



Universidad de Valladolid

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

**Overcoming pain through the concept of
humanization in Toni Morrison's novels**

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Curso: 2023-2024

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores suffering and overcoming it in the main characters of all of Toni Morrison's novels, with the objective of demonstrating a hypothesis that such suffering and overcoming it constitute the central axis of the writer's novels, with two fundamental methods of overcoming it: one through the development of altruistic values, and the other through escape or evasion to the world of fantasy. The relevance of this thesis lies in offering different social perspectives to understand the realities affecting African-American society. The methodology used to perform the textual analysis of the novels will be done with the psychological theory of the Big Five, emphasizing the dimensions of Humanization, Openness, and Neuroticism. We can conclude that the hypothesis is fulfilled, observing how suffering progressively fades away in the main characters, being replaced by humanization.

Keywords: Toni Morrison, suffering, healing, Humanization, Openness, Neuroticism.

RESUMEN

Esta tesis explora el sufrimiento y la superación de este en los personajes protagonistas de todas las novelas de Toni Morrison, con el objetivo de demostrar una hipótesis de que dicho sufrimiento y dicha superación constituyen el eje central de las novelas de la escritora, existiendo dos modos fundamentales de superación: uno mediante el desarrollo de valores altruistas, y otro mediante la huida o evasión al mundo de la fantasía. La relevancia de esta tesis radica en ofrecimiento de distintas perspectivas sociales para comprender las realidades que afectan a la sociedad afroamericana. La metodología empleada para realizar el análisis textual de las novelas se hará con la teoría psicológica de Los Cinco Grandes, haciendo incapié en las dimensiones de Humanización, Apertura, y Neuroticismo. Podemos concluir que la hipótesis planteada se cumple, observando como el sufrimiento se desvanece de manera progresiva en los personajes principales, siendo sustituido por la humanización.

Palabras clave: Toni Morrison, sufrimiento, sanación, Humanización, Apertura, Neuroticismo.

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1. Introduction

Suffering goes hand in hand with the condition of being a human being, yet it is not possible to speak of suffering without speaking of healing. Although both concepts are opposites, they are intertwined. To heal is to be able to identify the pain, and to be able to give a name to what bothers, disturbs, or upsets an individual (Egnew, 2005). To heal is to be able to identify the pain, and to be able to give a name to what bothers, disturbs, or upsets an individual. Overcoming pain is something that the suffering individual must do on his or her own. Nevertheless, according to Egnew (2005), establishing close, affectionate, empathic relationships and connections, and also with good communication, helps the affected person to cope better with their suffering and to heal more quickly and effectively. Having someone to share thoughts and feelings with is fundamental in the healing process. Healing wounds through writing stories is also a healing process, and not only that, but it can also visualize and criticize social situations that affect the writer in some way (Nye, 1997). This is what Morrison does in her novels, telling stories about her social perspective as an African American, capturing different social situations for which this community suffers. Therefore, the protagonists of Morrison's novels suffer as well, as she tries to depict different social situations in fiction that end up giving a real perspective of the suffering of the African American community. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, all suffering has a way of healing.

Considering this, the main objective of this dissertation is to propose and present a hypothesis in which the main characters in Morrison's novels move and evolve through an overcoming of an initial suffering. This hypothesis can be fulfilled through two predominant ways, the first is through a progressive humanization, or, the second option, is the escape into the world of fantasy. To carry out this hypothesis, it is first presented the situations through which the characters suffer in order to have a previous context of the traumatic situations they go through. Once this has been done, the Big Five psychological theory is applied. Through the dimensions of Neuroticism, Openness, and Humanization, thoughts, actions, or words of the characters are extracted from the novels where there is

evidence of the different facets of these dimensions. In the case that the novel contains neurotic characters, it will be evidenced through facets of Neuroticism. If the character is not neurotic, it will simply not be indicated. Once the suffering and/or emotional instability due to it has been identified, we will begin to see the character's healing process. It is here that it will be analyzed if the character heals by means of escaping through fantasy, that is, scoring higher in the Openness facets. On the contrary, if the character manages to heal through a humanistic progression, scoring higher in the Agreeableness facets.

2. Studies on the psychology of Morrison's characters

Scholars who have studied Toni Morrison's novels in depth, like López Ramírez (2015), Boudreau (1995), Hutter (2010) or Singh (2021), have praised Morrison for her exquisite ability to handle pain, suffering, and trauma, and catharsis Morrison's protagonists have a remarkable ability to deal with the various obstacles that life and society throw at them, and to finally be able to heal, often unexpectedly.

Morrison captures in her novels the reality of the racism and oppression imposed on African Americans by white-dominated society. Some scholars have suggested that this discrimination is the root cause of many other issues, such as identity problems, class problems, discrimination between black people due to different skin tones, or between black women and black men, among others (Karim, 2023; López Ramírez, 2013; Boon, 2019; Sofiani, Akhadiah, and Emzir, 2019).

Social and racial minorities experience insidious trauma as a result of the cruelty inflicted by the dominant group, usually the whites. Hence, they internalize feelings of inferiority and self-contempt, which are projected onto them by the patriarchal Western discourse. Systemic racism, like other types of marginalization and social exclusion, determine the forms which the transgenerational transmission of trauma takes within the family and community (López Ramírez, 2013).

O'Reilly (1996), López Ramirez (2013), Wiwik (2019), and Sofiani, Akhadiah, and Emzir (2019) focus precisely on how the suffering caused by racism affects the identity of the protagonists, as the trauma the characters carry with them causes them to isolate themselves and cannot freely express how they feel, or what worries them, which ends up destroying their identity and not accepting their true-self. In addition, O'Reilly (1996) argues that, in order to love oneself, one must have had the experience of being loved by who makes you understand that you have value as a person. This issue of being loved presents another problem in Morrison's main characters; the struggle of living in an unfavorable family environment accompanied by abuse. Dysfunctional upbringing is reflected in the protagonists' characterization: insecurity, fear of abandonment, need for attention, aggressiveness, irascible temperament, etc. (Wiwik, 2019; Sofiani et al., 2019).

Another recurrent theme related to suffering in Morrison is slavery. The effects of slavery on have been explored by Burdeau (1995), O'Reilly (1996), and Farah (2021). The three authors link this theme to identity issues and the dysfunctional family environment, as slavery brings with it inhumane treatment, generational trauma, and discrimination; issues, all of them, that negatively affects one's perception of oneself.

In the same vein, O'Reilly (1996), Wardi (2005), Hutter (2010), Singh (2021), and Karim (2023) explore the suffering, trauma, and pain of black women in Morrison's novels. This is essential when analyzing Morrison's work, as most of her protagonists are black women. These female protagonists must deal with various forms of discrimination such as racism, slavery itself and its aftereffects, their identity as black women, and, of course, with gender inequality, sexist attitudes, and the standards imposed by a racist society that marginalized and excluded women. The female discrimination issue is covered in more detail in the studies of Otten (1986), O'Reilly (1996), and Farah (2021), which explore how a beauty canon imposed by the whites, negatively influences other races, promoting an alienation from their own ethnicity, and causing problems of insecurity and self-esteem as the affected minority do not fit into the established canon, as the identity they develop is connected to aspects of an oppressive system. Furthermore, Wardi (2005), López Ramírez (2015), and Aydemir & Tanritanir (2019), delve into discuss male violence in this context, illustrating,

with excerpts from Morrison, how physical and psychological violence and even rape are inflicted on young and adult female characters. A more global perspective on women's oppression is given by Ahmad (2021), Karim (2023), and Sharmin (2023), who speak of a dominant white patriarchy imposed upon the heads of Toni Morrison's black female characters: "The patriarchal agents in these novels enforce white beauty standards, dictate women's roles and behaviors, emphasize marriage and motherhood, and use sexual exploitation to control women" (Sharmin, 2023).

Ahmad (2021) provides a cure for this suffering, the union of minorities. Ahmad (2021) suggests that Morrison's female characters who associate with each other undergo a healing process of sorts, they eventually improve their self-esteem, and grow personally, thus allowing their black female identity to flourish.

3. Theoretical frame and Method

Costa and McCrae developed the NEO-PI-3 model (Third Edition), one of the models of the Big Five psychological theory. This model of the psychological theory is the most accurate of all since the authors decided to delve into a more complex analysis that would explain more accurately and concretely the totality of traits that define the human being, and it is the one that will be used in this thesis. This model consists of the measurement of five dimensions, scoring higher or lower depending on the personality of each individual adding for each dimension six facets that define score high in that specific dimension (Weiner & Greene, 2017). This model functions as a cognitive schema, which helps to address the characteristics of a person, or in this case a character. Therefore, any textual evidence that points to a particular way of being can be linked to one of the five dimensions (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

One of the dimensions is Extraversion (E). It is the dimension related to energy when it comes to socializing. People who score high on this dimension will be outgoing, sociable, eager to explore, to know, and full of energy. On the contrary, people who are more

reserved, introverted, who like to stay in their comfort zone, and who find it difficult to establish social relationships, will score lower in this dimension (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Another dimension of this model is Conscientiousness (C). This dimension is related to orderliness, rationality, and responsibility. People who score high on this dimension are hard-working, orderly people. If you are an industrious, perfectionist, constant, meticulous, and organized person, you will probably score high on this trait. If, on the other hand, you are a lazy person, you leave things to the last minute, procrastinate, and are easily demotivated, you will score low on this trait (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Neuroticism (N) is related to one's emotions. A high score will confirm a person's emotional instability. Traits characteristic of a person with a high Neuroticism score are: Anxiety (N1) being a nervous person, full of fears and worries; Angry Hostility (N2) being a person who experiences rage and anger frequently, and also very linked to violence; Depression (N3) being a person who experiences loneliness, sadness, and guilt; Self-Consciousness (N4) being a person with a high sense of ridicule and inferiority; Impulsiveness (N5) being a person with low patience, tolerance, and who is easily frustrated. And finally, the Vulnerability (N6) facet in which they feel in constant danger, and do not know how to act in stressful situations. However, a low score on this dimension implies self-control, high self-awareness, relaxation, and mental stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

The Openness dimension (O) is related to newness. A person who scores high in openness will accept and enjoy any innovation. The traits of a person who scores high in Fantasy (O1) are people with a high imagination and a lot of inner world; Aesthetics (O2) is the facet in which you will score high if you appreciate beauty; Feelings (O3) facet of people with a high ability to recognize their emotions; Actions (O4), people are open to try new experiences. Ideas (O5); is the facet of people who are stimulated by listening to new ideas. And finally, the Values (O6) facet relies on the examination of social, political, and religious values. Nonetheless, people who score low on this dimension are unimaginative, traditional, and closed to new things (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Finally, the dimension of Agreeableness (A). This dimension is characterized by humanization and kindness towards other people. A high score on this dimension indicates the facets of Trust (A1) if you always have good intentions with others and trust them. Straightforwardness (A2) if you speak the truth. Altruism (A3) if you care and help others even if you receive nothing in return. Compliance (A4) which consists of giving in and being permissive to others. Modesty (A5) which consists of not thinking you are better than others. And Tender-Mindedness (A6), which is about the tenderness and sympathy with which you treat others. However, a low Agreeableness score indicates that you are a cold person, who does not approach others because you think you are better than them or simply because you do not trust them (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999).

Through these facets, the hypothesis test will be carried out. First of all, the traumatic experiences and suffering that the characters go through chronologically will be mentioned. Once we have this, the next step is to know if it is a neurotic character or not. Therefore, if the main character or characters of the novel have any neurotic traits, it will be shown through a quote from the corresponding novel so that the reader can see it clearly. From here it only remains to analyze the final development of the character and check if the hypothesis is fulfilled, demonstrating again with quotes from the text if the salvation of the character occurs through the dimension of Openness, more specifically with the facet of Fantasy (O1). Or, on the contrary, check with quotations from the text if the character's salvation is produced by a progressive increase in humanization (Agreeableness).

4. Character Interpretation

4.1 Fantasy Level

In *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison first introduces Pecola Breedlove as a girl who becomes homeless because her father, Cholly Breedlove, burns down her family home. From this initial instance, it is clear that the background Pecola comes from is not a stable one. First of all, the separation from her family because of the fire, for which she feels

abandoned and neglected by her parental figures when she is only eleven years old. In addition, she feels alienated because her economic and home situation makes people perceive her as a freak. This separation forces her to live with Claudia and Frieda, two sisters who host her in their home, which distances her somewhat from the family environment. This brings us to the second point, the family environment that Pecola is surrounded by is full of violence. Their parents are constantly fighting, and Cholly verbally and physically abuses Mrs. Breedlove. All this creates an atmosphere in the Breedlove house full of discomfort and malaise for both Pecola and her older brother, Samuel. Samuel leaves home, as he cannot stand the arguments of his parents, leaving his sister alone in the family situation. This abandonment means that Pecola does not have a role model in her situation to rely on, since he was the only person who stood up to the family relationship and confronted his father. Leaving his sister unprotected in the family environment, and the little attention Pecola receives from her mother, Cholly takes advantage of his daughter's vulnerability and rapes her. Also, closely tied to her family, and another theme by which Pecola's family is affected is beauty. Morrison describes the ugliness that surrounds the Breedlove family. This is due to the beauty standards indirectly imposed by white people, to which several characters in the novel are exposed, which is derived from a racism of the society in which they live. This racism is suffered by Pecola, not only with the internalized racism at home, but also with the people in the street, and with her classmates. As a result, Pecola becomes a marginalized character by the social environments that surround her.

Studying Pecola's reactions, actions, and words in these situations and throughout the novel, it is discovered that due to her traumatic life, she becomes a neurotic character. Although Pecola does not act hostile (N2) and impulsive (N5), she does act with other facets of high neuroticism. Primarily, her family's negative perception of beauty means that she does not see herself as pretty, nor does she like herself. She is constantly alert to how others perceive her and imagines that if her appearance were to change, the people around her would really like her. So she becomes withdrawn and insecure about her appearance:

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at

least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes." (Morrison, 2007e, p. 61).

This facet of self-consciousness (N4) is also closely linked to the facet of anxiety (N1). This poor relationship with her own perception causes her to obsess about her physical appearance and to want to change it. This is due to Pecola's main concern, mentioned above, which comes from the belief that if others see her pretty, they will love her. Pecola's beauty references are white American actresses such as Shirley Temple, for whom she has a somewhat strange fascination:

Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was (Morrison, 2007e, p. 34).

Pecola knows how popular Shirley Temple is, the alluring beauty she possesses, and the people who admire and love her for it. Therefore, one of the parts of the novel in which her obsessive anxiety with her appearance is really accurately reflected is the one in which she drinks milk uncontrollably in the Shirley Temple cup. By doing this act, Pecola is convinced that she will somehow manage to absorb a little of Shirley Temple's white beauty, trying to gain love and acceptance from others:

"Three quarts of milk. That's what was in that icebox yesterday. Three whole quarts. Now they ain't none. Not a drop. I don't mind folks coming in and getting what they want, but three quarts of milk! What the devil does anybody need with three quarts of milk?" The "folks" my mother was referring to was Pecola (Morrison, 2007e, p. 38).

This obsession with changing in order to be loved makes her a very vulnerable child (N6), another of the facets that indicate Pecola's high neuroticism. She is a very insecure child, and she shows herself to be fragile in front of Frieda and Claudia, allowing them to see how she really feels. These two sisters are the only characters Pecola trusts and can act naturally, without fear of being disliked for how she looks, as she sees these two girls as equals and as

her friends. Thus, Pecola is able to expose herself to them and reveal her true feelings: “Then Pecola asked a question that had never entered my mind. “How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?” But Frieda was asleep. And I didn’t know” (Morrison, 2007e, p. 47).

Nevertheless, the support from Pecola and Frieda is not enough for Pecola to overcome the abuse she suffers at home, nor the racism she suffers on the street. Pecola feels constant guilt and sadness, as well as a constant negative perception of herself, isolates herself, and wants to disappear. This indicates another of the traits indicating high neuroticism, depression (N3):

Pecola covered her head with the quilt. The sick feeling, which she had tried to prevent by holding in her stomach, came quickly in spite of her precaution. There surged in her the desire to heave, but as always, she knew she would not. “Please, God,” she whispered into the palm of her hand. “Please make me disappear.” She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away (Morrison, 2007e, p. 60).

The only way for Pecola to overcome her neuroticism is to increase the Openness facet, more specifically by opening the Fantasy (O1) level. Pecola creates an imaginary friend, and projects in her mind that her eyes are blue, things that don't really exist but make her a less anxious and depressive character. She begins to believe that she is pretty and that people love her for it. And thus, Pecola escapes both her suffering and her reality:

Why don’t you look at me when you say that? You’re looking drop-eyed like Mrs. Breedlove. Mrs. Breedlove look drop-eyed at you? Yes. Now she does. Ever since I got my blue eyes, she look away from me all of the time. Do you suppose she’s jealous too? Could be. They are pretty, you know. I know. He really did a good job. Everybody’s jealous. Every time I look at somebody, they look off. Is that why nobody has told you how pretty they are? Sure it is. Can you imagine? Something like that happening to a person, and nobody but nobody saying anything about it? They all try to pretend they don’t see them. Isn’t that funny? . . . I said, isn’t that funny? (Morrison, 2007e, p. 210).

Sethe, the protagonist of *Beloved*, is also haunted by her traumatic past. Sethe is raised on a slave plantation called Sweet Home, where she suffers several abuses. She eventually manages to escape with all her children; however, the plantation owner comes back for her. Sethe decides to kill one of her children who is still a baby, a traumatic event that affects her and her whole family, but thanks to this they avoid returning to the plantation and being slaves, part of the novel that we will discuss later. Sethe tries to maintain a normal life with her daughter Denver and her love interest she once knew on the plantation, Paul D. Nonetheless, memories of her past continually haunt her. This could be translated as anxiety (N1), one of the facets of Neuroticism. For Sethe, the past is something she cannot forget, unable to suppress her negative thoughts, resulting in her not feeling well, and constantly replaying these memories:

"How could I forget? Worrisome..." "How come everybody run off from Sweet Home can't stop talking about it? Look like if it was so sweet you would have stayed." "Girl, who you talking to?" Paul D laughed. "True, true. She's right, Sethe. It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home." He shook his head. "But it's where we were," said Sethe. "All together. Comes back whether we want it to or not" (Morrison, 2007a, p.15).

Beloved's arrival home only increases Sethe's anxiety, as Beloved acts as a constant reminder of where she was and what she went through. Although Sethe initially adores Beloved because she provides comfort and security, as Beloved knows everything Sethe has been through, and Sethe feels very understood by her. Yet, her constant presence only aggravates Sethe's memories. When Paul D and Denver try to break out of this loop of traumatic past that haunts Sethe, Beloved causes Sethe to worsen the loop of her memories, thus furthering her anxiety and creating depressive (N3) feelings in Sethe. Sethe gives up her whole life for Beloved, consuming herself in her memories, not facing her present, and doing absolutely everything Beloved asks of her, isolating herself from the rest of the characters in the novel and from herself:

Denver saw the flesh between her mother's forefinger and thumb fade. Saw Sethe's eyes bright but dead, alert but vacant, paying attention to everything about Beloved--her lineless palms, her forehead, the smile under her jaw, crooked and much too long-- everything except her basket-fat stomach. She

also saw the sleeves of her own carnival shirtwaist cover her fingers; hems that once showed her ankles now swept the floor. She saw themselves beribboned, decked-out, limp and starving but locked in a love that wore everybody out. Then Sethe spit up something she had not eaten and it rocked Denver like gunshot. The job she started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved. Now it was obvious that her mother could die (Morrison, 2007a, p. 257).

However, before all this domination, Sethe tries to show herself vulnerable (N6) to Paul D, Denver, and Beloved. She tells them how she feels, she can talk to them about things that happened in the past, where it hurts. Most of all, she shows that vulnerability with Paul D and Denver, as they try to give her a life beyond her past and her pain, even though Sethe finds it harder:

[Paul D] rubbed his cheek on [Sethe's] back and learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it; its wide trunk and intricate branches. Raising his fingers to the hooks of her dress, he knew without seeing them or hearing any sigh that the tears were coming fast. [...] Maybe this one time she could stop dead still in the middle of a cooking meal--not even leave the stove--and feel the hurt her back ought to. Trust things and remember things because the last of the Sweet Home men was there to catch her if she sank? (Morrison, 2007a, p. 20-21).

And undoubtedly, another trait that increases Sethe's neuroticism is impulsiveness (N5). The moment in the novel, when this facet can be observed, is when the plantation owners are looking for Sethe and her family to take them back to Sweet Home. In response to this, preventing at all costs that she or her children suffer what she suffered on the plantation, Sethe decides to kill one of her children. This impulsiveness causes the owners of Sweet Home to perceive her as a mentally unstable person, and Sethe and her family are spared. Nonetheless, this impulsivity makes her emotional instability worsen:

Inside, two boys bled in the sawdust and dirt at the feet of a nigger woman holding a blood-soaked child to her chest with one hand and an infant by the heels in the other. [Sethe] did not look at them; she simply swung the baby toward the wall planks, missed and tried to connect a second time, when out of nowhere in the ticking time the men spent staring at what there was to stare the old nigger boy, still mewling, ran through the door behind them and

snatched the baby from the arch of its mother's swing (Morrison, 2007a, p.163).

As it happens with Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, the only escape Sethe finds to escape from her high neuroticism is through the facet of fantasy (O1). Thanks to fantasy Sethe manages to free herself from her past and her constant memories that kept her from moving forward in her life. However, this open door to fantasy makes her have a rather abstract perception of reality. Gone is the troubled and constantly anguished Sethe, to give us a renewed but not sane Sethe:

[Sethe's] eyes, fixed on the window, are so expressionless [Paul D] is not sure she will know who he is. There is too much light here in this room. Things look sold. "Jackweed raise up high," she sings. "Lambswool over my shoulder, buttercup and clover fly." She is fingering a long clump of her hair. Paul D clears his throat to interrupt her. "Sethe?" She turns her head. "Paul D." "Aw, Sethe." "I made the ink, Paul D. He couldn't have done it if I hadn't made the ink." "What ink? Who?" "You shaved." "Yeah. Look bad?" "No. You looking good." "Devil's confusion. What's this I hear about you not getting out of bed?" She smiles, lets it fade and turns her eyes back to the window. "I need to talk to you," he tells her. She doesn't answer. "I saw Denver. She tell you?" "She comes in the daytime. Denver. She's still with me, my Denver." "You got to get up from here, girl." (Morrison, 2007a, p. 289-290).

The story of Florens, the protagonist of *A Mercy*, begins when Jacob Vaarak, an American merchant and farmer, arrives at Mr. D'Ortega's plantation to pay off a debt. D'Ortega tells Vaarak to choose a slave, and Florens' mother convinces Vaarak to take her daughter. Florens' mother makes this decision to save her daughter from the abuse she might suffer on the plantation, which she already suffered. However, Florens sees this as a terrible betrayal. She feels abandoned and rejected, and only wants to be loved at all costs, feelings that are reflected in her later relationships with the other characters. Being a slave on Vaarak's farm she also feels that she is trapped and that she cannot do anything about it, thus limiting her connection to the world outside the farm and a part of herself. Another experience that is traumatic for her is her separation from the Blacksmith, another of

Vaarak's farm workers. This situation aggravates the fear of not being accepted and the fear of rejection, feelings she was already a little panicky about because that is how she felt when she was abandoned by her mother.

Florens is a character with high neuroticism. The first neurotic facet that shows this is anxiety (N1). The obsession they have with the Blacksmith is unhealthy. Florens has constantly anxious behaviors towards him. He likes to watch him constantly when he is not aware of it; when he is working, when he is interacting with other people or even sleeping. Furthermore, because Florens is afraid of rejection, he has anxious and obsessive behaviors to know what the Blacksmith is doing. These behaviors can be observed in the chapters in which she narrates the novel:

Night comes and I steal a candle. I carry an ember in a pot to light it. To see more of you. When it is lit I shield the flame with my hand. I watch you sleeping. I watch too long. Am careless. The flame burns my palm. I think if you wake and see me seeing you I will die. I run away not knowing then you are seeing me seeing you. And when at last our eyes hit I am not dead. For the first time I am live (Morrison, 2008, p. 33).

Likewise, other neurotic facets that Florens presents are impulsivity (N5) and hostility (N2). These facets are presented through the relationship she has with the Blacksmith when things in the relationship are not going as she wishes. In the penultimate chapter that Florens narrates, it is told how the Blacksmith is taking care of a little boy. Florens begins to freak out because this means that the Blacksmith doesn't have eyes only for her. For Florens, having so much of the Blacksmith's attention placed on someone else who is not with her causes her to have feelings of anger, violent impulses, and out of control. This causes her to break the boy's arm, which triggers the Blacksmith to view her as an unstable, potentially dangerous person and leave her:

Seeing me the boy returns to screaming and that is when I clutch him. I am trying to stop him not hurt him. That is why I pull his arm. To make him stop. Stop it. And yes I do hear the shoulder crack but the sound is small, no more than the crack a wing of roast grouse makes when you tear it, warm and tender, from its breast. He screams screams then faints. A little blood comes from his mouth hitting the table corner. Only a little. He drops into fainting

just as I hear you shout. I don't hear your horse only your shout and know I am lost because your shout is not my name (Morrison, 2008, p. 108).

Florens does not accept the Blacksmith's rejection. Her head can't deal with another rejection from another important person in her life who supposedly loves her. Faced with this situation Florens begins to write her whole story on the wooden walls of the farmhouse, hoping that someday the Blacksmith will read it, understand her, forgive her, and they will get back together. This instability and inability to deal with another situation of rejection causes Florens' trait of openness to rise, and his neuroticism to drop. He does this through the fantasy facet (O1).

There is no more room in this room. These words cover the floor. From now you will stand to hear me. The walls make trouble because lamplight is too small to see by. I am holding light in one hand and carving letters with the other. My arms ache but I have need to tell you this. I cannot tell it to anyone but you. I am near the door and at the closing now. What will I do with my nights when the telling stops? Dreaming will not come again. Sudden I am remembering. You won't read my telling. You read the world but not the letters of talk. You don't know how to. Maybe one day you will learn (Morrison, 2008, p. 123).

4.2 Encouraging finale

The couple composed of Violet Trace and Joe Trace, is the protagonist of the novel *Jazz*. In this novel, both characters go through traumatic moments. On the one hand, Violet's father abandons her family and sometime later her mother commits suicide. Feeling abandoned and looking for a better life, Violet marries Joe, however, she still feels a great emptiness, which she tries to fill with what she did not have in her childhood, becoming a mother figure. Nevertheless, after several miscarriages, the couple discovers that Violet is infertile. The news fills both of them with sadness, but it especially affects Violet, who obsessively desires to have a baby. So much so that we discover facets of neuroticism in the narrator's account of Violet's intentions: "It never happened again as far as I know—the

street sitting— but quiet as it's kept [Violet] did try to steal that baby although there is no way to prove it" (Morrison, 2007b, p. 21). In this short line of the novel, the traits of Depression (N3), and Impulsiveness (N5) are revealed to us, which are also repeated in the face of her husband's infidelity. When Violet discovers that Joe has been cheating on her with an eighteen-year-old girl named Dorcas, she cannot believe it. Violet becomes obsessed with Dorcas and attends her funeral to act out through violence and the aforementioned neurotic traits:

Know her husband, too. [Joe] fell for an eighteen-year-old girl with one of those deepdown, spooky loves that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going. When the woman, her name is Violet, went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face they threw her to the floor and out of the church (Morrison, 2007b, p. 10).

On the other hand, Joe Trace suffers, like Violet, from family abandonment by his mother. Joe feels a strong disconnection with his origins and feels incomplete. While Violet tries to fill this void by trying to be a mother, Joe tries to fill it with the love given to him by other characters, such as Violet or Dorcas. This last character, Dorcas, is the one with whom Joe feels most comfortable, because of the youthfulness she brings to him, the deep conversations, and the void Dorcas fills in him. Although Dorcas tries to get away from him, it doesn't work out well because he ends up killing her. This leads us to the neurotic trait that haunts Joe throughout the novel, Depression (N3), as he is always sad:

anybody passing through the alley next to a certain apartment house on Lenox might have looked up and seen, not a child but a grown man's face crying along with the glass pane. A strange sight you hardly ever see: men crying so openly. It's not a thing they do. Strange as it was, people finally got used to him, wiping his face and nose with an engineer's red handkerchief while he sat month after month by the window without view or on the stoop, first in the snow and later in the sun (Morrison, 2007b, p. 100-101).

In spite of that, this evidence of neuroticism and the traumas they both carry from the past are progressively overcome through the dimension of agreeableness. This evolution is much easier to see in Violet, as after Dorcas' deception and death, she decides to try to talk about it with other characters. One of the characters she tries to talk to is Alice Manfred, Dorcas' aunt. Thanks to Alice, Violet is able to return to Trust (A1) again, shows great

sensitivity to what Alice shares with her, corresponding to the trait of Tender-mindedness (A6), and is Alturist (A3) to Alice, as they both talk to comfort each other, and do favors for each other, but not because they get something in return:

“At first [Alice] thought [Violet] came here to harm me. Then I thought you wanted to offer condolences. Then I thought you wanted to thank me for not calling the law. But none of that is it, is it?” “I had to sit down somewhere. I thought I could do it here. That you would let me and you did. I know I didn’t give Joe much reason to stay out of the street. But I wanted to see what kind of girl he’d rather me be.” “Foolish. He’d rather you were eighteen, that’s all.” “No. Something more.” (Morrison, 2007b, p. 73).

Unconsciously, they both help each other overcome their past, and deal with a difficult present. Thanks to Alice, and the moments they share together, Violet manages to be honest with herself, and although she is convinced that she wants to fight for her relationship with Joe, she also knows that she cannot stay where she is not wanted. This honesty towards herself is represented by Modesty (A5), in a part of the novel in which she frees a parrot, symbolizing letting go of the one who does not love, respect, or value her:

So she knew the parrot was there because she kept going up and down the stairs from her apartment door to the front door to see if Joe was coming down the street. At two in the morning, again at four, she made the trip, peered out into the dark street, solitary except for a pair of police and cats peeing in the snow. The parrot, shivering and barely turning his green and blond head, told her each time, “Love you.” “Get away,” she told him. “Go on off somewhere!” (Morrison, 2007b, p. 81).

Joe's progression towards humanization is more difficult to observe, for it is not until the end of the novel that we see that Joe is also at peace in his relationship with Violet. We observe that they return to Trust (A1) in each other, show themselves in a vulnerable and caring way (Tender-mindedness (A6)), become permissive towards each other (Compliance (A4)) and accept each other just as they are:

Breathing and murmuring under covers both of them have washed and hung out on the line, in a bed they chose together and kept together nevermind one leg was propped on a 1916 dictionary, and the mattress, curved like a preacher’s palm asking for witnesses in His name’s sake, enclosed them each

and every night and muffled their whispering, old-time love. They are under the covers because they don't have to look at themselves anymore; there is no stud's eye, no chippie glance to undo them. They are inward toward the other, bound and joined by carnival dolls and the steamers that sailed from ports they never saw. That is what is beneath their undercover whispers (Morrison, 2007b, p. 186).

The protagonists of *Love* share a tough past under the yoke of Bill Cosey's power. Heed and Christine, the main characters of the novel were best friends until Cosey's appears in both lives. Cosey was a powerful man who represents a figure of abuse of power throughout the novel. He was a wealthy man, with a lot of property, who took advantage of women. This is the trap into which the protagonists fall, as they fight for an inheritance stained with blood and abuse after Cosey's death. Both protagonists hate each other, spend all day fighting, and are angry with each other. Nevertheless, they each live through different traumatic experiences. On one hand, Heed is forced to marry Christine's grandfather at the age of eleven. Cosey floods her with wealth, and attention, something that boosts Heed's ego. However, he also abuses her, but she, being only a child, has no notion of this. After the marriage to Cosey, things turn ugly for Heed, as Cosey's family does not take her in because they realize the danger of the girl. Yet, Heed interprets that she is unwanted in her husband's family and that only he wants her. On the other hand, Cosey and Heed's marriage also affects Christine negatively, as she no longer receives attention from the male figure in her family, and sees how her best friend does. This causes a wall to grow between the two protagonists fueled by envy, and greed to get what is left of Cosey, her inheritance.

In this novel, we do not see progressive humanization. It is not until the end that we see that Heed finds herself in a vulnerable position and Christine comes to her aid in an Altruistic (A3) way. The two protagonists begin to talk, and gradually come clean (Straightforwardness (A2)) and acknowledge the toxic and unnecessary jealousy they have felt for each other over the years. Both are honest with each other and admit that their obsession with Billy Cosey not only broke their friendship but also negatively affected their

lives because of the abuse they both suffered at Cosey's hands. Both Heed and Christine are filled with Modesty (A5), empathy, and Tender-mindedness (A6), and manage to reconcile:

Language, when finally it comes, has the vigor of a felon pardoned after twenty-one years on hold. Sudden, raw, stripped to its underwear. [...] I called you a fool, but I was jealous too. The excitement and all. It had that. You sound sad. No. It's just. Well, it's like we started out being sold, got free of it, then sold ourselves to the highest bidder. Who you mean "we"? Black people? Women? You mean me and you? (Morrison, 2003, p. 164-166).

In the novel *Home*, Morrison introduces us to a couple of siblings, Frank and Cee, who have lived certain traumatic events throughout their lives. On the one hand, Frank is a man who fought in World War II. Exposed to constant violence and danger, Frank not only sees his best friends die but also kills a young girl after she approaches him sexually. These experiences cause Frank to blame himself for the death of his friends, and throughout the novel, he is haunted by the girl's death. In the novel, these traumas become hallucinations that are constantly present in Frank's life, accompanied by a lack of control and violence. Actions typical of a neurotic person with traits of Anxiety (N1), Angry Hostility (N2), Depression (N3), and Impulsiveness (N5). Frank inhabits anger, hatred, resentment, guilt, and discontent in a constant way:

Frank froze. The big man came right up to him and shoved his chest. Twice. Frank dropped his Dr Pepper and swung hard at the man, who, lacking agility like so many really big men, fell immediately. Frank leaped on the prone body and began to punch his face, eager to ram that toothpick into his throat. The thrill that came with each blow was wonderfully familiar. Unable to stop and unwilling to, Frank kept going even though the big man was unconscious. The women stopped clawing each other and pulled at Frank's collar. "Stop!" they screamed. "You're killing him! You motherfucker, get off him!" (Morrison, 2012, p. 72).

On the other hand, there is Cee. This woman marries a man, with whom she moves to a city that is new to her. Unfortunately, her husband only loves her for her car and abandons her in the face of the unknown. Cee, feeling lost, with no one by her side and unable to pay the rent, decides to move in with a doctor, where she is offered a room in exchange for her help

in his work. Unlike Frank, Cee is never neurotic. Cee is totally naive and trusting. It is at this point in the novel that the doctor slowly begins to take advantage of Cee's innocence, and experiments on her until she is sterile, and dying. When Frank learns of all this, he tries to put aside his trauma, progressively putting aside his neurotic facets to go to his sister's aid, an Alturist act (A3), showing us the first expression of humanization.

Cee and Frank's reencounter opens a door to the possibility of overcoming pain and trauma for both of them, through the facets of Trust (A1), straightforwardness (A2), and Tender-mindedness (A6). This is because both can tell each other the truth of what they have been through, trusting each other and doing so gently. By sharing their true feelings with each other, Frank makes peace with himself, and Cee can forgive the people who hurt her. And even though they have saved each other from pain, they know that they have to be the ones to move on with their lives:

Meantime her brother was there with her, which was very comforting, but she didn't need him as she had before. He had literally saved her life, but she neither missed nor wanted his fingers at the nape of her neck telling her not to cry, that everything would be all right. Some things, perhaps, but not everything (Morrison, 2012, p. 91).

Lastly, the protagonist couple of *God Help the Child* is Bride and Booker. Bride is born into a family of black people with a lighter skin tone than her own. Because of this, her father believes that her mother cheated on him and abandons them both. This feeling of abandonment is added to the rejection that her mother has for her because of what happened with her father and her skin color. So, Bride, in response to her mother's emotional abuse, tries to win her affection through immoral actions, such as lying in court and having an innocent person thrown in jail. These events cause a deep trauma in Bride, who does not accept herself. The behaviors we observe in Bride are a constant sense of vulnerability (N6), and an anxiety (N1) that manifests in Bride in repeated hallucinations of her physical change. Bride cannot control them and they are always accompanied by

moments of vulnerability to show us her trauma and high neuroticism as she feels frightened, anxious, and nervous:

Bride drove carefully, peering ahead for obstacles, alive or not. By the time she saw the sign nailed to the trunk of a pine tree, her exhaustion quieted a growing alarm. Although there were no more physical disappearances, she was disturbed by the fact that she'd had no menstrual period for at least two, maybe three, months. Flat-chested and without underarm or pubic hair, pierced ears and stable weight, she tried and failed to forget what she believed was her crazed transformation back into a scared little black girl. (Morrison, 2015, p. 108).

Booker also suffers from traumatic events in the past that have a negative impact on his present. Booker had a brother, Adam, with whom he always had a great connection. However, Booker's brother is sexually abused and subsequently murdered by a pedophile. This event leaves a severe mark on Booker, making him an always vigilant person, and always consumed by the sadness of the memory of his brother, as he believes it is the only way for him to stay with him. Booker, apart from being a person with anxiety (N1) and depression (N3) because of this thought, also becomes a totally uncontrolled, impulsive (N5), hateful, hostile (N2), and violent person when some event in the present reminds him of what happened to his brother:

Blood stained his knuckles and his fingers began to swell. The stranger he'd been beating wasn't moving anymore or groaning, but he knew he'd better walk away quickly before a student or campus guard thought he was the lawless one instead of the man lying on the grass. He'd left the beaten man's jeans open and his penis exposed just the way it was when he first saw him at the edge of the campus playground (Morrison, 2015, p. 87).

Booker and Bride, being a couple, have never talked about their problems. Regardless, this changes when Booker learns that Bride went to talk to a fake accused pedophile. What Booker doesn't know is that the accused is innocent, and Bride doesn't know the trauma Booker has with his brother's murder. So, Booker leaves Bride, and it is not until the end of the novel that they meet again. When this happens, both confess their traumas to each other, decide to trust (A1) each other, and speak honestly (straightforwardness (A2)):

“You lied? What the hell for?” “So my mother would hold my hand!” “What?” “And look at me with proud eyes, for once.” “So, did she?” “Yes. She even liked me.” “So you mean to tell me—” “Shut up and talk! Why did you walk out on me?” “Oh, God.” Booker wiped more blood from the side of his face. “Look. Well, see. My brother, he was murdered by a freak (Morrison, 2015, p. 117).

On the one hand, Booker manages to forgive himself, and he also comes clean with himself. Booker realizes that he is living in a memory, in something he felt that no longer represents him. Thanks to saying it out loud and telling it to the person he loves, is when he realizes how bad it is making him constantly relive in the past, hooking himself to a hatred that he feeds back without any sense. So, he decides to write to his brother and confess him the truth:

I don't miss you anymore adam rather i miss the emotion that your dying produced a feeling so strong it defined me while it erased you leaving only your absence for me to live in [...]. I apologize for enslaving you [...]. No slaveowner could have done it better. (Morrison, 2015, p. 122).

On the other hand, Bride, through confessing the truth, speaking things frankly and trusting her partner, is also able to free herself from the traumas caused by her mother. After talking to Booker she feels liberated, stops having the hallucinations she had, and seeks her truth and what she feels good about. For the first time, Booker makes her feel calm, loved, and not judged:

[Bride] felt more than rested and free of tension; she felt strong. She didn't get up right away; instead she remained in Booker's bed, eyes closed, enjoying a fresh vitality and blazing clarity. Having confessed [Bride]'s sins she felt newly born. No longer forced to relive, no, outlive the disdain of her mother and the abandonment of her father (Morrison, 2015, p. 123).

4.3 Deadly End

In Morrison's second novel, *Sula*, Nel and Sula are two good friends who support each other in order to overcome their family situation and suffering. On the one hand, Nel is under the yoke of her mother, Helene. Helene subjugates her daughter Nel to impossible standards of behavior and beauty, making Nel never feel enough for her mother or for her. On the other hand, Sula's father dies when she is just a few years old, creating an absence in her home on her mother's side, and creating a different view of love and sexual relationships. Both characters suffer racism and humiliation, and both also share the experience of having a child die because of them, sharing a background of suffering. Although, on the one hand, Sula feels very isolated, abandoned, and alone, since she has internalized the scorn and rejection she suffered from her family and her community. So Sula feels lost, she feels an emptiness that no one is able to fill:

The first experience taught [Sula] there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either. She had no center, no speck around which to grow. In the midst of a pleasant conversation with someone she might say, "Why do you chew with your mouth open?" not because the answer interested her but because she wanted to see the person's face change rapidly. She was completely free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed, no desire to command attention or compliments—no ego. For that reason she felt no compulsion to verify herself—be consistent with herself (Morrison, 2004a, p. 137-138).

On the other hand, Nel's upbringing by Helen makes her settle for a life at home and accept the love she believes she deserves from her husband, Jude. However, when Jude cheats on Nel with Sula, Nel takes it as a double betrayal, because she loses all the relationship and trust she once built with both her husband and her best friend:

Hunched down in the small bright room Nel waited. Waited for the oldest cry. A scream not for others, not in sympathy for a burnt child, or a dead father, but a deeply personal cry for one's own pain. A loud, strident: "Why me?" She waited. The mud shifted, the leaves stirred, the smell of overripe green things enveloped her and announced the beginnings of her very own howl (Morrison, 2004a, p.127).

But the friendship that unites both characters is what humanizes them, and at the same time saves them from suffering. Together they can be themselves, they can talk about anything, they feel at home, they help each other, they give each other feedback, and trust each other.

This attitude shows us the high degree of Agreeableness which they are capable of reaching when they are together:

Her old friend had come home. Sula. Who made her laugh, who made her see old things with new eyes, in whose presence she felt clever, gentle and a little raunchy. Sula, whose past she had lived through and with whom the present was a constant sharing of perceptions. Talking to Sula had always been a conversation with herself (Morrison, 2004a, p. 114).

Sula is saved from her suffering through the facets of Modesty (A5), Compliance (A4), and Tender-mindedness (A6) because she shows herself to be no better than Nel, she treats her as an equal even though Sula has lived through many more things, she has left the community that had always treated her, her best friend, and her family disrespectfully. Another reason is that she feels compassion for Nel, Sula knows what she has done wrong, she gives her the space she needs, she understands her, and although sometimes Nel's nerves get on Nel's nerves, Sula never loses patience with her. Sula's love and respect for Nel are so great that it is her last thought before she dies: "Sula felt her face smiling. "Well, I'll be damned," she thought, "it didn't even hurt. Wait'll I tell Nel." (Morrison, 2004a, p. 168).

Nel, on the other hand, stops suffering through the facets of altruism (A3), Modesty (A5), and Tender-mindedness (A6). Nel shows altruism when she decides to take care of Sula when she gets sick before she dies, without asking for anything in return. Tender-mindedness by treating Sula in a sympathetic way, and Modesty when she recognizes her own mistakes, and when she admits missing Sula, a feeling that shows that both were kindred spirits, knew how to accompany each other in pain, forgive each other, and miss each other in the hardest moments of their lives:

"All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude." And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. "We was girls together," she said as though explaining something. "O Lord, Sula," she cried, "girl, girl, girlgirlgirl" (Morrison, 2004a, p. 193).

The protagonists of *Tar Baby* also suffer traumatic experiences. Jadine's family situation is quite complex, as her parents are dead and she is raised by her aunt and uncle and the wealthy family they work for. This family decides to provide Jadine with an education in

Paris, studying and modeling. Although this is positive for her, Jadine grows up with a great uprooting of herself, her race as a black person, and her origins, something that makes her feel very lost and not knowing who she is. This suffering is perfectly reflected in a conversation she has with herself. As she doubts her own identity, and herself, she is not very clear about why her fiancé loves her:

I wonder if the person he wants to marry is me or a black girl? And if it isn't me he wants, but any black girl who looks like me, talks and acts like me, what will happen when he finds out that I hate ear hoops, that I don't have to straighten my hair, that Mingus puts me to sleep, that sometimes I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside—not American— not black— just me? (Morrison, 2004b, p. 60).

Son also has a traumatic past as he is to blame for the death of his wife, something for which he has not yet forgiven himself. This event fills him with guilt and pain, causing him to run away from everything he knew, his home, his family, his friends, etc.

For eight years wherever [Son] looked—in the molten sea, in shape-up halls, in canneries and on flophouse cots he saw that mouth dying before the eyes did when it should have been the other way around and while he could not regret the fact that she was dead, he was ashamed of having been unable to look her in the eyes as she died. She deserved that. Everybody deserves that. That somebody look at them, with them, as they face death— especially the killer (Morrison, 2004b, p. 88).

Nonetheless, when Son and Jadine's worlds intertwine and they begin a relationship, they manage to overcome this suffering thanks to the humanization they go through. They trust each other, tell each other the truth, treat each other with affection, and love each other without asking for anything in return, even though they have inadvertently made each other's lives easier. Son gets that forgiveness, understanding, and acceptance he has been seeking for years after his wife's accident, and Jadine provides it. While Son provides Jadine with a proximity and closeness to her origins and identity that she has not had before. Thanks to Son, Jadine discovers who she is. This promotes the facets of trust (A1), Straightforwardness (A2), altruism (A3), and tender-mindedness (A6).

Gradually [Jadine] came to feel orphaned. [Son] cherished and safeguarded her. When she woke in the night from an uneasy dream she had only to turn and there was the stability of his shoulder and his limitless, eternal chest. No part of her was hidden from him. She wondered if she should hold back, keep

something in store from him, but he opened the hair on her head with his fingers and drove his tongue through the part. There was nothing to forgive, nothing to win and the future was five minutes away (Morrison, 2004b, p. 245).

Later in the novel, though, Jadine and Son's relationship takes a turn for the worse. Son loses some of his humanization, and the couple's arguments get progressively aggravated until Son hits Jadine. Nevertheless, the clarity Jadine has gained regarding her identity through humanization makes Jadine prioritize herself, and she decides to return to Paris, and Son ends up disappearing.

The next novel, *Paradise*, does not have a single protagonist, but several women who heal thanks to their progressive humanization. Each chapter is narrated by a different woman who, due to her traumatic past, arrives at the convent, where most of the plot develops. Characters such as Pallas and Gigi, arrive at the convent because of love betrayals. However, the rest of the characters carry a more traumatic past that makes them have a high neuroticism. First, Mavis' character suffers verbal, physical, and sexual abuse inflicted by her husband, which makes her a fearful character. Mavis also feels great anguish and guilt for unintentionally killing her children. These feelings correspond to the neurotic facets of anxiety (N1), and vulnerability (N6). Mavis's anxiety reaches such extremes that she begins to hallucinate imagining that her children want to kill her and so she decides to run away:

“They got no right to kill me.” “What?” “He’s making the other children do it.” “What? Do what? Speak up so I can hear what you saying.” “I’m saying they are going to kill me.” “They? Who? Frank? What they?” “All of them. The kids too.” “Kill you? Your children?” Mavis nodded (Morrison, 2007c, p. 35).

Another character of this novel who also suffers from neuroticism is Seneca. Seneca was abandoned by her mother, which makes her feel lonely and searching for love. In addition, Seneca is another woman who is abused by her partner. These two traumatic events cause Seneca to regularly self-injure herself: “But the pain framed the pleasure, gave it edge. The humiliation made surrender deep, tender. Long-lasting” (Morrison, 2007c, p. 151). This indicates Seneca's high neuroticism, with facets such as anxiety (N1) as she feels relief when she cuts herself, depression (N3) because she is unhappy, and impulsivity (N5) when

she decides to commit self-harm. Finally, another of the women who arrives at the convent who also has a high degree of neuroticism is Consolata. Consolata is rescued from the streets by the Mother Superior of the convent. Although she does not believe in God, she decides to stay because she sees this Mother Superior as a mother figure. Nevertheless, after her death, and without finding any consolation in religion and feeling that she has been left alone in the world, Consolata begins to drink. This behavior is neurotic, more specifically depressive (N3), anxious (N1), and impulsive (N5), since she turns to drink to fill a sentimental void and wishes to be dead:

In the good clean darkness of the cellar, Consolata woke to the wrenching disappointment of not having died the night before. Each morning, her hopes dashed, she lay on a cot belowground, repelled by her sluglike existence, each hour of which she managed to get through by sipping from black bottles with handsome names. Each night she sank into sleep determined it would be the final one, and hoped that a great hovering foot would descend and crush her like a garden pest (Morrison, 2007c, p. 235).

Isolated from the outside world, they create a small community of women within the convent. Little by little, they begin to trust each other, and the secrets of each one come to light, hard childhoods, mental health problems, abuse, etc. They support each other, share their feelings, understand each other, comfort each other, talk to each other, listen to each other, and give each other advice, actions they had never experienced outside the convent. They know each other's pain, and through this, they help each other, sympathize with each other, and are able to accept and forgive themselves. It is at this point that suffering, and neuroticism are reduced to give way to higher agreeableness. Facets such as confidence (A1), altruism (A3), and tender-mindedness (A6), are what make these characters evolve and free themselves from the suffering that repressed them.

It was Pallas who insisted they shop for tubes of paint, sticks of colored chalk. Paint thinner and chamois cloth. They understood and began to begin. First with natural features: breasts and pudenda, toes, ears and head hair. Seneca duplicated in robin's egg blue one of her more elegant scars, one drop of red at its tip. Later on, when she had the hunger to slice her inner thigh, she chose instead to mark the open body lying on the cellar floor. They spoke to each other about what had been dreamed and what had been drawn (Morrison, 2007c, p. 284).

The next novel to be discussed, *Song of Solomon*, has Milkman as the main character. This boy has a somewhat complex family situation. On the one hand, his mother, Ruth, sees herself as insignificant and weak because of the wealth his father had and how everyone has admired her for it, but not really loved her. Ruth also marries a rich and powerful man, like her father. However, Macon Dead II, her husband and Milkman's father abuses her, and she never truly comes to love him. Furthermore, Ruth's relationship with Milkman is based on toxic overprotection and attachment. On the other hand, Macon Dead II is a man who wields power due to his business dealings and with an attachment to material things and money, as he believes it is the most important thing in life. His great superiority complex prevents him from having social, loving, family, or friendly relationships since he does not love anyone in an altruistic and sincere way. In addition, he wants his son to be exactly like him, materialistic and without feelings. The family situation is complicated when we, as readers, discover family secrets, which make Milkman a distrustful and greedy person, such as the presumed intimacy that Ruth had with Milkman's maternal grandfather or the supposed gold hidden by Pilate Dead, the sister of Macon Dead II.

All of this family drama causes Milkman to have major issues with identity and connection to his heritage. As mentioned earlier, his mother has lived surrounded by wealth due to her family's position of wealth, and she feels very disconnected from her roots and who she is, values instilled indirectly in Milkman. Her father, on the other hand, pressures her to stay with his business and wants Milkman to become the person he is; materialistic and heartless. He doesn't care about his past, or his bad relationship with his sister Pilate, he is only dedicated to making money, values that he manages to impose on his son Milkman in much of the novel. This happens especially when Macon convinces him to steal from Pilate the supposed gold she is keeping.

As if that were not painful enough, Milkman also suffers with his friendships and love relationships. His best friend, Guitar, belongs to a social group to avenge those who killed his parents since this group is in charge of killing white people. Guitar also accompanies Milkman to find the gold kept by his aunt Pilate, and when Milkman reveals to him that there is no gold, Guitar tries to kill his friend. Another character who tries to kill Milkman is Hagar, Pilate's granddaughter and Milkman's love interest. Due to the distrust of women

that Macon imposes on his son, Milkman eventually tires of Hagar and abandons her, which drives her mad.

Milkman feels lost during the novel. Since he does not have his identity forged, he lets himself be guided by the people who try to influence him. The character who manages to influence Milkman the most is his father, who ends up turning him into a distrustful and materialistic person. Nevertheless, Macon sends Milkman to fetch the money that Pilate left for herself, and thanks to this trip Milkman leaves his suffering aside and his humanization increases progressively. This humanization is observable after Milkman realizes that there was no gold at all, and he delves deeper into what really happened, giving cause to dive into his family history. Milkman's thoughts make us see that his agreeableness rises as he returns to Trust (A1), and wants to help his friends without receiving anything in return, Altruism (A3): “Remembering those days now, Milkman was ashamed of having been frightened or suspicious of Guitar’s message. When he turned up, he would explain everything and Milkman would do what he could to help” (Morrison, 2007d, p. 235).

We are also presented in his thoughts the facets of Straightforwardness (A2), and Modesty (A5) because he begins to be honest with himself and begins to realize how badly he has treated people, and leaves aside everything that his father has instilled in him. Milkman starts to be more generous with himself and others, stops being a greedy, avaricious, and materialistic person, realizing that the people around him are the ones that matter, and decides to be kinder to them:

Apparently he thought he deserved only to be loved—from a distance, though—and given what he wanted. And in return he would...what? Pleasant? Generous? Maybe all he was really saying was: I am not responsible for your pain; share your happiness with me but not your unhappiness. They were troublesome thoughts, but they wouldn’t go away. Under the moon, on the ground, alone, with not even the sound of baying dogs to remind him that he was with other people, his self—the cocoon that was “personality”—gave way. He could barely see his own hand, and couldn’t see his feet. He was only his breath, coming slower now, and his thoughts. The rest of him had disappeared (Morrison, 2007d, p. 245).

Milkman begins to be grateful, caring, and sensitive to the people around him, showing the facet of Tender-mindedness (A6), making amends for past mistakes thanks to what he

discovered about who his grandfather was, the history of his grandfather and his children, and discovering the truth of the fight between his aunt and his father. Thanks to this Milkman finds himself for the first time, knows what he wants, what makes him happy, who he wants and can trust, and dismantles his father's beliefs, behaving respectfully and politely in front of others.:

“You’ve helped me a lot, Miss Byrd. I’m grateful.” [...] He made motions of departure and then remembered his watch. “By did I leave my watch here? I’d like it back.” “Watch?” “Yes. Your friend wanted to see it. [...] We don’t have many visitors, especially young men who wear gold watches and have northern accents. I’ll get it back for you.” “Never mind. Never mind.” (Morrison, 2007d, p. 286).

5. Conclusion

Thanks to the use of the dimensions of the Big Five, we discover that the hypothesis raised at the beginning of the dissertation is confirmed. All of Morrison's characters begin their story with trauma, suffering, or malaise. That suffering can be considered neurotic in the novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, *A Mercy*, *Jazz*, *Home*, *God Help the Child*, and *Paradise*. This implies that more than half of Morrison's novels contain mentally unstable characters due to the suffering they go through. Another thing that all of Morrison's novels accomplish is that in the end all of the characters manage to heal in one way or another. The first option presented for release from suffering was through the fantasy level. This is fulfilled in the novels of *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved*, and *A Mercy*. As none of the protagonists find a solution or any kind of support to stop suffering, it is their mind that opens up the fantasy realm for them, in order to deal with the pain they carry. They do this through the dimension of Openness, more specifically thanks to the facet of Fantasy (O1). The rest of the characters in the novels manage to free themselves from their suffering mostly through acts of altruism (A3), confidence (A1), straightforwardness (A2), and tender-mindedness (A6). In other words, the remaining eight novels manage to overcome their suffering progressively through the dimension of Agreeableness.

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