Beauty as a Tool of Oppression in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Walker's *The Color Purple*

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Letter of Approval

This dissertation, which was presented to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, Kritipur Kathmandu by Namdev Nyaupane entitled "Beauty as a Tool of Oppression in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple"* has been approved by the members of the Research Committee who are listed below.

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Abstract

This dissertation looks at how beauty used to oppress people because of their race and gender in Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker *The Color Purple*. It says that beauty in the literature written by American women is not just about how something looks but it is actually a way of thinking that is shaped by European standards and men having power over women. The research uses ideas from different fields, including what Frantz Fanon said about racism and how it affects our minds what Antonio Gramsci said about how some groups of people have more power over others and what bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins said about feminism and being black. This study is based on reading and comparing the texts. It shows that characters like Pecola Breedlove and Celie think that European beauty standards are the best and this makes them feel bad about themselves be quiet and feel like they are falling apart. Beauty is like a kind of violence that controls the bodies and identities of women by leaving them out treating them like objects and looking at them in a certain way. The study also shows that Toni Morrison and Alice Walker do not agree with the usual ideas about beauty. Instead they think that beauty is about defining yourself being with your sisters having control over your body and being proud of your culture. In the end this study says that beauty in these novels is connected to politics and oppression. It helps us understand American literature better by showing that beauty is not just about how something looks but it is also, about power, identity and surviving. Beauty is a part of oppression and this study helps us see that.

Key Words: Beauty, Black Feminism, Internalized Racism, Male Gaze

Chapter I

Introduction: The Politics of Beauty and Oppression

The way beauty is shown in Morrisons *The Bluest Eye* and Walkers *The Color Purple* is really about how it's used to oppress people. To understand how beauty is used as a tool of oppression in these books we need to look at the history and culture of African Americans in the century. Morrisons *The Bluest Eye*, which was written in 1970 and Walkers *The Color Purple,* which was written in 1982 were both written during a time when there were a lot of changes happening in the United States. This was after the Civil Rights Movement. When Black feminist thought was becoming more popular.

Both of these books *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* show how beauty standards that are based on racism and sexism are used to oppress women. Toni Morrison wrote *The Bluest Eye* during a time of social changes in the United States. African Americans, Black women were fighting against racism and sexism. Morrison was inspired to write *The Bluest Eye* because of something that happened when she was a kid. She knew a girl who wanted blue eyes, which shows how much Black people wanted to be white.

The story of *The Bluest Eye* takes place in Lorain, Ohio during the Great Depression. This was a hard time for Black families. They did not have money and they were treated very badly. In this story beauty is something that Black girls like Pecola Breedlove cannot have. They think that being white is what makes someone beautiful and loved. Alice Walker wrote *The Color Purple* in 1982. She was inspired by feminist ideas and she wanted to tell the story of poor Black women in the South. The story of *The Color Purple* takes place in the South between the early 1900s and the 1940s. This was a time when Black people were separated from people and they did not have many opportunities.

In *The Color Purple* beauty is what makes a woman valuable. Characters like Celie are treated badly because they are Black and they do not look like what men thinks beautiful.. Women like Shug Avery, who are lighter skinned and more attractive are treated better. This shows that beauty is what gives someone power and respect.
Morrisons *The Bluest Eye* and Walkers *The Color Purple* are both about how beauty's used to oppress Black women. Beauty is not just about how someone looks it is, about how society treats them.

The way beauty is shown in Morrisons *The Bluest Eye* and Walkers *The Color Purple* is really important. It helps us understand how Black women were treated in the past and how they are still treated today. Morrisons *The Bluest Eye* and Walkers *The Color Purple* are two books that show how beauty can be used to oppress people. We need to think about how we can change the way we think about beauty so that everyone is treated equally. Within the hierarchies of black and white people in the United States beauty has never been neutral; it has been used as a tool to elevate whiteness. This ideal has been sustained by laws, economic power and cultural institutions shaped by slavery, segregation and patriarchy. As a result beauty in American women's literature is a deeply political concept, not just a personal preference. The history of slavery, segregation and gender oppression has controlled, used and judged women's bodies by white and patriarchal standards causing lasting harm. This study looks at how *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* show beauty as a way to oppress women making them feel bad about themselves because they do not fit Eurocentric beauty standards. It uses Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony to argue that beauty is a system
that makes people agree to oppression by embedding itself in everyday beliefs and desires. This system of beauty is not about individual desire; it is produced and reinforced through everyday social practices within the Black community.

In *The Bluest Eye* community members, including adults and children prefer light skin straight hair and blue eyes making those who do not fit feel excluded. Pecola's suffering is not just because of her feelings; it is also because of a community that makes her feel ugly and not good enough. The 'beauty myth', as Naomi Wolf says, is a construct that controls women's bodies and keeps existing power structures in place. Within this framework beauty is a shared belief that controls behavior, shapes identity and keeps racial and gender hierarchies in place. Morrison and Walker show that oppression is not just imposed from above; it is also reproduced within marginalized communities making resistance more complex. At the time Morrison and Walker challenge this logic through characters like Claudia MacTeer and Shug Avery who resist Eurocentric norms and redefine beauty. They show how redefining beauty is an act that gives dignity, power and selfhood back to Black women. This study explores how patriarchal ideals and Eurocentric beauty standards oppress women leaving them isolated, objectified and silenced. These works also show how beauty can be reclaimed as a source of self-worth, strength and power. Morrison and Walker emphasize the effects of internalized beauty politics through characters like Pecola Breedlove, Celie and Shug Avery. They also suggest the possibilities of resistance and self-definition, in the form of the beauty of female bodies.

The main character Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* is a representation of the disastrous repercussions of internalized Eurocentric beauty standards that might arise from the internalization of societal beauty standards. Pecola comes to the conclusion that her life would change if she could alter her eyes: "It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful" (46). This line illustrates the manner in which white-dominated ideas of beauty inflict psychological trauma on Black females by telling them that their natural features are fundamentally undesirable.

The hierarchy is established by the social structure, and it is on the basis of beauty and social status. Black women are directly victimized by white supremacy. In fact, the black characters' voices are opposed to gender discrimination. Black women are unable to speak out against racism. This is the reason why their voices are not heard. The physical manifestation of race and the social stigma is associated with black women who are exploited because of their color. The existence of women is threatened by patriarchal institutions due to the racial discrimination. Pecola Breedlove and Claudia Mac-Teer, the protagonists of *The Bluest Eye*, tell the story of African American women status who are representative characters of white-dominated society. These two characters are forced to deal with a world that ignores them and damages their sense of self-worth during the crucial identity formation.

In the same way, in *The Color Purple*, Celie's tyranny starts not simply via physical torture but also through the refusal to acknowledge her own beauty and humanity. Early on in the story, Celie's stepfather relays the following message to her: "Are you going to do something that your mother wouldn't do?You had better pipe your mouth and get in the habit of it" (3). This dehumanization transforms Celie's body to a tool of use rather than a place of self-expression, demonstrating how patriarchal regimes weaponize beauty, or the denial of it, to silence women. Celie continually refers to herself as ugly which is a manifestation of the internalized oppression that she has absorbed, while Shug Avery is characterized as "the most beautiful woman I ever saw" (17). In contrast to Celie, Shug's beauty provides her power in the bedroom and the ability to move around in social circles, but Celie's lack of traditional beauty makes her more susceptible to mistreatment. It is through their combined efforts that Morrison and Walker demonstrate how beauty is not only an aesthetic quality but a built hierarchy that has the power to determine a woman's self-image, worth, and even her ability to survive. Beauty

is thus both an instrument of oppression (the male control over women's bodies, the female competition that is defined by white and patriarchal standards) and a decisive factor of exclusion.

The politics of beauty are inextricably linked to the subjugation of Black women. Beauty is never an impartial concept in this context; it is shaped by Eurocentric racial hierarchies and patriarchal power structures, so becoming a weapon of dominance that influences women's identities and lives. The desire of Pecola Breedlove to have blue eyes serves as a representation of the internalised cruelty perpetrated by white beauty ideals. Morrison remarks "It dawned on Pecola at some point that if her eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful, then she would be a different person altogether" (46). In this line beauty is associated with whiteness in this passage, demonstrating how societal values exclude Blackness from the category of beauty. The belief held by Pecola is that having blue eyes would bring her love, visibility, and safety. However, Morrison cautions that this yearning is terrible since it results in the erasure of her own Black identity. As she states in the foreword, her want was implicitly imbued with self-loathing on the basis of her race. Therefore, Morrison illustrates how beauty can be weaponised; it is not just a matter of outward appearance, but also of self-worth, survival, and belonging in a society that is stratified on the basis of race. Regarding this issue, the previous scholars have barely discussed these novels through the perspective of beauty. These novels are also full of conflict between black and white culture where black culture is dominated by white culture. So, this research has focused on beauty as a tool of oppression.

Research Questions and Objectives

As a result, the purpose of this project is to investigate the role of beauty as a mechanism of racial and gender oppression in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice

Walker's *The Color Purple.* Specifically, it addresses three interrelated research questions. They are;

1. What role does beauty play in keeping power structures in place within the novels especially when it comes to the experiences of Black women?
2. Why do the beauty standards that are considered normal by society have such an impact on the identities, self-worth and social status of Black female characters leading to them being marginalized both psychologically and socially?
3. How do authors like Morrison and Walker use storytelling, character development and symbolism to show the problems with these beauty standards and eventually challenge them?

The goal of this study is to answer these questions by looking at three things: how beauty is used as a tool for racial and gender oppression in the novels how these beauty standards are internalized by people and how the authors writing techniques can be seen as a way to resist these oppressive norms. Morrison and Walker show that beauty can be used as a way to control the bodies and identities of American women. To understand how white beauty standards are used to dominate people this research uses ideas from Fanon, Gramsci and Black feminist thinkers like hooks and Collins. At the time it looks at how the works of Morrison and Walker point out the flaws in these dominant beauty standards giving people a chance to fight back define themselves and gain freedom. This research argues that beauty is not about how something looks but it can also be a way to control people and keep racial and gender oppression in place making it a big issue in African American literature.

Delimitations

This study is limited to two American novels: Toni Morrisons *The Bluest Eye*. Alice Walkers *The Color Purple*. These books deal directly with issues of beauty, race, gender

and oppression in the lives of women. Other works by the authors or different writers are not included so that the study can stay focused. The study also only uses a theoretical ideas like Gramscis concept of hegemony Fanons ideas on racial subjectivity and Black feminist theory.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction called "The Politics of Beauty and Oppression". This chapter sets up the framework for the study and introduces the research problem: that beauty is a category that is constructed by society and operates within systems of racial and gender domination. It outlines the research questions, objectives, significance, scope and limitations of the study and gives an overview of the novels and theoretical ideas used. The chapter ends with a summary of the dissertations structure. The second chapter talks about the methodology, literature review and theoretical perspective. This chapter explains the qualitative research methodology used which involves closely analyzing the texts and comparing them. It also reviews existing research on beauty politics, racial aesthetics and the representation of women in African American literature. Then it explains the framework of the study, which is based on the ideas of Fanon and Gramsci and situates these ideas within broader critical debates. The third chapter looks at how Eurocentric beauty standards and racial self-loathing're shown in the novels. This chapter analyzes how these beauty standards are used as tools of control in *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple*. It examines the emotional effects of internalized racism on the protagonists and how this leads to racial self-loathing. The chapter shows how beauty can be a mechanism of psychological violence within systems of racial oppression.

The fourth chapter looks at the gaze and objectification of Black women. This chapter examines how racial ideology and patriarchy intersect through the gaze and the

commodification of Black womens bodies. It explores how objectification happens in both public spheres of the novels and how this reinforces gendered and racialized hierarchies. The chapter also looks at moments of resistance and narrative subversion that challenge beauty norms. The last chapter summarizes the arguments and findings of the study and reaffirms the importance of beauty ideology in sustaining racial and gender oppression. It evaluates the contributions of the research reflects on its limitations and suggests directions for future research, in African American literary and cultural studies

Chapter II

Methodology, Literature Review, and Theoretical Perspective

This study uses a comparative research method. A qualitative approach helps to understand Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. The research focuses on how beauty works as a made tool for racial and gender oppression. The study looks closely at the language, pictures, symbols, characters and storytelling in the novels. This helps to see how beauty standards shape female identity, self-worth and psychological experience. A comparative method is used to analyze similarities and differences between the two novels. This shows how Eurocentric beauty ideals work in stories and produce different outcomes of trauma and resistance. The main sources are *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple*. Secondary sources include articles, peer-reviewed journals and critical works in African American literary studies Black feminist theory and intersectional criticism. The study focuses on beauty as an ideological construct and its social and psychological effects on Black female characters. Other themes like race, class, sexuality and patriarchy are discussed only if they relate to beauty. The study mainly focuses on characters and considers male figures only if they reinforce or challenge dominant aesthetic and patriarchal norms. *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker have been discussed from angles. These novels hold insights into human conditions. To understand the study it is essential to overview the criticism these novels have received. In *The Bluest Eye*, Ahmed Seif Eddine Nefnouf comments on 'shadism', examining it from intersectionality. He notes that individuals with skin tones face specific discrimination connected to class, gender, age, ability and race. Shadism is a social problem embedded within broader systems of inequality. When reading existing literature on this topic there is no lack of research on Morrison's novels. *The Bluest Eye* has been studied by critics. Ahlawat for example analyzes three novels by

Morrison: Sula Beloved and *The Bluest Eye*. He uses eco-feminist theory. Equates female characters with nature. He argues that nature and women are both oppressed in a society. Anju and Sharma study persisting themes in Toni Morrison's novels. They establish violence, oppression and sacrifice as themes. They also discuss racism against communities and oppression of Blacks by Blacks. They conclude that Morrison uniquely deals with the theme of violence. Babamiri presents a perspective on *The Bluest Eye* focusing on the distortion of motherhood caused by racism. He argues that Morrison presents a deformed image of motherhood distorted by racism. Morrison tries to depict that due, to racism African Americans have lost their selfhood. The distorted motherhood cannot transfer protection and empowerment to children.

This leads to psychological trauma among the young black characters in the novel. Sarulatha and Geetha have highlighted that Morrison has tried to exhibit the identity crisis of black communities in contrast to the social and political scenario of America in *The Bluest Eyes.* The socio-political scene has been set by the white community in the novel and under this net the blacks are treated as inferiors. The young black girl, under the oppressive environment, yearns for the bluest eyes to be accepted by the white-oriented society, and hence suffers from identity crisis (18). Additionally, Heinart in her essay "*Novel of Education: Bildungsroman* and *The Bluest Eye"* has asserted that *The Bluest Eyes* cannot be called Bildungsroman but rather it is an anti-Bildungsroman (58). She gives the evidence by saying that none of the characters show any type of growth since their growth is disrupted by racism at the end.

Mbalia claims that Morrison's attitude in the novel is underdeveloped. She argues that Morrison being in her early stages of career has considered racism as a major issue in the marginalization of blacks; however, she has ignored the class system of the capitalist society, America, in downgrading the blacks (15). It is in this context that the present

study will be an addition to the existing literature on the subject since it looks at the novel from a feminist point of view. In this research, Mbalia has tried to highlight the true picture of representation, subjugation, racial discrimination of the female characters by both their local and foreign masters. The black girls suffer psychologically because they face threat, violence, and harassment from both their black counterparts as well as from the white.

Additionally, *The Color purple* has been studied through different perspectives. In fact, different researchers and critics have conducted research on *The Color Purple* and have drawn different conclusions. Radjuru emphasizes that *The Color Purple* portrays the life of Celie, a poor, illiterate Black girl who endures severe physical, emotional, and psychological exploitation (22). Despite the hardships Celie slowly starts to feel better about herself as she learns more about who she's and grows as a person. Her story shows how she moves from being quiet and obedient to being proud and respectful of herself. This change helps her gain a position in American society. It also shows how strong Black women are when they face treatment. Baga thinks the novel is an example of how a new kind of Black woman is formed. Celies journey from being controlled by men to being independent and aware of herself is the focus. She starts life as a girl who is not treated fairly and doesn't have much education but she changes her life through hard work and being strong on the inside. The best thing about the novel is that it doesn't show a made-up world.

Instead it shows the lives of Black women and how they live in a community that is treated unfairly. It reveals how the way society is set up makes their lives even harder. It shows how Black women are affected by the structures that are, in place. The novel gives a picture of their struggles and hardships. It highlights the challenges they face every day. The story is a reflection of their experiences.

Through the character of Celie, Walker gives voice to those who have long been silenced within Black society. Celie's personal narrative reflects the pain, endurance, and resilience of Black women who suffer both racial and gender-based oppression (Dhivya 34) observes, Walker's work powerfully represents the lived realities of Black women and exposes the harsh conditions that shape their identities.

The Color Purple records important hallmarks in feminist literary criticism. Walker not only attacks patriarchal oppression and claims the submerged voice of women. One important thing that she also calls into question is the polarity between femininity and masculinity. Walker expresses her concern about gender roles and gender dynamics in her characterization and plot development. However, this study highlights how black women were victims of sexism in American society and that the oppressed females overcame their frustration and got empowered through their sisterhood.

Rosemary Ojone Ajibogwu brings attention to the theme of intersectional discourse in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye.* His study explores how race, gender, and social context intersect to shape the experience of Black women in both novels. Ajibogwu emphasizes that individual experiences and cultural environments influence how characters respond to oppression and construct meaning in their lives. He states:

> Both *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* demystify the inherent contradictions that are embedded in identity discourse through their portrayals of characters struggling to resolve the conflict of their multiple identities, which results in fluctuating relationships as manifested between/within identities. This contributes to fluid and robust discourse on identity inequalities without outright immersion in

> categorical representations. Traditionally, hierarchies inherent in cultures have been maintained through narratives that facilitate either inclusion or difference. (2)

These lines depict characters who are struggling to resolve the conflict of their multiple identities, which results in fluctuating relationships as manifested between/within identities, both *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* demystify the inherent contradictions that are embedded in identity discourse. This helps to contribute to a flexible and strong conversation on identity inequality without completely immersing oneself in categorical representations. Throughout history, narratives that either encourage inclusion or distinction have been used to perpetuate the hierarchies that are inherent in civilisations. These novels reveal that experiences of marginalization cut across characters with different class backgrounds, and racial identities.

Women are exposed to violent treatment by members of their own communities as a result of the fact that the fundamental cause of the most extreme forms of misery is the existence of a patriarchal society. Given what has been said, the experience of women in society is much more lamentable when they are placed under the authority of white and black males. Women in a society that is ruled by patriarchy are not only made explicit, but they must also struggle with the supremacy of whiteness. Pauline and Pocola are the primary focus of the novels when it comes to the topic of oppression based on race and gender. They are exposed to both racism and sexism throughout their childhood, and later in life, they are unable to express themselves and are subjugated in ways that are both racist and sexist. The ideas of each characters who approach the work from a diverse assortment of viewpoints have read it, and it has been the topic of a diverse assortment of interpretations. The outcome is correlated with female dominance, which is defined by the concept that black women are endowed with superiority with respect to both race and gender. The research is intrinsically tied to the problem because of the background of the

existence of Black women in white society, where they are victims of exploitation. The book's topic is black slavery, which included the racial and gender-based exploitation of women. In this issue scholar Davis Boyas has focused particularly in cultural aspect. His ideas regarding to culture is presented as:

> *The Bluest Eye* also combines music, folklore, history, sociology, and nightmares. To claim that children are suffocating under mountains of manufactured lies because of institutionalized waste is one thing. Demonstrating that waste, reproducing those kids, and relying on it to live and die are entirely different things. A furious sadness overtakes Miss Morrison. (21)

Although the above review interprets the text from different critical perspectives, none of the reviewers interpreted it from the perspective of the oppression faced by women, especially black women. Without a proper study of this text from the point of view of the oppression to which the black female character is subjected, it becomes incomplete. The study consequently seeks to identify oppression as one of the most prevalent characteristics of the book and to explain how oppression hampers the fulfillment of the female dream character in the novel. *The Bluest Eye*, a coming-of-age narrative that follows the parallel but very different journeys of its two main characters, Pecola Breedlove and Claudia Mac-Teer, two young girls of African-American descent, has these two girls as the protagonists. These two young women are confronted with the challenge of navigating a society that disregards them and undermines their self-esteem during the critical years of their adolescence, which are essential to the development of a healthy sense of identity. Claudia steers clear of the unpleasant consequences of her invisibility, in contrast to Pecola.

Despite the challenges that arose from living in an African American neighborhood after the Great Depression, Claudia's family was able to communicate to

their daughter the fact that one of their primary priorities was that she lives to maturity in a healthy state of well-being. Pecola slips through the historical, ethnic, and gender gaps that were established. As a result, the idea that the novel is one of the studies of social and cultural dominance is held by certain people. Erin Miller argues that the psychological understanding of the culture differ across social classes, particularly relation to autonomy, power and freedom. She mentions:

> The psychological and experiential effects of slavery; the pernicious facets of Christian piety and the spirituality of resistance; the brutal development and destruction of the continents landscape from development or neglect; and how these crises affect relationships between men and women. Her research focuses primarily on how, why, and when women band together for camaraderie as well as how and why these alliances frequently fall apart. (12)

From this observation it makes awareness on social and ideological power that dominance is maintained by a certain group of individuals. Erin Miller makes the following assertion. The psychological and experiential consequences of slavery; the destructive aspects of Christian piety and the spirituality of resistance; the violent development and destruction of the landscape of the continent through either neglect or development; and the manner in which these crises influence the relationships between men and women. Her study is mainly concerned with the ways in which women form alliances for the sake of both companionship and solidarity, as well as the reasons why these alliances often break apart. Women are psychologically inferior in society, which causes them to take on a dominant role. Women's voices are not often raised since culture and society have overcome female psychology. On the other hand, David Gates understands the book as being a religious philosophy that exists amongst many ethnicities. He explains about the

impact of colonialism in his writing. He tries to provoke clash between the colonizer and the colonized group. He states:

> Although the Southern colonies are unmistakably strongholds of slavery, the North is by no means an innocent bystander, and neither religious freedom nor religious tolerance is givens. Measles and smallpox are two prevalent illnesses. However, there is a quality of Eden in the splendor and abundance of this new world, as well as many virtues that outweigh the evil components. (25)

The significance of slavery, in which Black people share comparable experiences, is further discussed throughout the book. Cultural aspects of slavery in society, which is why it is debated both interracially and inside society. The community fosters or advances the racial case as a social issue, which causes it to become more deeply ingrained in society. As a result, the black race or slavery becomes a long-term social idea that persists for an extended period of time.

Walker refrains from attempting to hold society responsible for her acts, despite the fact that he is a revolutionary writer. She uses her pen to develop a voice that has the ability to bring about a change in the way that conservatives think and to cultivate an atmosphere that is beneficial to the well-being of black women. Speaking up and using loving weapons of resistance are two methods by which Walker contributes to the preservation of both people and the world. In addition to continuing her job for as long as she is able to provide support, encouragement, and care, Walker feels that a lot of people have helped her become the black feminist that she is today. Her feelings she shares as:

> Even though I'm always complaining, I feel like I've been tremendously fortunate in my growth as a person and as a writer. Even though I'm always complaining, I feel like I've been extremely lucky. Every time I've knocked on a

> door, someone has answered it. There always seems to be a way home, no matter where I go. I have received assistance, support, encouragement, and nurturing from individuals of a variety of races, creeds, colors, and dreams, and I have tried to provide assistance, support, encouragement, and nurturing to others to the best of my abilities. (viii)

Walker believes that people, especially particularly women of color, should be given the opportunity to escape any and all types of torture to which they are subjected by simply raising their voices in protest against any and all forms of domination. It is because of her status as a writer of several works who has spoken out against the violence that silent black women face that Walker is recognised to be a Black Feminist writer.

The main character Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* is a representation of the disastrous repercussions of internalized Eurocentric beauty standards that might arise from the internalization of societal beauty standards. Pecola comes to the conclusion that her life would change if she could alter her eyes: “It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Beautiful eyes that are blue. Pecola has blue pretty eyes in her mind. She thinks that if she has eyes people will like her and she will be worth something. Blue eyes are what white people usually have. She wants to be like them. At night Pecola always says a prayer she asks for eyes. She has been doing this for a year. This shows how people are made to feel bad about how they look. What is normal about someone becomes something that makes them feel sad. Pecola is not the one who feels this way. The people around her feel bad about themselves too. They look at Pecola. Think she is ugly but that makes them feel better about themselves. Claudia says "We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness" (201). This means that Pecola is like a target for everyones feelings. She takes on all the fears and sadness of the people around her. This happens because people think

that white people are better and that makes everyone feel bad, about themselves. Frantz Fanon argues that colonialism forces Black people to internalized feelings of inferiority through racism and culture domination. Fanon adds:

> The black man more so, for the good reason that he is black. Is not whiteness in symbols always ascribed in French to Justice, Troth, Virginity P I knew an Antillean who said of another Antillean, ilis body is black, his language is black, his soul must be black too. This logic is put into daily practice *by* the white man. The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness. (198)

These lines explain especially true in the case of the Black people and this is because of the very simple fact that he is Black. The color of his skin is black, the language he speaks is black, and his soul must be black as well. This reasoning is implemented in the everyday life of the white man. The black man is the representation of wickedness and repulsiveness. Fanon demonstrates how colonial ideology used beauty as a weapon by establishing whiteness as the epitome of purity and goodness, while Blackness is linked to ugliness. This labeling functions as oppression because it conditions the colonized subject to internalize inferiority. Fanon contends that this symbolic link establishes a hierarchy, with the Black person being naturally placed in the opposite position, which results in their moral and aesthetic devaluation. He continues his thoughts as:

> The White man's eyes break up the Black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed, its field of vision disturbed. What does the black man *want?* Fanon insists and in privileging the psychic dimension changes not only what we understand by a *political* demand but transforms the very means by which we recognize and identify its *human agency.* (10)

These lines explain the white man's eyes smash apart the Black man's body and in that act of epistemic violence its own frame of reference is transgressed. Fanon believes that in privileging the psychic dimension, Fanon argues that black communities are not only changing what we understand by a political demand, but we are also transforming the very means by which we recognize and identify its human agency.

The dominant white perspective (white gaze) that evaluates Black bodies according to Eurocentric standards, reducing them to racialized objects that takes apart the Black body, transforming it into an object of racial significance rather than a human being. Beauty enters the political sphere: the gaze classifies and evaluates the Black body by using pre-existing racial preconceptions. These novels carry almost the same issues; both novels address racialized beauty standards and patriarchal domination, though they depict different forms of conflict. However, the novels depict distinct manifestations of oppression shaped by differing social and gender dynamics. Celie is commodified as property and labour, and her stepfather as well as her subsequent husband refer to her as ugly Celie is not a woman.. She knows how to work hard.. She is a clean person. God has helped her. You can do what you want. She will not make you take care of anything or give it food. Her being herself does not make her special in this situation. She is only important because she listens and works. This is very different from Shug Avery, who's a glamorous woman and feels good, about herself. When Shug arrives it is like something big is happening. She wears a red wool dress and a lot of beads.

She looks so stylish that it is almost as if the trees all around the house have drawn themselves up tall in order to get a better look" (92). She wore a crimson wool dress and a chestful of black beads. a striking black headdress that has what seem to be Chickasaw feathers. She has such a fashionable appearance that it seems as if the trees that surround the home have grown taller so that they can view her better. The beauty of

Shug is so stunning that it is impossible not to admire it. Her attractiveness underscores both the liberating potential of beauty and the repressive repercussions that it may bring, especially for Celie, who has a negative self-image and compares herself to Shug:

> I look at Shug and I feel my heart begin to cramp. It hurt me so, I cover it with my hand. I think I might as well be under the table, for all they care. I hate the way I look, I hate the way I'm dress. Nothing but churchgoing clothes in my chifferobe. And Mr. _____ looking at Shug's bright black skin in her tight red dress, her feet in little sassy red shoes. Her hair shining in waves. Before I know it, tears meet under my chin. (78).

Celie expresses a deep hatred for her own appearance and clothing, revealing how completely she has absorbed society's judgment of her as ugly. Shug's vibrant black complexion, which was highlighted by her form-fitting red dress and her feet, which were encased in tiny, sassy red shoes, left Mr. _____ speechless. In this perspective, beauty is a double-edged sword: Shugs beauty grants her the ability to influence others and gives her a voice, but Celie's perceived lack of beauty perpetuates her invisibility and servitude. However, both works indicate that beauty, while it is a mechanism of oppression, may also be reclaimed in order to restore dignity and instigate resistance. Celie embarks on a journey to establish her own self-worth by doing a humble deed, such as getting her own clothes, in the novel *The Color Purple*. Celie says "everything is going to be well. You are worthy of a better life than this one" (54). In this context, beauty is not about receiving acceptance from men but rather about having personal dignity and receiving confirmation of one's selfhood. Claudia's reluctance to conform to white beauty standards is a moment of resistance that is comparable to others that arise in Morrison's novel. Claudia says; "I destroyed white baby dolls," she remembers. The actual horror did not consist of the mutilation of dolls. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of

the same impulses to little white girls" (20). When Claudia destroys the doll, she is actively rebelling against a society that devalues Black traits, which is a stark contrast to Pecola's melancholy acceptance of this devaluation.

Beauty is shown to be a political weapon in both *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple*. The psychological breakdown of Pecola is a consequence of her failure to reach Eurocentric norms, while Celie's experience of quiet and servitude results from her refusal to acknowledge these standards. However, both Morrison and Walker oppose the idea of limiting beauty to the point where it is solely oppressive. On the other hand, they investigate the ways in which actions of self-expression, solidarity with one's community, and opposition to imposed norms may serve as a means to redefine beauty. In the end, these words serve as a reminder that beauty is never impartial. It has the potential to be a place where oppression is perpetuated, but it is also a place where emancipation and self-affirmation are conceptualized. Pecola always had the belief that if her eyes were different, which is to say more attractive, then she herself would be different too. Eyes that are gorgeous Eyes that are gorgeous and blue eyes that are big and blue and beautiful (41). Pecola believes that the possession of blue eyes, a Eurocentric characteristic that is often white, is equivalent to beauty. She adopts the concept that the only way for her to be liked and appreciated by others is for her to acquire these characteristics. This demonstrates how Black females are oppressed by racialized beauty standards that ignore their natural characteristics. She begged for blue eyes every night, without fail. She had prayed fervently for a year.

For Pecola beauty is not something she wants it is something she really needs to have. She prays for it because she feels like she is not good enough the way she's. Pecola wants to be beautiful like people not like herself a Black girl. People look at Pecola.

Think she is not pretty and that makes them feel better about themselves. This shows how people think about beauty and how it can be bad for people like Pecola.

Beauty is supposed to make people feel strong and good about themselves.. For Black women beauty has been used to hurt them. In books about American people beauty is not just about looking good it is about race and class and gender and power. Two novels, *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker talk about how peoples ideas of beauty hurt Black girls and women. These girls and women feel bad about their bodies and themselves because they do not look like people.

Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* wants eyes so badly and this shows how much she wants to be like white people. She does not like herself because she is Black and that is very sad. The same thing happens to Celie in *The Color Purple*. She feels like she is not important. She does not like herself because she is not beautiful like white people think she should be. This is not just because men are mean, to her but because she does not fit the idea of beauty that white people and men have.

Both of these works shed attention on the confluence between racialized beauty tropes and institutional oppression, demonstrating how the bodies of Black women become places of dominance and conflict. Through the lens of Antonio Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony, the issue of beauty that is present in these writings may be brought into focus. Gramsci contends that dominating groups are able to retain their power not just through the use of force but also through the use of cultural norms and ideals to secure participants' assent. Gramsci states:

> A distinction must be made between civil society as understood by Hegel, and as often used in these notes i.e. in the sense of political and cultural hegemony of a social group over the entire society, as ethical content of the State, and on the other hand civil society in the sense in which it is understood by catholics, for whom civil

> society is instead political society of the State, in contrast with the society of family and that of the Church. (448)

These lines of Gramsci, show the conception of the State there correspond analogous variations in his conception of civil society. White standards of beauty such as having blonde hair, blue eyes, pale complexion, and a slender body become established as hegemonic norms that Black communities internalize. During this hegemonic process, individuals are able to self-police themselves. For example, Pecola wishes she had blue eyes, whereas Celie accepts that she is invisible. Therefore, beauty becomes a disciplinary mechanism that contributes to the perpetuation of injustice based on race and gender.

The psychological concept that Frantz Fanon presents in *Black Skin, White Masks* provides an additional layer of complexity to this conversation. The racial epidermal schema is a psychological framework that is formed by the white gaze, according to Fanon's argument. Fanon argues "That familiar alignment of colonial subjects- Black/White, Self/Other- is disturbed with one brief pause all and the traditional grounds of racial identity are dispersed, whenever they are found to rest in the narcissistic myths of Negritude or White cultural supremacy" (ix). The Black subject lives with this schema. In this model, people of African descent are pushed to see themselves as less than worthy since their physical appearance is continually evaluated in comparison to the standards of humanity, politeness, and beauty that are held by white people. Black women are doubly marginalised by both race and gender, and they are pushed to crave a whiteness that is unreachable and damaging. This mental wound is exacerbated for Black women since they are discriminated against on both factors. Fanon's definition of internalised self-hatred, in which the colonised subject seeks recognition by adopting the norms of the coloniser, is echoed in Morrison's work by the craving for blue eyes that the protagonist

experiences. In a similar vein, Fanon's observation that the black man is enslaved by his inferiority complex, the white man by his superiority complex is reinforced by Celie's acceptance of her own ugly qualities. Both of these novels use a dramatic approach to illustrate this double bind, demonstrating how colonial legacies of race and beauty permeate the private lives of Black women.

Fanon also offers a criticism of the gendered dynamics of racial desire, specifically focusing on the way in which Black women are often subjected to the pressure of determining their value based on their closeness to whiteness. In his consideration of Antillean women who seek white spouses as a means of social elevation, Fanon illustrates how beauty gets linked with power, sexuality, and racial hierarchy (45). Fanon's discussion focuses on the women who sought white mates. Pecola's fantasy of blue eyes and Celie's depreciation of her dark-skinned, ugly body are two examples of how profoundly white-defined beauty enters the brain, causing both invisibility and desire. Morrison and Walker dramatise this entanglement in their works. Pecola's dream of blue eyes and Celie's devaluation of her physical appearance are two examples.

Black feminist philosophers like Bell Hooks and Patricia Hill Collins provide essential insights into the ways in which beauty functions within the context of overlapping systems of dominance. Hooks contends in his book *Black Looks: Race and Representation* that depictions of black women in popular culture have traditionally served to promote white supremacist values, so making black women either hypersexualized or invisible (7). Hooks views the process of recovering beauty as more than just an aesthetic endeavour; rather, it is a political act of resistance against the erasure of cultural traditions. In a similar vein, Collins, in his book Black Feminist Thought, emphasises the fact that dominating images like the mammy, the jezebel, or the tragic mulatta serve as ideological instruments to discipline the identities and bodies of

Black women (Collins 69). These observations are reminiscent of Morrisons portrayal of Pecola as the sad victim of cultural erasure, as well as Walkers description of Celies effort to transcend beyond imposed stereotypes and towards self-definition. When taken as a whole, Gramsci, Fanon, hooks, and Collins provide light on the ways in which beauty operates as a site of both oppression and resistance. Morrison and Walker show us the violence that happens. They make space for us to think about different kinds of beauty that come from Black people, their community and how strong they are. The idea of beauty that white people think is best controls how Black women think about themselves. This study looks at what Fanon, Gramsci, hooks and Collins said. It says that beauty is a way to control how Black women think about themselves. It does this by getting inside their minds by being a part of the culture that's in charge and, by using pictures that tell them what to do.. At the same time beauty can be a place where Black women can resist and define themselves. Morrison and Walker and these other people help us see that Black identity and community are really important when we think about beauty. Beauty is not something that people like or do not like it is also a way to control Black female subjectivity and Black women can use it to fight back and be who they want to be.

Chapter III

Eurocentric Beauty Standards and Racial Self-Loathing

For a long time the way people think about beauty in Europe and other places has been affecting the lives of Black people. This way of thinking says that people who are white have skin straight hair and certain facial features are the most beautiful. These ideas are not just about what people like to look at they are also very powerful. Can decide who is valuable and who is not. Black women and girls often feel bad about themselves when they compare their bodies to these standards. They feel like they do not measure up. When Black people start to believe that the white way of beauty is the best they can start to hate themselves and their own culture. They might not like their hair or their skin color. They might even feel like they are not worth much. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are writers who write about the lives of people in America. They show how these ideas about beauty can be very hurtful. They show how these ideas can make people feel like they do not belong and can even make them feel crazy. These writers also show how these ideas about beauty are connected to problems like racism. They show that beauty is not about how you look it is also about how people treat you and what they think you are worth. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker write about characters who are struggling with these ideas about beauty. They show how these characters feel and what they go through. This helps us understand that beauty is not something you see it is also something that can control your mind and make you feel bad, about yourself. Beauty is a part of how Black people are treated and it is a big part of the problems they face.

Morrison's novel investigates the ways in which the beauty standards held by white people contribute to the destruction of Black people's self-worth. One of the major characters of *The Bluest Eyes*, Shirley Temple as the icon of eurocentric beauty explores:

> We loved Mary Jane because we loved the candy… Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in gentle disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of a world of clean comfort. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply pretty. She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. (44)

The reason why we adored Mary Jane was because we loved the candy. Each wrapper, which is light yellow, has a picture on it. A photograph of the little girl after whom the sweet bears the name. A face that is white with a smile Blue eyes that seem to gaze at her from a realm of pristine comfort, hair that is blonde and in a state of soft disarray. The eyes display a bratty, impish demeanor. They are really beautiful as far as Pecola is concerned. The candy is pleasantly tasty when she consumes it.

Black girls like the blonde, blue-eyed Mary Jane that is shown on the wrapper; nevertheless, they do not appreciate her as a person. They see themselves as an inferior group of people, and they have taken the concept of whiteness to heart as something that is worthy of admiration. Pecola consumes milk as a way of making whiteness a part of herself. Morrison depicts:

> He wore white shirts and blue trousers; his hair was cut as close to his scalp as possible to avoid any suggestion of wool, the part was etched into his hair by the barber. In winter his mother put Jergens Lotion on his face to keep the skin from becoming ashen. Even though he was light-skinned, it was possible to ash. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant. (72)

His mother used Jergens Lotion on his face throughout the winter in order to prevent the skin from becoming ashen. It was feasible to ascertain his ethnicity despite the fact that he had pale complexion. The line that separated the terms "colored" and "nigger" was not

always well defined; subtle and unmistakable indicators threatened to blur that barrier, and the watch had to be vigilant at all times.

Geraldines categorization of brown people and niggers demonstrates internalized racism predicated on the degree to which one is seen as a respectable white person. Cleanliness, neatness, and discipline are all characteristics that reflect the standards of the white middle class. Pecola and the members of the Breedlove family are experiencing self-loathing as a result of their race, and they fall into the "dirty" category. Pecola writes:

> It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. (41)

Some time ago, Pecola realized that if her eyes, which contained the images and were aware of the views, were different, that is, beautiful then she herself would be different. Her teeth were in decent condition, and at the very least, her nose did not resemble the large and flat ones of some of the people who were considered to be attractive.

Pecola hopes that she will be granted blue eyes via prayer, since she believes that whiteness is associated with love, acceptance, and visibility. She has the belief that if she changes her physique to conform to Eurocentric ideals, people would be more inclined to treat her with kindness. She has an absolute sense of self-loathing. The process of internalizing negative feelings about the color of one’s skin. The tears that flowed down her cheeks seemed to have a certain amount of weight, and they seemed to move in time with the beat of the music. Pecola has a sense of humiliation that stems from the assessment of her Blackness as an unattractive trait. This passage illustrates this in the

context of Geraldine's refusal to accept Pecola. That assessment of her is included by her into the category of emotional self-injury. Pecola is the recipient of Pauline's criticism. She comments to Pecola as: "She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen. There at last were the darkened woods, the lonely roads, the river banks, the gentle knowing eyes" (97). Following her schooling in the film industry, she was unable to gaze at any face and not immediately give it a classification on the scale of pure beauty. The scale was one that she completely absorbed from the silver screen.

Alice Walker delves into the concept of whiteness as an unequivocal ideal of beauty. However, the novel also often depicts colorism and self-hatred, which are closely connected to Eurocentric values. Celie, who is a major character in the story, believes that she is unattractive because she has dark skin. She tells me that after that, I can feel Shug shaking me. she says to Celie. She makes a clear correlation between the concept of being black and the concept of being ugly. The root of this internalized falsehood may be traced back to white beauty standards, which place a high emphasis on attributes such as pale complexion and Eurocentric characteristics. The feelings of worthlessness that she experiences are a result of internalizing these expectations. Mr.____ praises to Nettie as:

> The first thing I notice bout Mr. _____ is how clean he is. His skin shine. His hair brush back. When he walk by the casket to review Sofia mothers body he stop, whisper something to her. Pat her shoulder. On his way back to his seat he look over at me. I raise my fan and look off the other way. Us went back to Harpo's after the funeral. (108)

These lines show when Nettie first sees Mr. _____, one of the first things that she notices is that he is completely spotless. His skin is glowing. He uses his hair to sweep back. He

pauses, comes to a halt, and whispers something to her as he passes by the coffin and takes a look at the corpse of Sofia's mother. Give her shoulder a pat. He looked over in my direction as he was making his way back to his seat. The phrase clean skin implies that the complexion is not too dark. The masculine gaze bolsters a hierarchy in which Celie's Blackness is undervalued, while Netti's more Eurocentric characteristics are given more importance. Sofia mocked Celie as:

> Not so pretty, say Carrie, looking in the looking glass. Just that head of hair. She too black. Well, brother must like black. Shug Avery black as my shoe. Shug Avery, Shug Avery, Carrie say. I'm sick of her. Somebody say she going round trying to sing. Umph, what she got to sing about. Say she wearing dresses all up her leg and headpieces with little balls and tassels hanging down, look like window dressing. (20)

Above the lines of glancing into the mirror, said, that is not so attractive at all. Only that head of hair is required. The generated text has been blocked by our content filters. It is evident that the brother has a preference for the color black. Too black is a term that describes the internalized racism known as colorism, which rates Black women depending on how closely their appearance resembles that of white people. Within the context of white beauty standards, having too much blackness renders an individual less attractive. Corrine strives to present herself as a respectable Christian woman. Corrine's apparel and personal hygiene are an embodiment of the Christian values of the middle class, which are founded on the principles of white respectability. She conceals the fact that she is of African descent while visibly adhering to the Eurocentric criteria of purity. The White Beauty is an opponent of Shug. Shug is so fashionable that it brings tears to my eyes. Shug says:

> She looks so stylish it like the trees all round the house draw themselves up tall for a better look. Now I see she stumble, tween the two men. She dont seem that well acquainted with her feets. Close up I see all this yellow powder caked up on her face. Red rouge. She look like she aint long for this world but dressed well for the next. But I know better. (33)

In this observation, she has such a fashionable appearance that it seems as if the trees that surround the home are stretching themselves up to get a better glimpse of her. She is now tripping up between the two males, as Shug can see. It is apparent that she is not very familiar with the proper use of her feet. Upon closer inspection, Shug sees that her face is completely covered in a layer of this yellow powder. She seems as if she is not going to be around for much longer in this world, but she is dressed appropriately for the next one. Celie holds Shug in high esteem because Shug is a representation of a kind of beauty that is outside of the ideals set by white people. On the other hand, Celie's yearning indicates that she feels a sense of inferiority in comparison to others who are beautiful, as she has internalized the notion that she herself does not meet the criteria for beauty. Pecola's yearning may be described as nothing more than self-loathing based on her race. Pecola's feelings of self-loathing are not innate; rather, they are inculcated by the white gaze, which assesses Black youngsters as inadequate on the beauty scale. Morrison describes the process by which youngsters come to accept the belief in their own racial inferiority.

In an environment that continually fosters pessimism, the loss of self-esteem may come rapidly and easily in youngsters, and the path to ruin is irreversibly sealed. This is a description of the method by which psychological colonization takes place. The lessons that Pecola learns from her environment indicate that white beauty is valuable. The generated text has been blocked by our content filters. Pauline Breedlove is influenced by movies that promote white beauty standards. She was made acquainted with physical

attractiveness. She disrobed her intellect, tied it up, and gathered an enormous amount of self-loathing. Pauline's perception of herself is transformed by the all-white Hollywood photos.

The notion that beauty is equivalent to whiteness is something that she has taken to heart, which leads her to the conclusion that she and her Black family are unattractive. This is what leads to her severe treatment of Pecola. Hollywood is transformed into Pauline's beauty scale. Morrison writes to Pecola: " She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen. There at last were the darkened woods, the lonely roads, the river banks, the gentle knowing eyes" (97). She has such a profound sense of self-hatred as a member of her race that she even evaluates her own kid according to the standards of white people in cinema. This leads to trauma that is experienced throughout generations, in which the ideal of whiteness is unattainable.

The picture of the ideal white suburban family serves as a representation of the concept of beauty, perfection, and happiness as it is seen on a national level. Black youngsters are being made to accept this as normal, which creates a situation in which whiteness is seen as something to strive for and blackness is seen as a failure. Each and every night, Pecola says a prayer hoping for blue eyes. The way in which Pecola visualizes the eyes of white people as mystical emblems of affection, security, and attractiveness is shown by these allusions to children's novels that are written for white audiences. Pecola has the false notion that if she possesses beauty, she would then be deserving of love. She is convinced that the reason her family beats her is because of her Black look, a belief that is fueled by her self-loathing.

The basis of Maureen's appeal may be traced back to colorism, which is a direct reflection of the beauty standards of white people. Her lighter complexion, greenish eyes, and neatly kept clothing resemble whiteness, which gives her an advantage over females who are darker-skinned and Black. Maureen openly states that Blackness is unattractive.

Instead of being a universal aesthetic term, beauty has served historically as a strong cultural construct. Eurocentric standards, which are shown in characteristics such as blue eyes, white skin, and straight hair, have dominated Western civilisations and have led to restricted notions of beauty that disregard and devalue racialised bodies.

The psychological and societal repercussions of Eurocentric beauty standards are the subjects of stinging criticisms in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison and Walker address the issues of black people especially women related in the context of a wider theoretical framework that encompasses postcolonial feminist criticism and cultural hegemony. By drawing on Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony, beauty may be regarded as a cultural instrument that promotes dominant beliefs by presenting them as common sense. Within this context, Eurocentric beauty standards become so normalised that Black women, such as Pecola and Celie, begin to embrace their own erasure as natural. On the other hand, the writings also provide insight into the potential for resistance. Nausea was also overwhelmed by depictions of tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual inferiority, fetichism, racial flaws, slave ships, and above all else. She depicts:

> I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: Sho good eat in. (130)

At the same time, Nausea had the responsibility of caring for her own body, on her own race, and her ancestors. She submitted herself to an impartial evaluation in the process. She uncovered her blackness and her ethnic features. Fanon discusses the way that racial stereotypes collapse onto the Black subject, leading him to absorb the negative images that are prevalent in the white culture. The process of internalization results in feelings of self-hatred among people of color because of the belief that whiteness is the most ideal standard of beauty, intelligence, and civilization. Fanon states:

> On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, who unmercifully imprisoned me, I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (130)

Fanon made himself an object, he removed himself a great distance from his own presence, on that day when he was entirely dislocated and incapable of being abroad with the other. This was the white guy who had imprisoned him. Fanon's metaphor demonstrates an interior rupture, illustrating the manner in which society's racist view causes the Black person to feel maimed. According to Fanon, the Black subject assesses its own value including its physical attractiveness using White norms, which results in a profound sense of psychological estrangement.

The moment when Claudia destroys the white dolls in *The Bluest Eye* and when Celie embraces self-expression in *The Color Purple* are both examples of counter-hegemonic awareness. These moments are also examples of ways in which beauty is reinterpreted in order to reinforce Black identity and dignity. The primary issue discussed in this study is the manner in which Eurocentric beauty standards operate not only as aesthetic preferences but as systems of oppression based on race and gender, influencing

the self-perceptions and social roles of Black women. Beauty is a fundamental element of oppression in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Beauty not only distorts an individual's perception of themselves, but it also reinforces societal hierarchies. Both works illustrate the ways in which the assimilation of Eurocentric aesthetics results in feelings of racial self-loathing, alienation, and enslavement. In addition, they highlight potential ways of resistance and redefinition. The character of Pecola Breedlove is a prime example of the devastating effects of Eurocentric beauty standards in *The Bluest Eye*. Pecola yearns for blue eyes, certain that they would change her life for the better. Morrison highlights:

> It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. (41)

Pecola had the realisation some time ago that if her eyes, which contained the images and comprehended the sights, were different in other words, beautiful she herself would be different. Her teeth were in excellent condition, and her nose was not large and flat like some of the others who were considered to be so attractive.

The notion of beauty is equivalent to whiteness for Pecola, particularly in terms of the presence of blue eyes. She links these blue eyes with receiving affection, attention, and acceptance. Pecola says "Every night without fail, she prayed for blue eyes," (47). This means, her spiritual life is consumed by this yearning. For a whole year she had prayed fervently. Her longing highlights the manner in which beauty politics that are colonial and racialised function psychologically by making Black girls into subjects who have a hatred for their inherent characteristics. Morrison demonstrates that this kind of

internalised racism is not developed in isolation; rather, it is nurtured by a culture that idolises Shirley Temple and white dolls as the pinnacle of beauty. Claudia, the young narrator, refuses to conform to these standards by destroying dolls. Pecola, on the other hand, thoroughly absorbs them, which ultimately results in her breakdown.

Morrison is also successful in illustrating idea how Pecola's group contributes to the perpetuation of racial self-loathing. Instead of validating the beauty of Blackness, they perpetuate the norms that serve to oppress them. Claudia reflects all had the impression that we were completely pure after we washed ourselves on her, all of us everyone who knew her, she mention:

> We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking dreams we used to silence our own nightmares. (162)

Her guilelessness adorned us, her culpability consecrated us, her distress caused us to shine with vitality, and her lack of social grace gave us the impression that we have a sense of humor. Pecola is transformed into the scapegoat for the collective humiliation of her town, absorbing the projections of its sense of unworthiness. The irony lies in the fact that Eurocentric values shatter not just the self-image of Pecola but also the cohesiveness of her community. These ideals set Black bodies against one other in a cycle of oppression. In Walkers *The Color Purple*, a similar dynamic is shown in which beauty is the basis for societal worth, which is often seen via patriarchal and masculine perspectives. Celie is deprived of beauty by the people that surround her, starting with her father transactional description:

> She ugly. He say. But she aint no stranger to hard work. And she clean. And God done fixed her. You can do everything just like you want to and she aint gonna make you feed it or clothe it. Mr. ____ still dont say nothing. I take out the picture of Shug Avery. I look into her eyes. Her eyes say Yeah, it bees that way sometime. (14)

These lines explain her unattractive looks. She is not unfamiliar with the concept of putting in a lot of effort. She is clean. And God had fixed her. They have completed freedom to do as you like, and she will not force you to provide food or clothing for it. Her lack of traditional beauty provides a means of rationalising her invisibility and degradation, while her identity is reduced to service and function. Just like Pecola does, Celie takes this erasure within herself and believes that she is unworthy of receiving love or appreciation. The repressive politics of beauty are further emphasised by the contrast between Celie and Shug Avery as:

> She got on red wool dress and chestful of black beads. A shiny black hat with what look like chickinhawk feathers curve down side one cheek, and she carrying a little snakeskin bag, match her shoes. She look so stylish it like the trees all round the house draw themselves up tall for a better look. Now I see she stumble, tween the two men. (33)

These lines explain she is wearing a dazzling black piece of headgear that is decorated with what seem to be feathers from a chickinhawk. Her appearance is so fashionable that it is almost as if all of the trees around the home have stretched themselves to their full height in order to have a closer look at her. Shugs beauty gives her power and serves as a source of autonomy that Celie is unable to get. However, Shug becomes a harsh mirror for Celie that exacerbates her own feelings of inadequacy: “I detest the way I look. I hate the way I dress. In my chifferobe, there is nothing other than clothing suitable for

attending church. And Mr. ____ staring at Shugs glowing, dark complexion, her feet encased in little, sassy red shoes, while she wore her tight red dress" (78). The way that his looking is something really loathes. He was very unhappy with his style of attire. Celie draws a comparison between herself and others that is unfavourable, and she also takes in the relationship between beauty and value. She is trapped in a system that prizes specific sorts of beauty, much like Pecola, and her self-esteem is devastated as a result. Both works also go into different forms of opposition to Eurocentric beauty politics.

In a similar vein, Celie has feelings of empowerment in *The Color Purple* when her humanity is validated independent of male approval. Celie thinks of the fact that she cannot recall being the first person in her own outfit while Kate, her brother-in-law's sister, maintains that she deserves to have her own clothes. She will need to have a custom one manufactured now. She attempts to explain the meaning to Kate. She is flustered and starts to stutter. She says,"Celie, everything is going to be well. You are worthy of a better life than this one" (54). Celie starts to redefine beauty, no longer seeing it as compliance to patriarchal or Eurocentric ideals but rather as self-worth and dignity. Both novels illustrate how Eurocentric beauty standards engender racial self-loathing, transforming Black women into subjects who feel estranged from their own bodies and communities. Pecola's desire to have blue eyes is a testament to the destructive impact of these standards. At the same time, Celie's self-denial is a reflection of the widespread devaluing of Black women's identities. Both Morrison and Walker show how people resist. This resistance can be seen in Claudia's refusal to play with dolls. It can be seen in Celie's acceptance of who she is. These novels remind us that beauty is not neutral. It is a tool that can be used to make some people seem better than others. It can also be used to empower people when they are treated unfairly. Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye criticizes the idea that white featuresre the most beautiful. In the book, blond hair, blue

eyes and white skin are seen as the best. Pecola Breedlove suffers because of these standards. She becomes an example of how these standards can hurt a person.

The Bluest Eye is Morrison's way of explaining this. She wants to know why Pecola did not have the experiences, as others. Pecola prayed for a change a radical alteration.

Morrison highlights Pecola's internal self-loathing, questioning how societal standards of beauty are imposed on Black girls and exposing the destructive gaze that condemns them. She writes:

> Implicit in her desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later, I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was? Who had looked at her and found her so wanting, so small a weight on the beauty scale? The novel pecks away at the gaze that condemned her. (6)

Her yearning was based on a subconscious feeling of racial self-loathing. And twenty years later, she was still wondering how people get such knowledge. The narrative attacks the eyes that passed judgement on her. This "racial self-loathing" reveals how Eurocentric ideals penetrate the psyche, particularly of children, convincing them that their natural features are ugly, undesirable, and unworthy of affection. Pauline Breedlove, Pecola's mother, also internalizes these standards. She idolizes to Hollywood's white actresses as:

> She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen. There at last were the darkened woods, the lonely roads, the river banks, the gentle knowing eyes. There the flawed became whole, the blind sighted, and the lame and halt threw away their crutches. (97)

She was never able to look at a face and not give it some category on the scale of pure beauty after her education in the movies. The scale was one that she learnt on the silver

screen. At long last, the black forests, the lonesome roads, the banks of the river, and the kind, perceptive eyes were all there. Her obsession with white beauty deepens her neglect of her Black daughter, showing how Eurocentric ideals fracture even maternal bonds. Celie recalls her first impression of Shug avery, describing her as the most beautiful woman who has ever seen, far more attractive then herself. This memory highlights Celie's sense of inferiority showing how Shug embodies confidence, independence, and an idealize femininity that Celie both envies and reveres. Celie reflects on Shug Avery's beauty as:

> Shug Avery was a woman. The most beautiful woman I ever saw. She more pretty then my mama. She bout ten thousand times more prettier then me. I see her there in furs. Her rouge face. Her hair like something tail. She grinning with her foot up on somebody motor car. Her eyes so serious. Sad some. I ast her to give me the picture. An all night long I stare at it. An now when I dream, I dream of Shug Avery. (13)

These lines highlight that the most stunningly lovely lady that she has ever laid eyes on. She is more beautiful than my mother. Her cheeks are flushed with color. Her hair is like something from a tail. She is smirking with her foot propped up on someone else's motor automobile. Her eyes, however, are serious. Shugs beauty, marked by stylish clothes and sexuality, grants her a kind of power, but it also subjects her to judgment and objectification. She is admired for embodying traits associated with glamour closer to white-coded femininity yet condemned for her independence. The two novels show how the idea of beauty that comes from Europe is used to oppress people like Pecola because of their race and gender. For Pecola being white is like a dream that she wants to become it is a desire that's so strong it makes her crazy. For Celie being ugly is something that people say she is. That is why they treat her badly and do not listen to her. Pauline

Breedlove and Shug Avery are like two people one is hurt by trying to be like white people and the other is strong but also seen as just a pretty object because of how society values beauty.

In both novels the characters start to believe that the European idea of beauty is the best and that makes them hate themselves for being Black and they feel like they do not fit in with their bodies. This just makes the system that says white people are better even stronger and it makes Black women feel like they are not human. The author Morrison shows how the idea of beauty, which is defined by people makes Black people feel bad about themselves. Pecola wants to have eyes because she feels like nobody likes her or sees her. She thinks that if she had eyes people would treat her differently and that shows how people are only accepted if they fit the European idea of beauty. For Pecola beauty is not just about how she looks it is, about being loved and safe.. Claudia sees that this idea of beauty is actually hurting people. She recalls her hatred of white dolls that were held up as beautiful:

> I destroyed white baby dolls. But the dismembering of dolls was not the true horror. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls. The indifference with which I could have axed them was shaken only by my desire to do so. To discover what eluded me: the secret of the magic they weaved on others. (22)

She took white baby dolls. Broke them into pieces.. What was really scary was not the broken dolls. It was the fact that she wanted to do the thing to little white girls. The thought of her hurting them was the thing that could really get to me and make me think that she might actually do it. Claudia did not want to believe in the ideas of beauty. This shows that people do not just accept the beauty standards that they see. These standards

are forced on them. Pauline Breedlove is an example of how these beauty standards can hurt adults. She learned about beauty from the movies.

This shows that beauty is not one thing. It can help women in some ways. It is also controlled by men. Nettie saw how the idea of beauty in Europe and America affected people. In Africa she saw how the people who lived there were forced to believe in the beauty standards. This is connected to how Celie was treated in America. It is all part of a system. Pecola thought that if she had eyes people would love her. This is an example of how some Black people do not like themselves. Celie thought she was ugly and that it was her fate. This shows how the beauty standards that are forced on people can make them quiet and accepting of abuse. Pauline Breedlove and Shug Avery are two women who deal with beauty in ways. Pauline loves the beauty standards of Hollywood while Shug uses her beauty to get what she wants.. Both of them are trapped in a system where the value of a person is measured by how white and beautiful they are. So beauty in these stories is not about how something looks. It is a way of controlling people and making them feel worthless.

In Toni Morrisons story the Black female body is treated in a way that takes away its dignity and protection. The Breedlove family thought they were ugly. This was not something they thought on their own. It was something that society made them believe. It was as if someone had put a cloak of ugliness on each of them and they just accepted it. This “cloak of ugliness” (35) is a way of controlling their bodies. The family believed what others thought of them. This made their bodies a source of shame. Pecola was raped by her father, which shows how society does not care about the female body. Morrison describes what happened to Pecola in a clear and disturbing way: “The rigidness of her limbs the desperate concentration in her eyes was only the childs fear, not the womans desire” (163). This moment shows both the abuse of a child and the loss of innocence. It

turned Pecolas body into a place of violence and silence. When she got pregnant and her life fell apart it showed that her body was never really hers. It was always being controlled by others whether it was because of beauty standards or mens aggression. Even when Pecola started her period, which's a natural part of being a woman it was seen as something to be curious about and also something that was contaminated. Girls would tease her about it. Her body was always being watched, judged and controlled by others never by herself. Alice Walker starts her story with the Black female body being hurt. Celies stepfather hurt her. She could only tell God about it in pieces. This violent act made Celies body a tool for men to use and her pain was silenced. Her body became a burden that she had to keep secret. Beauty is not something that looks nice. It is a way of controlling people, Black women. Toni Morrison uses beauty as a weapon in her story The Bluest Eye. Because of the idea that white beauty's the best, with blue eyes, blonde hair and white skin a hierarchy is created where being Black is seen as being ugly

The fact that Pecola Breedlove believed that her life would be different if she had blue eyes is an example of how beauty can become a tool for social control. Because she lives in a culture that does not acknowledge her humanity, her desire is not for vanity but rather for survival; beauty is a promise of protection, visibility, and love. It is shown by Morrison that beauty serves as a kind of oppression since it is able to persuade those who are oppressed to agree to their own erasure.

Alice Walker’s novel *The Color Purple* presents the concept of beauty as a patriarchal weapon that is used to justify abuse. Celie has been referred to be "ugly" on several occasions, which makes her an ideal candidate for mistreatment, work, and quiet. The fact that she is not attractive is used as an excuse to deny her love, voice, and capacity for agency. In this context, beauty functions as a kind of currency that confers power: women who possess it, such as Shug Avery, are able to achieve exposure and

mobility, but women who do not possess it are deemed disposable. As a result, both novels demonstrate that beauty is a factor in the maintenance of racial and gender inequalities by revealing who is deserving of respect.

Pecola's wish to have blue eyes is the most severe example of racial self-loathing that she exhibits. The idea that her dark skin and brown eyes are the reason for the violence in her family and the rejection she receives from society is something that she continues to internalize. This urge is specifically identified by Morrison as 'racial self-loathing,' and she demonstrates how representations of white culture, such as Shirley Temple and white dolls, teach young black women to detest themselves. Not only does Pecola want to be beautiful, but she also desires to vanish from the very concept of blackness. In the same way, Celie, the protagonist of *The Color Purple*, comes to terms with her ugly self. Due to the fact that she has been taught by Eurocentric and patriarchal conventions that dark-skinned, impoverished Black women are not deserving of adoration, she does not fight back against being termed ugly. The self-erasure that Celie engages in is a reflection of Fanon's dissertation of internalized racism, which states that those who are oppressed adopt the gaze of their oppressors and act accordingly. In both of these novels, racial self-loathing is not something that is intrinsic but rather something that is learnt and generated by cultural hegemony.

Chapter IV

The Male Gaze and Objectification of Black Women

The notion of the male gaze, which is a well-known idea in feminist theory, relates to the manner in which women are depicted, evaluated, and controlled from the perspective of males. It was initially developed in feminist theory as a patriarchal method of gazing that objectifies women, transforming them into objects of visual and sexual consumption. This notion takes on a more unique and violent form when it is used to Black women. The bodies of women have been treated very badly throughout the history of Western culture. They have been seen as different because of their race. They have also been seen as women in a way that makes them seem like they are always available for men or like they are sexy or like they are bad. This has been very hard for women. It has made people look at them in a way that's not respectful and it has taken away their power to make their own decisions.

Black women writers have shown how this happens in private and in public. It affects how women see themselves how communities work and how people relate to each other. In this study we are not talking about the gaze as a way to understand or connect with someone. We are talking about how it's a way for people in power to control womens bodies. Laura Mulvey says that when men look at women they see them as objects not as people with power. They look at women. They display them for others to look at. This is not about one person looking at another. It is about how society works and how some ideas become more important than others. It can be understood this better by looking at what Antonio Gramsci said about hegemony. He said that the ideas of the people in power become the way of thinking in a society. So when we talk about the gaze we are not just talking about someone looking at someone. We are talking about a system that shapes how we see things and how we relate to each other. For example in *The Color*

Purple by Alice Walker and *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison we see how the male gaze is a problem. It makes violence against women seem okay it silences women. It supports the bigger systems of racism and patriarchy. We see this in the lives of characters like Celie and Pecola Breedlove. These books show us that when Black women are objectified it is not about how they are seen it is also about the politics of it. This is connected to the history of slavery, colonialism and white supremacy which still affect how we think about women today.

The male gaze is an issue in these novels. It is something that justifies violence against women silences their voices and supports the systems of racism and patriarchy. The Color Purple and The Bluest Eye are books because they show us how the objectification of Black women is not just about how they are seen it is also about the politics and the history behind it. Black women are not just objects they are people, with their power and their own voices. These works emphasize the fact that the objectification of Black women is not only visual or interpersonal but also deeply political. In Morrison's novel she writes:

> Implicit in her desire was racial self-loathing. And twenty years later, I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who made her feel that it was better to be a freak than what she was? Who had looked at her and found her so wanting, so small a weight on the beauty scale? The novel pecks away at the gaze that condemned her. (6)

These lines focus on racial self-loathing was an underlying factor in what she wanted. And twenty years on, she was still pondering the question of how one comes to know it. The gaze is specifically identified by Morrison as the white, male-defined beauty mindset that is prevalent and that condemns Pecola as being unattractive. In this situation, the gaze is a structural male gaze, as shown by the fact that boys make fun of her, men disregard

her, and instructors fail to acknowledge her presence. Pecola absorbs this look, and eventually, she starts to see herself through its lens. In her words she writes:

> She also knew that when one of the girls at school wanted to be particularly insulting to a boy, or wanted to get an immediate response from him, she could say. “Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove! Bobby loves Pecola Breedlove!” and never fail to get peals of laughter from those in earshot, and mock anger from the accused. (40-41)

She was also aware that if one of the females at school wants to verbally abuse a guy in a very offensive manner or if she wished to elicit an instant reaction from him, she was able to remark, Breedlove is someone who Bobby absolutely adores. They always manage to elicit uproarious laughs from anybody within hearing, as well as feigned indignation from those who are being accused. This so-called joke strips away Pecola’s humanity, leaving just an object that may be mocked. The body of Pecola is transformed into a location where lads demonstrate their manly superiority. The laughter functions as a public display, a symbolic objectification in which her value is determined by the opinions of men. Pecola argues:

> Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. The loved one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lovers inward eye. (162)

Love is never any better than the person you are loving. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love brutally, weak people love weakly, and foolish people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never secure. The only person who really has the ability to love is a lover. The one who is beloved is sheared, neutralized, and immobilized in the

dazzling brightness of the beloveds inner gaze. The portrayal of Cholly's sexual assault of Pecola is implied by this description. He does not see her as a kid; rather, he views her through a distorted and aggressive lens that is typical of masculinity. The fact that Morrison gives the impression that his sight transforms her into a frozen object that is stuck under his "inward eye" is significant since she has no ability to act independently in this situation. Pecolas Prayers: "Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time" (41). She made a point of praying for blue eyes every single night without fail. She had been praying with great passion for a whole year. She was not entirely without hope, despite the fact that she was slightly dejected. It would take an incredibly lengthy period of time for anything as great as that to occur. When she wishes for blue eyes, she is wishing for others to look at her in a different way. She wants to avoid the male/white gaze that considers her to be undeserving. She has internalized the belief that she can only be treated as a human being if she alters the way her body looks as a result of the intense stare. Men treats Shug as:

> He look at Sofia like she a hant. This Henry Broadnax, Sofia say. Everybody call him Buster. Good friend of the family. How you all? he say. He smile pleasant and us keep listening to the music. Shug wearing a gold dress that show her titties near bout to the nipple. Everybody sort a hoping something break. But that dress strong. Man oh man, say Buster. Fire department want do. Somebody call the Law. (51)

He gazed at Sofia as if she were a ghost. Sofia insists that this individual is Henry Broadnax. Everyone refers to him by the name Buster. We continue to listen to the music as he gives us a beautiful grin. Shug is dressed in a gold outfit that comes close to

exposing her nipples. Everyone is secretly holding out hope that something will go wrong. However, that outfit is durable. Say, Buster, man oh man. The fire department is not an acceptable option. Have someone contact the authorities. This is a clear illustration of the masculine gaze theory. Shug's body is displayed for the world to see and gawk at. Men gaze at her breasts as objects of pleasure. Celies stare, in contrast to the mens, is one of feeling and waking, and she also glances. The mens gaze is one of sexualization and objectification. Celie states:

> A woman need a little fun, once in a while, she say. A woman needs to be at home, he say. She say, This is my home. Though I do think it go better as a jukejoint. Harpo look at the prize fighter. Prizefighter push back his chair a little, pick up his drink. I dont fight Sofia battle, he say. My job to love her and take her where she want to go. Harpo breathe some relief. (51)

This quote states that a woman needs to have a little bit of fun. According to what he has to say, a woman should be at home. Despite the fact that I believe it would be more appropriate to operate as a juke joint. Harpo, please have a peek at the prizefighter. Prizefighter put his chair back slightly and picked up his drink. she does not fight Sofia's battle. It is her responsibility to cherish her and take her to whatever place what she wants to go. Harpo now feels a sense of relaxation.

Harpo exercises patriarchal control in order to limit Sofia's physical presence to the area of the home, which is yet another way of objectifying her by treating her as property instead of as a human being. Mr. ____ takes care of Celie and describes her as a tool for sexual and labor-intensive purposes. Mr. ____ looks for Celie and she says:

> He look at me. It like he looking at the earth. It need somethin? his eyes say. She go with me in the store. I think what color Shug Avery would wear. She like a queen to me so I say to Kate, Somethin purple, maybe little red in it too. But us

> look an look and no purple. Plenty red but she say, Naw, he wont want to pay for red. Too happy lookin. We got choice of brown, maroon or navy blue. I say blue. (20)

These lines highlights that the gaze of Mr. ____ reduces her to less than human status, depriving her of the ability to act on her own will in either an emotional or sexual context. Women are seen as sexual property. Woman dressed in a flowing gown that extends all the way up to her knees, topped off with a headdress that has small balls and tassels dangling down she looks like she has been dressed up as a window display. Shug is the subject of sexual rumor. Men discuss her attire and figure as indicators of sexual worth, which is another example of the objectifying gaze. Geraldine Gazed on Pecola as: "She looked at Pecola. Saw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had come undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum peeping out from between the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel of the shoe" (75). Her gaze was directed at Pecola. She saw that her outfit was tattered and filthy, that her head was adorned with plaits, which had come undone and left her hair matted, that her shoes were muddy with a wad of gum sticking out from between the cheap bottoms, and that her socks were stained, one of which had been walked down into the heel of her shoe. Pecola is reduced to an undesirable thing that is invading Geraldine's space as a result of her stare. Pecola is seen by her as a category rather than as a kid. She perceives her as the filthy Black girl. It is the white middle class perspective that strips Black female bodies of their humanity. Celia's body objectify for male scrutiny as: "He starts to whistle. Take two dollars. Give her a quarter back. He look at me. You want something gal? I say, Naw Suh. I trail long behind them on the street. I dont have nothing to offer and I feels poor. She look up and down the street. He aint here. He aint here. She say like she gon cry. Who aint? I ast" (17). Celie provides a description

of how a guy made a visual comparison between her and Nettie in order to decide which sister he would wed. The male gaze takes a literal approach to assessing women based on their physical characteristics, such as their complexion, hair, and appearance. According to Mr.____, Celie is taken as sexual and labor object. He gazes to Celie as:

> She die screaming and cussing. She scream at me. She cuss at me. I'm big. I can't move fast enough. By time I git back from the well, the water be warm. By time I git the tray ready the food be cold. By time I git all the children ready for school it be dinner time. He don't say nothing. He set there by the bed holding her hand an cryin, talking bout don't leave me, don't go . (9)

Celie's physique is inspected in silence by Mr.____, who treats her as a tool for employment and sexual purposes. His gaze is utilitarian in nature: he sees her as a tool rather than as a person. Celie provides a description of how Pa and other males assess the bodies of women. He says that she is quite intelligent. She responds that she is smart as well. This is a portion of a scenario in which men evaluate women according to how much they are able to provide and how obedient they are. "Smart Too" (15) demonstrates that the male gaze is not just sexual in nature but also disciplinary. Men are more likely to be attracted to women who seem passive because intelligent women pose a challenge to male dominance. Shug is so elegant that it brings me to tears; these sentences describe that. Shug's physical form is transformed into a visual standard for what is considered to be beautiful in a society that is defined by patriarchy. Celie's response demonstrates how profoundly the dominating gaze impacts women. Pecola is visually tormented for her appearance and she speaks as: "Ashamed of the insults that were being heaped on our friend, we just sat there: I picked toe jam, Frieda cleaned her fingernails with her teeth, and Pecola finger-traced some scars on her knee, her head cocked to one side. My mothers fussing soliloquies always irritated and depressed us" (23). This means they

remained in their seats, feeling embarrassed because of the offensive words that were being directed at our buddy. Pecola's passive nature is in stark contrast to the energetic manner in which others look at her. Through the use of stillness, Morrison demonstrates how Pecola's status in her own universe is that of an object rather than a subject

This gaze is doubly repressive in the context of literature written by African American women, since it connects with both gendered and racialised forms of objectification. *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* are examples of the ways in which Black women are defined and devalued through the eyes of males, stripped of their subjectivity and reduced to bodies that may be used, swapped, or disgraced. In addition to illuminating the catastrophic implications of such objectification, these novels also envision various kinds of resistance against it. Pecola Breedlove's whole identity in *The Bluest Eye* is determined by the way that other people see her, or more specifically, by the way that they do not view her as attractive.

> At this point, lacking support, this free-floating aggression requires an investment. Since the girl is at the age in which the child begins to enter the folklore and the culture along roads that we know, the Negro becomes the predestined depositary of this aggression. If we go farther into the labyrinth, we discover that when a woman lives the fantasy of rape by a Negro, it is in some way the fulfillment of a private dream, of an inner wish. (197)

This free-floating aggression necessitates an investment at this point in time because it does not have any support. The girl has reached the age in which the kid starts to come into contact with the culture and folklore that we are familiar with on the highways. Therefore, the Negro is the one who is destined to be the recipient of this attack. Fanon demonstrates how the sexual imaginations of white people transfer fear, desire, and hostility onto the bodies of Black men. This is a manifestation of objectification that

operates via the lens of the white female perspective, and it involves making bodies of color into erotic symbols as opposed to individuals. He writes in *Black Skin, White Masks as:*

> He attempts a somewhat more complex reading of masochism but in making the Negro the *predestined* depository of this aggression he again pre-empts a fuller psychoanalytic discussion of the production of psychic aggressivity in identification and its relation to cultural difference, by citing the cultural stereotype as the predestined aim of the sexual drive. Of the woman of Color he has very little to say. I know nothing about her. (24)

Although he makes an attempt to perform a more intricate reading of masochism, he preempts a more comprehensive psychoanalytic discussion of the production of psychic aggressivity in identification and its relationship to cultural difference by citing the cultural stereotype as the predestined objective of the sexual drive and by again making the Negro the predestined depository of this aggression. He does not express himself very well when it comes to women of color. He knows nothing about her. Fanon acknowledges the absence of discussion around women of color, an omission that is indicative of the ways in which women are objectified or ignored in conversation about race. The racist prejudices that are present have an impact on the way that women are seen, even when they do emerge. The generated text has been blocked by our content filters. (xii–xiii) Fanon's depiction, albeit being about a Black man, shows how the colonial gaze reduces bodies of both genders to racist shards. Objectification is based on this process of breaking the body down into its component parts and stereotypes, which is the reduction of an individual to their physical characteristics.

Morrison demonstrates the way in which Pecola absorbs a male-dominated standard of attractiveness that is based on whiteness. Blue eyes were the object of her

desire every night, and she prayed for them without fail. Her desire to be seen differently by both men and society is closely connected to the racial self-loathing with which she is also associated; this is shown by the fact that:

> Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time. Thrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people. (41)

In this quote, she had prayed with fervor for a year. She nevertheless maintained a sense of optimism in spite of the fact that she had been slightly disheartened. A significant amount of time would need to pass before anything as magnificent as that could occur. She would never come to understand how beautiful she was because she was thrown, in this manner, into the constraining notion that only a miracle could deliver her. Her view would be limited to what she could see: the eyes of other people. When she becomes the victim of her father gaze, the tragedy that befalls Pecola becomes even more severe. The generated text has been blocked by our content filters. Morrison writes: “The hopelessness of her prospects, the emptiness of her beauty, the solitariness of her suffering, and the rigidity of her poverty all seemed to provide a certain degree of comfort to him” (162). The stare of Cholly eliminates the humanity of Pecola, transforming her into a receptacle for his own sadness. In this context, the male gaze is not just sexual but also viciously exploitative, serving as a representation of the junction of patriarchal authority and racial oppression. Celie is subjected to a continual weapon in the form of the male gaze, as shown by Walker in *The Color Purple,* who is informed from the very beginning that she is unattractive and unfit. The fact that her father commodified her by giving her away in a marriage transaction to Mr. ____ is especially noteworthy. However,

she is not unfamiliar with the concept of putting in a lot of effort. The way that she appears disgusts her, and she has an intense hatred for the clothing that she wears. A cipherrobe of her has nothing other than garments that are appropriate for going to church. As for Mr. ____, he was looking at Shug, who had a radiant black complexion. She had on her tight red dress and her feet were enclosed in small, sassy red heels. Celie is made invisible, but Mr. ___ sees Shug as glorified and worthy of celebration. Her appearance is so fashionable that it is as if the trees that around the home were drawing themselves up tall in order to have a better look (92). She demands attention not only as an object but as a person who embraces her own sexuality. Shug personifies the idea of regaining exposure on her own terms, which is a challenge to the patriarchal structure of the masculine gaze. Her beauty provides her with a paradigm of female autonomy and serves as a source of oppression, but it also contrasts with Celie's obscurity.

Morrison and Walker both emphasise how the male gaze has the ability to cause long-lasting psychological harm to Black women. Pecola's entire psychological breakdown is the result of her being perceived as unattractive and then being brutally eaten by her father's stare. Celie has been treated simply as an object of labour and sexual use. This treatment silences her voice and suppresses her individuality. As a result, the male gaze is a technique of dominance that strips women of their subjectivity, promotes gendered violence, and perpetuates racial inequalities in both works. That being said, both writers provide understated types of resistance as well. Claudia rejects the ideals of beauty that are imposed by the masculine gaze in the novel *The Bluest Eye*. She opposes the system that connects femininity with whiteness and attractiveness by destroying white baby dolls, stating, "I destroyed white baby dolls. The actual horror did not consist of the mutilation of dolls. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to little white girls" (20). The fact that she said no opens up the prospect that she may be

able to avoid becoming objectified by refusing to engage in its norms. Celies journey towards self-resistance in *The Color Purple* starts the moment she learns to see herself from a perspective that is not defined by the male gaze. She eventually realises her own sensuality and self-worth and begins to gradually regain subjectivity from objectification by way of her connection with Shug.

Both novels illustrate how the male gaze serves as a primary mechanism for the objectification of Black women. The look silences Celie and subjugates her, whereas for Pecola, the gaze serves to annihilate her individuality and is harmful. However, Morrison and Walker also maintain that the gaze is not completely authoritative; it may be contested via alternate perceptions of self-expression, beauty, and dignity.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Beauty is not something that looks nice it is also a way that people are controlled and oppressed. In the novels *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker we see how beauty can be bad for women. These books show how White beauty standards, what men want and how society sees race all work together to affect the lives of women. The main characters, Pecola Breedlove and Celie are treated badly because of what men and society think of them. They are seen as important because they are Black. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker also look at how Black women can take control of their lives and love themselves. They think that beauty can be a thing if women are in charge of it. We need to think about how these books show that beauty is not something that people like or dislike but it is also a way to control people. Beauty can be very bad for people. We need to think about new ways for people to feel good about them and be strong. The novels *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* are important because they show us that beauty is not just something it is also a way that society can hurt people. We need to think about what these novels are saying as we finish reading them. Beauty is a part of *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* and it affects the lives of Black women, like Pecola Breedlove and Celie.

Beauty serves as an ideological weapon in both works, advancing the aims of white supremacy and patriarchy. Pecola's longing for blue eyes is an indication of her acceptance of the beauty standards of white people, as seen in *The Bluest Eye*. It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Beautiful eyes are blue. Frantz Fanon explains this yearning in Black Skin, White Masks as the colonized subjects desire to achieve recognition by assimilation into white norms. For Pecola, beauty is tantamount to merit,

love, and life itself in her vision. This want, however, does not set her free; on the contrary, it obliterates her sense of self.

The similar logic that is shown in Walkers *The Color Purple* is seen through the perspective of commercialization in a patriarchal society. Celies stepfather describes her as unappealing but acknowledges that she has value due to her usefulness. Beauty is not discussed here as an intrinsic characteristic; rather, it is discussed as an economic value that is ascribed by men. The lack of beauty is used as a reason to justify abuse and exploitation in this context. Beauty serves as a disciplinary discourse in both works, legitimizing power and depriving women of their autonomy. The development of a negative self-image based on race is one of the most devastating effects that beauty politics can have. Each evening, without missing a day, she begged for blue eyes. In these phenomena Pecola is embodied. For a whole year she had prayed fervently (47). Her prayers illustrate the ways in which systematic racism invades the brain, teaching Black girls that their natural characteristics are unattractive. Morrison also demonstrates the way in which this idea may permeate whole communities. Pecola serves as the scapegoat for others to confirm their self-worth; in doing so, she reveals the communal responsibility in perpetuating repressive beauty standards.

Celie also adopts the belief that she is worthless. She takes her invisibility and ugliness as givens, never doubting their existence until Shug Avery comes into her life. She dislikes the way that she looks and the way that she dresses even more when she compares herself to other people. There is nothing other than clothing suitable for attending church. Mr. _____, marvelling at Shugs vivid ebony skin in her tight red dress, with her feet in small sassy red shoes. Celie's gaze matches the patriarchal gaze in this instance, illustrating the ways in which women too may become complicit in the reproduction of repressive structures. The two novels show that beauty standards do not

just affect women on the outside. They also hurt their sense of self on the inside. Alice Walker leaves out Mr. ___ name on purpose and this is not a writing style. It is a way to show how men in charge can take away peoples individuality. By not giving Albert a name Alice Walker makes him a symbol of men being in control and he is mostly defined by his role as a husband and the man in charge rather than as a real person. This also shows how Celie sees him because she cannot or will not see him as more than the person who has power over her. The blank space really shows how systems where men are in charge take away the identities of both women and men and it makes relationships all about who has power and control. The two novels really emphasize this point about beauty standards. How they affect women and also how systems where men are in charge can be hurtful, to everyone. Alice Walker use of the name Mr. ___ is a part of this and it helps to show how these systems can take away peoples sense of self.

In both novels, the male gaze plays a crucial part in the objectification of Black women. The attack on Pecola by Cholly Breedlove is the quintessential example of the devastating power of the masculine gaze in the book written by Morrison. Before raping his daughter, Cholly has a strange sense of empathy that Morrison describes as "The rigidness of her poverty, the solitariness of her suffering, the hopelessness of her prospects, the emptiness of her beauty, seemed to him somehow to relieve him" (162). Cholly does not perceive Pecola as a kid or a subject; instead, he sees her as an object onto which he reflects his own misery.

Throughout the whole of her existence, Celie is subjected to male objectification in the novel *The Color Purple*. Her father and husband see her body as property, reducing her identity to nothing more than labour and sexual availability. The affection that Mr. ____ has for Shug serves to further highlight this rationale since Shug is praised for her attractiveness, but Celie is dismissed. The male gaze breaks down Black women into

classifications of use or spectacle, thus preventing them from being entire. It is important to note that none of the two novels attributes the tyranny of beauty to people alone; rather, it is a kind of oppression that is perpetuated by whole societies.

The characters in *The Bluest Eye* not only reject Pecola because of the color of her skin, but also because of it since they are members of the same community. Her "ugliness" becomes a reality that is shared by the community and is used to elevate others by comparison. Morrison is critical of the manner in which oppressed populations absorb and reproduce the ideas of the dominant group, which serves to perpetuate cycles of suffering. In the same way, Walker demonstrates the ways in which women themselves have the ability to establish hierarchies of beauty. Nettie and Kate urge Celie to put up a fight against the influence that her husband wields over her, but they also recognise the fact that beauty has an impact on the lives of women. Shug Avery, albeit a source of strength for Celie, nevertheless engages in beauty politics by representing the glamour that Celie does not possess. In both novels, oppression is shown as a communal experience as much as it is an individual experience. The thing is, just because Black women experience oppression together it does not mean they will automatically support each other. In fact they are often divided by their community. This is because the ideas of the people in power are repeated within these groups and individuals start to believe in and enforce the things that hurt them. For example in *The Bluest Eye* the Black community repeats the idea that you have to be beautiful in a certain way like having light skin and straight hair. This makes people who do not look like that feel bad about themselves. Pecola Breedlove is an example of this. She is seen as ugly by the people around her. This makes her feel worthless. The way the community treats Pecola is very sad. Kids make fun of her and adults do not care about her. This shows that these ideas about beauty are not just forced on the community by outsiders but also repeated by the

community itself. This makes it hard for Black women to come together and support each other because they are all trying to be close to the ideas of the people in power.

As a result people like Pecola are left alone. Are not protected. This shows that oppression is not something that happens when the larger society excludes Black people but also when Black people are divided among themselves. Morrison is saying that just because people suffer together it does not mean they will automatically come together. Instead she shows how the ideas that are deeply ingrained in our society can prevent people from working. This raises questions, about how Black women can come and fight against oppression. Both Morrison and Walker show that in difficult situations there are ways to resist. In *The Color Purple* the main character Celie changes a lot with the help of her friend Shug. Celie starts to see herself as a person who's worth something even if men do not think so.

She does not remember the first time that she wore a dress that was completely. At this point, she will need to have a special version made. He made an effort to clarify the message for Kate. She was agitated and started to stammer and stutter. She states the following. Everything is going to turn out well, Celie. You are deserving of a life that is better than this one.

This act of self-expression is meaningful because it demonstrates that beauty may be reinterpreted as dignity, autonomy, and self-love. Both novels ultimately make a demand for a fundamental reconceptualisation of the notion of beauty. Morrison addresses the harmful repercussions of equating beauty with whiteness, while Walker illuminates the ways in which patriarchy commodifies and devalues the bodies of Black women. Both writers also propose, however, that the concept of beauty might be recovered not by conforming to imposed norms but by affirming Black identity and gender. In this study the notion of beauty as a tool of oppression is not just evident in the

novels of Morrison and Walker; it is also a deep critique on cultural politics. The collapse of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is a clear demonstration of the deadly effects of internalized racism and communal involvement in the maintenance of Eurocentric beliefs. The silence of Celie and her subsequent empowerment in *The Color Purple* demonstrate how self-discovery and solidarity may be used to defy patriarchal notions of beauty. These novels, when considered together, demolish the idea of beauty as being benign or universal, demonstrating its function in the maintenance of systems of dominance. However, what is more important is that both works give room for the possibility of conceiving other futures. Rather than being defined by compliance, beauty may be redefined as authenticity; rather than being defined by external validation, it can be redefined as self-affirmation. Morrison and Walker thus encourage readers to transcend norms that are oppressive and embrace a vision of beauty that is celebratory of Blackness, gender, and resilience. Their thoughts continue to be timely and transformational in a society that is still governed by hierarchies of beauty that are based on gender and race.

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