

Healing of Wounds, Return of the Soul -----A Study of the African Diaspora in Toni Morrison's "Beloved" from the Perspective of Postcolonial Theory

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Abstract: In the 1990s, there was a big explosion in diaspora literature, and black literature became more active in academia. *Beloved*, one of the historical trilogy of African American writer Toni Morrison. This paper will use the research methods of "text reading" and "thematic content analysis" to analyze and explain the diaspora of the novel "Beloved". Especially the shaping of characters in the novel and the exploration of African-American identity, in the pursuit of the origin of the lack of identity and the exploration of the return of identity—that is, the hybridization of identity. And from the post-colonial theory to be analyzed. It is not difficult for us to find that only by loving ourselves and actively integrating into the black community can we face the ghost of history, rediscover the meaning of history to reality, smash the unspeakable otherness attached to the past, and embark on the road of gaining the status of subjectivity.

Keywords: *Beloved*, Post-colonialism, Homi Bhabha, Identity reconstruction

1. Introduction

Morrison was born on February 18, 1931, in the small town of Lorain, 25 miles west of Ohio. He fled his racist home state of Georgia in the early 20th century, then moved to Ohio via Kentucky and settled there. Morrison's childhood experiences set the stage for the mysticism and demonization that recur in her novels. Revisiting the history, traditions and values of Black Americans from a black perspective and communicating them to black people. Her works, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Beloved* are known as one of the historical trilogy. In 1993, she became the first African-American woman who wins the Nobel Prize for literature since Pearl S. Buck. *Beloved* was narrated in 1873 and the novel was not presented to readers until 18 years later. *Beloved* was narrated in 1873, and the novel spanned 18 years before it was presented to readers. This arrangement provides an opportunity to retrace the past and is an application of Morrison's traumatic narrative technique. The novel takes the storyline of grandmother Babe Suggs, the protagonist Seth and her youngest daughter Denver as the main clue, revealing the tragic fate of black people oppressed by slavery. Under slavery, black slaves materialized as the identity of the other, and living in the shadow of slavery could not be freed, which led to a serious crisis of black slaves' identity consciousness [1]. In recent years, Morrison has become an important object of American minority literature research and one of the hot topics in American

cultural research. So far, research on *Beloved* has had various controversies. For Morrison's research, the United States initially began in the 1980s. After Morrison won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, China also began to have further research on Morrison's works. But as early as 1905, the Indian-British writer Rudyard's "*Kim*" can probably be regarded as the earliest precedent for the Nobel Prize in Literature to turn its attention to the diaspora. According to Marie Gillespie "the experience of the immigrant or diaspora is central to contemporary society, and in response to this development, the study of race and ethnicity has been at the forefront of recent discussions in attempts to elucidate the lived experience of postmodernity [2]. Thus It can be seen that in contemporary literature, identity construction has always been a heated topic, especially the identity reconstruction involving ethnic minorities and immigrants, and the issue of identity has developed into the most concerning issue of postcolonial literature, which includes colonialism, multi-cultural hybridity, hybridity, and otherness.

2. The Destruction of Identity (Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Verbal) by Slavery

Homi Bhabha is good at describing how the power of external compulsion distorts human nature through psychological factors from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis. By using words like flight, alienation, and flow/mobility, he argues that colonialism did not construct a fixed identity.[2] Paul D was so estranged from himself that at one point he couldn't tell if the screams he heard were his own or someone else's. Slaves were told they were inhuman and traded as commodities. As a result, Paul D was very insecure about whether he could be a real "person", and he often doubted his worth as a human being. He looked at the rooster named Mr. on the farm and thought that he had more freedom than him. He began to doubt his masculinity/manhood [2]. For the past eighteen years, he has not settled anywhere, but has been moving. Sethe, who is also regarded as a subhuman, was once called "animal traits/characteristics" by school teacher, and she also seemed to be estranged from herself, full of self-loathing [2]. Her children, too, with unstable identities, Howard and Buglar, run away, and Denver confuses her identity with that of *Beloved*, who feels like she's actually starting to disintegrate physically. Slavery worked by destroying Baby Suggs' family and depriving her the chance to be a true wife or a loving mother. Paul D. in order to avoid emotional pain. He locked all his feelings in rusty "tobacco cans" and concluded that one should not love too strongly [2]. Sethe's infanticide reveals the perverse power of slavery: under slavery, a mother best expresses her love for her children by murdering them, thereby protecting them from the more progressive destruction wrought by slavery.

According to William Safran's standard definition of diaspora "They retain memories of their original homeland, they may not be fully embraced by a foreign land, and thus feel partially alienated and isolated from it [3]. In the postcolonial and postmodern context, what kind of thinking, speech, and speech do the people at the bottom use to show their voices? Baba believes that any idea of "translating" a complete thought through language is naïve [4]. Because differences are hard to smooth out. Like realism in Gothic fiction resists expression, often painful, unspeakable, the world of the unconscious and instinctual, mysterious and supernatural, refusing to be identified, explained and described, causing anxiety and trauma. Baba's so-called ambivalence, hybrid states, the third space of negotiation, etc. [4] can be explained in terms of Saussure's structuralist linguistics: "Language is a system of signs, and signs are defined by "signifiers" (Signifiant) and "signifie". Symbol= thing". For example, the sign system of traffic lights: red=stop, green=go. Sign= signifier /signified. In *Beloved*, red is often accompanied by death, exuding death. Scent. For example, Sethe's memory is filled with her daughter's blood and the pink minerals on her tombstone. Also in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet letter*, the scarlet letter "A" on the chest of the protagonist Hester Prynne is punished for adultery Punishment [5]. And the red house in *Jane Eyre* means freedom to be exploited and imprisoned [6]. This shows that language has power and limitations. The unspeakable words of

the bottom people connect themselves to all possible meanings through words and disengagement is communicated through the third space.

So Morrison suggested that our national identity must be healed. America's future depends on its understanding of the past. How? The past, present and future are an inseparable continuum of historical development. Avoiding or denying the past will lead to loss of self and loss of the future. This means that as a slave, there must be self-awareness awakening and identity construction. On the other hand, I will criticize about America's past in comparative literature, a common set of ideals that guide the American spirit in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *America Dream in The Great Gatsby*. These shared ideals include a concept of liberty that ensures the possibility of upward social mobility for all Americans if they work toward it [7]. Readers may wonder whether the American Dream is actually achievable, in stark contrast to whether Morrison's identity construction can be achieved. *Gatsby* believed all his life that as long as he had enough property, he could transcend his lower birth and be on an equal footing with Daisy and Tom. However, even if *Gatsby* succeeded in gaining wealth, he was never accepted by the upper class. Just as the American dream of the 1920s was destroyed by ecstasy and desire—money and happiness. They search in vain for a bygone era where their dreams are worthwhile. Just as the colonized are eager to try to disintegrate the definition of people at the bottom. For example, Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring* The entire black race is worried about whether it can make a breakthrough in a racist society. Elitism in the black race is de-fined as the consumption of self, laziness and condemnation of the proletariat [8]. Spivak believes: "It's not that people at the bottom can't speak, it's just that their voices are suppressed and can't be heard." Baba believes that many of the invasions of postcolonial thought into the human heart are unconscious, that is, a process from passive acceptance to active acceptance, from forced access to adaptive access. As in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*," the little black girl Pecola's apparent imitation is essentially a resistance. He was always looked down upon, despised by his mother, and even raped by his biological father. And she blamed it all on her lack of blue eyes, and finally collapsed under a series of blows. Just as it was cool for the newly emerging black elite to socialize with whites in *Infants of the Spring*, whites took the initiative to join the new black movement. White people fighting for black rights and equality is noble. Music as a spiritual bond unconsciously and actively brings the black voices to the white areas [8]. Nietzsche claimed that the tragic spirit originated from the sublimation of the spirit of Dionysus and the spirit of music [9]. The 1920s were the tumultuous Jazz Age—The Rage Time in American history. After the rapid rise of capitalism in the 19th century, people also moved around the world with the flow of capital, that is to say, where the capital went, there were diaspora phenomena and diaspora. Therefore, in order to pursue the American dream blindly for the "gold rush", people did not hesitate to cross the ocean to come to the United States, they infatuated with the metropolis, and soon the uproar of immigration swept through [9]. It is a pity that the reality is not as beautiful as what they imagined. In an environment where racial discrimination is very serious, blacks always exist as "other" and are in state of being thrown out. As a result, there are a series of cultural conflicts and identity is questioned, so identity needs to be identified and rebuilt [10]. So when the American dream is wrecked by desire and reality, people fall ill of a neurosis as a result of frustration. The necessary condition for a neurotic attack is a conflict between the libidinal desire of a person and that part of his being which we call his ego [11]. Thus, it can be seen that people must wake up from the past, recognize the reality, find self-healing methods, strive to reconstruct their identity, and finally realize the unity of "other-edge-self" [12].

As it is mentioned above that identity is destroyed, then identity must be healed. then how? According to Freud's traumatic neurosis, some terrible memories of the past are forced to recur, especially war trauma. Trauma can capture the experience of a victim over time as repetition, uncontrollability, hallucinations, or the emergence of disturbing things. The act of owning the past and reenacting past events. According to Pierre's traumatic memory and narrative memory: "sudden

flashbacks of history cannot be experienced in the past, and the sudden recall of past memories in a new environment leads to fear of loss of control, and post traumatic stress disorder can be eliminated". Sethe struggles to forget the past and start a new life. As she labored in the fields, the joyful and painfulness of Sweet Home's past were instantly presented to her eyes. This phenomenon is typical of post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms. The symptoms of PTSD fall into three main categories "avoidance, inclination, and overreaction." Sethe tried to escape the past, but she never succeeded, the past was like the air around her that surrounded her all the time. So the best way to heal is cognitive activity therapy and interpersonal therapy - the support and companionship of family, friends, loved ones to the injured person [13]. This shows how important community participation was to black slaves. Individuals need the support of the community to a large extent to survive. Sethe began to develop her self-consciousness during her twenty-eight days of freedom. Likewise, Denver found herself and grew up when he left 124 and became a part of society. It turns out that Paul D and his fellow inmates in Georgia can only escape through cooperation. They were practically bound to each other, Paul D recalls, "if one loses, all loses.". Cincinnati's black community played an essential role in 124. By the end of the novel, the black community secures Sethe free from the past through driving Beloved away by gathering at 124. Therefore the author announced "124 was quite—the ghost was gone". After trying to cure, everything is calm.

3. Self-Awareness and Identity Construction

The arrival of freedom made Baby Suggs realize the existence of self for the first time in more than sixty years. ("She didn't know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, "These hands belong to me, my hands..."! When she preached in the glade, she said: "Love it, love it strongly [1]; from this point, we can see that she has begun to realize the importance of her own body value, self-consciousness began to wake up. Denver's self-consciousness began to wake up. She kept saying that she couldn't stay at 124, and she couldn't go anywhere. She began to protect her mother from harm. Later, she joined the work and worked hard to maintain protect dignity and freedom [1]. On the 124, Seth felt the joy of completely owning herself for the first time. In these short 28 days, she worked hard to make friends with black people, enjoy the joy of family, and she wanted to be a new self, a person with self-awareness. The appearance of Paul D, the man who only escaped from the "Sweet Home" alive, awakened Sethe's memories that had been sealed for many years, and the scenes of the past slowly unfolded in front of her. Paul D told her "You are the most precious, we have more yesterday than anyone else, and we need a kind of tomorrow"[1]. This seems to be telling people that the past and the memory are all a person gets a complete identity. Identity is indispensable, memory is historical, and history is narrated and constructed, so writing and speaking are crucial to the identity construction of individuals and groups.

4. Conclusions

By analyzing the lack of identity of black women and the state of otherization without autonomy, this paper explains their difficult journey from the awakening of self-consciousness, the return of self and the reconstruction of self-identity. It emphasizes that only by loving oneself; actively integrating into the black community; facing the ghost of history and rediscovering the meaning of history to reality can the otherness attached to the body be shattered, and the past, present and future are inseparable. In the novel of Beloved, what she really wants to show is how the black community should complete the construction of self-identity through love and mutual aid! Heal the wounds in the heart! Restore the expectation and hope for the future! Realize the value of their own survival. The process from "other" to "self" makes people face the dark history. With the departure of the Beloved, people's

psychological wounds are also healed, and historical wounds are also dispelled. Love can dissolve everything. redemption of love. Love is the most precious thing in the soul. It is a good medicine to wash away evil. Identity is recognized to be equal and free. Just as "the other country can't hold our soul, the hometown can't hold our body, so there is a distance and wandering"— so-called diaspora. This kind of change in the rhythm of life is as arbitrary as jazz, and people who live in it are either integrated or eliminated, and it all depends on whether the personal identity is accepted by the upper class.

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