

I. Introduction

Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, presents the lives of several impoverished black families in the 1940's in a rather unconventional and painful manner. Mrs. Morrison leads the reader through the lives of select children and adults, describing a few powerful incidents, thoughts and experiences that lend insight into the motivation and behavior of these characters.

The Bluest Eye is a simple story about a lonely black girl, Pecola Breedlove, daughter of black parents-Cholly and Pauline. Pecola is eleven- year- old when she knows the huge chasm about the racism. Pecola, unloved by her own parents, rejected by her own classmates and teacher, finally knows the cause of her rejection-racism. When her own father burns the house, sets his family members outside of it and is sent to jail, her own mother rejects her, and then this helpless child is sheltered by another family called the MacTeer. The half of the story of the protagonist of the novel, Pecola, is narrated by both MacTeer sisters, Claudia and Frieda. When Pecola knows what it feels like to be a black girl, she longs for blue eyes as both the ultimate symbol of whiteness and the key to acceptance and love from those around her, and it drives her into madness. Pecola's progressive insanity is charted through her relationships with other members of the black community whose sense of individual and communal identity has, in varying ways and degree, become distorted by the internalization of white cultural values. Later on, in the progression of the novel, the girl, who does not know the difference between the black and the white, knows about the big chasm of the race. This sort of racial discrimination compels Pecola to aspire after the bluest eye hoping that will bring love and affection to her.

Published in 1970, *The Bluest Eye* came about at a critical moment in the history of American Civil Rights Movements. Morrison began Pecola's story as a

short piece in 1962; it became a novel-in-progress by 1965. It was written, as one can see from the dates, during the years of some of the most dynamic and turbulent transformations of Afro-American life. One of those transformations was a new recognition of Black-American beauty. After centuries, Black-Americans began to argue for a new standard of beauty. This new standard was meant to be racially inclusive, allowing blacks to see black as beautiful, but the need to argue for this new standard reveals how firmly the white standard of beauty was entrenched.

But before this kind of conceptualization, the black people used to act themselves as the culturally inferior and racially segregated which is very eloquently dramatized in the novel through the portrayal of the different characters like Pecola and her parents, Cholly and Pauline.

The novel also poses many other issues. By looking at the extreme case of Pecola, we learn the truth about our world, a truth that we are normally incapable of noticing with which Morrison has been concerned ever since. The style is fragmentary- a kind of democratic narrative in which many narrative voices are privileged to speak. Morrison has used variations of this system in other novels, favoring this strategy as a way to look at a story from many angles without giving too much control to one voice. And Morrison's concern with oral Black-American traditions is apparent from the very first lines of Claudia's prelude.

However, in this particular novel, Morrison has attempted to examine the forces that can make the oppressed take part in their own oppression. How can it be that a little girl could be made to feel so ugly? Why do the black children of the novel insult each other by calling each other black? What does it mean (and what does it do) when a black woman wishes her daughter could look like Jean Harlow (a white-

skinned Hollywood actress)? How has this happened? What has been lost? Is there a way out?

The Bluest Eye was the foundation-stone in Morrison's writing career. With the publication of the novel, literary reviews for and against it came in abundance. As Morrison succeeded in publishing novels one after the other, critics gradually failed to oppose its racial theme and its exposition of race problems in America. However, critics after critics have thematically, formally and culturally analyzed it. This study will fully focus on the racism, its impact on black people and its aftermaths upon them.

Most of the characters in the novel are isolated and fragmented within themselves, culturally and racially. Characters in the black community accept their status as the Other, which has been imposed upon them by the white community. In turn, blacks assign the status of other to individuals like Pecola within the black community. Morrison's entire characters exist in a world defined by its blackness and by the white society which both violates and denies it. The destructive effect of the white society can take the form of outright physical violence, but oppression in Morrison's world is more often psychic violence, which ultimately makes the characters feel melancholic. For example, When Junior throws his mother's cat into Pecola's face, Geraldine's (Junior's mother) subsequent epithet for Pecola—"black bitch"—completes the sequence of events, conditioned by the U.S. racial order in 1941 (the time of mental disorder because of the great depression, in which half of the black Americans were out of work), that leads to Pecola's deep psychic damage. The adoption of a rigid role, the withdrawal from life, is for Morrison as a failure; but her condemnation is tempered by the recognition of the unnatural position of blacks in a racist society.

Pecola is the epitome of the victim in a world that reduces persons to objects and then makes them feel inferior. In this world, light-skinned women can feel superior to dark ones, married women to whores, and so on. Pecola, thus, is so far outside the centre of the system-excluded from reality by race, gender, class, age, and personal history-that she goes mad, fantasizing that her eyes have turned blue and so fitted her for the world. But not all outsiders go mad or otherwise surrender.

The characters in *The Bluest Eye* are lonesome in themselves because of the terrible consequences of blacks' internalizing the value of the white culture that both directly and indirectly reject them. Pecola, the protagonist of the novel, aspires for the bluest eyes which she considers as one of the characteristics of white people. She tries to internalize the values of a white culture which brings terrible consequence – melancholy.

Pecola's mother, Pauline Breedlove, constitutes the white norm of 1940s cultural citizenship that the novel critiques. She has largely assimilated into white society, assuming it's wispy, middle-class trappings: lace doilies, a large Bible in the front room, the making of soufflés in the Home Economics Department—hygiene-cum-sterility of houses and persons .Her values, habits, and possessions signal a cultural membership that her race undercuts. By rejecting the beauty of her daughter after delivery, Pauline proves herself as the blind follower of the supremacy of the dominant race. She rejects her baby simply because she does not possess the color of the dominant race. In spite of being as a black woman Pauline internalizes the value and the culture of the white. That's why; she cannot overcome the situation and suffers from the melancholy.

Cholly, the father of Pecola, is not an exception that he can not deny the fact that he has internalized the values and the customs of the superior white class. His

indifference attitude towards his home, family and even himself slowly drives him to the state of being melancholy. His regular habit of being intoxicated and the regular quarrel with his wife not only fragment the family but also lead each family member into the vicious-circle and melancholy. A powerful incident, Cholly's first sexual experience with Darlene, gives insight into the rage, confusion and tenderness he feels towards women in his adult life. The narrator describes the incident with Darlene and the white men through Cholly's eyes. The reader understands the initial excitement of young sexual energy, and the later humiliation of being caught by the cruel white men. Cholly directs his anger towards Darlene rather than towards the white men so that he can not cope with the white men and succumbs himself with the superiority of the white class.

Toni Morrison was a precocious reader as a child. Working out of her memory of what Lorain, Ohio, had been like in 1940(flourishing time of Harlem Renaissance), she reconstructed her own childhood placed in center stages are three little girls: the book's narrator. Claudia Macteer.⁹;her sister Frieda,¹⁰; and their friend Pecola Breedlove ,¹¹.In centering the story on an ordinary girl who is taught by her colorist culture that she is ugly, Toni Morrison portrays the cruel ground which forecloses Pecola's longing to be loved. The passage from the school primer which opens *The Bluest Eye* represents the all white world of children's books which the novel challenges. The little MacTeer sisters, who tell Pecola's story, raise their voices in defense of what is black.

The novel proceeds with the acceptance and the rejection of the so called white superior culture. Those characters who can overcome with the fact that they are blacks but not less than the white are not melancholic. For example Claudia (the narrator)'s ability to survive intact and to consolidate an identity derives from her

vigorous opposition to the colorist attitudes of her community. She fights to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals. It marks contrast to Pecola Breedlove's surrender to western values; Claudia refuses to be tamed into conventional behavior and smashes the Shirley Temple doll that is imposed on her at Christmas. Because of this, Claudia does not succumb on the white superiority .On the other hand, Pecola who regards herself as an inferior and she internalizes the white values and colors which she does not possess and eventually suffers from the melancholy.

After the publication, the novel received a wide range of acclamations. Toni Morrison's novels have attracted both popular and critical attention for their inventive blend of realism and fantasy, upspring social analysis and passionate philosophical concerns. Cynthia A. Davis says:

The constant censorship of and intrusion on black life from the surrounding society is emphasized not by specific events so much as by a consistent pattern of misnaming. Power for Morrison is largely the power to name, to define reality and perception [...].*The Bluest Eye* [1970], for example, opens with a primer description of a typical American family: " Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, father, Dick, and Jane live in the green and white house". Portions of that description reappear as chapter headings for the story of black lives; all removed in various degrees form the text book reality. (324)

The combination of social observation with broadening and allusive commentary gives her fictions the symbolic quality of myth, and in fact the search for a myth adequate to experience is one of Morrison's central themes. Because her world and

characters are inescapably involved with problems of perception, definition, and meaning, they direct attention to Morrison's own ordering view and its implications.

Morrison's early works explore the results for black women when the values are real and powerful but are designed primarily for middle class whites. This concept certainly appears importantly in *Song of Solomon*, but that book also explores what happens to women whose values are determined by the men who control their lives. From the outset, these values are known by some of Morrison's female characters to be useless, even damaging, to them. Claudia, the narrator of *The Bluest Eye*, for instance, recognizes her position. In this regard Jane S. Bakerman examines how female characters fail in Morrison's first three novels when they try to acquire beauty and love. In their search for love as for valid sexual encounter to be worthy in the society, female characters in Morrison's novels never meet their desire. Bakerman opines that the author in the novel joins her basic theme with the initiation motif and initiation experiences. Bakerman further states:

The Bluest Eye employs two frames; the outer frame demonstrates the elementary school reader standards for family behavior and beauty. The inner frame is the family life of the MacTeer; the younger MacTeer daughter, Claudia, tells us the story of her friend, Pecola Breedlove, and in doing so describes her own stable family as a point of comparison and contrast. (543)

Pecola seems to have been growing up knowing that the Breedloves were damaged people, undervalued by both whites and blacks. She wishes to emerge not only from the isolation of childhood, but also from the isolation of the family stigma: They are poor, and they are ugly. In *The Bluest Eye*, we can find female characters searching for love, for valid sexual encounters, and, above all, for a sense that they are worthy.

Morrison's first four books, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Tar Baby* constitute Morrison's struggle with colonization, both for her characters and their communities, as well as in her own writing. We can see this pattern in the dialogical way in which Morrison frames her early novels: *The Bluest Eye* is framed with a deconstructive dialogue with the Dick and Jane children's book; *Sula* with the Bible and *Song of Solomon* with the American capitalist success myth. To scrutinize this issue of colonialism, Malin Walther Pereira further states:

One of the many thematic concerns that can be clarified by a periodization of Morrison's work based on her struggle with colonization is her treatment of beauty throughout her work. In the novels before *Tar Baby* Morrison repeatedly depicts black female characters engulfed by white ideals of beauty. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's desire for blue eyes reflects a community by white ideas of what is beautiful. (74)

During the Black Arts Movement, writers delineated the impact of the cultural colonization of the black community by Euro-American culture and values and actively pursued a black aesthetic. Using a decolonization framework for periodizing Morrison's work, thus, embraces both her recurring concerns as well as the literary origins during the Black Arts Period.

A universal characteristic of Morrison's published novels has been her depiction of male and female protagonists failing or succeeding on the difficult journey to freedom through self-awareness. In this regard, Patrice Cormier-Hamilton states:

Morrison's steadfast concentration on the importance of the past indicates that for her, self-realization for African Americans can only

be achieved through an active acknowledgement of one's cultural past. Only by understanding and accepting the past can African Americans achieve a psychological wholeness in the present and strengthen their power as a race in the future. (111)

Morrison's protagonists face a world that is more complex, oppressive, and destructive. These protagonists must battle against intra-racism and inter-racism as well as poverty and sexism. Her works do exhibit naturalistic tendencies and she presents them in a new way, illustrating different challenges specific to minorities and offering alternate ways of dealing with these challenges.

Thomas H. Fick studies *The Bluest Eye* as primarily represented by T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Plato's "Allegory of the cave" in Book 7th of *The Republic*. These two important moments in Western culture provide specific thematic and structural elements in the novel; in a larger sense they suggest Morrison's belief in the close relationship between intellectual traditions and particular economic and social conditions. So he states; "*The Bluest Eye* is framed by the narrator's brooding recollection of a *Wasteland*, and the seasons which title the major sections-'Autumn', 'Winter', 'Spring', and 'Summer'-mark off a parody of rebirth and growth"(10).

In the thin light of spring, Pecola Breedlove is raped by her drunken father (a cruel sort of breeding indeed), and in summer, pregnant, she goes mad in the winter after the equivalent of Eliot's M^{me} Sosstris works a phony spell to give her blue eyes.

Likewise, Cat Moses studies *The Bluest Eye* as the genesis of Morrison's effort to do what the music did for blacks, what we used to be able to do with each other in private and in that civilization that existed underneath the white civilization. She states:

The catharsis and the transmission of cultural knowledge and values that have always been central to the blues form the thematic and rhetorical underpinnings of *The Bluest Eye*. The narrative's structure follows a pattern common to traditional blues lyrics: a movement from an initial emphasis on loss to a concluding suggestion of resolution of grief through motion. (623)

In this way, *The Bluest Eye* contains an abundance of cultural wisdom. The blue lyrics that punctuate the narrative at critical points suggest a system of folk knowledge and values that is crucial to a young black woman's survival in the 1930s and '40s and which supports Claudia's cathartic role as storyteller.

L.E. Sissman acknowledges that Morrison has taken the subject matter generally rejected by the writers and treated characters to whom no ultimate glory is possible. Sissman remarks, "Morrison writes affectingly and often in the freshest, simplest and most striking prose, of young Frieda and Claudia MacTeer and their friend Pecola, who is growing Lorain in 1941"(4). The same critic further adds that Morrison gives us a fresh, close look at the lives of terror and decorum of those Negroes who want to get on in a white *Uncle Toms* (4-5). Despite all these believable striking facts of Morrison's writing, Sissman also does not find the story flawless:

The Bluest Eye is not flawless; Miss Morrison's touching and disturbing picture of the doomed youth of her race is marred by an occasional error of fact of judgement. She places the story in a frame of the bland white words of a conventional school reader –surely an unnecessary and unsubtle irony. (5)

Roberta Rubenstein studies Morrison's first four novels in the light of cultural discrepancy with reference to the characters' psyche, gender, and cultural

dehumanization. The personality of each character is split because of the terrible result of racism and cultural oppression. In the domination of black culture by the whites, each character observes her/his own stature through the white spectacles. They feel that they lack something to secure the place for a happy and luxurious life in the society. The same critic employs, "The recurrent imagery of deformity and mutilation visually represents the injurious effects of oppression and marginalization, whether resulting from gender, ethnic minority identity, economic circumstances, or their cumulative consequences" (141).

Allen Alexander studies the novel as the religious references, both from Western and African sources, abound in Toni Morrison's fiction, but nowhere are they more intriguing or perplexing than in *The Bluest Eye*:

In Morrison's fictional world, God's characteristics are not limited to those represented by the traditional Western notion of the Trinity: Father, son and Holy Ghost. Instead, God possesses a fourth face, one that is an explanation for all those things—the existence of evil, the suffering of the innocent and just—that seem so inexplicable in the face of a religious tradition that preaches the omnipotence of a benevolent God in *The Bluest Eye*. (293)

Though Morrison's model of God owes much to African tradition, a major part of her portrait is dedicated to exposing how traditional Western notions about God affect her characters. If *The Bluest Eye* can in any way be characterized as an initiation story, then a major portion of a character's initiation involves discovering the inadequacy of Western theological models of those who have been marginalized by the dominant white culture.

Among the critics who have studied the novel thematically in association to cultural context Barbara Christina is worth quoting. Pecola's story is not only her own but also a representation of past three hundred-year's context. The author makes Pecola's story relevant to history that encompasses the interface between black and white cultures. In *The Bluest Eye*, the story presents tragic complexities of a desire of Pecola for blue eyes that symbolize beauty and therefore goodness and happiness. It is the conflict between the distinct norms of two cultures:

This simple theme, the desire of a black girl for blue eyes is a real and symbolic statement about the conflict between the good and the beautiful of two cultures and how it affects the psyche of the people within those cultures. The theme is the base of the conflict of artistic and social values between the Anglo-American and Afro-American cultures, complicated by the psycho political dominance of one culture over another. As such, this novel is a book about mythic, political and cultural mutilation as much as it is a book about race and self-hatred.

(60)

To provide an introductory outline to this research paper, it can be said that all the chapters try to concentrate on the hypothesis of proving characters psychological and communal disintegration, and individual separation in this text. This present research work has been divided into four chapters. First chapter presents outline of present research study itself. It gives the bird's eye view of the entire thesis. The second chapter deals with racism, intra-racial conflict, absurdity which have been used in this research study. On the basis of theoretical modality explained in chapter second, the third chapter will analyze the text at a considerable length. This part shows the body structure of core of this research. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of the entire

thesis. On the basis of the analysis of the text done in chapter three, it concludes the explanation and arguments put forward in the preceding chapters and shows about the racism in America, intra-racial conflict, the absurdity, racial hatred, racial melancholy.

II. Racism in America

Racism is the belief that a particular race is superior or inferior to another, that a person's social and moral traits are predetermined by his or her inborn biological characteristics. Racial separatism is the belief, most of the time based on racism that different races should remain segregated and apart from each another.

Racism has existed throughout human history. It may be defined as the hatred of one person towards another or the belief that a person is less than a human because of his/her skin color, language, customs, place of birth or any factor that supposedly reveals the basic nature of that person. It has influenced wars, slavery, the formation of nations, and legal codes. During the past a thousand of years, racism on the part of western powers toward non-westerns has had a far more significant impact on history than any other form of racism (such as racism among western groups or among Easterners, such as Asians, Africans, and others). The most notorious example of such racism by the West has been slavery, particularly the enslavement of Africans in the New World. This enslavement was accomplished because of the racist belief that Black Africans were less fully human than white Europeans and their descendants. Talking about the impact of racism on mankind, Brace says, " Race has been a cause of more misunderstanding and human suffering than anything else that can be associated with a single word in a language" (116).

In the Old Testament people's distinctiveness is established not in appearance and custom but in relationship to God. The descendants of Jacob, Abraham's grandson, became the people of Israel who take the name of Israel and the people are his descendants. Thus, the distinctiveness is defined by God not in terms of appearance and custom. God is a sole power who divides and names a people. There is a little hint that early Jewish writers developed any theories about the relative

importance of biological and the cultural inheritances by which God made those people distinct. This theocentric notion rarely applies in understanding "new racism".

Ancient Greeks and Hebrews distinguished themselves from "other" in terms of appearance, customs, and language or theocentrism. A group of people having common epithets and some sort of association forms a distinctive human culture. In the 5th century B.C. in Greece, Hypocrites sought "to explain the (supposed) superiority of his own people of (Western Asia) by arguing that the barren soils of Greece had forced the Greeks to become tougher and more independent"(Appiah 275).In the Hellenic world in Greece both the black "Ethiopians" to the south and blonde "Scythians" to the north were viewed as inferior to the Hellens. However, Homer in the Iliad and pre-Socratic sophists in their works clarified hat the inferiority was not incorrigible. They defined racial characteristics as independent feature not as color.

America has had a long history of racism. Racism has infiltrated every aspect of American society and shows no sign of decreasing. This fact is more easily understood if racism is viewed for what it really is at its core: an institutional ideology. It is the belief that one group of people with a particular biological make up is superior to other groups with a differing biological make up. Thus, these groups deemed superior are allowed to gain economic power and social dominance over the other groups considered inferior. This condition is all the more exasperating in America because of the many strides that have been made over the past decades to combat the situation. In this context Barbara J. Fields argues:

An outcome favorable to the black and white common people is, in short, might-have-been that probably could not have been. Even so, we may well pause for a moment to consider why not. To do so is to

remind ourselves that the "race problem" took its form, not from discrete attitudes, but from the circumstances under which ordinary people had to make their choices. (145)

It is apparent that racist practices directed against black, brown, yellow, and red people have been an integral element of the U.S. history, including present day American culture and society. This means not simply that Americans have inherited racist attitudes and prejudices, but, more importantly, that institutional forms of racism are embedded in American society in both visible and invisible ways. These institutional forms exist not only in remnants of de jure job but also housing, and educational discrimination and political gerrymandering. In this regard Apfelbaum states:

One strategy practiced by many whites to regulate the appearance of prejudice during social interaction is to avoid talking about race, or even acknowledging racial difference. Whites' acknowledgement of race was highly susceptible to normative pressure and most evident among individuals concerned with self- presentational aspects of appearing biased. (928)

In the history of America, when some of the Africans were brought into America then the most devastating social practice started. In this regard Fanon argues:

In the white world, the man (sic) of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema, because superimposed upon the corporal schema is a historical- racial schema fabricated out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories. (110)

African Americans or Black Americans are citizens or residents of the United States who have origins in any of the black populations of Africa. In the United States, the

term is generally used for Americans with at least partial sub-Saharan African ancestry. Most African Americans are the descendants of captive Africans who survived the slavery era within the boundaries of the present United States, although some are voluntary immigrants from Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, South America, or elsewhere. African Americans make up the single largest racial minority in the United States. Claudia Tate states:

The first volume in a new series of black literature and culture is intended to disseminate new and revised assessments of keys in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American intellectual history. The achievement of such a sweeping agenda, by leading African-American literary scholars, no doubt will be as intellectually exciting as it will be contentious. (106)

In the beginning it is useful to explore the history of the notion 'race'. Barbara Jeanne Fields studies the race from the period of the slavery. She argues:

Race as a coherent ideology did not spring into being simultaneously with slavery. During the heyday of the cotton empires in the nineteenth century that slavery, limited the need for free citizens (white people) to exploit each other directly and thereby identifying class exploitation with racial exploitation. (143)

She says that by doing so slavery permitted and required the white majority to develop its own characteristic form of racial ideology. This is partly borne out by Higginbotham's observation. Higginbotham also notes, "It was obvious that the financial viability of southern states was primarily dependent upon slave power" (112). Likewise, Jordon notes, "Negroes became slaves, partly because there were social and economic necessities in America which called for some sort of bound,

controlled labor" (93), and Eric Williams insists, "Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was a consequence of slavery"(5).

The popular conception of a race- based slave system did not fully develop until the 1700s. During the 1770s Africans, both enslaved and free, helped rebellious English colonists secure American independence by defeating the British in the American Revolution. Africans and Englishmen fought side by side and were fully integrated. In 1863, during the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. The proclamation declared that all slaves in states who had seceded from the union were free.

No more in the post-slavery South was this evident that each slaveholding class had 'European roots' and carried 'a European inheritance into its American present', thus Social Darwinism would play a significant role in the justification of the emergence of 'Jim Crow' the segregation laws. Frankenberg says:

For the greater part of...history...arguments for the biological inferiority of people of color represented the dominant discourse...for thinking about race. Within this discourse, race was constructed as a biological category, and the assertion of white biological superiority was used to justify economic and political inequities ranging from settler colonization to slavery. (24)

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, racially discriminatory laws and racial violence aimed at African Americans began to mushroom in the United States. These discriminatory acts included racial segregation, which was legally mandated by Southern states and nationwide at the local level of government, voter suppression or disenfranchisement in the southern states, denial of economic opportunity or

resources nationwide, and private acts of violence and mass racial violence aimed at African Americans unhindered or encouraged by government authorities.

The Civil Rights Movement aimed at abolishing public and private acts of racial discrimination against African Americans between 1954 to 1968, particularly in the Southern United States. African Americans have improved their social and economic standing significantly since the Civil Rights Movement, and recent decades have witnessed the expansion of a robust, African American middle class across the United States. Nevertheless, due in part to the legacy of slavery, racism and discrimination, African Americans as a group remain at a pronounced economic, educational and social disadvantage in many areas relative to European Americans.

Superiority of one group or its cultural practice exclusively defines another as the inferior because of the presence or absence of the characteristics that the former has. This perception that one group is superior to another is a false belief. Racism as "transmitted traits are linked to social characteristics"(Gerzina 126).Discrimination or the projection of hierarchy is a practice to maintain the perceived differences in the society.

Race studies, having inherited the 19th century traits, view at its peak in the present day. It does not mean that the practice and the study were not present before. It was present even in the Classical Greek and ancient Hebrew societies but in different levels. The race was mainly practiced by the westerns to define the non-westerns in terms of color, language and the civilization. Because of this, Africans were brought in America and condemned to be the slaves which has no law and justice. The only law was the white and in front of the white people, the blacks knelt down and the most destructive and animalistic practice started in the human history with slavery.

Race and Black Literature

Black literature, also called African American literature, is the literary work created by Americans of African descent or literary work written about the African American experience. Black literature reflects the development and history of the United States through the eyes and perspectives of African Americans. The term Black literature covers a wide range of works, from slave narratives of the nineteenth century to contemporary literature. Black literature is generally traced to the late eighteenth century. Two hundred years later, the field of Black literature has evolved to the point where there is no questioning about its role in American history and culture.

Certain themes are prevalent in Black literature; the slave experience is examined in many of the best known works in this field. The novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), which was written by a white woman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, is often regarded as a landmark work in Black literature because it so profoundly affected race relations in America.

Many great works of Black literature focus on the Black experience, and depict race relations in certain times and places. For example, Mildred D. Taylor's 1930 novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, describes one tight-knit family's experience in Mississippi in the 1930s. Another major work of Black literature, published in 1937, is Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes were Watching God*, which is set in Florida at the beginning of the Twentieth century. Written in dialect, *Their Eyes were Watching God*, was controversial in its day, but was rediscovered in the 1970s and deemed a classic.

Black literature is often divided by era. These divisions serve not only to describe the periods from which the works come, but can also be used as shorthand to

describe the cultural perspectives from which the works come. The slave narratives of the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries describe the movement of Blacks from Africa to their new positions in the United States. After the Civil War, when the slaves were emancipated, begins the post-slavery era, noteworthy in literary terms for non-fiction works by W. E. B. DuBois and poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar. In the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance was the first movement in Black literature that appealed to an audience wider than the Black community of its time, and works from this period remain very popular today.

The civil rights era of the 1950s-1960s was another period of expansion for Black literature. Gwendolyn Brooks became the first Black person to win a Pulitzer Prize with her book of poems *Annie Allen*. Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison won wide acclaim for their novels, which addressed cultural and political realities, and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. composed his sermons and speeches, which are familiar to most Americans today. Novelists, playwrights, and poets of this era paved the road for the movement that would come in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, when Black literature became mainstream, material that is part of American culture at large.

Black literature did not start all of a sudden; the way for black literature was paved by the poet and novelist Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and the novelist Charles Waddell Chestnut. And in the years that immediately followed a sizeable number of Negro critics and scholars (W.E. B Dubois, Benjamin Brawley), as well as numerous minor poets (Fenton Johnson, Georgia Douglas, Alice Dunbar-Nelson), were steadily active.

Harlem Renaissance

The sudden emergence of an immense number of gifted black writers appeared to augur the inception of a Third Force on the American literary scene, and

since- by reason of its closeness to the nerve center of the country's cultural ferment and the hospitality it offered radical movements in Negro life-New York city's Harlem was for this generation of Negro intellectuals a kind of Mecca(literary place of the Blacks) toward which they gravitated in spite of not as actual residents, the movement has long been spoken of as Harlem Renaissance. Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen and Sterling Brown, Negro Americans of this century first encountered a large expression in lyric form of their ancestral memories and the strange, bitter exactions which their fated involvement in the American reality entailed. Amongst those writers, Langston Hughes had the longest productive career.

Langston Hughes stands as a literary and cultural translation of the political resistance and campaign of black consciousness leaders such as Martin Luther King to restore the rights of the black citizenry thus fulfilling the ethos of the American dream, which is celebrated universally every year around February to April. By 1924 his poetry which he had all along been working on showed the powerful influence of the blues and jazz. His poem "The Weary Blues" which best exemplifies this influence helped launch his career when it won first prize in the poetry section of the 1925 literary contest of Opportunity magazine and also won another literary prize in Crisis.

Hughes expressed his determination to write fearlessly, shamelessly and unrepentantly about low-class black life and people in spite of opposition to that. He also exercised much freedom in experimenting with blues as well as jazz.

According to Arnold Rampersad, an authority on Hughes, states:

Much of his work celebrated the beauty and dignity and Humanity of black Americans. Unlike other writers Hughes basked in the glow of the obviously high regard of his primary audience, African Americans.

His poetry, with its original jazz and blues influence and its powerful democratic commitment, is almost certainly the most influential written by any person of African descent in this century. (36)

Richard Wright came up with *Native Son*, which was a turning point as it brought forth the bleeding hearts of the Blacks. This book brings forth the story of a black man who accidentally kills the mother of his girlfriend who is white; then he asserts his identity after this murder. In this book also, the powerful theme of segregation, violation, discrimination, and the oppression of the black by the white is apparently portrayed. The theme of protest and the powerful indictment of the story of being black is not only expressed in Richard Wright's *Native Son* but also his another book *Uncle Tom's Children*, where the husband of a Negro woman who has been seduced by a white salesman.

Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* came on the scene after the publication of Richard Wright's books. Here, Ellison uses an interesting metaphor to show how Blacks are invisible in American society. It is a protest novel that howls rages and hoots against the mainstream culture and the American biased system. Through the novel, Ellison skillfully conveys the Black experience.

Another movement followed by the Harlem Renaissance was Black Arts Movements. Through the movement again the prominent and the powerful Afro-American writers expressed their rages, anger, dissatisfaction and the cruelty and the brutalization towards the Blacks by the white society. Larry Neal was the foremost and leading writer who was considered to be significant. Larry Neal states:

The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Arts is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black power concept...an art that

speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America...Black Arts Movement proposes a radical recording of the Western cultural aesthetic. It proposes a separate symbolism, mythology, critique and iconology. (75)

Black Arts Movement designates a number of African-American writers whose work was shaped by the social and political turbulence of the 1960s-the decade of massive protest against the Vietnam War, militant demands for the rights of Black that led to repeated and sometimes violent confrontations. The literary movement was associated with the Black power movement in politics, whose spokesmen oppose the proponents of integration and assimilation, and instead advocated black separatism, black pride and black solidarity. The other prominent writers who followed Larry Neal are Amiri Baraka, James Baldwin and John Oliver.

III. Racism and its Consequences in *The Bluest Eye*

Intra-racial conflict in the Breedlove's House

Color itself is not a manifestation of a person's or a group's intellectual and cultural heritage and economic status. Color of skin or hair is not like a uniform that is changeable but has become a glass that changes the reality. When reality is perceived in terms of person's appearance-color of skin, hair, bodily structure, complexions, it becomes a source for the disintegration of any society. The prejudice of color may be held by both-one who sees the other and the other who is seen. This prejudice begins with the prefatory note in *The Bluest Eye*:

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, father, Dick, and Jane live in the green and white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow- meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play. (3)

The story of Pecola Breedlove, the daughter of the black parents Cholly and Pauline, is the epitome of a racially suffered girl who prefers loneliness as she is isolated because of her complexion and has aspired for blues eyes by which she thinks she would be loved everywhere. She is not comfortable with the society she belongs to.

That's why, she is socially fragmented and has contemplated for the bluest eyes. The plight of the girl caused by the familial fragmentation and rejection is narrated by other two girls, Claudia and Frieda:

Cholly Breedlove, then, a renting black, having put his family outdoors, had catapulted himself beyond the reaches of human consideration. He had joined the animals; was, indeed, an old dog, a snake, a ratty nigger. Mrs. Breedlove was staying with the woman she worked for; the boy Sammy was with some other family; and Pecola was to stay with us. Cholly was in jail. (12)

The vivid picture of Pecola and her chaotic, fragmented house is very apparently narrated by Claudia. The family members of Pecola are not united together. The consequences of the racism in *The Bluest Eyes* are intra-racial hatred, family conflicts, loneliness, and most importantly the chaotic world of the Black people. For example, though Claudia is a black girl, she is addressing a person from the same ethnic group as a ratty nigger. She tries to conceal herself of being a black girl by showing the blackness and ugliness to other.

The Absurdity of the Breedlove's House

The location of the house is presented as an isolated and deserted house. In this regard Claudia narrates:

There is an abandoned store on the southeast corner of Broadway and thirty fifth street in Lorain, Ohio. It does not recede into its background of leaden sky, nor harmonize with the gray frame houses and black telephone poles around it. Rather, it foists itself on the eye of the passerby in a manner that is both irritating and melancholy. (24)

It is very eloquently presented that the house is irritating and melancholic. The frequently repeated word black, further, suggests the racism and sexism in the black ghetto. The frame of the house is gray, the telephone is black and never harmonizes with the neighborhood are the salient features of isolated and chaotic house which is nevertheless a symbol of melancholy.

The Breedlove family is isolated because they can not resist that they are poor and ugly .In the era of slavery, Blacks were represented as the others, secondary and delicate. Instead of confronting the actual reality, who actually they are, they just follow their masters. Cholly narrates:

The master had said, " You are ugly people". They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance." Yes, "they had said. You are right". And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it. (28)

These family members of the Breedlove, instead of believing the fact that the outer complexion has nothing to do with their actual reality, they just succumb into the reality that being ugly and black means the secondary or outcast into the society where white people are dominant. Because of this:

The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant .They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. (28)

Now their self-loathing has made their own lives more painful in which no one is in the uniformity of the familial ties. Their underlying reality, as they believe, is their

race. They think themselves as inferior to the white and slowly the intra-racial hatred begins within them. On the one hand, they can not challenge the reality and on the other hand, they are out of the clutch of their community. Cholly, the father of Pecola, dwells upon drinking. Pauline, the mother of Pecola who is a cripple, hates her own daughter Pecola because she is extremely ugly; Sammy, the son of Pauline and Cholly, flees from the house, and Pecola, the protagonist of the novel, who is eleven-year-old, yearns for the bluest eye hoping that it would make her love. The ugliness of the Breedloves is narrated as:

But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. Except for the father, Cholly, whose ugliness (the result of despair, dissipation, and violence directed toward petty things and weak people) was behavior, the rest of the family- Mrs.Breedlove, Sammy and Pecola Breedlove- wore their ugliness; put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them. (28)

So the portrait of the house further intensifies that the characters living in the Breedloves' house are living dead. Although they are living under the same roof, sharing the same kitchen, their direction is different. They lack the good communication and the harmonious familial ties. It is because:

The only living thing in the Breedloves' house was the coal stove, which lived independently of everything and everyone, its fire being out, banked or up at its own discretion, in spite of the fact that the family fed it and knew all the details of its regimen. Sprinkle, do not dump, not too much...The fire seemed to live, go down, or die according to its own schemata. (27)

It is very apparent that the only living thing in the Breedlove's house was the coal stove. What it signifies is that the coal stove itself a non-living thing living in the Breedlove's house. It is not because they are only black and the blackness is the main cause of their hardship. Living the tormenting livelihood of each member and relating the past experience into present makes the Breedloves fragment. They, instead, blame each other for being the black though they are from the black parents which lead to the family fragmentation of the family.

Pecola's Longing for Blue Eyes

The regular quarrel between Cholly and Polly does not only make Pecola lonesome but also condemns her brother Sammy to runaway from the house." To deprive her of their fights was to deprive her of all the zest and reasonableness of life". (31) Pecola is not only rejected by her parents at home but also at school, even by her classmates. The reason behind this rejection is the color she possesses. This sort of rejection from everyone is rooted deeply inside her heart. She assumes that she would not be rejected rather loved or at least accepted if she had blue eyes. She gives more importance to the color of eyes rather than to the color of skin. The following text reflects her craze for blue eyes:

It has occurred to Pecola sometimes 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...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. (46)

Pecola discovers her own ugliness when she realizes that she is terribly black. This internalization of her reality being black means rejection from her community. After that her days are gone looking in the mirror and tracing the blackness. Claudia, in this regard, narrates:

Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike. She was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk. (34)

Although there are many students in her class, she has no friends at all. She has realized the reality she is ugly which makes her separate from the same race and the same group of people. That actually creates melancholy in her life.

By being deserted from her own parents; from her classmates; and even from her teachers; Pecola, now, realizes that the reason behind this is the color which makes her separate and unloved. Facing the mirror in her front, Pecola analyzes her beauty. She compares her self with other girls of her age and finds herself being extremely ugly. So, she fantasizes of having the bluest eye which will help her to confront the reality and she will be loved. With some sympathy upon Pecola, Claudia makes wishes:

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. If she looked different, beautiful may be Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd

say," why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty-eyes". (34)

Now, Pecola's existence in her own view is possible only in the acquisition of blue eyes; they are more than food and water for her. She decides to buy Mary Jane candy not for stomach but for eyes because the wrapper has a blonde, blue-eyed child. Mr Yokobowski, a white shopkeeper, does not look at Pecola. He deliberately urges his eyes to draw back" because for him there is nothing to see" (*The Bluest Eye*, 48). She finds him indifferent to her arrival and associates it with her blackness:

But she has seen interest, disgust and even anger in grown male eyes. Yet this vacuum is not new to her. It has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distance. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So the distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes. (49)

The vacuum filled in Yokobowski's eyes is his deliberate willingness to distance himself from "a little black shaft of finger"(49). On the other hand, Pecola sees life in the picture of Mary Jane. Separated from the real- life experience in the society, Pecola identifies herself with Mary Jane candy and absorbs it thinking that she has at least associated herself with Mary Jane and her eyes. She assuages her resulting, unearned shame with "nine lovely orgasms with Mary Jane. Lovely Mary Jane for whom a candy is named" (*The Bluest Eye*, 50).

Frieda and Claudia, who are searching for whisky that Pecola may give them because her father drinks, arrive at "Lake shore park, a city park laid out with

rosebuds, fountains, bowling greens, picnic tables" (105). At the moment Claudia describes why black people dream of things they don't have:

It was empty now but sweetly expectant of clean, white, well-behaved children and parents who would play there above the lake in summer before half-running, half-stumbling down the slope to the welcoming water. Black people were not allowed in the park, and so it filled our dreams. (105)

When people are excluded from the society in terms of inferiority of color and therefore social status, they naturally make efforts to be included by having things that white people value because they can never discard their skin-color. When Pecola visits the shop of Yacobowski, she does not talk to him actively. Although she desires to have Mary Jane, she has no guts to ask for it:

"Christ. Kantcha talk?"

His fingers brush the Mary Janes.

She nods.

"Well, why'nt you say so? One? How many?" (38)

Pecola is crazy about the blue eyes that marks the extreme beauty of whiteness. On the one hand, she is fantasizing about grasping the extreme beauty and on the other hand it causes melancholy to her.

Every event that has happened in the life of Pecola is tangibly or intangibly associated with her internalized reality that she is ugly and in order to be loved she feels she must have the bluest eyes. When Pecola is sitting alone on the school playground, Louis Junior sees her and randomly takes her into his house to show the kitten. She, for the first time, sees a cat that excites her but her excitement remains no longer because the cat attacks her severely. The act of attacking by cat does not make

her worry because she feels that the cat with blue eyes is good enough to attack which reinforces her desire to have blue eyes. Such type of fascinations for the blue eyes Pecola has brought in her mind. At the same time she compares and contrasts herself with a white-skinned girl, Maureen Peal, who is loved more at school. Pecola knows:

She (Maureen Peal) enchanted the entire school. When teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners; black girls stepped aside when she wanted to use the sink in the girls' toilet, and their eyes genuflected under sliding lids. (48)

Pecola, thus, hates herself, as she compares herself with a white girl, of being a girl from the inferior class. In the same class a white –skinned girl is loved not only by her friends but also by teacher. The favorable condition of the white girl inside the classroom makes again Pecola lonely. The self-hatred of a poor, ugly, black girl, Pecola, is very vividly shown in the aforementioned indentation. .Instead of getting love and care from the classmates, Pecola gets agony, hatred and physical torture as well as mental torment. Let's see how she is tortured by school children:

Black e mo Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps nekked.

Stch ta ta stch ta ta

Stach ta ta ta tat a. (50)

This type of teasing and torturing not only from the white boys of her class but also from the black boys makes her feel melancholy. Such situation causes her to feel down-hearted and neglected. "Pecola edged around the circle crying .She had dropped her notebook, and covered her eyes with her hands"(50).When Pecola visits the house of Junior, a white-skinned boy, she kills the cat because she knows that the cat is

black like her which she hates a lot." He (cat) was black all over, deep silky black, and his eyes, pointing down toward his nose, were bluish green."(70).Pecola is ugly, untidy and unloved. She is vividly described when Geraldine, the mother of Junior, glances at her at her home in the moment when the cat is accidentally killed by Pecola:

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. She saw the safety pin holding the hem of the dress up. (71)

In this way, an innocent girl, who should have nothing to do with the outer reality of the society, is forced to tolerate the bitter reality that being black means being outcast and unloved. This kind of negligence from her own teacher, own classmates and even from her own parents makes her aspire blue eyes which she thinks will eventually change her existing situation. Pecola knows that if she had the blue eyes, the attitude of Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove towards her would change. That is to say, the love between her parents would eventually make her comfort to live in the Breedloves' family. For this reason, Pecola yearns and longs for blue eyes.

How Past Affects the Present?

The pathos of the Breedloves' lives lies in their complete alienation from each other and from the world; locked in their individual cells of consciousness, they are unable to give birth to each other, and to bring each other into the world of generative time. Cholly, the father of Pecola, is not an exception from being melancholic. His terrible experience in the past frequently haunts his present reality. He does not

express such absurdity of his life apparently but his activities towards his wife, Pauline, and his daughter, Pecola, very eloquently dramatize the fact that he can not confront the actual reality, but shows his anguish and tribulation towards his family members.

When Cholly was in the womb of his mother, his father had run away from the life of unborn baby, and later on he was left alone in the railway station by his own mother after his birth. So he is deprived of both his maternal and paternal love. Later on, he is brought up by his aunt Jimmy to whom he really treats as his own mother. His happiness of being loved from Aunt Jimmy can not last long when she dies. The life of Cholly is in the sea of sorrow where he has no one to share his joys and sorrows. When Cholly is fifteen, he is loved by a black girl, Darlene. One day when he is having his first sexual act with his girlfriend, Darlene which turns out to be the most embarrassing moment in his life where his ecstasy of heavenly pleasure becomes traumatic because of the presence of two white men. They insult him "Get on with it, nigger," said the flashlight one. "Sir?" Said Cholly, trying to find a buttonhole. "I said, get on with it. And make it good, nigger, make it good." (116)

Cholly has also understood the reality that being a black means being outcast. That's why, he has been insulted by two white men calling him the obscene word nigger. "When he was still very young, Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl" (31).

After the first bitter sexual experience with his girlfriend, Darlene, the chain of mental torture does not end. It even puts him in a vicious-circle when he hears the news of Darlene's pregnancy. By hearing the news which he can not endure, he decides to be far away from her life, as his father did with his mother. Instead of

helping the poor black girl, Cholly leaves the place forever and has decided to meet his father. "Cholly knew it was wrong to run out on a pregnant girl, and recalled with sympathy, that his father had done just that .Now he understood"(*The Bluest Eye*, 31).

Slowly and gradually, Cholly suffers from being melancholic and begins to hate himself. After the sexual intercourse with Darlene, Cholly knows, he is insulted only for his race. Because he is a poor, humble and black person. So inter racial hatred takes place in the life of Cholly which he does not expose directly. For this reason, his hatred towards those who love him is expressed as:

They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, and helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess- that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke. He was, in time, to discover that hatred of white men- but now. (118)

The self-loathing of cholly is reflected with the repetition of the words" they were white and strong"(118). By regarding those white people as superior, Cholly feels himself as inferior in race. Black people have internalized the self- made reality that they are blacks means they are inferior. So they can never challenge with white people which Cholly can not deny. Cholly hates them who have created the problematic situation, the one who bears witness to his failure, his impotence. The one whom he had not been able to protect, to spare, to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight was his first girlfriend.

Cholly compares the two worlds- the binaries between the black and the white. Chances and opportunities always favor the white. So they are prosperous and industrious. But, blacks exist within their limited ghetto which is also made by the white. He mourns:

With the confidence born of a conviction of superiority, they performed well at schools. They were industrious, orderly and energetic, hoping to prove beyond a doubt De Gobineau's hypothesis that "all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it". (133)

Pauline, the wife of Cholly is not less traumatic than him when she is also haunted by her own past and frequently she gets shelter in her past life. Pauline recalls:

When the war ended and the twins were ten years old, they too left school to work. Pauline was fifteen, still keeping house, but with less enthusiasm. Fantasies about men and love and touching were drawing her mind and hands away from her work. Changes in weather began to affect her, as did certain sights and sounds. These feelings translated themselves to her in extreme melancholy. (*The Bluest Eye*, 88)

Pauline, from the very beginning of her childhood, suffers from melancholy. At the age of fifteen, any girls can dream about men. But those dreams and fantasies are confined within her house. She dwells upon men only when she gets a little time from her household work. So, she is often melancholic. When she gets married with Cholly, she wants to come out from the melancholy to a happy conjugal life. She dreams that her melancholy will be dissolved when she is in the embrace of her husband." In the loneliness, she turned to her husband for reassurance, entertainment, for things fill the vacant places"(91).

Pauline Breedlove is the cinema's primary victim, and her story gives shape and context to Pecola's more general tragedy. As a child in Alabama, Pauline had cultivated the pleasures of ordering her small world, but she is an artist without the

means to realize her creative impulses: "She missed- without knowing what she missed- paints and crayons" (89). When her marriage to Cholly deteriorates she has little else to do but go to the movies, where she is introduced to romantic love and physical beauty- the most destructive ideas in the history of human thoughts." 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 on absorbed in full from the silver screen"(97). The notion of absolute beauty commits Pauline to think of her world as a shadow, a projection of the perfect world where "white men(take) such good care of the women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses"(97).

Polly's dreams of becoming jubilant with the knot with her husband does not move smoothly when the love fades away and the quarrel takes place in stead:

When Cholly began to quarrel about the money she wanted, she decided to go to work. Taking jobs as a day worker helped with the clothes, and even a few things for the apartment, but it did not help Cholly. He was not pleased with her purchases and began to tell her so.

Their marriage was shredded with quarrels. (*The Bluest Eye*, 92)

When love fades away and misunderstanding and quarrel take place then the relation cannot go longer. Cholly has no capacity to fulfill the desires of his wife, but he is making an object to his wife to go for the work in a white family.

When Pauline discovers that she is pregnant, the habit of Cholly becomes, to some extent, changed. He now concerns about his wife, and he drinks less. But Polly" Went to the movies instead. There in the dark her memory was refreshed, and she succumbed to her earlier dreams. Along with the ideas of romantic love, she was introduced to another thing - psychic beauty"(95).

Pauline works in a white family's house. When Pauline delivers the baby, Pecola, she hates her own baby. It is because she does not possess the standard beauty. It means Pecola is black and ugly." Knowing that it hurts white women during delivery, she assumes herself to be hurt and when she begets the child it is ugly. Head full of pretty hair but lord she was ugly"(216). Instead of knowing the reality that black parents have black child, Pauline also wants a beautiful baby like a white child. Such type of racial injustice and lack of resistance make the black family melancholic. When Pauline is free, she enjoys movie because it is the source of fantasy. Besides, being a cripple she wants to be beautiful and a perfect woman which is not less than her fantasizing.

Racial Hatred: A Major Cause of Melancholy

When whiteness stands as a hill that can never be shaken or embraced or penetrated, the arrow directed toward it returns and destroys one who has left it. But to be safe, he leaves the arrow rather to his community members who seem unable to let it back. It is not only a self-loathing and negation to attack one's own image but also a step to disintegrate one's own community and its cultural norms. Then the community divides itself in terms of light-skinned color and deep skinned color, older generation and younger generation, female and male.

The novel is dominated mainly by two families the Breedlove and the MacTeer family. Claudia MacTeer, the narrator of the story, has the resistance power against the white dominated society. Claudia is very conscious of the perversity of this position and of its roots in racist society. As a child, she says, she hated Shirley Temple," Not because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles, who was my friend, my uncle, my daddy, and who ought to have been soft-shoeing it and chuckling with me"(13). Claudia recognized the diversion of feeling from her self and

world into white values, emphasized by repeated references to white dolls, babies, and movie stars. She was fascinated by those images because they were loveable to everyone but her. She tried to dissect them, to discover or possess the magic they weaved on others, but finally she knew it was meaningless to run after the whiteness. Claudia knew, even as a child, the force of alien cultural images. She knew that white ideals denied her reality by forcing it into strange forms of appearance and experience. Her first reaction was appropriate: "She could feel only disinterested violence for what without relevance to his life, still regulated it" (*The Bluest Eye*, 15-16).

The child Claudia learns false love rather than cuts herself off from the only model of loveableness she is offered. But Claudia, the adult narrator, sees that Shirley Temple cannot really be loved or imitated because she is just a doll, and image without a self behind it. The crime of the racist society is not only the theft of black reality; it is the substitution of dead, external classifications for free self-definition. A society based entirely on the look, on the absolute reification of the other, reifies itself. If blacks are defined as slaves, whites are defined as masters; the Third is not a person at all, only an abstraction. There is finally a look with no one behind it, because the freedom to define the self is denied. The movie stars and pinup girls of the white culture are not models of selfhood. The message they carry is that human life is of no choice. To model one on them is to lose one's responsibility to create oneself in a world of others; to love them is to deny the equal freedom of others.

Unlike Pecola, Claudia challenges the hitherto belief about racism and confronts the reality-being black does not mean being outcast. That's why; she destroys all the dolls are related to the whiteness. Claudia says, "I did not know why I

destroyed those dolls. But I did know that nobody ever asked me what I wanted for Christmas"(14).

The first person narrator Claudia and her sister Frieda, who are comparatively happier than the Breedloves, are from a black family that Rosemary type, one from middle-class white family, hated to be mixed with. Rosemary Villanucci enjoys living above her father's café and eating bread and butter. The MacTeer sisters need to go "to the railroad tracks where (they) fill burlap sacks with the tiny pieces of coal lying about"(10). The association of whiteness with bread and butter and that of blackness with coal project hierarchy of whiteness and blackness in living Standards.

Claudia understands the peripheral existence of black people as "an irrevocable physical fact, defining and completing our metaphysical condition"(17). In the world in which many of the qualities deemed desirable are generated by white fantasies, the Breedloves and the MacTeers are excluded; color of their skin marks them outsiders. The blacks, being a minority in caste and class," However, move about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate (their) weakness and hand on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment"(17). Beneath the tangible differentness or exclusion are the intangible but even more powerful expectations and assumptions of the dominant white culture. Black people who are led to be outdoors become conscious of their condition. This racial marginalization and peripheral existence breed in the oppressed ones. Claudia narrates, "A hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a park, a grape arbor" to be exposed themselves in the society"(18).

Pecola Breedlove, left by her father to face an outdoor life, is under the protection of the MacTeer. The MacTeer sisters like her because they find she doesn't like to dominate them. Pecola loves blue-eyes and white skin so much that she wishes

to keep on drinking" milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup"(19). Claudia at first hates Shirley not "because it was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles" and a blue eyed yellow-haired, pink-skinned white doll as a gift at Christmas but later she realizes that she "had not yet arrived at the turning point in the development of my (her) psyche which would allow me (her) psyche which would allow me (her) to love her (Shirley)"(19).

Claudia dismembers a blue-eyed, white skinned- doll a present received at Christmas, where as "(a)dults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs-all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured"(14).Claudia does know that blue-eyes and blonde hair are admired by all but she does not possess them. The doll she receives at Christmas, the Shirley Temple mugs cannot measure her own lack of desirability. Claudia dismembers the doll's parts one by one to find out what it conceals to make it loved and admired. Her curiosity increases when people call the white girls on but not her. The dismembering of the doll is not so horrifying but "the truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulses to live white girls" (22).

Claudia, unlike Pecola, has the resistance power but she even can not deny the evil-rooted system existing in the society, where blacks are excluded from every opportunities. She says:

Nobody paid us any attention, so we paid very good attention to ourselves. Our limitations were not known to us- not then. Our only handicap was our size; people gave us orders because they were bigger and stronger. So it was with confidence, strengthened by pity and pride that we decided to change the course of event and alter a human life. (150)

Claudia mourns for herself and the people of the black community who are existing in the ghetto. These black people can not confront the reality, neither the white people nor the black pay attention into each other. What does the word "bigger and stronger" suggest by showing it to the white men? It is the inferiority complex of the blacks because they can not overcome from the self –made reality, i.e. blacks are delicate, fragile and subordinated. This binary opposition between the black and the white creates the black being oppressed and suppressed by the whites. The two races of the people into the two different worlds are not only distinct from each other but are difficult to reconcile into one to make the community as an integrated whole.

The temptations to bad faith are enormously increased, since one's own reification can be escaped in the interlocking hierarchies that allow most of us feel superior to someone. Only the very unlucky, or the truly free, are outside this system.

Pecola is so far outside the center of the system-excluded from reality by race, gender, class, age and personal history- that she goes mad; fantasizing that her eyes would have turned blue and so fitted her for the world. But not all outsiders go mad or otherwise surrender. Further, the isolation makes Pecola so unable to connect with others that they often act cruelly, out of cold detachment or fleeting impulse. Cholly rapes his daughter because he feels no "stable connection between himself and his children...he reacted them, and his reactions were based on what he felt at the moment"(127). Commenting on Cholly's act Claudia says, " 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 lover's inward eye"(163).

The main cause of the destruction and the melancholy of Pecola is the racist society where black people can not come out of it and become the victim like

Polly, Colly and the most importantly Pecola. Characters in the novel and their lives are affected by the racist society. Pecola is not only rejected by her own mother because of skin and color but she is also isolated by her friends as well as the teachers. That's why, she longs for having blue eyes thinking that blue eyes will make her become loved. She even can not go to school and she knocks the door of Soaphead Church for giving her the strength. She says:

"I can't go to school no more. And I thought may be you could help me."

"Help you how? Tell me. Don't be frightened".

"My eyes".

"What about you're your eyes?"

"I want them blue". (138)

Pecola rushes to Soaphead Church to ask for help from him. She hopes his divinely power may decorate her with the blue eyes without which she cannot go to school where black's children are totally neglected by the teachers and the white boys. Pecola fantasizes for the eyes that must be the bluest which causes the destruction in the life of Pecola. Claudia narrates:

And fantasy it was, for we were not strong, only aggressive; we were not free, merely licensed. We were not compassionate; we were polite; not good, but well behaved. We courted death in order to call ourselves brave, and hid like thieves from life. We substituted good grammar for intellect; we switched habits to simulate maturity; we rearranged lies and called it truth, seeing in the new pattern of an old idea the Revelation and the word. (163)

Hiding the reality from them and trying to mimic like the white cause melancholy and later on the self- destruction in the lives of the black people. Pecola is the epitome of such reality which is narrated by Claudia. The frequently repeated isolated words vividly intensify the racial melancholy in the life of Pecola. "Leave me alone! You better leave me alone" (*The Bluest Eye*, 159) given by Pecola further suggests the isolated, fragmented and emotionally shattered life of Pecola.

Her family, friends and community victimize Pecola throwing blackness and ugliness at her. They seem to have purged themselves from it. She is a passive center who receives all but never throws at any. Her subjective action, her prayer for blue eyes, renders her tragic failure. Her madness is an outcome of the community's self-consciousness to be at least less ugly than others and the racially divided society. Being mad, she talks with her created self- whose response almost satisfies her. She comes to believe that she has been granted the beauty that accompanies blue eyes. Her two friends talk about the reason of stopping going to school:

What did you stop for?

They made me.

Who made you?

I don't know. After that first day at school when I had my blue eyes.

Well, the next day they had Mrs. Breedlove come out. Now I don't go any more .But I don't care.

You don't care?

No I don't. They're just prejudiced, that is all.

Yes, they sure are prejudiced. Just because I got blue eyes, bluer than theirs, they're prejudiced. (197)

In the novel, characters try to uplift themselves in a better world. When they consciously make efforts to conceptualize the white norms to be acceptable in the society, they forget the norms of their own race. They rather dispatch their ugliness and blackness and throw it at those who seem to be powerless. Pecola is the one who suits for their purpose. Pecola, too, sees whiteness and white norms inevitable but she has no one under her to cast her ugliness. Her initiation turns to futility. "Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she failed her arms like a bird an external, grotesquely futile effort to flu"(204). All other members of the community, though they are black, dirty, ugly in the eyes of white people, exclude her as the whites do them, and not perceive her as "Other" while they want to be in the center. Claudia says:

All of our waste which we dumped on and which she absorbed. And all of or beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us – all who knew her- felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us; her guilt sanctified us, the pain made us glow with health...Even her waking dreams we used to silence our own nightmares. And she let us and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength. (205)

Black people negate her and make her "Other" to show themselves in the center. In the presence of her blackness and ugliness, they can be better, less ugly, less uncivilized. Some hate her to show her inferior as the whites. Those who love her love her violently or unproductively:

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 love one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lovers' inward eye.

(163)

The love from the parents of Pecola turns out to be destructive love .Pecola always addresses her mother by Mrs.Breedlove. How far the relationship is intimated is clearly shown by the formal language spoken by a daughter to her mother. Likewise, the love of her father destroys the life of an innocent daughter. Cholly loves Pecola but it is fatal:

He at any rate was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, and give something of him to her. But his touch was fatal, and the something he gave her filled the matrix of her agony with death. Love is never any better than the lover. (106)

This book caused every reader to examine the way people treat each other and ask themselves why it happens; this book led these readers to a deeper understanding of the tragedy of the cruelty that occurs in a life of extreme loneliness. Pecola's internalization of visual absence also manifests itself in her desire to disappear:

Please make me disappear. She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away...her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now. Yes, that was good. The legs all at once. It was hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, too, went away. Then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done, almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. (39)

All the people in the community are too conscious of their skin-color and consequent status in the racially divided society. Unable to acquire the cultural standards of white race, they direct their hatred to their own community members who are considered to be inferior within. The self-hatred of themselves causes melancholy in their lives. The black boys' hatred to Pecola and her mother's assertion that she is an ugly girl are in fact self-loathing. The prejudice of race not only divides people of distinct color but also causes melancholy within them. Color division and subsequent reclamation of racial beauty is not a problem of the contemporary period, it is an everlasting ill-rooted problem existing in the society. The reconciliation of the different races to make a whole is impossible due to the superiority of one race over another and the dominant to dominate and those inferiors hate themselves for being such and melancholy always exists.

IV. Conclusion

Social scientists believe that American society is evolving through an interaction between people of different colors. Though the society is multi-racial and consequently multi-cultural, the habit of projecting hierarchy of white supremacy and domination, black inferiority and submission is rampant. The lower part of social ladder is vacant for people of color especially black ones. They are viewed as unproductive and barren soil that can never contribute to America's development. The continual efforts made by the blacks to erase the prejudice that they are inferior in heart and mind are overlooked and they are always labeled with problem creating people.

In the literature there is a battle between two views: that the blacks have no presence in mainstream literature and that Afro-Americans are the power givers to the whites. Black images and personas, in fact, are responsible to grant power to the whites, who see nothing in black images as Yokobowki does with Pecola. Afro-American's claim has certainly never come from the void but from the presence of blackness. If we say well to one then we are creating the binary of bad at the same time. Rosemary is white and Maureen is cute only because the MacTeers and the Breedloves seem black and ugly.

Once the superiority of whiteness is established, it is a human instinct for black people to have the things they lack but the white possess. It is natural to believe that they lack whiteness but unconvincingly do they lack equality, freedom, and prosperity? So their efforts are always toward the possession of them not whiteness. Unable to attack the supremacist belief, they try to conceptualize and internalize the white norms. But mixing whiteness in blackness hardly succeeds and it brings about

the collapse of individual identity and communal norms. Concerning Geraldine's case, she succeeds to imitate the white norms but the result is grotesque.

Race in America has not bounded itself in biological categorization of people of color. It has transgressed the hierarchy of color and referred to other categorization such as in class, institution. Morrison says:

When the strength of a race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble...The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the western world, and we should have nothing to do with it. Physical beauty has nothing to do with our past, present or future. Its absence or presence was only important to them, that white people who used it for anything they wanted. (*Song of Solomon*, 83)

Pecola, the protagonist of the novel, can not act and perform according to her culture or race. Rather she wants to resemble the white child; she wants to be loved like a white child. Due to these feelings of inferiority complex of physical beauty which has nothing to do with the actual reality, she loses her own label and becomes crazy of having blue eyes.

If the concept of race is practiced healthily, it is a rich source of social integration and cultural development. It otherwise brings psychological splits and disintegration in the society. Morrison further states:

The assertion of racial beauty was not a reaction to the self-mocking, humorous critique of cultural, racial foibles common in all groups, but against the damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze (*The Bluest Eye*, 168).

The psychological splits and division of black people mirror their cultural situation. They are figuratively maimed and mutilated because of their failure in material gain, social status, equality and identity. Construction of the growths of the self is implicitly linked to restrictive and oppressive cultural circumstances. The Dick and Jane family, an ever present unclear family, enjoys all social standards; white men with gun who handle the power. Yokobowski, a member of middle class white family, enjoys economic boom; and Rosemary, who boasts upon her house, butter and bread are absent in black community. The dream of the MacTeers and the Breedloves families are filled with desire, for failures are filled with desire for prosperity and equality. Because of this failure, they are dehumanized, isolated and driven to the melancholy which finally paves the way for destructiveness.

Pecola's ugliness, defined visually by white standards, forces her into a position of invisibility and absence, which in turn becomes her only mode of presence. She hides herself behind the ugliness of the mainstream culture, which won't look at Pecola's desire to be perceived as a human being in order to exist at all its concentrated in her sad fantasy of obtaining blue eyes. Seeing whiteness and blue eyes everywhere, she comes to realize that life relies on them. Through them, she might see and be seen as a real person and thus acquire the self determination denied by her race and circumstances. Unable to exist into her own eyes, she exists only in the images reflected by others' eyes. In the process, she takes the position of an object, never of a subject.

Black people view their minds and souls through white lenses because of the flaws of American society. White oppression has become the hindrance to follow the proposition of the self-love and love of others. Pecola searches for love and beauty but the society at first and then even the black community became the hindrance.

Pecola, unnoticed by the external reality, is deserted by her own mother because she lacks the whiteness; The frequent quarrel between her mother and father that causes melancholy to both of them; her friends' and teachers' rejection towards her, are the reasons that drive her crazy to have blue eyes by which she thinks, she will be loved everywhere. This racist society not only creates melancholy to Pecola's life but also to Cholly and Pauline. Pecola cannot recognize her own worth but runs after the black's internalized self-made reality that being blacks means inferior. After her belief about the bluest eyes she has made an imaginary friend for the companion she has never had, as well as the devoted admirer of her blue eyes. Pecola, who couldn't figuratively see before, has remedied the problem. Now she literally sees herself in the most twisted and tragic way. Ultimately, the pressure of society and her own self-hatred drive Pecola into a state of melancholy. Pecola's melancholy is observed as a result of her self hatred of being a black/ugly girl and her fantasy of blue eyes.

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