

Chapter III

The South Space: The Housebo(u)nd Space and the Communal Identity

In this chapter, I will demonstrate another representation of Black construction of identity, focusing on the relationship between the south space and Milkman's female ancestors. These female ancestors strongly attach to the south space defined by human relationships in family and community. Willingly, they devote their lives to serve their family and community, sacrifice individual gain, and reject the "progressive" life, in contrast to Milkman's male ancestors. They can create a communal identity and be free without escaping or going northward. However, the loss of individuality comes with a price, since it can cause them to dissociate from family and community.

The south space as the "housebo(u)nd" space

In the novel, the south space can be seen as a space of family and community. It embraces two major characteristics represented by the terms "housebound" and "housebond" spaces. On one hands, the space can be seen as a housebound space due to its geographical demarcation. It refers to the senses of boundary, exclusion, and imprisonment within the family and community spheres. On the other hands, it is the housebond space based on human relationship. It suggests the senses of boundless bond, universality, and free will. The two terms suggest that the south space embodies both closed and open characteristics.

The south space as the housebound space

The housebound space is limited by geography. It is a private, enclosed, isolated space that does not allow changes and differences to penetrate in it. Firstly, the housebound space is isolated and disconnected from the outside world. For example, Shalimar, one of the southern towns the protagonist visits, is described as a local and unique land, untouched by civilization and modernization.

Some places had lots of trees, some did not; some fields were green, some were not, and the hills in the distance were like the hills in every distance. Then he watched signs – the names of towns that lay twenty-two miles ahead, seventeen miles to the east, five miles to the northeast. And the names of the junctions, countries, crossings, bridges, stations, tunnels, mountains, rivers, creeks, landings, parks, and lookout points. Everybody had to do his act, he thought, for surely anybody who was interested in Dudberry Point already knew where it was. (p. 226)

The description shows the opposite scenery of Mains Street or Not Doctor Street. It is the backward land without buildings, but “trees”, “fields”, and “hills” everywhere. There is no distinct variation or universal name to help outsiders to locate themselves. The unique name of each place such as “Dudberry Point” is accessible for only local people, who “already knew where it was.” Therefore, the only way outsiders can survive in this place is to depend on local people. Additionally, it is almost inaccessible by public transportation, since there is only one bus (p. 260) per day. Even though one reaches there, one can hardly know it because there is no distinct landmark. Milkman paid “close attention to signs and landmarks, because Shalimar was not on the Texaco map [...]”, however, “he wouldn’t have known he had arrived if the fan belt hadn’t broken again right in front of Solomon’s General Store, which turned to be the heart and soul of Shalimar, Virginia.” (p. 262) This description of “the heart and soul of Shalimar” shows the tremendous contrast from the modernized Not Doctor Street in the North with the systematic and universal city planning. In other words, the absence of modernization and progress proves the absence of White official authority. It suggests that the local people are unique and autonomous, maintaining the traditional ways of life.

Secondly, the South is frozen in time. Apparently, the southern community is impervious to changes. Geographically, the southern land has been rarely changed from the past. For example, although Pilate had been in the South for decades, Milkman can later follow the same track and meet the people she met because things rarely change there. More specifically, Milkman can still walk to the Hunter Cave through the same path as Macon and Pilate used to walk when they were

young. The outback and bucolic characteristics of the land preserve everything in almost the same condition. Moreover, in the social aspect, while the outside world is evolving to the progressive future, the southern community maintains their primitive ways of life. It is the agrarian society without the presence of official and financial institutions or private enterprise. Danville, another southern town Milkman visits, is described this way: "Danville, with its diner/bus station and its post office on the main street was a thriving metropolis compared to this no-name hamlet, a place so small nothing financed by state funds or private enterprise reared a brick there." (p. 259) Shalimar is more primitive. The center of Shalimar is "Solomon's General Store", which is many times removed from the private enterprise in the city. Milkman can neither fix his car because there is no garage, nor connect to the outside world because there is no post office. Furthermore, while northern Blacks move forward to financially better their life, the southern Blacks are described as primitive people who live in a primitive community. For example, it is depicted that "The women's hands were empty. No pocketbook, no change purse, no wallet, no keys, no small paper bag, no comb, no handkerchief. They carried nothing." (p.259) These objects represent modern society where people are educated ("pocketbook"), live in urban society ("change purse", "wallet", "small paper bag"), possess personal property ("keys"), and are concerned about images and formality ("comb", handkerchief"). The portrayal of the women carrying "nothing" can symbolize both the indifference towards civilization and deprivation of the people. While the North is going forward to the better future and leaving the past behind, the South remains the same as it has always been. The imperviousness, thus, proves the community's different sense of time, which does not linearly move from past-present-future, but still stagnates.

Next, the southern community is closely knitted by family legacy and traditional culture, which emphasize the closeness and privacy of the space. In the socio-anthropological aspect, the exclusiveness of the southern community is presented through endogamy.

There must be a lot of intermarriage in this place, he thought. All the women looked alike, and except for some light-skinned red-headed men (like Mr. Solomon), the men looked very much like women. Visitors to

Shalimar must be rare, and new blood that settled here nonexistent. (P. 263)

The “intermarriage” among the folks displays that the South is the space of similarities, not only in racial aspect (“all the women looked alike”) but also in gender aspect (“the men looked very much like women”). This seems to present the southern community as a matriarchal society, in which women play an important role in the community, especially in the domestic sphere. However, we should note that it is the point of view of an outsider, a northern Black man, towards the “exotic” land. His opinions echo Bousoon’s argument on internalized racism, gender and class discrimination prevailing in the novel, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Embodying the northern egotistic point of view, Milkman unintentionally provokes the local folks’ anger and hatred and insults them through his conspicuous consumption. The fight between Milkman and one of the folks shows that he is unaccepted in the community. It intensifies the image of the enclosed space where there are no outsiders, changes, or differences.

In addition, the closeness of the space can also be seen through the cultural aspect. The southern community has internal codes known only among local people. First, there are names and naming. In an interview given in 1976 while Morrison was writing the work tentatively named “Milkman Dead”, which would become *Song of Solomon*, she said “The name thing is very, very strong theme in the book that I’m writing, the absence of a name given at all, the odd names and the slave names, the whole business, the feeling of anonymity, the feeling of orphanage.” (MacKethan, 2003, p.186) Morrison seems to suggest that a name is not only a group of words used to call a person, but also the bond to family and community. Similarly, the names represented in the South are seen as the internal codes among local folks, since it maintains their collective history. For example, the sign “Dudberry” (p. 226), which Milkman noticed along the road, is known only among local people because it makes no sense for outsiders as to where and what it refers to. The folks’ names such as “Nephew” (the nephew of Reverend Cooper, p. 257) or “Small Boy” (one of the hunters, p. 271) have their own history behind the names that “got from yearnings,

gestures, flaws, events, mistakes, weaknesses. Name that bore witness.” (p. 330) It is apparent that name connects one to his/her family and community. Catherine Carr Lee points out the significance of African names that “names provided a link with the African past; in the New World, slaves conducted secret naming ceremonies and used their African name when they could avoid the presence of whites.”¹(p. 46) African names and naming ceremonies signify the autonomy and self-determination of the Blacks. For instance, Jake redefines his name in order to seek complete freedom. The name “Jake” is abandoned since it connects him to the cruelty of slavery and the authority of his White master over him. Ironically, he decides to keep the name “Macon Dead” for it suggests his autonomy in determining his own name, in spite of being “scrawled in perfect thoughtlessness by a drunken Yankee in the Union Army” (p. 18). Similarly, randomly pointing to the name “Pilate” in the Bible, Jake insists on giving the name for his daughter. Despite the fact that its meaning refers to the “Christ-killing” (p. 19) man, he likes the name because of the “group of letters [that] seemed to him strong and handsome”; he “saw in them a large figure that looked like a tree hanging in some princely but protective way over a row of smaller trees.” (p. 18) By reinscribing the meaning of names, Jake declares his autonomy and strikes back at the authorities, his slave master and Christ (who does not answer his request for saving his wife’s life), that obstruct his happiness. Apart from representing the bond between people and their family and community, names and naming are the Blacks’ internal codes used to avoid and subvert other threatening authorities.

Another internal code predominantly presented in the novel is singing. Songs and singing are employed to display the internal deliverance of Black history. The song about Solomon sung by local children contains many riddles that Milkman can never decipher unless he asks the local people. He has to collect and weave many stories and pieces of evidence together, such as from Reverend Cooper, Circe and Susan Byrd, to understand the whole song. Apparently, the song survives because of the collective memory of the Blacks. Furthermore, singing is seen as the ritual

¹ See more in Catherine Carr Lee’s “The South in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*: Initiation, Healing, and Home” (2000)

requiring participation from the members of family and community. The obvious example is the singing of Pilate, Reba, and Hagar depicted at the end of the first chapter of the novel.

They were singing some melody that Pilate was leading. A phrase that the other two were taking up and building on. Her powerful contralto, Reba's piercing soprano in counterpoint, and the soft voice of the girl, Hagar, who must be about ten or eleven now, pulled him like a carpet tack under the influence of a magnet. (p. 29)

The singing is presented as the family ritual, completed by the participation of every family member in "leading", "taking up", and "building on" the song. It illustrates the harmony and bond of the members. Moreover, singing is "a magnet" attaching people to their family and home. Macon, who hears and "surrender[s] to the sound", is led back to his own home on Not Doctor Street and to his former home in Danville. It makes him realize the lifelessness and estrangement among the members in his present home because "there was no music there" and think of the happiness of his past home with the images of "fields and wild turkey and calico" (p. 29). More importantly, the singing ritual is always represented as a female activity. In the novel, we always see Pilate and her children singing songs, which pacify and console the "audiences" such as in Macon's retrospection of home, Mr. Smith's flight, and Hagar's funeral. The ritual displays the significant role of women in uniting and connecting family and community.

The last cultural activity showing the closeness of the southern society is hunting. In "Doe Hunting and Masculinity: *Song of Solomon* and *Go Down Moses*", Duvall (2003, p. 115) states that hunting "is something more than the literal stalking of animals; the hunted animals in both are totemic substitutes for characters". Duvall further suggests that the ritual brings the protagonists to the "transcendent moment" which is "the creation of adult subjectivity" (2003, p. 115). Or in other words, it is the coming-of-age ritual. Milkman realizes his selfishness towards his family members and foolishness in obsessing over material things. After the hunting, he learns to give to and care for others as we can see from his kind offer to bathe Sweet. Besides, he confesses to the folks that he is "scared to death" (p. 280). It shows that

after hunting he is more mature, since he can gradually abandon his pride and egocentricity. In addition to the coming-of-age ritual presented by Duvall, hunting, as a male activity, can also be seen as the process of assimilation to the primitive Black's community by proving masculine ability. In hunting, men need to prove their bravery, strength, and survival skills. Milkman at first fails to befriend the local folks, since he unintentionally displays his "masculinity" through boasting about his wealth and sexual potency, which is not the "dignified" way to present it. Therefore, the men want to give him a lesson so they invite him to go hunting to prove how to be a "real man". After Milkman's survival of the hunting, the local men change their attitudes towards him. He is treated more civilly and gradually accepted, and given a chance to "get the heart" (p. 282) of the dead bobcat. Moreover, the process of proving masculinity is finally completed when he is introduced to Sweet, who signifies a gift for a man who has done some heroic deed. With the proof of masculinity in the hunting ritual, Milkman can assimilate to the community.

These characteristics crystallize the south space as the "housebound" space because of its closeness of the space, maintenance of primitiveness, and intimacy in the family and community. It seems to negatively suggest its backwardness, unfriendliness, and exclusiveness for others. Nevertheless, the south space has another dominant characteristic, which based on human relationships. This characteristic proves that the space can be seen as an open and boundless space, presented by the term "housebond" space.

The south space as the housebond space

Clearly, family and community play an important part in the South. We can see through the housebound characteristics that family and community are limited and demarcate the space. However, family and community can also suggest the sense of human relationship that is not limited by space. The term "housebond" suggests the bond between family/community and its members that is not limited only to a certain area, but carried with them wherever they go. Besides, it implies the sense of free will and independence, since they willingly choose to maintain close

relationships with their family or community. In this sense, the south space is not only demarcated within the boundary of the South of America, but also situated wherever the southern people want it to be.

The implication of the south space as “everywhere” regardless of geographical limitation clearly proves the openness and flexibility of the space. One example is “Southside” community (p. 56), which is geographically in the North. However, when compared to the middle class community on Not Doctor Street, it is seen as a segregated world. “Southside” community is the Black underclass ghetto, the result of “the Great Migration” of the southern Blacks to the North in order to escape from intense racial discrimination and poverty. Not only does its name suggest the bond to the South, but its inhabitants also have strong bonds to their southern home. The Southside folks still maintain a strong sense of community. Apparently, the image of the barbershop of Railroad Tommy and Hospital Tommy is similar to the image of Solomon’s General Store in Shalimar. Both of them are the “heart and soul” of the community, where the Black folks meet and exchange conversations.

The men began to trade tales of atrocities, first stories they had heard, then those they’d witnessed, and finally the things that had happened to themselves. A litany of personal humiliations, outrage, and anger turned sicklelike back to themselves as humor. They laughed then, uproariously, about the speed with which they had run, the pose they had assumed, the ruse they had invented to escape and decrease some threat to their manliness, their humanness. (p. 82)

The quotation shows that the topic of discussion is the South. The Black folks express their past lives in a new light. Dehumanized and “emasculated” by the Whites, they “uproariously laugh” at the traumatic lives as a result of the violent racial discrimination in the South, which becomes their collective memories. Moreover, the barbershop also becomes the “public space” for the Blacks to express and criticize social and political opinions especially against the White racists. For instance, the Black folks gather and listen to the radio reporting the news about the murder of Emmett Till and discuss whether the news will appear on the front page or

the sports page of the newspaper (pp. 80-2). The incident shows racial prejudice prevailing in the North. According to the folks' sarcasm, the biased newspaper takes the news of Blacks' murders as only an American pastime. This shows their concern towards people of the same race. Despite being in the North, "Southside" is similar to the southern communities which attempt to maintain their sense of community and create their own space to subvert the undesirable authority.

Apparently, the creation of the south space outside the South is not only in the form of real Black migrant community, it is also presented in the form of imaginary land constructed by oral tradition. In Trinh Minh-Ha's "Grandma's Story", she notes that "to listen carefully is to preserve." (Minh-Ha, 1987, p. 4, quoted in Middleton, 1993, p. 73) In primitive African culture, oral tradition is the only way to maintain and preserve their traditions and history, since they have no written culture. Stories and histories are kept in people, not in papers. For example, the history of slavery and segregation is shown through the "tales" of the Southside's ex-slaves, as presented above. With oral tradition, they "reconstruct" the past life through storytelling and pass it to their descendents. Like the Southside folks, though living in the North, other characters repeatedly construct the southern world through their storytelling. For example, we can see that "Lincoln's Heaven" is constructed by Macon and Pilate. However, their images of the southern home are different. Macon's "Lincoln's Heaven" is presented as a story of success. It is related to the productivity of the land that his father and he create together. He emphasizes the cooperation between him and his father, "I worked right alongside my father. Right alongside him. From the time I was four or five we worked together. Just the two of us." (p. 51) The richness of the land is illustrated with "a fortune in oak and pine", "a stream full of fish", "deer and wild turkey", and "fruit trees, apple, cherry" (p. 51). It is mentioned that, during telling the story, Macon "transforms" from the harsh, stern businessman to the southern boy, since his voice is "less hard", "more southern and comfortable, and soft." (p. 52) The image seems to suggest the revival of "Lincoln's Heaven" in the moment of storytelling. While Macon's farm shows the success of his life, Pilate's "Lincoln's Heaven" is family. It is told through the relationship of family members, especially between Macon and her. She depicts Macon as a boy,

“Macon was a nice boy and awful good to me” (p. 40) and expresses her gratitude towards him, “Hadn’t been for your daddy [Macon], I wouldn’t be here today. I would have died in the womb. And died again in the woods. Those woods and the dark would have surely killed me. But he saved me and here I am boiling eggs.” (p. 40) Both Macon and Pilate talk about the farm to Milkman to help him connect to his ancestors’ home in the South. Here, we can see the unlimited potential of oral tradition in “reconstructing” the southern land in the North. It makes Macon and Pilate temporarily “revisit” their southern home. Moreover, oral tradition presents the mutual communication among people. Storytelling tightens the bond of human relationships because it is the two-way communication in which everyone can participate. Hence, the oral tradition that is unlimited and unbound by space proves the south space as an open and flexible space.

Furthermore, the housebond space also implies the sense of free will and independence. As mentioned before, the southern community is indifferent towards external forces and personal progress and has a strong attachment to family and community. The determination shows the freedom of choice to sacrifice for family or community and resist the mainstream influence. For example, Magdalene called Lena, Milkman’s first sister who seems to be an uneventful character, clearly represents the strong bond of family relationship. She is presented as a “selfless” woman who sacrifices her whole life for her family, especially her mother and sister. Although Lena is seen as a “housebound” person since she is rarely seen outside the house, she willingly chooses to stay in the house in order to uphold housebond values. She denies her personal progress such as pursuing further education, seeking a job outside the house, or getting married and willingly stays to protect her mother from Macon’s ferocity as she says, “I didn’t go to college because of him. Because I was afraid of what he might do to Mama.” (p. 215) In addition, she willingly yields to Macon’s authority for the sake of family, despite the fact that she is rebellious against his power. She, therefore, finds a transient escape from unbearable conditions with the making of artificial roses.

I was the one who started making artificial roses. Not Mama. Not
 Corinthians. Me. I loved to do it. It kept me...quiet. That’s why they make

those people in the asylum weave baskets and make rag rugs. It kept them quiet. If they didn't have the baskets they might find out what's really wrong and ... do something. Something terrible. (p. 213)

The quotation shows Lena's real nature as a rebellious and independent person. Though comparing her life with prisoner or the insane, Lena is not imprisoned or submissive to Macon's power, but chooses to stay calmly, suppress her anger and force herself to be under his control. For the sake of family, she decides to forsake her power (to do "something terrible") and keeps "quiet". By "making artificial roses", which signifies her creation of unnatural or fake love in the family, she attempts to uphold housebond values. However, when Lena finally sees that Corinthians' life is almost completely ruined by her father and brother, she rebels against them by declaring, "I don't make roses anymore, and you have pissed your last in this house" (p. 216). It seems that she will no longer be silent; she must speak out to remind Milkman of his selfishness and indifference towards his family. This can be seen as another act Lena does to maintain housebond values. Lena's determination to abandon her personal happiness and support family members leads her to create a selfless life. Her life is the outstanding case showing one's free will in sacrificing everything to maintain the bond of family relationship.

The south space based on human bonding proves that the space is open and boundless. It shows that the sense of family and community does not have to be limited in domestic sphere or in certain area. Also, the bond to family and community signifies another kind of freedom that is not based on wealth or individual escape, unlike the north space. In both the housebound and housebond space, we can see that it leads the people to embrace communal identity, since their lives are always associated with family and community. However, the embrace of communal identity and the denial of individuality can come at a price. Ironically, the loss of individuality can cause the disconnection between people and their family or community, since when one longs to be a part of the family or community, one cannot avoid losing the individual self in it. This can be clearly seen in Milkman's female ancestors, Circe, Sing Dead, Pilate and Susan Byrd.

Milkman's female ancestors and the communal identity

The south space has tremendous influence towards individuals to create communal identities. In this chapter, I focus on Milkman's four female ancestors: Circe, Sing Dead, Pilate Dead, and Susan Byrd. These women have strong attachments to the South in two different ways. For the first group, they perceive the south space as the "housebound" space. The South is the "home" they have to stay in in order to maintain the family's or community's legacy in the cases of Circe and Susan Byrd. For the second group, the south space is the "housebond" space. The south space is embodied within themselves, since they have obligations towards family and community wherever they are in the cases of Sing and Pilate.

Regarding the south space as the housebound space, Circe and Susan Byrd are bound in their houses in order to serve and maintain family or community. For Circe, the housebound space is the space of vengeance on the White racists. She willingly "incarcerates" herself in the Butlers' mansion to closely witness its fall as the act of rebellion against her White masters. Rebuffing Milkman's money for leaving the place, Circe ironically declares her "freedom" in "imprisoning" herself in the mansion. It is the rebellious act against her White master who couldn't stand "the thought of having no help, no money" and had to "let everything go" such as the upstairs maid, the cook, the yardman, or the chauffeur (p. 246): everything but Circe.

"Do you hear me? She saw the work I did all her days and died, you hear me, died rather than live like me. Now, what do you suppose she thought I was! If the way I lived and the work I did was so hateful to her she killed herself to keep from having to do it, and you think I stay on here because I loved her, then you have about as much sense of a fart!" (p. 247)

Obviously, at first, Circe is housebound because she is a slave and has no power or weapon to rebel against them. The passage clearly shows that Black slaves like Circe are seen in the lowest rank of labor, which is worse than death. However, when her masters all died and leave the house to her, instead of leaving the place to live a better life, Circe decides to stay in order to declare her independence and victory over her

White masters. She intends to live for an extraordinarily long time (more than a hundred years) to see the end of the “White colony”.

“They loved this place. Loved it. Brought pink veined marble from across the sea for it and hired men in Italy to do the chandelier that I had to climb a ladder and clean with white muslin once every two months. They loved it. Stole for it, lied for it, killed for it. But I’m the one left. Me and the dogs. And I will never clean it again. Never. Nothing. Not a speck of dust, not a grain of dirt, will I move. Everything in this world they lived for will crumble and rot. The chandelier already fell down and smashed itself to pieces. It’s down there in the ballroom now. All in pieces. Something gnawed through the cords. Ha! And I want to see it all go, make sure it does go, and that nobody fixes it up. I brought the dogs in to make sure.
(p. 247)

According to Circe’s “declaration of independence” above, we can see that she employs the opposite logic from the Whites to strike them back. Circe’s White masters are depicted as the image of White colonizers whose predominant concern is the progress of their house, since it represents their wealth, power, and prosperity of life. Apparently, the act of importing furniture from abroad such as “pink marble” and “chandelier” and especially the act of stealing, lying, and killing for the luxury of their house clearly emphasize their colonial mind. As a result, Circe employs the logic of the slave or “third world” people to counter them. She decides to halt their progress by being negligent and indifferent towards the decline of the mansion. Stopping cleaning and renewing the mansion, she does not destroy it herself, but lets it “crumble” and “rot” by itself and makes sure that “nobody fixes it up.” As opposed to the White colonizers’ progressive weapon that can make massive and hasty destruction, the dirt becomes one of her “weapons” against them that gradually and slowly drives their “colony” into ruin. With this act, she exonerates herself against Milkman’s accusation that she stays because she loves her White masters (p. 247). Her indifference towards the ruins confirms her stance on being their enemy. Furthermore, it seems that Circe revenges herself against the Whites not only for herself, but also for her people, the Dead’s family whose father was killed by them,

and also for her race in declaring freedom to determine their lives. Circe's rebellious act enables us to reinterpret the Butlers' mansion. Since the Butlers, due to their superiority as being Whites, used to "legally" transform Jake's Black utopia to their "White colony", Circe, with her superiority as being alive for an extraordinarily long time, "expropriates" it and turn it into the Black space. The rotten mansion is the evidence of the Black victory. In spite of living alone in the mansion, Circe's determination to take revenge for herself and her people by sacrificing her ordinary life proves her authentic communal identity. It suggests that, for Circe, family and community is her "blood" or her race.

While Circe's housebound space is the space of vengeance, Susan Byrd's housebound space signifies the space of a pureblood family. Susan clings to her ancestor's home in order to purify her family's name from being associated with Blacks. In her conversation with Milkman, it is shown that her family is American Indian, to which Milkman shares ancestors. However, Susan always claims that her family is a close family that does not like any of its members to mix with other races, especially with Black people. Besides, the isolation of Susan's family is further intensified when she reveals that they do not only cut themselves off from other races, but also their relatives.

"I've been here all of mine," said Susan. "Both my parents were born here and so was I. Never been farther away than St. Phillips County. I have people in South Carolina, but I've never ever been to visit them."

"That's because they're passing too. Just like John. You couldn't visit them if you wanted to." Grace leaned over the plate of cookies and selected one.

"They're not the only family I have left." Susan was indignant.

"I hope not. It's a sad thing, Mr. Macon, when you're left without any people to claim you. I keep up with my family. I'm not married, you know, not yet anyway, but my family is very close." She gave him a meaningful look. (p. 291)

It is mentioned that Susan's other relatives are "passing" and deny claiming her as their family. Yet, she successfully proves that those are not the ones she has left when, ironically, Milkman, the Black relative whom they refuse to include in their family, comes to claim Susan and her family as his family. It seems that, for Susan, family is the ideal and the house represents the utopia reserved only for her people. Yet, Sing's "disgraceful act" of running off with Jake, the Black boy brought up by her grandmother, becomes the fault of family, which should be mended or concealed. Therefore, for the Byrds, there is only the "Boston Sing". Seemingly, she knows that if she lets her neighbors know about Sing, the disgraceful story would be repeated by them again and again, like the legend of Solomon and Ryna. Therefore, she has to be a secret keeper to save the family's name and their home as a pureblood space. Being single and burying herself in the house for the sake of her family, Susan creates the identity based on her ideal family.

Although the embrace of communal identity presents bonding and close relationships among people in the family or community, it explicitly leads to the loss of individuality. Their strong attachment to their homes results in their disconnection from the broader society or community. Since they abandon their individual selves, they are not seen in society as a complete person. For example, Circe's self-confinement separates her from the human sphere. For the folks in Danville, she is a ghost. They assume that she is dead because Circe was already a hundred when they were young (p. 233). Milkman finds out that she is in fact still alive, but "so old only her mouth and eyes were distinguishable features in her face. Nose, chin, cheekbones, forehead, neck, all had surrendered their identity to the pleats and crochetwork of skin committed to constant change." (p. 240) Moreover, Milkman at first regards her as a witch in his dream. Apart from her old face, Circe is described grotesquely that she has "the strong, mellifluous voice of a twenty-year-old girl" (p. 240), which makes him think of her as a supernatural being. It seems that the strong voice as a young girl of old Circe symbolizes her internal power to live and achieve her aim. Circe's creation of communal identity through paradoxically confining herself in the mansion to gain revenge for her people makes her lose contact with others in the community.

It alienates her from the outside world and finally causes her the loss of “human identity”.

The embrace of communal identity, in Susan’s case, separates her from the neighbors and also prevents her from having an individual life. Apparently, Susan’s life depends on her “ideal family”. However, the concern for family makes her live both in reality and illusion, since she often lies about her family to save their faces. Even her friend, Grace, is not trusted for she “talks so much” and “carries tales all over the county.” (p. 321) The distrust isolates and alienates her from society. Besides, what she wants others to know is a made-up story. Therefore, her life can partly be seen as unreal. Additionally, the distrust also affects her personal life. As I mentioned before, Susan is still single, lives alone in the house, and is detached from her relatives. With her loyalty towards her extraordinarily “close” family, Susan has to live a sad life without anyone to claim her.

The lives of Circe and Susan illustrate the housebound space that helps create their communal identity by “imprisoning” themselves in certain space in order to serve family and community. Next, I will focus on the other two ancestors, Sing and Pilate, and their lives in the housebound space enabling them to form the communal identity through bonding with people. Like Circe and Susan, Sing and Pilate have strong senses of obligation towards family and community. However, they are not bound only in their southern house. For them, the South is “wherever” they are. In other words, the South is not defined by space, but relationship and bonding towards people. For example, the housebound space for Sing is the miscegeneous relationship with people. First, Sing creates miscegeneous relationship with “black Jake” (p. 321), despite the fact that her Indian family discriminates against Blacks. She ran away with him, “riding off with a wagonload of slaves” (p. 321) from Virginia, and settled in Danville. She clings to him wherever he goes for she is “crazy about her husband [...], overcrazy” (p. 243). Unlike Circe and Susan, Sing’s housebound space is involved in extending human bonding, as we can see from her lack of discrimination towards the Blacks. Her human bonding is so strong that she violates the Byrds’ convention to form the miscegeneous family with the Deads. Nonetheless, Sing does not totally cut off her Byrd family from her life. Like Susan,

she embodies the pride of the Byrd, as “[s]he always bragged how she was never a slave. Her people neither.”(p. 243) Here, her bond with her family is apparent, though running away from them and having a different point of view towards Blacks. Consequently, Sing’s miscegenation displays the openness and flexibility of the south space that is not only based on the sameness within family and community, but also the bond between human beings. It shows that she chooses to embrace communal identity in the way that she creates bonding with people across racial divides.

Embodying the housebond space, unlike Sing, Pilate creates a wider bond between human beings. While Sing’s relationship with Jake can be seen as a bonding towards people close to her family, Pilate has strong bonds not only with people in or close to her family, but everyone. She brings with her the sense of obligation towards people everywhere she goes, wishing to gather her family members and being responsible for the dead man Macon accidentally “killed”. Moving all around the South to “look for her people” (p. 146) and the dead man’s bones (to fulfill her father’s ghost’s request) and travelling to the North to find Macon, Pilate is accomplished in both obligations. Furthermore, she reproduces “Lincoln’s Heaven” in the North and ignores the materialistic values of the urban North.

...Darling Street where Pilate lived in a narrow single-story house whose basement seemed to be rising from rather than settling into the ground. She had no electricity because she would not pay for the service. Nor for gas. At night she and her daughter lit the house with candles and kerosene lamps; they warmed themselves and cooked with wood and coal, pumped kitchen water into a dry sink through a pipeline from a well, and lived pretty much as though progress was a word that meant walking a little further on down the road. (p. 27)

No meal was ever planned or balanced or served. Nor was there any gathering at the table. Pilate might bake hot bread and each one of them would eat it with butter whenever she felt like it. [...] They ate what they had or came across or had a craving for. Profits from their wine-selling evaporated like sea water in a hot wind – going for junk jewelry for Hagar, Reba’s gifts to men, (p. 29)

The passage shows another definition of freedom presented in the novel, unlike Macon's "wealth-is-the-only-freedom". Pilate is free from capitalistic and materialistic values of the North. Similar to Circe and many southern people, Pilate is impervious and indifferent to the progress and technology of the modern world. As opposed to her brother's assimilation to urban middle class society, she insists on the traditional ways of life as she had on the farm. Free from the modern system such as "electricity", "gas", or water-supply to facilitate her life, she lives the simplest life that does not mainly depend on money. As opposed to capitalistic life, there is no need to collect life savings or plan for the better and more stable future. She does everything "whenever she felt like it", "came across", or "had a craving for." Money and accessories are only the temporary presents and unnecessary for life. Besides, she ignores progress as well as it ignores her. It is mentioned that "there were no street lights in this part of town; only the moon directed the way of a pedestrian." (p. 28) This emphasizes Pilate's life mostly involved in nature. The maintenance of a traditional way of life transforms her house on Darling Street to another "Lincoln's Heaven".

Additionally, there are many others examples to illustrate Pilate's independence. The extreme example is described through her "grotesque" (p. 148) body as having no navel. According to Circe, Pilate is "[b]orned herself" because her mother is already dead. She "popped out" from her mother's womb; even Circe had not heard her "heartbeat" (p. 244). It seems to suggest that she does not completely belong to the human sphere as the navel symbolizes human bonding in the first stage of life. This foreshadows her future life because when Pilate grows up, she has difficulty living with other people in the communities. Because of having no navel, she had been ostracized and regarded as an evil by them, even her own boyfriends. Yet Pilate can transcend this contempt by not only living her life in her own way, but also embracing community. With her extraordinary psychological strength, many critics have regarded Pilate's independence with different terms, such as "a character of larger than life dimensions – one who has transcended the limitations of her historical moment and milieu"(Smith, 2003, p. 35), or "a self-invented, self-created woman of the ancient proprieties"(O'Reilly, 2004, p. 106). The most interesting one

is from Gerry Brenner's "*Song of Solomon: Rejecting Rank's Monomyth and Feminism*". Brenner regards Pilate's independence as showing "she inherits **our celebrated American tradition of individualism**, and she challenges and rejects her society's values by living in its very midst, refusing to retreat from it." (2003, p. 105, emphasis added) Brenner's employment of the American north space's concept of individualism to characterize Pilate, the character representing the African south space, interestingly points out her difference from other southern characters in the aspect of being extraordinarily independent. In Pilate's case, I think individuality comes to serve her communal identity. The fact that she is independent enables her to survive in the ostracizing community. If she completely yields to her community's contempt, she may become a fragmented person and have no power to serve her family and people.

However, her freedom and independence is not the obstacle for her to create strong bonds with others, including the ones who hate her. Pilate has a strong bond not only with her family, but also other people. For the family, she mentions that she "didn't have a thought in [her] head of ever leavin them [Jake and Macon], but I did." (p. 142) The extraordinarily strong bond is shown through her recurring conversation with her father's ghost who keeps telling her mother's name and asking her to properly bury him. However, it is later revealed that Pilate misinterprets his aims.

I went cause Papa told me to. He kept coming to see me, off and on. Tell me things to do. First he just told me to sing, to keep on singing. 'Sing,' he'd whisper. 'Sing, sing.' Then right after Reba was born he came and told me outright: 'You just can't fly on off and leave a body,' he tole me. A human life is precious. You shouldn't fly off and leave it. So I knew right away what he meant cause he was right there when we did it. He meant that if you take a life, then you own it. You responsible for it. You can't get rid of nobody by killing them. They still there, and they yours now. [...]Life is life. Precious. And the dead you kill is yours. They stay with you anyway, in your mind. So it's a better thing, a more better thing

to have the bones right there with you wherever you go. That way, it frees up your mind. (p. 208)

In fact, Jake's ghost whispers the word "Sing" to tell Pilate her mother's name, which he never told her when he was alive. And the left body in fact refers to his bones needing Pilate to bury properly. Nevertheless, Pilate's misinterpretation of "Sing" gives her an advantage, since she can create a strong bond with family through the singing ritual, which needs the participation of every family member. Moreover, it shows her compassion and responsibility towards other people, since she travels around the South in order to go back to the cave and collect the "dead man's bone killed by Macon". The most important point is that she does not see the requests as a burden, but the act of "free[ing] up [her] mind". Here, it is obvious that Pilate's freedom is related to "a deep concern for and about human relationships." (p. 149) Paradoxically, as long as she serves them, she is free. Morrison seems to challenge the concept of individual freedom by presenting through Pilate that one can achieve freedom by completing one's communal identity and strongly bonding with other people.

Nonetheless, like Circe and Susan, it is apparent that both Sing and Pilate are affected by the interference of their family and community, resulting in their loss of individuality. In Sing's case, her decision to deviate from her family's convention causes her to lose "existence". Her family conceals her love story and distorts her life story to save their face, since they perceive it as an improper act. For her family, there is only Sing who went to "private school in Boston" (p. 321), and Sing who ran away with Jake does not exist. Thus, in reality, she has no existence for them. Besides, Sing's absence from the family almost causes the disconnection between the Byrds and the Deads. Without the truth about her, Milkman can never find out about his ancestors. Therefore, Sing's authentic identity is essential to complete her descendant's formation of identity as well. Similarly, Pilate is "cut off" (p. 142) and dehumanized by the people in her communities. She is not seen as a human being but "something God never made" (p. 144), since for them the navel signifies that one was born "natural" (p. 143). As a result, Pilate's individuality is repudiated in the "human sphere".

Whether “bound” or “bond” with the house, these women strongly attach to their family and community. The south space introduces another kind of self formation for African-Americans achieved by merging themselves with family and community, despite the fact that they have to sacrifice their individuality. In the next chapter, I will discuss Milkman’s encounter of both the north and the south space, which finally enables him to create a heterogeneous identity.