

Quest for Identity in *Season of Migration to the North* and *Song of Solomon*: A comparative Study of Mustafa Saeed and Milkman

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Abstract: This study aims at exploring the Afro-Arabs and Afro-Americans' constant search for their identity and the way in which the identity is restored. It addresses a timeless existential anxiety of the individuals who find themselves torn between two worlds; suffering from double consciousness. It tackles their dilemma by presenting a contrast in their life. It further reveals the falsehood and the deceit of interest in the colonial ideologies and materialistic philosophy by way of emphasizing the destructive impact through their concern for human relationship. The treatment of the topic from the perspective of Afro-Arab and Afro-American points of view bestows the study a kind of authenticity and credibility. Though both of the protagonists are

uprooted and spent years wandering in search for identity, deprived of parental love as children and are seen as odd and indifferent, at the end Mustafa Saeed fails to develop a sense of identity while Milkman succeeds in establishing a strong identity. It is clear from the research that denying one's past is destructive as it leads one to struggle against his being. Yet, getting the best of the other as well as preserving native roots is necessary for attaining a better and truer self. Past is interrelated to the present and vice versa means that reliable strong roots are essential for a balanced and co-existence life. To the best of our knowledge, no researcher has dealt with such topic as an area of research comparatively. Therefore, the study is important and attractive; and an eclectic approach is adopted by the researchers as both stories, *Season of Migration to the North* and *Song of Solomon* are categorized as two postcolonial narratives.

Key Words: Afro-Americans, Afro-Arabs, alienation, rootlessness, roots, identity

Introduction

The question of identity dates back to ancient times and to Rene Descartes claim "I think, therefore I am" (24) is addressed in all literatures of all times. Recently, such question has surfaced to the ground and becomes a tremendous literary preoccupation more than any time before due to the uncertainty, instability and assimilation of nations, diverse cultural identities, race, modernization, globalization and flux that characterize the modern world.

Truthfully, the quest for identity is natural for the people who pass from one stage of life to another or have been under colonization or suppression for ages. It is a natural reaction for those nations that have witnessed a rebirth in order to establish their individualism and distinction from others. Boullata says "It is natural for the emergent or the resurgent nation to embark on such search in order to establish its personality and the distinctiveness of its individuality" (49) to know its place in the history of the world. If the identity is stable and clear, it will gain consistency and firmness. If the identity is troubled and contradictory, it makes one suffer from disintegration and liquefaction in his faith, morals and behavior. Identity is an impenetrable fortress that protects a person and without it human turns into a trivial object and an impersonator.

Many of the societies reborn in history are identified by chaos, confusion and anxiety because of mimicry and imitation of the others. That means the failure to form a positive concept cause identity crisis that stands behind the loss of interest in life due to many of psychological conflicts and recurring frustration that renders the individual self-alienated and lost. A stable and robust, identity is essential for a healthy life. A mentally healthy person lives and mixes with the world with full confidence as he is fully conscious of his identity. The role played by the environment in the formation of the individual identity positively or negatively cannot be detached. The ways of bringing up children followed by the family and society shape the identity through which one either gets interested in life or loses his interest in life.

In modern fiction that is concerned with "the problem of identity in circumstances of extraordinary flux and complexity" (qtd. in El-Nour 181), the quest for identity has preoccupied the literary context. It displays people's search for their identity to redefine themselves after a violent and bloody conflict of the national and sectarian affinities. Afro-Arabs and Afro-Americans who have been the subject of torture and suffering for decades are the central topic of the postcolonial literary works. Their experience of imperialistic suppression and slavery "was put to question in various campaigns of degradation" (Boullata 49).

After robbing the wealth, colonialism worked hard to deform the colonizer's identity and culture making Arabs a monster follower. The superiority of the white race over the non-white peoples has created a sense of division and alienation in the colonized black identity and beliefs. This leads Negroes to what Fanon says "I begin to recognize that the Negro is the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognize that I am a Negro." (153). The criterion of their evaluation is the skin color. This means the individual is not judged by his academic achievement or success, but by his/her color. In fact, the blacks "were divested of all human referencemade to forget their past, their language, their religion..... were prepared to accept anything that came from their masters. They were fed on the myth of white superiority" (Kapoor 187). The remarkable conduct of the whites towards the blacks "look a Negro" or "Mama, see the Negro I'm frightened" (Das 84). The Colonial experience left its nightmarish impact on the colonial societies, which divides their identity in all fields. This prompts them to enter into a confrontation and a reckless search for their identity that is already fragmented. Excluded from their societies and discriminated by the whites, the blacks begin searching for their roots and origins that will grant them a place in the map of the humanity and identity that equals that of the whites. While Afro- Africans assert their identity against the whites, the Arabs asserted their identity first against Turkish domination and then against the Western hegemony.

The intellectuals have found themselves pushed by a strong desire to define themselves with relation to others. An example to the outstanding Arab-African novelists and Afro-American novelists engaged in a quest for identity and who devoted their work to their black people's place in the history are Al-Tayeb Salih((1929 -2009)) and Toni Morrison (1931-).

Al-Tayeb Salih: a Sudanese novelist celebrated as "the genius of the Arabic novel" in a book entitled *The Genius of Arabic Novel* by group of Arab writers and published in Beirut in 1976. Salih is concerned with the search for authentic African personality amidst the overwhelming torrent. He wrote in Arabic language though he is fluent in English and spent his time traveling between east and west. His assertion on writing and expressing himself in Arabic seems to be part of his affirmation of identity. Salih's work is understood "in term of inner conflict and the search for the affirmation of individual identity"(El-Nour 8). Salih confirms that "The foundation of my work, for what it is worth lies is what I am: a Sudanese Muslim Arab who was born at a certain time, in a certain place"(Sharif). His "deep concern with the exploration of identity is what gives Salih's work its coherence and gives it its special place in Sudanese literature" (El-Nour 181). However, Salih gains universal name among the greatest Arab writers of the 20th century with the publication of his masterpiece *Season of Migration to North* (Arabic version 1966, English version-1969) (SMN). SMS, Salih's second novel which has been translated into many languages is considered "among the six finest novels to be written in modern Arabic literature" (Salih 5).

Toni Morrison (1931-): The first African American woman writer to receive the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993. She also won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for *Beloved* (1987). Her literary works show her commitment and concern not only for her black people, but also that of human beings. Her "overriding theme in her novels: the search for love and identity" (Washington 11). Her novels reflect the agonizing black history that has affected the identity of African American and their powerful cultural heritage. For her, "individual constructions of identity are affirmed by seeing something of oneself and one's forebear in representation of the history of the nation" (Weedon 26).

Song of Solomon (SS) (1977) is Morrison's third novel and the first novel whose protagonist is a male. It is considered the greatest novel ever written by Afro-American writer. It was cited by the Swedish Academy and won the National Books Critics Award. It has been ranked as one of the best English novels of the 20th century. It presents the issue of Black identity. Due to its content and deviation from other novels, it is one of the challenging novels of Morrison.

Both (SMN) and (SS) are similar in terms of search for identity. It is a quest for roots, place and identity and the impact hegemony of the whites' culture on the blacks. The narratives that are similar in the heroes' suffering from the tragedy of self-fission examine the core of the human problem that arises when one finds himself torn between two worlds with no home. The title of SS indicates a natural migration from Europe and back to the south. However, the title of SMN suggests something has gone wrong as migration goes against nature. As the title arouses its invertible nature, the ending of the narrative is unforeseeable. The journey is symbolic and historic. There is an attempt in both novels to bring back native identity to wholeness despite the damage done through colonization and slavery. The importance of family and community in sustaining the individual identity is emphasized. Both of the protagonists lack family in the spiritual sense. They are uprooted and spent years in search for their entity. Though they absorb the identity of the whites, they find themselves rejected by both worlds. The novels show the destructive impact which the loss of identity has on the individual and the society. At the end Mustafa fails to establish a sense of identity while Milkman develops a secure identity after a long series of discoveries of his roots and ancestors. They demonstrate the importance of understanding one's heritage. Yet the ending of both protagonists is mysterious.

Mustafa is fatherless and he does not know his father who points out he doesn't know his identity and his past. This means Mustafa is not originally Sudanese in his belonging or his heritage. Saeed is African and Arabic "I'm like Othello — Arab—African," (SMN 39). This mirrors the schizophrenia of the Africans in the west. While he identifies himself as Arab; he is identified as African by the others due to his color. Similarly, Milkman does not know the real name of his father or grandfather; and was left unaware of that. Milkman's father accepted a new name given to him (when his real name was recorded wrongly) with a hope of hiding his history of slavery. His acceptance shows how Afro-Americans renounced their original identity upon their arrival to the USA declaring a struggle against their being. Both of the lifeless and loveless families affect their sons negatively. In fact, Losing parents' warm and love, they turn into indifferent to survive and lead a life of alienation and restlessness. Also, due to the absence of intimacy, the sons feel emotionless, rootless and experience a sense of not belonging to their families and places; which causes trauma of identity crisis. They suffer from a marginal existence as strangers due to their hybrid culture. Both are influenced by ladies, Milkman by Pilate while Mustafa by Mrs. Robinson.

Season of Migration to the North (SMN)

The narrative shows the dilemma of Afro-Arabs who find themselves without past nor a viable future and their struggle for identity. It represents the reality in the post-colonial period with all of its views, contradictions and conflicting voices, regardless of what is going on in the minds of intellectuals from the deep conflicts, tragedies and complex dimensions in the mid-sixties. Mustafa Saeed is a symbol of intellectual hero in the colonial society who experienced colonialism to the core, drank it with the English language that came with the new system of life,

absorbed its culture and civilization fully and realized its values physically, spiritually and historically.

The novel depicts the dilemma of Mustafa Saeed who is torn between sticking with his original identity and the western one. Rejecting his past, history, values, religion and heritage with a hope of being accepted as one of the white society, he finds himself completely strange rejected by the two worlds. The sense of alienation and loss doesn't leave him in his home and abroad. He "savored that feeling of being nowhere, alone" (SMN 31). Historically, Saeed (born two weeks before the bloody encounter between an independent theocratic Sudan and the British Empire) stands for the early generation troubled by the loss of identity and unable to assimilate with the western identity which indicates the impact of colonization on the colonized identity. "I was conscious and not conscious. Was I asleep or awake? Was I alive or dead?" (SMN 126). His words embody the influence of the colonization in its worst forms and tragic violence: self-fission not only on the economic and cultural level, but also on the existential level. Yet, it would be unfair to say Saeed's crisis of cultural identity is totally caused by the colonization because there are other factors that work together to shape Saeed's character as it will be stated in the study.

Saeed is from Sudan, a home of different identities. The Sudanese identity is African and Arabic. The African identity is imposed by color. However, the Sudanese are neither accepted as Arabic by Arabic society nor by the Europeans. At this point dispersion and decay begin. The parents suffer from acute identity crisis, double consciousness and schizophrenia. Thus, the children evolve without identity which is a sense of patriotism that might be absent among a majority of the people. The British occupation for Sudan and absorbing the western culture in the colonial school and spending his childhood (Saeed) in London brought him back to his original alienation.

Saeed, the only son of his parents, has no family, relatives, brothers and sisters which stands for the loss of history, past and identity. In fact, Mustafa Saeed metaphorically represents the historic rupture produced by the colonization in Eastern societies. He is depicted brilliantly as a person without a sense of belonging, without tribal or family roots, as was the case in traditional Oriental communities. It seemed clear in Mustafa's portrayal of his relationship with his mother. His slave mother from the south which is nothing but Sudan occupied and enslaved by the occupation, is isolated and seen strange to the extent she can no longer afford to smile and even shed tears at her son's departure. His mother is Sudan robbed of its decision and volition, stripped of the feeling of emotion and smile.

Thus, she has nothing to offer to him. Saeed's emotionless relationship towards his mother implies a similar relation to his original home. "That was our farewell: no tears, no kisses, no fuss. Two human beings had walked along a part of the road together; then each had gone his way" (SMN 29). Saeed's mother who represents Sudan that symbolizes the east has lost its ability to love as love demands freedom.

The mask covering Saeed's mother "with something on her face like a mask" (SMN26) implies that her emotion is unknowable. Due to this uncertainty, Saeed as a child is not sure of his place in the world, or who he is. As a child, he must go in search of this essential bonding which he lacks. "Every child has a legitimate need to be noticed, understood, taken seriously, and respected by his mother ... This initial mutual intimacy can never again be created, and its absence can be a serious obstacle right from the start" (Miller 27-28). The lack of intimacy and love experienced by Saeed in his early childhood has resulted in the dryness of the feelings and

love in his world. He expresses his childhood's agony saying he found himself different and impregnable.

I had felt from childhood that I — that I was different —
I mean that I was not like other children of my age:
I wasn't affected by anything, I didn't cry when hit,
wasn't glad if the teacher praised me in class,
didn't suffer from the things the rest did (SMN 26).

This detachment, even dispassionate rationalization, makes Mustafa Saeed feels different from others, a moral hollow at the core of his being. The absence of parental love that connects one to a place doesn't develop a sense of belonging and the feeling of being. It leads to an identity crisis and split fragmentation. It is true with Saeed who is seen "nowhere" (SMN 43) and whose persistent anxiety results in his "inner death" (Canlı 1). He "becomes indifferent to others and always feels a sense of alienation and depression" (109 Wanru). This indifference is important for mere survival. In short, Saeed is a hollow character who is brought up in an empty context devoid of parental affection and care.

Society

Historically, Arab and African citizens in Sudan presume themselves differently. The southerners are seen as slaves and not a part of Sudan whereas the northerners are masters. Since Mustafa's childhood, he feels that he is not desired in his homeland. He is called the black Englishman which indicates that his exclusion from his nation is based on racial discrimination. Such description is that the southern slave is destined to be just a bondman. Mustafa Saeed's mother "was a slave from the south, from the tribes of Zandi or Baria" (SMN 49). This implies that the narrative also sheds light on the question of belonging to a nation that attempts to reject some parts of its citizens. Feeling alone and abandoned by the whole world, he isolates himself and is indifferent to almost everything. His expatriation leads him to cry out "Mustafa Sa'eed does not exist. He's an illusion, a lie" (SMN35). His compound alienation makes him see the countries which he resides and leaves later like a mountain on which he constructs his tent at night and in the morning he takes off the wedge continuing his journey. The place "Was like some mountain on which I had pitched my tent and in the morning I had taken up the pegs, saddled my camel and continued my travels" (SMN 29). His teacher describes him as if he "had come out of the jungle for the first time." (SMN 76) exhibits his alienation. Though he absorbs western values, it doesn't help him to cross the alienation or compensate the spiritual introspection which he lost in his original place. When he comes back to search for the peace of mind, he doesn't find it. He comes as a stranger and lives there as a stranger (SMN 80).

In an attempt to assert himself, he accepts the offer to join the colonial school at the time people thought of school as places of evil. In fact, People of authentic Sudanese roots rejected colonial education. However, due to the absence of identity, nothing deters Saeed from his decision. He "absorbs Western civilization" (SMN 35). In fact, Mustafa is intentionally shaped by the colonizer. The goal of colonial educational messages is to erase the original identity completely. The colonizers' aim can be achieved through internalizing to the colonized the civilization and values that contradict with his original identity. Thus, colonization aims at creating agents that suck up its heritage and beliefs blindly. This hint is made obvious from the hat placed on Saeed's head by English soldier that swallows Saeed's face. "He dismounted and

placed it on my head and the whole of my face disappeared inside it" (SMN 27). Thiong'o says the colonial education

Annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement, and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves (3).

It is noticed that the colonizer makes use of Mustafa's intelligence and family structure that lacks genuine Sudanese roots. Saeed's tribe lives between Egypt and Sudan belonging to neither country. Such background of his parents suggests dissociation from real Sudanese identity which means Saeed has no loyalty towards Sudan. Thus, Saeed was given more importance than others. Sending him to Egypt and then to London is not random, but already planned to act as an agent of colonial dominance in Sudan. It seems that the colonization's policy is the same as that in India to leave "a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" (qtd. in Bhabha 87). Mustafa transformation is almost complete when "The tone in which the masters addressed him was different from that in which they talked to us" (SMN 47). The way he was received in Egypt by Mrs. Robinson shows his strong desire for the total assimilation with the new adopted culture. "I am South that yearns for the North and the ice" (SMN 108). This shows Saeed's association with the west rather than his homeland. Actually, Saeed's strange nature and absorbing western civilization isolate him from the world of his society.

Mustafa's Journey

Mustafa's belonging to his original homeland is shallow. He was not concerned with his land or its worries. He "was cold as a field of ice, nothing in the world could shake me" (SMN 28). His relationship with his mother that stands for his relationship with his hometown is strange. "It was as if she were some stranger on the road with whom circumstances had chanced to bring me" (SMN 26). The absence of belonging causes Saeed's trauma. From Saeed's background, it is not surprising to hear Saeed says he has the feeling of being free (SMN 26) with no ties to the traditions that guide him. So, Saeed begins his journey of search towards the north starting his destination from Khartoum to London via Cairo; and then back to hometown.

Apparently, his journey is to pursue his study, but it is a quest for his identity. His journey is not away from homeland. On the contrary, it is homecoming and stability. During his departure to London, he never sheds tears or feels sad "I was not sad. "My sole concern was to reach London, another mountain" (SMN 31). To him, London is his unvisited homeland which is familiar to him" "I immediately felt an overwhelming intimacy with the sea" (SMN 31). Mustafa's feeling has nothing to do with a change of a place. To him the change of place is not felt but imagined. The way he departs his place to Egypt is emotionless. "I packed my belonging in a small suit-case and took the train. No one waves to me and I spilled no tears at parting from anyone" (SMN 28). This contradicts some researchers' claims that say Saeed's journey to London is to take revenge on the colonizer. Moreover, a normal person does not take a woman to

retaliate. His closed room in Sudan full of books in English is another evidence of his attachment to England and its culture.

Mrs. Robinson in Egypt

Mrs. Robinson has a big influence on his upbringing and education. Through her, he absorbs English culture “From her I learnt to love Bach’s music, Keats’s poetry; and from her I heard for the first time of Mark Twain” (SMN 32). His seriousness and achievement show his influence in English culture. Mrs. Robinson teases him about his intellect “Can’t you ever forget your intellect?” (SMN 32). His feeling of ingratitude towards anyone who gives him a helping hand reflects the policy of the colonizer who makes the colonized unable to do anything. “I had no feelings of gratitude; I used to take their help as though it were some duty they were performing for me” (SMN 28). This can be seen as the first indication of the central consequence of Saeed’s attempt at assimilation in the West; an attempt that correspondingly distances him from his people and culture. As Frantz Fanon says

Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. (9)

By getting themselves assimilated with the values of the whites, Afro-Arabs deny entirely their being which is a product of the values, faith and history. Thus, as they expose themselves to intense conflict and confusion as it happens with Saeed.

London

Upon his arrival to London, Mustafa Saeed realizes that his accent in English is not like that of the English people. “I now heard language for the first time is not like the language I had learnt at school” (SMN 32). That indicates that England is not his unvisited home. Yet, he tries to assert himself with a hope of being integrated into English society. He achieves a great academic success and even becomes more than native English.

To please the whites, he sacrificed his original heritage, religion and belonging and if his life were asked he would never hesitate. This can be manifested when Jean Morris asks him to give her the old Arabic manuscript, the prayer rug and the rare vase in return for sleeping with him. However, she throws the manuscript and the prayer rug into the fireplace and hits the vase on the ground (SMN 118). After stripping Saeed of all his belongings, she kicked him in a sensitive place between his thigh and he fainted. At that time he “remembers his “mother” (SMN 119) who is nothing but his homeland. Jean’s conduct exposes Mustafa’s search for his ancestor and roots. Saeed understands that no amount of schooling would make him one of the white society as he is still fundamentally and culturally seen as the other. He feels he is inferior to them due to his color.

Being 'black' in Britain is about a state of 'becoming' (racialized); a process of Consciousness, when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are. Located through your 'otherness' a 'conscious coalition' emerges: a self-consciously constructed space where identity is not inscribed by a natural Identification but a political kinship. Now living submerged in whiteness, physical difference becomes a defining issue, a signifier, a mark of whether or not you belong. Thus to be black in Britain is to share a common structural location; a racial location. (qtd. In Weedon 74)

To escape from the sense of inferiority and alienation, he turns to women. His relationship with ladies can be seen as a way of getting a sense of belonging and acceptance in the English society. However, his relationship with the ladies is based on contempt and exploitation. Ann Hammond who exploits Saeed Sexually left a small paper before her suicide in which she writes "Mr Sa'eed, may God damn you." (SMN 34). The small paper means continuity of European contempt and demean of others, the east. Isabella Seymour says "My mother,' 'would go mad and my father would kill me if they knew I was in love with a black man" (SMN 106). Jean Morris who stands for Europe left no stone unturned to humiliate Saeed and to destroy his history. She reduced him to his former state colonized and victimized.

To her, he is ugly and loathsome "You are ugly. I've never seen an uglier face than yours." (SMN 33). Here, Mustafa Saeed represents the East in general, and the Arab world in particular in his struggle with the imperialist west which colonized the east, and looked down upon it. West abused Eastern dignity and deprived it of its freedom and sovereignty on its land and plundered its wealth, and enjoys it, without giving it the opportunity to enjoy even a little fraction of these blessings. Through Saeed, we come to know "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence" (Huntington 51).

Saeed who lost everything in exchange for nothing and lived in a world of deception and falsehood "experienced a feeling of ignominy loneliness, and loss." (SMN 119) to the extent he yearns for death as he cannot sustain the battle. In killing his wife Jean, he seeks to kill himself. Only death can relieve him from false personality and from his life full of lies "I am no Othello. I am a lie" (SMN 35). He calls himself a lie as he doesn't belong to any place. He is nothing but a bundle of contradicting selves, known to vary as Khalid, Charles etc. His adaptation of multiple names: Hassan, Mustafathat doesn't belong to one language or culture is not a confusion of identity, but a lack of identity. His two persona at night a lady killer and at the day as a scholar reflects his sense of instability due to the lack of identity. This dissociation last for 30 years. Telling a lie to seduce the ladies indicates the fragile identity of the colonized identity and self-confidence. He wants to be executed but he was not granted and he spent seven years in prison. Then, he was set free. "Actually his punishment" in prison for seven years "was nothing more than an affirmation of his poorly developed self- identity" (Canli4). Here, Saeed represents the early generation that "was troubled by the loss of its original identity coupled with its inability to identify with the west, and this identity crisis made them a destructive force

everywhere (qtd. in El-Nour 155). At home rejected and abroad discrimination frustrated them. The dual rejection made them an element of destruction.

Mustafa Saeed's Return

It is only through coming back to ancestor and getting rid of the shells of the western culture and blending its essence with the reality of one's country, life becomes meaningful and a whole. Thus, Mustafa comes back to the foundation of culture instead of betraying himself and lying to himself. However, Saeed's return aggravates the crisis that shattered him and splattered his life. He is seen strange even to his wife, Hosna. The matter has caused a sense of loneliness even among his people. He tries to assert himself through distancing himself from his prior experience in Europe. Yet, he was unable to adapt and fully integrate with his local people. Removed from his hometown before he takes up his original identity fully, he was unable to adjust himself completely. He fails to function within his people in social norms. Thus, Mustafa requests the narrator not to allow his sons to travel. He wants his children to grow naturally on their soil among their people. He wants them to imbibe its heritage, history and values as after that they will not be shaken by any challenge.

to spare them the pangs of wanderlust" if they grow up imbued with the air of this village, its smells and colors and history; the faces of its inhabitants and the memories of its floods and harvestings and sowings, then my life will acquire its true perspective as something meaningful alongside many other meanings of deeper significance. (SMN58)

Saeed failed because the sense of belonging demands support, beliefs in values, traditions and adjustment to the rules and conventions of community; not only to know or to perform them. Saeed is only good at acting. In England, he pretends to be like English and similarly he does in Sudan. He follows his sense not his thinking. His intellect doesn't help him as his problem has to do with beliefs and values shown to us not through the mind but through our hearts and emotions without thinking. He does not show any deep emotion but to die. This means Saeed's life at the village as well as in London is based on a lie. He displays no sense of belonging neither in Sudan nor in London. He finally realizes that it is of no use to keep betraying himself in the village. "It's futile to deceive oneself. That distant call still rings in my ears" (SMN 57). Thus, he disappeared.

Moreover, throughout Saeed's life abroad, he never studied about his history in spite of his authorship or even thinks about his history which is inseparable from identity and essential for a stable and healthy life. Mustafa Saeed's closed room in Sudan shows Saeed's interest in keeping the two identities intact but separately which reflects his tension. One can say Mustafa inhabits what Homi Bhabha calls "the ambivalent world of the not quite /not white, on the margins of metropolitan desire" (92). He remains split between east and west and this is manifested in his rooms in London and Sudan. His dedication in one of his books "To those who see with one eye, speak with one tongue and see things as either black or white, either Eastern or Western." (SMN 114) reflects the tragedy of Mustafa Saeed who stands for the post-colonial society that becomes hybrid and generates split self. The self sees with two eyes, speak with two tongues and sees things black and white together, neither of the East nor West. It means a pure identity has no

place in the post-colonial world. The dedication can be read as a message for coexistence and accepting the otherness as adopting one at the expense of the other will cause a crisis as it happens to Saeed. Salih finds that it is better for human being to work together on coexistence and to tolerate each other in the context of human values. Salih in such quotation criticizes those who see otherwise. Through Saeed's life has been shown the impossibility of living in two cultures simultaneously; and a healthy life demands strong cultural roots in a specific environment.

It can safely be said that Saeed stands for Arabic intellectual crisis and the state of schizophrenia experienced by the intellectual who tries to adhere to his cultural heritage at the same time he wants to keep up with the western civilization. Saeed, who absorbs the western culture, comes into conflict with himself when he comes back home because of his inability to come to term with himself and to adapt to his environment which he left since long years. He was neither able to be English nor to come back to his original civilization. Saeed's lack of authentic Sudanese roots and upbringing, absence of motherly love, his strange nature of makeup, lack of feeling to adjust himself to the rules, beliefs and norms of his community, the division based on racism in Sudan and the impact of colonization have a role in Mustafa's failure to develop a sense of identity.

Song of Solomon (1977) (SS)

The narrative is about Milkman's unaware search for his identity and for himself; a search which stands for Africans' quest for their identity which would heal them from the ghost of alienation and restlessness. Such remedy can be carried on through connecting to the past and ancestors. Morrison says "young black men are doomed to spiritual death and self-alienation unless they read and understand their history" (Washington 10). The novel introduces a portrait of Milkman who is self- alienated and isolated from the whole world around him including his historical and cultural roots. Through the character of Milkman, "Morrison reveals that disordered existence is part and parcel of fragmented ancestral relationships" (Beaulieu 5). In contrast to Milkman is his aunt Pilate who "demonstrates the inner strength that exists when one lives a life fully connected to the wisdom and stories of the ancestors" (5).

The materialistic world which Milkman absorbed doesn't cure him. On the contrary, it enhances his confusion. Milkman's identity crisis lies in adhering to materialism at the expense of his original identity. Giving his priority to property alienates him from the community as he lost his humanity. This reflects the extensive impact of slavery on the African identity and its trauma. His journey of the quest for identity mirrors the struggle of African American culture and history to survive in the white society. It also reflects the displacement and painful agony experienced by the blacks in the USA and the way in which they have been feeling, searching for a meaning for their being and the way in which middle-class African people belittle their poor black people.

The theme of identity is apparent right from the opening line of the narrative and the epigraph. "The fathers may soar. And the children may know their names" (Morrison 10). This line sheds light on the importance of family which stands for identity. The names are emphasized when Robert Smith is not called by his identity but by his personality of his job "Insurance agent" (SS 19). Names' essence is sum up in Morrison's words:

If you come from Africa, your name is gone. It is particularly problematic because it is not just your name but your family, your tribe. When you die, how can you connect with your ancestors if you have lost your name? (qtd.in Selassie70).

In fact, names are “our mask and our shields and the containers of all those values and traditions” (qtd. 70).

Right from the beginning, the question of identity nags Milkman’s mind. He wants to know his grandfather’s name, but he was left unaware of his real last name. Shockingly, does he come to know that many of his family members are not as he thought they are? Angrily he asks “could not I be a whole man without knowing all that?”(SS 134). Then, he “Question everybody” (SS138). On his way to his aunt Pilate to get clarity, he realizes he was walking in the opposite direction (SS 136) which shows his alienation and loneliness.

He didn’t mean it. It happened before he was through. 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. (SS 69)

The above quotation reflects Milkman’s alienation from the world and himself. Concentration on things behind him shows that he is different from either child of his age who has faith in the future. Though he is unconscious, he seems instinctively aware of the importance of the past for he is obsessed with things behind him. Going the direction he was coming from suggests him that they know their past. His uncertainty about everyone around him makes him unsure of whom he is.

The ambiguity is manifested when he shows his hate for riding at the back of the car with his family. He says “riding backward makes him uneasy” (SS 63). This means he doesn’t like to walk blindly into the future without knowing who he is and not knowing what to expect. He doesn’t know what is interesting to others and what is interesting in himself as “All he knew in the world about the world was what other people had told him” (SS 207). He feels he is the puppet exploited by others for their purposes. “Everybody wants something from me”(SS 362). His parents want him to replace their fathers. Hagar wants to marry him, Pilate wants him to be the leader of the ancestors and his friend Guitar wants him to be a destroyer. This means he doesn’t find any model to copy. “He wondered if there was anyone in the world who liked him. Liked him for himself alone”(SS 137).

Detached from his family and rejected by his society, he isolates himself and is indifferent to almost everything. The feeling of inferiority torments him all the time. The haunting painful experience of African people and his parents’ transmission torture him leading to his psychological trauma. Milkman finds himself continually pushed into the search for his meaning in life. He “lives the limbo life of the living dead, always struggling” (Mbalia 56) to find a place between his past and present. In an attempt to assert himself, he starts limping psychically due to his psychology unsoundness “he had noticed that one of his legs was shorter than the other” (SS 113). His limping is nothing but his identity created by his mind.

Milkman's Parents

Milkman parent's ill-will towards each other and their suffocating mistakes have created many of the problems that shattered his life and made him lead a life of alienation and confusion. His parents, who are spiritually dead as their name suggests, suffer from the loss of their fathers which metaphorically symbolizes the loss of African past and identity, adopt the western values. This loss influences Milkman's life seen as "some burden had been given to him and that he didn't deserve it" (SS 207). His mother's trivial, unauthentic and isolated world disturbed Milkman. Her encouragement for Milkman to think of what people can do for him reflects the policy of the whites who made the African Americans acknowledge "dying of lovelessness" (SS 254). Her absurdity can be attributed to her loss of her identity and her weakness to assert herself. She is found interested in white values and this can be seen in her table manner despise of Pilate house and her way of life. Milkman deduces that a mother, without a personal identity has very little to bestow.

Milkman's father who is materialistic and who changes his name to become Macon Dead 11 with a hope of getting rid of his slavery identity stands for African Americans who have suppressed their original identity which threatens the identity of African Americans. Milkman, who is more his father than his mother, absorbs his father's motto that money provides identity. He is taught by his father that "own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too." (SS 102). Thus, he behaves and thinks like a white man. He looks at people including his mother and sisters in terms of commodity. His attitude towards his mother as a mercenary reminds us of what happened for the Africans when they denied their past in the USA. Moreover, Milkman's disguise of his name seen as a source of shame implies his denial of his identity, gender, history and heritage in exchange of being accepted by the white society.

As a matter of fact, in the absence of appropriate guidance, honesty, and explanation, Milkman has trouble with himself. His lifeless and loveless life at home paralyzes him to develop a healthy relationship with everyone around him. His relationship with others is emotionless, irresponsible and materialistic. Luo Wanru says "losing parents love, Milkman is indifferent to others and always feels a sense of isolation and depression" (109).

Milkman's Relationship with Others

Milkman's childhood is disfigured by the events that took place before his birth. The racism of his past generation stands behind his alienation. Walking in the street against the flow of the traffic shows his loneliness and that he is unwelcomed by the people around him. His vanity and indifference to others including not only his family but also his poor black friends isolate him from the people. This reflects his isolation from his society not because he is estranged but because he has no sympathy towards the others. Like Mustafa Saeed, he has no deep concern for human relationships since his childhood. He is, as his name indicates, exploits all people around him giving nothing in return. His disconnection from his true identity is manifested in his rejection to return Hagar's love. His selfishness affects all Africans. Hagar's death and the destruction of her reproductive capacity indicate the death of the future generation of African people. Milkman's relationship with his whole family viewed as a bundle of craziness as equal as that with his community. He is indifferent to the racial matters. Upon the murder of Emmett Till,

he says “Yeah, well, fuck Till. I ‘m the one in trouble.”(SS 154). In fact, the adaptation of individualism approach by the blacks stands behind the disappearance of the black values. The commitment to materialism leads him to a life of self alienation and isolation. His loss is acknowledged silently when he says nobody was going his way (SS 136). Such restlessness makes Milkman feels that his life is “pointless, aimless”(SS185) just “a garbage pail for the actions and hatreds of other people”(SS207).

Milkman’s despise for his name, his surname and his black people reflects his ambivalence towards his racial identity; and the whites world has only aggravated his confusion. Being rejected by both worlds, he finds his whole body “lacked coherence, a coming together of the features into a total self” (124). “The trauma of the cultural displacement within which” Milkman lives, is referred to by Homi Bhabha and others as “unhomeliness.”(Tyson 421). He experiences a sense of exclusion and of not belonging as “he had never felt that way, as he belonged to anyplace or anybody” (SS 475) and considers himself “the outsider” (475).

Boredom

Though Milkman has reached the age of thirty, he is aware of nothing except he is getting bored with everything and everyone. “Everybody bored him. The city was boring. The racial problems that consumed Guitar were the most boring of all” (SS 186). Such feeling demands from Milkman to develop his consciousness that allows him to see himself and other African people having the same common identity to establish a strong tie with his community. This can be achieved through getting rid of his materialistic shells and through showering love on his black people.

Pilate

Pilate, Milkman’s aunt, stands for African identity existent values brought to America by the forefather “if you ever have a doubt we from African, look at Pilate” (SS 100). She is a metaphor of a pilot who guides Milkman throughout his search for his identity. When Milkman visits her, he was offered eggs, a symbol of rebirth and apples, symbols of knowledge. She sows the seeds for Milkman growth both socially and psychologically through teaching him the values of spiritual African and helps him get rid of his vanity and pride that hinder his development. For the first time in his life, he feels extremely happy at Pilate’s house. In fact, she plays the role of a surrogate mother who showers love on him and changes his attitudes towards his name and women. “Now he was behaving with this strange woman as though having the name was a matter of deep personal pride” (SS 75). When she was shot dead by Guitar her blood that spilled on Milkman Dead impels him with a tranquil sense of nirvana and almost baptizes him against the evils of absurd earthly life. Though Milkman becomes absorbed in his aunt’s spiritual world, he finds himself torn between his father’s world and his aunt’s. His feeling of not belonging causes an unstable sense of self. Unable to handle his sense of instability within the confusion of his own world tactfully, Milkman turns to the pretension of indifference as a survival. His restlessness has reached to the extent he even wishes for death. His readiness to die in Hagar’s hands is a result of his deep depression with his life.

Milkman's Journey

Milkman's dream of flying in his childhood and the image of the white peacock haunt him. Through his friend, Guitar, he comes to know that the peacock stands for materialism he worships blindly "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 down" (SS 297). These words enlightened Milkman but he cannot fly without returning to the foundation of his culture. Thus, he decided to search for the gold which turns later to be nothing but a metaphor for his identity and family. Milkman's journey is a metaphor for African American spiritual healing of double consciousness which can be carried out through connection with history.

Through his experience, Milkman comes to know the name of his ancestor "Everybody in this town is named Solomon" (SS 490). Knowing one's name is a metaphor for knowing the past. Through Solomon's song, Milkman solves African American dilemma of place, past and identity (SS 22). His journey which goes through Danville, Shalimar and Virginia and the changes that took place in Milkman represents the marginality experienced by the blacks. At the beginning, his superiority over his people is discarded. To find a place in the whole and to become a whole man, he must get rid of materialistic values. His loss of northern clothes and watch implies his consciousness development to escape from imperialism. He experiences rebirth in Shalimar when Luther and Calvin took him on a hunt. In the woods, he overcomes fear by defeating Guitar's challenge to take his life. In the woods, Milkman leaves his indecisiveness and metaphorically takes flight into self. Changing out of his suit into mild clothes signifies his spiritual and metaphorical transformation to become a whole man who belongs to a human community. Taking a bath at Sweet house is a symbol of Milkman's rebirth; and signifies Milkman cultural immersion in a traditional black culture. Putting on a new garment at the end is an image of change in both Milkman's behavior and character. The disappearance of limping shows his cure of alienation and development of his sense of identity. His identity "emerges when he allows himself to accept his personal and familial past" (Smith13). It can be said his journey "achieves cosmic wholeness on his epic journey through his connection with his African ancestors and the recovery of their names and family narratives" (Selassie 70). Leaping towards Guitar, who stands for desperation and wildness, but also its joy and humor, Milkman accepts both sides of his conflicting sides that belong to his father and the others that belong to Guitar, Hagar and Pilate. Izgarjan in *Shifting Identities in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon* says "Milkman at the end learns to live with the conflicting sides of his identity" (32). Milkman at the end attains what DuBois calls:

Self-conscious manhood, to merge his double Self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.

Conclusion

The research has examined Afro-Arabs and Afro-Americans' quest for their lost identity. It reflects the African Americans and Afro-Arabs dilemma, the trauma of double consciousness and their attempt to locate themselves within history. The influence of colonization and materialism on societies is shown through the depressing portraits of Saeed and Milkman whose lives and actions sum up everything.

Besides emphasizing the importance of family and community in sustaining identity, the novelists expose the way in which the blacks have been the subject of torture throughout history. The blacks have been stripped of all aspects of humanity and their original identity; and in return they are fed on the myth of the white superiority and internalized to the values and civilization that contradict their original beliefs, ideas and values. This leads to identity crisis which causes many of psychological conflicts, recurring frustration and culminated in awareness of unknowing whom they are. Saeed and Milkman are victims of such policy and a case of schizophrenia. Fascinated by the west (Saeed) and in order to better himself socioeconomically (Milkman), both characters absorb the white values with a hope of being accepted by the white society. To satisfy the whites, they sacrifice their past, morals, heritage and values to the extent they become more than English and American. However, they are evaluated and seen through the eyes of the whites who believe in their superiority over the blacks. The double consciousness affects their thinking, feeling and conduct negatively. They suffer from a marginal existence as outsiders due to their hybridity. Such internalized intermingled legacy is the source of illness in both novels. Rejected by all humanity in general, the protagonists lead a life of alienation which is worse than death itself. Their restlessness makes them wish for death.

To escape from the sense of instability, confusion and alienation, both turn to the pretension of indifference as a survival. They also turn to ladies not to satisfy their lust, but to escape from the sense of inferiority. Saeed's multiple names used to seduce the ladies reflect not his confusion but his lack of identity. His lies also indicate the fragile identity of the colonized that is a product of the falsehood and deception of the whites.

Both protagonists finally agree where the future must be and where their real existence can be imposed. Their wholeness can be fulfilled only through returning to their roots. Absorbing the white culture just leaves them always struggle against their being. Their journey in search of their identity from south to the North and back (Saeed's journey) and Milkman's journey to the south reflects the painful agony and racism experienced by the blacks throughout history. It also shows the lies and the deception of interest in colonial ideologies and materialistic philosophy by way of emphasizing the destructive impact through their concern for human relationship. Saeed and Milkman's relationship with others hurt them and causes their death.

It seems that the novelists attempt to arouse people's sense of pride for their history, values, past and roots; and never to be afraid or shamed of whom they were as it is the only way that sustains their healthy life away from the world of dilemmas. The past and a sense of independence are essential for healing double consciousness and for establishing a strong identity. Past is interdependent in the present and vice versa as Eliot rightly points out in his *Tradition and Individual Talent*. This means we cannot enjoy a lofty life at the expense of the history as that will make us just monster followers fighting against ourselves. Teaching our generation with a true knowledge of our past helps create a consciousness and a sense of community needed for future. This role has been played by Pilate, a symbol of African identity

that guides Milkman to be a whole. Beside the central message of pride in culture and heritage, there is also a message of inclusiveness and tolerance as implied in Saeed's dedication in one of his books.

Milkman who has been inspired by his aunt and purified by his experience during his journey gets rid of the shells of materialism that hinder his development; and adjusts himself to beliefs, rules and conventions of the black community. Then he finds himself accepted as one of them. Yet, it should be noted that Milkman's journey to the south doesn't mean embracing his original identity entirely and abandoning the northern as experience becomes internalized. He just adopts the best from his early experiences and preserves his native roots. He becomes a whole only when he allows himself to accept his personal and familial past. However, the ending of Milkman is mysterious. His leaping towards Guitar "If you surrendered to the air, you could ride it" (SS544) raises a question mark whether he dies or flies. In fact, the novel opens with Mr. Smith's suicidal leap and ends with Milkman leap. Yet, Milkman's leap is not towards death but towards life as he finally becomes aware of himself and his place in history. He is no longer dead. His leap is just "a figurative leap into the past" (Beaulieu 21). Opposite to his success, Saeed fails to develop a sense of identity. He attempts to integrate himself with his people through distancing himself from his past, a thing which aggravates his alienation. This distance is manifested in his locked room which suggests his alienation and his inability to get rid of the western influence which becomes internalized.

Apparently, he has lived physically with the villagers, but spiritually absent. Uprooted from his home before he absorbs his identity completely, he couldn't identify himself with his people. Belonging demands a strong belief in tradition, history, past and values. It is not enough to know them and to perform them. Saeed only learns how to act such roles. In Sudan, he pretends to be Sudanese and in England as English. He is not entirely African, not English not Arabic. His intellect doesn't help him as his problem has to do with beliefs and values shown to us not through the reason but through our hearts and emotions without reasoning. He is like a rubber as he describes himself and remains as a rubber till the end. A rubber bounces but it doesn't come back to its first place. Like a rubber, Saeed has no real strong roots to tie him down and he never attempts to think or to search for his past despite his authorship. May be, he is afraid of enslavement as his mother is a slave from the south. His life in Sudan is like that in England based on a lie and illusion. His marriage and children couldn't cure him of the influence of the whites. He always yearns for the north. In his letter to the narrator he mentioned more than once that he could not resist the North. "But mysterious things in my soul and in my blood impel me towards far away parts that loom up before me and cannot be ignored" (SMN58). "That distant call still rings in my ears. I thought that my life and marriage here would silence it" (58). From the above quotations it can be inferred that Saeed's destination after his sudden disappearance from the village right after the flood is towards Europe again.

In a nutshell, it can be said that Mustafa Saeed represents Arabic intellectual crisis and a case of schizophrenia experienced by the intellectual who tries to adhere to his cultural heritage. At the same time he wants to keep up with the western civilization. Saeed, who absorbs the western culture, comes into conflict with himself when he comes back home because of his inability to come to term with himself and to adapt to his environment which he left since long years. He was neither able to be English nor to come back to his original civilization. Saeed's lack of authentic Sudanese roots and upbringing, his lack of motherly love, his strange nature of makeup and absence of feeling to function within acceptable social norms in Sudan and in

London, the division based on racism in Sudan and the influence of colonization stand behind his failure to develop a sense of identity.

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