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论玛莎·诺曼戏剧中的 过去和记忆

王莉 著



Past and Memory in Marsha Norman's Dramatic Works

中国社会科学出版社

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前 言

玛莎·诺曼（Marsha Norman, 1947—）是20世纪70年代末开始闻名于美国剧坛并获得普利策奖和托尼奖等各种不同荣誉的当代剧作家。自创作伊始，她的戏剧作品就体现出浓厚的悲剧色彩以及对人物内心世界的深刻剖析，受到观众和研究者们较为普遍的关注。她的作品不但译有中文，也在中国舞台上多次演出。然而国内外学者更多地关注作者和作品主人公的性别身份的意义。本书在细读诺曼的全部作品的基础上，认定了她作品中的一个普遍而又重要的主题“过去与记忆”，并从戏剧呈现的角度入手，对这一主题做多方位的深入剖析，并比较在不同作品中的不同景象。本书选取诺曼的七部代表剧作，考察了其中三种不同的过去：创伤性过去、让人渴望的过去以及虚构的过去，深刻地剖析了诺曼如何运用各种戏剧手段呈现不同的过去和记忆，以及剧中人物对不同的过去和记忆采取的态度和做出的行动。

本书由五部分组成。第一部分为引言。在梳理了国内外已有的研究文献的基础上，阐释了本选题的研究意义，为本书的主体分析奠定了基础。第一章研究了《出狱》（*Getting Out*）和《黑暗中的行者》（*Traveling in the Dark*）中的创伤性过去以及主人公对创伤性过去由压抑到和解的过程。在这两部作品中，创伤性过去对主人公心理和情感上造成伤痛，他们试图压抑以便忘记往事。然而他们的压抑行为却造成了生存危机。在朋友和家人的帮助下，主人公能正视创伤性过去，与之取得和解。在诺曼看来，这种和解并非抹杀过去，而是将创伤性过去重置于他们的生活轨迹之中，这有助于主人公重新审视自我与社会之间的关系，对未来的生活怀有希冀。

在《出狱》中，诺曼使用了闪回、分裂人格、空间限制以及两个演出场地并置等手段，表现阿林作为儿童性虐受害者以及社会受害者的创伤性记忆。尽管阿林试图压抑她的创伤性记忆，现实中的各种诱因却不断地

引起这些闯入性的记忆。最终阿林通过与过去的自我的重新整合与创伤性过去取得和解。

在《黑暗中的行者》中，山姆因压抑母亲去世的创伤性记忆而对其生活造成了严重的后果。诺曼采用具有象征意义的母亲的花园以及房屋外墙所代表的场外空间表现山姆对创伤性记忆的压抑。好朋友的去世激起了他对母亲的去世的创伤性记忆。妻子不懈的帮助和同理心让他走出创伤性记忆的阴影，重新与家人建立情感联系。

第二章分析了《第三和橡树》(*Third and Oak*)、《僵持》(*The Hold-up*)和《爱上丹尼·布恩》(*Loving Daniel Boone*)中让人渴望的过去以及主人公由怀旧到幻灭的过程。三部作品中的主人公均沉迷于对过去的回忆不能自拔，因而他们无法客观地认识过去与现在。事实上，过去并非他们想象的那样美好。他们在认识到怀旧情感的不切实际以及生存现实后，试图走出过去的阴影并接受现实。通过对主人公由怀旧到幻灭的戏剧呈现，诺曼对过度的怀旧情感进行了批判，因为怀旧情感使得主人公无法在现实生活中实施有效的行动。

《第三和橡树》中，诺曼运用不在场人物的物品以及在场人物对不在场人物的语言模仿表达对过去的怀旧情感。两位女主人公在洗衣店的偶然相遇促使她们认识到自己过去的婚姻的现实，进而对自我进行重新认识。台球厅的两位男主人公通过接受舒特的死亡以及乔治即将死去的事实，认识到曾经的美好时光已经过去，从而接受了现实，并消除了二人之间的误解和隔阂。

在《僵持》中，诺曼通过现代牛仔对西部逃犯故事的痴迷以及西部逃犯对现代技术进步的不接受态度来表现对过去的怀旧。但是，现代牛仔的死亡促使西部逃犯反思他所处的时代的暴力性质。现代牛仔的葬礼的舞台呈现是对西部逃犯时代结束的哀悼，而西部逃犯的重生表现了诺曼对人性以及人类的灵活性和适应性的赞扬。

《爱上丹尼·布恩》作为一部时光穿越剧，把弗洛的个人记忆与对丹尼·布恩神话的集体记忆相交织。诺曼通过分割舞台空间将布恩时代和现代博物馆并置。弗洛现代生活中的感情失意让她对布恩时代充满怀旧情感，然而她的时光穿越之旅却让她意识到布恩作为神话人物的虚构性。

第三章探讨了《晚安，母亲》(*'night, Mother*)和《特鲁迪·布鲁》(*Trudy Blue*)中虚构的过去以及主人公勇敢面对的过程。两部剧作中主

人公的过去是在由他人或自己虚构的世界中度过的。通过对过去的回忆，主人公认识到生活在虚构的世界中让她们的生存毫无意义，无法实现自己的人生价值。她们通过选择摆脱这种虚构的过去，包括做出死亡的选择，展示了自我价值。

《晚安，母亲》通过母女二人的对话展现了女儿过去是生活在母亲编织的世界中。诺曼采用具有象征意义的阁楼表现杰西过去生活的停滞状态以及生活中的秘密。杰西的自杀是她摆脱过去并实现自我控制的方式。在《特鲁迪·布鲁》中，由于整个剧是金杰的回忆，诺曼采用了空舞台以及插曲式结构。生活在幻想的世界中使得金杰对现实中的人和世界无法正确认识。她逼近的死亡促使她认识到过去幻想世界的虚构性，从而摆脱了幻想人物，回到现实世界中的家庭。

最后一部分为结论。诺曼对过去和记忆的关注实际上是她对人如何生存的哲学性思考。剧中人物对过去和记忆的态度体现了他们的存在焦虑。通过表现人物能够通过解决与过去的关系而获得他们认定的更好的存在方式，诺曼认为人能够通过个人努力改变存在方式并实现自己的人生价值。

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INTRODUCTION

Marsha Norman (1947—) is regarded as a major contemporary American playwright thanks to the acclaim of several major critics concerning her early plays, especially her Pulitzer Prize-winning play *'night, Mother* (1982). Robert Brustein, the artistic director of Harvard's American Repertory Theatre (ART), in his well-quoted review, speaks highly of Norman as a universal playwright who addresses general human experiences:

Nothing reinforces one's faith in the power and importance of the theater more than the emergence of an authentic universal playwright—not a woman playwright, mind you, not a regional playwright, not an ethnic playwright, but one who speaks to the concerns and experiences of all humankind. (162)

Just because of this universality of Norman's concern, he compares Norman to the Russian playwright Anton Chekhov and the father of modern American drama Eugene O'Neill for exploring similar themes (159). Similarly, Frank Rich, The *New York Times* chief theatre critic, considers it "Marsha Norman's profound achievement that she brings both understanding and dignity to forgotten and tragic American lives" (3). On account of her particular concern over women's issues and her dramatization of women's experiences, Janet Brown, the prominent feminist theater critic, hails Norman as "the most successful author of serious feminist drama working in the U. S. today" (60). The *New York Times* critic Mel Gussow wrote a long article entitled "Women Playwrights: New Voices in the Theatre" to make a detailed commentary on Norman and *'night, Mother*,

regarding the playwright as one “at the crest of a wave of adventurous young women playwrights” (22). Besides the topmost honor, the play also earns for its author the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Hull-Warriner, and Drama Desk Awards and four Tony nominations. It has been translated into many languages, included in college drama books and performed all over the world.^①

Norman's commitment to writing has made it possible for her to author ten original plays, five adaptations (including three musical adaptations^②), a novel, several television scripts and screenplays. In addition to her own writing, she nurtures upcoming playwrights. She is the co-director, with Christopher Durang, of the Playwrights Program at the prestigious Juilliard School of Drama. She also serves on the board of the Dramatists Guild. Besides, she has won a slew of other honors and awards including grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the American Academy and Institute of the Arts and Letters, Lifetime Achievement Award for Literary Arts by Guild Hall, and the William Inge Distinguished Achievement in the American Theatre Award.

In light of all these laudatory comments and accolades, some critics believe Norman's works deserve even more critical and scholarly attention than they have been given. Linda Ginter Brown, in the preface of *Marsha Norman: a Casebook* (1996), laments that “contemporary critics give Norman less attention and acclaim than she rightly deserves. As one of America's foremost contemporary playwrights, she merits more” (xi). Matthew Roudané, writing about American plays and playwrights since 1970, also expresses that “[d]espite her important and ongoing contributions to the American stage, Marsha Norman has not been fully embraced by the critics” (“Plays” 378). Christo-

① For instance, it was translated into Chinese by Huang Zongjiang and Zhang Quanquan and published in the first issue of *Foreign Theatre* in 1985. It is included in *British and American Drama: Plays and Criticisms*, a course book for Chinese colleges, edited by Liu Haiping and Zhu Xuefeng. It has been put on stage in China several times. It was first performed at China Youth Art Theatre in Beijing in 1993. It was later staged at Oriental Pioneer Theatre in Beijing in 2006, Changqing Arts Theatre in Jinan in 2009 and at Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center in 2011.

② In 1991, Norman's adaptation of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, a Broadway musical, won her the Tony Award for Best Book of a Musical.

pher Bigsby is also disappointed by the fact that Marsha Norman still tends to be regarded as “the author of *'night*, *Mother* and nothing else” (*Contemporary* viii).

In addition, among the critical works on Norman's plays, most of them mainly focus on her two better-known plays, *Getting Out* (1977) and *'night, Mother*. The critical reception to Norman's other plays has been less than salutary. To Norman, the reasons for this lack of positive regard is bias: “[t]hey are perceived to be ‘girl plays’, concerned with loss and death, love and betrayal, friendship and family” rather than “‘guy’ plays” with guns in them (“Not There Yet” 79). Norman in fact produces a series of plays engaging with the past and memory, profoundly evoking the existential crises through characters that are intertwined in the dynamics between the past, the present and the future. Rather than focusing on a single play, it is most useful to explore her plays as an internally related body of work.

Two books comprehensively encompass almost all of Norman's works to date. Linda Ginter Brown's *Marsha Norman: a Casebook*, published in 1996, is a collection of essays which deals with most of Norman's plays rather than just the more well-known plays. Deeming that Norman's purpose in writing is to “give everyday people, in many instances women, voices to make sure someone, somewhere, is listening” (xi), she hopes that the essays in the book may correct the dearth of scholarship on Norman. However, research on Norman is still far from being adequate. Bigsby devotes one chapter to Norman in *Contemporary American Playwrights* and analyzes her plays from *Getting Out* to *Trudy Blue* (1998).^① He claims that Norman in plays from *Getting Out* through to *'night, Mother* displays a woman playwright's particular concern with women because in these plays she “find [s] in dialogue between women a way of opening up channels to emotional needs and anxieties” (210). However, he also

① The original version of the play appeared in 1995 Humana Festival in Actors Theatre of Louisville. Bigsby's comments on this play are based on the typescript which is used for a planned off-Broadway production in Feb. 1998. But until Dec. 1999, the final version was performed in MCC Theatre in New York. The ending of the final version is totally different from the early ones. Whereas the early versions end with the suicide of the heroine, the final version ends with the heroine's reconnection with her family.

observes that with men as protagonists, Norman similarly shows the emotional truths and “exposes hidden tensions and anxieties” (210). To him, Norman’s dramatization of the emotional truths beneath the banalities of conversations and the desire for connection is Norman’s way of examining the isolation of herself, and in extension, of humankind.

Up to now, according to the databases ProQuest, CETD, NDLTD and WorldCat. org, there are thirty-five Ph. D. dissertations and twenty-seven M. A. theses in the United States, one M. A. thesis in Canada, one dissertation in Germany and two M. A. theses in Taiwan which deal mainly with the more famous plays as mentioned above. Among them, only two center on Norman’s treatment of the past and the rest approach Norman’s plays from diversified perspectives—feminist theories (focusing on female autonomy^①, female self^② and mother-daughter relationship^③), family studies^④, aesthetic studies^⑤, spatial

① Examples are Linda Louise Rohrer Paige, *The “Other” Side of the Looking Glass: A Feminist Perspective on Female Suicide in Ibsen’s “Hedda Gabler”, Hellman’s “The Children’s Hour”, and Norman’s “‘night, Mother”*. Diss. The U of Tennessee, 1989; Karen Kay Keeter Rogers, *Responses to Restriction and Confinement in Selected Plays by Women Dramatists of the English-Speaking Theatre: The Susan Smith Blackburn First-Prize-Winning Plays From 1980—1981 Through 1985—1986*. Diss. The U of Texas at Dallas, 1999.

② For example, Linda Ginter Brown, *Toward a More Cohesive Self: Women in Works of Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman*. Diss. The Ohio State U, 1991.

③ Examples are Karen K. Foster, *De-Tangling the Web: Mother-Daughter Relationships in the Plays of Marsha Norman, Lillian Hellman, Tina Howe, and Ntozake Shang*, Diss. The U of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1994; Suzanne Elaine Beal, *“Mama Teach Me That French”: Mothers and Daughters in Twentieth Century Plays by American Women Playwrights*, Diss. U of Maryland College Park, 1994.

④ Examples are Gretchen Sarah Cline, *The Psychodrama of the Dysfunctional Family Desire, Subjectivity, and Regression in Twentieth Century American Drama*. Diss. The Ohio State U, 1991; Pamela Powell Monoca, *The Bond that Ties: The Role of the Family in Contemporary American Drama*. Diss. The Catholic U of America, 1995.

⑤ Examples are William W. Demastes, *American New Realism in the Theatre of the 80s*, Diss. The U of Wisconsin-Madison, 1986; Carolyn Cope, *The Woman’s Aesthetic in Selected Plays Of Maria Irene Fornes, Holly Hughes, Wendy Wasserstein, Marsha Norman and Suzan-Lori Parks* Diss. Southern Illinois U, 2005.

theory^①, discourse analysis^②, reception studies^③ and genre studies^④. This is also the case for scholarly essays of consequence, some of which have been collected in *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (volume 186). Most of the articles also cover Norman's better-known plays, with only a few of them including comments on Norman's other works.

In China, the name of Marsha Norman was first mentioned in 1983 after she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama (Fu 265). The next year Huang Zongjiang and Zhang Quanquan translated *'night, Mother* which was published in the first issue of *Foreign Theatre* in 1985. Chen Maiping, in an article on western realistic drama, underlines Norman's realistic mode of writing (30). However, more serious study on Norman's plays began after *'night, Mother's* first performance at China Youth Art Theatre in Beijing in 1993. Tang Lifeng's study on *'night, Mother* points out that Jessie's committing suicide is a paradoxical way to end the state of living death (44). Shi Jian's article "Reality and Fantasy of Norman's Female Characters" investigates the conflict between reality and fantasy of the female characters in *Getting Out, Third and Oak, The Hold-up*, and *Traveler in the Dark* (43).

The latest database search for Chinese scholarship on Norman's plays shows both variety and depth. According to the CNKI database, there appeared three Ph. D. dissertations,^⑤ two M. A. theses and more than a dozen articles during the last ten years. In addition to reading Norman's plays from a feminist perspective, research on Norman's work extends to the realm of language and exis-

① For Example, Huang Shih-yi, *Spatial Repression in Marsha Norman's Plays*. MA thesis. Taiwan Chengchi U. 2002.

② For Example, Alice Spitz, *Power Plays: The Representation of Mother-Daughter Disputes in Contemporary Plays by Women—A Study in Discourse Analysis*, Diss. Universität des Saarlandes, 2005.

③ For Example, Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic: Performance Criticism and Representation*, Diss. New York U, 1988.

④ For Example, Elizabeth Rose Thompson, *Saving the Southern Sister: Tracing the Survivor Narrative in Southern Women's Modern and Contemporary Novels and Plays*. Diss. U of Memphis, 2010.

⑤ The three dissertations are Wu Wenquan's *Cultural Encounter, Dialogue and Confluence: Contemporary American Drama in China*, Diss. Nanjing U, 2004; Zhang Jinliang's *Language as a Perspective: A Study of Three Contemporary American Dramatists*, Diss. Nanjing U, 2007; and Cen Wei's *Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman: Dramatizing Female Identity*, Diss. Shandong U, 2009.

tentialism. He Anfang and Liu Xiuyu read *'night, Mother* as a play to convey Norman's feminist messages. Zhang Jinliang, reading Norman's plays from the language perspective, takes Norman's characters' silence as an obstacle on their way to become a self (28). Zuo Jin and Han Zhongqian maintain that the person deixis and vocatives show the deep love between the mother and daughter in *'night, Mother* (131). Cai Xiaoyan considers the play as Norman's concern with modern human beings' existential crisis (47).

Throughout her works, Norman displays a persistent concern over the past and memory of her characters. In her view, her characters' present situation can only be drawn from what they experienced in the past, i. e. — “why the person is the person they are” (“Interview” 150). However, notwithstanding the diversity of perspectives within the known scholarship on the playwright's works, Norman's concern with the past and memory and her dramatic techniques in representing the two have been paid short shrift. Thus, the present study intends to focus on seven of Norman's original plays which display her pervasive concern with the past and memory, including *Getting Out*, *Third and Oak* (1978),^① *The Holdup* (1979), *'night, Mother*, *Traveler in the Dark* (1984), *Loving Daniel Boone* (1992), and *Trudy Blue*.

There is a small body of criticism which comments on the importance of the past and memory in Norman's plays on various occasions. Most of these critiques, however, merely mention the past and memory in passing and do not delve into it. Other scholars' analyses of the aspect are edifying for a further study. Furthermore, Norman's incorporation of the various dramatic elements in representing the past and memory and the interaction between the past and the present has not been sufficiently tackled.

Among the studies, Jennifer Anne Workman's thesis, *Marsha Norman's Ghosts: The Embodiment of the Past on the Stage*, is the only one which is devoted to examining Norman's representation of the past. To her, the plays not

① This play consists of two acts “The Laundromat” and “The Pool Hall”. Because originally Norman allowed the two acts to be produced as separate one-acts, either of the two parts is sometimes discussed as a play without mentioning the other part at all. But Norman says in the preface to the play in *Collected Works* that the two parts are in fact talking about the same thing and should not be treated separately.

only reflect the characters' pasts but also the author's personal past in some way. After an analysis of Norman's personal past which motivates most of Norman's writing, Workman explores Norman's employment of ghost figures as a device to represent the past on the stage, although there is only one play that has real ghost figures on stage.^① Classifying the ghost figures in Norman's plays into three types, "ghosts who are actual characters in the play, ghosts whom the characters represent through imitation and ghosts who are absent characters", Workman argues that Norman's conception of the ghost figure is different from that of the earlier dramatists for its positive aspect—the ghosts "are helpful to the characters they interact with" (72). However, as will be discussed later in this study, the past in Norman's plays is in effect an impediment which causes an existential crisis for the protagonist. In addition, the past is represented in various forms rather than merely through ghost figures.

Through her very first play *Getting Out*, Norman demonstrates her artistic virtuosity in representing the past and memory and the interactions with the present in an innovative way. This is noted by several critics. John Simon, using an ingenious conceit, praises highly the expressionistic technique^② used in *Getting Out* to underscore the inextricably linked relationship of the past and present. He writes that "it is one thing just to twine strands together, and another to interweave them artfully, to produce a kind of reweaving. Here the past fills in the aching holes in the present, as seamlessly as if it were the work of a master

① In Norman's musical version of *The Secret Garden*, which is discussed in Workman's thesis, Norman presents real ghosts physically present. In *Getting Out*, the past self of the heroine is put on stage but is only in her memory. Similarly, in *Trudy Blue*, the imaginary characters are in the heroine's mind instead of being real ones.

② Expressionism in drama was a movement in Germany in 1910 and flourished until around 1924. Plays since 1924 written both in Germany and outside it are largely under the influence of the expressionist technique without subscribing to the expressionist philosophy of expressing protest and rebellion. One of the features of expressionist drama is intense subjectivism. The expressionist writer usually shows the world to us as it is seen through the eyes of one character, invariably an alter ego for the writer. Because the world is revealed through one character's vision, it is completely subjective and it becomes deliberately and purposefully distorted. Eugene O'Neill is the first American playwright who made an adept experimentation of the expressionist technique in several of his plays such as *The Emperor Jones* and *The Hairy Ape*. Contemporary American playwrights continue to adopt the technique to explore the subjective mind (John Gassner and Edward Quinn, 256–261). This technique is also used in *Trudy Blue*.

mender" (82). Commenting on the intertwining past and present which is accommodated through the coexistence of the two selves of the heroine, Bigsby observes that "To watch the play is to see a tapestry being sewn, a collage constructed" (*Contemporary* 218). Their remarks show their acclaim of Norman's dramatic skill in interweaving timescales and events.

In addition to the favorable remarks on Norman's dramatic technique, scholars' discussions highlight the past as one of the traps for the protagonist to get out. Nevertheless, because their analyses focus on the theme of "getting out" or "cutting ties", there is no in-depth discussion of the nature of the past. Mel Gussow observes that a primary theme of Norman's plays is "as illustrated by the title of her first work, is 'getting out' — a leave-taking... severing ties of blood, marriage, and past" ("New Voices" 22). Likewise, Esther Harriott titles her essay "Marsha Norman: Getting Out" and cites that Norman's chief concern is about characters "on the point of cutting ties — to the past, to the present, or even to the future, to their families or friends, or to their former selves" (129). Summarizing her essay that "Norman's characters are at a critical point, when events of the past intersect with events of the present to bring about the need for a change in direction for the future" (147), she suggests that Norman's characters are driven by the passion to disentangle themselves from entrapped situations and try to achieve a kind of redemption.

Andrea J. Nouryeh, in the essay "Flashing back: Dramatizing the Trauma of Incest and Child Sexual Abuse", maintains that both *Getting Out* and Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive* "disclose the effects of trauma on their central characters and force audiences to confront the difficulties of the characters' healing process" (49). Because of her focus on the devastating effects of child sexual abuse in *Getting Out*, she overlooks the traumatic experiences of social victimization that the protagonist underwent in her past life. However, her study enlightens a reading of the play through the perspective of trauma studies. As the story of a survivor of abuse who is tormented by intrusion of traumatic memories once repressed, and who heals through finally releasing those memories, *Getting Out* stands up well to such an analysis.

Although the characters' immersion in the past and memory in *Third and*

Oak: The Laundromat and The Pool Hall is a prominent feature, it has been largely overlooked by scholars. One of the reasons is that most of the scholarly focus is on *The Laundromat*^① and its feminist issues. Jennifer Anne Workman's research stands out as it regards that Norman in this play represents the past through two types of ghosts: "ghosts that the characters imitate and ghosts that the characters describe" (79). Although she detects the phenomenon of the characters' imitation of the dialogues and mannerisms of the absent characters, she does not give an in-depth study of the causes and motivations behind the characters' behaviors. In fact, the characters' nostalgia for the past, which is represented by the absent characters, is the driving motivation.

Among the studies on *The Holdup*, Robert Cooperman's essay discusses the topic of mythological past in Norman's play. In the essay entitled "'I Don't Know What's Going to Happen in the Morning' —Visions of the Past, Present, and Future in *The Holdup*," he points out that in the play Norman dramatizes the battle between the present and the past, and "the past, even a mythological past, becomes a respected advisor, not a hindrance to be dismissed in the name of progress, and women become active as nurturers and nation-builders" (106). In fact, it is argued in the present study that Norman has a futurist outlook which considers the violent and life-negating past as unproductive and the present and future, with promise and prosperity, as productive. Different from Cooperman, Konstantinos Blatanis in his book *Popular Culture Icons in Contemporary American Drama* approaches *The Holdup* through the perspective of cultural studies. Comparing Norman with Arthur Kopit and Sam Shepard, he argues that Norman invites her audience to "turn critically toward its own celluloid nostalgia" (164) through displacing and deconstructing pop images of the American West and presenting a picture of the promising, expansive, and polysemous West. His opinion on the outlaw as a western icon and Norman's critique on nostalgia is inspiring for the present study. However, his study lacks the discussion of Norman's usage of dramatic elements in representing the nostalgia for the

① Examples are Esther Harriott's "Marsha Norman: Getting Out", Jenny S. Spencer's "Marsha Norman's *She* —tragedies" and Cen Wei's *Lillian Hellman and Marsha Norman: Dramatizing Female Identity*.

past and the transforming process of the protagonist.

Scholars have insightfully explored Norman's concern with the past and memory in *'night, Mother*. Vivian M. Patraka in "Staging Memory: Contemporary Plays By Women" remarks that the play is "in part the struggle of memories between a mother and a daughter concerning their concept of and relationship to the deceased father, a struggle that culminated in an overtly Freudian suicide by the daughter with her father's gun" (290). Bigsby also points out the absent father's prominence in the contested memories of both mother and daughter (*Contemporary* 236). C. Casey Craig in *Family Ties and Family Ties* illustrates that the family's past lies are what causes the mother and daughter to be the most intimate strangers (333). Their comments are illuminating for a further exploration of the past and memory and the aim of the heroine to make sense of the past, which is replete with misrepresentations.

Despite that the religious element in *Traveler in the Dark* has attracted critics' attention, the effects of the past and memory on the protagonist are touched upon. In "The Way Out, the Way In: Paths to Self in the Plays of Marsha Norman," Leslie Kane comments on Norman's use of the symbolic setting in embodying the effects of the past and memory on the present (270). To her, the protagonist's present crisis originates from his unresolved past crisis, i. e. the death of his mother. Scott Hinson in "The 'Other' Funeral" explores the protagonist as a narcissist because of his unresolved feelings over the death of his mother (111). His essay concludes that with his philosophical crisis being resolved, the protagonist still does not face the truth of his mother's death (119). Although his essay sheds light on understanding Norman's protagonist as one with the psychology of a narcissist, he fails to notice the therapeutic function of an empathic family in helping the protagonist resolve the traumatic past.

Studies on *Loving Daniel Boone* mainly focus on Norman's technique in alternating the past and present and the play as a time-travel play. Marya Bednezik, in "Writing the Other," makes a comment that in *Loving Daniel Boone*, with Norman's fabulist skill in portraying time traveling, "[t] his frequent alteration of scenes past with scenes present causes the audience to examine and, perhaps, reformulate some of their assumptions about the historical event, the