

族裔文学与文化研究系列丛书

莫里森小说中的创伤与身份建构

李美芹
姜志强 著



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本书是国家社科基金项目“二十世纪非裔美国文学中的种族政治研究”(14BWW073)的阶段性成果和浙江省哲学社会科学基金项目“美国黑人作家作品中体现的多种族文化民主理念研究”(11JCWY19YB)的结题成果

心怀桃花源，放歌沧桑间

喜欢莫里森，也喜欢评论莫里森的作品。不仅因为她是获诺贝尔文学奖后仍笔耕不辍的黑人女作家，还因为她所描写的生命中的厚重感。在她的笔下，生命或是一株压抑了生命活力的金盏花（《最蓝的眼睛》），或是一场精神顿悟的认祖苦旅（《所罗门之歌》），或是一树花开（《宠儿》）……这些生命或安静或热烈，或卑微或璀璨，或跃动或沉思……经年过往，生命的年轮或深或浅，仿佛刻着一笺烟雨，半帘幽梦。

凡尘喧嚣，莫里森笔下的非裔美国人，更是在累日灵魂的挣扎中寻找着适合自己的地方，用来安放灵魂。他们需要的也许是一座安静的灵魂宅院（在莫里森大多数作品中，似乎实现了这一愿望），也许是一本无字经书，也许是一条迷津尽开的小路，心之所往的尽头，是可供心灵休憩的驿站。再次起程时，没有了迷惘，更没有了彷徨……

沧桑阡陌中，没有人改变得了纵横交错的奴隶制和种族歧视的曾经。只是，在渐行渐远的回望里，那些伤过的、痛过的、失落过的、挣扎过的、哭泣过的，都演绎成了坚强；那些无法遗忘的、刻骨铭心的、耿耿于怀的、念念不忘的，都风干成了风景。于是，莫里森小说中的人物，一路放歌，一路纵情，一路相互扶持，一路相互伤害，山一程，水一程，趟过红尘、沧桑、流年、清欢，站在岁月之巅放眼，躺在心灵谷底放牧。回望时，月光如流，蹉跎芳华者有之，奋起抗争者有之，狂野嚎哭者有之……愈是艰难处，愈是修心时。经年流转，踏浪生活之洋，云帆尽头，回眸处，斑斑点点，是愈合的疤痕，还

有透过枝叶的明媚。

在莫里森的笔端，流露着沧桑经年中的期盼：怒放的生命需要微笑的理由。生命是一场负重修行，但心灵需要减压；即使雪压青松，也要给自己寻找一种取暖的方式。以夸父的执念求索，以女娲的姿态重塑生命，以普罗米修斯的胸怀盗火，以浮士德的决绝告别庸碌，向往美好……沧海巫山过后，峰回路转处，或许，最美的风景都在路上。

心若浮沉，浅笑安然。童年的疤痕，可以有一生那么长，也可以心怀桃花源，放歌沧桑间！

感谢国家社科基金和浙江省哲学社会科学基金的立项，使我有勇气在书山电脑前拨开思维的迷雾，坚持着自己的求索。感谢浙江工商大学外国语学院领导和同事们的激励，使我有信心砥砺前行。感谢姜志强教授的宽容和携手，使我有恒心以梦为马，虽韶华不再，却不敢负少女初心；而且他亲力亲为，为全书谋篇布局，并撰写了第四章关于黑人文化意识构建和文化杂糅的部分内容。感谢我的双胞胎儿女给我的生命带来的丰盈和美好，他们懂感恩，肯奋发，使本就为母则强的我获得了更强大的慰藉，切身体会到“在爱你当中，我遇到了最好的自己；在爱你当中，我的生命成了恢弘的庙宇”。感谢我生命中的摆渡人，他们默默的支持是我奋发前行的精神支柱，也助我开启了思维的点点曦光。成稿后的审校和协调过程中，浙江工商大学出版社的编辑王英女士做了大量有效工作。在此，作者表示衷心感谢！

李美芹

2018年9月于杭州金沙学府

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Introduction

Toni Morrison, one of the foremost writers in American history, editor, and professor, the first African American Nobel Prize laureate in literature, is considered one of the foremost figures in contemporary American fiction. The prize marks “not only a personal triumph, but also the recognition of the artistry of African American fiction and the validity of the black woman’s voice” (Taylor-Guthrie, 1994: vii). She made her debut as a novelist in 1970, soon gaining the attention of both critics and a wider audience for her inventive blend of realism and fantasy, unsparing social analysis, passionate philosophical concerns and her poetically-charged and richly-expressive depiction of Black America. Up to now, Morrison has published eleven novels, two plays, a short story, a collection of critical essays, and several edited volumes.^[1] The combination of social observation with broadening and

[1] The eleven novels mentioned here are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1997), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012) and *God Help the Child* (2015). Morrison’s only short story is *Recitatif* (1983). Other influential works and edited books include two plays—*Dreaming Emmett* (performed in 1986) and *Desdemona* (first performed on 15 May 2011 in Vienna), Children’s literature (with her son Slade Morrison)—*The Big Box* (1999), *The Book of Mean People* (2002), *Peeny Butter Fudge* (2009), A libretti—*Margaret Garner* (first performed in May 2005); An important critical work—*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992); Nonfiction—*Remember: The Journey to School Integration* (April 2004), *What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction* (edited by Carolyn C. Denard, April 2008). In addition, Morrison edited *The Black Book* (1974), *Re-racing Justice, En-gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (1992), *Birth of a Nation’hood: Gaze, Script, and Spectacle in the O.J. Simpson Case* (co-editor) (1997), *Burn This Book: Essay Anthology* (2009).

allusive commentary gives her fictions the symbolic quality of myth, and earns her a number of literary distinctions.^[1] In 1993, Morrison was honored with the Nobel Prize in Literature for her giving “life to an essential aspect of American reality” in novels “characterized by visionary force and poetic import” (Frangsmyr: 135). Nevertheless, the most important contribution Morrison makes for American and world literature, as is maintained by Tao Ming, is that “she has fictionalized—thus culturally carved out—a territory in which black people are not marginal anomalies but a genuine human society” (2002: 338–339). Morrison’s novels have been translated into many languages, and a number of scholars and doctoral candidates over the world have criticized and assessed her works, seeking to “unravel the complexity that she prides on” (Samuels & Hudson-Weems, 1990: 142). Her success signals that African American literary canon will sooner or later come to the fore onto the stage of mainstream American and world literature, a development that will make it impossible for future exclusion.

The extent of the critical interest in Morrison’s works, which is extraordinary by any standards, is wide and varied. Morrison’s novels have invited a number of reviews, essays and book-length studies in different critical methodologies and from various perspectives since the 1970s: feminism, psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, post-modernism, reader-response criticism, post-colonialism and cultural approaches. However, it’s difficult to talk about critical responses to her fiction without examining the nature of a black aesthetic and to African-American critical paradigms.

In the Black Aesthetic movement of the 1960s, sociopolitical African-American critical canon dominated African-American critical paradigm. Henry Louis Gates Jr. was among the first of a group of literary scholars to question the predominance of sociological approaches to black literature. In arguing for wider critical paradigms, which as he later said respected the literary text as “a rhetorical structure” with its own “complex set of rules,” he unleashed a long-running and

[1] Morrison has received honorary degrees from Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, Dartmouth, Sarah Lawrence, Spelman, and Oberlin, SUNY Albany and Princeton. *Sula* was nominated for the 1975 National Book Award and in 1978 *Song of Solomon* won the National Book Critics’ Circle Award and Institutes of Arts and Letters. *Beloved* won the Anisfeld Wolf Book Award in Race Relations and the Melcher Book Award. It also received the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

fierce series of debates, which tolled the knell of sociopolitical canon. Even so, the contested assumptions that black literature has a role in countering negative representations of black people and in promoting black consciousness inform much of the critical writing on Toni Morrison, emphasizing upon the White American cultural domination of African-American communities—arising, of course, from the priority given it in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*. Though early in 1974, Barbara Smith discussed Morrison's use of "mascon images" in *Sula* in her essay entitled "Beautiful, Needed, Mysterious," and in 1975 Joan Bischoff read the novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* as having a universal theme—the "thwarted sensitivity" of Pecola and Sula in her essay entitled "The Novels of Toni Morrison: Studies in Thwarted Sensitivity," an editorial in the 1977 summer issue of *First World* called attention to the fact that, despite public acclamation of Toni Morrison's novels, there was little scholarly or critical analysis of her works. In 1977, a criticism based on black culture began to emerge. More importantly, two writers for *First World*, Philip Royster and Odette C. Martin, laid down the groundwork for a criticism that positioned Morrison specifically as an African-American writer.^[1] In the same year, a feminist reading of Morrison's novels also began to take shape. Barbara Smith proposed a mode she called "black feminist criticism." Though her reading of *Sula* as a black lesbian text gave rise to many controversies, her article led to a movement of black feminist criticism of Morrison's works and that of many other black writers in the following years. In the 1980s, there have been few attempts to apply a liberal humanist model to Toni Morrison's works or indeed to black literature in general. C. W. Bigsby offers the most interesting reading of African American literature from this perspective, finding in black writers a refreshing moral assuredness which white liberal American writers had rejected in favor of "cosmic conspiracies and fragmented layers of experience" (Peach, 2000: 9). Critics often concerned themselves with Morrison's use of mythic structure and the subject of female self-discovery in her novels. Most notably are Jacqueline de Weever, Cynthia Davis and Jane S. Bakerman.^[2] There also appears

[1] Sandra Adell. *Literary Masters: Toni Morrison*. Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2002, pp. 113–115.

[2] De Weever. "The Inverted World of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*." *CLA Journal*, 1979 (22), pp. 402–414. Cynthia Davis. "Self, Society and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction." in Linden Peach ed. *Toni Morrison*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998, pp. 27–42. Jane S. Bakerman. "Failure of Love, Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison." *American Literature*, 1981(52), pp. 541–563.

the study of Morrison's novels focusing upon their language and how they are constructed, upon various methods of unlocking their multiple meanings, and upon how other texts impose meanings upon them. It employs a number of perspectives on language, meaning, narrative and history, which are normally placed under the general label of post-structuralism. Psychoanalytic perspectives on Morrison's fiction developed in the mid-1980s, but it is only more recently that critics have pursued their psychoanalytic criticism within a poststructuralist framework.^[1] By the end of the 1980s, complex readings of Morrison's novels had begun to appear in a number of important black and ethnic studies venues—*Black American Literature Forum*, *CLA Journal*, *Black Scholar Minority Voices*. The glowing reception of *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby* encouraged further development in criticism including a variety of critical approaches.^[2] In the 1990s, Marxist perspective found its voice in Morrison's fiction. Doreatha Mbalia traces Morrison's developing class consciousness in *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness*, discovering in Morrison's works Marxist principles such as humanism, collectivism and imperialism. Morrison has also been compared to Faulkner and Marquez in her use of stream of consciousness and magic realism (Wilentz, 1997: 109). The 1990s and the present century witness a number of the essays drawing on black feminist criticism and anthropological/cultural criticism in tandem with post-colonialism theory, the crux of which consists of seeing literary symbolism in the context of symbolic structures operating in society. Among them, Homi Bhabha expounded the post-colonial theory in *The Location of Culture* by citing examples from Morrison's fiction, while Houston Baker's argument that what Morrison "ultimately seeks in her coding of Afro-American place is a writing of intimate, systematizing, ordering black village values out of a woman's consciousness, a writing conscious always of black woman's self-possession" (1997: 136) echoes Morrison's own elaboration in her "City Limits, Village Values" and "What the Black Women Thinks About

[1] See Houston A. Baker, Jr.'s "Knowing Our Place: Psychoanalysis and *Sula*" and Jennifer Fitzgerald's "Selfhood and Community: Psychoanalysis and Discourse in *Beloved*," both in Linden Peach ed., *Toni Morrison*. Another important paper is Ashraf H. A. Rushdy's "'Rememory': Primal Scenes and Constructions in Toni Morrison's Novels," published in *Contemporary Literature* in 1991.

[2] Nancy J. Peterson. *Toni Morrison: Critical and Theoretical Approaches*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, pp. 5–6.

Women's Lib."^[1]

As far as macroscopical perspectives are concerned, the published works on Morrison's fiction since the 1980s can be categorized into three perspectives. The first perspective is on Morrison and Womanism, the representatives of which are Babara Hill Rigney's *The Voices of Toni Morrison*, Aoi Mori's *Toni Morrison and Womanist Discourse*, and Michael Awkward's *Inspiriting Influences: Tradition, Revision and Afro-American Women's Novels*. The second perspective is on Morrison and Afro-American literary tradition, the representatives of which are Trudier Harris's *Fiction and Folklore: the Novels of Toni Morrison*, Denise Heinze's *The Dilemma of "Double Consciousness,"* and Philip Page's *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels*. The third perspective is on Morrison and the white classic writers, which equals Morrison with such white writers as Christina Rossetti, Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner and James Joyce.^[2] A number of doctoral candidates in the United States have based their doctoral dissertation on Toni Morrison's fiction. Roughly speaking, their critical focuses are similar to that of the critical works on Toni Morrison.

A distinct phenomenon deserving our notice is that although Morrison herself has not used any theoretical vocabulary in her reviews or essays about her works, most of her non-fictional works concern issues of colonization for African Americans. Early essays such as "What the Black Women Thinks About Women's Lib" and "Behind the Making of *The Black Book*" center on her belief in the importance of black resistance to internalizing white culture and instead, focusing on African American cultural values. Such a concern also appears in her later non-fiction, such as the essay "City Limits, Village Values," thereby indicating the issue of colonization as an on-going thread throughout her works.^[3]

[1] Calling her work "village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe" (Thomas Leclair. "The Language Must Not Sweat." *New Republic*, 1981, p. 26.), she believes that good novels ought to "clarify the roles that have become obscured ... and they ought to give nourishment" (pp. 120-121).

[2] Jill Matus. *Toni Morrison*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998, pp. 145-153.

[3] "Behind the Making of *The Black Book*." *Black World*, 1974, pp. 86-90; "City Limits, Village Values: Concepts of Neighborhoods in Black Fiction," in Michael C. Jaye and Ann Chalmers Watts, ed., *Literature and the Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature*, New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1981, pp. 35-43; "What the Black Woman Thinks about Women's Lib," *New York Times Magazine*, 1971, pp. 14-15, 63-66.

Because she does not make literary concessions to white ignorance of African American language and tradition, Morrison has been accused of a sort of cultural exclusivism. Addressing such comments from white critics, Morrison declares: "I don't know why I should be asked to explain your life to you. We have splendid writers to do that, but I am not one of them. It is that business of being universal, a word hopelessly stripped of meaning for me ... If I tried to write a universal novel, it would be water." (LeClair, 1981: 124) Morrison believes that truly good literature always has something meaningful to say about what it is to be human, whether speaking of whites or people of color, and suggests that critical demand for a "universal novel" is often merely a disguised request for literature written from a white point of view. Morrison notes that "[i]nsensitive white people cannot deal with black writing, but then they cannot deal with their own literature either" (Tate, 1989: 160). While the white world that surrounds Morrison's black characters is usually a symbol of violation and oppression, she "rarely depicts white characters, for the brutality here is less a single act than the systematic denial of the reality of black lives" (Davis, 1998: 323). Morrison's writing, then, is an ongoing attempt to reclaim the collective past of African Americans in order to allow the definition and maintenance of a personal and cultural identity.

One controversial aspect of Morrison's work has been her delineation of the heterogeneous nature of the African-American community and her exposure of the violence and sexual abuse which black women and black children have suffered at the hands of some black men, as Calvin Hernton concluded: "Variously she has been accused of 'selling out,' of turning back the clock of racial progress, of being a tool of white feminism, of being a black-man-hater, and of engendering sexual immorality among black women." (1990: 203–204) Some critics caustically counterattack Morrison for polarizing language itself into white discourse and silenced black speech. However, since the record of history under slavery was mostly written by non-slave writers, Morrison must re-write her own people's history. In doing so, it is crucial for her to trace the social and political oppression of African Americans to its origins in slavery. Moreover, her interest is not to accuse whites of enslaving African descendants but to recover the fragmented pieces of the black past. Thus, she does not polarize language but deliberately uses the polarized language of the racialized dominant culture in order to challenge its racist binary effects.

Studies on Morrison's novels from interdisciplinary perspective are few if there are any. Several critics have touched upon the relationship between Morrison's novels and music aesthetics. In "Recovering an Art Form," Aoi Mori argues that oral narrative including music is a matrix for conserving African-American culture. Those of Morrison's characters who are dispossessed of their own "art form" (1999: 89) as a creative outlet for their feelings simultaneously lack the knowledge of their identity and self-worth, while those who are capable of singing are also able to communicate effectively and to foster solidarity.

In addition to the follow-up studies of the earlier research perspectives, many new perspectives, such as narration, psychoanalysis, post-modernity, post-structuralism and post-colonialism, emerge gradually at the same time. Morrison's novels present their unique narrative features, so many researchers interpret them from the perspectives of narrative discourses, strategies, structures and so on. In *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice*, Susan S. Lanser puts forward a new narratology which will be "attentive to issues that conventional narratology has devaluated or ignored" (1992: 8). She thinks that conventional narratology has been too concerned with formal structures and has ignored the ideological implications of its narrative procedures. In this book, she defines "three varieties of narrative voice for her study: the authorial, the personal, and the communal" (Ginsburg, 1995: 69). In her opinion, it is these special narrative structures that narrate black women's unspeakable secrets.

There are also essays devoted to Morrison's jazzthetic strategies. Lars Eckstein analyzes Morrison's musicalization of *Beloved*'s words and jazzthetic techniques, and their functions in his "A Love Supreme: Jazzthetic Strategies in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." Cheryl Hall in "Beyond the 'Literary Habit': Oral Tradition and Jazz in *Beloved*" also probes into the oral tradition and jazzthetic techniques in *Beloved*. In "Kinds of Blue: Toni Morrison, Hans Janowitz, and the Jazz Aesthetic," Jürgen E. Grandt argues that the aesthetic gesture in Morrison's novels is explicitly inventive, just as African American jazz has always been. Barbara Williams Lewis probes into the function of jazz in Morrison's fiction, especially in her novel *Jazz*, arguing that Morrison's stylistic approach is also jazzy, while Paula Gallant Eckard claims that jazz is the essential narrator of the novel *Jazz* in "The Interplay of Music, Language, and Narrative in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*." Many critics such as Anthony

J. Berret, Rinaldo Walcott and Nicholas F. Pici have pointed out Morrison's fiction is also jazzy on the level of language itself. However, to study systematically how Morrison's music aesthetics influence her motifs and her philosophy, or rather to say, how these qualities interact with one another to form her soul-liberating texts rests with this dissertation.

The study of Morrison abroad starts earlier than domestic study, so the research results are more fruitful and the research perspectives are more various. Compared with the study of Morrison abroad, China's Morrison study starts later and is not so good in research quality. It begins from late 1980s, there are many research results during the short development time. There are many repeated researches, especially in research perspectives and methods.

In China, the critical efforts paid to Morrison appear to be interestingly dramatic. Before she won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Chinese scholars paid little attention to her and her writings, and there were altogether only 7 articles criticizing directly her fiction in Chinese academic journals. After she won the Nobel Prize in October 1993, she has become more and more popular among Chinese scholars and media. The number of essays on Toni Morrison are increasing, most of which focus on the analysis of one single book of hers. Critical methodologies such as feminism, psychoanalysis, post-colonialism, eco-feminist and anthropological approach are employed to analyze her fiction from different perspectives. Domestic study of Morrison has reached two climaxes. The first one is after 1993 when Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature; another is after the 21st century. In 1993, the winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature attracts numerous domestic scholars' attention to Morrison's works. Domestic Morrison study is still rising in recent years, the study of Morrison has become a significant study, and Morrison herself has become well known in academic circles. Du Zhiqing divides domestic Morrison study into two stages: "(1) The initial stage (from middle 1980s to 1993) ... (2) The developmental and in-depth stage (after 1994)." [1] (2007: 122) At the initial stage, scholars pay more attention to the translation and introduction of Morrison's works, so the academic research results are limited. After 1993, the study of Morrison gives priority to academic researches. Research results at this stage include interviews of

[1] All the cited Chinese literature in this paper is translated by the author.

Morrison, introductions to Morrison's awards, discussions of themes of Morrison's works, and explorations of her narrative features. The study of Morrison's works can be roughly divided into the following two categories. The first category is the study of themes of Morrison's works. For example, in 1994, Wang Shouren wrote in *Foreign Literature Review* that "racial problem in America hasn't been resolved because people all avoid talking about the dark slavery history to some extent" (41). In the same year, Hu Quansheng proposes in *Contemporary Foreign Literature* that narrative structures and plot lines of novels advance the development of stories, and shows to readers the slavery experience's deep influence on the blacks after the collapse of the slavery. The second category is the study of artistic features, such as narrative features, structure features and magic realism features, in Morrison's works. For example, Li Guicang writes in *Journal of Northwest University* that "it's Morrison's innovative and unique writing techniques that deeply revealed the possibility of 'psychological reality'" (1994: 27). By the tentative analysis of narrative techniques in *Beloved*, Li discusses some narrative techniques to show that Morrison uses these techniques to represent a common theme in modern western literature—the absurdity and perplexity of people's living. All these research results have broadened the horizon of China's Morrison study, thus have promoted the development of China's Morrison research.

Since 1999, China's Morrison study continues to develop. This period is marked as the third period. It indicated that China's Morrison study is developing and maturing. The outstanding features of this period are plentiful research results, wide criticism perspectives and deep analysis. The first Morrison study monograph in China, *Gender, Race and Culture: Toni Morrison and the 20th Century Afro-American Literature*, was published in 1999. In this monograph, Wang Shouren and Wu Xinyun explore Morrison's writing thoughts and artistic features, and deeply analyze Morrison's first seven novels from the perspective of gender, race and culture. In 2004, they changed the title of this book to "Gender, Race and Culture: On Toni Morrison's Novel-Writing" and also added the analysis of Morrison's eighth novel *Love* in it. Thus this book becomes more comprehensive and more systematic, and has a milestone significance on China's Morrison study since it has illuminated other Chinese scholars and induced their interest.

Later, Chinese scholars have published more than 20 monographs relating