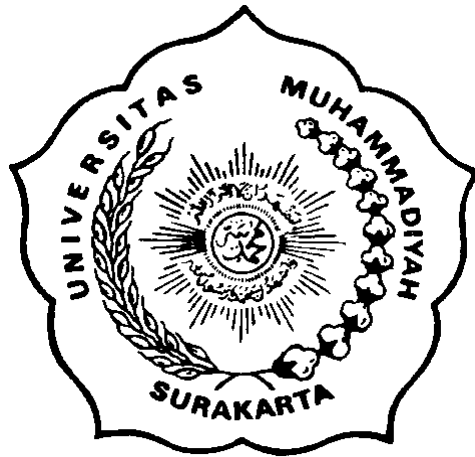


**SEARCHING FOR IDENTITY**  
**IN TONI MORRISON'S *SONG OF SOLOMON***



**RESEARCH PAPER**  
Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For Getting Bachelor Degree of Education  
In English Department

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**2009**

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Background of the Study

*Song of Solomon* is a novel written by Toni Morrison that was published in 1977. The publisher *Song of Solomon* is Alfred Knopf publisher. *Song of Solomon* also published by the other publishers such as Plume, Penguin Book and Vintage Publisher and first included in Everyman's Library in 1995. This novel has 362 pages that are divided into 2 parts. Part I consist of 9 chapters and Part II consist of 5 chapters.

Toni Morrison was born in Lorain, Ohio, on February 18, 1931. Her father was handworker and dignified man, her mother was church-going woman, and she sang in the choir. Morrison was always educated in the integrated school from her elementary school to university. Morrison was a smart student. She graduated with honors from Lorain High School. Although Morrison belong black people who find it difficult to achieve advanced education, she succeeded entering the prestigious Howard University in Washington D.C, where she majored in English with a minor in classics.

Morrison graduated from Howard University in 1953 with a B.A. in English. She attended Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, and received a Master's degree in 1955. After graduating, Toni was offered a job in Texas Southern University in Houston, where she taught introductory English. In 1957 she returned to Howard University as a member of faculty. Toni married to

Jamaican architect, Horald Morrison in 1958. Having two children from her marriage, she was divorced from her husband.

After that, Morrison joined a small writers group. In this group, she began her career as an author. Beginning with her writing about a girl she knew in childhood who had prayed to God for blue eyes, she developed it into her first novel *The Bluest Eye* that was published in 1970. After her first novel, Morrison started writing her second novel *Sula*. This novel was published in 1973; it was nominated for 1975 National Book Award in fiction. *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *a drama* (1984), *Beloved* (1987), and *Jazz* (1992) were Morrison's next novel and drama that almost all of the themes merely confirm black society, race discrimination, and gender.

The *Song of Solomon* novel tells about a man who finds his life direction through his family history. The story begins in 1931 in the Mercy Hospital roof. An insurance sales man, Robert Smith, plans to fly from across the Great Lakes and a crowd gathers to watch. After Mr. Smith leaps from the roof, he died. The next day, Ruth Foster Dead birth a boy baby. She is the first mother who births a black child in the Mercy Hospital, Milkman Dead. Milkman nourished by his mother and his Aunt Pilate love. His sister Corinthians and Magdalena (Lena) taken care him.

Milkman got anything what he wants because his father is a rich landlord. Because of that, he grows up bored and privileged. Then he became lack of compassion like his father, Macon Dead II, a ruthless landlord who pursues only to accumulation of wealth. After he become adult, Milkman has no direction and feels stifled living with his parents and also wants to escape from his family's pressure

and tragedies to somewhere else. Then his father informs him that Pilate may have millions of dollars in gold wrapped in a green tarp suspended from ceiling of her rundown sack.

Milkman robs Pilate with his friend Guitar. He promises to Guitar share the gold. Unfortunately, inside the green tarp, they only find some rocks and skeleton of his grandfather. Guitar is disappointed not find the gold because he needs fund to carry out his mission the Seven Days. Then Milkman leaves his hometown in Michigan. He thinks that the gold might be a cave near Macon's old Pennsylvania farm and promising Guitar to share if he finds. Before he leaves, he severs his romantic relationship with Hagar. Hagar is driven crazy by his rejection and tries to kill Milkman.

After arriving in Pennsylvania, Milkman discovers that there is no gold to be found but he found the history of family. He meets Circe, an old midwife who helped deliver Macon Dead II and Pilate. From Circe, Milkman knows that original name of Macon Dead I was Jake and that he was married with an Indian girl, Sing. After that Milkman heads south, Shalimar, where his grandfather lives. He does not know that Guitar followed him and try to kill him because Guitar thinks that Milkman was cheat about the share of gold.

In Shalimar he feels uncomfortable with the atmosphere of the society but he tries to love it and he gets more clues of his family. He finds that his great grandfather was legendary flying African; his name is Solomon, who escaped slavery by flying back to Africa. In his findings journey, Milkman gets profound joy and a sense of purpose. He becomes a compassionate and responsible adult.

After surviving from Guitar who trying to kill him, he returns home and tells his father and his aunt Pilate about his findings. At home he get that Hagar has died. Nevertheless, Milkman accompanies Pilate back to Shalimar, where they bury Jakes bones on Solomon Leap. After Jake's burial, Pilate is dead by bullet that Guitar had intended for Milkman. Milkman feels so sad then he calls out Guitar and leaps forward him.

In the Goodreads site some people give their responses and also review of *Song of Solomon* novel. It comes from Jeffrey, he says that this novel is the best novel last 50 years of American life, despite the high standing of both novel and author; there are many that chide both for delving too far into the world of African American mythology. Another comment comes from Tiffany, she considers that *Song of Solomon* is a poetic book; it is like a reading music. This book has a lot of mythology in it as well (people actually fly) but it's very interesting. The comment also comes from Dan who read this novel in October 1993. He has different opinion with two sources above. He says that he gets serious problem with this novel. The first three quarters of the book are terrific. Written in a realistic style and capture the modern lives of its characters. The final section of the book suddenly turns into a fable.

*Song of Solomon* became a bestseller and drew praise from readers and critics when it was published in 1977. *Song of Solomon* is Toni Morrison's third novel won the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction in 1977. It is now widely taught and appeared again on best-seller lists when it was chosen by Oprah

Winfrey for inclusion in her book club. Beloved by readers for more than twenty years, it is still considered one of Morrison's best books.

The writer is interested to study this novel due to four reasons. They are, first, the setting of the novel. It is consisting of two part, they are setting of time and setting of place. The novel begins in 1931 and moves forward until 1963 when Milkman born then grows up until he become adult, it is occasional flashback the late nineteenth century. It is set in large city in Michigan and the countryside around Danville, Pennsylvania and Shalimar, Virginia.

Second, the character of the novel, there is Macon "Milkman" Dead. He is the protagonist of the novel. The reason why Milkman is an interested character because at the first, Milkman character shows as negative character, he is an egotistical young man, lacks compassion, wallows in self-pity, and alienates himself from the African-American community because he is born into sheltered, privileged life and he is been protected from racism by his class position. But at the end becomes as positive character by searching for identity. In another word, Morrison does not draw Milkman as an entirely negative character, but one who needs some corrections.

Third, the conflict of the novel that comes from the protagonist character, Milkman. They are external and internal conflict that experienced by Milkman. The external conflict happens when Milkman grows up in the privilege of an African-American upper-class family as the only son but he has pressure from his family tragedies. For example his father thrives on hatred for his wife, Ruth. The internal

conflict, Milkman bored with his life. He thinks he has to escape from his family's pressure and tragedies searching for gold. The climax rises when Milkman searching for gold by steals his aunt Pilate. It is not gold that he finds then he leaves his hometown and begins search for gold that led him to his family history.

Fourth, the theme which is fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. It causing many themes appears in novel. *Song of Solomon* has many themes such as man make an abandonment of women, it shows that the female characters in the novel suffering because burden from the man. The other theme is the effect of racism because racism is the central cause of suffering in the novel. But the major theme in this novel is self identity is high value of life. An African-American man fined his identity from discover of his family history through searching for gold.

To the writer, *Song of Solomon* is a great story that reveals the adventure a young African-American man who bored with his life because his family's pressure and tragedies by searching for gold, a search that brings him to his family history and change his life to be meaningful and loss his burden of his family's pressure and tragedies. Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in analyzing this novel by using Sociological Approach with the title “**Searching for Identity in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*”**.”

## B. Literature Review

In analyzing this novel, the writer found another research using *Song of Solomon* novel. As the writer browse in internet, the writer found the research from some researchers, first is Diane M. Golden (1994) from Florida Atlantic University. Her research entitled “The mythic quest for selfhood in Toni Morrison's "*The Bluest Eye*," "*Song of Solomon*," and "*Beloved*””. In her research she fined the purpose of Toni Morrison’s novel, Morrison encourages her readers to imitate her heroes' journey in their own lives. Through her protagonists' successes and failures on their monomythic quests, Morrison educates her readers.

Second is a researcher in Petra Christian University who study *Song of Solomon* novel, Yenny (1996). Her research entitled “The study of Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* as a means to awaken the African-Americans from The American dream of materialism and the value of The African heritage for The African-Americans' live”. In her research, she wants to find out how the value of the African heritage makes the African-Americans awake from the materialism of American dream. She proves it by using materialism approach. Third is Szilvia Suranyi (2008) she writes a book entitled “Oral Folk Traditions in Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* - African American History, Geneology and Cultural Identity”

From the literature review above, the present researcher assumes that there is no researcher who analyzes about “Searching for Identity in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*”. The writer will analyze the novel by using sociological approach to find out the background of America society in the mid nineteenth century.



### **C. Problem of the Study**

Relating the idea, which has been presented in the previous background of the study, the problem statement is: “What is the searching for identity as reflected by Toni Morrison novel *Song of Solomon*.”

### **D. Limitation of the Study**

The writer focuses her discussion on searching for identity reflected in *Song of Solomon* by using sociological approach.

### **E. Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To analyze the novel based on its structural elements.
2. To analyze the novel based on the sociological approach.

### **F. Benefit of the Study**

In conducting the research paper, the researcher hopes that the study will have benefits as follow:

#### **1. Theoretical Benefit**

To give the reader a contribution in understanding the novel *Song of Solomon* especially related the topic of the searching for identity in *Song of Solomon*.

## **2. Practical Benefit**

In this research, the writer wants to give some contributions to the development of literary study. In addition, it would help researchers who want to examine Toni Morrison's work especially *Song of Solomon*.

## **G. Research Method**

### **1. Research Object**

The writer uses the novel *Song of Solomon* as the object analysis of the study, published 1977.

### **2. Type of the Data and the Data Source**

The writer defines the source of data into 'primary data' and 'secondary data'. The primary data is the text of *Song of Solomon* itself, while the secondary data are taken from the books and other materials that are relevant to support the analysis.

### **3. Technique of the Data Collection**

The data collection is done through observation and content analysis.

The following steps are:

1. The writer reads the novel repeatedly
2. The writer analyzes the novel
3. The writer makes a note about the story or material
4. Drawing conclusion based on the analyzed data

#### **4. Technique of the Data Analysis**

The technique of data analysis in this research is descriptive. This is an interpretation of the text and context analysis to show how Morison's *Song of Solomon* portrays the searching for identity.

#### **H. Research Paper Organization**

To report this research, the writer divides the research into six chapters, namely: Chapter I is the introduction which consists of the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, the objective of the study, the benefits of the study, methodology of the study, and the research paper organization. In Chapter 2, the writer comprises the underlying theory, present the theory of Sociology of Literature, Major Principle of Sociology of Literature, and the structural elements of the novel. Chapter 3 the historical background of American society in the mid twentieth century. Chapter 4 deals the structural elements analysis of the novel. Chapter 5 deals with Sociology analysis. Chapter 6 conclusion and suggestion.