

Chapter I

Introduction

Toni Morrison and Her Works

In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, black women are doubly oppressed, that is, sexually and racially. The mass spread of images of femininity in American society force black women to negate them and live the life of white women. Due to this, they feel themselves invisible in white society. To overcome this suppression, Morrison gives her female characters a central and strong position and male subordinate position. She advocates for female bonding among black girls and women. Black girls and women support each other in their difficult situation. She uses female language and forms to articulate female problems and resist against oppression. She also uses blues songs which are full of folk knowledge and values that help Morrison's characters to survive in and resist against racist and sexist society. Through blues songs, blue women singers have articulated the yearning for freedom from discrimination, poverty and disenfranchisement.

Henry Louis Gates writes that Toni Morrison is one of the most formally sophisticated novelists in the history of African-American Literature. She has managed to invent her own mode of literary representation. Her themes are often those expected of naturalist fiction the burdens of history, the determining social effects of race, gender and class and of the lyrical modernism love, death, betrayal and the burden of the individual responsibility for her or his fate.

Henry Louis Gates writes that Toni Morrison was born and named Cholee, Anthony Wofford on February 18, 1931 in the poor, multiracial steel town of Lorain, Ohio. She was one of the four children of Ramah Willis Wofford, a home-maker who

sang in the church choir and of George Wofford, who held a variety of jobs, including car washer, steel mill welder, and road construction and shipyard worker.

From her parents and grandparents Morrison received a legacy of resistance to oppression and exploitation as well as an appreciation of African American folklore and cultural practices. Her maternal grandparents emigrated from Alabama to Ohio in hopes of leaving racism and poverty behind and finding greater opportunities for their children. Her father likewise left Georgia to escape the racial violence that was rampant there. Despite these struggles, Valerie Smith writes, “Morrison recalls the ubiquitousness of African American cultural rituals in her childhood and adolescence; the music, folklore, ghost stories, dreams, signs and visitations that are so vividly evoked in her fiction have been prevalent and empowering forces throughout her life”(361). The influence of these presences in her early life informs Morrison's commitment to inscribing the characteristics of black cultural expression in her prose.

After graduating with honors from Lorain High School, Morrison attended Howard University. She received B.A. degree from there in 1953 and an M.A. from Cornell University in 1955, where she completed a thesis on the theme of suicide in the work of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. She then taught English at Texas Southern University from 1955 to 1957 and at Howard from 1957 to 1964. At Howard she met and married Horald Morrison, a Jamaican architect. They had two sons. Morrison divorced her husband around the time she left Howard. In 1965 she began to work as a senior editor at Random House, where she got an opportunity to publish books of black authors such as Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones.

A year before she was appointed as an Association Professor of English at State University of New York, her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), a story based on victimization of an eleven-year-old girl, published. In *Sula* (1974) she explored the

complexities of black characters life, particularly that of black women character. The novel was nominated for National Book Award but it was *Song of Solomon* (1977), a story of Milkman Dead's unwitting search for identity, won not only the fiction Award of the National Book Critics Circle but also an American Academy Institute of Arts and Letter Award.

After the success of *Song of Solomon* in 1980 she was appointed to the National Council on the Arts by President Jimmy Carter. In 1981 her fourth novel *Tar Baby* was published which invokes the African American folktale that is told and retold in African communities and throughout American communities. Maureen Howard finds, “*Tar Baby* as a highly realistic novel, full of the actual riddles, the unanswerable question, of our present lives” (20). *Tar Baby* was on the best-seller lists for first four months. In 1988 she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and Robert F. Kennedy Award for her fifth novel *Beloved* (1987). *Beloved* was inspired by the true story of a black American slave woman, Margaret Garner. It unearths the historical reality of horrifying situation during slavery, emancipation and aftermath.

In the meantime, Morrison simultaneously continued teaching, writing and editing. From 1984, for five years she was a Schweitzer Professor of Humanities at State University of New York at Albany. In 1989 she became the Robert F. Goheen Professor of the Humanities at Princeton University. In 1992 she succeeded completing yet another novel *Jazz*. The name of the novel itself classifies the improvisation of the migration events and their consequences in black communities during 1920s. In 1993 she received the Nobel Prize for literature and became the first African American to receive this honor. Morrison then wrote another novel *Paradise* in 1998. The book moves around the idea of where Paradise is and who belongs in it. Paradises are described as male enclaves, while the interloper is women, defenceless.

Love (2003), Morrison's eighth novel is a story of a rich black man who dominates all the women around him directly or indirectly. Besides all these novels, Morrison published a play *Dreaming Emmett* (1985), based on the brutal killing of a fourteen year-old black boy, Emmett Louis Bob Till, for allegedly whistling, after a white woman. Her critical work *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination* (1992) brings black culture and Africanist persona in the center by clarifying that whiteness is impossible and immune in its absence. Blackness is "other" is a source of literary imagination even for mainstream and cultural discourse in general.

Valerie Smith explores that in each of her novels, she boldly reveals the silence and undermines the presumption, assumptions, hierarchies and oppositions upon which Western hegemonic discourse depends and which legitimate the oppression of people of color, women, and the poor. Her prose involves the lyrical and the historical, the supernatural and the ideological. She seeks to show the place of enchantment for people like the ones among whom she grew up. She explores the complex social circumstances within which they live out their lives.

Morrison's characters experiences themselves as wounded or imprisoned, not only by virtue of their gender but additionally by racial and economic divisions within American culture. 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.

A number of critics concerned themselves with the subject of female self-discovery in Morrison's fiction. Morrison gives emphasis upon the white American cultural domination of Africa American communities in *The Bluest Eye* and *Song of Solomon*. Morrison uses myth to deliver concrete situation of oppressed. Susan Blake

points out that myth and folklore can transform the acceptance of blackness as identity into the acceptance of blackness as limitation. Morrison has been frequently accused of placing limitations on her women characters and not allowing her women to fly.

Morrison's fiction originates in a zone outside of Western literary criticism, so French feminist theory needs to be employed with difference to African American cultural paradigms. Morrison's language suggests the importance of the maternal and the semiotic, the world of mother passed down to the daughters, who are repressed by the symbolic, the law of the father. Morrison's fiction includes the linguistic disorder which is truly feminine, which distinguishes Morrison from white feminist and black 'womanists' such as Alice Walker (writers who feel themselves committed to the survival of the black people, male and female). While white male power is often given short-shrift by white feminist writers, the uneasy alliance between black men and black women is a recurring subject in Morrison's fiction because of their common experience of white oppression. The abuse by black men is explained, if not excused, in Morrison's work as they have been emotionally and sexually crippled by institutionalized racialism. Morrison is more willing than many white feminist writers to acknowledge wrongdoing by women.

All of Morrison's characters exist in a world defined by its blackness and by the surrounding white society that both violates and denies it. The destructive effect of the white society can take the form of outright physical violence but oppression in Morrison's world is more often psychic violence. She rarely depicts white characters in her novels. Morrison avoids the picture of the black person 'invisible' in white life. Instead she involves the reader in the black community and shows that the white society's ignorance of that concrete, vivid and diverse world is even more striking.

Black is visible to white culture only insofar as they fit its frame of reference and serves its needs. Thus, they are consistently reduced and reified, losing their independent reality. Mrs. Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* has a nickname, 'Polly' that only white use. It reduces her dignity and identifies her as 'the ideal servant'. As Satre has pointed out, human relations revolve around the experience of 'The Look' for being seen by another. It confirms one's reality and threatens one's sense of freedom. Many of Morrison's characters try to define themselves through the eyes of other. Such characters can fall into bad faith like 'Pecola', not only by dependence on one another but also by internalising 'The Look' of the majority culture. The Look of white society, supported by all kinds of material domination, not only freezes the black individual but also classifies all black alike. Morrison makes it clear that this ontological problem is vastly complicated in the context of a society.

The position of the black woman is doubly difficult. Black women in Morrison's fictions discover that they are neither white nor male and all freedom and triumph are forbidden to them. Their female ideal is a 'white doll baby' with blonde hair and blue eyes. Even if they accept their reification, they will be inadequate, as black woman is the antithesis of American beauty. Defined as the other, made to be looked at, they can never satisfy the gaze of society. Because they are doubly defined as failures and outsiders, they are natural scapegoats for those seeking symbol of displaced emotions. There are Morrison's other characters who refuse to become images to submerge themselves in a role. The whores, in *The Bluest Eye*, are also freed by exclusion from society. Morrison has always offered mythic possibilities in her novels. She shows black women as victims. Women are displaced in her novels because of central versus peripheral perceptions.

Review of Literature

The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison's first novel was published in 1970. Critical reviews of the novel were positive, though the sales were modest by publishing standards. Several reputable newspaper and book-review journals such as *The New York Times Book Review*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The New Yorker* and *Newsweek* reviewed *The Bluest Eye* and complimented Morrison for her writing style. Other reviews praised Morrison for daring to take an honest look at American racism and its damaging effects on the mental health and spiritual development of African American children particularly girls. Morrison was one of the first writers black or white, to ask what happens to the mind, heart and soul of a young African American girl who is raised in a society that values beauty standards that are not her own. As many critics and reviewer have analyzed the book. In this section our attempt will be to provide and present different criticism and reviews which support our main idea that the situation of African American woman is doubly difficult.

In her work Toni Morrison has explored the experience and roles of black women in a racist and male dominated society. In the center of her complex and multilayered narratives is the unique cultural inheritance of African Americans. In her Periodical, Rosemarie Garland Thomas writes "In both Morrison's and Walker's novels a simplistic reading suggests that women are victims and men are perpetrator ...no essay polarity between innocent women and guilty men is supported by the texts. Her novels explore the subjects of incest and rape" (8).

Michael Awkward, in his essay *The Evil of Fulfillment: Scapegoating and Narration in the Bluest Eye*, explores Morrison's conscious revision of the Ellisonian depiction of incest in her first novel *The Bluest Eye*. She has revised the incest of Trueblood episode from *Invisible Man*. This revision provides compelling evidence to support feminist claims about the power of feminist literary and critical texts to alter

the readings of male canonical works. Here Morrison presents the phallogocentric nature of Ellison's representation of incest which marginalizes and renders the consequences of the act irrelevant for the female victim. Morrison has exposed patriarchy's inherent oppressiveness. He writes;

The Bluest Eye serves as a revisionary reading of the Trueblood episode of *Invisible Man*. Morrison writes her way into the Afro-American literacy tradition by foregrounding the effects of incest for female victims in direct response to Ellison's refusal to consider them seriously. And so while the victims of incest in both novels ultimately occupy similarly silent, asocial position in their respective communities, Morrison explicitly details Pecola's tragic and painful journey, while Ellison, in confining Mathy Lou to the periphery, suggests that her perspective contains for him 'no compelling significance'. (201)

Barbara Christian finds the story of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is not only hers but of whole black females. The story encompasses three hundred years of unsuccessful interface between black and white cultures. Through Pecola's story, Morrison wants to show the suffering and struggle of a fragile black girl in white dominated society. It also presents the conflict between the values and standard of two cultures.

This simple theme, the desire of a black girl for blue eyes, is a real and symbolic statement about the conflict between the good and beautiful of two cultures and how it affects the psyche of the people within those cultures. 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. As such, this novel is about mythic, political and cultural mutilation as much as it is a book about race and sex hatred. (60)

Michael Awkward in his essay *The Evil of Fulfillment: Scapegoating and Narration in The Bluest Eye* examines Morrison's manipulation of the contents of the primer. The manipulated primer shows the Breedloves unhappiness and self hatred which is antithesis of standardized ideal (white) American family of the primer. Through her deconstruction she exposes each individual element of the myth as not only inaccurate in general but also wholly inapplicable to Afro-American life. Morrison rejects bourgeois standards of happiness and prefers an emotion privileging African American environment.

Afro-American attempts to live in accord with these ultimately unhealthy standards occasion,... not only an emotional barrenness similar to that of the primer family but also intense feeling of failure and worthlessness such as those experienced by the Breedloves. By exhibiting such negative feelings are direct functions of Afro-American adoptions of these myths, Morrison attempts to break the spell of the hypnotic propaganda of an overly materialistic America. (179)

Another critic Donald B. Gibson also examines the use of epigraphical primer text in *The Bluest Eye*. He comes with the idea that through the primer text, the dominated culture exercises its hegemony. The act of learning to read and write means to expose oneself to the values of dominant white culture and teach the victim how to oppress her own black self by internalizing white values.

The implication of the novels *The Bluest Eye* structure is that our lives are contained within the framework of the values of the dominant culture and subjected to those values. We have all internalized those values, and to the extent that we have, we are instrument of our own oppression. (162)

Barbara Christian says that Morrison in her *The Bluest Eye* has explored the devastating effects of Western ideas of beauty and romantic love on a vulnerable black girl; she has also demonstrated how these ideas can invert the natural order of an entire culture. The vortex at which two conflicting orders meet, Pecola becomes the scapegoat. Being a black and female, the Pecolas of America are an accessible dumping ground. She writes;

Pecola is the passive center of the novel, the one to whom things happen and whose only action, her prayer for and receipt of blue eyes, renders her tragic. Her tragic flaw is her particular vulnerability and her generic ill-luck to be born black and female, to be born into the chasm between two cultures. (72)

Chapter II

Black Feminism

Feminism: A General Introduction

Before entering into a discussion of 'Black Feminism', it is necessary to talk about feminism in general. In fact female means a biological contrast to male 'sex' but this nature based male and female sexual difference have been changed into social and cultural construction of gender differences. This gender role cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive where as women as emotional (i.e. irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive.

From the beginning of human civilization women were treated as inferior creatures while men were considered as superior beings. Women were also blamed for lacking intelligence and responsibilities. Aristotle, a renowned Greek philosopher said that the female is a female by the virtue of a certain lack of qualities. He asserts that woman lack qualities that is why they are women not men. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify such inequities which still occur today, as excluding women from equal access to leadership and decision-making positions.

Patriarchy imposes submissive role upon the imagination of young girls through literary works encouraging women to be innocent and submissive, to obey unargued will of man, to tolerate familial abuse, wait patiently to be rescued by a 'man' and view marriage as the only desirable reward for right conduct. If a woman does not accept her patriarchal gender roles then she is considered as a monster or bad girls. Both roles ; of good girls and bad girls, are projection of patriarchal male desire to own submissive women so that men's sexuality cannot be threatened in any way and to dominate her in all, financial, political and societal matters.

As time passed, females became aware of their secondary position and began to question it. Females directly or indirectly started revolting against this kind of suppression and patriarchy. Thus feminism came into practice as an attack against female marginalization as our society and civilization is pervasively patriarchal i.e. it is male-centered and controlled organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains : familiar, religious, political. The most influential voice against patriarchy was raised by Mary Wollstonecraft in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). She was the first major feminist who maintained that lack of sufficient training was one of the major disabilities of women for their repressed condition. For her women are turned into weak petty creature by neglected education, by manners and moral and by flattery and dependence. In her book, *A Vindication of the Rights of women*, she mentioned that men consider females rather as women than human creature and sink them still lower, merely to render them alluring objects.

Feminist literary criticism is a political attack upon the marginalization of all women with their being relegated to a secondary position. Most feminist believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture which is organized in favour of the interests of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how power imbalances due to gender by literary text. Simon de Beauvoir, a French feminist, strongly protests the cultural identification of women as merely negative 'object' or 'other' to men. But man is the defining and dominating 'subject' who is assumed to represent humanity in general. In her essay, *The Second Sex*, she writes 'existence' always precedes 'essence' she says one is not born, rather becomes women. She strongly objects to man's attitude of discriminating between man and woman and the use of myth of women to justify all privileges and even justify their abuse. She writes,

Men need not bother themselves with alleviating the pains and the burdens that physiologically are women's lot since these are 'intended by nature', men use them as a pretext for creating the misery of the feminine lot still further for instance refusing to grant to woman any right to sexual pleasure, by making her work like a beast of burden.

(997)

Many French feminists advocate for a revolutionary linguism, an oral break from the dictatorship of patriarchal speech. They call on women to invent a language that is not oppressive, a language that doesn't leave speechless but that can integrate feminine intelligence, experience, skepticism, suffering, reason and vision. Thus Luce Irigaray, a French post feminist, emphasizes on the need of woman language. Based on Lacan's concept of symbolic order of language they developed 'Ecriture Feminine'. She says that males language is rational because their sexuality is centered around penis whereas female sexuality is irrational, non linear, incomprehensible to men because female sexuality is diffused over their body. Therefore the writing of the female has a force which can overcome the patriarchal language. Their writing is expressed through their body she writes "women like the mystic is able to lose all sense of personal subjective being and is therefore able to slip through the patriarchal net" (89).

Elaine Showalter, a prominent American feminist, also advocates for female language. She opines that if women continue to speak as men do when they enter discourse, whatever they say will be alienated. Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* is a milestone in gynocriticism. Gynocriticism is that latent mode in feminist criticism that views females as the producer of textual meaning. They are treated as writers not merely as readers. Gynocritics construct a female framework for the analysis of

women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience rather than to adapt male models and theories. "Gynocritics begin at the point when we free ourselves from linear absolutes of male literary history, stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition and focus instead on the newly visible world of female culture" (1227), she writes in her essay, *Toward a Feminist Poetics*. Although there are many theories regarding feminism yet their aims are same; to protest against patriarchy and establish their own identity.

Third World Feminism and Black Feminism

'Feminism' totally ignored the existence of all the non white women. The word 'feminism' always referred to the well-educated and privileged class of white women who have ample time and are bored with leisure, with homes and with men. White feminist scholars have moved rapidly forward in addressing theories of subjectivity, questions of difference, the conceptual implication of binary oppositions such as male verses female or equality versus difference. This new wave of white feminist theorists finds little to say about race. White feminist scholars pay hardly more than lip service to race as they continue to analyze their own experience in ever more sophisticated forms.

So, In 1970 and 80s, several black women writers rose to the literary and critical forum and started voicing out their agonies as marginalized and doubly oppressed as black and as women in their works. Being black and women they were doubly suppressed. They were victimized by blacks as well as the white society. The black female experience is characterized by the interlocking oppressors of race, class and gender. These oppressors are interwoven into social structures and work together to define the history of the lives of black women of color.

According to writer like bell hooks, the history of these cultural oppressors can be traced back to slavery. In her book, *Aint I a Woman : Black Woman and Feminism*, hooks asserts that as far as black slavery, white people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex, that ranked white men first, white women second though sometimes equal to black men who ranked third and black woman last.

Various writers argue that historically black women have been stereotyped as sex objects and breeders. Black woman have also been stereotyped by both black and white as 'bad' women. U.S. society still perceives and represents black women as fallen women, whores and prostitutes. They have always been exploited as the object of white male sexual assault. They often become the victim of rape because sexism of white male was socially legitimized. Black men can no longer protect them because they themselves are in dehumanized situation. White women are considered delicate, pure and passionless, a bastion of moral and spiritual virtue. The black female did not fit in this vision of womanhood. African women are seen as wanton pervasions of sexuality, not paragons of piety and purity. They serves as foils to the Victorian ideal of the passionless women becoming as Sander Gilman has written, the central icon for sexuality in the nineteenth century. Women of African descent were not idealized as angels of the household but forced to labor in the field like beast that they were said to resemble. In the essay *Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problem of Silence*, Evelyn M. Hammonds writes,

This stereotype was used to justify the enslavement, rape and sexual abuse of black women by white men; the lynching of black men; and not incidentally, the maintenance of a coherent biological theory of human difference based on fixed racial typologies. Because Afro-Americans were defined as property, their social, political and legal

rights barely exceeds those of farm animals-indeed, they were subjected to the same forms of control and abuse as animals. (96)

So, black female writers came up with the conscious sense of this doubly suppressed state – one by the racial prejudice and other by the obvious male chauvinism. They are trying to alter the past by recreating or reconstructing it. The black female writers became conscious of their past, mother-link tradition, black women's experience and their world and started 'female writing' which they sought as a move towards their identity and independence. The worth noting writers in this connection are Alice Walker, who works for the survival and wholeness of black women and for the valorization of women and of all the varieties of work women perform, Toni Morrison who writes about the black female cultural values and damaging effects of sexism on women of color, both inside and outside their community and writers like Maya Angelou, Lorraine Hansberry etc.

Lorrain Bethe observes an understanding of this double oppression forms the basis of African American feminist criticism. Black feminist literary criticism offers a framework for identifying the common socio-aesthetic problems of authors who attempt to fashion a literature of cultural identity in the midst of racial sexual oppression. It incorporates a political analysis that enables us to comprehend and appreciate the incredible achievements black women made in establishing artistic and literary traditions of any sort and to understand their qualities and sensibilities. Such understanding requires a consciousness of the oppression these artists faced daily in a society full of institutionalized and violent hatred for both their black skin and their female bodies. Developing and maintaining this consciousness is a basis tenet of black feminism. In her landmark essay, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, Alice

Walker discloses how the political, economic and social restrictions of slavery and racism have historically stunted the creativity lives of black women.

The politics of black feminism have a direct relationship to the state of black woman's literature. Black feminism movement has opened up the space needed for the exploration of black women's lives and the creation of black women's identified art. Black women's writing reveals about the state of black women's culture and intensity of all black women's oppression. Because of racism black literature has been viewed as a separate sub-category of American literature. It took the surfacing of the second wave of the North American Feminist Movement to expose the fact that black females works contain an accurate record of the impact of patriarchal values and practice upon the lives of woman. The politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are interlocking factors in the works of black women writers.

According to Barbara Smith, both sexual and racial politics and black and female identity are inextricable elements in black women's writing. Black women writers constitute an identifiable literary tradition. Thematically, stylistically, aesthetically and conceptually black women writers manifest common approaches to the act of creating literature as they share common political, social and economic experience. In her essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" she explores that,

The way Zora Neal Hurston, Margaret Walker, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker incorporate the traditional Black female activities of root working, herbal medicine, conjure and midwifery into the fabric of their stories is not mere coincidence nor is their use of specifically Black female language to express their own and their characters thoughts accidental. (174)

She believes that the use of Black Women's language and cultural experience in books by black women takes their writing far beyond the confines of white male literary structures.

Deborah McDowell in her *New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism*, insists African American feminist critics must abandon slogans. Rather they must situate the study of black women's writing in the context of black history and culture and explore its thematic and stylistic correspondences with the literature of black men as well as investigate its special uses of language and imagery. Black Women writers started writing out of her own identity and try not to take the ideas or methodology of white/male literary thought. They depend upon the precious material of black women's art. In black women's works, women are the central figures, they are portrayed positively and they have great relationships with one another. The form and language of their works are also nothing like white patriarchal culture.

Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* can be explored from black feminist perspective. In her novel, *The Bluest Eye*, the relationship between girls and women are essential and she is critical towards the heterosexual institutions of male-female relationship, marriage and the family. Morrison's work poses feminist questions about black women's autonomy and their impact upon each others lives. Morrison depicts the necessary bonding that has always taken place between black women or girls for the sake of barest survival. Together the girls and women find the courage to create themselves. She explores the limitations of the black female role which are even greater in a racist and sexist society. It takes great amount of courage to challenge them. Her main character of *The Bluest Eye* cannot overcome this social pressure and influence and falls prey to convention while Claudia, another minor character, escapes it. Most of black women writers believe that the act of writing itself is a powerful tool

for bringing about change in the lives of women. This discourse has given us a perspective to observe and analyze the novel, *The Bluest Eye*.

Mohanty in her *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* argues that third world feminism (i.e. black and minorities feminism) and first world feminism (i.e white feminism) have common issues but differences are also plentiful. Thus, claiming universality of gender oppression is not the same as arguing for the universal rights of women based on the particularities of our experiences. Locating the feminism in their contexts, she argues further that "the challenges posed by black and third world feminist can point the way toward more precise, transformative feminist politics based on the specificity of our historical and cultural locations and our common contexts of struggle" (107).

Third world feminisms have two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic western feminisms and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically and culturally grounded feminists concerns and strategies. The former has a negative concern of deconstructing and dismantling while the later has the positive concern of building and constructing. The western feminist discursive practices colonize 'third world woman' by producing it as a singular monolithic subject. Though heterogeneous in both discourse and practice, the western feminisms produce coherent effects of the 'third world woman' as they share an implicit assumption of the 'west' as the primary referent i.e. west as the 'self' and non-west as the 'other'.

Mohanty uses the term 'colonization' to refer to the production of economic and political hierarchies and cultural discourse about the third world. It implies a relationship of structural domination and suppression, often violent, of the heterogeneity of the subjects in question. Feminist political practice as feminism is both discursive and political. It has an ideology and purpose i.e. to intervene into

particular hegemonic discourses to counter and resist the so-called legitimate and scientific bodies of knowledge and to enter power relationship discursively. Feminism addresses the relation between 'Woman' and 'women'. Woman as a cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses like scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic cinematic etc where as, women as a real, material subjects of their collective histories. The relationship between the representation of 'Woman' produced by hegemonic discourses and 'women' as historical subjects is arbitrary. Western feminism colonizes the material and historical heterogeneities of the lives of the third world women to produce and represent a composite singular third world woman. Having an inadequate knowledge about effect of western scholarship on the 'third world', western feminisms assume of a privileged position of ethnocentric universalism. Therefore when they produce discursive homogeneity of the oppression of the third world women, they exercise power.

This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender and her being 'third world'. She is ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, and victimized. This is in contrast to the self representation of western women as educated as modern as having control over their own bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decision. Western feminism constructs the image of privileged western women in their difference from the underprivileged third world women. Third world women need to represent themselves instead of being represented by others.

Ketu H. Katrak in her *Politics of the Female Body: Postcolonial Women Writers of the Third World* argues that in the works of postcolonial women writers the female body is in a state of exile- including self-exile and self-censorship, outsider ness and un-belonging to itself within patriarchy. She proposes the idea of external

and internal exile of bodies in patriarchal societies. The external exile manifests migration and geographical relocation such as political persecution, material conditions of poverty and forms of intellectual silencing in third world societies, whereas the internal exile exists where the body feels disconnected from itself as though it does not belong to it and has no agency. Female exile results from colonial education accompanied by racial superiority. It leads to linguistic and cultural alienations. Several texts demonstrate female bodily exile resulting from forgetting one's native language and cultural ways supplanted by English language or for resisting the patriarchal authority of fathers and husbands.

The experience of internalized exile unfolds as a process that includes the female protagonists' complicated levels of consent and collusion to domination. In the process of the body being exiled female protagonists come to a state of consciousness and transcend exile. They resist domination and attempt to cope with their bodies and communities. In resisting exile they often use their bodies via speech, silence, starvation or illness. At times, resistance fails and fatal outcomes result in murder or suicide. Women writer portray how their protagonists resist patriarchy or colonial oppression from within the system rather than political resistance or imprisonment depicted of male postcolonial writers. Female resistances are undertaken with self-consciousness and remarkable creativity that decides to take risks and confront domination in the interest of self-preservation

The other forms of bodily resistance are use of non-literary materials like, oral tradition folk tales restrained in memory by women or oral, visual and performative. In oral testimonies the body speaks and woman find voice in narrating their lives. Along with voice, women's knowledge gathering and experience are converged the female body in movement, dance and other non-verbal and aural forms. Village

gossip, small-talk, communal memories, local folklore, historical records, myth, imagination and artistry and female bonding are other more forms.

In western culture, female bodies are politicized. The politics of female bodies includes the constructions and controls of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions, and its location socio-culturally, even materially in postcolonial regions. The politics involves socialization involving layers and levels of ideological influences, socio-cultural and religious, that impose knowledge or ignorance of female bodies and construct women as gendered subject or object. Women writers present the struggle of the protagonist to resist patriarchal objectification and definition as daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, and mother-in-law. The politics involves a study of acceptable versus censored expression of sexuality. Such as motherhood within heterosexual marriage is glorified and romanticized but other manifestations that pertain to female sexuality are disrespected or pitied such as childless women who may single by choice or infertile or widows. Lesbian partnership and love are often mystified as sisterhood for fear of violence.

The key controls of female sexuality are located in the area of culture tradition, particularly when women are expected to be the guardians of tradition in anti-colonial struggle. Further, 'traditions' most oppressive to women are located within the arena of female sexuality- not only the glaring violent ones such as 'sati' but other normative forms of objectification in custom like dowry, multiple childbearing, as well as in fulfilling tradition expected roles as daughter, wife, mother, etc. Education has possibilities for both liberation from and continuation of patriarchy. But education does not lead necessarily to women's personal liberation. Women themselves have to be conscious and fight for their liberation.

Chapter III

Black Feminism in *The Bluest Eyes*: Double Marginalization and Resistance

This chapter analyzes Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eyes* on the basis of the theoretical insights developed in the earlier chapter. In the following pages, I have tried to analyze the process of formation of black female subjectivity in a racist patriarchal culture, black woman's double marginalized situation, and resistance to such an oppression by using the artistry, music, female bonding and other such communal contexts.

Black Female Subjectivity

Morrison portrays, in her novels, black female bodies as the sites of invasion. It is the area on which is mapped the encroachment and colonization of African American experiences, particularly those of its women by a hegemonic white culture. *The Bluest eye* is a whole document of this invasion in term of sexuality and its interaction with commodity culture. Morrison's project is to rewrite the specific bodies and histories of the black Americans whose positives images and stories have been eradicated by commodity culture .She does this by shifting the novels prospective and point of view, a narrative tactic that enables her to represent black female subjectivity a layered shifting and complex reality .

The disallowance of the specific culture and histories of African American and black women is figured in *The Bluest Eye* as the result of annihilation of popular forms and image by gradually spreading mass culture industry. Economic, racial and ethnic difference is erased and replaced by equal ability to consume, even though what is consumed are more or less competing version of the white image .The difference in race or ethnicity or class appear to be erased or made equal at the level of consumption .

There is evidence of the influence of this process of erasure and replacement throughout *The Bluest Eye*. For example, the grade school reader that prefaces the text is a common mass-produced presence in school across the country. Its wide spread use made learning the pleasure of Dick and Jane's commodified life dangerously synonymous with learning itself. It stands as the only visible model for happiness and thus accuses those whose lives do not match up with it. White lower class children can at least more easily imagine themselves positive within the story's realm of possibility. For black children this possibility might require a double reversal or negation. The result, no doubt, a black child like Pocola must see herself in the body of a white little girl throughout *The Bluest Eye*. The damaging result of it are illustrated in the repetition of the Dick and Jane story first without punctuation or capitalization and then without punctuation capitalization and spacing.

Perhaps one function of the mass deployment of these stories was in fact to raise hopes for a better future in order to counteract the oppressiveness of the present. It also delimits the chance of dissatisfaction or unrest and encourages unquestioning labor at the same time. But in *The Bluest Eye* most of the characters goes to the extent to which mass culture has made the process of self-denial. Interaction with mass culture for anyone not represented therein or specially African American frequently refuse self and see oneself in the body of another.

The novel's obvious instance of this is in the endless reproduction of images of feminine beauty in everyday objects and consumer goods "white baby dolls with their inhumanly hard bodies and uncanny blue eyes", "Shirley temple cups"(16), "Mary Jane candies", even the clothes of "dream child"(47) Maureen peel, which are stylish because they suggest Shirley temple cuteness. Claudia and Freda witness the effect of mass cultural reproduction on other people "the honey voices of parents and

aunts, the obedience in the eyes of peers, the slippery light in the eyes of teachers”(57) all pours out to the Maureen Peals of the world and not to them from the response of other people to girls like Maureen, the sisters learn the fact of their own lack variously identified as ugliness or “unworthiness”.

The mass spread of these images of femininity in American society is the primary mechanism by which women are socialized and sexualized in this country. Romantic love and physical beauty both are destructive to the extent they are made definitionally unavailable. The consequences of this estimation repeated continually throughout Pocola’s life. When Mr. Yacobowski, an old white storekeeper and her teacher cannot or will not see her then she ceases to be seen at all or sees herself in the iconographic images she can attain only in madness.

The horror of the industrialization is responsible for generating and continuing these repeated, static and unattainable images of beauty and femininity for white women. It does not allow alternate images and standards for black women. The result of an African American’s separation from his or her cultural centre turns them to rely on the white bourgeoisie social model. The migration of Afro-Americans in last first half of this century and the end of last to Northern territory usually industrial towns like Lorain accelerated the separation of families and friends. It removed them further from whatever common cultural existed in the rural south. In the absence of a network of community members ready to step in as Aunt Jimmy's family and friends do and make it their business to look after each other, blacks of North who feel isolated from their past and alienated in their present look elsewhere for self-affirming context. As Pauline takes her early married life in Lorain is the loneliest time of her life. She does not like the life of transplantation north and like to recall memories of her childhood.

"I don't know what all happened everything changed. It was hard to get to know folks up here and I missed my people I weren't used to so much white folks. The one I seed before was something hateful but they didn't too much ... Up north they was everywhere next door, downstairs, all over the streets and colored folks few and far between. Northern colored folk was different too. Dicty – like No better than whites for meanness. They could make you feel just as no-count, 'cept I didn't expect it from them. (91)

From this seemingly fragmented and hostile community, Pauline turns to day jobs and to movies. At the fisher's house she finds beauty, order, cleanliness and praise. As she watches in movies "white men taking such good care of they women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses..."(95), she finds it increasingly difficult to return to her own life and as a result she "more and more neglected her house, her children, her man" (96). Like the Dick and Jane story, Pauline's movies continuously present her with ideal life which she does not have.

The mass circulation of images of femininity negatively affects women in the area of sexuality. It negatively affects the attitude and behavior of the people with whom they interact. *The Bluest Eye* however, documents further the effect of those images on women themselves on the level of the body and in terms of how they understand and experience their own sexuality. Pauline defines strength, beauty and youth solely in terms she has learned from film. Thus the possibility of ever attaining them is foreclosed.

Her daughter Pecola also finds herself aggressively ugly as her family perceives her. So, Pecola gets off eating candy. The wrapper of Marry Jane candy has a picture of a little Marry Jane for whom the candy is named. She has white face,

blond hair and blue eyes. To Pecola they are simply pretty. For her, "To eat the candy is somewhat to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane candy. Be Mary Jane" (38). After eating Mary Jane candy and the milk from "Shirley Temple cup"(16), she imagines herself miraculously translated into the body of white girl and live white experience as a negation of blackness. Rather than reconcile herself as her mother, Pecola chooses a life of her own erasure and annihilation. She prays to God "make me disappear"(33).The ugliness of her entire body and sexuality lead her to her madness and isolation.

While Claudia does not experience the gravest effects of the myth of beauty as Pecola does. She is not seen as the ugliest of the ugly but she knows that blue eyes and blond hair are admired by all. Claudia doesn't like the white doll which she receives at Christmas. Instead in Christmas she wants "to sit on the low stool in Big Mama's kitchen with [her] lap full of lilacs and listen to Big Papa play his violin for [her] alone"(15). So, she destroyed the white baby doll. This shows her revolt against white values and standard that threatens her very being. She also knows that white baby dolls, the Shirley Temple mug and so on are measures of her own lack of desirability. But Claudia , unlike Pecola, fights back and tries to make sense out of the contradictions she finds around her about love and beauty.

In *The Bluest Eye* writing the specific stories, histories and bodies of African American which are being made invisible Morrison wants to stop these damaging results. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison seems to move her examination of Pecola's life back and forth from the axis of race to that of gender. By doing so, Toni Morrison enables the reader to witness the complexity of black female subjectivity as the meaning of blackness in this country that shapes the experience of gender.

Double Marginalization

Toni Morrison's demonstrates a central interest in the issues of boundary, attachment and separation. Morrison's characters experience themselves as wounded or imprisoned not only by virtue of their gender but additionally by racial and economic division within American culture. If white woman is the other within white patriarchal culture, then women of ethnic minority group face a sense of double diminishment. As Pauline Breedlove phrases it, "Everybody in the world was in a position to give [black women] orders" (108). Yet despite this double oppression, black women writers have celebrated and written eloquently of their sustaining values. She articulates some of the culture contradictions of black women's and men's problematic position in white patriarchal American culture.

The subject of color and female beauty are recurrent features of the oppressive experience of black women in white culture. In *The Bluest Eye*, Maureen Peal, a light skinned girl enchanted the entire school. "When teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their partners ..." (48) she is envied less for her family's greater affluence than for her light skin. Teachers discriminate between white and black student. Even black boys have no courage to tease a white girl. But they tease to black girls saying "Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadadsleepsnakked..." (51).

The same way another colored boy called Junior enjoys bullying girls. He likes to make girls scream and run. In such an early age he shows his male instinct. But he is afraid to tease a pack of nigger girls as "They usually travelled in packs and once when he threw a stone at some of them, they chased, caught and beat him witless" (67). Here the word "pack" is used to refer to a group of girls to show his

dislike for nigger girls. His mother, Geraldine, also doesn't like him to play with niggers. She had explained him that there is difference between colored people and niggers.

Geraldine herself desires to repress and deny 'funk' to exhibit no stereotypically African American qualities such as thick lips, nappy edges and "rounded enunciation". She belongs to a distinctive group of women who;

...go to land-grant colleges, normal schools, And learn how to do the white man's work with refinement: home economics to prepare his Food; teacher education to instruct black Children in obedience; music to soothe the weary master and entertain his blunted soul. Here they learn the rest of the lessons begun in those soft houses with porch swings. And pots of bleeding heart: how to behave, the careful development of thrift, patient, high morals and good manners. (64)

To get rid of funkiness is for Geraldine to get rid of blankness. In America, blankness is equated with evil, so to embrace the ideal national virtues of "thrift, patience, high morals and good manners" (64) she lives the life of a machine. This attempt to eliminate the funk does not allow her the pleasure of loving either her husband, whose sexual advances are unsatisfying inconveniences or her son, whose emotional needs she meets with an affectionless efficiency.

Even white doctor discriminates between black women and white women. He considers black women as animals. During labor pain, Pauline overhears the doctor commenting on the ease of childbirth for black women. "Now these women you don't have any trouble with. They deliver right away and with no pain just like horses"(97). On the contrary white women are treated as human being. The doctor asks white

women about her pain, health and talk nicely with her. Pauline is surprised with the doctor's comment. She says,

I hurt just like them white women. Just cause I wasn't hoping and hollering before didn't mean I wasn't feeling pain... Besides, that doctor don't know what he talking about. He never seed no mare foal. Who say they don't have no pain? Just cause she don't cry? 'Cause she can't say it, they think it ain't there? (97)

She is right to say so. All women have same pain while giving birth to baby. It is unfair of the doctor to discriminate between white and black women.

Morrison shows that the humiliated black male allies himself with the third by making the black woman the object of his displaced fury. During his initiatory sexual experience, Cholly and the girl named Darlene are discovered by two white men. They force the pair to continue at gunpoint for their amusement. So, Cholly Breedlove in his sexual humiliation looks at his partner with hatred but not at his tormentors:

Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, helpless... For now he hated the one who had created the situation, the one who bore witness to his failure his impotence. The one whom he had not been able to protect, to spare, to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight. (118)

In the recurring scene, instead of looking outward at the oppressor, he displaces blame onto the only person left that a black man can 'own' or 'oppress' i.e., black woman.

Pecola is exploited psychologically and sexually by male members of her own community. Junior, the colored boy, calls her in his house and kills his mother's beloved cat and blames her killing it. On it, his mother scolds her very harshly. She is also avoided by Jacobowki, a storekeeper. She noticed "total absence of human recognition" (36) in his look. Most of the time, she has seen interest, disgust, even anger in grown male eyes. While taking money from her hand he hesitates to touch her hand. Soaphead Church, a child molester takes advantage of her and his own father rapes her.

In Morrison's novels, male characters are in marginal position in a strongly female world. The men, who couple with women, are either ineffectual shadows, womanizers or deserters. For example: Mr. Henry, Macteer's roomer who flirts with prostitutes and tries to fondle Frieda Macteer. Another morally deformed member of the community is Soaphead Church, a man of mixed blood, a "spiritual advisor" to troubled souls. He is a pedophile. For him little girls are the only sexual objects because children do not threaten his fragile and sterile masculinity. Children are scared of him. Once Claudia says, "... that crazy old Soaphead Church lives there ... He scare me"(59). He molests little girls because, he thinks, they are manageable and seductive. Later he manipulates Pecola's faith in miracles and make her poison his landlady's aged dog. Like this he violates her spiritual innocence as her father abuses her physical innocence. Pecola is now a lost soul, imprisoned in madness from which she can never flee.

The factor motivating Cholly to rape his daughter in the kitchen stems from the whole of his past experience, his experience as a poor black youth, victimized by white and black oppression. His mother abandons him as his father runs away by impregnating his mother. In his first sexual experience, he was humiliated by the two

white hunters who threaten him with bodily harm if he does not continue sexual intercourse with Darlene. The hatred and hostility that would be directed at the hunters is displaced onto Darlene. He hated Darlene and wished he would hurt her. He hated Pecola too because he could not give her fatherly love. He wished "to break Pecola's neck"(127) but he wants to do it tenderly. Finding her fragile and weak he rapes his 11 years daughter cruelly.

Pecola becomes a scapegoat for her community's deepest fears and anxieties about both blackness and sexuality. Claudia compares Pecola with marigold seeds, suffocated before she could blossom. Indeed nature itself seemed poised against those at the very bottom of the social order, buried so deeply that they can't thrive. As the adult Claudia muses, "This soil is bad for certain kind of flowers. Certain seeds it will not, nurture certain fruit it will not bear and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim has no right to live"(164).

Morrison uses Aunt Jimmy's illness and funeral as both a ritualistic enactment of a vividly female culture that strengthen the sinews of black Rural America. As the old woman dies, her friends come to wait with her, hugging their memories of illness to their blossoms. In a lyrical crash of words, Morrison tells us the story of those old black. Women reared in the south and in so doing relate their lives to that of Pauline Breedlove:

Then they had grown. Edging into life from the back door. Becoming everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, "Do this". White children said, "Give me that". White men said, "Come here. Black men said, "Lay down". The only people they need not to take orders from were black children and each other. But they took all of that and recreated it in their own image. They ran

the houses of white people and knew it. When white men beat their men they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victims. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other. The hands that felled trees also cut umbilical cords; the hands that wrung the necks of chicken and butchered hogs also nudged African violets into bloom; the arms that loaded sheaves, bales and sacks rocked babies into sleep. They patted biscuits into flaky ovals of innocence – and shrouded the dead. They plowed all day and came home to nestle like plums under the limbs of their men. The legs that straddled a mule's back were the same ones that straddled their men's hips. (108)

These are the experiences of black women. They have to work hard at home and also out side home to earn their living. They work like animals day and night. They are oppressed not only by white men and women but also by black men. They have to take orders all the time by white and their male counterparts. They do all kinds of work but they are not helped by their husbands. They alone look after their families and also work for white families. In African American society women play the vital role. They are the backbone of their families.

Paulin Breedlove also works for white family. Once her husband Cholly Breedlove totally drunk comes to her workplace to ask money the white mistress becomes angry. She threatens Cholly to leave her home. She also suggests Paulin to leave her drunkard husband and come to work for her. When Paulin rejects her proposal she fires her from the work and denies giving her the eleven dollars she owed her. "She didn't give me the eleven dollars she owed me, neither. That hurt bad. The gas man had cut the gas off and I couldn't cook none. I really begged that woman

for my money. I went to see her. She was mad as a wet hen kept on telling me. I owed her for uniforms and some old broken-down bed she give me" (93). This situation shows the exploitation of black woman by white woman. White woman doesn't understand the problem of poor black woman. She tries to force her opinion on black women. When again Paulin asks her if she will loan the money to her. The Mistress suggests her that she shouldn't let a man take the advantage of her. She should have more respect and it is her husband's duty to pay the bills and if he can't then she should leave him and get alimony. This shows that black women are not only dominated by white and black males but also by white upper class females.

Politics of Form

Morrison's writing concern political issues notably racial and sexual. "Difference" is the site of struggle which involves the material as well as theoretical consequences of ideology. Morrison's writing is politically and culturally inflected through African American tradition. The yearning she articulates and prohibition she faces are written racially. She adapts expressive modes from African American oral, narrative and musical traditions, notably women's culture.

Her writing conveys actual events with suggestiveness. Her narrative lines, flashbacks and expected prediction veil and qualify meaning. The effect of all this is that it encodes hesitation. Morrison's treatment of Cholly's incestuous rape of Pecola, for example ends up foregrounding an awareness of the complexity of judgments and feeling. In the scene where Cholly rapes his daughter which is awful to imagine, Morrison wants readers to look at him and see his hatred as well as pathetic love for his daughter.

The Bluest Eye has been criticized for being stuck in the pathology of Afro-American experience. Violence, madness and incest are some of the extreme forms of

pathology. The racism which pushes people to such extreme is Morrison's underlying concern. She describes a society where whiteness is the standard of personal worth, where 'Shirley Temple' and 'Jeanne Harlow' set standards for beauty and "Dick and Jane" readers prescribe an oppressive notion of normality, where Pecola's shame at her mother's race serves as a model for self improvement, where fathers deny their daughters and God denies the communal prayer for the privileged of blue eyes. Morrison argues that in such a society "Marigolds" cannot bloom. The Marigolds are metaphoric here. The barrenness of soil includes scapegoating and intraracism which is deeply rooted in history of human struggle. The soil, in which the seeds were sown, represents racism is an inescapable attitude and it provides no means of recovery.

The Bluest Eye is a carefully organized multi-formed narrative. Morrison orders her materials into four seasonal parts; autumn, winter, spring and summer but within this design nothing is simple or stable. Excerpt from "Dick and Jane" reader serve as a reference for Claudia's autobiographical narratives. Numbing the imagination with their simplification of grammar and life both form and the substance of the "Dick and Jane" passage violate the unity of the life Morrison depicts.

The overall effect of this complexly structured work is to foreground the authorial project of organizing a multi-voiced novel, when the parts sometimes jostle against one another sometimes complement or blend with each other. This shows a dense sense of the multiplicity of narration. In this respect *The Bluest Eye's* design supplement its thematic focus on communities as sites of meaning and meaning gets constructed dialogically.

Claudia being a narrator does not show empowerment interpreting the meanings of novel. But the activity to interpret the novel's diverge segment goes to readers. But it doesn't mean the book is open-ended. *The Bluest Eye* focuses its

concern with the production of meaning in the valuation of race, gender and social class. At the very outset of storytelling, Morrison already questions the act of telling just by moving Claudia from 'why' to 'how', "There is really nothing more to say except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how" (4), and by being vague about what she is trying to do and finally shifting from Claudia's first person 'I' to the impersonal 'one'. Morrison does all these only to involve the readers in interpreting the novel.

Morrison's use of an orchestrated narrative design belongs in a long and often dazzling tradition of experimentation, where disrupted chronology, shattered plot, decentered accountability, disparate modes of narration can lead to a panic about the loss of center. All these devices insist on the readers' self-conscious participation in the reconstitution of the text. The four seasons organization of *The Bluest Eye* adds another complication to this already difficult patterning. For while the March of the season is predictable. The notion of the seasons is that they are an annually recurring condition from which there is no escape. Morrison sets up the sequence of these seasons, starting with Autumn's decline and ending once again towards a decline which emphasizes the negative aspects of this metaphor.

Morrison's work raises important questions about her address to readers. Morrison sees her resistance to closure as a uniquely black aesthetic mode similar to black music. She uses it as an opportunity to free readers to tap new capabilities within themselves. As Morrison is a black woman writer whose "implied reader" is educated middle class and not frequently white. So her address is also personal and political not just literary. African American novelists have traditionally turned to strategies of evidence and indirection in order to suppress or disguise racial anger. *The Bluest Eye's* form clarifies Morrison's anger because it brings the causes of Pecola's

suffering into sharp focus. Thematically this novel is clearer and more optimistic and formally it offers solace by narrative strategies whose meditation continues to displace the pain and anger of being defined as 'other'.

For Morrison, the voice is the source of regeneration and it is the interaction of diverse voices that complements the power of the single voice and makes reconstitution possible. Her novel uses the season cyclicity to signal a trap. In *The Bluest Eye* circularity functions as a structuring metaphor which runs counter to other aspects of her text. The story-line and seasonal cyclicity suggests an entrapment. Alongside it is a multi-voiced orchestration which makes powerful claims for the needs of many reiterations which express great anger. This design reveals that the tyranny of racist values is inescapable.

It is specially *The Bluest Eye's* verbal exuberance that counters the difficulties inscribed in this seasonal metaphor. Morrison's syntax belies her fatalism. Her cadences spill into long sentences in which flexible syntactical structures exact the capacity for change. Her short sentences and sentence fragments are close system, self-sufficient, well-placed and punchy. Her descriptive passages are rich with images which make facts resonate with latent meanings. The overall impression such writing creates is of an echoing, shimmering experience. Note for example, the following passage:

They come from Mobile. Aiken. From Newport News. From Meridian. And the sounds of these places in their mouths make you think of love. When you ask them where they are from, they tilt their head and say "Mobile" and you think you've been kissed. They say "Nagadoches" and you want to say "Yes, I will". You don't know what these towns

are like, but you love what happens to the air when they open their lips
and let the names ease out. (63)

The "they" Morrison describes here are certain type of "brown girls" particularized in Geraldine- a character she condemns with special anger. Yet the writing in this passage mostly beautifies these women.

Pauline's description of her lovemaking with Cholly is one of this novel's extraordinary passages. The rainbow metaphor she assigns to orgasm is indeed a covenant but a broken covenant. She transforms Pauline's sense of touch and visual sensations into an eroticized prose free of grammatical prevention. Pauline's orgasm, this stylistic articulation of desire is indeed erotic. Morrison's style here involves the notion of "*jouissance*". In this respect, *The Bluest Eye* in general and the rainbow passage in particular anticipate Alice Walker's use of Celie in *The Color Purple* (1982). Pauline and Celie would have been socially and linguistically disenfranchised speakers. For this author's African American vernacular is a medium of empowerment that runs counter to the normality posited by Dick's and Jane's parents and their dog. *The Bluest Eye* counters the muting of Pecola's voice with the empowerment of other voices in her community. Their voices blended into a threnody of nostalgia about pain rising and falling, complex in harmony, uncertain in pitch but constant in the recitation of pain.

The musicalization of experience is Morrison's theme once more when commenting on Cholly's epic journey in search of his father:

The pieces of Cholly's life could become coherent only in the head of a musician. Only those who talk their talk through the gold of curved metal, or in the touch of black and white rectangle and taut skins and strings echoing from wooden corridors, could give true form of his life.

Only they would know how to connect the heart of a red watermelon to the asafetida bag to the muscadine to the flashlight on his behind to the fists of money to the lemonade in a Mason jar to a man called Blue and come up with what all of that meant in joy, in pain, in anger, in love, and give it its final and pervading ache of freedom. Only a musician would sense, know, without even knowing that he knew, that Cholly was free. (125)

Morrison's writing registers music as an expressive but also classifying medium formally as well as thematically. Here and in numerous other passages, including Pauline's rain and the full Aunt Jimmy section, the syntax builds up sequences of repetition and variation. Morrison's very writing is a performance which celebrates the free play of language and the power of the voice to utter. Thus, when she uses the Aunt Jimmy and Cholly episodes to explore the concept of freedom, her conclusions are questionable. The freedom of old age she bestows on rural black woman and the 'Godlike' freedom she grants Cholly when she leaves him with nothing left to lose.

Her writing begs to be read aloud. Her diction, rhythms and incremental patterned almost seem propelled by sound. Repeating key words and stringing along sentences, clauses and phrases which do not always group into punctuated units; this writing creates an echo-chamber effect. This is the 'verbal delirium' as woman writers linguistic resistance to the despair inscribed in plots of victimization but it is also verbal mode rooted in African American secular and religious oral traditions.

Claudia captures the power of the voice when she describes her mother singing the blues:

If my mother was in a singing mood it wasn't so bad. She would sing about hard times, bad times and somebody - done - gone - left - me times. But her voice was so sweet and her singing- eyes so melty I found myself longing for those hard times, yearning to be grown without "a thin di-i-ime to my name" I looked forward to the delicious time when 'my man' would leave me, when I would "hate to see that evening sun go down ..." cause then I would know "My man has left this town". Misery colored by the greens and blues in my mother's voice took all of the grief out of the words and left me with a conviction that pain was not only endurable, it was sweet. (18)

Blues

The Bluest Eye's narrative structure follows a pattern common to traditional blues lyrics: a movement for an initial emphasis on loss to a concluding suggestion of resolution of grief through motion. The blues lyrics that punctuate the narrative at the critical points suggest a system of folk knowledge and values that is crucial to young black woman's survival in the 1930s and 40s. This also supports Claudia's cathartic role as story teller. The lyrics also illustrate the folk knowledge and values that are not transmitted to Pecola.

In traditional blues song, the singer is the subject, the "I" who tells her or his own story. In *The Bluest Eye*, however, Claudia tells Pecola's story. Except for a few fragmented lines of dialogue, Pecola remains silent within Claudia's narrative. Claudia is posited as the narrative's subject, its 'bluest I' and representative blues figure and Pecola as the object 'tabula rasa' on which the community's blues are

inscribed. Rather than singing Pecola's blues, Claudia sings the communities blues. Claudia bears witness, through the oral tradition of testifying to the community's lack of self-love and its transference of this lack onto the hopeless body of Pecola.

The blues are first represented in the text in Claudia's reminiscence about the Saturdays when her mother was in a singing mood. Claudia recalls snatches of lyrics from 'hard times' songs her mother frequently sings, including the phrase "hate to see that evening sun go down" (18) – a reference to one of the earliest recorded and most popular "St. Louis Blues". This blues exemplify the cultural knowledge and values transmitted orally to Claudia that ease and assist her transition into womanhood.

Hearing her mother sing the blues, Claudia finds herself;

longing for those hard times, yearning to be grown without "a thin dime to my name" I look forward to the delicious time when 'my man' would leave me, when I would "hate to see that evening sun go down ... 'cause then I would know my man has left this town". Misery colored by greens and blues in my mother's voice took all the grief out of the words and left me with a conviction that pain was not only endurable, it was sweet. (18)

The lyrical language in which Claudia describes her mother's singing is suggestive of the sweet and cathartic tone of traditional blues.

Both the song and the novel exhibit a lyrical progression from an initial statement of loss to a concluding statement of resolve to move on, literary and figuratively. The song opens on the traditional blues note of loss or lack: The speaker's man has left her with an empty bed and consequently she hates to see the lonely night time come. The song then proceeds to the suggestion of resolution. The

notion of resolution of earthy problems through motion is implied in the sound of the blues.

Morrison has stated that her purpose in writing the novel was to peck away all the gaze that condemns Pecola's blackness as ugly. Morrison criticizes the racial self-hatred implicit in the community's valorization of Maureen Peel. Maureen Peel and Shirley Temple serve as icons of the destructive reification of caste and whiteness. Claudia too recognizes the self-loathing inherent in the condemning gaze and the blues wisdom that fills the house with her mother singing.

Morrison shows that MacTears have retained a connection to ancestral knowledge which helped them in their current situation. Whereas, the Breedloves don't retain a connection to ancestral knowledge and long for values of white upper middle class, which has brought in their family a sense of worthlessness and lack.

The following passage is Pauline's blues and it expresses a longing for home and community.

When I first seed Cholly I want you to know it was like all the bits of color from that time down home when us chil'ren went berry picking after a funeral and I put some in the pocket of my Sunday dress and they mashed up and stained my hips. My whole dress was messed with purple and it never did wash out. Not the dress nor me. I could feel that purple deep inside me. And that lemonade Mama used to make when Papa came in out the fields. It be cool and yellowish ... and that streak of green the June bugs made on the trees the night we left from down home. All of them colors was in me. (90)

Paulin recreates that which is lost and for which she longs, transforming lack into poetry. Unfortunately, the transformation is temporary. The lure of the material supplants her memories of community. Poland also transforms lack into poetry :

I got blues in my mealbarrel

Blues up on the shelf

I got blues in my mealbarrel

Blues up on the self

Blues in my bedroom

‘cause I’m sleeping by myself. (38)

The transformation of lack, loss and grief into poetic catharsis is the task of the blues singer and Claudia accomplishes in narrating *The Bluest Eye*. Black women artists historically have shaped and interpreted female blues subjects who yearn for freedom. They yearn for freedom from poverty, discrimination, debt and disenfranchisement. It is also an assertion of women’s control over their bodies. When a woman is living in desparate material conditions, her body is all that she owns and controls. Thus, assertion of ownership and control is a courageous political statement.

Although the blues typically feature a first-person singular subject and exhibit a concern with the problems or experiences of the individual, black women’s blues communicate private troubles publically. Claudia’s blues are ‘Classical Blues’ performed by female singer accompanied by a pianist and small instrumental combo. Nevertheless, the singer certainly remained the dominant personality in performance. Thus, Claudia’s is the dominant voice in the novel. Morrison constructs Claudia as a blues subject. She learns to sing from her mother and her blues is *The Bluest Eye*. *The Bluest Eye* is Claudia’s blues for Pecola and her community. The novel’s central theme is the community’s lack of self-love, a lack that privileges the light skin and

blue eyes. Claudia is the voice of the community's blues and Pecola is the site of the inscription of the community's blues.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Morrison portrays in her novel, *The Bluest Eye*, how black female bodies are negated by white culture. They are made invisible in white society. Mass culture produced by white does not represent black people. In order to follow them, black people frequently refuse themselves. The mass spread of images of femininity in American society forced black women to negate them and try to live the life of white women like Pecola and Pauline Breedlove. *The Bluest Eye* documents the effect of these images on women's body and their sexuality. Black women are doubly negated because of their race and gender. Through this novel Morrison wants the reader to witness the complexity of black female subjectivity that shapes the experience of black females.

Morrison's characters experience themselves as wounded or imprisoned not only by their gender but also by racial and economic divisions. Black women face a sense of double diminishment in white patriarchal society. In *The Bluest Eye* white girl like Maureen Peel is always praised for her beauty but Pecola is humiliated all the time for being black and poor. Morrison shows that even highly educated people like doctors and teachers discriminate between black and white. White doctor treats black women like animals and white teachers consider black girl invisible. Even black males dominate and suppress black women. They exploit black women psychologically as well as sexually. White women also find themselves superior to black women. They also take advantages of black women. To protest this marginalized situation, Morrison, in her novels, gives black female characters a central and strong position and male characters a subordinate position. The

protagonists are black females while males are just shadows, womanizers, or deserters.

To overcome this suppression from every side, Morrison advocates for female bonding among black women. In her novels women and girls support each other in their difficult and bad situations like in Aunt Jimmy's illness. They work hand in hand to overcome race, gender and class discrimination. Though some females are successful to overcome these situation but most of them fall prey to these situation.

Morrison takes recourse to literary forms for protesting oppression. She uses female language and forms to articulate women's problems. She denies the language and forms of patriarchy. In her novel, forms play vital role. Morrison has designed *The Bluest Eye* as a multi-voiced novel which supplement its thematic focus on communities as sites of meaning. By exploiting the Dick and Jane Reader, Morrison violates the unity of life shown there as the life depicted in the reader is unachievable by black children. She also orders her novel in four seasonal parts. The notion of the seasons is that they are annually recurring condition. Through this design Morrison suggests that black female plight is also never ending process. *The Bluest Eye's* form clarifies Morrison's anger. The story line and seasonal cyclicity suggest an entrapment. This design reveals that the tyranny of racist and gender value is inescapable. By making the oppression visible, Morrison advocates for woman's empowerment and freedom to overcome such domination in society.

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