

北京外国语大学

博士学位论文

题目：从自我憎恨到自我肯定：对托妮·莫里森的小
说研究

系 别：	<u>英语学院</u>
专 业：	<u>英语语言文学</u>
研究方向：	<u>英美小说</u>
姓 名：	<u>胡俊</u>
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内容摘要

这篇论文尝试从非裔美国人自我憎恨心理的角度来分析托妮·莫里森的小说。作为一位非裔美国作家，托妮·莫里森不可能对她同族人的命运无动于衷，因为一直以来非裔美国人都在受着种族问题的困扰。但是莫里森在她的作品中并没有聚焦于黑人和白人之间的直接冲突，让她更感兴趣的是黑人团体内部的问题——这些问题往往是因为文中人物违背个人的兴趣、压抑自己的本性以及忽视本民族文化而一味模仿主流文化的模式造成的。通过呈现某些非裔美国人的自我憎恨心理，莫里森试图证明，对白人价值标准的内化以及对黑人身份的放弃是白人种族主义对非裔美国人造成的最大伤害。尽管莫里森在她的小说里描写了一些非裔美国人的自我憎恨心理，她同时也试图利用她的小说来修复她所暴露的这些心灵创伤。一方面，莫里森在其作品中记录了那些以牺牲自己的黑人身份来获得社会认可的非裔美国人；可另一方面，她又呈现给我们另一些黑人角色，他们则把坚持自己本民族的文化传统当作自己生存的关键。正是这些坚持黑人文化核心价值的黑人，在一个充满敌意、文化上陌生的环境里为其他黑人提供了心理上和精神上的安慰，并把那些自我憎恨的黑人引向他们的本民族文化传统。但是莫里森描述非裔美国人自我憎恨心理的目的并不仅仅局限在文中人物的改变，她似乎希望通过自己的作品来寻找一个文化治疗方案，使所有那些期待通过抛弃本民族文化传统融入主流社会的黑人能从自我憎恨过渡到自我肯定，因为只有承认并发展非裔美国人自己的文化身份，而不是通过一味迎合主流文化模式，才是非裔美国人在美国社会里获得真正平等性的认可的前提条件。

论文共分三章。第一章总结了莫里森小说中存在的非裔美国人自我憎恨心理的各种表现方式。非裔美国人的自我憎恨主要表现在他们对其种族身份的背叛。每一个民族都会有其与众不同的外观或是文化上的特点，但莫里森的小说显示，为了更好地融入到主流社会当中去，某些非裔美国人试图抹去标明其黑人身份的外观或文化特征。非裔美国人由于其皮肤颜色以及其它独特的身体特征，很容易与美国白人区别开来，他们的自我憎恨则往往从他们的身体开始。在莫里森的小说中，某些非裔美国人试图改变其外观特征。而这些自我憎恨的非裔美国人表现出来的另一个更为重要的特点则是对于本民族文化身份的放弃；由于没有意识到本民族祖先对他们的重要性，他们对于黑人团体中的年纪大的人缺乏应有的敬意；为了向白人文化模式靠拢，他们宁愿压抑自己的情感活力；为了获得个人的

心理平衡，他们不惜牺牲同族人的利益，破坏黑人内部的团结。

第二章探究的是非裔美国人自我憎恨心理的各种起因。莫里森的小说显示，非裔美国人的自我憎恨现象不能仅仅被当作一个性格上的问题来看待，它实际上起源于白人种族主义，正是因为种族主义使得美国黑人无论是对于他们自己还是整个黑人团体与白人社会的关系都很难做出真实的判断。种族主义所采取的最粗糙而又最简单易行的方式是利用暴力来执行各种明确的法律，以期征服和控制非裔美国人。为了在种族主义社会里生存，非裔美国人不得不时刻压抑自己反叛的本能，尽管这种压抑会破坏他们的自信心。莫里森的作品同时也显示白人对黑人的经济压迫也在一定程度上导致了非裔美国人的自我憎恨心理。而最有效而又最持久的方式则是白人对黑人进行的意识形态上的控制，通过传媒和教育系统，白人思想渗透到黑人的头脑里，产生细微或深刻的影响，使得黑人接受自己的劣势地位，并身不由己地加入到白人对自己的迫害中来。

第三章讨论的是莫里森为除去非裔美国人的自我憎恨心理所提供的治疗方法。通过质疑那些强加在非裔美国人身上的主流社会的价值判断标准，莫里森试图使那些自我憎恨的非裔美国人认识到，并不是盲目地接受白人文化话语，而是坚持他们自己的文化价值和传统才是他们在美国社会获得认可的关键。通过展示某些非裔美国人的自我憎恨心理和这种不健康心理给他们带来的深深的创伤和痛苦，莫里森揭露了欧美文化霸权主义对非裔美国人产生的破坏性的影响。在莫里森的小说中，黑人身份的肯定表现不断出现和那些对黑人身份的否定表现形成对抗。通过使非裔美国人认识到其自我憎恨心理的危害，莫里森试图鼓励她的同族人热爱自己的民族文化，保存并发展本民族独有的文化方式来作为他们身份和力量的真正源泉。

在当下的语境中，当越来越多的少数民族团体和边缘团体都在为自己的身份认可做出抗争的时刻，研究托妮·莫里森作为一个少数民族团体的代言人，如何鼓励她的同族人从自我憎恨过渡到自我肯定有着一定的意义，因为这样的研究把注意力引向一个方向：那就是少数民族团体和边缘团体的身份认可不是建立在抛弃自己的独特性，而是建立在维护并发展自己的独特性上。

关键词：自我憎恨，自我肯定，种族主义，非裔美国人文化身份

Abstract

This dissertation attempts to study Toni Morrison's fiction from the perspective of the self-hatred of African Americans. As an African American writer, Morrison cannot remain indifferent to the plight of her own people, who have long been haunted by the problem of racial inequality. Instead of focusing on the direct conflicts between blacks and whites, Morrison shows more interest in the problems inside the black community, the problems created by the imitation of dominant models hostile to the characters' interests, origins, and cultures. Through presenting the self-hatred of some African Americans, Morrison intends to demonstrate that the internalization of white values and the abandonment of their black identity are the most debilitating effects of white racism on African Americans. Although Morrison writes about the self-hatred that exists in the minds of some African Americans, she also uses her fiction to repair the psychic-scars she has exposed. On the one hand, Morrison records those African Americans who intend to acquire social recognition at the expense of their "blackness," yet on the other hand, Morrison presents us other African Americans who regard their cultural tradition as essential to their existence. It is those blacks who stick to the core aspects of black culture that provide other blacks with psychological and spiritual comfort in a hostile and culturally alienating environment and it is also they who attempt to connect those self-hating characters to their own cultural heritage. Yet the purpose of Morrison's depicting the self-hatred of African Americans is not limited to the transformation of blacks in her work. She seems bent on finding a culture cure which can help all those blacks who have abandoned their own cultural heritage to assimilate into the dominant society to move from self-hatred to self-regard, since it is not integration or assimilation but recognition and cultivation of African-American cultural identity that serve as the prerequisites for equal membership of blacks in American society.

Chapter One summarizes various forms of the self-hatred of African Americans reflected in Morrison's fiction. The self-hatred of African Americans is mostly reflected in their betrayal of their racial identity. Every ethnic group possesses its own

distinctive cultural as well as physical traits, yet Morrison's fiction reveals that to merge into the dominant society, some African Americans try to erase the identifying marks of black people, both physically and culturally. Since African Americans with their black skin and other unique physical traits are easily demarcated from white Americans, their self-hatred is often focused on their body. In Morrison's fiction, there are some blacks who attempt to alter their physical appearance. Yet the abandonment of their African cultural identity is a more important characteristic of those self-hating blacks, who unaware of the importance of their ancestors to them, may fail to respect the elderly people in the black community, who may also suppress their emotional vitality to edge towards the white model, and who for their own psycho-balance may sacrifice the communal unity.

Chapter Two investigates the causes of the self-hatred of African-Americans represented in Morrison's narrative. Morrison's fiction indicates that the self-hatred of African Americans cannot be treated as if it were simply an issue of personality, it actually originates in white racism, which makes it exceedingly difficult for African Americans to preserve a true perspective of themselves and their groups in relation to the larger white society. At its coarsest and most sophisticated, racism uses violence to enforce explicit laws to subjugate and control blacks. Therefore, to survive in racist society, African Americans have to watch over their rebellious impulses, although such suppression may undermine their own self-confidence. Morrison's fiction also reveals that white economic exploitation of blacks to a certain extent nurtures the self-hatred in African Americans. Nevertheless, the most effective and sustained technique adopted by whites is the ideological manipulation of blacks. It is through media and the educational system that white ideas successfully infiltrate into the minds of blacks, producing subtle and profound effects on them, making them accept their inferiority. African Americans are thus trapped into helping to cause their own victimization.

Chapter Three focuses on the remedying ways Morrison points out to her people to move from self-hatred to self-regard. Questioning the imposed values and perceptions of the dominant culture, Morrison attempts to make those self-hating

African Americans realize that rather than the blind acceptance of white cultural discourse, it is the adherence to their own cultural values and traditions that is of vital importance to their recognition in American society. In Morrison's fiction, positive representations of "blackness" constantly intervene to counter negative representations. By presenting the self-hatred of African Americans, which leads to a deep sense of pain, hurt and woundedness, Morrison brings to light the devastating impact of Euro-American cultural hegemony on African Americans, in this way Morrison is encouraging her people to love their own culture, to preserve and perpetuate their own distinctive ways as a source of identity and of strength.

Today when more and more minority groups and marginal groups are fighting for their recognition, the exploration of how Toni Morrison, a spokeswoman for a minority group, encourages her people to move from self-hatred to self-regard might be significant, since it draws attention to the view that the genuine recognition for minority groups and marginal groups is based not upon the abandonment of their uniqueness but on the maintenance and development of it.

Key words: self-hatred, self-regard, racism, African-American cultural identity

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Introduction

Since the 1970s, we have witnessed a remarkable efflorescence of African American literary production, mostly by African American women writers. It is this steady outpouring of African American writing along with the upsurge of other minority literature that has accelerated the reshaping of the American literary canon. Among those writers playing active roles in promoting black voices is Toni Morrison. Deemed as a writer “who, in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality”(Morrison, *Lecture and Speech of Acceptance* 6), Morrison won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993. Many critics have focused overwhelmingly on Morrison’s artistic achievements. For example, literary critic Harold Bloom claims that he “reread[s] Morrison because her imagination, whatever her social purposes, transcends ideology and polemics, and enters again into the literary space occupied only by fantasy and romance of authentic aesthetic dignity” (2). However, Morrison herself seems to disapprove of the opinion that her work “transcends ideology and polemics.” When talking about the function of the novel, Morrison declares that a novel “should be beautiful, and powerful, but it should also work” (“Rootedness” 341) and “must have something in it that suggests what the conflicts are, what the problems are” (344), which reveals her belief that literature should be aesthetically beautiful as well as politically engaged. That Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize should be attributed not only to her enchanting style but also to her being able to use her artistic talents to reflect “an essential aspect of American reality.” And this “essential aspect of American reality” is none other than the particular plight of African Americans, a group Morrison herself belongs to.

Being an African American herself, Morrison cannot remain indifferent to the plight of her own people, who have long been haunted by the problem of racial inequality. Well conscious of her specific identity, Morrison has never hesitated to render her works through this particular perspective. In an interview with Nellie McKay, she showed her reluctance to be compared with classic white writers:

I am not like James Joyce; I am not like Thomas Hardy; I am not like Faulkner.

I am not like in that sense. I do not have objections to being compared to such

extraordinarily gifted and facile writers, but it does leave me sort of hanging there when I know that my effort is to be like something that has probably only been fully expressed in music, or in some other culture-gen that survives almost in isolation because the community manages to hold on to it. Sometimes I can reflect something of this kind in my novels. Writing novels is a way to encompass this—this something.” (Mckay 152)

To Morrison, it is her deep rootedness in black culture and her ability to present what is vital to her people that contribute to her success as a writer. What she attempts to do through her work is to speak out “the unspeakable thing”, the racial problem in American society. To borrow Gurlcen Grewal’s words, “If Morrison’s writing makes aesthetic sense to the reader, it is not in spite of but because of the ideological vision propelling that art” (xi). The racial problem actually serves a powerful catalyst for Morrison’s work.

The consequences of white racism on black victims have been a prevalent topic among the works of African American writers. The relations between blacks and whites or the black-white wars in northern cities have generally been the typical topics among black writers especially black male writers. Take two eminent black male writers for instance. While in *Native Son*, Richard Wright presents the shocking story of Bigger Thomas who is driven to dismember a white girl; in *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison delineates the experience of a young black man struggling in the white world. Both books deal with the direct confrontation between blacks and whites. Although also belonging to the group of black writers, Morrison nevertheless perceives a difference between black male and female writers:

There is a gaze that women writers seem to have that is quite fascinating to me because they tend not to be interested in confrontations with white men—the confrontation between black women and white men is not very important, it doesn’t center the text. There are more important ones for them and their look (Davis 230).

This observation can be adopted to Morrison herself, with her pushing black-white relations to the periphery of her narrative. The focus of Morrison’s fiction is on

relationships within black communities: "I've only been stimulated to write about black people. We are people, not aliens. We live, we love, and we die" (Ruas 118), since it is to blacks that she is addressing her work: "Whenever I feel uneasy about my writing, I think: what would be the response of the people in the book if they read the book? That's my way of staying on track. Those are the people for whom I write" (LeClair 121).

One thing interesting I note about Morrison is that rather than idealize her people, she attempts to reveal how some African Americans have deeply internalized racist stereotypes and construct themselves accordingly, almost always with disastrous results. In Morrison's fiction, issues of race and ethnicity are no longer as simple as the confrontation between whites and blacks but inescapably interweave with issues of gender, class and other problems within black communities. When talking with Verdelle on her latest book *Paradise*, Morrison said: "I think the threat for many of our communities is internecine. By that I mean the enemy is within, as opposed to being on the outside. Quarreling within the family" (Verdelle 80). So I think dwelling upon the self-hatred of African Americans in her novels may help us understand how Morrison explore the racial problem in her work.

With this in mind, I consulted the Dissertation Abstracts International from 1970--2001 and also MLA Abstracts International from 1970--2001 to check whether this topic has been much discussed. Owing to her fame, work on Toni Morrison has always been prolific. Different aspects of her fiction have been studied through different approaches. Feminism is the most commonly used approach because women's fate in Morrison's fiction has been a common theme. Anthropological or cultural approaches might come next, with their stress on Morrison's use of community, folklore, myth and a jazz and/or blues aesthetic. Marxist criticism has been adopted to analyze Morrison's class consciousness. The recuperation of African-American history in Morrison's fiction has aroused the attention of historians; and psychoanalytic, postmodern and reader-response methodologies are applied to study the other aspects in Morrison's fiction.

Among the 163 Ph. D. dissertations related to Toni Morrison, including 130

comparing her works to those of other writers and 33 totally devoted to her work alone, none undertakes a systematic study of self-hatred in Toni Morrison's fiction, although there indeed exist several related Ph. D. dissertations. Denise Heinze uses Du Bois' view of double-consciousness to analyze Morrison's novels, from which she draws the conclusion that Toni Morrison's oeuvre is influenced by her immersion in two distinct cultures, one American and one Black;¹ Julia Leigh Eichelberger discusses the characters in *The Bluest Eye*, who internalize racist ideology;² Joyce Russell Robinson also adopts Du Bois' theory of double-consciousness to analyze *The Bluest Eye*, which calls attention to the media and American standards of beauty as factors that create a sense of duality among African-Americans;³ Michele Lisa Simms-Burton discusses intra-racial class contention in *Tar Baby*.⁴ Besides these dissertations, there are some books and articles related to the theme. The books include Philip Page's *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in the Novels of Toni Morrison* and Dorcatha Drummond Mbalia's *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness*, with the former analyzing the double-consciousness in Morrison's fiction and the latter referring to intra-racial class prejudices while discussing Morrison's class consciousness. And also J. Brooks Bouson's *Quiet as It's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison* in which Bouson discusses the feeling of shame and painful experience African Americans go through under the oppression of white racism.

The articles include Judylyn S. Ryan's "Contested Visions/Double-Vision in *Tar Baby*," Roberta Rubenstein's "Pariahs and Community," Michael Awkward's "'The Evil of Fulfillment': Scapegoating and Narration in *The Bluest Eye*," Marilyn Sanders Moble's "Narrative Dilemma: Jadine as Cultural Orphan in *Tar Baby*," Malin Lavon Walther's "Out of Sight: Toni Morrison's Revision of Beauty," Cynthia A. Davies' "Self, Society, and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction," John N. Duvall's "Descent in

¹ *The Dilemma of "Double-Consciousness": Toni Morrison's Novels*, DAI 51 (1991): 8.

² *Ideology and the Individual in Novels by Ralph Ellison, Toni Morrison, Saul Bellow, and Eudora Welty*, DAI 53 (1993): 9.

³ *The Shadow Within: Du Boisian Double Consciousness in Five African-American Novels*, DAI 52 (1992): 12.

⁴ *Narratives of Black Bourgeois Desire: Examining the Class-Line in Twentieth-Century Black Women's Fiction*, DAI 59 (1998): 4.

the "House of Chloe": Race, Rape, and Identity in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*," Cynthia Dubin Edelberg's "Morrison's Voices: Formal Education, The Work Ethic, and the Bible," Edward Guerrero's "Tracing 'The Look' in the Novels of Toni Morrison," Malin Lavon Walther's "Out of Sight: Toni Morrison's Revision of Beauty," and Elaine Jordan's "'Not My People': Toni Morrison and Identity." These articles either use the theory of double-consciousness to analyze Toni Morrison's novels or discuss intra-racial prejudices.

All of these dissertations, articles and books have been enlightening, but in one way or another, they are still different from what I am going to discuss. Double-consciousness is a term first introduced by the black scholar W. E. Du Bois almost a hundred years ago:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, --an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (5)

On the one hand, Du Bois attributes the affliction of African Americans to their double-consciousness; yet on the other hand, he regards the double-consciousness as a "gifted second-sight,"(5) which means African Americans actually possess more perspectives to view this world. Many critics have tried to analyze Morrison's fiction from the perspective of Du Boisian double-consciousness. Like Du Bois, they noticed the negative as well as positive effects of double-consciousness on African Americans. In her article "Contested Vision/Double-Vision in *Tar Baby*," Judylyn S. Ryan contends that

Diversity among human beings guarantees a potentially beneficial range of different visions. However, when these different visions are manipulated to determine and denote advantages (economic, political, and social) and disadvantages, choices available and choices unavailable, these differences accrue an element of contestation....Double-consciousness not only attests to

the existence of these contesting visions, but it also reflects a "resolution" of sorts, in the acceptance of the dominant world view on the part of some African-Americans. (600)

These words indicate that double-consciousness can be problematic if a hierarchy is generated among different visions, which will grant advantages to some, while denying rights to others. To African Americans, the resolution of the conflict between the black culture and the white culture is often based on the sacrifice of the former. Ryan goes on to argue that although double-consciousness is initially a negative experience characterized by an unreconciled and self-alienating "two-ness of being" in which externally derived distorted perceptions of the African identity are dominant, it can be 'cleansed'/transformed into a positive potential—double vision...The person "gifted" with this double-vision achieves an understanding that is greater than the sum of the constituent realities"(605). Here Ryan points out the disunity in the double-consciousness while at the same time perceiving the possibility of transforming it into a gifted diversified vision.

Denise Heinze holds the similar view that even though double-consciousness perhaps can never be integrated into a single vision, by orchestrating a sense of connectedness between cultures rather than attempting to dissolve the differences, African Americans can turn this double vision into something beneficial. Morrison herself is such an example who draws from both her African and European heritage and who benefits from a hybrid cultural background. She seems not to utterly oppose double-consciousness when she declares that "finding or imposing Western influences in/on Afro-American literature has value." What she disagrees with is the hegemony hiding in the double-consciousness as she continues to say "but when its sole purpose is to place value only where that influence is located it is pernicious"("Unspeakable Things Unspoken" 10). Morrison's words reveal that the problem with African Americans is not that they have two kinds of consciousness but that white racism forces them to hate their African consciousness. Rather than the difference between black culture and white culture, it is the cultural hegemony, the systematic negation of one culture by another, the suppression by the supremacist white culture of the

subaltern black culture, that threatens the natural development of African Americans, that nurtures their hatred towards their own culture which is counted as worthless by the defining society. Thus African Americans can never part with their double-consciousness, yet self-hatred is an unhealthy state of mind, which needs to be eradicated if African Americans want to lead a healthy life, since it will lead to their alienation from their own people and own culture, strengthening their sense of dislocation and depriving them of their authenticity. In this aspect, the exploration of the self-hatred theme in Morrison's fiction has a different significance from the investigation of the double-consciousness in that it discusses a more urgent problem to African Americans. Only after African Americans get rid of their self-hatred can they truly benefit from their double-consciousness, otherwise, they will forever live in a torturing dilemma.

As to the shame felt by African Americans, it still differs from self-hatred. African Americans' feeling of shame may come from their lack of confidence under the pressure of white racism, but it can also arise from their dissatisfaction with their own action of trying to cater to racist society. The former is destructive and degrades their African tradition while the latter is constructive in its adherence to African values. What's more, although some books and articles have dealt with the intra-racial biases in Morrison's fiction, they fail to take in its complexity and comprehensiveness. Self-hatred not only lies in one or two of Morrison's novels, but is a recurrent theme in all her fiction, and its representations not only include hatred towards oneself but also aggression against one's own people.

It was Kurt Lewin, an expert on Jewish self-hatred, who influenced the study of minority identity in the United States. According to him, the self-hatred of blacks is "one of the better known and most extreme cases."⁵ Lewin's view was incorporated into the thinking of Abram Kardiner, Lionel Oversey and Kenneth Clark. In *Mark of Oppression* (1951), the two psychiatrists, Kardiner and Ovesey made their famous statement on African Americans: "the Negro has no possible basis for a healthy

⁵ Kurt Lewin, "Self-Hatred among Jews," in *Resolving Social Conflicts: Selected Papers on Group Dynamics*, ed. Gertrude Weis Lewin. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948) 189, qtd. in Scott 26.