

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

NEW ESSAYS ON SONG OF SOLOMON

The American Novel series provides students of American literature with introductory critical guides to the great works of American literature. Each volume begins with a substantial introduction by a distinguished authority on the text, giving details of the work's composition, publication history, and contemporary reception, as well as a survey of the major critical trends and readings from first publication to the present. This overview is followed by a group of new essays, each specially commissioned from a leading scholar in the field, which together constitute a forum of interpretative methods and prominent contemporary ideas on the text. There are also helpful guides to further reading. Specifically designed for undergraduates, the series will be a powerful resource for anyone engaged in the critical analysis of major American novels and other important texts.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

★ The American Novel ★

GENERAL EDITOR

Emory Elliott

University of California, Riverside

Other books in the series:

New Essays on The Scarlet Letter

New Essays on The Great Gatsby

New Essays on Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

New Essays on Moby-Dick

New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin

New Essays on The Red Badge of Courage

New Essays on The Sun Also Rises

New Essays on A Farewell to Arms

New Essays on The American

New Essays on The Portrait of a Lady

New Essays on Light in August

New Essays on The Awakening

New Essays on Invisible Man

New Essays on Native Son

New Essays on Their Eyes Were Watching God

New Essays on The Grapes of Wrath

New Essays on Winesburg, Ohio

New Essays on Sister Carrie

New Essays on The Rise of Silas Lapham

New Essays on The Catcher in the Rye

New Essays on White Noise

New Essays on The Crying of Lot 49

New Essays on Walden

New Essays on Poe's Major Tales

New Essays on Rabbit, Run

New Essays on Daisy Miller and The Turn of the Screw

New Essays on Hawthorne's Major Tales

New Essays on The Sound and the Fury

New Essays on The Country of the Pointed Firs

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

*New Essays on
Song of Solomon*

*Edited by
Valerie Smith*



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon
Edited by Valerie Smith
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1995

First published 1995

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

New essays on Song of Solomon / edited by Valerie Smith.

p. cm. – (The American novel)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-521-45440-9 – ISBN 0-521-45604-5 (pbk.)

1. Morrison, Toni. Song of Solomon. 2. Afro-American families in literature. 3. Afro-Americans in literature. 4. Michigan – In literature. I. Smith, Valerie, 1956– . II. Series.

PS3563.08749S636 1994

813'.54 – dc20

94-7334

A catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0-521-45440-9 hardback

ISBN 0-521-45604-5 paperback

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

Series Editor's Preface

page vii

1

Introduction

VALERIE SMITH

page 1

2

From Orality to Literacy:
Oral Memory in Toni Morrison's
Song of Solomon

JOYCE IRENE MIDDLETON

page 19

3

Call and Response:
Voice, Community, and Dialogic Structures
in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

MARILYN SANDERS MOBLEY

page 41

4

Knowing Their Names:
Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*

MARIANNE HIRSCH

page 69

v

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Contents

5

The Postmodernist Rag:
Political Identity and the Vernacular
in *Song of Solomon*

WAHNEEMA LUBIANO

page 93

Notes on Contributors

page 117

Selected Bibliography

page 119

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Series Editor's Preface

In literary criticism the last twenty-five years have been particularly fruitful. Since the rise of the New Criticism in the 1950s, which focused attention of critics and readers upon the text itself – apart from history, biography, and society – there has emerged a wide variety of critical methods which have brought to literary works a rich diversity of perspectives: social, historical, political, psychological, economic, ideological, and philosophical. While attention to the text itself, as taught by the New Critics, remains at the core of contemporary interpretation, the widely shared assumption that works of art generate many different kinds of interpretation has opened up possibilities for new readings and new meanings.

Before this critical revolution, many American novels had come to be taken for granted by earlier generations of readers as having an established set of recognized interpretations. There was a sense among many students that the canon was established and that the larger thematic and interpretative issues had been decided. The task of the new reader was to examine the ways in which elements such as structure, style, and imagery contributed to each novel's acknowledged purpose. But recent criticism has brought these old assumptions into question and has thereby generated a wide variety of original, and often quite surprising, interpretations of the classics, as well as of rediscovered novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*, which has only recently entered the canon of works that scholars and critics study and that teachers assign their students.

The aim of The American Novel series is to provide students of American literature and culture with introductory critical guides to

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-45604-3 - New Essays on Song of Solomon

Edited by Valerie Smith

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

American novels now widely read and studied. Each volume is devoted to a single novel and begins with an introduction by the volume editor, a distinguished authority on the text. The introduction presents details of the novel's composition, publication history, and contemporary reception, as well as a survey of the major critical trends and readings from first publication to the present. This overview is followed by four or five original essays, specifically commissioned from senior scholars of established reputation and from outstanding younger critics. Each essay presents a distinct point of view, and together they constitute a forum of interpretative methods and of the best contemporary ideas on each text.

It is our hope that these volumes will convey the vitality of current critical work in American literature, generate new insights and excitement for students of the American novel, and inspire new respect for and new perspectives upon these major literary texts.

Emory Elliott
University of California, Riverside