

A Study of Milkman's Growth in *Song of Solomon* From Freud's Personality Theory*

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Abstract—In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison describes Milkman's growing progress from a selfish and indifferent teenager to a mature and responsible man, which is a perfect example to initiation novel and Freud's personality structure theory. This paper tries to analyze Milkman's personality development in his growth process, which tends to reveal the psychological changes of his inner world and the real significance of growth: to gain self-sublimation by finding and recognizing one's lost cultural root. Through Milkman's growth progress, Morrison calls on the black minority to find their cultural self and identity by recognizing their ancestors, their black fellows and traditional African culture. Only in this way can the ethnic minorities find their true identities, achieve real independence and strive for more equality and freedom in the American mainstream society. Milkman's spiritual growth also inspires readers to build their spiritual homelands.

Index Terms—*Song of Solomon*, growth, Milkman's personality development, theory of personality structure

I. INTRODUCTION

Song of Solomon is the third representative novel of Toni Morrison, the winner of Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. It was published in 1977 in America and was popular with both critics and readers. The novel takes the African old folk tale "black people can fly" as the main story line and symbolic core, describes the life experience of Milkman, the youngest son of a wealthy black family in a northern city, who travels south to his homeland to search for gold and accidentally finds his family root and the source of culture. There are various characters in this novel, such as: the parents (Macon Jr. and Ruth) who cause the protagonist—Milkman to have a defective personality in his boyhood, Guitar Bains who is Milkman's best friend, Pilate who is Milkman's aunt and spiritual mother, Hagar who is Milkman's lover, etc. The novel demonstrates the plights of black minorities in the American modern society through imaginative and colloquial language and reveals the characters' psychological changes of their inner world by delicate psychological description.

Since Morrison won the Nobel Literature Prize in 1993, her works have been widely concerned by the literary world, indicating that black literature has reached a new milestone. The publication of *Song of Solomon* has received extensive attention from the critics. Although it has been published for only 45 years, it is found that more than 600 articles on the CNKI net deal with the analysis of *Song of Solomon*. Many scholars have criticized the novel from various angles, such as gender relations, racism, the black's cultural identity and symbolism, etc.

Based on the study of previous materials, *Song of Solomon* has often been read as an initiation novel. There are many studies illustrating the growth theme of this novel. Previous studies have seldom explored Milkman's growth from a psychoanalytic perspective. Besides, Milkman's growing process is a perfect example to Freud's personality structure theory. So this study tries to analyze the development of Milkman's personality in his growth process from the perspective of personality structure theory. What's more, through analyzing other characters' influences on the development of Milkman's personality in different stages, this study tries to reveal the importance of one's growth guiders and growing environment. The exploration of Milkman's spiritual growth could also help the readers to rethink Morrison's vision for the building of black people's spiritual home through recognizing their ancestors and cherishing their national culture.

II. INITIATION NOVEL AND *SONG OF SOLOMON*

Initiation novel or bildungsroman originated in Germany at the end of the 18th century. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* is considered to be the original model of this novel type. Initiation novel is a kind of novel that mainly describes the protagonists' personality development and spiritual growth with their experiencing of spiritual crises.

In the process of describing the protagonists' personality development, the initiation novel focuses on the changes of their inner world. In the process of growing, the initiation novel describes how the protagonist begins to grow up step by step through some travels and adventures that can contribute to their personality development. As they grow older, they become dissatisfied or bored with their current state of life. They have better expectations for the future, so they

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want to explore the world outside and start to pursue the meaning of life. After they have experienced complexities and unexpected ordeals of life and the world, they gradually realize that the journey of life was tough and human nature is obscure. With facing social realities and rethinking their imperfect self, they begin to grow, make changes and gradually become mature. They are no longer self-centered, but society-centered, thus they become to integrate into the society and take their responsibilities. Finally, they will gain a new self and understand life deeply. The real significance of growth is to constantly improve one's spirit, to understand one's national culture and to find one's true self. The exploration and research of initiation novel will continuously urge people to reflect more deeply on themselves and the society, which brings profound enlightenment and positive guidance to majority of teenagers.

Initiation novel is always an important part of American literature, and it is also a unique point for interpreting American literature. Written by Tony Morrison, a black American female writer, *Song of Solomon* employs the growth journey of a black young man Milkman as the main plot. Milkman's growth process is quite similar to the plot structure of western classic initiation novel: "temptation—leaving home—trials—bewilderment—epiphany—loss of innocence—recognizing self and life" (Rui, 2004, p.12). Tempted by a bag of gold, Milkman leaves home for the south and go to the outside world. The south journey of Milkman symbolizes that he is leaving dependence on the family and starting the real journey of growth. On his journey to the south to search for gold, he undergoes many difficulties and suffers physical pains, which are the trials for him. Influenced by his father, his original values are different from the south black fellows, so they have several conflicts at first, which makes him bewildered. But later he abandons superfluous material things gradually and learns to feel the outside world and survive in the natural world with what he was born. Through his contact with the south black fellows, he gets rid of the prejudice on them gradually and becomes to integrate in their groups. On his journey to search for gold, he discovers the history of his family and the cultural treasures of his ancestors, which is significant and like an "epiphany" for him to find his true self. Changing from the pursuit of material satisfaction to the pursuit of spiritual life, Milkman transforms from a selfish and irresponsible dude to a mature man who dares to take his responsibility and cherish people who love him. The growing process of Milkman in *Song of Solomon* attracts readers and makes them to reflect on the exploration of personal growth and finding one's true self.

III. MILKMAN'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT UNDER THEORY OF PERSONALITY STRUCTURE

A. Freud's Theory of Personality Structure

Sigmund Freud is an Austrian psychiatrist, psychologist and founder of the psychoanalytic school. His psychoanalysis, especially the personality structure theory has a significant influence on literary creation and criticism. Freud's early psychological structure contains two parts, the conscious and unconscious, and his research is mainly based on unconsciousness. In the late period, Freud puts forward a new theory of "three personality structure" in *The Ego and the Id*, that is, the complete personality structure includes three parts: the id, the ego and the superego. These three sections interact with each other and have different leading effects on individual's behavior in different times. Freud believes that personality can be seen as the psychological mechanism of control activity of the internal, which determines the behavioral characteristics and patterns of a person in specific situations (Che, 2021).

The id is the most primitive part in personality structure and it embodies the animal instinct of human beings. Its goal is to satisfy biological desires. It is full of irrational, antisocial and destructive impulses in the interior. It belongs to the unconscious part, abiding by the principle of happiness:

And most of that is of a negative character. It is filled with energy originating from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, only strives to fulfill the satisfaction of instinctive needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle. (Freud, 1960, p.73)

The ego is a part of the mind that represents consciousness. It has the psychological potential that everyone owns and it is rational. Once the ego exists, it becomes an intermediary between the id and the outside world:

As regards internal events, in relation to the id, the ego performs that task by gaining control over the demands of the instincts, by deciding whether they are to be allowed satisfaction, by postponing that satisfaction to the time and circumstances favourable to the external world or by suppressing their excitations entirely. (Freud, 1960, p.145)

The ego, on the other hand, moves between the id and the superego, which implements the desire of the id under realistic conditions and obeys the compulsory rules of the superego. It not only satisfies the needs of the id, but also cannot violate the values and demands of the superego.

The superego is concerned about morality and disciplines and obeys the rules of conscience, and is a moralized "ego". It is the internal moral supervisor that checks whether the ego is under the guidance of conscience and social ideals. The ideals and traditional values of a society are passed on to generations of human beings through "superego".

B. Milkman's Personal Development in His Growth Progress

1. Milkman Who Loses Himself under the Dominance of His ID

The id is primitive, instinctive and unconscious. It lacks rational thinking, only pursues satisfaction of desire and ignores moral and social values. Milkman's behavior accords with the characteristics of the id when he is a teenager.

The escape of great-grandfather Solomon makes Macon Dead—Milkman's grandfather an orphan; Macon Dead Jr. has witnessed his father's death and could never get out of this shadow. He becomes greedy for money and tells Milkman: "Let me tell you right now the one important thing you'll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too" (Morrison, 2004, p.55). He also forbids Milkman from contacting with Pilate: "Pilate can't teach you a thing you can use in this world. Maybe the next, but not this one" (Morrison, 2004, p.56). Macon Jr.'s values and actions have a direct influence on the dominance of Milkman's id in his personality structure. Young Milkman becomes as selfish and indifferent as his father. Without the moral leadership of the superego, his ego seldom struggles with his id, and "he had stretched his carefree boyhood out for thirty-one years" (Morrison, 2004, p.98).

Macon Jr. takes his family out with the expensive Packard car "to satisfy himself that he was indeed a successful man" (Morrison, 2004, p.31). When parking, Milkman accidentally pees on his sister:

She'd stepped away from him to pick flowers, returned, and at the sound of her footsteps behind him, he'd turned around before he was through. It was becoming a habit—this concentration on things behind him.

Almost as though there were no future to be had. (Morrison, 2004, p. 38)

Milkman always focuses on the past, which indicates he is different from others and he cannot see the hope of the future. Born into a rich family, he could not understand the hardships of life and the resentment of black compatriots against white people. He only lives in a self-centered world. Milkman doesn't know what the idealistic value is, what the good and evil are and what morality is in the id stage. He just knows that he is willing to pay all the costs in order to satisfy his own needs. For those people who love him, Milkman only enjoys their love but never returns his love to them. For example, to his lover Hagar, he follows the principle of pleasure, enjoys the love Hagar gives, but does not respond with any love. He thinks she is the "third beer", because she is "there" to satisfy his sexual desire, not because he loves her and really wants to get married with her.

Milkman's behavior dominated by his feelings and desires in his early life is actually a typical manifestation of the id in Freud's personality theory. Under the dominance of his id, Milkman's inner world fills with dissatisfaction, confusion and emptiness. He is experiencing a painful life journey mentally and loses the direction of his life in the id-dominated stage. Though he could satisfy his material desire, his spirit is barren and empty at this stage.

2. Milkman Who Begins to Grow under the Enlightenment of His Ego

In the three sections of personality structure, the ego plays a complex role. On the one hand, the ego tries to satisfy the pursuit of happiness of the id. On the other hand, it conforms to the requirements of the superego. Therefore, the strength of the ego must balance the conflicts and contradictions between the id and the superego. Otherwise, the personality will be defective in a state of unbalanced personality structure.

When Macon Jr. raises his hand to strike Ruth a second time, Milkman beats him and threatens him: "You touch her again, one more time, and I'll kill you" (Morrison, 2004, p. 67). After that, he leaves home and walks on the street:

The street was even more crowded with people, all going in the direction he was coming from. All walking hurriedly and bumping against him. After a while he realized that nobody was walking on the other side of the street. (Morrison, 2004, p. 86)

Under the pressure of the world outside, he still insists on his own way, which shows the awakening of the independent consciousness of Milkman, and he begins to think his role in the family and the relationship of people around him, which is a sign for him to grow.

After stealing from Pilate's house, the shameful sense of Milkman is another evidence of his spiritual awakening. He begins to think as a living and normal man with reflection and conscience. At the same time, he finds that his shorter left leg (which also represents his defective personality) returns to a normal length, indicating the end of id-dominated stage of Milkman and the awakening of his ego. Once driven by the id to pursue pleasure and satisfaction, after the enlightenment of his ego, he begins to care about the people around him and the real world he lives in, which means he transforms to the ego stage guided by the reality principle.

The ego-dominated Milkman begins to get rid of the oppressive atmosphere of his family and search for a new life in the future, so he leaves home for the journey to the south in search of gold, expecting an independent life on himself. In the process of looking for gold, Milkman begins to quest his family history and meanwhile is attracted by the traditional African culture. He begins to discover his real self in the inner world with the awakening of his ethnic consciousness and will achieve the sublimation of his personality on his following trip.

3. Milkman Who Achieves Self-sublimation in the Pursuit of His Superego

The superego has the mission of supervising the ego. It obeys the principles of conscience and morality, brings a sense of guilt and shame, and has the function of self-reflection and self-planning. On his way to the south, Milkman gradually reaches the highest level of personality structure—superego.

Milkman goes south to search for gold in order to gain independence himself and be free from financial dependence on his father. In the process of looking for the cave hidden with gold, Milkman crosses the stream by taking off the shoes and socks, and his shirt is also wet with water, which means that he is taking off the burden of pursuing materials. In addition, he loses an expensive watch once very important to him unknowingly but he doesn't care it at all. All of these indicate that he begins to be away from his previous materialistic life and approach spiritual freedom step by step.

Helping an old man lift a heavy crate onto a weighing platform is another evidence of Milkman's personality development. He begins to learn to help others and integrate into his black community unconsciously.

His growing interest in his ancestors and his urgent pursuit of his identity and ethnic culture drive him on his way to Shalimar of Virginia. On the way of hunting in Shalimar, Milkman realizes that all the things he brings from home are useless here, "where all a man had was what he was born with, or had learned to use" (Morrison, 2004, p.227). This indicates that he is getting rid of the redundant things he once had, and he gets closer and closer to the spiritual freedom. In contact with his black compatriots in the south who are enthusiastic and kind to him, he begins to rethink his family and understand his parents and sisters. His mother is tormented by the lonely and miserable life without sex and regards him as the only relief of her life. His father Macon Dead Jr. who is greedy for money just wants to protect his labor fruits like his father Macon Dead. And his lover Hagar becomes abnormal because of his irresponsibility. His gentleness to another woman Sweet indicates that he begins to respect women. At last he repents his ruthlessness to Hagar and shows respect to her by carrying a box with Hagar's hair after her death. Milkman is ashamed of his selfish and indifferent actions, which indicates that he finds his conscience and reaches a new level of personality structure, his superego.

When he hears the song of children in Shalimar: "Solomon don't leave me here... These children were singing a story about his own people" (Morrison, 2004, p.304) for many times, Milkman finally discovers his family history through traditional oral folk songs sung from generation to generation. The understanding of family history makes him gain his rebirth. He's not the man that he used to be. After experienced confusion, joy and pain of growing up, he begins to think and reflect under the control of his superego. He finally changed from a childish and defective person to a mature and responsible man and he gets closer and closer to his self-sublimation.

Although Pilate, his spiritual mother is dead, Milkman knows "without ever leaving the ground, she could fly" (Morrison, 2004, p.340). When he realizes that his great-grandfather Solomon could fly, he is very excited. "My great-grandfather could fly! Could fly! He didn't need no airplane. Didn't need no fuckin tee double you ay. He could fly his own self!" (Morrison, 2004, p.328). At last he chooses to jump to fight with Guitar, to fly like his great-grandfather Solomon, because he knows "if you surrendered to the air, you could ride it" (Morrison, 2004, p.337). Solomon's legend great inspired him who is always ashamed of his family before. Some researchers think: "Although Milkman didn't find the legendary gold. However, he found his family history which he was proud of and the spiritual fortune which could let him fly" (Liu, 2014, p.16). It is the pursuit of spiritual fortune symbolizing his pursuit of the superego that makes him fly and complete the sublimation of his life. Milkman's whole life proves that seeking roots of one's ethnic history and traditional culture is the way to sublimate one's personality and the way to become a mature and integrated person.

IV. THE CHARACTERS WHO INFLUENCE MILKMAN'S PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT

A. *The Parents' Influence on Milkman's ID*

Macon Jr. and Ruth are Milkman's parents. Their defective spiritual world seriously influences their son's personality development and results in his defective personality, which is dominated by the id in his early life.

Macon Jr. is Milkman's father, but does not take a father's responsibility. The responsibility mentioned here is not material, but spiritual. Filled with greed and indifference to others, Macon Jr.'s spiritual world is governed by his id to satisfy his desire for money and property. As a father, his behaviors and values influence Milkman in his boyhood. Macon Jr. is a cold, selfish, ruthless slumlord whose only concern is making money. His selfishness is reflected in his attitude towards the people around him. For whatever reason, if the tenants can't afford the rent, he will not hesitate to evict them. One of his tenants, Mrs. Bains, says about Macon Jr.: "A nigger in business is a terrible thing to see" (Morrison, 2004, p.22). He calls his own sister Pilate a treacherous snake and hinders the relationship between Milkman and Pilate. He gets married only for wealth, because his bride is the daughter of the richest and most prestigious black doctor in the Michigan town. But he makes her spend the married life without love and even "His hatred of his wife glittered and sparked in every word he spoke to her" (Morrison, 2004, p.10). His two daughters First Corinthians Dead and Magdalene Dead are accustomed to making artificial roses due to the lack of warmth and love in the family. When they are middle-aged, Macon Jr. still stops them from trying to love, leaving the two sisters in a depressed life. Macon Jr. makes the family members feel no love at all.

Macon Jr. in the id stage and the depressed family environment cause Milkman to have a defective personality. Macon Dead I's death of gunshot leave psychological trauma on Macon Jr. and he has never fully recovered from witnessing his father's death. No longer an innocent young man, he has changed to a person of selfishness, arrogance and irresponsibility. Just as Macon Jr. inherits the spiritual burden from his father, so does Milkman. Like his father, Milkman is also selfish and indifferent to others, who only pursues his own pleasure. The father in the family plays a role of keeping the relationship of family members harmonious, which affects the personality of children. If a father has the authority to be respected by his children, the children will have a good model to follow. Children who grow up in a caring and tolerant family atmosphere tend to have an honest and frank heart. However, Macon Jr. lacks the responsibility as a father and is not a good guide, which results in Milkman's deformity in personality.

Ruth who is also in the id stage influences Milkman's personality development as well. Although born in a rich family, after her father's death, she doesn't feel the warmth of love in her married life. Ruth has been oppressed by

Macon Jr. and she lives in a family life completely without herself. The water mark on the table assures her that “she was alive somewhere, inside, which she acknowledged to be true only because a thing she knew intimately was out there, outside herself” (Morrison, 2004, p.11). When Ruth is twenty years old, Macon Jr. refuses to live with her any more. Therefore Ruth, who is short of love, is eager to find something to fill her heart’s emptiness. She misses her father and feels that only her father really loves and cares for her in the world. And after her father’s death, she regularly lays secretly on her father’s grave to look for comfort in the midnight. The abnormal intimacy between daughter and father confuses her husband’s thinking about their relations. Besides, she breast-feeds Milkman to get the satisfaction of love, even though her son is not a baby anymore. The nickname of “Milkman” is from the fact that she feeds her son milk until he is six years old. Because of this, the personality development of Milkman is slow, and “he had stretched his carefree boyhood out for thirty-one years” (Morrison, 2004, p. 98).

Ruth’s family status has a subtle influence on the way Milkman treats women unconsciously. As for Macon’s neglect, Ruth’s actions in silence and obedience convey the idea that women are in a state of oppression. They are confined in the house to do their family duties, and they are often neglected by the men. Thus Milkman has a feeling of superiority to women at first, and he treats a woman randomly. Therefore, he only enjoys the care of his mother and two sisters, but never shows love and respect to them. Similarly, he does not reciprocate the love to his lover—Hagar, and does not care about her inner aspiration. After he is tired, he just abandons her, which leads to Hagar’s death. Milkman only pursues his pleasure but doesn’t care about the others. His coldness, shallowness, selfishness is manifestation of his personality’s deformity, which is in some degree due to Ruth who spoils Milkman and does not build an independent woman’s image, resulting in Milkman’s irresponsibility and ignorance of how to treat women who love him.

B. *Guitar’s Influence on Milkman’s Ego*

Guitar’s spiritual world is mixed with the domination of his id and ego, which has an impact on Milkman’s personality development. Compared with the influence of Macon Jr. on Milkman’s id, the influence of Guitar has a more significant influence on Milkman’s ego. In the first half of the novel, Guitar makes a balance of his id and the superego and he is in the ego stage.

When Milkman was twelve years old and in sixth grade, he met Guitar and they became friends. Guitar is older and more mature than Milkman, and he guides Milkman as a wise elder brother. Guitar helps Milkman in his daily life. They discuss various topics together, such as the widespread racial inequality and the unfair treatment to black people in the United States. Milkman often pours out his emotional troubles to Guitar, and Guitar always gives his philosophical answers. Milkman tells Guitar that he has hit his father, Guitar explains that “the cards are stacked against” the hearts of black people and sometimes black people are even forced to hurt each other. Guitar also teaches Milkman some life principles, and he scolds Milkman who lives a freewill and frivolous life. He takes Milkman to visit Pilate, which plays a vital role in the development of the personality of Milkman. He also comforts Hagar who was lost and collapsed after being abandoned by Milkman. Guitar feels very sorry for her experience and drives her home. All the way he advises her that she should never ruin herself because of Milkman.

When confused about why a peacock with a tail full of “jewelry” cannot fly better than a chicken, Milkman is enlightened by Guitar’s answer: “Too much tail. All that jewelry weighs it down, like vanity. Can’t nobody fly with, all that shit. Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you own” (Morrison, 2004, p.179). Guitar’s view of life without any burden has a strong impact on Milkman. He realizes that he is the peacock with a heavy tail occupied by vanity and desire, which is enlightenment for him to get rid of the physical desire of the id and begin to pursue a more realistic life guided by the ego. Only by this can Milkman fly higher and grow to be a mature man. So in the first period of Milkman’s personality development, Guitar’s guide is an important reason for Milkman to achieve the ego stage.

C. *Pilate’s Influence on Milkman’s Superego*

Pilate, Milkman’s aunt, more like his spiritual mother, has a great influence on Milkman’s personality development, especially on the development of his superego.

Pilate’s father gives her that name. He “Chose a group of letters that seemed to him strong and handsome; saw in them a large figure that looked like a tree hanging in some princely but protective way over a row of smaller trees” (Morrison, 2004, p. 18). We understand what “Pilate” means more accurately as a homonym for “Pilot”. In fact, Pilate does play the role of moral leadership in the novel.

After Ruth turns 20, she and Macon Jr. stopped the sexual life. It is Pilate who tells Ruth the way to have a baby. Macon Jr. abuses pregnant Ruth, and it is also Pilate who finds methods to protect the baby. It could be said that Pilate gives life to Milkman. Although Macon Jr. bans the relationship between Milkman and Pilate, the magic of bloodline and charm of Pilate deeply attract Milkman to come closer to her. The song of Pilate reproduces the past of their family: “Sugarman done fly away/ Sugarman done gone/ Sugarman cut across the sky/ Sugarman gone home” (Morrison, 2004, p.54). Milkman gets some information about family history from her songs and begins his own search in Virginia. In the process of Milkman’s personality development, Pilate leads Milkman to find his true self and contributes to the transformation of his personality. Milkman becomes a mature youth from a childish teenager to a mature adult.

In the process of getting along with Pilate, Pilate’s independence, bravery and love of national culture have affected Milkman slowly but permanently. When Milkman was a baby, Pilate often told stories and sang folk songs to him beside his bed. As he grew older, Milkman often went to Pilate’s house to eat the delicious food cooked by her. It was

Pilate who taught him to appreciate the beautiful scenery of the clear blue sky where Milkman was looking forward to approaching, representing his desire for pursuing spiritual freedom.

In the end when Pilate is wrongly killed by Guitar, Milkman realizes and understands why he loves her so much. He knows although she is dead, “without ever leaving the ground, she could fly” (Morrison, 2004, p.340), which means Pilate realizes her spiritual freedom by finding the family history. Facing the threats of the dark where Guitar is hidden, he is fearless with a mature heart. At last he chooses to jump to the dark to fight with Guitar, flying like his ancestor Solomon. He discovers the secret of flying or growing, “if you surrendered to the air, you could ride it” (Morrison, 2004, p.337). At this moment, Milkman finds his own cultural root and understands the meaning of one’s true self. Milkman’s last flight is a sign of the completion of his personality transformation. Milkman reaches the highest level of personality structure — the superego, achieves his self-sublimation by the guide of Pilate who is also in the superego stage.

V. CONCLUSION

Song of Solomon vividly exemplifies initiation novel and it is also an excellent demonstration of Freud’s personality theory. This paper firstly explores the protagonist Milkman’s growing process, which is roughly accords with the plot of initiation novel, then mainly analyzes Milkman’s personality development in his growth progress and the influence of other characters as growth guiders on his personality development.

On Milkman’s way of finding his family history, he “goes into the earth and later walks its surface. He twice enters water. And he flies in the air. When he walks the earth, he feels a part of it, and that is his coming of age, the beginning of his ability to connect with the past and perceive the world as alive” (Taylor-Guthrie, 1994, p.124). Although undergoing numerous pain and difficulties, Milkman has experienced a growing progress physically and spiritually. His personality which is controlled by the id following the pleasure principle at first, gradually transforms to the ego which is guided by the reality principle, and finally achieves its sublimation, getting to the stage of superego. Milkman’s growth progress proves that being rooted in the nation’s history and culture is the way to sublimate one’s personality and the way to become an integrated and real mature person.

By describing the growing process of an ordinary black young man, Morrison conveys the confusion, pain and joy in the process of growing and self-exploration. Through the “flying” (self-sublimation) of Milkman, Morrison expresses that the real growth is to understand and cherish the root of one’s national culture and tradition. At the same time, she appeals to black people to find their true self by identifying with their ancestors, ethnic culture and fellowmen. Only in this way can ethnic people build their true identities, achieve real independence and strive for more equality and freedom in American mainstream society. Meanwhile Milkman’s spiritual growth also inspire those who live in the spiritual crisis to find one’s true self and build one’s spiritual homeland in the modern society.

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