
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Four Dimensions of Disability Narrative: Race, Gender, Ethics, and Affection

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ABSTRACT

As an emerging study field, disability studies still have many innovative aspects that need to be exposed in terms of research perspective and depth. Disability narrative is one of the perspectives. Due to the strong inclusiveness of narratology itself, in its continuous cross-research with other fields, there have been death narratives, hero narratives, illness narratives, trauma narratives, and so on. Even though there are currently no scholars defining the disability narrative, it can still prove the feasibility and rationality of its emergence. This paper aims to reveal the changes in the identity construction of disabled characters and their important roles in the narrative process by focusing on the representation of the Normal/Abnormal and the Subject/Other and the four dimensions of race, gender, ethics, and emotions that appear in disability narratives in the literary field.

KEYWORDS

Disability narrative; Normal/Abnormal; Dimension; Disabled characters.

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1. Introduction

Disability studies only emerged on the stage of Western critical discourse in the 1980s, so there are still many gaps to be filled in the study of disability narratives. This paper first distinguishes illness narratives, trauma narratives, and disability narratives that are very similar in the medical field. Through the academic definitions of the first two and relevant articles by disability researchers, it is proposed that disability narratives can refer to both the narrative relationship between doctors and patients in the medical field and the autobiographical description of their own disabilities by disabled writers, or the narrative development description of disabled characters in literary works by able-bodied writers in the literary field. Then, it discusses the manifestation of the Normal and the Abnormal/the Subject and the Other in the disability narrative based on its social characteristics. Finally, it analyzes the four dimensions of race, gender, ethics, and affection in the disability narrative by listing the works of Harper Lee, Toni Morrison, Kazuo Ishiguro, and Carson McCullers, and finally proves that the setting of the disabled role in the disability narrative has practical significance in many aspects.

2. Theoretical Framework

Disability, illness, and trauma were initially professional terms in medicine but later aroused the research interest of many scholars as humanities and social sciences intersected with other disciplines. Therefore, these three medical terms were later used in literary research. These three terms are similar to some extent, and their definitions in Webster's Dictionary are as follows. Disability refers to a physical, mental, cognitive, or developmental condition that impairs, interferes with, or limits a person's ability to engage in certain tasks or actions or participate in typical daily activities and interactions or an impairment (such as a chronic medical condition or injury) that prevents someone from engaging in gainful employment or an impairment (such as spina bifida) that results in serious functional limitations for a minor. Illness just refers to an unhealthy condition of the body or mind. Trauma means an injury (such as a wound) to living tissue caused by an extrinsic agent or a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress, physical injury, or an emotional upset. What needs to be carefully distinguished here is disability

and illness. Disability can be divided into congenital and acquired disabilities, and some disabilities are caused by illness, but vice versa. In addition, compared to illness, disability has a greater impact on patients' social participation or social mobility. Trauma refers more to a mental or psychological illness caused after suffering from a disease or blow. Based on the previous comparison of the meanings of disability, illness, and trauma, illness can include disability, but the difference is that disability is not simply a physical and mental illness but rather a result of the complex interaction between personal health status and social environment. (Yang Guojing, 110-120) According to American disability studying expert Lennard J. Davis, "Disability not only refers to functional impairment or physical or mental impairment but also refers to the acceptance and construction of these differences." (Lennard Davis, 1995) In other words, "disability is a product of social construction" (Zheng Jieru, 182-191), which means that people with disabilities are more affected by society than those with illness.

Professor Shen Dan proposed in an article titled "Narration," published in 2003, that narration is one of the terms with the longest history, the greatest changes in usage, and the most complex meanings in Western narrative theory. As for narrative works, they have various meanings, whether broad or narrow, which can refer to a specific form of expressing the story (or a certain element of the story), the entire expression layer, and the act of telling the story itself. (Shen Dan, 66-71) Tang Weisheng believes in his book *Narration* that, in its simplest sense, narration is the description of a story. However, in the field of literature, narrative refers to the narration of a real or fictional event, or a series of such events, in the form of prose or poetry and to narrate events in a certain order, that is, to organize relevant events into a coherent series of events within the discourse. (Tang Weisheng, 2010)

With the extension of narrative in the field of literature, narratology, as influenced by structuralism, turns its attention from the outside of the text to the inside of the text and focuses on exploring the structural principles inside narrative works and the relationships between various elements. Due to its scattered and inclusive characteristics, narratology can be grafted differently with literary styles, literary images, and disciplines outside of literature, enriching and expanding the interpretation connotation of literary texts, such as violence narrative, hero narrative, suffering narrative, death narrative, illness narrative, trauma narrative, ethical narrative, and so on. From this, it can be seen that compared to disability narratives, disease narratives, and trauma narratives appeared earlier, but it precisely demonstrates the rationality and feasibility of combining disability and narratives. In *The Illness Narratives*, Arthur Kleinman pointed out that illness narratives are descriptions or statements related to diseases. Narrowly defined illness narratives only refer to patients' descriptions or statements about their own diseases; broadly defined illness narratives refer to descriptions or statements related to diseases in literary works, which not only end at the disease itself but also include patients, medical services related to patients, family members, and people's reactions to patients. (Arthur Kleinman, 1988) In *Trauma Narrative: A Study of Anthony Burgess's Trauma Literature*, Li Guirong defines "trauma narrative" as a narrative of trauma, a narrative of trauma time, impact, symptoms, feelings, mechanisms, and so on. She also proposes the concepts of medical trauma narrative and literary trauma narrative. The former refers to truthfully recording the patient's condition based on facts to adapt to treatment and the institutional requirements of the research unit, using this as the basis for studying the patient's condition and taking appropriate medication. The latter is a narrative of literary trauma with a wide range of themes, ranging from real historical events to imaginative works. (Li Guirong, 2010) The study of disability, as a critical study that only emerged in the Western critical discourse in the 1980s, has not only a short studying time but also a relatively narrow studying scope. It is regretful that there has not yet been a definition of "disability narrative" by scholars. The aforementioned "illness narrative" and "trauma narrative" can draw inspiration: the definition of disability narrative should also be based on the fields of medicine and literature. In the field of medicine, it mainly refers to the description of the cause and physical condition of a person with disabilities in order to facilitate better treatment. In the field of literary research, on the one hand, it can refer to the description of one's own physical disability or fictional character disability by disabled writers with physical disabilities. For example, Irish writer Christie Brown, who suffers from congenital cerebral palsy, wrote his own physical disability in an autobiographical novel, *My Left Foot*. On the other hand, it can also refer to the description of the image, role, and status of disabled characters created by able-bodied writers in literary works. In Mitchell and Snyder's *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourses*, they view the subject of disability as "a character-making trope in the writer's and filmmaker's arsenal, as a social category of deviance, as a symbolic vehicle for meaning-making and cultural critique, and as an option in the narrative negotiation of disabled subjectivity." (Mitchell & Snyder, 1985) It refers to the discussion of the utility and manifestation of disability in literary narratives around the historical background of literature and film and finally points out that the centrality of these issues demonstrates that disability is a prevalent characteristic of narrative discourses.

Trauma narratives developed early on and have a complete system of theory. At the same time, since trauma narrative mainly derives from the field of psychoanalysis, in the process of its development, it can not leave the guidance of psychoanalysis. The study of illness narrative began in the early 1980s, stemming from society's fear of certain diseases and increasing emphasis on health. It was not until the 1990s that it received widespread attention from the Western academic community. Its development started relatively late, and many theories have not yet been constructed. Therefore, current illness narratives mainly focus on analyzing disease imagery in literary works or the literary creations of diseased writers. Their research is mainly analyzed from sociological and cultural perspectives, and the research scope is not as extensive as trauma narratives. Consistent with the research

characteristics of illness narratives, disability narratives also have shortcomings, such as short research time and incomplete theories. However, the studied individuals in these two fields are different, which means that disability narratives only focus on disabled individuals rather than ill patients in a general sense. However, it is worth mentioning that there is confusion among the three in a certain medical aspect, such as at the level of mental disorder, where a person may cause harm or impact to the mind after being subjected to a certain trauma, leading to mental illness, which can also be considered a form of mental disability to some extent. Nevertheless, the meanings to be expressed by these three are absolutely different in different backgrounds or contexts.

3. The Normal and the Abnormal/ Subject and Other in Disability Narrative

Like feminism, the rise of disability studies in Western literary criticism originates from social movements. The minority rights movement of the 1960s, especially the Civil Rights Act passed in 1964, showed disabled people the possibility of fighting for equality. Afterward, with the promotion of a series of disability rights movements such as "accessibility," "deinstitutionalization," and "independent living," people with disabilities have made significant progress in striving for accessibility, equal access to education and work opportunities, and reducing social prejudice and discrimination. The concept of disability as a social issue has gradually entered people's minds. (Yang Guojing, 110-120) It was not until the 1980s that disability studies truly entered the stage of Western criticism. Scholars such as Davis, Thomson, and Snyder have conducted in-depth research on disability, laying the foundation for the development of disability studies.

In Davis's view, the concept of disability only emerged in the mid-19th century, but at this time, people with disabilities, women, black people, and others were belonging to Other. Later, with the introduction and development of eugenics, disabled individuals seemed to exist as "abnormal and erroneous" in society. The concept of eugenics was first proposed by British scientist Galton in 1883 and was influenced by genetics. He emphasized that genetics is the true cause of individual differences by studying individual differences. Therefore, in order to ensure the normal survival ability of future generations, Galton advocates for good spouse selection and improved race. In his view, eugenics was an important social and cultural movement in the 20th century, closely related to racial, ethnic, and gender ideologies, as well as issues such as population control, social health, national hospitals, welfare conditions, and so on. (Francis Galton, 1909) The eugenics proposed by Galton no longer only belongs to the fields of biology or social sciences but also integrates into the scope of sociology. Human bodies are divided into "normal" and "abnormal," and in order to meet social expectations and national needs, the main goals of eugenics are "normalizing the nonstandard" or "the elimination of 'defectives.'" (Lennard Davis, 1995) At this time, people with disabilities were subjected to oppression and discrimination from various sources.

In the 20th century, Foucault conducted a systematic study of the concept of "the abnormal" in Western society during his lectures at the University of France. He divided "abnormal people" into three categories: human monster, the individual to be corrected, child masturbator/onanist, and conducted a genealogical analysis of them. (Michel Foucault, 2003) Under the influence of Foucault Davis, in *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, with the help of statistical concepts such as normalcy and normal distribution, the national institutions can "scientifically" divide the whole population into "normal" healthy people and "different" disabled people, and then "legally" ignore and deprive the rights and interests of the disabled under the pretext of safeguarding the interests of the national community. (Lennard Davis, 1995) From this, it can be seen that this demographic division still carries the concept and intention of eugenics.

In the narrative of disability in the field of humanities and social sciences, the meanings conveyed by the appearance of disabled images or bodies in different eras are different. In most literary works, there is actually no binary opposition between physical normality and abnormality. However, some writers may place their own personal disability experiences on the works or set a certain "mission" in the character image they create. In fact, the emergence of disabled characters can be found in literary works from a very early age. For example, Homer's cyclops Polyphimus, the lame and blind Oedipus described by Sophocles, Hugo's one-eyed and deaf Quasimodo in *Notre Dame de Paris*, and Faulkner's Benjamin Compson with serious intellectual defects in *The Sound and the Fury*. (Chen Yanxu, 208-212) The time, characters, places, or other elements appearing in literary works are all metaphorical, so the appearance of these abnormal disabled people often reflects some social ills or moral defects of some people. For example, Shakespeare's portrayal of Richard III is an ugly and disabled figure with a hunchback and short. In terms of character traits, he is cunning, jealous, and malicious. Richard III's deformed body is even belittled by others as an animal other, such as "adders," "vicious dog," "bottled spider," "foul bunch-backed toad," and "any creeping venom'd thing," all of which are descriptions of his dual physical and mental disabilities. Richard III's disabled body serves as a rhetorical vehicle and also metaphorically depicts the disorderly and pathological state of the country during the War of the Roses. (Wang Jingjing, 131-139)

In Davis's view, the defectives can only be on the edge of narration as a supporting role due to their physical disability, but Gore, an American scholar, does not agree with it. In *Plotting Disability in the Nineteenth-Century Novel*, she discussed the disability narrative written by Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Dinah Mulock Craik, Charlotte M. Yonge, George Eliot, and Henry James in

Victorian literature, revealing the necessary role that the disability plays in promoting plot development. (Clare Gore, 2020) Davis and Gore's views are not unreasonable, but in fact, before the 19th century and even after a short period that the concepts of "eugenics" and "the abnormal" were proposed, the majority of disabled characters in disability narratives in British and American literature were indeed marginalized and served for "the normal" who are healthy and in the centre. For example, in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Frankenstein created facial deformities and ugly monsters; Rochester, who was blind for a short period in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*; Captain Ahab, whose leg was bitten off by a whale in Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*; In Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, the presence of disabled characters such as Chillingworth with an ugly face and deformed body and so on. These are particular evidence compared to the "normal" protagonist, and their "abnormality" serves as a foil to the central character. Nevertheless, with the emergence of various civil rights movements, people with disabilities have made significant progress in striving for accessible travel, equal access to education and work opportunities, and reduced social prejudice and discrimination. The concept of disability as a social issue has gradually entered people's minds. More and more works include images of people with disabilities, and the roles and status of these characters have changed. Taking American literature as an example, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, under the impact of social Darwinism, hedonism, and money worship, Puritanism began to decline. At the same time, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War led to the consequences of a large number of American soldiers being disabled, which makes the author's description of them filled with sympathy and compassion. This emotion was ultimately transformed into the mighty, justice, selfless, and patriotic disabled soldier characters in novels by the government in order to "create heroes," such as Nick in Hemingway's *In Our Time* and Barnes in *The Sun Also Rises*. (Chen Yanxu, 208-212) It can be seen from this that the flawed, abnormal, disabled people are gradually moving towards the center of literary narrative, changing the previous image of the Other and gradually being the Subject and containing subjectivity.

4. The Four Dimensions of Disability Narrative: Race, Gender, Ethics, and Affection

In disability narratives, four dimensions that authors want to convey to readers can often be observed: race, gender, ethics, and affection. In the eyes of disability researchers, the Other in race and gender, like disabilities, are marginalized in mainstream social environments and suppressed by corresponding centers at different levels, or it can be said that there is a binary opposition between the Subject and the Other at those levels. Davis believes that almost all theories about race, gender, class, and other minority groups are systematically discussed because of their "disabled state." Thomson holds the view that "feminism and race are manifestations of disability" because both their bodies are seen as powerless and deficient, like disabled bodies. (Ren Bing & Shi Shuhui, 107-112) At the racial level, the most obvious one is the white subject and the black other. At the gender level, it basically manifests as the male subject and the female other, and at the body level, healthy people are the subject while disabled people are the other.

4.1 The Racial Dimension in Disability Narrative

Taking Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* as an example, this novel mainly revolves around the story of a kind white lawyer defending a poor but innocent black man named Tom Robinson. Not only is Tom's identity as a black person worth pondering deeply, but he is also a disabled person with an atrophic left hand. The description of his physical disability in the novel is not much. In Chapter 18, Tom Robinson's disability is clearly described as: "Tom Robinson's powerful shoulders rippled under his thin shirt. He rose to his feet and stood with his right hand on the back of his chair. He looked oddly off balance, but it was not from the way he was standing. His left arm was fully twelve inches shorter than his right and hung dead at his side." (Harper Lee, 1988) In fact, This atrophied left hand can clearly be regarded as one of the evidence to prove his innocence: because the scar on the white girl's body was hit with a left hand, it is absolutely impossible for Tom to do it. However, most white people have an inherent misunderstanding of black people: "The evil assumption—that all Negroes lie, that all Negroes are basically immoral beings, that all Negro men are not to be trusted around our women, an assumption one associates with minds of their caliber" (Harper Lee, 1988) Due to race, black people have always been considered evil and disrespectful animals in the hearts of white people. Moreover, Tom is a disabled person, which is in line with history but also presupposes the tragic ending of Tom: he was wrongly imprisoned after losing the case and was ultimately shot to death during his escape, largely due to his skin color. When Harper Lee sets up the characters, she portrays Tom as a disabled black more than a healthy black. Tom had a dual marginalized identity as if placing him outside the narrative and in a more marginalized position. However, Tom is one of the mockingbirds, which is exactly the story that Harper Lee is going to focus on. At this point, it can be said that Tom is the Subject rather than the Other in the disability narrative. The racial discrimination and prejudice against his physical disability in society have led people to hold a negative image of him without thinking. It not only criticizes the darkness and corruption of American society and deeply exposes the serious racial persecution and discrimination in American society but also reflects the difficult and bitter life of African Americans, especially a disabled black person like Tom Robinson.

4.2 The Gender Dimension in Disability Narrative

Throughout history, women have always been oppressed by the patriarchal system and placed in the position of the Other in the relationship between men and women. For example, Aristotle referred to women as "mutilated males," believing that their bodies were "improper form," and therefore, women could only exist as "monstrosities." (Garland-Thomson, 333-353) Rosemarie Garland

Thomson's commentary on the intrinsic relationship between the two is to the point: like femininity, disability is not so much an objective representation of inferior physical condition or impairments but rather a fictional cultural narrative targeting the body, both of which refer to power relationships acting on the body. (Garland-Thomson, 333-353) Zheng Jieru believes in "A Review of Clare Walker Gore's Plotting Disability in the Nineteenth-Century Novel" that Dickens metaphorically portrayed the oppression and persecution of Victorian women by patriarchal norms through "scars." Craik and Yonge, who were deeply influenced by religion, used disability writing as an effective narrative strategy to express their respective feminist views. (Zheng Jieru, 182-191)

As the most representative and famous African American female writer, Toni Morrison, without exception, depicts the stories of black people. Toni Morrison's works integrate race, gender, and disability, which is one of the reasons why her works are widely circulated. It is not difficult to see the racial conflict between white and black people in her works: the brutal and inhumane oppression, abuse, and blow inflicted by white people on black slaves. At the same time, as a postmodern female writer, Morrison focused more attention on describing black women. She vividly portrayed the history and destiny of black people, revealing more deeply the cruelty and absurdity of slavery. While calling for unity among the black community, she also helped black women understand and rebuild themselves. It can be observed that most of the disabled characters in Morrison's works are female, such as Sethe, who is mentally disabled, and Grandma Babe, who is disabled in her legs in *Beloved*. Mrs. Breedlove, who is disabled in her feet, and Pecola, who ultimately suffers from a mental breakdown in *The Bluest Eye*. Eva, the grandmother with only one leg in *Sula*, and so on.

It can be observed that women in the disability narrative in 19th-century novels are still in a humble and submissive position. On the other hand, in Morrison's portrayal of female disability, as a feminist, Morrison does not believe that female disability is a "disruptive force that challenges cultural truth" (David Mitchell & Sharon Snyder, 1985) and is also not a "narrative technique that imprisons women at home" (Zheng Jieru, 182-191). Morrison further praises the strength and greatness of disabled women. Tony Morrison changed the rebellious tradition of black male and female writers in the past, using his superb creative art and ideological realm to create unique, full-bodied, and complex black female images, showcasing their existence and survival difficulties. *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved* are several works by Morrison that highlight female themes, presenting a hymn of black women's loss, struggle, and pursuit of themselves. (Meng Qingmei, 112-118). The difficulties faced by black women are multiple, with discrimination against whites and oppression by black men causing black women to face numerous difficulties in identity construction. In the narrative of disability, black women, whether it is Eva with one leg or Sethe with a "cherry tree" in her back, will not easily bow and surrender like the difficulties in life when they experience more difficulties.

4.3 The Ethical Dimension in Disability Narrative

When it comes to the ethical dimension in disability narratives, it is necessary to mention the exclusion of disabled individuals by eugenics. The origin of eugenics can be traced back to the philosophical ideas of Plato, Locke, Kant, and others. Plato advocated for depriving "defective infants" of their right to life, while Locke and Kant believed that those lacking rationality were not enough for humans. (Licia Carlson, 2010) This idea was further developed in the mid-19th century with the introduction of Evolution, laying the theoretical foundation for modern eugenics. According to Galton, "In short, eugenics refers to the science of improving populations. The so-called improvement of populations goes far beyond the careful balancing of mating issues. Especially when applied to humans, even the slightest and the weakest effects must be considered so that more suitable races or bloodlines can rapidly grow and replace uncomfortable races, rather than the opposite". (Michael Rembis, 85-103) At this point, the eugenics ideology, with activism as the core logic, provides a theoretical basis for the otherization and stigmatization of disabled individuals. Eugenics have borrowed emerging statistical and biological methods such as genetic diagnosis, intelligence testing, and family lineage trees to label defective bodies as abnormal populations that require social transformation or even elimination. For example, Karl Pearson, a leading figure in eugenics in the UK, compared people with disabilities to criminals picaros and included them in the category of "the unfit," which is different from ordinary people. (Lennard Davis, 1995) It can be said that under the catalysis of eugenics, people with disabilities were built into "evolutionary defectives" in the 19th century, becoming incompatible with others in society. (Zheng Jieru, 182-191)

Take the *Never Let Me Go* by the Japanese British writer Kazuo Ishiguro as an example. In fact, Kathy, Tommy, Ruth, and the students of Hailsham in the novel are all human cloning. The original intention of their creation is to provide organs for sick and disabled human beings, and these clones can only donate their organs once and for all and finally die. The body, especially the damaged body of human cloning after donation, is the main field of the novel. Kazuo Ishiguro repeatedly portrays the pain of physical disabilities that human bodies such as Kathy may experience, such as when Kathy was working as a carer for Ruth, " But just once, as she was twisting herself in a way that seemed scarily unnatural, and I was on the verge of calling the nurses for more painkillers, just for a few seconds, no more, she looked straight at me, and she knew exactly who I was. It was one of those little islands of lucidity donors sometimes get to in the midst of their ghastly battles, and she looked at me, just for that moment, and although she didn't speak, I knew what her look meant." (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2006). In addition, human cloning is destined to be sterile and have no parents, which is another feature of their physical disability. Ethical issues are vividly revealed in the disability narrative,

with human cloning as the main feature. Kazuo Ishiguro wrote this novel not only to tell about the inhumanity of cloning technology and the misery of human cloning, such as Kathy but also to consider the ethical violation. The verb used in the book to describe human cloning donating to die is "complete," which is more thought-provoking. Firstly, this confirms that the existence of Kathy and her companions carries a "task," and upon completion of the task, they are also "completed." Secondly, after donating their organs, they no longer "complete" themselves, which seems to be another kind of irony. At this level, those human cloning who donate their organs again and again and make themselves incomplete are actually representatives of the disabled. Kazuo Ishiguro responded to the ethical problem of disability in today's society with his keen vision and surreal, unique description: human society should not eliminate disability but create an inclusive world where the disabled and normal people coexist in harmony. (Ren Bing, 121-127)

4.4 The Affectional Dimension in Disability Narrative

Since the concept of disability was proposed, more and more literary works have introduced disability narratives. The disabled are seen as different from the general public, and from their own perspective, they are bound to develop emotions that are different from those of ordinary people. Affected by historical factors and social backgrounds, the social cognition and affectional expression of disabled characters in disability narratives vary in different periods. For example, in the 19th century, American society, which was influenced by the function of Puritanism, and the punishment for violating religious taboos were often reflected as disabled individuals with physical disabilities. On the one hand, it demonstrated miracles, and on the other hand, it endowed disability with the meaning of original sin for humanity. (Chen Yanxu, 208-212) The disability narrative in literary works during this period often played a role in social education and warning. By the mid-20th century, people with disabilities gradually strengthened their sense of identity while striving for their legitimate rights and not being discriminated against. Writers who suffer from disabilities themselves bravely expose their physical disabilities, such as Jean Stewart in her autobiographical novel *The Body's Memory*, who recounts her situation and attitude towards life after amputation through the protagonist Kate. She has a famous saying: "My body is the last hardship I need to overcome." (Chen Yanxu, 208-212) In Davis's *Enforcing Normalcy*, he also pointed out that a certain group of deaf-mutes do not think they are different from others, just in the way they communicate. From this, it can be seen that the construction of disabled identity and affectional expression in disability narratives have also changed with the progress of the times and people's minds.

If most of the novels in the 19th century used disability narratives as an auxiliary role, then in the 20th century, there were more and more disability narratives centered around disabled characters. One of the typical examples is the work of Carson McCullers. As a Southern writer suffering from disabilities and illness, McCullers's works are filled with people with disabilities and are at the center of her narrative. For example, in *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter*, the Subject of the narrative is a mute named Singer, and the novel is filled with emotional expressions. Singer and Antonapoulos, both deaf and mute, were good friends who cherished each other and talked about everything in life. Antonapoulos was sent to the insane asylum when he suffered from mental problems. Since then, Singer has become one of the lonely people in McCullers's works. Even though Antonapoulos is Singer's only friend in his heart, Mick and others rely on him because of his existence or his physical disability and personality characteristics. In front of healthy people, Singh rarely expresses his opinions and rarely communicates in sign language, making him the best listener who can help others overcome loneliness. McCullers's works are deeply imprinted with her own life imprint, and the characters in the novel are always in some kind of unavoidable and involuntary painful predicament. In her novels, those who are suffering from psychological and physiological disabilities always attempt to rediscover the value and significance of human existence by constructing affectional attachment relationships between human beings.

5. Conclusion

Influenced by Galton's "eugenics" and the factor of religion, people with disabilities, like women and ethnic minorities, have always been marginalized, and they are even considered abnormal in society. With the rise of various civil rights movements, people with disabilities have gradually realized the importance of striving for their legitimate rights and interests. This is reflected in literary works, where disabled narrative characters gradually move from the edge to the center and have profound significance in the four dimensions of race, gender, ethics, and affection in the works. By observing disability narratives in the 19th and 20th centuries, it can be observed that, like feminism, people with disabilities also face numerous difficulties in building their identity. However, it is gratifying that they have been noticed by more and more scholars, including through disability narratives in literary works to convey the inner world of people with disabilities or disabled writers. In this sense, the attention to disability and the disabled is also a concern for the personal destiny of everyone, and the images of disabled people written in literature are a window that helps us to have a more thorough, profound, and vivid understanding of the living conditions of this special human group.

In addition, whether it is disability studies or disability narratives, there is still room for further research in China. Although a few scholars, such as Chen Yanxu and Yang Guojing, have introduced disability theory and attempted to introduce it into disability literature research, there is still a lack of depth and breadth of study. Therefore, Chen Yanxu pointed out the future development trend of disability literature, presenting a research focus on the image of disabled characters in the text, adopting methods and perspectives from other neighboring disciplines, and focusing on the social and cultural significance of disability. In this regard,

scholars who are interested in this field or hold a caring attitude towards disabled people still need to strengthen their theoretical depth and continuously expand their research fields.

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