



doi <https://doi.org/10.58256/a52qba20>

Research Article



Section: Literature, Linguistics & Criticism

Published in Nairobi, Kenya by
Royallite Global

Volume 4, Issue 4, 2023

Article Information

Submitted: 24th October 2023

Accepted: 1st November 2023

Published: 5th December 2023

ISSN: 2708-5945 (Print)

ISSN: 2708-5953 (Online)

Additional information is available
at the end of the article <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

To read the paper online, please scan
this QR code



Kumar, T. (2023). A journey of self-discovery and survival: A critique of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977). *Research Journal in Advanced Humanities*, 4(4). <https://doi.org/10.58256/a52qba20>

A journey of self-discovery and survival: A critique of Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* (1977)

Tribhuwan Kumar

College of Science and Humanities at Sulail, Prince Sattam Bin
Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia

Email: t.kumar@psau.edu.sa

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7259-9364>

Abstract

The focus of this study was to examine Toni Morrison's conceptual approach in portraying the main characters of *Song of Solomon*. Existentialist philosophy and literature largely focused on the inquiry of how humans navigate their existence in a rapidly evolving world. The text explored obligation and freedom as integral aspects of a purposeful existence for individuals. The textual analysis of *Song of Solomon* formed the basis of the study. Morrison presented Milkman and Pilate, the two main characters in this book, with circumstances that need them to make decisions between different options. This analysis concentrated on the characters' endeavours to chart their lives and overcome obstacles to underscore the existential concept of the work being examined. This analysis centred on Morrison's approach and the extent to which she successfully incorporated the social and cultural contexts of the two main characters. The study examined Milkman's inclination to adapt in order to align with his evolving identity, as well as his reluctance to conform to the established norms. In summary, the study thoroughly examined the author's existential perspective and evaluates Aunt Pilate's ability to make autonomous choices and take complete accountability for the outcomes of those choices. It centred on the self-perceptions of each character, as well as their perspectives on the community, its norms, and its principles.

Keywords: Existentialism, self-discovery, survival, Toni Morrison, philosophy



© 2023 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY-NC-SA) license.

Public Interest Statement

The present study provides a good understanding of Existentialism as a school of thought that has its unique outlook of the existence of man. Understanding the existential vision of Toni Morrison is a gateway to the reader to adjust himself/herself to whatever situation or circumstances imposed on him/her in an ever-changing world. Morrison skillfully depicted archetypal characters in *Song of Solomon* who have the ability to express existential issues. The novel functions as a comprehensive guide for those who have acquired an incapacity to manifest authentic behaviours in their everyday existence. Moreover, it can be seen as a catalyst for inspiring all persons to revive this dormant ability within their hearts and brains. This is an invitation for every individual to cultivate their own personal philosophy of life. Essentially, Milkman's predicament might be regarded as universal, as it relates to the quest for self-actualization and self-exploration.

Introduction

Song of Solomon is American literature at its finest, and its beauty and complexity are simply awe-inspiring. Toni Morrison deftly interweaves past and present, and the slow discovery of the history of Milkman's people carefully reveals where he has gone wrong in his own life, as well as what he must do now. Through the use of magical realism in *Song of Solomon*, Morrison is able to portray a world where multiple identities can exist harmoniously, offering a freedom from oppression and the less conscious rememory within the gothic. Milkman is mentally enslaved and spiritually dead, but with the help of his eccentric aunt, Pilate, and his best friend, Guitar Bains, he embarks on a physical and spiritual journey that enables him to reconnect with his past and realize his self-worth. The action of *Song of Solomon* spans thirty-some years. It explores the cause of Milkman's identity crisis, that is, his own psychological trauma led by the effects of trans-generational transmission of familial and racial trauma. Losing parental love, Milkman is indifferent to others and always feels a sense of isolation and depression.

The present study investigates Milkman's journey to search for his origin and to discover himself. Also, the study explores the dilemma that Milkman has to experience in his endeavor to find his roots. The study seeks to answer the following question: What are the obstacle that one can face in his attempt to find out his roots and what is the possible way to achieve self-realization? Milkman has either to conform to his father's materialistic will or to follow a spiritual path of his own and bear responsibility for his choice. Milkman's discovery of identity lies in his ability to understand his own past.

The study aims at highlighting the existential approach that Toni Morrison has adopted in portraying the character of Milkman in *Song of Solomon*. It introduces Milkman as model in his ability at exhibiting existential stands in overcoming different obstacles in his journey of searching for his origin. The choices that Milkman makes can be a inspiring for any reader of this research to adapt to the situation which he/she can find himself in. The study also aims at providing more insights on both Toni Morrison as a postmodernist writer as well as on the literary theory in question. That is to say, the study aims at pinpointing the philosophical dimension of Toni Morrison in her novel *Song of Solomon*.

Literature Review

My choice of Toni Morrison for critical appraisal is largely informed by her unique status in African American literature as a Nobel Prize winner and her status as a female writer as well as my personal fascination with how her works are didactic and very illuminating. The Effects of Trauma in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* is a PhD thesis Conducted by Balqis Astharini in 2002. In this thesis the researcher discusses about the effects of trauma experienced by the major characters.

From an existential standpoint, individuals are engaged in an ongoing process of continually constructing and reconstructing their distinct essence, drawing from the diverse range of life experiences available to them. Individual decisions are predicated upon the subjective evaluation of factors deemed significant or inconsequential to one's personal existence. Kierkegaard and Sartre support the idea as "a good productive life is one in which an individual is committed for the purpose of actualizing his true existential self" (Noonan, 2006; 2). Individuals may have thoughts of regret for the choices they have made in their past, leading to emotions such as anxiety, a sense of loss, and a lack of hope. This can be attributed to the realisation that they have previously hindered their ability to reach their maximum capabilities. From an existential perspective, an individual in this particular circumstance is commonly referred to as a person with "limited faith". This refers to the state of being unable or unwilling to make decisions that carry significant consequences, as well as the act of rejecting accountability for the process of constructing a purposeful life (Jabeen et al., 2022).

Existentialism posits that the condition of human existence is characterised by a fundamental state of oblivion at birth. In other words, individuals come into being without any preconceived biases or beliefs. However, individuals inherently possess the ability to engage in introspection and cognitive processes in relation to their environment, allowing them to shape their perception of reality from seemingly trivial elements (Kumar, 2000). In an alternative formulation, it might be posited that every individual possesses inherent freedom of choice and action upon birth, necessitating the subsequent responsibility to make decisions in accordance with this freedom. Nevertheless, the exercise of freedom must be accompanied by a sense of commitment: "Human beings are wholly free and they are also wholly responsible for what they make of themselves. This responsibility is accompanied by anxiety and sometimes hopelessness which result in a human being choosing a pre-determined way of life or choosing to remove themselves from the world and live in self-imposed isolation" (Holman, 1988; 176).

The theories used in analyzing the novel are historical and psychological approach (Ajmal et al., 2000). "Magic Realism in Contemporary American Women's Fiction" (2000) is a study conducted by Maria Ruth Noriega Sanchez in which the researcher examines the implementation of magic realist strategies in African American with a particular focus on Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988), it is also concerned with the significance of African mythical background and the experience of dispossession and transference of culture. The thesis "The relationship Between Character and Setting: A Narrative Strategy in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* by Sally-Anne Josephson" (1997) documents the development of my theory which builds on existing narrative theories and incorporates Grice's theory of implicature. It also illustrates the theory by exploring the relationship between the character of Pilate and her settings in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. The purpose of the thesis "Intercessory Power: A Liter Ower: A Literary Analysis of Ethics and Cary Analysis of Ethics and Care in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Alice Walker's *Meridian*, and Toni Cade Bambara's *Those Bones Are Not My Child* (2020) by Kelly Mills" is to examine post-Reconstruction literature as an intercessor that creates a common memory among readers and activates them as ethical agents who can move through retributive violence rather than enact violence. This literary analysis engages three novels—Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Alice Walker's *Meridian*, and Toni Cade Bambara's *Those Bones Are Not My Child: A Novel*—written by African American women authors about three time periods—Jim Crow Era, Civil Rights Movement, and Contemporary. In *Search of Lost Names: Narrating the Quest for Identity and Family History in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon* (2015) is a study conducted by Ranjana Das Sarkhel in which Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* revives the history of those people whose names do not find a mention in any historical document. The revival of history adds a new dimension to African American Literature where slavery becomes an important theme

and gives a satisfactory sense of existence to African Americans which is built through the establishment of a link between an assured sense of the past and the present.

Taking into account the works reviewed above with certain unavoidable limitations, it is clear that Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* was not looked upon from different perspectives and no attention has been given to examining this novel from a philosophical point of view. The purpose of the present study is to critically analyze *Song of Solomon* from an existential standpoint. It will examine how Morrison has employed this approach to convey the theme of searching for legacy in the novel.

Designs/Methods/Findings/Results

Morrison's intention in *Song of Solomon* is to endow the protagonist with a genuine presence. She wishes to emphasise that Milkman carries the ultimate accountability and must make the conclusive choices. She is deeply engrossed in contemplating the roles he must do to shape the trajectory of his life. The researcher will examine Morrison's intentional focus on the importance of individual acts in achieving self-fulfillment and personal freedom, as well as the complex nature of the search for one's true identity. The researcher will perform a meticulous examination of the text to ascertain how Toni Morrison skillfully integrates the events of *Song of Solomon* to depict the struggle for independence and identity that is suitable for the historical setting. To summarise, an existential interpretation of *Song of Solomon* entails examining Milkman's many experiences to assess the decisions he faces, specifically whether to accept or reject them. Furthermore, an analysis will be conducted on the roles played by the other actors in his education and his quest for essence.

Discussion

Toni Morrison, widely regarded as one of the most prominent African American writers in history, has consistently emphasised the imperative of attaining a liberated and authentic existence throughout her body of literary works. Morrison's writings have been read by readers from many demographic backgrounds and in multiple languages. Morrison's writing style possesses a distinctive quality due to her active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement during contemporary times and her upbringing within a multicultural and racially diverse culture. While it is acknowledged that she is not the initial African American writer to explore inquiries regarding the nature of humanity, it is evident that her literary contributions surpass those of her contemporaries in terms of their depth and philosophical perspectives.

Toni Morrison published *Song of Solomon* in 1977, her third book. It obtained the esteemed Friends of American Writers Award as well as the National Book Critics Circle Award. It elevated Toni Morrison to literary fame in the United States. Milkman Dead, a young man of traditional values who comes to the realisation that he must discover his life's purpose, is the protagonist of the narrative. Milkman's existence transitions from complete dependence on others to a state of autonomy. Or, in his pursuit of a meaningful existence, Milkman transitions from doing as others desire to undertaking every endeavour independently.

Although Milkman pursues material gain, he ultimately discovers himself in pursuit of history. During his youth, he would perceive those in his vicinity as purveyors of knowledge. His principal preoccupation is the pursuit of the riches that his father had informed him of. Nonetheless, this transforms into an additional fixation on the investigation of his familial forebears and memoirs. With the assistance of his associate Guitar and in accordance with his father's directive, Milkman desires to evade the obligation to accomplish something significant in his life. Nonetheless, throughout the narrative, Milkman seems to be escaping responsibility as opposed to evading it.

During his exploration into his familial lineage, Milkman undergoes a transformation from a

condition characterised by a lack of genuineness to one marked by a sense of authenticity. By doing so, he departs from his domicile in Michigan and emancipates himself from it through air travel. Within this chapter, Morrison places significant stress on the potentiality of achieving liberation through the act of embracing folk history. Hence, Milkman exhibits a strong desire to achieve the qualities of authenticity or mystical prowess that are commonly associated with existential heroes.

In the novel *Song of Solomon*, the protagonist is presented with the opportunity to exercise agency by utilising the knowledge and information bestowed upon him by various individuals regarding his ancestral lineage. Throughout the course of Milkman's maturation, he undergoes the crucial realisation that he bears the burden of accountability for his own destiny. Considering his individual desires, he must cultivate his sense of self. As Milkman embarks on his quest for the reputed wealth, he experiences a growing scepticism in his father's proposition. The protagonist begins to question the validity of his father's philosophical beliefs. As the individual embarks on a journey to explore his ancestral heritage, he gradually recognises that in order to lead an authentic existence, he must actualize his capabilities and pursue a self-determined lifestyle. The individual gradually develops self-confidence, enabling them to assume responsibility for cultivating and actively pursuing their personal sense of worth.

Morrison's objective is to emphasise the notion of existential freedom through the portrayal of Solomon's narrative about the African individual who possesses the ability to soar. The concept of freedom is that the individual assumes ultimate accountability for determining the trajectory of their own life. In her work, Morrison employs the creation of a myth as a means to underscore the significance of identity within the framework of historical agency and the exercise of free will. The author skillfully integrates the events of the Solomonic narrative to exemplify the quest for a particular type of identity and autonomy within the context of historical occurrences. In this particular scenario, Milkman embodies the ideals of his culture. In this instance, Morrison used the utilisation of myth adaptation within the context of black historical background in order to manipulate existential concerns, so establishing significant connections.

Morrison seeks to underscore the notion that universal access to freedom is a paramount concern. Each character depicted in the story have the inherent capacity to experience significant spiritual growth, and any failure to do so may be attributed to the choices they make that do not align with their authentic selves. Toni Morrison endeavours to convey the notion that within the context of the African American experience, the attainment of liberty necessitates the assumption of corresponding responsibilities. Nevertheless, achieving an ideal equilibrium between individual freedom and societal obligations is an elusive endeavour. It is obvious that what Morrison wants to emphasize is that "truth compels one to get in touch with his heritage so as to comprehend his true self and establish a higher quality of existence: One that does not necessarily include or prelude material wealth." (Samuels & Hudson, 8)

The most important metaphor employed in *Song of Solomon* is that of flight. The concept refers to the attainment of either physical or metaphysical emancipation. The protagonist, known as Milkman, is informed of his ancestral lineage, which reveals that his forebears were African individuals who had endeavoured to achieve freedom from enslavement by undertaking daring flights or seeking repatriation to Africa. Notably, Milkman's birth coincided with a tragic incident involving a man's suicidal flight. While the successful emancipation journey undertaken by Milkman's great-great-grandfather resulted in his freedom from slavery, it is important to acknowledge that the experience was far from pleasant for those individuals who were left behind. In alternative terms, his act of fleeing might be described as unwise as a result of his inability to acknowledge his innate ability to endure the prevailing society norms and values of that period. Similar like Milkman, he previously dedicated his life to the service of others. The individual's endeavour to locate the treasure, rather than prioritising his familial connections, exhibits a comparable level of irresponsibility to that demonstrated by those who came before him.

In the novel *Song of Solomon*, Morrison aims to develop a realistic persona for the protagonist. She desires to clearly communicate that the ultimate accountability and decision-making authority lie with Milkman. She exhibits a significant level of anxiety around the roles he is expected to assume in determining the trajectory of his own life. Once more, the author emphasises the notion that the attainment of self-actualization and personal freedom is contingent upon the acts undertaken by each individual. In addition, she also intends to elucidate the intricate nature of the struggle for the essence of one's self. In more precise terms, the author aims to articulate that the pursuit of genuine existence inherently encompasses the pursuit of veracity, endurance, affection, and even authority. Toni Morrison effectively conveys this notion by means of the explicit teachings that Milkman acquires both directly and indirectly from his familial relationships.

The concept of flight has perpetually fascinated Milkman and will continue to do so indefinitely. Gaining insight into his historical background is crucial for the process of self-discovery. The children residing in his ancestral locality known as "Shalimar" engage in a melodic expression, and it is only upon his complete understanding and ability to conclude the song that he attains a realisation of his true identity. The protagonist, Milkman, discovers that his cultural identity and historical background hold significant value as his personal inheritance. Simultaneously, he becomes aware of his father's material legacy, which is represented by the symbol of gold.

An examination of the existential concerns prevalent in the novel *Song of Solomon* necessitates a comprehensive investigation of Milkman's various encounters, with the aim of assessing and rationalising the decisions he is confronted with, specifically the dichotomy of acceptance or rejection. Furthermore, an analysis will be conducted on the roles played by the other characters in his educational journey and his quest for self-discovery. As Milkman progresses into adulthood, he assimilates the perspectives of his parents and aunt, so becoming acquainted with a family dynamic that has a tendency towards negating the vitality of existence. It is worth mentioning that subsequent to the Civil War, a white soldier who was under the influence of alcohol unintentionally assigned the surname "Dead" to the family. The term "appellation" refers to the metaphysical obstacles that Milkman must overcome in order to achieve personal autonomy. Moreover, it symbolises the dominant position of the white community over the black community.

Macon Dead II, Milkman's father, was born a slave but worked his way up to being a successful landowner in his lifetime. Both he and his sister Pilate watch as white folks from the neighbourhood viciously slaughter their father. After being chased from their home and forced to leave, the two find refuge in the woods with the help of Circe, a woman who is a slave held by the same family that was responsible for the death of their father, Macon Dead I. The two children are living in constant terror of the white miner because their brother murdered him. They go their own ways, never to meet again.

Macon Dead II is a domineering and uncaring sustainer who has very little or no curiosity for his personal past or his ancestry. Macon Dead II is a descendant of Macon Dead. He is the African-American resident in this community who possesses the most riches. In general, he does not respect anyone, not even his wife, sister, or daughters. This includes no regard for anyone. Making a profit is the major target he has set for himself. He uses ownership as a form of defence against the predominance of the white world in order to ensure his survival. According to his purely materialistic worldview, the purpose of existence is to amass and protect riches and security.

From the age of four, Macon Dead II engaged in agricultural work alongside his father on their farm. However, the act of the father's murder significantly impacts his worldview. He has experienced a complete loss of all possessions and assets at present. The individual is departing from the agricultural establishment to another location. The individual makes the observation that the territory possesses significance in both a spiritual and material sense. Macon takes in a lot of materialistic items. He believes that "money is freedom; the only real freedom" (Morrison, 1977; 179). Because he has enabled his goods to become his slaves,

Macon believes he does not own himself. He goes to teach his son his brand of reality. He says “You want to be a whole man, you have to deal with the whole truth: Couldn’t be a whole man without knowing all that” (Morrison, 1977; 87).

Ruth Foster, the daughter of the only African American physician in the local community, is married to Macon. Macon does not exhibit the characteristics of a committed partner. As a result, the wife forms a lasting emotional bond with her departed father. Macon’s decision to marry Ruth is driven by a desire for financial gain and worldly aspirations, rather than being rooted in genuine emotional attachment and love. As a result of his fixation with material possessions, he regularly demonstrates contempt towards his family, particularly his spouse. The individual’s disdain for Ruth was readily apparent in every comment he made directed at her.

Macon Dead II believed that an individual’s identity is defined by their future accomplishments. It also offers an explanation for his previous and current deeds. Owing to his materialistic perspective on life, Macon fails to recognise the importance of his prior experiences in forming his present-day identity. He follows the materialistic ideals of the West to the letter. His possessions serve to distinguish him from other people. In Macon Dead II, possession takes precedence over creation. He becomes completely enslaved to his belongings and loses any feeling of self-ownership. Leon Lewis points out “After the murder of his father, Macon Dead II has resolved to win a place for himself in a conventional society. He has tied himself to a world that is corrupt and, as a result, he has infected himself and his family with hatred and contempt” (Magill, 1992; 513).

Macon holds the belief that life is solely characterised by the possession of material assets and financial resources. The state of being wealthy is synonymous with possessing wealth. The aforementioned mindset exerts an immediate influence on the character development of Milkman. As Roberta Rubenstein states:

“Milkman is belittled by his father who gives him a role in his exploitative business dealing and who regards his son as an extension of his own needs. As such, Milkman grows up in an exaggerated patriarchal microcosm” (Gates, 1993; 141).

Macon Dead II is originally depicted as capturing materialistic Western principles, with little regard for his familial situation and minority status. Without a doubt, Macon’s actions are indicative of these attitudes, whether they are related to his relationships with his spouse and sister, or even his behaviour as a son. Undoubtedly, he can be categorised as an individual exhibiting “weak faith” from an existential perspective, as he acquiesces to the realities of life without actively seeking to adopt or uphold an alternative perspective to the prevailing one within his community.

According to Kieth E. Byerman, “Macon Dead II distorted the values of his father by emphasizing possession over creation” (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 115). Macon’s fervent pursuit of amassing fortune and power is conspicuous throughout the entirety of his existence. He does not prioritise his own well-being; rather, he prioritises financial gain. The individual seeks to divert his attention from the challenges he must surmount by prioritising his efforts on fundraising activities. Macon Dead II, in essence, leads a life that might be characterised as lacking authenticity. The individual’s unwavering determination to accumulate material wealth serves as the primary motivating factor.

Ruth enters into matrimony with Macon Dead II at the age of sixteen, and subsequent to his demise, she assumes her father’s role. The individual in question possesses direct personal knowledge of a marital union devoid of affection, specifically with Macon II. The Milkman is the sole male offspring in her family, while the remaining two children are female. Macon’s search for a dedicated spouse is unsuccessful throughout the narrative, since Ruth never encounters a partner who fulfils this role. Macon subjects her to both verbal and physical mistreatment. Inevitably, a partner possessing such a mindset engenders heightened emotional attachment of the wife towards her deceased father. Ruth pays nocturnal visits to her father’s

burial site with the intention of engaging in conversation, therefore ensuring the perpetuity of her affection towards him. She maintains a deferential stance. With the following remarks, she declares her allegiance to her father: "It is important for me to be in his presence, among his things, the things he used, had touched. Later it was just important for me to know that he was in the world" (Morrison, 1977; 138).

Ruth persists in longing for emotional intimacy that eluded her throughout her marriage, characterised by her husband's absence of affection. Macon's strongest emotional bond with her father is observed during an intimate moment in which she is affectionately caressing his fingertips while they are in bed together. As story tells "She had never dropped those expressions of affection that had been so loveable in childhood" (Morrison, 1977; 128). Upon discovering her in a compromising situation with her father, Macon consistently displays contempt for her. Once he tells Milkman "Whether or not, the fact is she was in that bed sucking his fingers, and if she does that when he was dead, what'd she do when he was alive? Nothing to do but kill a woman like that" (Morrison, 1977; 84).

Nevertheless, Ruth manages to compensate for the affection she lost with her spouse through her relationship with her kid. The mother persists in providing nursing care to her offspring subsequent to its birth. The individual in question endeavours to attain affirmation for her sense of self and existence through her relationship with her son. Ruth continues to provide nourishment to her son beyond the stage of infancy, as it brings her a sense of joy and contentment: "He was too young to be dazzled by her nipples, but he was cold enough to be bored by the flat taste of mother's milk" (113). She opposes the idea of his growing up and becoming an adult. Welfred Samuels and Clenora Hudson-Weems state it: "Ruth provides Milkman with nourishment to sustain his life making it possible for him to become physically a man while symbolically remaining a child" (57).

Ruth confides in Milkman that she engages in the act of kneeling to reverently kiss her deceased father's hand, expressing her deep respect and affection for him. Furthermore, she reveals that her father is the sole individual who has ever bestowed genuine love upon her. The speaker proceeds to assert that the individual in question, aided by Aunt Pilate, has successfully preserved their own life, as their father has demanded the termination of the pregnancy and expressed a desire to have no other offspring. Ruth experiences a loss of a certain aspect of her identity, which has the potential to facilitate substantial individual development. Due to her absence of an independent self to depend upon, she persists in exhibiting inauthentic behaviour. She admits her deficiency in a sense of self when she provides Milkman with her definition of self, as she says: "I didn't think I'd ever need a friend because I had him (her father) I was small but he was big. The only person who ever really cared whether I lived or died....He caredand there was, and is no one else in the world ever did" (Morrison, 1977; 137).

In its whole, within the pursuit of self-discovery. Ruth is now devoid of any verbal contributions. The individual in question refrains from actively cultivating her own sense of self as she prioritises the needs and desires of others. The woman can be characterised as having a "weak faith" due to her tendency to prioritise the needs and concerns of others over her own. Morrison seeks to emphasise the repercussions of a decision lacking authenticity for 'the other' within the context of this specific scenario. It is evident that, despite the variations in their viewpoints over the course of their lives, Milkman's parents live inauthentic lives when examined through an existential lens. The parents of Milkman provided him with two contradictory accounts of the life of the character known as the Dead.

Similar to his parents, Milkman initially adheres to rigid materialistic Western ideals. Prior to embarking on his journey from his native Michigan to Shalimar, the ancestral hometown of his forebears, Milkman acquaints us with his father's worldview. Morrison effectively conveys this notion through the teachings he acquires from both his mother and father, whether through direct or indirect means. At the outset, Milkman demonstrates a lack of enthusiasm towards the various opportunities presented to him by

his community and parents: "All he knew about the world was what other people had told him. He felt like a garbage pail for the actions and hatred of other people. He had never acted independently." (Morrison, 1977; 133). The individual engages in "bad faith" by refraining from assuming accountability for self-definition and instead capitalising on others.

The adverse circumstances of Milkman's household and family seem to have had a profound impact on the spoiled, egocentric, bewildered, and immature juvenile persona that characterises him in the opening act of the narrative. It seems that he is cognizant of his autonomy and distinctiveness. Milkman's failure to comprehend the essence of the component he will comprise prevents him from perceiving himself as an integral element of the whole. His sole incentive is to satisfy his immediate desires for solace. Milkman began his journey when he was twelve years old. He spends the first thirty years of his life in Michigan. In the end, he manages to alienate himself from every individual and organisation he has ever interacted with.

Macon Dead II reveals to Milkman that he and his sister Pilate sought refuge in a cave subsequent to the killing of their father, Macon Dead I, at the hands of a white individual whom they had previously taken the life of. Despite their departure, the brother continues to hold the assumption that Pilate has subsequently returned in search of the money. This treasure was hidden in a green bag, which Milkman later discovers and uncovers to contain bones. In his endeavour to assist his companion Guitar in embarking on a journey to procure the coveted gold, Milkman becomes consumed with an unwavering determination to uncover the means by which to attain it. In this particular case, the chase of money by Milkman serves as a symbolic representation of the worldview shared by both him and his father with regards to the present.

Milkman maintains the conviction that his prior encounters, represented by the gold container, will emancipate him from any sense of individuality once he has departed from his place of origin. Valerie Smith puts it another way. He claims that gold will bestow upon him: "clean-lined definite self, the first sense of identity he has ever known." (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 281) Consequently, the notion of freedom that Milkman acquires is unsubstantiated. He remains resolute in his conviction that gold is the key to attaining independence and will not cede to the will of any individual, not even his father. The individual interprets it as a strategy to overcome an obstacle that divides him from the previous life of his parents.

During his life journey, Milkman is once again faced with the imposition of an external identity. Macon, driven by his conviction that the wealth he seeks is still buried in Pennsylvania, decides to send his son there once more, disregarding the fact that the object of his pursuit is in reality nothing more than a bag of skeletal remains. Nevertheless, due to his inability to identify it, Milkman embarks on a journey to Shalimar with the intention of retracing Pilate's footsteps and unveiling the hidden wealth. In this context, the quest for gold assumes a renewed significance. As Susan Willis points out, it denotes the pursuit of something: "the only unfetishized form of value and, in an allegorical sense, the retrieval of unfetishized human relationships" (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 217).

The spiritual strength of Milkman's mother is lacking. The mother persists in engaging in extended breastfeeding with her kid, surpassing the typical duration of the infant period. Due to her protracted efforts to foster and maintain a close relationship with him, she had a significant role in his acquisition of the nickname "Milkman." The protagonist, Milkman, is confronted with the task of coming to terms with an unfamiliar family name and individuals who aim to manipulate him for their personal benefit.

Initially, Milkman endeavours to establish his own identity by engaging in comparative analysis with others. The protagonist makes the realisation that Guitar shares a same aspiration. Despite their divergent backgrounds, they are able to establish a friendship. The protagonist, Milkman, manages to transcend his constricting bourgeois upbringing through the assistance of his companion, Guitar. He conveys to Milkman the central concept of the work. Guitar clearly had a big role in Milkman's development as a person. He becomes acquainted with Pilate, his aunt.

Hagar, the granddaughter of Pilate, shares Ruth's desire for affection and acknowledgement. Furthermore, she is severely lacking in a sense of self. Upon undergoing sexual initiation with Milkman, she develops an intense affection for him. Milkman perceives her not as an integral component of his existence, but rather as a sexual object. In spite of their enduring romantic relationship, Milkman concedes his lack of understanding regarding the complexities of her emotions and psychology. He appears indifference towards her and unprepared to assume the obligations of life on her behalf. Presently, Milkman arrives at the conclusion of his relationship with her. Instead of confronting her, he prefers to compose her a letter. From an existential perspective, he abstains from accepting responsibility for his avoidance of this relationship. It is critical to underscore the fact that his letter is, in fact, a business letter. He evades responsibility for their relationship by opting to separate in order to enable her to pursue personal objectives.

It becomes clear that Milkman is an entirely existential figure through his interactions with Guitar and Hagar. He is unable to accept responsibility for the actions of others. He avoids taking responsibility for his actions by constantly running away from it. His lack of concern for others is an utterly existential trait. He longs to escape away from the people who are surrounding him and attempting to dupe him into helping them with their schemes: "Above all he wanted to escape what he knew, escape the implications of what he had been told. And all he knew in the world was what other people had told him. He felt like a garbage pail for the actions and hatreds of other people. He himself did nothing....He had never acted independently" (Morrison, 1977; 133).

Based on the diverse range of experiences recounted by other characters, Milkman initially presents himself as an existential hero who is leading a fabricated existence throughout the course of his voyage. Each of his parents provides him with the most erroneous experiences of his life. Moreover, Milkman presents himself as an individual of 'bad faith' who is striving to evade responsibility for his interactions with Hagar and the subsequent consequences that ensued in his personal lives as well as with Guitar and Hagar.

In contrast, Milkman's aunt Pilate appears to be quite unlike the other members of the Deads. She lacks any emotional ties. Her set of ideals and life philosophy are singular. She challenges every single one of them. Pilate conceals her true identity and biography within a small metal receptacle that also functions as earrings. She was born with particular health conditions. As a result of her mother's demise during childbirth, she independently delivered herself and was born without a navel. This unequivocally establishes her physical uniqueness.

Pilate possesses a considerably broader perspective on the world than her brother Macon Dead II. She is the guardian of the past through her melodies, recollections, and personal belongings. She believes that reflecting on the past is the only way to recognise one's antecedents and oneself. She advises Macon, "You can't take a life and walk off and leave it. Life is life. And the dead you kill is yours. They stay with you any way, in your mind. So it's a better thing, a more better thing to have the bones right there with you wherever you go. That way it frees up your mind" (Morrison, 1977; 183).

This clearly demonstrates that Pilate has a unique perspective on life. Despite being the patriarch of the same family as her sibling, she presents an egregious opposition to him and his philosophy. Pilate becomes acclimated to carrying a bag of bones and a geography book as mementos of the past. Melvin Dixon observes that "Pilate is a restless wanderer who owns only those objects that implicitly direct her search for place" (Dixon, 1999; 135). She is enthusiastic about establishing the conditions that are essential for the revival of familial relationships.

One tangible example of Pilate's self-possession and self-creation is his premature birth, which lacked a navel. She attributes her self-deception to this. According to the narrative, she is born "dragging her own cord after birth behind her" (Morrison, 1977; 108). Pilate concurs with Sula that she is merely the

artist in this particular instance. These natal conditions serve as an indication of Pilate's inclination towards autonomy. Because she lacks a navel, she holds the distinct conviction that she is a freak. "It was the absence of a navel that convinced people that she had come into this world through normal channels, had never lain floated, or grown in some warm and liquid place connected by a tissue-thin tube to a reliable source of human nourishment" (Morrison, 1977; 35).

Pilate does not harbour concerns regarding the potential hindrance to her erotic expression; on the contrary, she perceives this as the bedrock of her liberation from traditional human associations and favours partnerships grounded in spiritual attunement. "When she realized what her situation in the world was and would probably be, she threw away every assumption she had learned and began at zero" (Morrison, 1977; 164).

This further underscores Pilate's initial singularity: the lack of a navel. It symbolises her liberation from the emotional dependence to which the other deceased women were obligated. Regarding Pilate's birth circumstances and the reason she lost her abdomen, Valerie Smith offers her opinion: "It makes her a character of larger-than-life dimension, one which has transcended the limitations of her historical moment and milieu. Her physical condition symbolizes her thorough independence of others, even as a fetus she did not need to rely on another person for sustenance. Her isolation and self-sufficiency enable her to throw away every assumption she had learned and begin at zero" (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 280).

In contrast to her sibling, Pilate maintains a status devoid of the detrimental impact of consumerism. She has the ability to ascertain what is significant to her. She resolves to live her life in strict adherence to an entirely new set of principles subsequent to recognising her distinctiveness from those in her vicinity. Suppressing the influence of her familial values, she resolves to concentrate solely on that which supports her unique identity. Her introspection regarding her values and preferred lifestyle is evident in her inquiries, "When am I happy and when am I sad and what is the difference? What do I need to stay- alive? What is true in the world?" (Morrison, 1977;149)

Pilate chooses a vocation that potentially grants her the greatest degree of autonomy and is prepared to stake everything on her moral principles. Based on this perspective, Leon Lewis asserts, "Pilate had a deep concern for and about human relationships" (Morrison, 1977; 150). Pilate's principles are founded upon an unwavering conviction regarding the value of liberty, which entails ethical accountability for every action she undertakes. In consequence, Morrison employs contrast to emphasise Pilate's personal fortitude in opposition to the conventional frailty of the other female character. According to , Leon Lewis, "Recognizing that she cannot count on any outside agency for support and realizing that she will survive only if she cultivates her own strength. Pilate rejects the outward attribute of standard femininity and chooses a deliberately simple life pattern that emphasizes the immediate and prize mobility and flexibility" (Magill, 1992; 514).

Morrison further endeavours to examine and delineate the boundaries of personal liberty through the character of Pilate. In contrast to several of Pecola and Ruth, Pilate leads an independent existence. Susan Willis (1993) states, "Pilate's freedom which makes her different from everybody else, has a very curious explanation: namely the lack of a navel" (319).

Pilate, equipped with her personal truths, successfully guides Milkman towards self-realization. Initially, of the novel, Pilate assumes the role of a life-saver, aiding Ruth in regaining acceptance from Macon, an individual who had previously rejected her. Furthermore, she is instrumental in bringing Milkman into the world by preventing his father's attempt to terminate the pregnancy; thus, she contributes to his conception. As Milkman matures, Pilate imparts upon him a historical understanding of himself.

Pilate undertakes the position of Milkman's mentor. At the outset of the work, the protagonist commences her instructional session by establishing a narrative that encompasses the circumstances surrounding her birth, the untimely passing of her father, and her own personal history. The teachings imparted by the character help Milkman to adopt a contemplative perspective towards the world. "Pilate helped Milkman break free of the white ideological shell of his protected existence to see beyond the social encumbrances of wealth and status to the deeper meanings he finds in the dark" (Krumholz, 1997; 11). The protagonist, Milkman, seeks refuge and companionship within the residence of Pilate until he is able to embark on his pursuit for an authentic existence. Ultimately, she assumes the role of an instructor for him. The character in question appears to have exerted a notable influence on Milkman's worldview and his subsequent development towards a more authentic disposition.

Overall, Pilate's trajectory diverges significantly from that of her brother and his family, despite their shared past. She forges her own path, disregarding the truths and beliefs that her family has embraced in favour of her own set of convictions. In doing so, she exemplifies "good faith" in the existential sense, as she endeavours to establish a life for herself. Pilate's outlook on life naturally resonates with Milkman's character due to his immediate necessity for an alternative path in life.

At this juncture, Milkman is confronted with the decision of how to direct his life in response to his current quest for self-actualization; based on the preceding discourse, it is indisputable that his parents hold opposing viewpoints, and that his aunt's vision is in direct opposition to both of them.

At the age of thirty, Milkman exhibits indications of a yearning for transformation. He perceives himself as a mere object in his parents' control, having led a life devoid of purpose and meaning while they devised their own agendas. At this juncture, he resolves to assume responsibility for his life and proclaims, "I want to live my own life" (Morrison, 1977; 225). This declaration signifies the necessity for a new survival mechanism and is an existential proclamation that signifies independence.

Initially, Milkman lacked interest in the opportunities presented by his local community. However, over time, he develops a strong determination to distinguish himself and gains a renewed perspective on the futility of his father's existence. Although Milkman's mother harbours no desire for him to reach adulthood, he begins to perceive her as foolish and self-centered as he matures. He also comes to the realisation that she lacks a unique identity and is not particularly capable of providing for him.

"What good is a man's existence if he cannot even decide what to die for? ", as Milkman himself concedes. "He embarks on a quest for a personal existence." (Morrison, 1977; 243) He sets out in search of his grandfather's ancestral residence, but his quest is ambivalent: he desires both the wealth that he believes Pilate has concealed and the history of his family. In both instances, his self-definition is continually expanding as he discovers distinctions that surpass initial expectations. It is possible to interpret Milkman's act of identification as an act of differentiation. His existence must acquire a fresh significance. In this passage, Morrison emphasises the fundamental concept of existential freedom: the course of one's life is entirely determined by the agency of the individual.

Additionally, Morrison underscores the significance of individual actions as means to attain personal autonomy and fulfilment. Susan Blake argues that while Milkman cannot attain individuality without acknowledging community, the identity he does attain is nonetheless personal (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 69). While Milkman retains ultimate autonomy, this liberty entails accountability. Substantiating material gains and irresponsibility for an interest in history and accountability, he discovers liberation in acknowledging the authenticity of his new status. According to Cynthia A. Davis, the hero integrates his free and factitious natures by perceiving himself as both a member of the social group and a free individual. In doing so, he becomes an active participant in the historical process that complicates the struggle for self-actualization (1990).

Morrison once again used the metaphor of flight to represent personal independence and liberty, in the traditional sense. During the latter part of his journey, Milkman undergoes a deep feeling of liberation from the beliefs and principles that were ingrained in him by his family. In essence, his quest for knowledge to discover his true nature overrides his desire for material riches. As Linda J. Krumholz (1997) puts it “Milkman’s quest for freedom changes from the freedom obtained through the solitary power of money to the freedom gained through connections to others, imaginative engagement and love” (109). The milkman aspires to achieve tremendous success and fulfilment, similar to his accomplished great-grandfather. He discovers that he can attain his aspirations on this journey. He finds the fundamental nature he is looking for in the historical background of his ancestors. In this due light, Valerie Smith points out “Knowing oneself derives from learning to reach back into history in relationship to others. Milkman bursts the bonds of the Western, individualistic conception of self, accepting in its place the richness and complexity of a collective sense of identity (Gates & Appiah, 1993; 283).

Macon Dead II dispatches Milkman on a mission to pilfer the green sack he believes contains the treasure hoisted from the ceiling of Pilate’s house in an earlier episode. Upon discovering that the sack contains only a bag of bones instead of the treasure, he orders his son to Pennsylvania, where he believes the gold is still entombed. When he is unsuccessful there, Milkman returns to Shalimar, his ancestral homeland, with the intention of retracing Pilate’s steps and discovering the concealed gold.

During his journey to Shalimar, Milkman is assisted by Circe, a former family employee whose superior murdered Macon Dead I, an individual whose insights prove indispensable to his ancestral research and direct him to the cave where his grandfather was executed. Accompanied by Pilate, Milkman discovers that the sack-full of bones belonged to his grandfather Macon Dead I and not the white man Macon had previously murdered. With the assistance of Pilate, Milkman attains the cave where his grandfather was murdered.

From now on, Milkman is to strip himself off any previous values and to have his own set of values for authentic knowledge. He has to get rid of those fragile truths that others used to instruct him on and to develop his own set of truths instead. Here, he is to undergo a lot of experiences offered by the people of Shalimar, and, in the process, he finds a new definition of himself. Now, he is in the presence of the past. As Kimberly W. Benston remarks “in the second part of *Song of Solomon*, Milkman renews the traditional search for the properly-named self in a journey which turns upon his own choice” (Spillers 102). Milkman needs to learn a new kind of literacy. He needs to find knowledge related to his own life for self-creation. Knowledge that enables him to see beyond the limited and the familiar. Samuel Allen points out “Morrison achieves an unusually skillful transition from a precisely described Michigan town into a timeless mythological world of quest for meaning and identity. Milkman develops from an indulged and self-indulgent child into a dangerously won maturity” (Mackay 30).

Once more, in Shalimar, he establishes connections with the locals and gains the confidence to be himself. According to the narrative, Milkman feels a sense of oneness with the earth he is traversing and no longer requires material possessions to differentiate himself from others. Milkman realises that the only way to discover who he truly is is to identify his family. By imagining himself as liberated, Milkman accomplishes his goal. Milkman combines subjective freedom with objective facts.

Within the novel *Shalimar*, Milkman overhears children reciting rhymes that hold some ethereal significance for him. As he begins to recall and analyse these rhymes, he discerns that they recount a familial tale: the folktale of Solomon, the flying African, who valiantly returns to Africa after attaining magical power. Solomon, in his haste to evade slavery, abandoned his twenty-one children, including Jake Milkman’s great-great grandfather.

Dorothy Lee observes that “he begins to uncover his treasure, the gift of self-knowledge to his

people” (Samuels and Hudson-Weems, 1990; 78). Milkman exhibits the qualities of a riddle-solver, and the children’s dance from the Song of Solomon provides the means to unlock his connection to Jay, or Jake, the son of Solomon, commemorated in the subject song during his flight back to Africa. Upon learning the name of his great-great grandfather, Milkman experiences a profound sense of liberation from the constraints and limitations imposed by materialistic ideologies.

As a result, Melvin Dixon declares, “He can now soar through the air.” His ultimate performance is Milkman’s leap of surrender, which he has earned by removing his vanity. His leap surpasses both the stability and liberation he has recently acquired. “By exhibiting self-maturity through his flight, Milkman uncovers something of greater worth than gold. This revelation grants him insight into his current self-awareness and provides the potential for an unrestricted future, which may inspire him to emulate his legendary grandfather. Consequently, he gains access to a new lineage encompassing the moral fortitude to lead a life devoid of materialistic ambitions—in other words, he discovers the path to genuine self-actualization.

Morrison’s intention in *Song of Solomon* is to illustrate that the quest for authenticity invariably accompanies the pursuit of truth. Milkman endures a variety of obstacles before he is able to embrace this objective. His journey through time symbolises his profoundest sense of freedom and self-fulfillment. His comprehension of the historical facts that unveil his cultural heritage is arduous. In pursuit of his objective, he relinquishes his desire for superficial approval and childlike treatment. As Milkman nears the end of his journey, he gains knowledge regarding his ancestral heritage and the essence of being, and comes to the realisation that this epiphany leads to total self-integration.

Milkman has restored his family’s honour and acquired the capacity to fly by the conclusion of the book. His understanding and incorporation of the motto of his great-great grandfather commence. Suddenly, he realised what Shalimar had realised: that by submitting to the air, one could ascend upon it. He recognises the significance of this particular catchphrase. He recognises that attaining the essence of his being requires both freedom and accepting responsibility for one’s actions. Consequently, he can finally reconcile himself with the convictions and actions of his ancestors. As an answer, Karen Carmean proposes:

“The escape from the earth- flight- (on the part of Milkman’s great grandfather) stands as a symbol for the refusal to be satisfied by a life without choice. At the nadir of his life, Milkman uses whatever available to please his self. And at the conclusion of his quest, he has overcome social and personal enslavement to achieve self-sufficiency and self-regard. Milkman becomes a man whose sense of courage has given his spirit wings” (Magill 515).

Song of Solomon features flight as a metaphor for emancipation by Toni Morrison. She wishes to emphasise that all individuals are accountable for living their lives as they see fit and that they have an inherent right to liberty. However, with this freedom should come responsibility. The author directs her existential manipulation of the freedom issue towards the construction of legends by employing the narrative of Solomon, the Flying African. Cynthia Davis notes that “Morrison adopts the myth to the black historical context to reconcile freedom with facticity on both individual and collective levels.” (Bloom 19). Solomon, who attempted to escape enslavement by returning to Africa via aeroplane, becomes a potent symbol of liberty. Milkman’s ascent will be possible only after he commits to a fresh set of principles. By utilising his own set of truths, he is capable of constructing a purposeful existence for himself.

Once more, Morrison explores the theme of existential liberation through his depiction of Milkman’s evolution from a state of inauthenticity to one of authenticity. She expresses concern regarding the consequential choices Milkman must make regarding his life’s trajectory, which, as Welfred D. Samuels

and Clenora Hudson-Weems put it, “must skirt “bad faith” and be steeped in the existential responsibility to act.”(53), as Pilate nears the end of his voyage, his personal concern becomes Milkman’s true ideals; however, in the beginning, he pursues wealth acquisition, which is his father’s concern. In other words, Milkman’s mission transitions from a materialistic heritage, symbolised by his father’s excessive consumption, to an intimate and cherished heritage, symbolised in the song tracing the common history of his ancestors. Sand Russell writes, “The hero pursues material gain but instead he finds himself on a quest for his history. The journey eventually gains him spiritual freedom”(44).

Conclusion

The present study provides solutions of many of the problems that any person, presented in Milkman, can face in attempting to achieve some sort of self-realization. Being aware of the possible paths that one can follow makes it easy for him/her to freely decide what and how to go about it provided he/she displays a sense of responsibility for his choices. As such many cultural and social clashes between generations can be avoided and both understanding and peace can prevail so that people succeed one generation after another in harmony. Milkman has to decide what to do to find his root without having a clash with the present generation. In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison successfully depicted characters that had universal qualities and effectively communicated existential ideas through many means. Individuals who have become incapable of behaving genuinely in their lives can utilise the entire work as a manual. An alternative perspective is to view it as an incentive for individuals to revive this inherent capacity inside the human heart and mind. This is an urging for individuals to cultivate their own individual life philosophy. Put simply, Milkman’s struggle is universal since it pertains to the journey of self-actualization and self-discovery. In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison depicted the difficulties that Milkman encountered as he pursued genuineness. She provided an illustration of his development from childhood to adulthood, emphasising his responsibility for making his own decisions in life. Morrison was enthusiastic about offering him a diverse array of experiences and providing him the autonomy to make decisions with existential awareness. He was responsible for determining and controlling his own future based on his personal desires. He was compelled to create his own facts and construct his own worlds. The Milkman embraced the ideas that his father had ingrained in him, as well as the virtues he had acquired from his community. Initially, he was influenced by his father’s materialistic ideas, which served as a guiding principle for him. However, he eventually developed his own distinct set of principles. The pursuit of his ancestors’ roots symbolised his recognition of his ability to live an independent life. Due to Milkman’s self-belief and proactive approach in seeking his own sense of value, he ultimately achieved success in uncovering his family’s origins.

Research Journal in Advanced Humanities

Funding: This project was funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University under the research project (PSAU- 2023/02/25022)

Acknowledgments: This project was supported by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University under the research project (PSAU- 2023/02/25022)

Author Bionote

Tribhuwan Kumar, Ph. D. is an Assistant Professor in the College of Science and Humanities, Sulail at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Saudi Arabia where he has been a faculty member since 2015. Before joining this university, he taught in many institutions in India since 2010 including SRM University, NCR Campus, Ghaziabad. His research areas are British Literature, Indian English Literature, Applied Linguistics, discourse analysis, and other interdisciplinary subjects in language and literature.

Authorship and Level of Contribution

In the event that the paper is co-authored, please indicate the level of contribution of each author.

Glossary of Terms

Provide a list of words and phrases and their meanings in English if in any case your work has borrowed any foreign word.

References

- Ajmal, M., Kumar, T., & Shah, A. H. (2020). The application of literary text in language classroom: A pedagogical stylistics perspective. *Asian EFL Journal*. 27(4.3), 384-402.
- Ayuk-Etang, E. N. M. (2021). Mothering and female victimization in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). *Hybrid Journal of Literary and Cultural Studies*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.58256/hjlcs.v3i2.627>
- Benston, K. W. (1991). "Re-Weaving The Ulysses Scene: Enchantment, Post- Oedipal Identity and The Buried Text of Blackness in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*." Ed. Hortense J. Spillers. *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex and Nationality in The Modern Text*. New York: Thomas Y.
- Bloom, H. (1999). *Modern Critical Interpretations: Toni Morrison's Sula*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Carmean, K. (1992). *Song of Solomon*, Ed. Frank N. Magill. *Masterpieces of African-American Literature*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Davis, C. A. (1990). Self, society and myth in Toni Morrison. Ed. Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Dixon, M. (1999). Like an eagle in the air. Ed. Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations: Toni Morrison's Sula*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Gates, H. L. & Appiah, K. A. (1993). *Song of Solomon: Communities of community* by Valerie Smith. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present* (Ed.). New York: Amistad Press.
- Heidegger, M. (n. d.). qtd. in "Encyclopedia Britannica Article". Britannica.com N.p, n.d. Web 29 Jan.2007, < [http:// secure.britannica.com/le/article/6860/existentialism](http://secure.britannica.com/le/article/6860/existentialism)>
- Holman, C. H. (1988). *Existentialism. A Handbook to Literature*, Fourth Edition. Indianapolis: Bobs-Merrill Educational Publishing.
- Jabeen, T., Kumar, T., & Yunus, M. M. (2022). Fathers, daughters, and domesticity in the early novels of George Eliot. *SAGE Open*. . doi:10.1177/21582440221113821
- Krumholz, L. J. (1997). Reading in the dark: Knowledge and vision in *Song of Solomon*. Ed. Kathryn Earled. *Approaches to Teaching the Novels of Toni Morrison*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America.
- Kumar, T. (2020). Representation of victorian society in the poetry of Mary Howitt. *Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana*. 25 (12), 215-221. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4280128>.
- MacKay, N. (1988). *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison* (Ed.). Boston: G. K. Hall.
- Magill. F. N. (1992). *Masterpieces of African-American Literature* (Ed.). New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Morrison, T. (1977). *Song of Solomon*. New York: Plume.
- Noonan, C. (2006). The Search of The Self: An Existentialist Analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," "The Minister's Black Veil," and "Wakefield". An MA thesis. Southern Connecticut State University.
- Russell, S. (1988). It's ok to say ok. Ed. Nellie MacKay. *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison*. Boston: G. K. Hall.
- Samuels, W. D. & Hudson-Weems, C. (1990). *Toni Morrison*. Boston: Twayne.
- Smith, V. (1993). "*Song of Solomon: Communities of Community*". Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Appiah. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. New York: Amistad Press.
- Spillers, H. J. (1999). A hateful passion, a lost love. Ed. Harold Bloom's *Modern Critical Interpretations: Toni Morrison's Sula*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Willis, S. (1993). Eruptions of funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Appiah. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*. New York: Amistad Press.