

***The Concept of Racism in Morrison's " Song of Solomon"*****Key word: Racism****Prof. Mahmoud A. Ahmed****Assist.instructor. Mohanad****M. Kadhim****University of Sudan for science And  
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*Toni Morrison's third novel Song of Solomon, establishes her as a major African- American writer. The story of a black man's research for his identity, through a discovery of his family history, became a best seller and drew praise from readers and critics, when it was published in (1977). The novel has been especially admired for the beauty of language and its grounding of universal theme in particularity of the African American experiences, as well as for its use of folklore.*

*Song of Solomon is based on an African- American folktale about slaves who can fly to Africa when they choose. Morrison fictionalizes this folktale through the character of Solomon, the great-grandfather of the story's protagonist, Milkman Dead. Through his discovery of the story of Solomon and his ability to fly, Milkman learns to take pride in his ancestry and to value his connection to family and community. Song of Solomon won the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction. It is now widely taught, and appeared again on the best seller lists when it was chosen by Oprah Winfrey for inclusion in her book club and it is still considered one of Morrison's best books.*

**2. Racism in Song of Solomon**

*Song of Solomon begins with the flight of Robert Smith an insurance agent, from the roof of Mercy Hospital. Smith appears on the roof of the hospital with two handcrafted wings on his back. A small crowd gathers to witness the impending jump. Many believe that he will not jump, but to the amazement of some and horror of others Smith jumps. Smith wants to leave the south side of the city in search of his freedom.*

*The North Carolina mutual life insurance agent.*

*Promised to fly from Mercy to the other side of*

*Lake superior at three O'clock(1).*

*The idea of flight to freedom is rooted in both African- American and European literary tradition. Mr. Smith reminds us of Icarus, a human from Greek mythology who uses wings made out of wax in an attempt to fly close to the sun. Like Icarus, Smith plummets to his doom when his wings fail to carry him. The novel depicts the struggle of black's culture in white society, depicting discrimination as well as separation. When Ruth Dead goes to the Mercy Hospital, on Main Avenue, Milkman becomes the first black to born there. The Southside residents playfully call Mercy Hospital, No Mercy Hospital.*

*The black community like to Call Main Avenue street as Not Doctor Street, because when Ruth's father, Dr. Foster practiced his patients there, he had referred to it as Doctor Street. But the white culture in its concern for separation and propriety decree that" Doctor Street was never used in any official capacity" and the edict that the street " would always be known as Main Avenue and not Doctor Street"(4). Creates a lasting nickname by referring to it there as Not Doctor Street. The black community establishes " a way to keep their memories a live and please the city legislator as well"(4). This shows the Whites' efforts to prevent African American from claiming their own version of the city's spaces.*

*The denying of black's right establishes the conflict between the white and black community. This story indicates the roots of the discrimination in the United States and this conflict derives from previous generations.*

*Theodore Mason notes that " The authorities attempt to fix the land scape in a web of artificial abstractions that bears no relationship to the lives of the people of Southside".*

*The narration moves to Macon's family. Macon Dead considers himself the richest African American in the neighborhood while, he regards all other African American as underclass. Nevertheless, Macon Dead was never accepted by his father in law, Dr. Foster. His wife's father does not trust him fully and does not show any respect to him. Macon's proposal to marry Ruth not because he loves her but because she is from one of the most wealthy and most honorable families in the neighborhood.*

*After their marriage, Macon treats Ruth badly. He periodically beating her and denying her love and sexual gratification. She withdraws into a fancy world seeking comfort in sleeping on her*

father grave and nursing Milkman until he is eight years old. He changed her home on Not Doctor Street as " More prison than palace"(101). Her daughters Corinthians and Magdalena get the same treatment from their father. His son Milkman accepts his father's selfish code and, as a young adult, works for him in the real estate and rental business. In short, the atmosphere surrounding the Dead family hardly constitutes what one might call a loving and warm on but is, instead cold and cruelly. Macon kept each member of his family awkward withfear. His hatred for his wife glittered and sparked in every word he spoke to her. The disappointment he felt in his daughters sifted down on them like ash, dulling their buttery complexions and chocking the lilt out of what should have been girlish voices(10).

Bjork states that " Macon and his family exemplify the patriarchal, nuclear family which traditionally has been a critical and stable feature in western societies". Macon was obsessed with accumulating wealth. Every day he sits in his real estate office, called Sonny's Shop, to take last money from his customers. When Guitar Bain's grandmother asks Macon to defer her rent payment in order to be able to feed her young children, he refuses without hesitation.

Yes, Mrs. Bains.

You got something for me?

Well that's what I come to talk to you about,  
you know Cency left all them babies with me...  
but babies can't make it with nothing to put  
in they stomach.Macon, ok, till Saturday coming.

Saturday, Mrs. Bains. Not Sunday. Not Monday. Saturday (28,29). Another example of Macon's mercilessness when he finds one of his tenants, Henry Porter, has gotten drunk and his threatening to shoot himself. Instead of attempting to save Porter's life, he visits him to collect the rent. Like other blacks in the middle class in his time, Macon's main aim is to get a lot of money to be equal to the white standard, so he uses the money of poor blacks to build his wealth.

Brooks Bouson says that, " Macon, in his drive wealth, assumes a white identified role as he actively exploit poor blacks in the Southside area of town where he is a slum landlord".

Macon does not only, pay any attention to his family or the blacks in general but he also humiliates his sister Pilate, his source of love

and support. Pilate Climbed out of her mother's womb without a navel. Macon Jr. leaves Pilate, when he is seventeen and doesn't see her again until a year before Milkman's birth. Macon believes that his sister betrays him by stealing some gold they found in a cave shortly after their father's death. Macon disowns her " at one time she had been the dearest thing in the world. Now she was odd, murky, and worst of all, unkempt. At a regular source of embarrassment"(20).

Macon bans Pilate from his house, because he is ashamed of her unkempt appearance. He is also ashamed of her because of her former career as a wine maker and smuggler. He hates her because of her residence in a slum without electricity or running water and her general disdain for material good. To Macon, Pilate, Reba, her daughter, and Hagar, her granddaughter are" a collection of lunatics" who make wine and sing in the streets" Like common street women"(20).Blinded by the white culture's values, Macon cannot recapture familial love. In a brief moment of nostalgia, listening to Pilate singing, " Macon felt himself softening under the weight of memory and music"(30). But although memory moves and rivets him, it does not alter his hardened core. His determination to own things and collecting the rents makes him merciless. Guitar's grandmother sums up his estrangement from the black community, when she says" a nigger in business is a terrible thing to see"(22).

This shows that Macon a domineering, abusive misogynist, who hates his wife and sister disappointed in his daughters and generally ignores his son. According to Jan Furman" hating his wife... ignoring his daughters and disowning his sister... are the sum of Macon's family connection".

Times goes and Morrison details certain events in Milkman's growing up. Milkman and his family go on Sunday afternoon to a trip. On their way, Macon tells them about his plan to establish a beach community at Honor for the " high class negroes". As usual, Ruth's comments are generally ignored. Corinthians is excited by this plan. Through her thoughtless comment, she reveals her racial prejudice against blacks and her psychological distance much like her father's from the black community. She giggles and says that" Negroes don't like the water"(50).

Corinthians admits that she would like to live at the beach so long as it is restricted to nice colored people. In the middle of their

trip, the young Milkman demands to use the bathroom. While urinating, Milkman hears the sound of Leana's footsteps behind him and turns around wetting his sister's pale-blue dress. Concentrating on things behind him becomes a habit for Milkman, as though he does not have a future to look forward to. At the age of twelve, Milkman befriends Guitar. Guitar takes "him to the woman who has as much to do with his future as she has his past"(35). Milkman and Guitar visit Pilate, although he knows that his father will punish him if he goes to Pilate's house but he does.

The two boys inquire whether she has a navel or not. She replies no, and invites them for a snack. When Milkman asks Pilate if she is his father's sister, Pilate mysteriously responds that there "ain't but three Deads a live"(56). Pilate tells them stories about her childhood in Montour County, Pennsylvania, and her relationship with her brother Macon, and how they escape from Montour County after their father's death. Suddenly, their conversation is interrupted by her daughter Reba and her granddaughter Hagar, they are introduced to Milkman. Milkman shocks when he saw Pilate although she has no navel, and " looked like a tall black tree"(57).

Milkman finds Pilate as she presents herself in the beginning of the novel, full of strength , confidence and good humor. Bjork says that " Macon and the town people identify Pilate as " ugly, dirty, poor drunk" but Milkman sees that Pilate while, she is anything but pretty, is neither dirty nor drunk. However when Milkman's father hears of Milkman's encounter with his sister, Macon scolds Milkman for disobeying him. He reminds Milkman that he doesn't want him consorting with Pilate. Milkman requests his father to tell him the family's history .

Macon remembers his childhood with his sister, Pilate. He tells him how they spent their time in the farm called Lincoln Heaven. Macon's actions towards others derive from his early trauma. He recalls the " numbness that had settled on him when he saw the man he loved and admired full of the fence, something wild ran through him when he watched the body twitching in the dirt"(50,51). Having never shared this story with his son, Macon now understand that it is time to verbalize not only the memory of his struggle to develop the land and

raise Pilate but also the memory of his father's violent death. Milkman notices that his father's voice softens as he tells of his early home life in a rural and community-oriented culture. In the sharing, Milkman feels close to his father" Milkman felt close and confidential now that his father had talked to him in a relaxed and intimate way"(54). Macon tells Milkman that his sister is a " snake"(83), and that is why he wants Milkman to stay away from her.

Following their discussion, Macon tells Milkman that it is the time for Milkman to learn the family business. To learn what is real. He will teach his son the " one important thing he will ever need to know"(54). Macon tells Milkman " own things. And left the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too"(55). Macon's response to the greater culture is to emulate it, cutting himself off from others in his obsession with accumulating wealth to protect himself. Joseph Brown, comments that Macon's father's experience makes him wants ' to own things and people. To accomplish this must reject his family, his past, and the support of his community.

At the age of twelve Milkman begins to work for his father, which gives him an opportunity to spend more time with Guitar, Pilate and Hagar. " Macon was delighted. His son belonged to him now and not to Ruth"(96). Living in the large shadow of his abusive and acquisitive father, Milkman grow up with a secret and shameful flaw. At the age of fourteen, Milkman" noticed that one of his legs was shorter than the other... It bothered him

and acquired movements and habits to disguise what to him was a burning defects"(62). Milkman" knew, because of the leg, that he could never emulate(63), his physically powerful father. He feels that he cannot measure up to his father's standards. As Milkman grows older, it becomes apparent that his short leg is merely an outward manifestation of his internal short comings.

At the age of twenty two, his father hits Ruth, and Milkman pushes his father against the radiator in defense of his mother. As he wants to prove his manhood , he threatens to kill his father if he ever touches his mother again. Macon never hits her again. Macon explains to his son the reasons behind his poor relationship with Ruth. He claims that Ruth and her father had an inappropriaterelationship. He even

*describes an incestuous scene, he witnessed between Ruth and her dead father. Macon in his distorted way, wishes to justify his continued humiliation of Ruth , and believes that there is " nothing to do but kill a woman like that"(74). Bjork says that" when Milkman strikes his father for humiliating his mother, he does so, to prove that he is not a bad man.*

### **3. Racism and the Seven Days Society**

*Distraught by his father's revelations, Milkman goes to see Guitar. Along the way, he remembers being breast-fed by his mother beyond infancy and feels disturbed. Milkman understand that Ruth had and continuous to have a life outside of being his mother. But the image of Milkman walking in a crowded street against the flow of traffic confirms his individuality. Milkman finds Guitar at Tummy's Barbershop among a group of men gathered around the radio, listening to a news report about a fourteen-year old black, Emit Till , who was stabbed to death after whistling at a white woman. Guitar sums up their situation as follows:" The cards are stacked against us and just trying to stay in the game, stay alive and in the game, make us do funny things"(87). Milkman becomes aware of the vulnerability of black men realizing that" each man in that room knew he was subject to being picked up as he walked the street"(101).*

*Following Emmitt Till brutal killing, a group of blacks calling themselves "the Seven Days" vows to balance the violence by killing a white for each subsequent black death. The mission of the Seven Days is " about trying to make a world where one day white people will think before the lynch"(160). Milkman's friend, Guitar explains the ongoing sociopolitical problems to Milkman when he points out the labor abuse that procedures the tea, that Milkman takes for granted" Like Louisiana cotton. Expect the black men picking it wear diapers and turbans... all over India that's all you see. Bushes with little bitsy white tea bags blossoming"(114).(Schreiber, 2010,36). It is clear now that Guitar has come to reject not only the values and attitudes of the black middle class but also the life of black working and lower class. Marriot explains the problem in psychological terms:" Black men must die so that the aggressive structure of white repression and sublimation of libidinal drives can remain in place".*

*Guitar joins the Seven Days in his attempt to challenge white culture's easy dismissal of blacks. When his father is cut into two in a*

*sawmill accident, Guitar is only four years old. He recalls how " his mother had smiled and shown that willingness to love the man who was responsible for dividing his father up through eternity... It was that fact that instead of life insurance, the sawmill owner gave his mother forty dollars" to tide you and them kids over", and she too it happily and bought each of them a big peppermint stick on the very day of the funeral"(224-225). Just as Nel realizes in Sula that her mother can turn to custard when she must placate the train conductor, Guitar cannot forgive his mother's gratitude for her handout from white authority.*

*Shortly after his father's death, Guitar's mother leaves the family." She runs away. Just runs away. My aunt took care of us until my grandmother could get there. Then my grandmother took care of us. Then uncle Billy came... so it was hard for me to latch onto a woman. Because I thought if I loved anything it would die"(307). Deserting the family in a time of grief, Guitar's mother increases the family's stress by disturbing a secure attachment for her children, and the movement from caretaker to caretaker compounds Guitar's trauma of loss. Years later, Guitar connects his personal and cultural life with the violent activities of the Seven Days(Schreiber, 2010,38).*

*As we saw in the The Bluest Eye, the black community creates its own hierarchy, which mimics white culture. Ruth's father, a successful doctor," didn't give a damn", about the blacks in his town(71). His main concern when his grandchildren are born is that they be lighted- skinned. Identifying with the white aggressor rather than with his own community. Dr. Foster forms no responsibilities when his daughter marries Macon, Dr. Foster's interest lies in Macon's financial success. Guitar criticizes Milkman's father behavior toward blacks " Your father is a very strange Negro. He'll reap the benefits of what we sow, and there's nothing we can do about that. He behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man"(223). In defense of his father, Milkman says that his father" doesn't care whether a white man lives or swallows lye. He just wants what they have"(224). He fixates on materials good and takes pleasure in ownership, not objects themselves.*

*Morrison shows that Milkman and Guitar are divided by their different upbringing world views. Milkman who belongs to the 1950s era, black upper class, is blind to see white racism, protected from it*

by his luxurious life. Guitar, who lives in poverty and he loses his father's life at the hands of white factory owner, sees oppression in every direction he looks, and is thus unable to draw a distinction between Emmet Till's murderer and Milkman's father.

#### **4. Racism in the Standards of Beauty**

The narration moves to describe the relationship between Milkman and his niece Hagar, they love each other and spend time together. He and Hagar become sexually attracted to each other, and at the respective age of seventeenth and twenty two, they consummate the relationship. For the first three years, Milkman is delighted by the affair since whenever he appears, she especially smiles and welcome him. After fourteen years, however the attraction has diminished for Milkman. (Bjork, 1999, 44.).

After some time, Milkman abandoned her and rejects her love. Milkman's rejection of Hagar's love is an example of his self-centered and callous behavior. Milkman is unable to love Hagar as she does. Milkman sends Hagar a rejection letter thanking her for all the years of happiness. Obviously Milkman has not developed any kind of deep concern for and about human relationships. He yearns instead to run away in narcissistic flight beyond his increasingly enclosed, static existence. For her part, Hagar responds with a stalking desire to kill Milkman, whose life ironically becomes further enclosed as he tried to avoid and hide from her (Ibid). Like Pocola In The Bluest Eye, Hagar thinks that Milkman left her because of her skin, so she attempts to refashion herself by purchasing new clothes and makeup. But her efforts at self-improvement and self-transformation are doomed to failure because of her dark skin. Hagar wants to draw the attention of Milkman by her attempt, because she knows that Milkman prefers lighter-skinned women.

Pilate tells Hagar that Milkman "can't value you more than you value yourself" (306). But Hagar views Milkman as her "home in this world and cannot survive without his protective gaze" (137). Just as Sula does when Ajax leaves her, Hagar takes to her bed. Although Pilate and Reba "offered her all they had: love, murmurs and protective shade", Hagar will not recover. (315). Hagar ultimately becomes dominated by Milkman even after he leaves her. Hagar's submissiveness into her role reflects the male dominated society of that time.

*Hagar relies on Milkman for her emotional survival, and in fact, she cannot live without him. This shows the weakness of Hagar because she depends on Milkman to live. Unlike her grandmother Pilate, she does not rely on men either financially or emotionally. As a result, she is the novel's strongest female character in terms of spiritual and emotional endurance. Pilate, unlike other female characters, is strong and powerful. She supports herself financially by making wine. She is suspected to have supernatural powers as a result of her non-existent navel. Pilate is named after Pontius Pilate, the Roman leader who ordered Jesus' crucifixion, and who was an evil and powerful man.*

*Although not evil, Pilate certainly embodies some very positive attributes of power. Ironically, as the only strong and independent character in the novel, Pilate has a male name.*

*In Chapter Seven, we turn to Milkman and Macon. Having spent his entire life under his father's roof, Milkman asks Macon if he can take leave for a year to focus on his personal ambitions. Although Macon resists and comes close to pleading with his son to stay, Milkman compares him to Pilate and her green sack hanging from the ceiling. Suddenly, Macon is no longer interested in Milkman's departure but wants to know everything about the sack that supposedly contains Pilate's inheritance. He tells Milkman the story of what happened when his father died, this time not leaving any details out.*

*The narrative switches to a flashback. After the death of their father, Pilate and Macon find themselves homeless. Fortunately, they are rescued by Circe, the midwife who delivered them both. Circe hides them away in the mansion she works in right outside of Danville. Pilate and Milkman stay there for only two weeks, not able to bear the four walls closing in on them. Pilate pierces her ear and begins wearing her infamous earring constructed out of her mother's brass box.*

*Six days after the first Macon Dead, his children—a twelve-year-old, Pilate and a sixteen-year-old Macon Dead—found themselves homeless. Circe, the midwife who had delivered them both and who was there when their mother died and when Pilate was named (259).*

*Pilate and Macon escape to the joyous outdoors and have a ball. Soon, however, they are wandering around frightened with no definite plan of action until they see a ghost of their father motioning at the entrance of a cave. They spend the night there but in the morning Macon realizes they are not alone. Inside is an old white man. Scared, Macon kills him and discovers gold underneath the man's green blanket. Imagining a life of luxury, Macon plans on taking the gold with him until Pilate dissuades him, saying that taking the gold would look like a motive for killing the man. Pilate and Macon then begin to fight and Macon leaves the cave, and waits for Pilate to come out. Three days later, when the coast is free from hunters, he enters the cave only to find Pilate and the gold gone.*

*Macon becomes convinced that the green sack hanging in Pilate's house is the gold. As he licks his lips, he tells Macon to get the gold. If Milkman is able to get the gold, Macon tells him he can have half of it and can do whatever he wants.*

*Macon get it and you can have half of it, go  
wherever you want. Get it. For both of us.  
Please get it, son. Get the gold(269).*

*Milkman arrives at Guitar's house and tells him about his plan to steal Pilate's sack, and Guitar agrees to help him. Although Milkman realizes that he doesn't really need Guitar help, he is inspired by Guitar's sense of fearlessness. As Guitar is figuring out how to bomb a white church and kill four little white girls in order to avenge the Birmingham Church bombing, in which four little black girls perished, but Guitar doesn't have enough money to purchase explosive. Guitar finds the steal of Pilate's sack good way to get the money of explosive.*

*Four little colored girls had been blown out of a church, and his mission was to approximate as best he could a similar death of four little white girls same Sunday since he was the Sunday man(270).*

*The differences of attitudes between Milkman and Guitar represent the two most common black ideologies in term of achieving true freedom. Milkman laid back in attitude is a stark contrast to Guitar whose hostility commands the use of physical force. Milkman, himself compares Guitar to Malcolm X who encourages force when necessary*

wanted to combat what he regarded as a white" oppression". Guitar character embodies Malcolm X's beliefs to the fullest, even taking them to an extreme level as a member of the Seven Days Society. when Milkman contradicts Guitar's points by asserting the fact that many white have made real sacrifices on behalf of Blacks, Guitar says that Hitler only killed the Jews because there were no blacks around him. It is therefore necessary for black people to avenge themselves since they cannot take legal action like the Jews did. Bouson states that " in explaining the personal and social forces that shape the construction of Guitar's political identity as a militant black nationalist and member of the Seven Days terrorist organization, the narrative presents Guitar as an individual who has been deeply scarred and traumatized by his childhood loss of his father".

It clear now there are many differences between Milkman and Guitar's views. Guitar who has never enjoyed the luxury of a comfortable middle class life, believes that blacks can win freedom and equality only through aggressive, revolutionary and political tactics aimed at dismantling the racist white power structure. On the contrary, Milkman whose outlook on life has been influenced by his father's prosperity and materialistic values, thinks that economics is necessary for blacks to gain their right. He believes if the blacks can make enough money, they can buy their way into white society. Milkman tells Guitar that he has to see him and other as human being rather than whites or blacks. Milkman tells Guitar that his murderous activities are "crazy" that they have become a "habit" and that since he is able to kill so callously, he might move toward killing black people, including Milkman himself. Milkman and Guitar see a white Peacock as a symbol of their greed. The Peacock dances in front of them and they want to catch it just as the image of the gold dances around in their minds and they went to find it.

### **5. Milkman and Freddie: Victims of Racism**

The fierce racism remains as a backdrop throughout the novel. One day, Freddie tells Milkman about his bad situation and how he is a victim of racism. He explains why he was raised in jail:" You know they ain't even got an or phanage in Jacksonville where colored babies can go? They have to put' em in jail(109). Adequate facilities for black are not available. A member of the Seven Days enumerates the material items and the luxury lifestyle that are inaccessible to

*blacks:" no private coach... no special toilet and your own special-made eight- foot bed either. And... no valet and a cook and a secretary to travel with you and do everything you say"(60). Society maintains the cultural practice of separation.*

*Milkman's distress at being pulled over by the police for no apparent reason but his skin color, ends his optimistic world view. This is the first time that he has experienced discrimination in his privileged time. Further agonizing is the fact that he if Macon Dead II had not been rich, Milkman would have stayed in jail. This experience draws Milkman closer to the rest of the African-American population, who at the time was being continuously discriminated against.*

*While the realization that both his legs are the same length does not appear to surprise Milkman, it signifies that he no longer is different from the rest of the black people. The fact that his skin color mattered more to the police than his money angered and upset him. It also unified him with the rest of his fellow African Americans. The prior limp and shorter leg were also signs of Milkman's lack of compassion. As soon as he finds himself ashamed for stealing from Pilate, he notices his legs are the same length.*

*They told us to pull over. They didn't see nothing.*

*They just sideswiped us, and told us to get out.*

*What was that for?... what'd they stop us for?*

*We wasn't speeding. Just driving along. They Stop anybody they want to. They saw you was colored, that's all(317).*

### **6. The Impact of Racism on Corinthians.**

*Chapter Nine visualizes the transformation of Lena and Corinthians. Usually they are classified as passive with no real life. They begin to revolt against the oppression in their own house. Although Corinthians has an academic certificate, she accepts a position as a maid for Michael Mary Graham, the state poet Laureate. Morrison, by drawing comparison between the two women, parallels the roles of the black and white women in 1960s American society. Miss Graham's inheritance includes her father's mansion and the legacy of white southern aristocracy. Consequently, she tries to recreate the tradition of old southern gentility, with Corinthians, as her servant. Morrison compares the white women's inheritance of wealth and privilege with the black women's legacy of Poverty and slavery, which forces Corinthians to struggle for economic survival in*

*a white racist culture that denies her opportunities to pursue her dreams and use her impeccable academic credentials.*

*Through Corinthian's story, Morrison criticizes the American educational system, for failing to provide black Americans with opportunities to get their right in employment. Carter. Woodson criticizes the educational system and says that " America's education system is designed to enslave the minds of black and to perpetuate the myth of black inferiority".*

*Like Sula's mother, Corinthians recognizes the overwhelming need for a human touch. Porter makes Corinthians feel " bathed, scoured, vacuumed, and for the first time simple"(199).*

*He returns a loving gaze that has been lacking, and " in place of vanity she now felt a self-esteem that was quite new"(201). In choosing Porter, Corinthians chooses to grow up, something her mother and sister have not done. Milkman tells his father about the relationship between Porter and Corinthians, and Macon break up the relationship between them.*

*A few days later, Lena confronts Milkman and harshly rebukes him for ending Corinthian's relationship. She reminds Milkman with what he was his whole life, someone who uses but doesn't give back. Lena reminds him of the time when he was a little boy urinated on her. She claims that in one way or another, Milkman has been urinating on others entire life, and that he is a " sad, pitiful, stupid, selfish, hateful man"(335), without any thing to show for himself. Lena's decision to stop making fake roses suggests that she no longer willing to live under false pretenses. And she tells him to leave her room. Milkman's failure to respond to her passionate appeal or to defend himself demonstrates his complete detachment from his family.*

### **7. Milkman's Journey to Shalimar Begins**

*Milkman decides to leave his house in search of gold as he doesn't find it in Pilate's green sack. Milkman tells his friend Guitar about his plan to go to Montour County, Pennsylvania , to look for the gold in the cave. He says that he will go alone but he will split any treasure he finds with Guitar. Guitar suspects that Milkman might cheat him. He reminds Milkman that he needs the money to carry out his Seven Day's mission. Milkman's trip to retrieve the gold is at first a proclamation of his selfish desire. Morrison describes him to be blinded by his desire for the gold. His idea to look for the gold in*

*Virginia is illogical, and he seems to have lost all his sensibility. However, Milkman's reasons for wanting the gold are not as materialistic as they first appear. Milkman regards the gold as his only chance to escape from his father's dominating character. The gold, therefore, serves as a means to create independence for Milkman. Macon and Milkman each wants the gold for different reasons. Macon's is desire to accumulate profit.*

*Milkman reaches Danville, he finds an old friend of his father, Reverend Cooper, who tells Milkman stories about his father's boyhood, Macon Dead I and Circe. Cooper also tells Milkman that the Butlers, the wealthy white family that employed Circe, were responsible for Macon Dead I's murder.*

*She worked for the Butlers rich white folks, You know, but she was a good midwife in those days. Delivered everybody, me included"(375).*

*In his way to meet Circe, he stops by the now run- down Butlers mansion. He walks inside and is startled by a rotting stench that quickly turns into a pleasant ginger scent. Milkman meets Circe and she reveals some facts about his ancestry. Circe's namesake is not biblical but is taken from Homer's Odyssey. In Odyssey, Circe is a sorceress who lives in a stone mansion in the wood. She also helps the Odysseus to find his way home. The Circe who Milkman encounters is also same type of an enchantress who aids him in finding his past. Circe tells Milkman that Macon Dead I's real name was Jake and that his wife's name was Sing and they came to Pennsylvania in a wagon from a place in Virginia called Shalimar.*

*The ruined Butler mansion alludes to the fact that money is only mortal. Once dead, the Butlers are forgotten and their mansion is purposely destroyed. The Butler mansion reiterates the concept of material wealth as being superficial and useless in many areas of life. The Butlers, who stole from others to make a profit, were dehumanized in the process. Macon, who watched his father die at the Butlers' hands, now shares some similarities with the aforementioned family. Both are numb to feeling as a result of constantly pursuing wealth. The last of Butlers, commits suicide after she discovers all the money is gone. Circe, as an act of revenge, allows dogs to destroy the house, a final insult.*

*As a child, isolated like his sisters, Milkman never played with his contemporaries:" his velvet suit separated him from the other children"(264). This isolation from other blacks by class recurs in Shalimar, where his car, whisky, and cloths separate him" They looked at his skin and saw it was as black as theirs, but they knew he had the heart of the white men who came to pick them up in the trucks when they needed anonymous, faceless laborers"(266). He looks longingly at the children playing in Shalimar and regrets the childhood he never had. When Milkman realizes his personal connection to the children's song, he gets" as excited as a child confronted with boxes and boxes of present under the skirt of a Christmas tree...He was grinning. His eyes were shining, he was as eager and happy as he had ever been in his life"(304). Through the innocent play of the children, Milkman recaptures the experiences of a childhood that escaped him. The singing children" reminded him of the gap in his own childhood"(299).*

*Reliving these experiences helps him to grow up, as he begins to understand not only himself but also his parents' trauma. As an adult, he now understand that his father's wealth has kept him from developing into an independent and socially responsible individual(Schreiber,2010,40). When he experiences genuine hospitality in the south, Milkman wonders why blacks ever left. He senses that people there are valued themselves rather than for their material goods.*

*The act of the men dressing Milkman up in military gear yet again signifies his transformation. Milkman is no longer a child spoiled by his luxurious upbringing but rather a man who can now fend for himself. In doing so he connects with nature and other. His ability to laugh with the hunters enables him to walk without his limps. He matures, so that his response will be not numbness but the ability to relate and love other " he did feel connected, as though there was some cord or pulse or information they shared. Back home he had never felt that way, as though he belonged to anyplace or anybody. He'd always considers himself the outsider in his family"(293). The community of his ancestor allows him to connect to his own. Pilate's ability to make sense of her life passes on to Milkman.Milkman first exhibits his compassionate side with Sweet, the local prostitute. Milkman's other acts of love were callous and egocentric, as he*

previously demonstrated with Hagar. Before, Milkman threw away Hagar's overwhelming love; now he accepts Sweet's passion and returns it by bathing her, making her bed, and scouring her tub.

At the time of his metaphorical death, Milkman sees an image of Hagar bestowing upon him a perfect love.

This image that flashes before his eyes represents Hagar's undying love and his rejection of it.

This rejection, however, is overturned through his caring actions towards Sweet. Milkman has matured and understands now the importance of integrity and respect.. Thus, Milkman finally accepts his black heritage.

### **8. Conclusion**

'The Song of Solomon' not only immortalizes Milkman's ancestry, it is also an important statement about African American social circumstances. In the song, Solomon abandons Ryna to fly back to Africa, and leaves her with twenty-one children. The theme of abandonment and flight is very prevalent throughout the entire novel. Guitar's mother flees after her husband's death, unable to bear the burden of raising her children alone. Pilate leaves behind Reba's father, lest he discovers she does not have a navel. Milkman leaves behind Hagar, who bestowed upon him unconditional love. The theme of abandonment was also apparent in African American society; oftentimes, the male had to leave in order to search for work. Many times, as revealed through the Great Migration, families were torn apart as family members went North in search of work. Thus is the case with Milkman's family, as his father eventually traveled North and left his Southern homeland behind.

Milkman returns to tell Pilate about his recent discoveries, which finally explain the true origin of the bag of bones Pilates has carried with her for decades. After their father's death, Pilate's brother Macon attacked a white man in a panicky self-defense and left the body in a cave.

Years later, Pilate dreams of her father, who tells her: " You just can't fly on off and leave a body"(147). Pilate interprets this admonition as a command to return to Pennsylvania to collect the Skelton of the white man, and does so, placing the bones in a sack which she hangs from the rafter of her house. Now Milkman informs her that the bones are actually her father's , and Pilate realizes that

*she must bury her father's remains in Shalimar where he was born. While they bury the remains of Pilate's father Guitar shoots Milkman but the bullet kills Pilate instead of Milkman. While she is bleeding, her regret is that " I wish I'd known more people. I would of loved 'em all. If I'd a known more, I would a loved more"(336). She asks Milkman to sing for her like Reba and Hagar and he does. in a similar way, song of Solomon sends out contradictory messages in its presentation of the underclass Guitar, who initially described as the person who can liberate Milkman, and yet who ultimately tries to kill Milkman.*

*The concept of flight not only begins the novel, but the story ends with it as well. Once dead, Pilate's body is encircled with birds, flying about her. One of the birds grabs the snuffbox out of the ground and carries it high in the air, signifying that Pilate's name and existence will live on through the generations. Milkman's belief in flight is reemphasized through his jump at Guitar. Morrison leaves Milkman's death in an ambiguous state, perhaps stating that whether he physically lives or not is not imperative. Milkman, who underwent a spiritual rebirth, will always be alive because his family name will now live on.*

*Milkman's final words emphasize not only his belief in flight, but his understanding of it. His ability to ride the air suggests that he has trust in the ability of how to choose his own fate.*

*In contrast to the beginning of the novel where Mr. Smith fails at flight, we are now presented with the possibility of a second chance. Milkman's jump at Guitar is optimistic as Milkman now understands how to fly. The concept of flight can be regarded as both realistic and hypothetical. Flight, throughout the entire novel, has been regarded as natural. After all, Solomon flew back to Africa. However, up until this point, no one has ever succeeded at flight. Milkman's spiritual rebirth as well as his newfound identity helps secure his survival against Guitar's revenge.*

## المخلص

مفهوم العنصرية في رواية اغنية سليمان للروائية توني مورسن

كلمة المفتاح: العنصرية

البحث مستل من اطروحة دكتوراه

م. م مهند محمد كاظم

أ. د محمود علي احمد

كلية اليرموك الجامعة

جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا / كلية اللغات

سونك اوف سولومون هي الرواية الثالثة للروائية توني مورسن. وهي قصة شخص يبحث عن هويته. هذه الرواية تناقش مشاكل المجتمع الاسود وماهي الحلول لها وكفاحهم من اجل نيل حريتهم المسلوبة من المجتمع الابيض. هذه الرواية تناقش اهمية ان يكون الشخص السود ملم وفخور بالأسلاف.

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