

**Tribhuvan University**

**Protagonist's Insanity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*:**

**A Psychoanalytical Study**

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English**

**By**

**Sibu Dhakal**

**Department of English**

**Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara**

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Tribhuvan University  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of English

**Letter of Recommendation**

This is to certify that Mr. Sibhu Dhakal has prepared this thesis entitled **Protagonist's Insanity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*: A Psychoanalytical Study** under my guidance and supervision. I, therefore, forward to consider it for final evaluation, approval and acceptance.

---

Mr. Ashok Shahi  
Teaching Assistant  
Department of English  
Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **I. Toni Morrison: A Biographical Sketch**

The 1993 Nobel Literature Laureate, Toni Morrison was born as Chloe Anthony Wofford on February 18, 1931 in the small town of Lorain, Ohio, America. She was born as the second of four children of George and Ramah Willis Wofford. Her maternal grandparents had left Alabama and travelled to Ohio in search of better opportunities for their children. Her father, a Georgian by birth, had also escaped the state's hostile racial climate and settled in Ohio. Morrison grew up in the salubrious atmosphere of Lorain during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Morrison's educational background and early professional life has helped her a good deal in moulding herself into a creative writer with social and political consciousness. Her precocity was detected very early when she was in the first grade. As she grew up, literature became her favourite subject and reading her fondest pastime. She graduated with honours from Lorain High School in 1949 and attended Howard University, from which she graduated in 1953 with a major in English. She had studied Latin for four years before graduating from high school.

She changed her name to Toni. She received an M.A. from Cornell University, where she wrote a thesis on the theme of suicide in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. She then embarked on a teaching career as a member of the English faculty at Texas Southern University in Houston. She taught English there from 1955 to 1957 and at Howard University from 1957 to 1964. She was married in 1957. During this time, she joined a writer's group and wrote a story about a young black girl who wanted blue eyes. Her fascination for books, especially the classics, continued though she showed no real interest in

writing fiction at that stage. Her early story gave birth to *The Bluest Eye* (1970).

Morrison worked as a senior editor at Random House, where she went a long way in stimulating her literary consciousness. By editing some of the significant works written by Africans, she was exposed to the thoughts of those who were more conscious than she was of the nature of the plight confronting her people.

Morrison learned from Alex Haley's *Roots* the dialectical relationship between discovering one's ancestral roots and discovering one's self; from Toni Cade Bambara the concept of the 'African Spirit'; from Henry Dumas the commitment to write about African people; and from Jean Paul Sartre, the French existentialist. Thus, for Morrison a familial, educational, cultural and literary background with an ambience of historical and social consciousness, mysticism, master craftsmanship and a love of excellence and work have gone a long way in shaping and moulding her as a committed novelist. The factors have helped her become more conscious of the nature of the African's dilemma, the crisis of the African personality, the cause and effects of it, and her increasing commitment to help solve it in terms of fictional art, thereby combining her political consciousness and aesthetic sensibility.

After her divorce in 1964, Morrison found herself in a situation that women everywhere can relate to. She had no husband; she had one child and another on the way. She was jobless with no prospects for employment. So, at the age of 33, she returned to her parent's home in Ohio.

From 1967 to 1988 Morrison taught at colleges and universities including Yale, Bard, the State University of New York at Purchase and the State University of New York at Albany. Since 1988, she has held the Robert F. Goheen Professorship of the Humanities at Princeton University.

Morrison has published nine novels, each of which has enjoyed wide critical acclaim and sustained scholarly attention. Her works include *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1991), *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2003) and *A Mercy* (2008), the latest novella. She has also written short stories and a play.

## II. Morrison as a Novelist

Toni Morrison has emerged as a significant African-American writer who "has been recognized as a strident voice for the exploited black people as well as master craftsman of the dominant artistic form" (Batra 9). She belongs to a group of writers in America- Maya Angelou, Toni Cade Bambara, Paule Marshall, Alice Walker and Ghoria Naylor - for whom writing is a liberating tool, a subversive strategy and artistic mode of self-expression.

Morrison seeks to produce literature that is irrevocably and indispensably black. Like Edward Said who exposed orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient, she explores the distortion of black reality by the dominant group for its vested interests. She refutes the hierarchical order shaped by the concepts of centre and periphery and questions the ideology on which the order is based. She is engaged in the project of constructing an Afrocentric perspective and evolving an African-American poetics.

Exploring the complexity of black female experience in white America, Morrison attempts to resolve the contradiction inherent in her African-American identity. She is conscious of her own marginalization within the context of the mainstream. She is concerned with the idea of 'black community.' Signifying her place in literature Trudier Harris writes:

By any standard of literary evaluation, Toni Morrison is a phenomenon in the classic sense of once-in-a-lifetime rarity, the literary equivalent of Paul Robson, Michael Jordan, or Wayne Gretzky, Chris Evert, or Martin Navratilova, the superstar whose touch upon her profession makes us wonder if we shall ever see like her again. (qtd. in Batra 9 )

Morrison is a highly matured fictional artist. She stands as an apt comparison with novelists of other countries and climes as she plays with a variety of viewpoints, as whites and blacks, husbands and wives, parents and children etc. In Morrison's novels of black

American life, appearance and reality, the magical and the real, the comic and the tragic are continually juxtaposed. By fusing history and art, past and present, Morrison "asserts, interrogates and critiques the social, political and cultural interests of the African-Americans" (Mitchell 49). The African-American history is the history of racial discrimination.

Therefore, Morrison inevitably deals with racial issues. Her novels transport us into a world in which there are flying black men (*Song of Solomon*), blind horsemen (*Tar Baby*) and other fabulous worlds. Like Virginia Woolf's works, her novels are bracketed by war. Although from different cultures and times, both of them faced problems. Both the novelists clearly acknowledge that imagination is central to their temperament and they have used some similar narrative strategies like 'interior monologue' and 'stream-of-consciousness'.

As a novelist artistically dealing with racism and sexism as sources of oppression of black women in white America, Morrison reminds us of Anita Desai, a distinguished contemporary Indian woman novelist in English, who sensitively presents female alienation and oppression in the post-colonial Indian society.

Morrison can be compared with James Joyce and William Faulkner which seems to be rather irresistible in regard to an exhaustive, mythical exploration of place and search for the nexus of past and present. Morrison is to the black milieu of Lorain as Joyce and Faulkner are to Dublin and Oxford respectively. If Morrison has excluded Caucasians from her fiction, Joyce and Faulkner have excluded ethnic 'others' from theirs. Like Joyce's and Faulkner's, Morrison's focus on human personality and character is indisputably universal.

Morrison's artistic genius enables her to reach out to the entire world although she takes pride in her black identity. Her fictional work can never be limited to anthropological treatises and geo-political periphery. Her novels are critiques of being and as such suggest strategies for survival in a world where the individual confronts tangible, immediate threats as well as impersonal and abstract hazards. Her greatest capacity as a writer is her ability to

create a densely lyrical narrative texture that is instantly recognizable as her own and to make the particularity of the African-American experience the basis for a representation of humanity as a whole.

Morrison's language is of utmost concern. We can recontract an idea of political and artistic revolution in the language constituted in her works. Her language is the language of black and feminine discourse, semiotic and maternal, informed as much by silence as by dialogue, as much by absence as by presence. She seems to conjure her language, to invent a form of discourse that is always at once both metaphysical and metafictional. One of the freedoms she claims in her novels is to move beyond the denotation of words, to render experience and emotion as musicians do, she suggests that language ought to be a device for grappling with meaning, providing guidance, or expressing love. She reflects on the loss of oral traditions and values that her novels seek to redress. She attempts to restore the language that black people spoke to its original power.

Morrison's devoted readers are found not only in America but in every continent, representing both sexes and all colours, ages and creeds. Today, Morrison stands as a powerful figure on the international literary scene. Her place in American letters leaves her standing next to such eminent writers as Thoreau, Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, and William Faulkner. She ranks worldwide with great masters like Dostoevsky and Gabriel Garcia Marquez. She has become the symbol of African American, of human struggle against various kinds of oppression, and, above all, of global longing for liberation.

### **III. Morrison's Major Works**

Her first novel *The Bluest Eye* focuses intently on the colonizing effects of white female beauty on a black girl and her community. The emphasis, most explicitly, is on racism. She investigates the devastating effects of the beauty standards of the dominant culture on the self-image of the African female adolescent. This novel deals with the themes



like Beauty, Identity, Sex, Gender, Madness, Poverty etc. But this novel is "basically concerned with the contradictions fostered by racism, sexism and distinctions affecting the black girls in white America" (Batra 11).

This novel centers on a young black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who abnormally longs for blue eyes in order to look beautiful. She is a victim of racial prejudice and is hated in her community merely because she looks darker than other black girls. Her yearning for blue eyes becomes so abnormal that she visits the Soaphead Church, the town spiritualist, to see if he can give her the blue eyes that she has always wanted. She is convinced by the miracle of the spiritualist and talks with an imaginary friend, asking over and over if her eyes are the bluest of all. She, after being raped by her own alcoholic father, loses the grip of reality and begins to go mad. By the end of the novel, Pecola, the protagonist, delights in celebrating her happiness of attaining the beauty of blue eyes in an insane state of mind.

Her another novel *Sula* emphasizes on gender, especially individualism of the African woman. This novel exposes how poor blacks are deceived by the false promises of their white masters. The concept of gender and its relation to the race and class is very much a part of this novel. It is the intriguing story of Sula Mae Peace, an acutely sensitive and defiant woman who startles the community with her extreme emotional pulses and grows into a strange, strong and independent woman. She denies behavioral standards of all kinds and attempts to rely solely on herself.

*Song of Solomon*, which received the National Book Critics' Circle Award in 1978, does not primarily focus on the concept of woman. Nevertheless, class in relation to race and gender becomes more focal in this novel than in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. Morrison subordinates sexism to both racism and capitalism. *Tar Baby* addresses the kinds of deceptions in which human beings participate to maintain the illusions of harmony and psychological tranquility. Morrison's emphasis in the novel is on class struggle against

capitalism. Racism and sexism, although equally oppressive, are treated as by-products of capitalism. Morrison's most celebrated and widely acclaimed work *Beloved* tells the true story of Margaret Garner, a slave woman who killed her own child rather than sell her into slavery. This novel draws our attention to the psychological turmoil experienced by the fictional character Sethe in the context of slavery. The entire history of slavery in America is stretched out on a giant canvas here. Gender oppression in the novel is not a visible problem that exists between African men and women, but one that exists within the context of the economic relationship between master and slave. Based on the most oppressed period of slavery in the history of African people, *Beloved* dramatizes a haunting amalgam of the past and present experiences of an escaped female slave, Sethe, tracing the heroine's quest for meaning and wholeness in slavery and freedom.

A novel set in Harlem in 1928; *Jazz* is Morrison's most disturbing novel. It is a disturbing psychological study of a childless African-American couple desperately seeking to come to terms with their frustrations and aspirations. Their fragmented, directionless lives propel them towards the grotesque and the absurd. It clarifies the improvisation of the migration events and their consequences in black communities during 1920s. Morrison's another novel *Paradise* explores the conflict between present and past mentalities and conflict in religion.

After the publication of *Love* (2003), Morrison's similarly indelible act stands at the centre of her remarkable new novella *A Mercy*. It is a kind of prelude to *Beloved* and a variation on that earlier book's exploration of the personal costs of slavery. Set some 200 years before *Beloved*, *A Mercy* conjures up the beautiful, untamed, lawless world that was America in the 17th Century. She has rediscovered an urgent, poetic voice that enables her to move back and forth with immediacy and ease between the worlds of history and myth, ordinary daily life and the realm of fable. This novel is a heart-breaking account of lost

innocence and fractured dreams.

Toni Morrison finally comes to us as ethnic, cultural feminist celebrating the strengths of black women against the heavy odds of racism, sexism, and classism. Morrison's development of the women characters in her novels parallels the way in which most black women writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Gwendlyn Brooks and Paule Marshall combine their concern for feminism and ethnicity. Though her women characters like Mrs. Mac Teer, Eva Peace, Pilate and Ondine do not have a societal support system that pays them well or appreciates their beauty and the dual role as house maker and provider they assume in their families, they keep their vision and their energies focussed on that which is worthwhile and sustaining. Morrison's emphasis on their selflessness and their strength is not to romanticize their limited opportunity for adventure or fulfillment outside the boundaries of their own communities. Instead, it is to show the value and the difficulty of the role that they play. Morrison believes that the ability of these women is too often ridiculed in negative matriarchal jargon. Morrison exposes the damage that sexist oppression both inside and outside of the ethnic group, has had on black women.

In short, Morrison has not proclaimed herself to be a black feminist as vehemently as writers like Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, June Jordan, Gayle Jones, Barbara Smith, and Deborah McDowell. However, in her novels she goes much deeper into the very roots of racism, sexism, and classism, and in a subtle way, she exposes the ideological basis of these pernicious social evils. And, to bring them out effectively she digs out the legends, myths, folk stories and folk songs of African-Americans. Thus, Morrison's role, as ethnic, cultural feminist, has been to alleviate the prejudices and misconceptions and to seek ways to reinforce the values that racism, sexism and classism would take away from the beauty, the work and the cultural values

of black women.

#### **IV. Background of *The Bluest Eye***

Morrison began to write *The Bluest Eye* during the winter of 1967 when she was lonely, depressed and living in a place where she had no friends. It seemed for her as if the black writers were writing to the white audience explaining things about black culture. She, therefore, wanted to write a book about the black, in the language of the black. She intends to materialize her desire in *The Bluest Eye*, which she opens with 'Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941'. For white people the meaning of the above-quoted opening line is literal, but for the black it means a big lie is about to be told.

Although there had been black women writers before her, she knew very little about them as they were not being taught in the universities. She set out to write *The Bluest Eye* although she felt alone in wanting to express the world of the black people. The time when the writing took place was of great social upheaval in the lives of black people. Morrison ignored those upheavals and turned to unique situation. In the Afterword she writes, "I chose a unique situation, not a representative one" (*The Bluest Eye* 168).

After the World War I, many new opportunities were given to the growing and expanding group of African Americans living in the north. Almost 500,00 African Americans moved to the northern states between 1910 and 1920. This was the beginning of a continuing migration northward. More than 1,500,000 blacks went north in the 1930s and 2,500,00 in the 1940s. Life in the North was very hard for African Americans. Race riots, limited housing resulting in slum housing, and restricted job opportunities were only a few of the many hardships that the African American people had to face at that time. Families often had to separate; social agencies were overcrowded with people that all needed help. Crime rates increased and many other resulting problems ensued. *The Bluest Eye* takes place during this time

period.

## V. Statement of the Problem

Pecola's radical alienation begins with her mother's rejection of her at birth. Her mother, Pauline, looks at her after giving birth and finds that her hair is pretty but she is ugly. At the white Fisher's home, Pauline slaps her own daughter and takes the side of the white baby. She gets nothing more than a nickname 'Polly' and 'an ideal servant' by the white Fishers.

Pecola's longing for blue eyes is unquestionably abnormal. Pecola's love for blue eyes, Pauline's happiness at a white family's kitchen, Soaphead Church's letter to the God, Geraldine's conscious repression of funk, the black boys' hatred of Pecola, Cholly's rape of his own daughter and his belief that whiteness is power- all are abnormal thoughts and deeds. Cholly's rape of his daughter is a twisted attempt at love, distorted by violence and expressed in violence.

Pecola's desire to be perceived as a human being in order to exist at all is concentrated in her sad fantasy of obtaining blue eyes. Seeing everywhere whiteness and blue eyes, she comes to realize that life relies on them. She is never able to exist in her own eyes but exists only in the images reflected by other's eyes. Ironically in the process she takes the position of an object, not of a subject. As she is raped by her drunken father, she becomes pregnant. As her pregnancy begins to show, instead of being sympathetic, Pauline beats her and forbids her to go school. When the baby is born prematurely and dies, Pecola loses what little grip of reality she had and begins to go mad. Being desperate and confused, she visits a West Indian preacher called Soaphead Church to see if he can give her the blue eyes which she has always wanted. Soaphead tells Pecola that God will give her blue eyes, but she will be the only one who can see them. By the end of the novel, Pecola, the eleven-year-old protagonist, talks to an imaginary friend, asking over and over if her eyes are the bluest of all. Her insanity results from the fact that her desires are not fulfilled, and she is a victim of neurosis.

Pecola is so far 'outside' the centre. She is 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 the world. She becomes a scapegoat of the community. Concentrating on Pecola Cynthia Davis says, "Pecola is the epitome of the victim in a world that reduces persons to objects" (33). Pecola's insanity is discovered only by the end of the novel although she had borne some abnormalities from the beginning. Similarly, Claudia declares her madness as, "She, however, stepped over into madness, a madness which protected her from us simply because it bored us in the end" (*The Bluest Eye* 163). About Pecola's madness Shakti Batra says, "Her mental breakdown, when it comes, has only the impact of reportage" (42).

None of her desires are fulfilled. This has created a big problem. She does not live in reality, instead, she delights in living in fantasy. To achieve the unattainable beauty, she keeps her nose to the grindstone and finally meets a tragic end. What makes her long for the blue eyes is an important issue at hand. Her desire for the blue eyes can not be the mere outcome of her love for beauty. Her mind was a *tabula rasa* when she was born. But, as soon as her mother rejected her, her psyche got corrupted. Society's standard of beauty at that time was white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. But Pecola did not meet the standard. She was ugly. Slowly, she began to realize this and began wishing for beautiful eyes so as to look as beautiful as the white girls with blue eyes. Each night before going to bed she would fervently pray for blue eyes. "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" (*The Bluest Eye* 35).

She thought that only if she had those beautiful, blue eyes she would no longer be thought of as 'ugly' or 'dirty', but rather as 'pretty' and 'beautiful'. This can not be the only cause of her insanity. The idea of beauty can not turn someone's life upside down, and in the end lead them to madness. Pecola grows sexual curiosity and desire as well right from the

beginning of puberty. On the night of first menstruation, Pecola spoke to Frieda:

"Is it true that I can have a baby now?"

"Sure", said Frieda drowsily. "Sure you can."

"But ... how?" Her voice was hollow with wonder.

"Oh," said Frieda, "somebody has to love you."

"Oh." (*The Bluest Eye* 23)

Pecola's sexual desire was repressed. It was not pacified by the incestual act of her brutal father, rather, it was intensified, overwhelmed.

Why does Pecola behave the way she does? Is she a victim of neurosis since her sexual as well as other desires are not fulfilled? What are the causes of her insanity? Is her insanity the sociocultural construct? Does she possess genetic abnormality? These queries need to be analyzed and solved. Apart from the beauty standards, Pecola's psyche needs to be explored and analyzed vis-a-vis her external world, which is the key concern of this dissertation. In order to study and analyze Pecola's insanity, it is necessary to study the opinions given by the major critics for getting broad ideas, authentic support and reliable criticism. Therefore, opinions of various critics have been accumulated and analyzed in the following chapter.



## Chapter Two

### Review of Literature

Since its publication in 1970, *The Bluest Eye* has elicited many criticisms for and against. Different critics have attempted different possibilities of interpretations of this novel right from the beginning to the recent time. They have professed many aspects of study. Various themes have been explored including decolonized self, meaning of female beauty, plurality of beauty ideals, treatment of beauty, obsession with beauty, lack of cultural rootedness, life-affirming values, humanity, objectification of women, commodity culture, Afro-American culture, traditional rituals, search for identity, social norms, madness, racial prejudice, abject poverty, assertion of sexuality, racism, sexism, class struggle, etc.

Early reviews of *The Bluest Eye* were favourable, if subdued. Morrison, in an afterword to the 1994 edition of the novel, expresses her dissatisfaction with the reception the novel initially received "with very few exceptions, the initial publication of *The Bluest Eye* was like Pecola's life: dismissed, trivialized, misread" (172). And it has taken twenty-five years for her to gain respect for this publication.

Critical attention to *The Bluest Eye* was slow in coming. The subsequent publication of her novels *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1973) and *Tar Baby* (1981) increased dramatically the volume of studies on Morrison's work. Certainly, after her selection as a Pulitzer Prize winner following the publication of *Beloved* in 1987, critics turned their gazes back to her earlier novels, looking for origin of themes and controlling images that found expression in Morrison's later works. In an early critique of *The Bluest Eye*, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi concentrates on the structure of the novel, noting the 'triadic patterns', patterns that appear in threes that are present in the work. Further, this critic examines the scapegoating in the novel, ranging from Geraldine's cat to Bob, the dog, and finally to Pecola herself. More recently, Terry Otten in his book *The Crime of Innocence in the Fiction of Toni*

*Morrison (1989)* argues that the theme of *The Bluest Eye* is 'failed innocence'. He also believes that Morrison depicts how American Society has substituted beauty for virtue. Likewise, Denise Heinze in *The Dilemma of "Double-Consciousness": Toni Morrison's Novels* examines the ideas of beauty and ugliness in *The Bluest Eye*. She argues that the African-American community in the novel has internalized "the insidious and lethal standard of westernized beauty" (35) symbolized by blue eyes.

Toni Morrison herself offers the readers insight to her book in the afterword included in the 1994 edition of *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison writes:

*The Bluest Eye* was my effort to say something about that; to say something about why she had not, or possibly ever would have, the experience of what she possessed and also why she prayed for so radical an alteration. 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. (176)

Morrison's 'she' is the very black girl whom she had met in the elementary school who had strong wish to have blue eyes. Morrison later realized that "beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could do" (167). The reclamation of racial beauty in the 1960s stirred these thoughts in the author and made her think about the necessity for the claim. She began the story in 1962 and in 1965 it assumed a book form. Morrison says she has tried to write "against the damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze" (168). Thus, *The Blues Eye* seems to be the elaboration of a true story of an innocent black girl who has been victimized in the black community of white America.

Morrison's America is a terribly genderized, sexualized and wholly racialized America. This may be the reason why Morrison was of the belief that the primary function of black history and art should be the reinterpretation, reevaluation and rediscovery of black life and experiences as lived by black people. As an African American writer, Morrison had with her a language with and through which she could powerfully evoke signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony and dismissive 'othering' of people. *The Bluest Eye* centers on a young black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who goes mad because of the combined weight of her unfulfilled desires and the experience of being raped by her father. The blues aesthetic is the major concern of Morrison in the text. Regarding the blues aesthetic and beauty standard, Shakti Batra writes, "*The Bluest Eye* asserts that 'physical beauty' and romantic love are probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. As Morrison interrogates a master narrative of beauty, her blues aesthetic lends structure, style, and form to the interrogation" (34).

Reading Morrison's works Barbara Christian gives her opinions as:

Toni Morrison's works are fantastic earthy realism. Deeply rooted in history and mythology, her work resonates with mixture of pleasure and pain, wonder and horror. Primal in their essence, her characters come at you with the force and beauty of gushing water, seemingly fantastic but as basic as the earth they stand on. They erupt, out of the world, sometimes gently, often with force and terror. (59)

Thinking on the 'blue eyes' as a symbol, Barbara Christian clarifies that such kind of symbol only affects the psyche of the people within those cultures and says, "The theme is at the base of the conflict of artistic and societal values between the Anglo-American and Afro-American cultures, complicated by the psycho-political dominance of one culture over another..."(60).

Commenting on Morrison's use of Jane Primer as a prefatory material to *The Bluest Eye*, Raymond Heiden in "The Structuring of Emotion in Black American Fiction" says, "... but the family presented in the subsequent pages of the novel is the very antithesis of the standardized, ideal (white) American family of the primer. The reader is informed, in fact, of the Breedloves' overwhelming unhappiness and self-hatred" (qtd. in Awkward 178).

*The Bluest Eye* is an epitome of beauty standard measured by American society. In this regard, Awkward further quotes Heiden, "The reader learns, in short, of the Breedloves' psychological and physical "Unattractiveness", of the family's utter failure to conform to the standards by which the beauty and happiness of the primer family (and, by extension, American families in general) are measured" (178).

Phyllis Klotman, in "Dick-and-Jane and Shirley Temple Sensibility in *The Bluest Eye*" expresses his views of the specific reference of each version of the primer. He writes, "The first (version) is clearly that of the alien white world.... The second is the lifestyle of the two black MacTeer children Claudia and Frieda, shaped by poor but loving parents trying desperately to survive.... The Breedloves' lives... are like the third—the distorted run-on-version of "Dick and Jane" (123).

Alexander Allen discusses on Morrison's use of references and allusions to God in *The Bluest Eye*. He opines:

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*. And of the many fascinating religious references in this novel, the most complex and perhaps, therefore, the richest—are her representations of and allusions to God. (75)

Allen further says that in Morrison's fictional world, God's characteristics are not limited to those represented by the traditional 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" (79).

Susan Willis in "Eruptions of Funk: Historicizing Toni Morrison" says, "Throughout Morrison's writing, the white world is equated with the bourgeois class—its ideology and life-style" (309). Willis further states:

The ultimate horror of bourgeois society against which Morrison writes and the end result of both alienation and repression is reification. None of the Morrison's black characters actually accedes to the upper reaches of bourgeois reification, but there are some who come close. They are saved only because they remain marginal to the bourgeois class and are imperfectly assimilated to bourgeois values. (135)

Michael Awkward's study of *The Bluest Eye* centers on the idea of double-consciousness proposed by Du Bois. According to Michael Awkward, "The one feature that distinguishes Pecola (and her family) from other Afro-Americans in the novel is the authenticity of her adoption of western standards" (188). Pecola never learns of the potential benefits of masking and self-division. Awkward further says, "In a white-dominated America, she represents a perfect target of scorn for the blacks who are armed with this knowledge. These Afro-Americans, infact, use Pecola as ritual object in their ceremonies designed to exhibit to the master their "rejection of the master" (189).

*The Bluest Eye*, then, seems to be concentrated on the factors which provoke Pecola's victimization in her own community. As we move through the "Seasonally cyclical, inverted world that is represented in Morrison's text, we see Pecola travel through various socio-economic sectors of the community and be abused by each in turn" (189). Michael Awkward further states:

Only by understanding the specific provocations for the sacrifice of Pecola

Breedlove can we comprehend the role of masking and double consciousness in the tragedy of the novel. Such an understanding will enable us to grasp the reasons that Morrison presents the (divided) Afro-American psyche as unhealed in the text's narrative events. (189)

Keith E. Byerman in "Beyond Realism" makes a profound evaluation on Morrison's fiction and finds that her fiction is much closer to that of the traditionalists. Byerman argues, "... Morrison shows the exploitative nature of logocentric orders. She dramatizes the destructive power implicit in the control of various symbolic systems" (100). Byerman further proclaims:

Her novels are quest tales in which key characters search for the hidden sign capable of giving them strength and/or identity. In a significant twist, those who find what they seek become the most thoroughly victimized, while those who are turned in their searches toward some other goal... are most often triumph. (100)

Byerman says that Pecola may be the central character in *The Bluest Eye* but she is not the only one victim in the novel. The others "We" individually and collectively are both victimizer and the victim, and "While the roles vary with each character, it is also the case that the role of victimizer results from that characters' own victimization by large society" (101). Observing the difficult situation of the black characters in *The Bluest Eye*, Byerman further views as:

*The Bluest Eye*, then is about the difficulty of achieving individuality and full humanity in an objectifying and manipulative society. To refuse that state of tension and negation is to accept self-hatred, illusion, and even madness. In this novel, the best that can be accomplished is an intimation of what a fully human condition might be. (106)

Roberta Rubenstein studies Morrison's novels in the light of cultural discrepancy with reference to the characters' psyche, gender, and cultural dehumanization. Rubenstein says, "Morrison's characters experience themselves as wounded or imprisoned, not only by virtue of their gender, but additionally by racial and economic divisions within American culture" (126).

Morrison's fiction demonstrates a central interest in the issue of boundary, attachment, separation that Rubenstein expresses as, "The boundaries that circumscribe black people of both genders are not only the prejudices and restrictions that bar their entry into the mainstream but the psychological ones they internalize as they develop in a social structure that historically has excluded them" (126).

Rubenstein further discusses Morrison's recurring use of images and motifs in her fiction. Morrison uses symbols and motifs like:

Parent-child and peer relationships, often exaggerated in the form of emotionally blurred or distorted ego and body boundaries, as in symbolic and even incestuous attachments. Another central cluster of image expresses figurative and literal maiming or mutilation. In turn, each of these images has a communal dimension, implying the divisions and splits within individuals that mirror their cultural situation. Thus, constriction of the growth of the self is implicitly linked to restrictive or oppressed cultural circumstances. (127)

Barbara Regney in "Hagar's Mirror: Self and Identity in Morrison's Fiction" views that choosing one's own name in certain tragic cases represents a rejection of race and culture. Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* provides, "yet another example of Morrison's concern with the significance of naming" (60). On the name of Pauline Breedlove as 'Polly' nick named by the whites, Regney comments:

'Mrs Breedlove' even to her husband and children, she is 'Polly' to the white

family for whom she works, and the diminutive name is totally appropriate in this case, for Pauline has diminished herself through her obsequious dedication to whiteness just as surely as little Pecola is diminished by her desire for blue eyes. (60-61)

Regney further expresses that nick names are appropriate in Morrison's novel, "... denoting truths about character, revealing secrets, determining how a person is viewed by a particular community" (61).

Dickerson in "The Naked Father in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*" analyzes the 'doubled' identity of fathers characterized as at once both 'familiar' and 'unknowable' to their daughters, focussing on the way Cholly's familiarity with Pecola causes not only his daughter's demise but also his own.

Laurie Vickroy in her article "The Politics of Abuse: The Traumatized Child in Toni Morrison and Marguerite Duras" writes:

Pecola's desire for blue eyes becomes obsessive after her rape, and her conviction that she has been given them by Soaphead Church indicates a complete psychic disintegration. Her own negative reflection in others' eyes has been the continual source of her pain, and her main wish is that her reflection be desirable. The extent of Pecola's obsession and pathology at this stage is presented through hallucinations, through her resistance to blinking, and her delusional view that others envy her gift. (87)

Vickroy focusses on the insanity of the child protagonist of the novel and opines that her madness is brought on by the victimization. She further writes, "The madness brought on by the victimization of the child protagonist frightens others. The people of her town avoid Pecola and exacerbate her separateness by removing her from school because of her uncanny, staring eyes" (163).



Pecola is victimized by the people of her society. She is avoided by all. Regarding the victimization of Pecola and the people's indifference to her, Vickroy comments, "Neither her family nor community can offer Pecola support—the latter are embarrassed or revolted by her incestuous pregnancy and madness. They blame the 'dog' Cholly, but cannot offer her comfort because her situation is an extreme of their own unacknowledged powerlessness" (168).

Though not specifically addressing trauma, many critics of Morrison's work, in particular Cynthia A. Davis, analyze how oppression is represented in the form of "psychic violence," i.e., the destructiveness of a white racist society which is not always physically brutal, but destroys by engaging in "the systematic denial of the reality of black lives" (323). Roberto Rubenstein also sees Morrison's work as illustrating that the "constriction of the growth of the self is implicitly linked to restrictive or oppressive cultural circumstances" (126). Thus, after studying and analyzing various views and criticisms, it is necessary to apply a suitable theoretical tool for further research. Therefore, the suitable theoretical tool with its selected sub-topics has been mentioned in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Theoretical Background**

#### **I. Psychoanalysis: An Introduction**

As defined by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis is a system of psychology directed towards the understanding, cure and prevention of mental disorders. In this sense it is a dynamic system of psychology that sees the sorts of human behaviour in unconscious motivation and conflict. Freud says, "There are two tenets of psychoanalysis which offend the whole world and excite its resentment, the one conflicts with intellectual, the other with moral and aesthetic prejudices" (Freud 16). The displeasing proposition of his theory is this "mental processes are essentially unconscious and that those which are conscious are merely isolated acts and parts of the whole psychic entity" (Freud 16). We are habitual to identify mental with the conscious only but Freudian definition of mind is that it comprises the process of nature of feeling, thinking and wishing; in this sense there are unconscious thinking and wishing. Freud's account of mind and personality follows a tripartite scheme that in the case of mind involves three levels of consciousness respectively the unconscious or subconscious, the conscious and the super conscious. The unconscious, the seat of the libido and of repressed memories is considered to be the most important level of mind because personality is considered to have developed out of primitive, Id or the original animalistic aspect of the self characteristic of the infant. Therefore, Id is the base for both ego and superego.

Freud provided convincing evidence through his many recorded case studies that most of our actions are motivated by psychological forces over which we have very limited control. Freud points at the importance of unconscious because whatever may be a conscious thought for a moment turns soon to become latent. In this sense Freud defines two kinds of unconscious:

One which is transformed into conscious material easily and under conditions which frequently arise, and another in the case of which such a transformation is difficult, can only come about with a considerable expenditure of energy, or may never occur at all... we call the unconscious which is only latent, and so can easily become conscious, the "preconscious", and keep the name "unconscious" for the others. (101)

Therefore, most of the individuals' mental processes are unconscious is Freud's first major premise. The second is that all human behaviour is directed ultimately by sexuality. For Freud prime psychic force is libido or the sexual energy. The strongest premise that is not always acceptable is that because of the powerful social taboos attached to certain sexual impulses, many of our desires and recollections are repressed. Hence Id is the reservoir of libido which is oriented to satisfy the unconscious desire, impulses or pleasure principle.

Because of Id's dangerous potentialities it is necessary that other psychic agencies should protect the individual and the society. This is ego, a rational governing agent of psyche. If Id is solely governed by 'pleasure principle', ego is governed by the 'reality principle'. So it is the mediator between the 'inner self' and 'outer world'.

The third regulating agent is superego which is moral censoring agency that works only for moral and social relation of the self. But ego and superego possess very small part of the topographic mind, while Id is quite vast. Overactive superego creates an unconscious sense of guilt that ultimately turns to be unconscious. Each individual upon joining the community sacrifices his instinctive pleasure for the common good. But the structure built up this way is quite insecure for a long time because the sexual impulses are difficult to control. Therefore, " society can conceive of no more powerful menace to its culture than would arise from the liberation of the sexual impulses and a return of them to their original goal" (Freud 17-18). In this sense unconscious wish is destructive.

Regarding about the slips of tongue in person and slips of pen in writing one will find they are frequent phenomena. Freud argues that small traces of such slips cannot be overlooked because through the small traces the detective and investigators catch a convict. Though it is not a crime, yet it exposes the inner mind of a person and artist what he flatly denies outwardly.

Freud argues that we live under the constant pleasure of repressed thoughts that are trying to fight their way up from the unconscious. That's why we often say or do things without intending to. But that may be in indirect way, too. Freud gives several of these mechanisms. One is what he calls *Parapraxes* or the slip of tongue or of pen. In other words, we accidentally say or do things that we once tried to repress. Another of the mechanisms is to *rationalize*. This means we do not give the real reason for what we are doing either to ourselves or to other people because the real reason is unacceptable. The next term that Freud uses is *Project*. It is transferring the characters we are trying to repress in ourselves onto their people. Freud claims that our everyday life is filled with uncscious mechanism.

Freud's concept of dream is also an important element to be discussed. Frequently it is found, critics saying that manifest dream story replaces the latent thought. But the nature of relation between the two is like a relation of two different groups. The recollection of dream itself is a very minute one. It can't simply represent all latent thought. "Dream is the mind's reaction in sleep to the experience of previous day and anticipation of possibility that gives the direct undisguised fulfillment of the wish" (Freud 107). However, not all dreams are only about pleasure wish; it can have the sense of fear and censorship too. Certain very transparent phantasy-formations are "day dreams." These day dreams are literally wish fulfillment of ambition as well as erotic pleasure.

Dreams result because of lack. A man forced to starve for days dreams about dinner in his sleep. Similarly a man having a desire for achieving good marks in exam dreams about

getting success, if he dreams about failure, it is because of the extreme fear in his unconscious level of mind is weaker than hopeful ambition. So, a person lacking sexual relation dreams for it and a person who has continuous physical relation with the partner dreams for the extreme satisfaction and capturing the lacking object in him or her. Because it is impossible to capture the dream object, the desire for that wish is never fulfilled. Therefore, there is no way except to dream or daydream and partly channelize the wish through literature, slips or playing with the resembling objects of the desire. Freud doesn't say that all dreams are wish fulfillment nor does he say that a man desires to possess the object that is lacking in him. But I find each of the two sex groups lacks what is possessed by other. The dreams in grown up people are different from that of infantile ones. This is because of a change in experience and castration.

## **II. Pleasure Principle and Formation of Ego**

Infantile dream is a fulfillment of wish admitted by the dreamer and it is the disguised fulfillment of the wish. A child does not have any constraints at his infantile period. Therefore, he or she is quite happy at this stage. In this way all the perverse tendencies have their roots in childhood, that children are disposed towards them all and practise them all to a degree conforming to their immaturity. This is the pleasure principle. Hence, the perverse in grown up people is nothing else but the recurrence of infantile sexuality. Libido is analogue to hunger. It is the force by means of which the instinct or the sexual instinct achieves expression. Freud argues, "Dream is not a pathological phenomenon, every healthy person may dream while asleep" (250).

We have learnt from children's dream that the object of the dream work is to remove, by the means of the fulfillment of some wish, a mental stimulus which is disturbing sleep. What the dreamer desires does not get quenched. In the process of the dream work the content (which is painful) of the dream thought is transferred into a wish fulfillment. But

wish fulfillment is not only the concept; it must certainly give some kind of pleasure to the dreamer. Because the person is morally conscious of father's law, rejects the wish, censors them and deprives himself from pleasure. This rejection, opposite to pleasure turns to be the dream of anxiety. Anxiety is the indication where the censored and repressed wish proves too strong laying down the barrier of morality and disturbs the sleep and gets partly released. Therefore, "purpose of dream is wish fulfillment" (Freud 30).

How so often dream forming wishes prove perverse and disturbing? They are dispositions of libido and investments of object by libido belonging to early infancy and long since given up in conscious life, but which at night prove to be still present and "in certain sense capable to activity" (Freud 284). Because of moral and intellectual training, the pleasure seeking tendencies are repressed. Freud says that the task of avoiding pain becomes for them almost equal in importance to that of gaining pleasure. Then the ego learns that it must go without immediate satisfaction, hinder gratification and learn to tolerate a degree of pain and give up the certain sources of pleasure. Thus, the ego is controlled more by reality principle. Nevertheless at the bottom this also seeks pleasure although it is delayed because of its relation to superego and reality. Thus the transition from the infantile pleasure principle to the reality principle is one of the most important advances in the formation of ego and repression of unconscious.

### **III. Repression of Unconscious and Neurosis**

Repression is a topographic dynamic concept, while regression is a purely descriptive one. In the hysteria, a regression of the libido to the primary incestuous sexual objects is quite regular. But there is no or very little regression to an early stage of infantile. Hysteria is caused by the restriction imposed on that primary life. This is known as repression of the libidinal wish. At first there is libido-regression but it is known quite later than that of repression. Freud claims that "regression of libido without repression would never give rise to

a neurosis but result in perversion" (Freud 289). It can be inferred from this that people fall ill of a neurosis only when the possibility of satisfaction for the libido is removed from them they fall ill in consequence of a 'frustration'. Therefore, neurosis has its origin in a conflict between ego and sexuality. This conflict is caused because of the friction between two opposite pulls of superego and Id. According to Freudian analysis, a person falls ill of a neurosis only when the ego loses its capacity to deal in some way or other with the libido. The stronger the ego, the more easily it can control the libido, but every trace of weakness in ego must have the same effect as an increase in the demands of the libido. In other words the neurosis is subject to evolve under this pressure of libido. Hence neurotic symptoms are forced substitutes for sexual satisfaction.

#### **IV. Sex and Sexuality**

Sexual act is not that much narrower as much as it has been generally thought. In this regard, Freud says:

If you take the sexual act itself as the central point, you'll perhaps declare sexual to mean everything which is concerned with obtaining pleasurable gratification from the body of the opposite sex; in the narrowest sense, everything which is directed to the union of the genital organs and the performance of the sexual act... in doing so you may come very close to the sexual, there would be no meaning to the childbirth in terms of sex. (155)

If we exclude sexuality from the process of childbirth and kissing then we are making a mistake. If one thinks that sexual only means about reproduction then there is a risk of excluding the whole host of activities like masturbation, kissing which are not directed towards reproduction, yet they are undoubtedly sexual.

In a popular view, sexual is something which combines references to the difference between the sexes, to pleasurable excitement and gratification, to the functions oriented

towards reproduction. But in Freudian scientific analysis, this is no longer sufficient. If we hold this popular view, it will be only incorrect approach to analyze dream and sexual activities. There are perverse exercises in the parts of the people. They are those who seek pleasure in looking, touching or watching other person's most intimate doings. There are others who expose parts of their own bodies which should be concealed otherwise, in the vague hope of being rewarded by similar action on the parts of others. What can we say to these activities? Are they sexual or asexual? To mark them as "signs of degeneration" would not answer the question. Even though these are perverse activities they have a purpose of sexual satisfaction. But Mailer holds a view that these kinds of perverse sexual needs are degenerative and follies in a culture. Homosexuality is also under the broad concept of sexuality but Mailer condemns it. Freud doesn't have to tell anything except that he categorizes all perversion under "dark night aspect of life" Despite this interpretation, these symptoms are within human beings; Freud has only interpreted about them whether good or bad. It is personal opinion that counts while using Freudian tool to observe a text, culture and the fictive characters who are generally typical human begins representing their socio-cultural norms or violation of the norms.

In this sense, what is called sexuality outside psychoanalysis applies only to the restricted sexual life that does not encompass all symptoms of dream and wish fulfillment. Sexuality is not given the unity between reproductive function and nonproductive acts. But while talking about psyche, neurosis, repression, gratification and sex we can not exclude any bit of the whole process of sexuality which is broader than the physical relation between opposite sexes.

## **V. Dream Symbolism, Language and Unconscious**

There are processes and tendencies in mental life, of which we know nothing, have known nothing and have no idea about their association with the psyche. This gives the term



"unconscious" even a fresh meaning. According to Freud, sexual theory can be applied to the symbolic interpretation of literature and dream. According to this he interprets imagery, and symbols in terms of sexuality. There are four distinguished relations of dream and unconscious to reality:

- a- substitution of the part for the whole
- b- allusion
- c- imagery
- d- symbolism.

Symbolism is perhaps the most remarkable part of theory of dream. The symbolic relation is essentially that of comparison and finding relation between the compared items. If symbol is a comparison, Freud says, "this comparison is not exposed by the process of free association," which is also comparison, "and also that the dreamer knows nothing about it" (126).

Following Freud's example of interpretation of dreams, we are made to believe to interpret all concave images (ponds, flowers, cups, caves, hollows, pits, jars, boxes, pockets, ships, house, door, gates, mouth, apple, fruit, hair, beaches and all others that have horizontal and hollow shape) as female genital organs or body. On the other hand, all images whose length exceed their diameter (i.e. tower, mountain, peaks, snakes, knives, lances, swords, cigarette, stick all other vertical objects) are male or phallic symbols. More than these he gives the interpretation of dancing, riding and flying as the symbols of sexual pleasure.

When we follow the above mentioned symbolic interpretations of dream objects, we can analyze the literature and texts in which the characters frequently use these kinds of objects. Therefore, reference to water, falling into water or clambering out of it, saving someone or being saved by someone are the symbols relating to birth and mother child relation. Journey or travel by train, though timid allusions, are related to death symbol or excessive indulgence in libido. Dress and uniforms stand for nakedness. Sacred number three

is symbolic to the whole male genital. Long, upstanding like sticks, umbrella, poles, trees and penetrating pointed weapons which injure body like guns or pistols are symbolic to the phallus and its extension is represented by balloons and aeroplanes. For Freud, playing piano is symbolic of self-genital pleasure and all games represent self-pleasure. Being naked, smoking by ladies and swimming are representatives of wishing and having physical relation. In every text we find these kinds of symbols exploited by the artists, some of them known to the artist and others instinctive. The task of the critic is to observe all of them and give the meaning. According to Freud, art is disguised gratification of sexual pleasure. An artist is neurotic in this sense. Applying this tool we can say that the characters are neurotic and do not know about their activities but the artist gets pleasure to observe those activities and writes about which the critics present possible interpretation.

Though it is not always easy to express everything that one comes to know, they bear grave meaning. Freud has encouraged the critics to interpret because "psychoanalysis sees no occasion for concealment or indirect allusions and doesn't think it necessary to be ashamed of concerning itself with the material so important and relating to inner psyche of human mind to bring on the forefront" (Freud 129). In this respect, symbolism is inevitable factor to be analyzed. It is independent factor in dream distortion existing side by side with censorship because the moral and conscious censorship gives way to symbols.

Human mind is divided between the polar segments of conscious and unconscious. The repressed infantile desire and wishes from the vast ocean of unconscious remain forever in the depth of human psyche. This unconscious and subconscious process is helpful in producing art and literature. The conscious part of the psyche copes with the culture laws, norms and values which enable and individual to maintain his stand in the society. The unconscious part, which is constituted of repressed desires, strives, for revelation. H. Sperber, a philologist, has expressed that "sexual needs have had the largest share in the origin and

development of language" (qtd. in Freud 140). This interpretation is different than that of Marie Bonaparte who considers that the characters in Edgar Ellen Poe's stories are internalized images of the artist which is the result of past experience. She then relates those images with the author's psyche and concludes that the story is the product of Poe's repressed libidinal desires for his mother. This trend of classical psychoanalytical criticism definitely undermines the power of the text and the language that constitutes it. But Sperber is not alone to assert the power of language, in the formation of unconscious and illusory self. Jacques Lacan stands as a monument to assert the same fact as stressed by Sperber.

The traditional trend of meddling with the writer's psyche in the fictional world, in turn, diverted to the reader's psyche along with Norman Holland before it reached to Jacques Lacan. Holland's was an amendment in author-oriented criticism of Freud. He emphasized upon reader. For him, the pleasure of the text originates from reader's unconscious while reading a text. In the process of reading, the reader identifies himself with the characters who at times get pleasure and also fear. Thus, the shifting of the self for gratification permitted in reading text is the major force that appeals readers to read the text. However, Holland was not breaking away from Freud. The author centered criticism came in vogue because of traditional thinking that author is the creator of meaning.

The involvement of language to interpret the unconscious came into existence along with French philosopher and psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. He provided a new aesthetics that is uttered in the words of Sperber that "the first sounds uttered were a means of communication, and of summoning the sexual partner and that in the later development the elements of speech were used for other purpose. At first, language was used by primitive men to communicate the desire for sex" (qtd. in Freud 140). In this way a number of root words arose which had the origin in sexual desire but had all lost their proper meaning.

This is the same thing but in different way Jacques Lacan tells about the use of language. This way, "Lacan... did far more than extend Freud's theory of dreams, literature and interpretation of both. More significantly he took Freud's whole theory of psyche and added to it a crucial third term that of Language" (Smith 237).

Literature is not for drawing only one conclusion if it is mistaken for this the text is closed which can never happen. Lodge says, "We are forced to accept the notion of an incessant sliding of signified under the signifier" (87). Language can best give reference towards concepts. The self is created because of the power to control language but if it is missed it is the language that controls self.

## **VI. Quest for 'Self' and Illusion of the 'Real'**

This extract proves how helpless the human beings are at the primary stage of life. Without the help from other, a child starves to death. In order to save the child 'the other' comes into existence but the child doesn't recognize this 'other'. The child lives in the condition of 'I' *hommelette* stage. The child's experiences are jumbled. The child has no sense of 'self' and language because it is like the broken mass of egg on frying pan. The 'ego' has not developed yet. However, he has entered the realm of language "even if by dint of his proper name" but is unaware of it (Lacan 82).

Man can't live alone. In this regard, Eagleton says, "One feature that distinguishes human beings from the other animals is that for evolutionary reasons we are born almost entirely helpless and are wholly reliant for our survival on the case of more mature members of the society" (152). At first he has only one relation that is to the 'other'. He is still a monochild. He is recognized by other. The individual's life is determined by his proper name which is dependent on language. The infant is not yet a developed self because of its incapacity to recognize itself, its family and other social and familial norms. With the passing of time, its incessant interaction with its mother or the mother figure, though in mute

language and its continuous vicinity with her, the child begins to regard his identity as a minor element of its mother's identity. The child is intricately associated to the mother. In Freudian term this is the 'pre-oedipal' stage but for Lacan it is 'Imaginary' stage. The child, in this stage, gets warmth and affection from the mother. The imaginary stage is a stage in which there is no clear difference between subject and object.

The cultural and linguistic order which Lacan terms 'symbolic' is waiting to the infant because it is predetermined second stage of a child. Now the child has to follow social order of illusory self. The child feels quite glad to identify him/herself in its own self. The child gets the blissful life. The child begins to identify his mother, becomes happy because he sees his self in his mother and mother in the child because both are interdependent. This is "mirror-stage" one reflecting the other. But his identification as a 'self' in mirror is illusory the child is blurred in the identification of subject-object in distinction. He is not tired of mastering over image in the self.

At this stage the child engages itself into the blissful activity, he conceptually moves in a fictional direction. "The Gestalt that he has picked up out in the mirror is both smaller and more stable than he is and is something outside him that is having an effect upon him without his understanding it" (Wright 54). In the mirror stage the mother behaves like the child. The mother-child relationship relies on the reciprocal attachment and affection. Although the attachment with the infant may not be incestuous, the infant becomes part of her being. So far the child has one identity, singular relation and singular culture of the mother. But it does not long last. The 'symbolic stage' is the hazardous situation for both the child and mother because the Father's law must be imposed which is against 'pleasure principle'. The child is to be thrown into the eternity of unconscious and castration.

The child now expects itself as a signifier and the mirror object as signified. The 'self' and 'other' for the child are unified to make a 'united self' which is never possible in reality.

Now he forms an opinion and process of mastering the process of achieving the harmony to unite 'self' with 'other'. This assumed mastery turns to be the 'ego'. Hence the 'ego' is not agent of strength but the victim of an illusion of strength. However, the child is not identified in terms of its gender, for the 'self'. Hence the 'self' is only the desired object never to be found.

The child, who is bound to follow the linguistic system and cultural code, is now not in the same blissful situation along with entrance of father's law. Father is the holder of phallus: the language and power. Now the child must differentiate between the binary opposition of symbol. The entrance into linguistic order is the beginning of the formation of complexities of the child psyche. He must encounter the linguistic and gender differences. From the unified structuralist harmony he plunges into the detached post structural anxiety. The language starts working at its own speed and the child's psyche splits into two: the conscious and unconscious. The 'self' constructed in the mirror stage now doesn't work smoothly but remains as a source of anxiety creation. He still doesn't recognize the fact that his 'self' is only the subjective experience which is quite opposite to reality. The painful life of an individual begins from this illusory 'self'.

With the knowledge of father's substitutive linguistic system, the subject becomes divided. This is the period when the child is forced to repress the imaginary gratification. The 'self' or 'ego' is bound to exist in the miserable condition throughout its life between the pressure of the repressed 'Imaginary' and the 'symbolic language' of cultural order. " 'I' am never where 'I' think, I stand at the axis of signifier and signified, a split being, never able to give my position a full presence" (Selden 86). The child knows the difference between gender but this knowledge is also illusory because what he thinks he knows, it is not.

In Lacanian model 'phallus' stands for the privileged in the system of language which helps all 'signifiers' achieve unity with their 'signifieds'. The father possesses the phallus and

is powerful. Mother lacks this, so is inferior. But both of them presuppose male fear 'castration' because they have the male organ and the females are already deprived of it. Though female castration is predetermined in symbolic order of the society, male has a constant fear of losing it. Therefore, both are anxious. Lacanian 'phallus' is watchful agent, similar to Freud's 'Superego'. It is the representative of the outer world which is supposed to be ordered and regular. It is watchful not to let 'Id' or 'Imaginary' come out to threaten cultural and moral norms. The 'Symbolic' for Lacan denotes power of 'phallus' which is sexually neutral and symptomatic of 'the Real' that is unattainable language of either 'Imaginary' or 'Symbolic'.

The power of phallus lies in the promise of language. It promises 'the real' that is impossible to acquire. The phallogocentric language lacks the power to fulfill the promise to enable the individual in capturing the 'real'. So it threatens the individual with castration if the person denies to follow the order of language. This forces a man to follow the culture of language and play the same game of illusion. Female has no option except to follow what phallus directs. In her infancy, the desire for mother's body, for Freud, is a kind of homosexuality i.e. lesbianism and the son's desire is incestuous one. Father, for Lacan, is the representative of linguistic-order of the society. Female language is equivalent to the child's language that it experiences in the 'Imaginary stage'. Since imaginary stage in itself is illusion, there is no real stage to come in life.

Then what is the relation of this illusion to literature? Literature is a combination of all kinds of texts. A single text must follow a system of language. The language with primitive people was used for summoning the opposite sex for physical relation. But the illusory self and the phallus have distorted its original function of language. Therefore, language has been just a code which does not mean exactly the thing the speaker intends. In this sense Lacan argues that every play of word is a 'slip' which means something else. People

and the characters in a text communicate through this language which does not possess its original meaning but assumed new code. As different characters have different feelings inside, they use language to mean what they want to say. But the opponent takes the meaning of the language for granted and plays back the same sign without understanding that the desired object is inaccessible. But because of illusory 'self' or 'ego' the desired object is never what one thinks other desires. The desired object is primordial lost object. It is the desire that invests the signifier with meaning, but it is only subjectively felt, not mutually acknowledged. The conscious is desire which one means while speaking but not recognized. In this sense Lacan sees the unconscious structured like language, and all texts as the structure of unconscious.

In this respect Freud and Lacan can be brought together to interpret the text. The unconscious which is repressed because of ego and superego in Freudian term is not satisfied because it never gets what it wants. Similarly, Lacan argues that language itself is illusory and the formation of unconscious is done by language. Therefore, there is no union with the 'real'. The 'real' is beyond grasp like satisfaction is beyond human access. Hence characters in a text are neurotic and it is this unconscious will or illusion that shapes their behaviour that is to be studied while interpreting a text.



## Chapter Four

### Textual Analysis

#### I. Pecola's Childhood, Her Family and Formation of Ego

Pecola Breedlove is the daughter of Cholly Breedlove and Pauline Williams. She has got an elder brother named Sammy. The Breedloves family has moved from the rural South to urban Lorain, Ohio, and the displacement, in addition to grinding work conditions and poverty, contributes to the family's dysfunctioning. She is compelled to live under the nurture of Cholly Breedlove who is driven to alcoholism, brutality and incest by a life of appalling oppression and dislocation; and Pauline Williams who is driven back into her bitter and hard-bitten self by Cholly's rage and by the unbearable misery of her life. Cholly happens to be a renting black. He is therefore 'beyond the reaches of human consideration. He is a 'ratty nigger', 'an old dog' who is presently in part. Pauline is staying with the woman she works for. Sammy is with some other family.

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)

One day Pecola comes to live with Claudia and Frieda in the steel making Cleveland suburb of Lorain. She has almost nothing when she comes to stay with them. "She came with nothing. No little paper bag with the other dress, or a nightgown, or two pair of whitish cotton bloomers. She just appeared with a white woman and sat down" (12).

Claudia and Frieda have fun during the days Pecola stays with them. She smiles and gracefully accepts what food gifts Frieda gives to her. Pecola abnormally likes the milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. She drinks three quarts of milk:

The "folks" my mother was referring to was Pecola. The three of us, Pecola, Frieda, and I, listened to her downstairs in the kitchen fussing about the amount of milk Pecola had drunk. We knew she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face. My mother knew that Frieda and I hated milk and assumed Pecola drank it out of greediness. It was certainly not for us to "dispute" her. We didn't initiate talk with grow-ups; we answered their questions. (16)

This is the first time she exhibits her abnormal behaviour. She drinks the milk not for the taste of milk but for the beauty of the Shirley Temple cup. She has already grown a strong desire to attain the white beauty. The hidden desire in the 'unconscious' to attain the beauty has led her to behave the way she has done. This is the revelation of her desire. On the one hand, Pecola is suffering from the unfulfillment of her desire to look beautiful; on the other hand, she is hated not only by the whites but also in her black community and more importantly her family. Her father does not love her. After being released from the jail Cholly does not come to see Pecola:

Folks just dump they children off on you and go on 'bout they business. Ain't nobody even *peeped* in here to see whether that child has a loaf of bread. Look like they would just *peep* in to see whether I had a loaf of bread to give her. But naw. That thought don't cross they mind. That old trifling Cholly been out of jail two whole days and ain't been have *yet* to see if his own child was 'live or dead. She could be *dead* for all he know. And that *mama* neither. What kind of something is that? (17)

Similarly, Pecola is a victim of abject poverty. She is not provided with basic necessities. Her family is a poor black family unable to nurture her properly. Their living condition is

miserable. Their living condition can be imagined by the description of their living quarter:

The large "store" area was partitioned into two rooms by beaverboard planks that did not reach to the ceiling. There was living room, which the family called the front room, and the bedroom, where all the living was done. In the front room were two sofas, an upright piano, and a tiny artificial Christmas tree which had been there, decorated and dust-laden, for two years. The bedroom had three beds: a narrow iron bed for Sammy, fourteen years old, another for Pecola, eleven years old, and a double bed for Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove. In the center of the bedroom, for the even distribution of heat, stood a coal stove. Trunks, chairs, a small end table, and a cardboard "wardrobe" closet were placed around the walls. The kitchen was in the back of this apartment, a separate room. There were no bath facilities. Only a toilet bowl, inaccessible to the eye, if not the ear, of the tenants. (25)

Even as a child, Pecola is a victim of whatever is around her. She feels the inexplicable shame ebb. She is mocked at. She is then filled with anger. She is expunged from human society even before she has awakened to a consciousness of self. She stands for the triple indemnity of the female Black child: children, blacks and females are devalued in American culture. The Shirley Temples of the world were adored and cherished, many sought after their beauty. Baby dolls with these blue eyes and blond hair were all the rage. However, Pecola does not meet the standard of beauty because she is ugly. Soon, she begins to realize this and begins wishing for beautiful eyes. She is no longer satisfied with herself and becomes consumed with the idea of beauty and what it means to be beautiful.

Many people look down on Pecola, treat her differently. Long hours she sits looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of her ugliness, the ugliness that makes her ignored or despised at school by teachers and classmates alike:

A group of boys was circling and holding at bay a victim, Pecola Breedlove. Bay Boy, Woodrow Cain, Buddy Wilson, Junice Bug-like a necklace of semiprecious stones they surrounded her. Heady with the smell of their own musk, thrilled by the easy power of a majority, they gaily harassed her.

"Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo..." (50)

She is the only member of her class who sits alone at a double desk. The first letter of her last name forces her to sit in the front of the room always. But others share the desk with their friends.

Her parents frequently fight each other. These outbursts greatly upset her and she often wishes she could disappear when they occur. If she looked beautiful, probably they would be different to her. Cholly drinks and makes a mess in the family. Pauline spends all her energy on her employer's home and children and leaving her own home a cruel, bleak and ugly place. They never express their love for her. She is led to further isolation by the harsh reality that no one encourages or loves her. All of the supports that a young child needs are not there. Her family does not support her, her teachers abhor her, classmates ridicule her and the people in the town ignore her. She has no one to turn to. Her adult role models are three uncouth, prostitutes that are looked down upon by all the women in the town. Although these women, Miss Marie, Miss Poland, and Miss China provide her with some entertainment and enjoyment in her rather depressing, mundane life, they do not advise her or listen to her troubles or problems. The only kindness she finds is the offhand acceptance from the three prostitutes, who are themselves outcasts.

Pecola's only real friends are the other two main characters Frieda and Claudia Macteer. However, they are relatively powerless in helping her and her situation. All they can do is pray for her and hope that everything will turn out alright. One day in the playground

they stick up for Pecola and save her from the touting boys:

"Leave her 'lone, or I'm gone tell everybody what you did!"

Woodrow did not answer; he just walled his eyes.

Bay Boy piped up, "Go on, gal. Ain't nobody bothering you."

"You shut up, Bullet Head. " I had found my tongue.

"Who you callin Bullet Head ?"

"I'm calling you Bullet Head, Bullet Head."

Frieda took Pecola's hand. "Come on."

"You want a fat lip?" Bay Boy drew back his fist at me.

"Yeah. Gimme one of yours."

"You gone get one." (51)

Claudia picks up Pecola's notebook and Frieda's coat, and the four of them leave the playground. That is the extent to which they can save and help Pecola.

Pecola is broken, fragmented, isolated and deserted in her childhood. She is not only hated but also terrified by her drunken and brutal father. All these circumstances lead her to mental breakdown.

Pecola's father Cholly Breedlove has a weird biographical background. He was abandoned by his mother when he was four, and his father was unknown to him:

When Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad. His Great Aunt Jimmy, who had seen her niece carrying a bundle out of the back door, rescued him. She beat his mother with a razor strap and wouldn't let her near the baby after that. Aunt Jimmy raised Cholly herself, but took delight sometimes in telling him of how she had saved him. He gathered from her that his mother wasn't right in the head. But he never had a chance to find out,

because she ran away shortly after the razor strap, and no one had heard of her since. (103).

Cholly was left by his parents without a name. It was Aunt Jimmy who gave a name and identity to him. She named him after her dead brother. She tells Cholly:

"What for? He wasn't nowhere around when you was born. Your mama didn't name you nothing. The nine days wasn't up before she threw you on the junk heap. When I got you I named you myself on the ninth day. You named after my died brother. Charles Breedlove. A good name. Ain't no Samson never come to no good end." (104)

When Cholly was fourteen, Aunt Jimmy died of a peach cobbler. So, he was greatly grieved at the death.

On the other hand, Pauline Breedlove was born as Pauline Williams on a ridge of red Alabama seven miles from the nearest road. When she was two, a rusty nail had pierced her foot. Complete indifference to the wound left her with "a crooked, archless foot that flopped when she walked-- not a limp that would have eventually twisted her spine, but a way of lifting the bad foot as though she were extracting it from little whirlpools that threatened to pull it under" (86). Of all the children, she had no nickname. There were no jokes or anecdotes about her. Nobody talked of her food preferences. Nobody toasted her. She did not feel at home anywhere. She liked to line up things in rows and when someone scattered her rows, she was never angry, "for it gave her a chance to rearrange them again" (87). Near the beginning of World War I, her family moved to Kentucky in search of better prospects. Some of her brothers joined the Army, one sister died, and two got married. She, the oldest girl, now took over the care of the house and minded the two younger children, a pair of twins, called Chicken and Pie who were still in school.

When the war ended, Pauline was fifteen, still keeping the house but with less

enthusiasm. She started dreaming:

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. She thought of the death of newborn things, lonely roads, and strangers who appear out of nowhere simply to hold one's hand, woods in which the sun was always setting. In church especially did these dreams grow.

(88)

After her marriage with Cholly, they came to Lorain, Ohio. Cholly found work in the steel mills right away, and she started keeping the house. Pauline wanted to dress up like other black women but when Cholly didn't have enough money to indulge her, she decided to go out to work. Their marriage was 'shredded with quarrels'. Money became the focus of all their discussions. She was not happy.

Now, she has taken on the full responsibility and recognition of breadwinner for the family by working for the Fishers.

As a child, Pecola suffers a lot. She is also the victim of homelessness. She lives with other family. She feels difficulty in communicating with them. Therefore, she speaks less freely and frankly. She is trying to escape paternal violence but in vain. She is alone in the race. She is the victim child of discriminative adult American Society. She is suffering from a complete psychological problem. Her unfulfilled desire to look beautiful and other socio-cultural constructs lead her towards neurotic insanity and finally she dies.

## II. Pecola's Desires and Unconscious

Pecola Breedlove's basic desire is to look beautiful. She wants to have blue eyes to look like other white girls of her community. She wants to disconnect herself and her blackness. She has internalized the pervasive standard of whiteness in the white dolls with blue eyes, in the movies she watches and in the light-skinned children. She wants to get emancipation from ugliness. Similarly, she wants to know the cause of her ugliness:

As long as she looked the way she did, as long as she was ugly, she would have to stay with these people. Somehow she belonged to them. 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. (34)

Pecola knows that if she had blue eyes, the schoolmates wouldn't mock at her and she would be treated differently even in her own family. Regarding this consciousness of Pecola, Claudia narrates:

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, maybe 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)

Being conscious of her unattractiveness and her colour, Pecola seems to disappear where she stands; she is unable to join Claudia and Frieda in returning insults to Maureen, or to appreciate that they are fighting for her. Children, teachers, neighbours and others have confirmed what her mother once remarked upon her at her birth: that Pecola will never be an



insider in the black community and cannot possibly hope for acceptance beyond it. All these remarks combine to reinforce Pecola's belief that the only escape for her is to become beautiful through obtaining the bluest eyes of all, the eyes that will dazzle everyone into loving her. Thus, it becomes inevitable for her to possess blue eyes. Her desire for beauty becomes so intense that she likes everything that is white and beautiful. Once, she buys the Mary Jane candy for its beautiful wrapper:

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. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane.

Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane. (38)

Pecola's belief that blue eyes will accomplish for her is just as strong as some of the folk beliefs expressed in the novel. Her prayer to God to make her disappear is predicated upon the belief that such a feat is possible. She gives poisoned meat to the old dog in the hope of getting the divine power makes a transition into fantasy. Similarly, her wish for the blue eyes ties her to all believers in fairy tales and other magical realms. It is Cinderella wanting to be transformed from char girl to belle of the ball, or Sleeping Beauty waiting a hundred years for the prince to awaken her. It is the classic tale of the ugly duckling turned beautiful swan, of the beast transformed through love and caring into the beautiful prince, of Sir Gawain's pig lady turned into a dazzling woman. Pecola seems to be doomed whatever she does. If she resorts to fantasy, she is considered crazy, if she tries to live in the real world, there is no place for her. Her desire for blue eyes ties her to many heroines of fairy tales, and many young girls who have wished for features other than the ones they have. But Pecola is unable to articulate the pain she feels or channel it through the form of the blues. Like her belief in

fantasies derived from outside the black community, her state of the blues is familiar, but she has no model for it to serve as a way of connecting her to the community rather than cutting her off from it. Nevertheless, Pecola has made friendship with three whores, namely, China, Poland, and Miss Marie. They do not hesitate to talk to her. They do not despise her if not love her. "Three whores lived in the apartment above the Breedloves' storefront. China, Poland, and Miss Marie. Pecola loved them, visited them, and ran their errands. They, in turn, did not despise her" (38).

With Pecola they are as free as they are with each other. Miss Marie tells stories for Pecola because she is a child, but the stories are breezy and rough. Miss Marie tells Pecola the story of her lover Dewey Prince that they have some children. But Pecola does not know what love is. She compares Marie's love with her parents' love:

Pecola went to the window and looked down at the empty street. A tuft of grass had forced its way up through a crack in the sidewalk, only to meet a raw October wind. She thought of Dewey Prince and how he loved Miss Marie. What did love feel like? She wondered. How do grown-ups act when they love each other? Eat fish together? Into her eyes came the picture of Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove in bed. He making sounds as though he were in pain, as though something had him by throat and wouldn't let go. Terrible as his noises were, they were not nearly as bad as the no noise at all from her mother. It was as though she was not even there. Maybe that was love.

Choking sounds and silence. (44)

This proves that Pecola has desire to be loved. Therefore, she has curiosity about love. She wants to have some good friends to share her problems with. She wants to get friendly affection and love from others. Therefore, she tries to be close with the whores.

At the beginning of the novel *The Bluest Eye*, there is a oversimplified story about

Dick and Jane. The story seems to be designed for the small children of the society to be read by heart:

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. (1)

The wealthy and cheerful white family described in this story seems to have been enjoying a luxurious life. Children, who are the most sensitive members of a society, begin to read this story at the school. After reading this story the poor and black children of the society naturally become shocked and humiliated. Pecola, too, is obsessed with 'pretty blue eyes' that Alice and Jerry have in the 'Dick and Jane' story. This desire remains in her unconscious and gets further intensified in later days.

Pecola, being a small girl of eleven and thinking herself as ugly and poor in the white society, always desires to drink the milk in a beautiful white Shirley Temple cup. The cup is so attractive to her that Claudia says, "We knew she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face" (16). The white Shirley Temple cup stands for the symbol of whiteness and beauty which makes an impact in the psyche of Pecola.

Pecola's desire for blue eyes might be an inheritance from her mother Pauline Williams. Pauline's desire is to look like Jean Harlow. Moreover, Pecola's desire stems from the beauty standard established by the white society. It is not only a Shirley Temple cup which is supposed to be the standard of beauty. At Christmas, worthy children receive a blue-eyed and white-skinned doll as a present by the adults. The adults say, "this is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it" (14). It is regarded in the society that "Adults, 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). These ideas of cultural domination and imposition have affected the psyche of Pecola.

One day, Pecola visits the Soaphead Church, the town spiritualist to request him in order to have blue eyes:

"What can I do for you, my child?"

She stood there, her hands folded across her stomach, a little protruding pot of tummy.

"Maybe. Maybe you can do it for me."

"Do what for you?"

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

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

"My eyes."

"What about your eyes?"

"I want them blue." (137-138)

He tells Pecola he can do nothing for her as he is not a magician. Then Soaphead sees the old dog Bob sleeping on the porch and his desire to get rid of it surges in his heart. He tells her that in order to have blue eyes she must serve meat mixed with poison to Bob and mark how it behaves. He tells her, "Take this food and give it to the creature sleeping on the porch.

Make sure he eats it. And mark well how he behaves. If nothing happens, you will know that God has refused you. If the animal behaves strangely, your wish will be granted on the day following this one" (139).

Pecola picks up the packet Soaphead hands over to her. "The odor of the dark, sticky meat made her want to vomit. She put a hand on her stomach." (139). She goes out and touches the dog's head, places the meat on the floor and the dog looks up at her with 'soft triangle eyes.' After eating the meat in three or four gulps, it chokes, stumbles, moves like a broken toy around the yard and dies:

He ate it in three or four gulps. The girl stroked his head again, and the dog looked up at her with soft triangle eyes. Suddenly he coughed, the cough of a phlegmy old man— and got to his feet. The girl jumped. The dog gagged, his mouth chomping the air, and promptly fell down. He tried to raise himself, could not, tried again, and half-fell down the steps. Choking, stumbling, he moved like a broken toy around the yard. The girl's mouth was open, a little petal of tongue showing. She made a wild, pointless gesture with one hand and then covered her mouth with both hands. She was trying not to vomit. The dog fell again, a spasm jerking his body. Then he was quiet. (139-140)

The extent of Pecola's yearning for beauty by obtaining blue eyes can be clarified by the above-quoted lines. She is so crazy for blue eyes that she visits the Soaphead Church and follows every steps directed by him. She does not even hesitate to feed the dog with stinging meat which almost makes her vomit. It proves that Pecola is determined to fulfill her desire at the cost of anything else.

Along with her desire for beauty, Pecola has grown sexual desire in her unconscious. Her libido begins with her curiosity about it. On the night of her first menstruation, Pecola asks to Claudia, "How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?" (23).

One Saturday afternoon, Cholly staggers home drunk and sees Pecola in the kitchen.

She is washing dishes:

Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt. Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable; next he felt the discomfort dissolve into pleasure. The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love. His revulsion was a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence. Her back hunched that way; her head to one side as though crouching from a permanent and unrelieved blow. Why did she have to look so whipped? She was a child—unburdened—why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation. He wanted to break her neck—but tenderly. (127)

It seems that Pecola is flirting to her father, Cholly. Her movement in the kitchen, the bending of body parts, the creamy toe of her bare foot—all are inviting Cholly for sexual pleasure. These activities of Pecola are happened-to-be-done unconsciously. These unconsciously-done activities of hers enhance Cholly's brutal lust:

The tenderness swelled up in him, and he sank to his knees, his eyes on the foot of his daughter. Crawling on all fours toward her, he raised his hand and caught the foot in an upward stroke. Pecola lost her balance and was about to careen to the floor. Cholly raised his other hand to her hips to save her from falling. He put his head down and nibbled at the back of her leg. His mouth trembled at the firm sweetness of the flesh. He closed his eyes, letting his fingers dig into her waist. The rigidity of her shocked body, the silence of her stunned throat, was better than Pauline's easy laughter had been. (128)

In this way, Cholly makes an attack on Pecola. But she does not resist. She does not even try to escape from the rape. She becomes silent and does not utter even a single word. She is cooperating with Cholly for the intercourse. And Cholly proceeds further:

He wanted to fuck her –tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear. His soul seemed to slip down to his guts and fly out into her, and the gigantic thrust he made –a hollow suck of air in the back of her throat. Like the rapid loss of air from a circus balloon. (128)

Now Pecola is unconscious. She is in the world of 'unconscious', not merely lack of awareness. Her 'unconscious' is allowing her to involve in this sexual act of ecstasy. But Cholly is carrying on as, "Removing himself from her was so painful to him he cut it short and snatched his genitals out of the dry harbor of her vagina. She appeared to have fainted. Cholly stood up and could see only her grayish panties, so sad and limp around her ankles" (128-129).

After sometime, Pecola regains her consciousness. She travels from the world of 'Id' to the world of 'Ego', from the world of 'unconscious' to the world of 'conscious'. When she regains her consciousness, she finds herself "lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy quilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her" (129).

Thus, Pecola's repressed and latent sexual desire gets its way out through unconscious involvement in intercourse with her father. If Pecola had resisted or tried to escape her best, Cholly could not have sexed her. So, this event does not look like a forceful rape but a natural intercourse.

### **III. Pecola's Insanity and Neurosis**

After being impregnated by her father, Pecola becomes the subject of daily gossip in the community. The MacTeer sisters, who are now selling seeds for collecting money for the survival of Pecola's future child, listen to fragments and put them together. It is "a story, a secret, terrible, awful story" of Pecola (148).

"Did you hear about that girl?"

"What ? Pregnant?"

"Yes. But guess who?"

"Who? I don't know all these little old boys."

"That's just it. Ain't no little old boy. They say it's Cholly." (148)

As her pregnancy begins to grow, instead of being sympathetic, her mother beats her and forbids her to go school. When the baby is born prematurely and dies, she loses the grip of reality and begins to go mad. Her life is then changed forever. Her insanity is clearly seen when she talks to an imaginary friend about her eyes. She is in such a neurotic state that she thinks she has got blue and beautiful eyes. In fact, there is no one she is talking to. She is talking to herself:

What? What will we talk about?

*Why, your eyes.*

Oh, yes. My eyes. My blue eyes. Let me look again.

*See how pretty they are.*

Yes. They get prettier each time I look at them.

*They are the prettiest I've ever seen.*

Really?

*Oh, yes.*

Prettier than the sky?

*Oh, yes. Much prettier than the sky.*

Prettier than Alice-and-Jerry storybook eyes?

*Oh, yes. Much prettier than Alice-and-Jerry storybook eyes.* (159)

Then Pecola comes on the street. Grown people look away. Children are frightened. Those children who are not frightened, laugh at her. Claudia narrates her insane state as:

The damage done was total. She spent her days, her tendril, sapgreen days,



walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach—could not even see—but which filled the valleys of the mind. (162)

Pecola's friends turn away from her. Even Claudia and Frieda avoid her forever. They try to see her without looking her:

We tried to see her without looking at her, and never, never went near. Not because she was absurd, or repulsive, or because we were frightened, but because we had failed her. Our flowers never grew. I was convinced that Frieda was right, that I had planted them too deeply. How could I have been so sloven? So we avoided Pecola Breedlove—forever. (162)

Pecola's brother Sammy has left the town. Cholly died in the workhouse. Mrs. Breedlove still does housework. And Pecola is somewhere in that little brown house she and her mother moved to on the edge of the town. She could be seen there once in a while before her neurotic death.

Thus, Pecola becomes a victim of neurosis and passes away in her early age. It is not only the idea of beauty that turns her life upside down and leads to madness, it is also the effect of heredity; she has inherited madness from her father and father's mother. At the same time, the victimization upon her is also one of the causes of her insanity. In short, we can enlist the causes of her insanity as: unfulfilled desires, heredity, and victimization.

Pecola Breedlove thinks that blue eyes will bring her the love she longs for and also somehow alleviate the multiple miseries of her hate-filled, quarrelsome, violent family, ironically named Breedlove. She becomes the victim of one another in a chain of black people including her own mother and father who have been twisted and perverted by the false

standards of the white world. She suffers not only as a black, but also as a female. Her desire to have blue eyes is never fulfilled. She enjoys the beauty only in fantasy. Her unfulfilled desire to look beautiful through attaining blue eyes leads her to neurosis and insanity. After being raped once by the father, the possibility of satisfaction for the libido is removed from her. So, she falls ill of neurosis. Her ego loses its capacity to deal in some way or other with the libido. Her weak ego can not control the libido. Her sexual satisfaction is substituted by neurotic symptoms. Pecola has a feeling of being black and ugly, being despised and ignored and being unloved and mocked at. She has no hope of getting someone to love her and make love with her. That is to say, she has no hope of getting someone to quench her libidinal thirst. In this way, the possibility of libidinal satisfaction is removed from her. Therefore, she falls a victim of neurosis, as Freud says, "people fall ill of neurosis only when the possibility of satisfaction for the libido is removed from them" (290).

Another cause of Pecola's insanity is heredity. She has inherited her father's and father's mother's madness. Cholly Breedlove's mother was also mad. As narrated by Claudia, Pauline knows about Cholly's mother's madness and, therefore, tries to prevent her children from being mad:

Pauline kept this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it into her storefront, or to her children. Then she bent toward respectability, and in so doing taught them fear: fear of being clumsy, fear of being like their father, fear of not being loved by God, fear of madness like Cholly's mother's. (100)

Cholly's mother's madness is not elaborated in the text. Nevertheless, her madness is known to some of the characters. Claudia narrates, "When Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad" (103). This type of merciless and insane act can be done only by insane people. She

"ran away shortly after the razor strap, and no one had heard of her since" (103). She never came back home. She might have died of madness.

On the other hand, Cholly himself is not a sane nigger. A person who rapes his own daughter can not be claimed as sane or normal human being. His abnormality lies in the fact that he liked ghost stories "about how a white man cut off his wife's head and buried her in the swamp" (104), he "never felt anything thinking about God, but just the idea of the devil excited him" (105), he "could not tell the difference between the sound and the odor" (105), he liked violent sex, he fucked naked, "engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure" (31), and many more:

Cholly was free. Dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt—fear, guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep. Free to sleep in doorways or between the white sheets of a singing woman. Free to take a job, free to leave it. He could go to jail and not feel imprisoned, for he had already seen the furtiveness in the eyes of his jailer, free to say, "No, suh," and smile, for he had already killed three white men. Free to take a woman's insults for his body had already conquered hers. Free even to knock her in the head, for he had already cradled that head in his arms. Free to be gentle when she was sick, or mop her floor, for she knew what and where his maleness was. He was free to drink himself into a silly helplessness, for he had already been a gandy dancer, done thirty days on a chain gang, and picked a woman's bullet out of the calf of his leg. He was free to live his fantasies, and free even to die, the how and the when of which held no interest for him. (125-126)

Cholly is unquestionably insane black man who rapes his own little daughter. But the degree of his insanity is less than that of Pecola. At different times, his insanity is revealed but most of the time it is concealed. His insanity is overshadowed by his drunkenness. Pecola

inherits the very insanity of her father, Cholly.

Another cause of Pecola's insanity is victimization. She is victimized not only by the white society but also by her black community. Her victimization begins from her own family. The family environment is terrible to her. She is extremely frustrated and requests for the God to make her 'disappear' as she says, "Please make me disappear" (33). The rape of Pecola is a product of Cholly's violent and destructive love.

Junior used to play with black boys because he could feel the hardness of their skin and smell wild blackness. He enjoys bullying girls. Once he tempts Pecola and succeeds in victimizing her. One day when he was idle, he saw a very black girl standing alone at the playground. He requested Pecola to go to his home in order to see the black kittens. Pecola desired inwardly to see the kittens, so she followed him reluctantly. When Pecola entered Junior's home she became surprised by seeing the well-decorated rooms. She wanted to see everything slowly and gradually. Junior suddenly called her and as she turned to him:

And he threw a big black cat right in her face. She sucked in her breath in fear and surprise and felt fur in her mouth....Junior was laughing and running around the room clutching his stomach delightedly. Pecola touched the scratched place on her face and felt tears coming. When she started toward the doorway, Junior leaped in front of her.

"You can't get out. You're my prisoner," he said.

His eyes were merry but hard. (70)

Thus, Pecola is victimized by Junior. He gives false promises and succeeds in victimizing her.

Geraldine, who desires to repress blackness and the funk to exhibit no characteristically or stereotypically Afro-American qualities such as thick lips, nappy edges, encounters Pecola whom Junior blames for killing the cat. She sees the vileness of blackness,

the varitable eruption of funk on 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.... She had seen this little girl all of her life. (71)

Geraldine hates Pecola not only because she is black but also because she represents the funk which she has tried to regress. In a violent anger, Geraldine says, "You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house" (72).

In this way, Pecola is victimized by her own black people. One of the novel's most chilling scenes, rivaled in emotional content only by the rape scene, is the one in which Pauline slaps Pecola when she accidentally overturns the blueberry cobbler. Pauline throws her out of the house, and then tenderly embraces the white Fisher child:

In one gallop she was on Pecola, and with the back of her hand knocked her to the floor. Pecola slid in the pie juice, on leg folding under her. Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me by implication.... The little girl in pink started to cry. Mrs. Breedlove turned to her. "Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it. (84-85)

Maureen knows that Pecola is black and dirty, and once in a quarrel with Pecola she says, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute!" (56). Pecola becomes a scapegoat of the community. The black community members pile up all their black and ugliness on her and they want to be released from it. Pecola, Breedlove, on whom *The Bluest*

*Eye* is centered, typifies Morrison's outsiders. Obviously, Pecola is driven mad by the fact she serves as the communal scapegoat.

Cholly is a constantly drunk and abusive man. His abusive manner is apparent towards Pauline physically and towards Pecola sexually. Finally, the rape by her father is the last evidence Pecola needs to believe completely that she is an ugly unlovable girl. While in most cases a father figure is one who little girls look to for guidance and approval. But Cholly is the exact opposite. He is the holder of phallus and hurts Pecola in a physical way that in one attempt measures up to the years of hurtful mockery. He took away from her the one thing that was utterly and completely hers. After the rape, Pecola was never even remotely the same. She is twice victimized.

Pecola is victimized even by the spiritualist, a faith healer, who gives false notion to her in order to have blue eyes. When Pecola visits him and requests him for blue eyes, "His mind raced, stumbled, and raced again" (138). He has no word to speak. Then, "His eye fell on old Bob sleeping on the porch" (138). He asks Pecola to feed the old dog with stinging meat. He makes her follow his directions. She, in the hope of getting her desire fulfilled, follows all the directions of Soaphead Church like a slave. She is victimized by him by false assurance and the wrong practice of spiritualism. She is in such a state of mind that she believes in what Soaphead says, and thinks that she has been provided with blue eyes by the God. Her insanity develops with such victimization.

Earlier in the novel, when Pecola was menstruating, Mrs. MacTeer punishes her without knowing the truth. She looked at Pecola. "You too!" she said. "Child of mine or not!" She grabbed Pecola and spun her around. The safety pin snapped open on one end of the napkin, and Mama saw it fall from under her dress. The switch hovered in the air while Mama blinked. "What the devil is going on here?" (22)

Thus Pecola becomes a victim child in the society which reduces human beings into objects.

She can not stand the victimization and, therefore, goes mad.

No doubt, the American whites are totally responsible for the victimization of the poor Pecola by creating a hierarchy of white supremacy and domination, black inferiority and submission. But at the same time, the blacks are also responsible for her victimization and madness. Her mother Pauline rejects her soon after birth. She hates her and gives physical punishment. At the white Fishers' home, Pauline slaps Pecola and takes the side of the white baby. Cholly rapes her physically, and other people rape her sentimentally. All other characters victimize her for their own purpose to be free from blackness, but it results in characters' psychological split and communal disintegration.

The unconscious which is repressed because of ego and superego in Freudian term, is not satisfied because it never gets what it wants. Pecola's desire to possess blue eyes is not fulfilled. Her quest for 'self' becomes unsuccessful and she falls in the illusion of the 'real'. The 'real' is beyond grasp, that is to say, the real blue eyes are impossible to obtain. She, therefore, is in illusion of possessing blue eyes in a neurotic state, and finally dies. At the same time, it should not be forgotten that Pecola is a victim of *schizophrenia*. She is a desiring machine whose desires multiply. But none of them are fulfilled. Therefore, she is suffering from 'split-personality'. There is another Pecola inside her. The Pecola who allows her father to rape is another personality of hers. Similarly, another personality of Pecola celebrates the false pleasure of possessing blue eyes.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

*The Bluest Eye* tells the story of a young black girl Pecola Breedlove who is convinced of her own ugliness and desires nothing more than to have blue eyes. On the first page of the novel, Morrison tells the reader in advance everything that will happen in the pages to follow. Indeed, Morrison alludes to the central event of the book in the following two sentences, "Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow" (4). Morrison places importance not so much on *what* happens as on *how* and *why* Pecola descends into inevitable madness.

Morrison gets across a very powerful idea that is found in every society today. Although this novel was written during the 1940s and most of the events that occur mirror that time period, the main idea transcends to this day and age. With a persuasive argument in mind and a poor, innocent black girl to appeal to the reader's pathos, Morrison craftily writes her story. She uses the rhetorical knowledge that arguments are often improved through the use of sensory details that make specific cases and instances come alive. Morrison's argument is how influential society can be on an individual and how strongly its ideas and views are impressed upon that individual. The ideas and views that she speaks of mostly pertain to beauty and what makes an individual beautiful. This idea of beauty can turn someone's life upside down and in the end lead them to madness. Thus, Morrison is trying to impress upon her readers what a negative effect society's ideas and views can have on an individual and how that individual's life is changed forever.

Morrison has written of desolation and decay, because this is where, as victims of our environments, we are left. It is a tragedy that the things that happened to Pecola happened. Again redressing the causal argument, society has a standard of beauty; Pecola does not meet



this standard. Her life is plagued by events which impress her ugliness upon her. She becomes the object of hatred by all of the members of her town. Her unstable family life leads to her rape which further enhances the problem. Then she becomes pregnant and begins her descent towards madness. Her life is then changed forever; she will never be the same. Throughout the book, the reader mostly sees Pecola as others see her. People see her as an ugly child and this one label is the most significant aspect of her life. Pecola also sees herself as others have seen her, and for this reason thinks of herself as being ugly. It is important for the reader to understand that this is her reality. It is the overriding factor that pushes her fantasy of blue eyes from a black girl's wish to have things white to a neurotic fantasy to make things right. Pecola ends up delivering a stillborn, probably as a result of her young age and the beatings she received after her impregnation. She ends up going crazy walking up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear.

Pecola is a traumatized child who provides not merely poignant metaphor but also concrete example of the neglect, exploitation, disempowerment and disavowal of certain communities and even entire cultures. Trauma is an event in an individual's life which is "defined by its intensity, by the subject's incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychological organization" (LaPlanche & Pontalis 465). Kai Erikson emphasizes that trauma can result "from a constellation of life's experiences as well as from a discrete event—from a prolonged exposure to danger as well as from a sudden flash of terror, from a continuing pattern of abuse as well as from a single assault, from a period of attenuation and wearing away as well as from a moment of shock" (457). Pecola is a victim of the very trauma as discussed by the above-mentioned scholar. She faces a prolonged exposure to threat, violence, ongoing abuse, and constitutes a pernicious form of trauma because the constant stress and humiliation are associated with being a person of low socio-economic status. Pecola's parents, furthermore,

are often powerless themselves, subject to the whites who employ them, victims of their poverty and the culture which invalidates them. In addition, they themselves have been physically and emotionally abandoned by their families. Cholly was rejected by both of his parents; Pauline was made an outsider because of a limp. Traumatized children themselves, they continue the trauma by denying their own weakness in their abuse of parental power, by instilling their own fears of impotence, and by calling upon their children to fulfill their own unmet needs.

The child victim created by Morrison is the embodiment of traumatic knowledge that, once understood and articulated, would reveal fearful truths about the other characters' lives. This knowledge, denied by victims and observers alike, sets individuals apart from one another, and underlines separations by skin colour, cultural affiliation, class etc. that help to maintain hierarchies of power. The 'community' depicted in *The Bluest Eye* lacks an ability to recognize itself and its own experience in the outcasts it shuns. It illustrates what Judith Herman aptly describes as the communal expedience of forgetting such truths, "Repression, dissociation and denial are phenomena of social as well as individual consciousness" (9).

Similarly, Pecola seeks comfort in words. In part she seeks understanding of what her father has done to her, but her conflicted dialogue with a split-off persona of herself also illustrates how much she has been isolated and how her pain and need to speak are ignored by her community and even her family. To characterize this self-splitting, Morrison utilizes an interchange of roman type and italics:

*Oh, come on!*

You are.

*Are what ?*

Jealous.

*O.K. So I'm jealous*

See. I told you.

*No. I told you.*

Are they really nice ?

*Yes. Very nice. ( 153 )*

Morrison tells Pecola's stories in part through an omniscient narrator and primarily through the sympathetic eyes of Claudia, who has been Pecola's friend and who realizes the harm done to her by the community, including herself in that complicity, "She seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing. Her pain antagonized me" (61). In this way, Claudia can not understand Pecola's unconscious. She relates Pecola's suffering only to the socio-cultural impositions, racial discriminations and domestic violence. Throughout her narrative we are doubly exposed to the dynamics and effects of racism. Similarly, if Claudia is an outsider in the way she experiences some of the same pain as Pecola, she is also an outsider and privileged in the sense that having been loved, she possesses the strength to have her own desires. Outsider and insider at the same time, she is sympathetically aware of the need to recognize her community's role and their own defeat in Pecola's disintegration and madness.

The character of Pecola has been dramatized to the devastation that even casual racial contempt can cause. Morrison admits:

But singular as Pecola's life was, I believe some aspects of her woundability were lodged in all young girls. In exploring the social and domestic aggression that could cause a child to literally fall apart, I mounted a series of rejections, some routine, some exceptional, some monstrous, all the while trying hard to avoid complicity in the demonization process Pecola was subjected to. That is, I did not want to dehumanize the characters who trashed Pecola and contributed to her collapse. (168)

After attempting different possibilities of interpreting Pecola's insanity, applying Freudian

theory of *psychoanalysis* as the principal tool, and making a deep textual analysis, a conclusion has been drawn that Pecola's insanity is the consequence of tripartite mechanism. In this dissertation, Pecola's insanity has been proved with some references to major critics and the text itself. The causes of her insanity have been explored and proved with textual evidences. In doing so, Pecola's psyche has been studied in relation to the outside world. Her unconscious has been analyzed vis-à-vis her ego. To conclude, the causes of her insanity are: victimization by the world she lives in, hereditary madness of her father and father's mother, and most significantly her repressed desires.

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