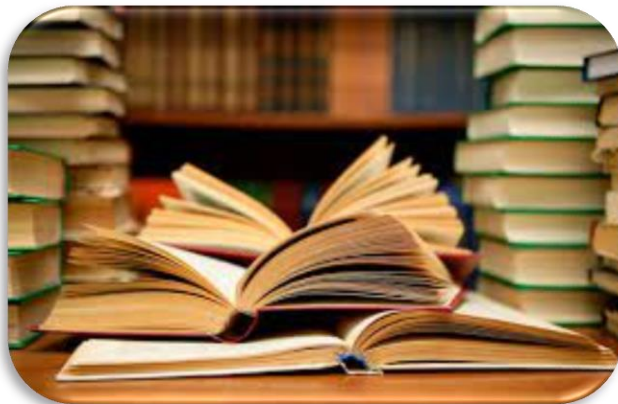


**Research Paper**



**Perception and Misperception of Violence:  
A Žižekian Study of Toni Morrison's *The  
Bluest Eye and Beloved***

**Afshin Mosalla Nejad<sup>1</sup>, Hassan Shahabi<sup>2\*</sup>,  
Shahram Raeisi Sistani<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*PhD Candidate of Department of English Language  
and Literature, Science and Research Branch, Islamic  
Azad University, Tehran, Iran  
afshinmosalla.nejad@yahoo.com*

<sup>2</sup>*Assistant Professor, Department of English Language  
and Literature, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad  
University, Kerman, Iran  
shahabi1964@yahoo.co.uk*

<sup>3</sup>*Assistant Professor, Department of Foreign  
Languages, Faculty of Literature and Humanities,  
Shahid Bahonar University, Kerman, Iran  
shahram.sistani@uk.ac.ir*

**Received: 02 July, 2023**

**Accepted: 11 August, 2023**

**ABSTRACT**

Violence as an unavoidable part of human beings' experience is so widespread within individuals' contacts that in most cases is ignored or taken for granted. However, violence is subject to various misperceptions that make the study of it challenging. Theoretically, this paper adopts the three forms of violence suggested by Slavoj Žižek: subjective, objective and systemic violence in order to explore how Žižek proves the ways by which, violence is perceived and misperceived. In doing so, this paper applies political discourse analysis, Black gender feminism, and psychoanalytic methods to be the approaches of this study. By applying Žižek's theories of violence on Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* as the corpus of the study the current paper explores violence and the ways it is misrepresented. The objective of this paper is to explore the strategies which lead to misperception of violence. The conclusion drawn from this paper shows that Žižekian systemic violence that generates other forms of violence should remain hidden as dark matter of physics. Some pseudo-activities, ideologies or pseudo-ideologies can be at work in their manifest and latent forms when something that is so obviously omnipresent remains invisible or is misperceived.

**Keywords:** Misperception of violence, Pseudo-activities, Ideology, Pseudo-ideology, Toni Morrison, Slavoj Žižek

**ادراک و ادراک نادرست خشونت: مطالعه ژیزکی از کتاب آبی ترین چشم و محبوب تونی موريسون**

خشونت به‌عنوان بخش اجتناب‌ناپذیر تجربیات انسان‌ها، چنان در تماس‌های افراد گسترده است که در بیشتر موارد نادیده گرفته می‌شود یا بدیهی تلقی می‌شود. با این حال، خشونت در معرض برداشت‌های نادرست مختلفی است که مطالعه آن را چالش برانگیز می‌کند. از لحاظ نظری، این مقاله سه شکل خشونت پیشنهاد شده توسط اسلاوی ژیزک را اتخاذ می‌کند: خشونت ذهنی، عینی و سیستمی به منظور بررسی این که چگونه ژیزک روش‌های ادراک و درک نادرست خشونت را اثبات می‌کند. در این راستا، این مقاله از روش‌های تحلیل گفتمان سیاسی، فمینیسم جنسیتی سیاه‌پوست و روش‌های روانکاو رویکردهای این پژوهش هستند. مقاله حاضر با استفاده از تئوری‌های خشونت ژیزک در کتاب «آبی‌ترین چشم و معشوق» تونی موريسون به‌عنوان مجموعه‌ای از این مطالعه، خشونت و راه‌های ارائه نادرست آن را بررسی می‌کند. هدف این مقاله بررسی راهبردهایی است که منجر به درک نادرست خشونت می‌شود. نتیجه‌گیری از این مقاله نشان می‌دهد که خشونت سیستمیک ژیزکی که اشکال دیگر خشونت را ایجاد می‌کند باید به‌عنوان ماده تاریک فیزیک پنهان بماند. برخی از شبه‌فعالیت‌ها، ایدئولوژی‌ها یا شبه‌ایدئولوژی‌ها می‌توانند در شکل‌های آشکار و پنهان خود در کار باشند، زمانی که چیزی که آشکارا در همه جا وجود دارد، نامرئی باقی می‌ماند یا اشتباه درک می‌شود.

**کلمات کلیدی:** درک نادرست از خشونت، فعالیت‌های شبه، ایدئولوژی، شبه ایدئولوژی، تونی موريسون، اسلاوی ژیزک

## INTRODUCTION

No study of the history of violence can escape the inevitable question around how the term violence is defined. Stathis N. Kalyvas provides the term violence with the definition: "the deliberate infliction of harm on people" (19). This definition of violence is too blurry because it ignores the stuffs that are imposing damage on the folks. Arno J. Mayer considers violence as "a political, legal and cultural construction that merely forces attention to the identity of those engaged in the construction and to their reasons, procedures, and intentions" (73). The latter definition is also restricting because it limits violence as a legitimate, societal and political structure. Understanding cultural beliefs and attitudes, which is subject to change overtime, is at the core of understanding violence that means perceiving what is and what is not regarded as violence in any given society at any given time. To avoid any misperception, the terms which are employed for violence should be studied in their cultural and social context. To drive this claim home: "Aztec society ... in which ritualized violence – the practice of ritual blood sacrifice of animals and/or humans – was part of everyday life, had no term for 'violence' as such" (Pennock 27).

In the process, this paper seeks to redefine how people come to the notion of violence and how people take part in it at various times in human history. This study also dwells on how through applying philosophy, history, movies, Hegelian philosophy and Lacanian psychiatry, Slavoj Žižek studies the strategies that lead to our misperception of violence. Žižek's oeuvre, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2008) is his main contribution to theorizing the notion of violence. His critical book houses two kinds of violence: subjective and objective, with objective violence being subdivided into *symbolic* and *systemic* violence. He argues that most of the time one type of violence makes dull our ability to discern the other. Žižek maintains that paying too much attention to subjective violence makes us blind to see their real cause (objective violence) and even drives us to take part in the conditions that facilitates and accelerates violence (*Violence* 9). Žižek states that objective violence "may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make of what otherwise seem to be 'irrational' explosions of subjective violence" (2). Žižek's paraphrasing of Bertolt Brecht throws more light on the invisibility of the border between *subjective* and *objective* violence. Žižek asserts that the man who robs a bank and the one who founds a bank are the same. However, the former is persecuted as a criminal by law and the latter is protected and respected by the same law (*Violence* 100).

It is worth mentioning that Slavoj Žižek by no means is a ground-breaking thinker regarding the concept of violence. His notion of 'systemic' violence heavily relies on theories of Johan Galtung's 'structural violence'. What is innovative about Žižek is the very idea of passivity. Žižek argues that: "Sometimes, doing nothing is the most violent thing to do" (*Violence* 183). However, in some cases it is better to be passive and doing nothing at all than to take an active part in the activities whose function is to make the exploiting system work smoother. In other words: passivity is not the threat today, but pseudo-activities that mask the nullity of what is taking place. Paradoxically, the first step to point out the meaninglessness of violence is to reject all its justifications instead of participating in the continuous noise it produces. Via applying Žižek's theories of violence, instead of focusing on soothing mechanisms that just try to cover the traumas of violence, this paper intends to help the readers avoid any misperceptions of the violence by turning their attention away from the productive mechanism of violence.



## METHODOLOGY

The methodology used by the researcher to collect and analyze the characters' actions and speeches in the corpus novels in the form of extracted phrases, sentences, monologues, dialogues, and quotations is political discourse analysis, Black gender feminism and psychoanalytic approaches. The corpus of study is Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. Morrison's individual approach to narrative is manifested in her debut novel *The Bluest Eye*, released in 1970, as black literature that gives voice to the unvoiced and marginalized African Americans. Toni Morrison's another novel, *Beloved* published in 1988, reviews the catastrophic and inhumane legacy of slavery.

In this qualitative study, the strategies that are at work in perception and misperception of violence in Toni Morrison's target novels in the light of the philosophical premises of Slavoj Žižek on violence are scrutinized closely. Perusing the discourse of Morrison's novels under investigation, the reader can identify several strategies and ideologies which are skillfully engineered to manipulate and interfere how we perceive and misperceive violence. However, the investigation will be limited to eight discourse strategies which are traced in the corpus of the study as representative in the process of misperceiving violence. These strategies are foregrounded and then studied to depict how these strategies and ideologies are misused to represent a distorted figure of violence. Practically, misperception of violence largely rests on spreading the ideologies that advocate all kinds of oppression carried out against the subalterns. In Žižek's very words, "Like love, ideology is blind, even if people caught up in it are not" (*First* 37). It seems that ideologies are created by the dominant, oppressive power in the society to confuse the subalterns to prolong the system of slavery and exploitation.

### Textual Analysis, Discussion and Findings

#### Concentrating on the Physical Traumas of Violence

According to anthropologists who study violence, in most cases public's concerns concentrate on the physical results of violent acts such as trauma, injury, and death, rather than focalizing on violence as a systematic social and political phenomenon. Since objective violence is a part of daily discourse, it is less easily recognizable. More often than naught, people can easily trace the subjective results of violence but they are not able to recognize the objective systems of violence that fuels it. Due to the fact that we merely see the manifest representations of subjective violence, such as murdering, terrorist attacks, suicide bombings, or the assassination of a well-known political figure via mass media, we steadily ignore the objective or what Žižek dubs systemic violence.

In the light of Žižek's premises on violence, Sethe's escape from Sweet Home in Morrison's *Beloved* is a Žižekian act not only against subjective violence but also systemic violence that both run through the novel. She revolts against the white masters' ideology that animalizes the black slaves. Sethe is the victim and at the same time the perpetrator of subjective violence which has its deep roots in objective violence that in Sethe's case is blackness and slavery. Sethe's offence of filicide is an example of subjective violence which its motivations are non-personal. It shows that although Sethe practices filicide (subjective violence), her criminal act is a dire result of objective violence (racism) generated by systemic violence (slavery). According to Fuston-White, "It was not madness, but the reality of slavery, that drove Sethe to kill her child, fully aware of the act and its brutality, as well as its compassion" (461). Providing



another concrete example, Sethe's ma'am bears "a circle and a cross burnt right in the skin" (*Beloved* 72). The mark as a sketch of historical records of slavery on the body of the black slaves is "at once imposing identity and differentiating them from the unmarked" (Thomson 121). Instead of paying too much attention to ma'am's branding as a physical scar the reader should focus on the fact that the branding on ma'am skin labels her as a breathing property that is far from claiming her own flesh and bone. As stated by Thomas Clarkson, branding was a disgraceful "mark of property," which separated the slaves from the white master class (124). Branding was an evidence of animalizing the slaves. By branding, they were maimed physically "like sheep or cattle" (Macaulay 73). Morrison presents another concrete evidence of the slaves being dehumanized by means of the *growing* chokecherry tree on the back of Sethe. This hallmark is representative of the documented tree of slavery. In each and every of the discussed instances, the traumas give voice to unvoiced and unspeakable violence.

### Exaggerated Empathy with Victims

Slavoj Žižek believes that any approach to violence should avoid exaggerated empathy with victims because this leads to a serious misperception of violence. The fear of brutal actions and empathizing for the victims of violence, acts as a charm which restricts and redirects our attitude (*Violence* 3). According to Žižek once we detach ourselves from emotional and moral evaluation we are able to turn our concentration to violence and fix on it and see violence in all of its multi-dimensional types.

To avoid misperception of violence in her novels through exaggerated empathy with victims, Toni Morrison makes use of the dichotomies of the traumatized/the traumatizer and the oppressed/the oppressor as binary oppositions. Her characters by no means can break out of the cycle of violence. In *The Bluest Eye*, for example, Cholly is humiliated by two white hunters when he is experiencing his first sexual relationship at the age of fourteen. Years later Cholly's anger and shame over this traumatic experience drives him to do the same to his daughter, Pecola, by raping her. Hence, Cholly is at the same time the victim and the victimizer of violence.

### Paradoxical Reversal

Slavoj Žižek in his book *Violence* highlights ambivalent essence of man's nature concerning humanity. Žižek presents Lacan's concept of paradoxical reversal to the perpetrators of violent acts by calling our attention to the point that those who participate in inhumane violent acts often take part in humane activities too, "One thing that never ceases to surprise the native ethical consciousness is how the very same people who commit terrible acts of violence towards their enemies can display warm humanity and gentle care for the members of their own group" (*Violence* 40). To drive his argument home, Žižek makes a parallel between a Nazi officer and Bill Gates. As Nazi officer spent all his day at work putting innocent people to death cold-bloodedly and after work went home to keep the company of his family cheerfully or give a helping hand to the man in his neighborhood repair their house, Žižek maintains that Bill Gates as an outstanding capitalist has established the 'Gates Foundation' for humane acts while at the same time making a lot of profit from excessive and widespread exploiting child workers and sweatshops as workplaces in which simple workers receive low wages and work under oppressive circumstances overseas. In Žižek's version, Bill Gate's contribution in structural / systemic violence (in this case exploiting child workers and sweatshops) causes numerous subjective violence on thousands and





thousands poor children and workers each year. Yet, Gates Foundation as a nonprofit foundation that fights disease, poverty, and inequity around the world masks its subjective violence as the tip of the iceberg.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, the episode in which Sethe takes a handsaw to her daughter turns to a narration of brutality of captivity. Years later, Sethe gives voice to her unhealed trauma: "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come [sic] back to me of her own free will and I don't have to explain a thing. I didn't have time to explain before because it had to be done quick [sic]. Quick. She had to be safe and I put her where she would be" (200). Paradoxically, Sethe's violent action of filicide was a *favor* that is rooted in mother-love.

### Humanitarian Mask of Charity

"Charity," Slavoj Žižek writes, "is the humanitarian mask hiding the face of economic exploitation" (*Violence* 19). On his account charity allows systemic violence to prolong longer and run smoother. The charitable element of capitalism provides the grounds for the systematic dire outcomes of the mild function of our political and economic systems (*Violence* 1). Paradoxically violence by the oppressor is better than charity because it openly shows its true colors. To quote Žižek's very words on his Twitter, "When we are shown scenes of starving children in Africa, with a call for us to do something to help them, the underlying ideological message is something like: 'Don't think, don't politicize, forget about the true causes of their poverty, just act, contribute money, so that you will not have to think!'" (Shasho149). Žižek believes that global capitalism tries to hide its role in exploiting the poor by providing charity works and persuading people, as responsible individuals, to participate for the global cause of poverty. In fact, this reasoning has already crept into daily system of consumerism. Take for instance Starbucks Corporation, an American multinational chain of coffeehouses, which not only serves tasty, rich coffee but also a sense of ethical responsibility; for every time a customer buys a cup of cappuccino, s/he is also giving denotations to starving children in Africa. However, the problem with this is that instead of really relieving African starving children from poverty, it simply lengthens their victimhood. Furthermore, upon a deeper thinking, this process blurs this issue by letting the consumers believe that through this trading they can help drop if not remove poverty altogether. According to an English aphorism, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

As specified by Žižek, donations and charity grant systemic violence to remain. If systematic violence ends, Žižek argues, there will be no necessity to provide the poor with charity. Moreover, capitalist system always tries to beautify its oppressive nature through public works, benevolence, and charity. Capitalism's mechanism of beautifying exploiting the proletariats is best expressed in the wonderful Persian proverb "war nam nihadan" (ور نم نهادن) frequently used by Žižek, meaning: "to murder somebody, bury his body, then grow flowers over the body to conceal it" (*Year* 6). From Žižek's standpoint even if the corpse (exploited working class) is beautified by flowers (humane acts such as charity) the very basic structure of society (social political and economic system) is corrupted.

The humanity and sympathy of the Sweet Home's patriarch in *Beloved* is just a mask that covers the terrible nature of slave-trade and slavery. Baby Suggs was born into slavery. As a Mammy she acted as a mother figure to eight children among them Sethe's husband, Halle. The miserable sight of Baby Suggs'



physical and psychological torture annoyed Halle, to the extent that he asked Mr. Garner to let him work on Sundays on the plantation to pay for his mother's liberty. Baby Suggs obtains her freedom by her son's five years working on Sundays to pay for her price to Mr. Garner. During her lifetime she was exploited by the Garners and when she was consumed up, Garner granted her freedom for humanity!

### **The Myth of the Simpleton, Jolly Sambo**

Myths, stereotypes, and slogans are impressive means of patrolling mass consciousness. Mythologized consciousness represents distorted image of reality (Bubandt 105). The *Sambo* stereotype developed throughout the dominion of slavery in America. White slave masters continuously did their best to represent an Afro-American male as a jolly, careless and overgrown kid, well-satisfied and joyful to serve his *friendly* white masters. The *Sambo* was giddy and lazy by nature and on that account dependent on his white master for direction. As stated by Norman Fairclough, one of the founders of critical discourse analysis, in his *Language and Power* (1989), "Words and phrases always carry connotations which are derived from their frequent use" (115). Thus, the miserable condition of slavery was rationalized and justified through this distorted, repeated image. Bishop Wipple's *Southern Diary, 1834-1844*, provides proof of this claim, "They seem a happy race of beings and if you did not know it you would never imagine that they were slaves" (Boskin 42). Frederick Douglass in 1845 in his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, and Written by Himself* criticizes pro-slavery ideology. Douglass makes a distinction between the myth of Jolly *Sambo* and the reality. He asserts that the Southern slave holders created the myth (false, widespread belief) that the slaves were jolly and used to sing as they were working in the plantations. The broad extent of this stereotype is amazing. It penetrated in folk sayings, kid's toys, kid's games and stories, fast food names and menus, postcards and titles of music. Repetition, for Winston L. Brembeck and William S. Howell "serves to clarify and to hold attention to an idea until it becomes a part of us" (*Persuasion* 177).

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Baby Suggs' telling quote about trauma concerns the familial structure for the slaves:

In all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby's eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children (27-28).

According to Trudier Harris, this represents the very image of *Sambo*, depicting in what way "black people [were] controlled by white people" (*Free Will* 336) and in addition "*Sambo* is ever self-effacing, ever obsequious and subservient, ever willing "to grin and bear it", ever willing to be trampled on by whites because its irrepressible spirit will rise up and beg to be degraded again" (*Free Will* 336).

### **The Myth of Kind Slaveholder**

The myth of kind slaveholders had a twofold function. Their image is a realistic representation of many slaveholders who wish to present themselves as good-hearted. They can even be regarded as symbol of progressive departure from traditional slave masters. Melanie C. Green, et al. in "Archetypes and Narrative Processes" argues on Harriet Beecher Stowe's text that narratives can be used to create new



stereotypes or images of racial groups, which can facilitate radical social changes. He provided his claim with the instance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that triggered antislavery feelings (101). Yet these 'kind' and 'sympathetic' masters could also be seen as representatives of deception and complicity. The slaves are regarded as a service or commodity that cannot be discarded. It is not that the kind slaveholders are unaware of truth of violence embedded in slavery, but rather that they turn a blind eye on the violent reality of slavery and are just after the profit they gain through economic ideology of slavery. Between the two most regularly represented ideology in Afro-American narrative; i.e. the 'traditional, simple' and the 'modern, sympathetic' ideology, the latter ideology can be considered more perilous; since it operates as if the 'kind' slaveholders care for slaves, while in reality they keep them enslaved and exploited.

Saint Augustine, the Christian theologian and philosopher, approved not only the institution of slavery but also flogging them *lovingly*! "You must use the whip, use it! God allows it. Rather, he is angered if you do not lash the slave. But do it in a loving and not a cruel spirit" (De Wet unpaginated). The 'kind' slave keepers' ideology functions in the same manner. It hides the dominance that the slaveholder has over the black slaves through presenting a more subtle kind of slavery. Žižek in *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (2002) argues that "We feel free because we lack the very language to articulate our unfreedom" (2) that echoes a very similar argument presented by Samuel Benjamin Harris, and his famous puppet of ideology, one "can only be free if he chooses to fall in love with his strings" (*Free Will* 44). Avoiding the traditional discourse of slavery that places his bonds people in the social condition of non-human beings or not more than careless kids, Mr. Garner makes a Shangri La bubble that promotes his own black slaves living in Sweet Home to have a strong belief in the misconception that they belong to white human community. This cunning simulation of a humane relationship between black slaves and white slaveholders only hides the hidden racism; the point Halle finds very soon by calling the readers' attention to the hypocrisy of the Garners. Halle confirms that there is no difference between the Garners and their neighboring cruel slaveholders, "What they say is the same. Loud or soft" (*Beloved* 205). Žižek approves this condition as he argues that confronting and fighting back an old-fashioned boss is much easier than a friendly boss that exploits you under the guise of friendly behavior (*Political Correctness* 7). Žižek also declares that the worst slaveholders are friendly and kind to the slaves; since the humanity only serves to lengthen the injustice and suffering of slaves through representing it moderate and bearable. Žižek also affirms Oscar Wilde's idea that, "Just as the worst slave-owners were those who were kind to their slaves, and so prevented the horror of the system being released by those who suffered from it ... the people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good" (*Soul of Man* 2).

In the case of the 'good' slaveholders, the ideology of racism becomes complicated. In the instance of Mr. and Mrs. Garner they are kind and sympathetic to the plight of the slaves, yet they are unwilling to free all, or any, of their slaves. Neither are Mr. and Mrs. Garner acting as per the ideology of the simple, traditional and cruel slaveholders or abolitionists. They follow their own ideological status which provides the white masters with profit. However, the schoolteacher in contrast to Mr. and Mrs. Garner functions according to simple ideology of slavery: the direct and simple expression of discriminatory racism that slavery rests on. To encourage his black women slaves to breed children, Mr. Garner practices a cunning strategy that proves to be viable. In contrast to many other slaveholders, Mr. Garner permits marriage happen between Sethe and Halle. She was a teenager when she entered Sweet Home to take the



place of Baby Suggs who worked as a mammy. All black enslaved men in Sweet Home dreamed sleeping with Sethe. Mr. Garner protected her against the raid of them. He gave Sethe one year to think and make her mind which one she wanted to accept as her man. Mrs. Garner confirmed her decision once Sethe revealed her decision to get married with Halle. This strategy is not for the reason that Mr. Garner and his wife are kind and sympathetic slaveholders but they know marriage lets Sethe and Halle breed as many babies as Sethe can afford. The Garners will claim the born babies to be their property to support their capitalism business.

### Ignoring the Parallax View

"The Ambassadors", Hans Holbein's well-known portrait, is frequently mentioned by Žižek as an example of anamorphosis (a distorted image or drawing that becomes recognizable only when viewed



from a specified standpoint). By all accounts the portrait depicts two foreign ambassadors at the court of the King of England, Henry VIII, standing among the apparatus used in Renaissance schooling. However, at the foot of the portrait, a skull is placed in a way that it can be recognized only when it is looked at from an acute angle. Žižek clarifies that this skull that is painted cunningly, is the very contradiction of what he dubs an anamorphosis. In Žižekian standpoint, anamorphosis is the stuff that remains an absurd stain when it is looked at directly, but which, once the observer looks at the picture from a lateral perspective, all of a sudden it makes sense. (*Looking* 91). Long ago Zhuang Zi, the Chinese philosopher who lived in the fourth century BC,

motivated us to go beyond human vision and to look at the world around us from the perspective of the gaze of objects. Žižek used this term as parallax view. As a film critic, Žižek said of Alfonso Cuarón's film *Roma* that if someone looks at the thing too straightforwardly, the dominant social range, he cannot see it clearly. It can be seen provided that it is seen in an oblique way without being foregrounded (Arroyo video).

Observing Žižekian Parallax View, sometimes we should change our standpoint to have a correct view of the events that happen around us. For example, the chokeberry tree decorating Sethe's back in Morrison's *Beloved* is a hieroglyphic substituting the totality of Africans' slavery; however, it does not represent the mystery that is the engine within the novel; namely, Sethe's murder of her own daughter. This displacement of abasement and wrath has the same root as in Cholly's case in *The Bluest Eye*. In this novel, neither Pecola's neglectful mother nor her father who rapes her are represented as villains by Morrison. Of course, the author by no means justifies Pecola's parents' wrongdoings. The author is after creating a better perception of the mechanisms of (Žižekian systemic) violence behind the prolonged (Žižekian subjective) violence. With regard to Cholly, Pecola's father, he was left by his mother on a garbage heap by the side of a highway just four days after his birth. He was rescued by his old aunt. After her death he decided to find his father he never met. Once he finds his father, the man drives him away



as a dog, cursing him a terrible humiliation of his whole life. After his marriage with Pauline, with the birth of his kids he is confused. Having no experience of a family life, he had no idea how to raise his own children (*Bluest* 160). This painful experience triggered his maltreatment with his wife, Pauline, and the sexual abuse of his own daughter, Pecola. This was a Freudian act of displacement of the frustrated anxieties, fears, and anger in Cholly's psyche.

### **The Ideology of Parentalism in Slavery**

In his *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (2000), Walter Johnson presented the ideology of paternalism, "Slave-market paternalism thus replayed the plots of proslavery propaganda and fiction: the good hearted slave at the side of the dying master; the slave who could be trusted to master himself; the slaveholder's saving interventions in the life of the unfortunate slave" (18). Even if the slaves could gain from the ideology of paternalism through earning enough supply of food and medical aid, the ideology of paternalism by no means gives a justification for the slavery system. Proslavery regards slavery as an inevitable necessity, profitable for both the master and the slave and a morally acceptable and legitimate institution. In 4th-century BC Aristotle in his *Politics* argued that those people who are mentally unable to look after themselves are inherent slaves. As cited by Donald Lucas, a natural slave is defined by Aristotle as "anyone who, while being human, is by nature not his own but of someone else" (*Politics* 21). For his part, keeping them in slavery was the only practical way to serve their profits. While in antebellum South, slaveholders exploited the black slaves as the major source of their economic benefit, some historians of American slavery such as Eugene Dominic Genovese (1930-2012) lately reexamined the relationship between White slave masters and Black slaves. He introduced the ideology of master-slave 'parentalism' to argue that slavery was not as cruel as it was presented and recorded in historical annals. To Genovese, slavery was a parentalism system that saved blacks from mistreatment and violence. Genovese cited that: "It gave the masters an interest in the preservation of the blacks and created a bond of human sympathy that led to an interest in their happiness as well" (144). Genovese asserted that parentalism meant mutual duties between the slave and the master. It was the master's duty to support his slave and treat him with kindness and humanity; while the slave's duty was to obey whatever s/he was told to and work with heart and soul. The slave should have a moral obligation to be thankful with no right to complain in any way, let alone rebel against their responsible master.

In her *Beloved*, Toni Morrison rebukes the ideology of parentalism in slavery as a kind of Whites' hypocrisy by juxtaposing the charming guise of Sweet Home with its terrible reality that governs it. Although the Garners as the owners of plantation set up Sweet Home as an earthly paradise, they by no means want to subvert the system of slavery. The Garners' Utopian Sweet Home is at its best a livable home with no ray of freedom (Dekoven 79). At Sweet Home, Mr. Garner made his very own system of enslavement. In his version, the black Negroes were not still independent or unchained, but were left to enjoy the illusion of being considered as human beings. Proud of his advanced way of thinking, Mr. Garner let his neighboring plantation owners know how he behaved his male slaves as men: "Now at Sweet Home, my niggers is [sic] men every one of them. Bought em thataway, raised em thataway. Men every one" (*Beloved* 10). Mr. Garner claimed an honorable superiority that raises him from his neighbors:



"Y' all got boy,' he told them. Young boys, old boys, picky boys, stropping boys. [...] But if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too" (11).

### CONCLUSION

In the current study all types of violence discussed by Slavoj Žižek are applied as hypothetical notions to show by what means one type of violence can emerge from the other types to reveal the causes and agents standing apart from subjective violence that are obvious and clearly identifiable. As Žižek discussed in his *Violence*, subjective violence is "enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds" (3). According to Žižek, systemic violence that grants the exposition of subjective violence is easily identifiable and caused by unsafe working conditions. Moreover systemic violence also contributes to more deceptive types of subjective violence inflicted on the physical bodies of slaves and laborers including malnutrition and its side effect because of low payments they receive. If a worker's low payments (systemic violence) prevent him from using nourishing food, he may suffer from malnutrition (subjective violence) and even die (subjective violence) because of his failure to pay for medical treatment and health care.

Systematically, we are helplessly exposed to different forms of subjective violence via watching news channels, reading newspapers, and surfing internet. So, objective violence needs more critical attention than the subjective violence that misleadingly evokes our attention to act. Only by exploring this objective frame can we make sense of the subjective violence that appears in different forms. Instead of isolating and punishing the agents involved in subjective violence we should challenge the objective violence that generates different forms of subjective violence. Žižek argues that the manifestations of subjective and objective violence should be experienced from different perspectives. Since objective violence suffers the very "zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent" (*Violence 2*) it remains invisible. Obviously, in order to perceive objective violence one has to shift his standpoint.

### References

- Arroyo, Anthony. (2009). *YouTube – Žižek on Children of Men*, Vol. (2) 25 Nov.
- Boskin, Joseph. (1986). *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Brembeck, W. L., & Howell, W. S. (1976). *Persuasion: A Means of Social Influence*. Prentice Hall.
- Bubandt, Nils. (2014). *The Empty Seashell: Witchcraft and Doubt on an Indonesian Island*. Cornell University Press.
- Clarkson, Thomas. (1788). *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African*. London: Joseph Crukshank.
- De Wet, C.L. (2016). "The punishment of slaves in Early Christianity: The views of some selected Church Fathers." *Actatheol*. Vol. 36 suppl. 23 Bloemfontein.
- Dekoven, Marianne. (2004). *Utopia Limited: The Sixties and the Emergence of the Postmodern*. Durham: Duke University Press.



- Dodds Pennock, Caroline. (2012). "Mass murder or religious homicide? Rethinking human sacrifice and interpersonal violence in Aztec society." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, pp. 276-302.
- Douglass, Frederick. (2008). *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*. Chapter X, in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*.
- Fairclough, Norman. (1989). *Language and Power*. London and New York: Longman.
- Fuston-White, Jeanna. (2002). "From the Seen to the Told: The Construction of Subjectivity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*". *African American Review*, Vol. 36, pp. 461-473. Doi.org/10.2307/1512209.
- Galtung, Johan. (1969). "Violence, Peace, and Peace." Sage Publications, Ltd. *Research Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 167-191.
- Genoese, Eugene. (1976). *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slave Made*. Vintage, 12 Jan.
- Green, Melanie C., & Fitzgerald, Kaitlin; Moore, Melissa M. (2019). "Archetypes and Narrative Processes". *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 99–102.
- Harris, Samuel Benjamin. (2012). *Free Will*. Simon and Schuster.
- Harris, Trudier. (1990). "Escaping Slavery but Not Its Images". *Toni Morrison – Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*. Edited by Gates, Jr., Henry Louis and K. A. Appiah. New York: Amistad Press, Inc.
- Johnson, Walter. (2000). *Soul by Soul: Life inside the Antebellum Slave Market*. Harvard University Press.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. (2006). *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lucas, Donald W. (1968). "Aristotle *Poetics*." *The Classical Review* 18.2.
- Macaulay, Zachary. (1824). *Negro Slavery; or a View of Some of the More Prominent Features of that State of Society, As It Exists in the United States of America and in the Colonies of the West Indies, Especially in Jamaica*. London: R. Taylor.
- Mayer, Arno J. (2006). *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 38-38.
- Morrison, Toni. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Random House.
- . *The Bluest Eye*. (1979). Great Britain: Chattu and Windas.
- Pennock, Caroline Dodds. (2012). "Mass murder or religious homicide? Rethinking human sacrifice and interpersonal violence in Aztec society." *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, pp. 276-302.
- Shasho, Nathan. (2015). *Perspective: Making Sense of It All*. History science, Critical Thinking Self Awareness.
- Thomson, Rosemarie Garland. (2017). *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*. Columbia University Press.
- Žižek, Slavoj. (1991). *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*. MIT Press.
- . (2009). *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*. Verso, London.
- . (2008). *Violence: Six Sideway Reflections*. New York: Picador.



- . (2002). *Welcome to the Desert of the Real: Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates*, New York: Verso.
- . (2011). *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. Verso Books, London.
- Whipple, Henry Benjamin. (1968). *Da Capo Press*, Reprint Edition, 1 Jan.
- Wilde, Oscar. (2021). *The Soul of Man under Socialism*. West Margin Press.

### **Biodata**

**Afshin Mosalla Nejad** is a PhD candidate in the Department of English Language and Literature, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran. He is a member of staff in Larestan Azad University. He has authored three academic books: *ABC of Poetry*, *Elementary Poetry*, and *Oral Reproduction* as well as a few articles. His main areas of interests are literature, philosophy, politics, psychology, mythology, and Political Discourse Analysis.

Email: afshinmosalla.nejad@yahoo.com

**Hassan Shahabi** is an assistant professor in Department of English Language and Literature, Kerman Branch, Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran. He has published several articles in authentic journals and conferences. His main areas of interests are English literature, postmodern literature, and literary criticism.

Email: shahabi1964@yahoo.co.uk

**Shahram Raeisi Sistani** is an assistant professor in Department of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Shahid Bahonar University, Kerman, Iran. He has authored and co-authored several articles in national and international journals and conferences. He is specialized in Commonwealth literature. Most of his research has been done on Australian literature and culture.

Email: shahram.sistani@uk.ac.ir

