved* is a slave narrative of Seth. Not uncommon to the times: a mother killing her own child to keep her from the horrors of enslavement Seth too kills her child. In *Beloved*, however, the child returns. First, she, only known as "Beloved," is a ghost haunting the house where her mother and sister live. Then, when exorcised from the home, she returns in corporeal form the age she would have been had she lived. In the beginning of the novel, the two-year-old ghost's presence is referred to as "spiteful" (Morrison 3), "sad," and mistakenly "evil" (10). Although Beloved is in the body of a twenty year old, her mentality is still that of a toddler, but rapidly developing. At the same time, because of her physical appearance, Beloved is subconsciously trying to develop on many levels at once. She is a child who was violently separated from her mother, by her mother, far before she was ready.

*Beloved* contains the typical elements that characterize Morrison's works: a fixed and limited setting, the broader setting of the sea, tragic structure, a shift in point of view, the scapegoat figure, the related themes of evil and social class, and, last but not least, the ironic rewriting of previous texts. Together with the inclusion of these diverse elements, which makes the novel suitable for a Bakhtinian analysis since Bakhtin's concepts celebrate the novel genre for its capacity to bring diverse elements together. Morrison's foregrounding of language diversity, her use of multiple narrative, and her questioning of an unjust class system by eradicating the

boundaries between social classes on several occasions in the novel. These three eye-catching aspects of the novel have their counterparts in Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia, polyphony and the carnivalesque.

That Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is stylistically diverse cannot be doubted: Morrison's novel appears straightforward at first glance, opening with blank verse in a standard prose narration, but over the course of the story the style varies to contain differing levels of imagery and metaphor, as well as changes in tense, changes in register, free indirect discourse, stream-of-consciousness narration. The characters manipulate language and transcend its standard limits. Their command of language allows them to adjust its meanings and to make themselves indecipherable to the white slave owners who watch them. For example, Paul D and the Georgia prison inmates sing together about their dreams and memories to deviate the words. The title of the novel alludes to what is ultimately the product of a linguistic misunderstanding. At her daughter's funeral, Sethe interpreted the minister's address to the "Dearly Beloved" as referring to the *dead* rather than the living. All literature is indebted to this "slippery," shifting quality of language: the power of metaphor, simile, metonymy, irony, and wordplay all result from the ability of words to attach and detach themselves from various possible meanings.

Mikhail Bakhtin was a Russian philosopher and a literary theorist. As Todorov points out, "[o]ne could praise Mikhail Bakhtin, without too many qualms, on two counts: that he is the most important Soviet thinker in the human sciences and the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century" (ix). Although Bakhtin started writing in the 1920s, he remained unknown to the West until the 1970s. The publication of his works in the Western world has brought new and wider perspectives to the various fields of the human sciences. Pam Morris indicates that

“his ideas are being utilized not just in literary studies but also in philosophy, semiotics, cultural studies, anthropology, feminist and post-colonial studies, Marxism, ethics and, of course, Russian and Slavic studies” (1). Such a variety of influence gives a hint of the diversity of topics in Bakhtin’s writings, which includes “the theory of the novel, socio-linguistics and the philosophy of language, aspects of Renaissance and medieval folk culture, cultural and literary history, the psychology of perception, and numerous epistemological and interpretive issues in the human sciences” (Gardiner, *Dialogics* 2). Among all this wide range of subjects, language and the novel genre fascinated Bakhtin all his life and his most influential concepts such as heteroglossia, polyphony, and carnivalesque came out of this interest.

In *Beloved* Morrison stratifies the literary language of the novel in terms of (sub)-genres, characters’ professions, period and social classes is examined. Besides, Morrison’s stylistic success in the incorporation of language diversity into the novel through different means such as parody, insertion of generic languages, and characters and narrators’ speeches make it polyphonic, heteroglossic and carnival in nature. The dialogization of heteroglossia and Morrison’s foregrounding of the problematic nature of language through this dialozation. In addition, Morrison’s representation of diverse languages as images of languages by means of hybridization, dialogized interrelation of languages and pure dialogues indications that the novel becomes a hybrid construction with the incorporation of heteroglossia.

Morrison is an exceptional American novelist. Her novels are filled with plenty of social issues and scientific innovations. As a novelist, she has carried distinct voice to the English-speaking world. Culture and history are the focus of Morrison. Apart from historical subject matter and socio-cultural issues, the novelist has managed to introduce fresh issue of scientific innovation and technological break-



through. Critic Keith Macdonald focuses upon the formalistic devices used by the writer in this novel. He is not only interested in the formalistic devices but also to the thematic elements. The text's power of using all the other available resources is celebrated by Keith. His view is presented below:

Morrison's *Beloved* historical novel is a text, which utilizes memoir as a means of presenting a possible future where human rights are decimated, but where human stories remain. The novel is considered as an example of an ongoing historical-fictional model where life writing acts as a window into a world where the individual's experiences guide the reader through the speculative world. (43)

This novel is a window to view and interpreted the world of slavery and its evil impacts. Westerns exist to serve and facilitate human lives hassled and hampered by discomforts. However, in this novel slavery adopted by America has rather intensified the fundamental hurdles of lives. Instead of mollifying and soothing the wounds of lives, American slavery has rather added fuel to the fire of clones' sufferings and agony. Thus, Keith's view is identifiable, no matter how contentious it might be.

Another critic Emily Cappel has looked into the very title of this novel. She is determined to demystify the slavery of contemporary period. Her view is expressed in the following excerpt:

Morrison mentioned that he was not interested in the possibility of escaping and rebuilding lives. She was after exactly what she wrote, an exploration of a life doomed to disintegrate. That one may only have scraps for a life, and to want more will just break a person apart. There is something endearing about the title of this novel. It sounds like the ultimate request of someone who is deeply in agony which

when not granted, would render the person incapable of going on. (15)

Bleak vision of life is reflected in this novel. This vision is provocative of fear of life. Actually, slaves are always supposed to live with the least hope of survival. The very title of this novel evokes the sense of the utter helplessness of life, which is circumscribed by the limited options given by the subhuman life. What provoked men to categorize lives into human lives and subhuman lives are difficult to surmise? A kind of lingering anthropomorphic pride is entirely accountable for the inception of negative vision almost verging on despair and fatalism.

Critic Arianna Vailas seeks to establish the triangular relationship amidst slavery of past and present and future history. His view about the power of *Beloved* to set up link amidst these three things is straightforwardly mentioned below:

Beloved incriminate the present in their distorted representations of an imminent future. Morrison's novel recounts the story of African Americans, reflecting upon their prescribed life within a confined community. Her experiences take place in a world that is uncannily akin to our own, the only major difference being that human cloning is at the forefront of modern medicine, an issue over which scientists and ethicists of this world are still debating. (23)

. This novel has raised several questions like whether is it ethically admissible to African Americans as subhuman beings or not and whether is it anti-humanistic to compel slaves to be like commodity. Along with these questions, the notion of humanism comes to be intermingled. Hence, the voice raised by Morrison in *Beloved* undoes the brutality of slavery.

Although all these critics have raised different issues in this novel, the issue of heteroglossia and carnival are totally absent. This thesis studies *Beloved* through the

Bakhtinian concepts. Bakhtin's celebration of the novel genre for its capacity to include diverse elements in terms of language use, structural complexities and thematic concerns, a celebration that finds its in Morrison's novel. Likewise, Bakhtin's notion of dialogism as a relational property common to all his concepts mentioned and dialogic relations comprising the essence of Bakhtin's ideas also find their equivalent in *Beloved* with Morrison's foregrounding of dialogic relations between the languages, characters' voices and social classes in the novel. For Bakhtin, the study of the novel genre and formulating a theory of it, compared to the study of the other genres, pose some difficulties. This is mainly because of the novel's constant developing nature. In his essay "Epic and Novel" Bakhtin states that "the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted" (DI 3). The other genres present more or less a fixed form, since, after their canonical establishment, they present a few or no changes at all: "[e]ach is a unit, and all units are interrelated by virtue of certain features of deep structure that they all have in common" (4). On the other hand, the novel, in its historical development, has never become a part of this unit. It "parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them" (5). This ever-developing and anti-canonical structure of the novel genre makes its study difficult.

Therefore, for Bakhtin, the literary theory dealing with the novel should see it as a "genre-in-the-making," no matter which phase of its development it analyzes. Also, the aim of the theory of the novel should not be creating a "novelistic canon in literary history," but to see the basic elements that give it its "peculiar capacity for change and of its influence and effect on the rest of literature" (11). Bakhtin

states that these basic elements can best be realized in the fundamental differences of the novel from the other genres. He finds three characteristics distinguishing the novel from the other genres in the early stages of its historical development. These are “the radical change it effects in the temporal coordinates of the literary image,” “the new zone opened by the novel for structuring literary images, namely, the zone of maximal contact with the present (with contemporary reality) in all its openendedness,” and “its stylistic three-dimensionality, which is linked with the multi-linguaged consciousness realized in the novel” (11).

The first concept with which Bakhtin celebrates this diversity is related to the multiplicity that language, with its stratified nature, brings to the novel genre, heteroglossia. Heteroglossia literally means different languages. In Bakhtin’s terms, it refers to “[t]he internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups,” and so on (262). All these diverse languages within a single national language constitute the heteroglot world where the individual uses language. Indeed, the individual finds himself amid heteroglossia surrounding him. The words in the language do not totally belong to him. As Bakhtin states, “[t]he word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes ‘one’s own’ only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention” (293). Thus, the individual joins his own words to ever growing heteroglossia and he becomes conscious of heteroglossia with his use of different languages in different situations. As Holquist indicates, “[h]eteroglossia is a way of conceiving the world as made up of a roiling mass of languages, each of which has its own distinct formal markers” (Dialogism 67). As an individual living in the heteroglot world, the author is

linguistically conscious of heteroglossia, and the representation of heteroglossia in the novel is of primary importance for the author. In its representation in the novel genre, heteroglossia becomes one of the essential elements bringing diversity to novelistic discourse. To understand this diversity, it is necessary to examine heteroglossia and its representation and incorporation in the novel genre in detail.

As mentioned before, Bakhtin's main assertion against Saussurean linguistics and the Formalist approaches in literature is due to the diverse nature of language. For him, "[l]anguage like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives is never unitary" (288). But this does not mean that there is no unifying force working in language. Indeed, for Bakhtin, two forces are always at work in any particular utterance: "centripetal forces" and "centrifugal forces" (271). As Bell and Gardiner point out, "[c]entripetal forces push towards unity, agreement and monologue, while the centrifugal forces seek multiplicity, disagreement and heteroglossia" (16). Bakhtin sees unitary language as "the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language" (DI 270). For him, [a] unitary language is not something given [dan] but is always in essence posited [zadan]—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystalizing into a real, although still relative, unity—the unity of the reigning conversational (everyday) and literary language, "correct language" (270).

Therefore, unitary language tries to limit the diversity of heteroglossia to provide a common communication ground among the speakers of a language. But this is only a part of its function. For Bakhtin, unitary language has also an ideological

function. It is a part of “the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization” (271). In this regard, unitary language also tries to impose unity on different cultures and ideologies operating in society by limiting their linguistic diversity.

If language has been Bakhtin’s main preoccupation throughout his life, it is what preoccupies Morrison in *Beloved* too. As McCarron indicates, “*Beloved* [...] is preoccupied with writing and, therefore, with language, although in this case not ‘literary’ language alone” (192). In *Beloved* language is not represented as something unitary; on the contrary, it is represented as stratified from top to bottom. It can be said that Bakhtin’s celebration of the novel’s capacity for the representation of the stratified nature of language finds its counterpart in *Beloved*. As mentioned before, Bakhtin’s celebration of this capacity is not for all novels, but for the novels following the Second Stylistic Line of development in the European Novel. Bakhtin’s conclusion after his analysis of heteroglossia in this Stylistic Line is very appropriate for *Beloved*: “[h]ere the dialogic nature of heteroglossia is revealed and actualized; languages become implicated in each other and mutually animate each other. All fundamental authorial intentions are orchestrated, refracted at different angles through the heteroglot languages available in a given era” (DI 410). In this regard, there is a reciprocal relationship between Bakhtin’s ideas and the use of language in *Beloved*. Morrison’s novel is a good example for the illustration of Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia and its incorporation into the novel genre, and it is through Bakhtin’s notion that the stratified language of the novel can be analyzed stylistically. Indeed, Morrison’s deliberate use of different languages of the novel’s era, his “heighten[ing] our awareness of the languages we live in,” and putting them into dialogical relations make such an analysis most appropriate (Gregor, 271). This analysis necessitates a close examination of the stratification of literary language in the novel, looking at the

ways in which Morrison incorporates and dialogizes the languages of heteroglossia, and finally understanding how he represents them as images of languages spoken by the different characters.

In *Beloved* using the device of a ghost story, Morrison gives a voice to the pre-verbal infant killed by a mother desperate to save her child from slavery. The dead baby, Beloved, comes back in the body of a nineteen-year old. Beloved, now a teenager, is able to articulate feelings that ordinarily remain unspoken. The novel then engulfs, or rather is engulfed by Beloved's dare to regain the maternal closeness of a nursing baby by her mother. It is this articulation of infantile feelings that powers a dialogue that "fuses pronoun positions and abolishes most punctuation, undoing all the marks of separation that usually stabilize language" (Wyatt 474). For example, at the end of the book when Beloved finally communicates with her mother as an infant she says:

we played by the creek. I was there in the water.

In the quiet time, we played.

The clouds were noisy and in the way.

When I needed you, you came to be with me. I needed her face to smile.

I could only hear breathing. (245)

The mother figure in the novel, Sethe, defines herself as a maternal body. Some critics suggest that Sethe's insistence on her own physical presence and connection on the children precludes an easy acceptance of the separations and substitutions that govern language. For example, Sethe will not use signifiers to represent her nursing baby. Consequently she cannot tell the story of the baby's murder. Instead, Morrison uses an analogy or metaphors.. These metaphors, as Wyatt states," abandon their

symbolic dimension to adhere to a baseline of literal meaning" (Wyatt 475). The following passage is an illustration of this very feature:

Would there be a little space she wondered, a little time, some way to hold off eventfulness, to push business into the corners of the room and just stand there a minute or two, naked from shoulder blade to waist relieved of the weights of her breasts, smelling the stolen milk again and the pleasure of breaking bread? (Morrison 218)

The phrase "to push business into the corners of the room" suggests putting aspects of her life on hold. She would put them to the corner of the room, like an unused chair, to relax and enjoy the company of Paul D. The figure of speech in which "weight" usually means "responsibility" turns out to describe only the physical weight of Sethe's breast. Morrison with many opportunities to welcome heteroglossia into his novel. When these opportunities join with Morrison's parodic and satiric intentions, the novel becomes a novelistic hybrid consisting of different languages of heteroglossia. In *Beloved*, language is stratified according to genre, profession, period and class. All the languages belonging to these groups show differences according to their vocabularies, jargons, "specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents" (Bakhtin, 289). These languages comprise the heteroglot world of the novel and they enter the novel through heterogeneous ways such as "the speech of narrator", "the stylistically individualized speech of characters," "inserted genres" (pastiche) and their parodic stylization (parody), and "stylization of the various forms of semiliterary (written) everyday narration (the letter, the diary, etc.)" (262-3).

For Bakhtin, "literary language itself is only one of [the] heteroglot languages—and in its turn is also stratified into languages (generic, period-bound and



others)" (DI 271-2). This kind of stratification foregrounds the centrifugal forces operating in language and it also prevents the author or narrator's single language or style from dominating the novel. First of all, there is generic stratification of literary language observed in *Beloved*. Jacques Lacan, former philosopher and psychoanalyst who wrote *The Function and Field of Speech and Language*, suggests that the language in *Beloved* reinforces the sense that "materialization clog the haunted house." What Lacan means by this is that spatial images that are usually used as figures of speech take shape as actions. This is evident when Paul D, a former slave from the same plantation as Sethe, finds her again after an absence of eighteen years. He feels out his chances for establishing a relationship with her by asking if "there was some space for him" (45). The expression seems natural in the circumstances. The situation, however, causes Paul D to make space for himself, literally by "holding the table by two legs, he bashed it about wrecking everything, screaming back at the screaming house" (180). Spatial images then take shape as actions. It also recognizes the use of language which describes body language. Body movements become real and expressive.. This is illustrated as Paul D Stands:

There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, knees drawn up, holding, holding on, this motion, unlike a ship's, smooths and contains the rocker. It's an inside kind--wrapped tight like skin. Then there is the loneliness that roams. No rocking can hold it down. It is alive. On its own. A dry and spreading thing that makes the sound of one's own feet going seem to come from a far-off place. (Morrison 217)

Metaphors and body language express a character's way of self-expression. But just what can self-expression accomplish? Simply suggested, these self-expressive

expressions symbolize or articulate past African-American experience. For example, Nan, the slave who was in charge of Sethe, tells her that Sethe was the only child her mother did not kill as they were being transported on the slaveship. She told Sethe that her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew." (132)

Clearly, this is a representation of a lineage of people repressed by slavery. In telling Sethe her story she tells of the Africans who died on the Middle Passage. There are many parallels between *Beloved* and the works of other writers, and these parallels bring the languages and stylistic conventions of these works to the novel as well. As Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor indicate, "[t]he whole novel echoes with the sound of other men's art: Melville, Conrad, Coleridge, Richardson, Chesterfield. It is a chorus of languages: no mere pastiche but a zest of invention, a linguistic energy and exuberance that openly admits what it is doing and delights in the skill" (*A Critical Study* 271). Among these parallels, those concerning Sterne are crucial, since it is evident that Morrison deliberately incorporated Sterne's style into his novel in addition to Richardson's epistolary mode mentioned above.

The parallels between Seth's narration and other slaves' story are very striking: "both include digressions, sudden starts and stops and share similar irregularities in the chapter headings. Both narrators are chronically self-conscious, 'anticipating' the time-manipulating devices of modern literature" (Nadal 98). For example, Seth points out the contrast between the writing time and clock time: "Good God! Look at the time! If I am not more able to choose what I say I shall find myself describing the day before yesterday rather than writing about today for you tonight!" (RP 29). In another example, he says, "[...] instead of time crawling, it hurries, not to say dashes past me. I cannot get one tenth of the day down!" (32). also alludes to this

by using a similar playful tone: “I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve- month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume—and no farther than to my first day’s life” (TS 256-7). As Tiger puts forth, “[c]learly, Paul exerts an appealing influence on Morrison, for Seth, like Paul is both chronically indisposed and when it comes to the art of storytelling chronically self-conscious” (220). In this way Morrison follows the stylistic tradition of the comic novel, since, as Bakhtin indicates, the comic novel incorporates and organizes heteroglossia through literary parody and parodic stylization of the language of other works (DI 301). He also goes one step further by parodying a novel which is itself a literary parody.

Apart from the generic stratification of literary language, there is also a stratification according to “racial jargons” (Bakhtin, DI 262). In *Beloved*, the most widely used language in this regard is the African language that the black use (RP 28). Along with the expression of past Black experience, Morrison undoubtedly acknowledges powerful influences of her family and her community. In an interview with Charlie Rose, from the Public Broadcasting System, Morrison said:

I'm completely informed by that community, by my extended family the language particularly. Not just the survival, but the way they spoke, you know. The language of average, of poor African-Americans is always discredited as though it was impossible for them to speak, or they were stupid. But there was this incredible merging of new language and Biblical language and sermon language that created a third thing for me. A third kind of way of expressing myself. They pulled from all the places and that's what I tried to incorporate in my books. (A93)

In Morrison's language it is no wonder why critics have made comments such as; "her works have a magic charm with its love of language", and that "she writes energetically and richly" (Lydon 23). This very expression of Black experience and love of language is evident in the following passage from *Beloved*, as Morrison links *Beloved* to millions of slaves, by combining her spirit to the body of a woman who died on one of the slave ships. Another form of self expression in a unique literary technique is the absence of language in language. What I mean by this is the voice or the ability to communicate among the characters, varies. For instance, as I mentioned previously. Sethe is unable to use signifiers to symbolize her nursing baby, hence she is unable to talk about *Beloved's* death. Another example is the extensive use of body language, as I mentioned previously. It is the result of an absence of a speaking subject. Much is understood by and about the character, yet the character may be non-verbal at times, therefore, absent of language in a communicative sense. For example, in this particular passage "Sethe extends her rights over her own body"(Wyatt 476).

Her rights include protecting her baby from returning to slavery. Again body language supplements for spoken language. When she saw [the slave owner] coming to [recapture them she] 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. where they would be safe. (Morrison 163)

For Bakhtin, different languages are dialogized in the heteroglot novels (DI 291). In this regard, the diverse languages of *Beloved* are also dialogized, which becomes very evident especially in the dialogues where language fails to transmit the meaning. As Emerson points out by referring to Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia, "[l]ife in language is in fact dependent upon the preservation of a gap. Two speakers

must not, and never do, completely understand each other; they must remain only partially satisfied with each other's replies, because the continuation of dialogue is in large part dependent on neither party knowing exactly what the other means" (xxxii-iii).

In *Beloved* both the "internal dialogization" of language and its dialogization with "the subjective belief system of the listener" (Bakhtin, DI 282) are closely interwoven and they underline the ambiguities and limitations of language because of its diverse nature. With the use of metaphors, extensive body language, language being used as an expression of Black experience, the absence of punctuation and a characters inaudible voice, various meaningful symbolism may be recognized. We first start off with the house where the main characters live. The house is numbered and identified by its house number which is 124. Morrison introduces the novel in saying "124 was spiteful. Full of a baby's venom. The women in the house knew it and so did the children"(3). Morrison offers the idea that perhaps "124 will be the setting of the novel. The words "venom" and "spiteful" suggest there to be some sort of conflict, or evil will take place. Not only does Morrison use the house to introduce the novel, but she also uses 124 as a guideline to structure the sections of the novel.

Incidentally, the novel is divided into three parts. Each section describes the condition of the house, introducing its movement and perhaps staging the activity that will take place. Section two reads "124 was loud. Stamp paid could hear it even from the road" (169). Reading this, one might be able to see that the house, at this point, would be filled with action and confusion. It would be so loud that even Stamp paid, a neighbor, could hear it from the street. Section three says "124 was quiet. Denver, who thought she knew all about silence was surprised to learn hunger could do that: quiet you down and wear you out" (259). This sentence eludes to a change in action or pace

of the story. Suggesting the house moved from being evil to loud and finally quiet and peaceful. The chokeberry tree, which is branded on Sethe's back, labels her as an animal and limits her in the progression of her and her children's living. It symbolizes the system of slavery, from which she was forced to kill her infant Beloved. Sethe's sense of identity comes from denying the tree, which is dead to feeling. The drinking of the breast milk correlates with the tree on Sethe's back. It marks the extreme and exclusive self- definition as a mother Her role as mother, then, is determined by having breast milk, "milk enough for all" (Morrison 198). The murder of her child, Beloved, signifies Sethe's love, her role as a mother and the rebellion against the perpetual torture of slavery. Sethe argues that, "by killing her baby, she kept her safe from the dehumanization of slavery. The children are her only self, her best things. She claims she wouldn't "draw breath without her children as she will destroy rather than surrender them" (Jones, 618). If we were to draw a synopsis from these interpretations we would say Sethe's act, blood and breast milk, rage, pride, and love become one.

Morrison uses three stylistic devices, namely "hybridizations, the dialogized interrelation of languages, and pure dialogues," (Bakhtin, *DI* 358) to create the images of languages in *Beloved*. Hybridization joins two linguistic consciousnesses within the limits of a single utterance and in this way it creates the images of languages. For example, Sethe tells about the life on the two segregated parts of the. In a similar way, sometimes this illumination happens with the dialogized interrelation of languages, which also create a hybrid image of languages. On the other hand, pure dialogues, as Bakhtin states, directly reveal "the dialogic contrast of languages" and in this way create the images of languages (*DI* 364). *Beloved* is full of such dialogues reported in Sethe's narration and Denver's letter, and through these dialogues one language

illuminates the presence of the other. In conclusion, the analysis of Morrison's *Beloved* with the Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia reveals the complex language system of the novel and Morrison's stylistic skill in creating the novel's language out of diverse languages. *Beloved* itself can be called a novelistic hybrid in which different languages live, dialogically interact and illuminate each other. Morrison, as opposed to the centrifugal forces of language aiming at a unified language, celebrates the centripetal forces of language in the novel. In this regard, the language of the novel is highly stratified according to literary genres and writings, the characters' professions, the two periods which the novel covers, and the social classes to which the characters belong. Morrison organizes and incorporates all the languages belonging to these groups through various compositional forms used for appropriating and organizing heteroglossia such as "parodic stylizations of generic languages, various forms of stylizations and illustrations of professional and period-bound languages," literary parody, the speech of characters and narrator, and inserted genres (*DI* 292). Above all, these languages are not represented as literary samples of languages, but artistically represented as images of languages and they are put into dialogic relations in the plot which is crafted by Morrison.

For Bakhtin, the originator of the polyphonic novel is Dostoevsky. Bakhtin observes some polyphonic elements in other writers preceding Dostoevsky, but, as he remarks, only through Dostoevsky's art is polyphony fully realized with all its characteristics in the novel genre (*PDP* 3). It can be said that after Dostoevsky, especially with the modern novel's experiments with narrative structure, polyphony has become a widespread narrative mode used by various authors. Examples of postmodern fiction also use polyphony in diverse ways for different aims including the problematization of certain concepts such as language and truth, since, as

Stevenson argues, postmodernism extends modernist uncertainty of these concepts (196). The reason for the popularity of the polyphonic mode among modern and postmodern authors is that polyphony provides the author with wider possibilities to question ideas and concepts by bringing together multiple perspectives and voices which are dialogized in the polyphonic structure of the novel. In Morrison's *Beloved* this kind of questioning is directed at the concept of truth: "[w]ithout denying that there is such a thing as truth, Morrison makes us aware that 'the truth' is an extremely complex concept, impossible to tie down with rational formulas and reductive solutions" (Redpath 58). Therefore, in *Beloved*, polyphony becomes a narrative strategy for Morrison through which the complexity of truth is explored, since the polyphonic form allows the construction of free and independent voices having their own points of view and truths in the novel. To understand how Morrison makes use of polyphony in his exploration of truth in *Beloved*, first, it is necessary to identify which truth Morrison problematizes, and then to analyze how Morrison's novel becomes polyphonic in the Bakhtinian sense.

Morrison explores the complex nature of truth by alluding to an incident revealed by some historical sources. As Nadal points out, these sources "refer to an incident that occurred in 1797 on board a ship bound for Manila, involving Wellington, then Colonel Wellesley, and a young clergyman" (86). An historical presence is simply the affiliation of events in the past while at the same time being a affiliated with the events in the present. In these two novels, the characters' behavioral actions have been the result of and therefore guided by the encroachment and colonization of past African-American experience. The reader, then relives the events of the past while being subjected to its effects in the present, thus creating an historical presence. This technique is intentionally used by Toni Morrison, but



inadvertently used by the reader. Not only has this feature of an historical presence enhanced the language of the novel, but the word choice used by Morrison has as well. In any language, spoken or written, we know that the word choice is a key factory. Words like "misraised", "ornery" and "vex" illustrate a universal meaning, but in context may tell us the gender of the person speaking and may pin point the region from which this particular dialect evolved.

For Bakhtin, many-voicedness, which refers to “[a] plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses,” is the main characteristic of the polyphonic novel (*PDP* 6). McCallum indicates that “[m]ultivoiced narratives use two or more character focalizers or narrators from whose perceptual and attitudinal viewpoints events are narrated” (23). In this regard, many-voicedness also becomes the primary characteristic of *Beloved*. In the novel, Morrison uses two first-person narratives, “the double narrative provides two opposed points of view, a device that Morrison employs recurrently in his works because it undermines the assumptions built by the first perspective and forces the reader to see the events in a new light” (88). Therefore the double-narrative form brings two distinct independent points of view and voices to *Beloved* together with the other voices represented in these narratives. In this double-narrative structure, the first voice belongs to Seth. Her voice is important since it becomes the narrative agent for most of the events. Seth’s narration constitutes the main frame of the story, which in turn becomes magical realism in form, and in his first-person narration her voice is given independence. The second narrative voice belongs to Beloved and it is constructed blurring the reality and imagination. Other characters’ voices are represented with the use of double-voiced discourse which increases the polyvocality of the text. For Bakhtin, double-voicedness is the primary characteristic of discourse in the polyphonic novel (*PDP*

185). In *Beloved*, double-voiced discourse works on two levels. On the first level, the novel has the structure of an historical novel, which is, for Bakhtin, a variety of unidirectional double-voiced discourse, i.e. narration from the first person (199).

The open-endedness of *Beloved* also draws attention to its two other polyphonic characteristics. For Bakhtin, the polyphonic novel is dialogic (*PDP* 40), and what is foregrounded in the polyphonic novel is not a dialectic evolution, but coexistence and interaction (31). The existence of incompatible and diverse worlds belonging to the characters in the novel reveal the novel's multi-leveledness, which is, for Bakhtin, another important characteristic of the polyphonic novel (*PDP* 16). As McCallum points out, multi-leveled narratives "comprise two or more interwoven or interconnected narrative strands through which events (or different versions of events) are narrated. These strands may be differentiated by shifts in narrative point of view (who speaks or focalizes) and/or by shifts in the spatial or temporal relationships (or what Bakhtin terms 'chronotopic' relationships)" (23-4). In *Beloved*, this multi-leveledness once again is due to the double narrative structure of the novel which provides a shift in narrative point of view. As Sinclair indicates, the novel "is about two opposed narrators experiencing a voyage on the ocean, which is another way of looking at men's voyages through the living seas of their existences" (179). In this regard, Seth's narrative reveals Seth's world and his existence, and Beloved's narration brings another level to the main plot line of the novel, her world and his existence. The polyphonic novel involves multiple voices and multiple plot levels related to these voices. It is not a reflection of the single consciousness of its author or narrator; therefore, it also includes multiple ideas. For Zappen, "polyphony is a process of creating and testing ideas, a process that engages the author and the readers as well as the characters in the polyphonic novel" (51). In *Beloved*, ideas are

merged with the characters' personalities. In this regard, Seth's rational and scientific ideas are merged with her African values, which constitute her personality. On the other hand, other characters' ideas are merged with their religious and romantic personality. For Bakhtin, the polyphonic novel makes use of adventure plot as its plot-compositional base, and it combines it with other genres to make its polyphonic use (PDP 105). In *Beloved*, Morrison uses the adventure plot as the novel's plot compositional base since the novel is set in slavery and their miserable condition.

In Bakhtin's notion, the carnivalesque refers to carnival and grotesque elements manifesting themselves in literary works. As mentioned earlier, these elements have their origins in folk culture and humour and they have been transposed into the field of literature from antiquity to the modern times. Bakhtin calls this transposition the carnivalization of literature (PDP 122). Here, the novel genre gains a special status since from its early examples—which, for Bakhtin, go as far back as the ancient times—to the latest ones, it has played a major role in the carnivalization of literature. As Allen indicates, “[t]he modern inheritor of this unofficial, highly satirical and parodic, dialogical tradition of the carnivalesque is found, Bakhtin argues, in the novel” (22). For Bakhtin, a genre bears the characteristics of its early examples, and the novel genre, by revealing carnivalesque elements, reveals its ties with its previous historical forms. Especially, the novel's examples belonging to the aforementioned Second Stylistic Line of development in the European Novel, strongly shows these ties with their inclusion of carnivalesque elements in the novel's imagery, language and/or plot. The novels belonging to this Stylistic Line tend to be heteroglot, dialogic and polyphonic. Morrison's *Beloved*, a novel clearly belonging to this Stylistic Line with its heteroglot, dialogic and polyphonic characteristics mentioned so far, also includes carnivalesque elements. In this regard, the

carnavalesque in the novel is evident due to the novel's inclusion of the carnivalistic features, acts and imagery, characteristics belonging to the carnivalized genres of antiquity and elements of grotesque realism. The main condition for the presence of carnivalistic features and acts in any literary work is the presence of a place having the significance of the carnival square. As Bakhtin states, any place providing for the gathering of all kinds of people in the same place, such as taverns, roads and decks of ships, can have the carnival square significance in carnivalized literature (PDP 129). For Bakhtin, especially "the deck of a ship" "is a substitute for the public square, where people from various positions find themselves in familiar contact with one another" (174). In *Beloved*, as Crawford indicates, the ship "can be seen as a carnival square" (213): "[t]he ship becomes a circus ring and marketplace, both of which are typical domains for a world turned upside down" (209). On board the ship, there are heterogeneous social classes such as the common people, emigrants, slaves, officers and people from the upper classes of society. In various instances, the ship's carnival square significance becomes very clear when these different classes come together. For example, the shooting the sun rite gathers passengers, slaves, and officers on board the ship. As Seth informs, "[t]here was a number of officers on the quarterdeck. They waited on the sun, the brass triangles held to their faces. Now here was a curious and moving circumstance. All those of the ship's people who were on deck and some of the emigrants too, turned and watched this rite with silent attention" (RP 37). The shooting the sun rite in the novel is actually a navigation process by which the ship's position is determined. As the midshipman Taylor explains to Seth, the slaves "wait for the sun to climb up the sky and they measure the angle when it is greatest and take the time too" (36). But as Seth indicates, it turns into a rite with the gathering of all people: "these people, I say, accorded the whole operation a respect such as they

might have paid to the solemnest moment of a religious service” (38). Therefore, early in the novel, the quarterdeck gains a carnival square significance, which is then extended to the whole ship.

*Beloved* makes satirical intentions clear by strictly stratifying the ship’s social structure. The front end of the ship (fo’castle) is occupied by the common people (sometimes referred to as the emigrants) and the slaves. The upper classes, referred to as ladies and gentlemen, stay in the stern of the ship (afterdeck). The line dividing these social classes in normal life becomes a white line at the main mast, separating the fore and aft of the ship. The quarterdeck belongs to the captain and the officers. But, just as in a carnival, at various instances this line is crossed and life is turned upside down on board the ship. This is done with the subtle incorporation of carnivalistic features and acts. As mentioned earlier, for Bakhtin, there are four main features of carnival taking place in the carnival square. The first feature is that everybody participates in the carnival. There is no distinction between the spectators and the participants when it is carnival time. As Crawford indicates, “Bakhtin’s carnival is a heterogeneous and excessive party time where the people become one by participating in turning the known, familiar world on its head” (46). In *Beloved*, though the ship is strongly divided according to the social classes, all the characters become participants in a carnival life during their long voyage, regardless of their social positions. In this regard, the whole voyage can be considered as a carnival parade, in which several rites and carnivalistic acts take place. The only spectator of this voyage is the reader (or Seth’s godfather as the supposed reader of his diary), and the characters become direct participants even when they are just spectators.

In *Beloved*, free and familiar contact becomes deadly for Edward, and it is also a threat for the other social classes. During the Make and Mend ritual, Seth observes

that “[t]he people, the men, the crew—they had purposes of their own! They were astir! We were united, I believe, in our awareness of the threat to social stability that might at any moment arise among the common slaves and emigrants! It was horseplay and insolence at liberty in the fo’castle” (RP 112). Therefore, the second feature of carnival is presented as destructive, and its destructive power is directed against the essence of society which promotes the social hierarchy. In this way Morrison criticizes the class system, which is, for him, “the classic disease of society in this country” (Baker 136): “Morrison cannot resist any opportunity to snipe at class. He attacks the sham politeness of the upper classes and uses Edward as a means of exposing the evil consequences of class-ridden English society. Edward acts as a kind of sacrificial victim caught in transition between the lower and upper classes” (Crawford 212).

The third feature of carnival, carnivalesque *mésalliances*, is closely connected to free and familiar contact among people. The lifting of the boundaries among people brings people’s contrasting worlds to the same level. In *Beloved*, “this topsy-turvy world, subject to disorientating sea-bound ‘ups’ and ‘downs,’ brings with it a social reversal or inversion. What is ‘high’ is brought ‘low’ and vice versa” (202). Therefore, in the novel, hierarchies are turned on their heads and opposites are mingled. For Crawford, The central “opposition” is between upper and lower classes. The fantastic and carnivalesque erode the dominating influences of such distinctions. They interrogate and symbolically dismantle the ground for such differentiation. They engage to blur the “white line” between the “lower” and “higher” social orders in conjunction with a debate throughout the trilogy foregrounding the “constructed” nature of English class and hence the reversibility of this structure—its vulnerability to deconstruction and erasure (203).

In this regard, the sailor's rites blur the distinctions and opposites among people through the person of Edward. For example, the badger bag rite "seeks to appease forces rising from below the surface, and to achieve an equatorial balance," and in this rite "the parvenu gentleman [Edward] is tormented as a scapegoat, humiliated and frightened" (Kinkead-Weekes and Gregor, *A Critical Study* 259). Thus the badger bag brings religious Edward to the same level as the slaves. As Bakhtin indicates, "[c]arnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (*PDP* 123).

The fourth carnivalistic feature in *Beloved* is profanation. In carnival, what was once sanctified is brought down to earth, debased and ridiculed. In *Beloved*, there is a profaning attitude toward religion and the clergy. Edward can be respected by religious people on land, but on board ship, he becomes an unwanted man. He is regarded as "a kind of natural bringer of bad luck" (RP 193). Anderson is an atheist and he hates the parson. The slaves are involved in the pagan rituals and they make Edward a part of these rituals with their profaning attitudes. For example, during the above mentioned rite, he is made to kneel before a figure, "bearded and crowned with flame [who] bore a huge fork with three prongs in his right hand" (236). Seth also shares the slaves' hatred of Edward. In such an environment, there is no chance for Edward to survive. As Strongman indicates, "Edward's death, as well as iterating Morrison's theme of class division, emphasises also that of the division between the sacred and profane. Edward's rite of passage is a retrograde one which is consequent on his inability to sustain his (dis)position in the structure of the society aboard the ship. Morrison's intent is to criticise the society that constructs his death" (63). But carnivalistic profanation is not just toward Edward. As Redpath points out,

“Prettiman, the arch-rationalist, armed with a blunderbuss and pacing the decks in an effort to disprove all superstitions, including religion” aims to profane slaves’ belief by shooting an albatross (69). In this regard, the parallel between Edward and the albatross of Coleridge’s *Ancient Mariner* becomes clear. They both represent the sacred, one for religion and the other for nature, and they are both profaned by slaves.

All these features of carnival are closely connected with each other and they mainly serve Morrison’s satirical aims. Inseparable from them are carnivalistic acts with their ambivalent nature. The most important carnivalistic act in this regard is the mock crowning and decrowning of the carnival king. In this act, “all life is concentrated around a carnival king. This is life that has left its normal rut, almost a ‘world turned inside out’” (Bakhtin, PDP 163). It is a dualistic act since it includes both crowning and decrowning processes. As Bakhtin indicates, a “mock priest” can take the place of the king in this carnival act since he is the representative of another authority, i.e. religious authority (124). In *Beloved*, carnivalistic acts are mostly observed in the slaves’ rites which reveal a carnivalistic sense of the world. The crowning and decrowning act is not played upon a mock priest but on a real parson, i.e. Parson Edward who is officially crowned on land, but unofficially decrowned at sea. In this regard, Edward experiences two rites: the first is the badger bag, leading to his humiliation, and the second is the Make and Mend, leading to his subsequent dying of shame.

Apart from the ritual act of decrowning, laughter is also another important carnivalistic act observed in *Beloved*. For Bakhtin, carnivalistic laughter is related to ritual laughter of the ancient times, which is directed towards the gods to force them to renew themselves (PDP 126). It is both deriding and renewing, therefore like the previously mentioned act, it is dualistic in nature. As Gardiner indicates, carnivalistic



laughter is “[d]eeply ambivalent (‘ridicule fused with rejoicing’), [and] like all features of the carnivalesque, it is directed towards the profanation of higher authority and is connected with the symbolism of reproductive force” (Dialogics 46). In *Beloved*, carnival laughter is mainly directed at Edward. He is the one representing religious authority, and also the one who has to renew himself in the new society of the ship. In this regard, the slaves’ rites force him to renew himself, though he cannot cope with the result of his renewal. Carnivalistic laughter and a sense of the world as carnival dominate the slaves’ rites. Before the badger bag, Edward sees the slaves preparing for their equatorial entertainment, accompanied by “bursts of laughter” (RP 231). During the rite, he becomes the target of this laughter as he reports in his letter: “For a few moments I believe I was rendered totally insensible, only to be brought to myself again by the sound of yelling and jeering and positively demonic laughter” (236). In this rite, the slaves not only laugh at Edward, but their laughter is also directed at the sea gods, who are expected to renew themselves and help the ship while it crosses the equator. Carnivalistic laughter can also be heard during the Make and Mend rite. Seth hears “a great noise from the fo’castle and the most unexpected noise of all—a positive crash of laughter!” (109). Later, he detects “the distant sound of a man’s voice” (115). Indeed, Edward is singing “Where have you been all the day, Billy Boy?” (115), and then he sings another tune, which Seth cannot understand, but as he remarks: “The words must have been warm, I think, country matters perhaps, for there was laughter to back them. [...] The singing stopped. There began to be laughter again, applause, then a clamour of shouts and jeers” (115). Edward is ridiculed and debased by carnivalistic laughter, but he also takes a step towards renewal since he initially enjoys his drunkenness and experience. Therefore carnivalistic laughter preserves its ambivalent nature in *Beloved*. It ridicules and in

this way brings “the target of the laughter down to earth and forcing it to renew itself” (Brandist 139). Although Edward’s dying of shame is tragic in itself, as Boyd indicates, “laughter and tragedy do, however, make fairly strange bedfellows” (165). In the novel, tragedy, or death, is a part of carnival regeneration.

The other serio-comical genre taking its root from carnivalized folklore and manifesting itself in *Beloved* is Menippean satire. As Crawford points out, “Morrison’s fiction is partly satirical, drawing on strategies for indirect attack or critique that originate in ancient literary forms, particularly Menippean satire” (29). The carnivalistic nature of Menippean satire is much more pronounced than in Socratic dialogue. For Crawford, Menippean satire “is a genre that Bakhtin sees as combining heterogeneous elements in a deeply organic, integral, and interrogative form. The contrary viewpoint then, evident in Menippean satire, promotes the symbolic subversion of the stable, familiar world—the ‘real’ world—and questions its cultural authority” (32). Thus the essence of menippean satire as a genre becomes very suitable for Morrison’s aforementioned satirical aims, “This grotesque representation of the material body is in sharp contrast with its classical representation which idealizes the material body. For Bakhtin, it is in the Renaissance that these two representations meet, experience a struggle and interact” (RW 30).

In *Beloved*, this interaction becomes obvious since, apart from the grotesque concept of the body, classical representation is also given. It is Edward who represents the slaves’ bodies as idealized, individualized and completed although he himself is represented as a grotesque figure: “They go about their tasks, their bronzed and manly forms unclothed to the waist, their abundant locks gathered in a queue, their nether garments closely fitted but flared about the ankles like the nostrils of a stallion. They disport themselves casually a hundred feet up in the air” (RP 188). He

especially admires one of the slaves, who turns out to be Billy Rogers later:

“Watching one young fellow in particular, a narrow-waisted, slim-hipped yet broad-shouldered Child of Neptune, I felt that some of what was malignant in the potion was cancelled by where and who was concerned with it. For it was as if these beings, these young men, or some of them at least and one of them in particular, were of the giant breed” (216). Edward’s admiration for the classical beauty becomes an oblique reference to his latent homosexuality. This kind of representation is also present in Seth’s account, stressing the sharp contrast between the grotesque and classical representations: “Summers himself went out and fetched Rogers. [...] He was naked to the waist, [...] stand[ing] as a model to Michelangelo! His huge chest and columnar neck were of a deep brown hue” (252). Compared to the classical representation, the grotesque body becomes formless, hideous, imperfect and uncompleted.

But, for Bakhtin, grotesque realism never presents a one-sided negative picture. There is always ambivalence in the grotesque image. The main principle in grotesque realism is degradation, that is, “the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract: it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity” (RW 19). It is only through degradation that regeneration is possible; therefore, degradation has an ambivalent nature in grotesque realism. In *Beloved*, apart from its grotesque representation, the material body is also brought down to earth by emphasizing its bodily functions. In this regard, “images of filth connected with vomit and excrement” dominate the novel.

This thesis has both examined Morrison’s *Beloved* from a Bakhtinian point of view and examined Bakhtin’s ideas from the point of view of how they work in practice. The main Bakhtinian concepts that have been used in the analysis of the novel are heteroglossia, and the carnivalesque. These concepts are central to Bakhtin’s

theory of the novel and their close examination in *Beloved* has shown that while these concepts shed light on the stylistic, structural and thematic complexities of the novel, the novel also verifies the working of these concepts in practice. As a result of this mutual verification it can be concluded that Bakhtin's ideas and Morrison's work provide illuminating insights into each other.

Bakhtin's notion of polyphony celebrates the novel's capacity for the representation of a plurality of voices in the whole of the novel. In a polyphonic novel, characters' voices are not dominated by an authorial or narratorial voice, and in this way the characters are given freedom to express their own ideas, truths and ideologies. Morrison also gives this freedom to his characters and indeed polyphony becomes a narrative strategy in *Beloved*. The use of the polyphonic mode enables Morrison to present the events from two different perspectives. He also furthers the polyvocality of the text with the use of double-voiced discourse in the representation of the characters' voices.

Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque celebrates the novel genre for its capacity to bring social and cultural diversity together and to represent them in a topsy-turvy world in which high is presented with low, beautiful with ugly, sacred with profane and so on. In *Beloved*, Morrison represents the ship as a carnival square which is populated by people from different ranks of society. In this way, not only does he represent a social microcosm, but he also offers a look at the conflicting worlds of people belonging to a highly stratified society. Therefore, it can be concluded that Bakhtin's celebration of the novel's capacity for including diverse elements finds its counterpart in Morrison's *Beloved*. Other studies, although they treat Bakhtin's ideas and Morrison's novel separately, confirm the first point. In terms of Bakhtin's celebration of the novel's capacity for diverse elements, critics consider Bakhtin's

ideas as bringing new insights to complex literary texts. Morrison applies Bakhtin's ideas to complex and sophisticated novels in their narrative techniques and thematic concerns in order to examine their diverse nature from a Bakhtinian point of view. In the same way, *Beloved* has also been celebrated by the critics for its complexity in terms of language use, narrative technique and thematic concerns. (227).

The second point by which Bakhtin's ideas and Morrison's novel verify each other is related to Bakhtin's notion of dialogism. The analysis of Bakhtin's concepts has shown that dialogism is a relational property, common to heteroglossia, polyphony and the carnivalesque. Dialogism in Bakhtin's idea of heteroglossia refers to the dialogization of different languages and speech types constituting the language of the novel. In terms of polyphony it refers to the dialogization of different voices in the polyphonic structure of the novel. Dialogism in Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque indicates the dialogization of social classes and opposing elements. For Bakhtin, a dialogic novel foregrounds all these dialogic relations within the whole of the novel. In this regard, *Beloved* is a highly dialogic work in the Bakhtinian sense, since the novel reveals all the dialogic relations that Bakhtin points out. In terms of heteroglossia not only does Morrison include diverse speech types but he also puts them into dialogic relations. Sometimes these dialogic relations in heteroglossia serve Morrison's aim to underline the problematic nature of language in conveying meaning. Morrison also dialogizes the characters' voices in the polyphonic structure of the novel and by presenting truth from different voices he questions the complex nature of truth. In addition, he dialogizes different social classes aboard the ship through the incorporation of carnivalesque elements and this serves Morrison to criticize the strict class consciousness in society with its consequent risk of man's cruelty to man.



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Tribhuvan University

A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony, and  
Carnival

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English, T.U.

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in English

By

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Central Department of English

Kirtipur, Kathmandu

February 2018

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Letter of Recommendation

Mohan Kumar Chaudhary has completed his thesis entitled “A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Carnival” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2072/009/15 B.S. to 2074/10/10 B.S. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

.....

Prof. Dr. Ram Chandra Paudel

(Supervisor)

Date: .....

Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “A Bakhtinian Analysis of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Heteroglossia, Polyphony and Carnival” submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Mohan Kumar Chaudhary has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee:

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Internal Supervisor

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External Examiner

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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