



Rewriting Black Identities: Transition and Exchange in the Novels of Toni Morrison (New Comparative Poetics)

Rebecca Hope Ferguson

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This book received a Toni Morrison Society Recognition Award

The complexity of African-American identities is a central concern in Toni Morrison's writing. Speaking of «the enormous layers of lives that [black Americans] live,» she has commented that «If I examine those layers, I don't come up with simple statements.» Drawing on relevant areas of feminist, poststructuralist and race-related theory, this study explores aspects of that complexity, encompassing all eight of her novels to date, including *Love* (2003).

Opening with an exploration of *The Bluest Eye* (1970) in the light of psychoanalytic theory concerning the relational self, racial identity and the transitional object, it goes on to analyse Morrison's articulation of changing aspects of black American identity, assessing among other concerns her poetic practice in relation to voice, time, space and memory, her deployment of narrative and generic forms, and her expressive use of intertextual references.

This innovative study also highlights the key stages of historical and cultural transition that feature most prominently in her novels - the fragmentation and dislocation entailed by slavery, the era of Reconstruction and its aftermath, the impact of the Great Migration and the concept of the New Negro, gender difference and conflict, the Civil Rights movement and the politics of black separatism, and the unique ethos of the all-black townships as reflected in *Paradise*.

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