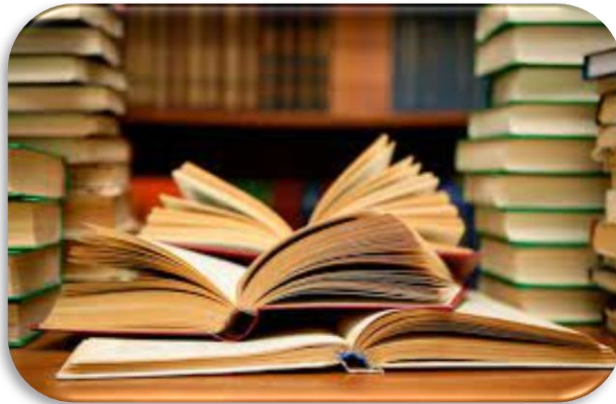


## Review Paper



## The Discourse of Racist Violence in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

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### Abstract

This paper explores how Western's overpowering cultural ideals of beauty, founded on physical features such as black skin, curly thick hair and flat noses, function as tools of racial oppression. Alienation, self-rejection, self-loathing and ultimately self-destruction are Afro-Americans' reactions to the dominant standards of Western culture. The objective of this paper is to explore psychological and ideological means that justify and internalize racism in the mindsets of both Euro-Americans and diasporic Afro-Americans. An amalgamation of Black gender feminism, psychoanalytic approaches, and linguistic racism in addition to critical discourse analysis is used to provide the innovative methodology practiced in this paper. A linguistic reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* offers a fresh sight at the gate of new literary interpretation methods; moreover, applying Critical Discourse Analysis to trace racism in slavery system is the innovative aspect of the present paper. This paper concludes that internalized racism is not only a psychological but an ideological problem. It is also concluded that although racism has an ideological basis, it cannot be reduced to ideology, as is often done in literary texts.

**Key Terms:** Racist violence, Racial ideology, Internalized racism, Discourse analysis, Linguistic racism

مقاله حاضر به بررسی چگونگی تبدیل شدن معیارهای ایده آل های فرهنگی سلطه گر زیبا شناسی غرب، بنا شده بر ویژگی‌های فیزیکی به ابزاری برای سرکوب نژادی می پردازد. از خود بیگانگی، طرد شدن از خود، خود بیزاری و در نهایت خود ویرانگری واکنش های آمریکایی های آفریقایی تبار نسبت به معیارهای غالب فرهنگ غرب است. سیاهپوستان طبقه فرودست نمود بیرونی انبوهی از صفات منفی مرتبط با سنت ها و ایدئولوژی‌هایی است که رنگ تیره سیاهپوستان را تجلی شر، شیطان، نفرین خدایان، هراس های شب هنگام و نقطه مخالف زیبایی می داند. از این رو جدایی سیاهپوستان از دیگر نژادهای بشری غیر قابل تردید است. هدف این مقاله بررسی ابزارهای روانشناختی و ایدئولوژیکی است که نژادپرستی را در باور جمعی اروپایی-آمریکایی ها و آفریقایی-آمریکایی های دور از وطن نهادینه و توجیه پذیر می کند. برای ارائه متدولوژی بدیع در این مقاله از تلفیقی کارآمد از فمینیسم جنسیتی سیاه پوستان، رویکردهای روانکاوانه و نژادپرستی کلامی به همراه تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی استفاده شده است. خوانش زبانشناسی از رمان آبی‌ترین چشم اولین اثر تونی مورسون خوانشی متفاوت در مبحث روش‌های مدرن تفسیر ادبی ارائه می‌دهد. علاوه بر این، استفاده از تحلیل گفتمان انتقادی به عنوان رویکردی میان رشته ای که به زبان به عنوان شکلی از عملکرد اجتماعی برای ردیابی نژادپرستی در نظام برده داری مینگرد، جنبه نوآوری مقاله حاضر است. این مقاله نتیجه می گیرد که نژادپرستی نهادینه شده نه تنها یک مشکل ذهنی بلکه یک مشکل ایدئولوژیک است. نتیجه گیری دیگر آن است که همانطور که اغلب در متون ادبی دیده می شود، گرچه نژادپرستی مبنای ایدئولوژیکی دارد نمی توان آن را تنها به ایدئولوژی تقلیل داد.

**واژگان کلیدی:** خشونت نژادی، ایدئولوژی نژادی، نژاد پرستی نهادینه شده، گفتمان تحلیلی، نژاد پرستی زبانی

## INTRODUCTION

Theoretically, there are meaningful relations between ideology, racism and discourse. It seems that both ideology and racism are notably reproduced by social practices and particularly by the notion of discourse. Discourse reproduces systems of dominance, hegemony and social inequality such as racism. Racism as a form of social injustice and dominance is in need of being defined in terms of different types of social practices such as discriminatory discourse. To put in simple words, racism is a complicated system of social inequality in which a few components are at work such as ideology, daily discriminatory discourse, institutional structures, ethnicity, power relations between ethnic minority groups and dominant white European groups as well as many other things. However, limitations of space and scope only allows foregrounding of a few of these features of racism and reproduction of racism in the present paper; namely the relations between racist knowledge (ideologies, models of ethnicity, representations, political discourse of racism, organizational structures of racism and power relations between dominant white European and ethnic minority groups deprived of any human rights).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Racist narratives reflect racial issues from a variety of cultural standpoints. Issues concerning the notions of race and racism permeate American literature and continue to be among the most critical, social topics today, and are of central concern to students, teachers, and scholars. The body of racist discourse narratives explores how these racial issues have been treated in a dozen of main novels including Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) that evoked charges of *racism* against the novel and against Mark Twain who merely had aimed to present race discrimination and power relations between the whites and the blacks; while others see *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as an attack on racism, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) which is a tale from the Native Indians as a marginalized community that suffer because of genocide, exile and racism, and all these curses are attributed to the whites. In *The House on Mango Street* (1984), the Mexican-American author, Sandra Cisneros, foregrounds the direct link between racial inequality, poverty, and violence. Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) had great impact on the direction of the new black literature. Wright's *Native Son* argues that without access to power, black life is bleak, far from the possibilities of success and threatened by the ever-present hostile world. William Faulkner's well-known cannon of literature like *The Sound and The Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Light in August* (1932), and *Absalom, Absalom* (1936), are overloaded with confusion over racial identity, with mixed-race characters fighting to settle their origins and struggling to find an appropriate way to fit themselves into a racially essentialist society. Paul Rosenblatt's signature book, *The Impact of Racism on African American Families: Literature as Social Science* (2015), adopts an innovative scope to explore the burden of racism on Afro-Americans. With a critical view to narrate ordinary experiences of Afro-Americans, Rosenblatt's book employs novels written by African American writers such as James Baldwin and Toni Morrison as a corpus of analysis.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Since this was qualitative research paper, the analysis was based on language and observations involving some kind of textual analysis. The researcher was only interested in giving a description of the cases, situations and incidents under research study. This was a theory-based design method created by



collecting, analyzing and presenting data. The methodology applied by the researcher in the current paper to interpret Toni Morrison's selected text, *The Bluest Eye* as the corpus of the study, was a close reading that focuses on its exploration of discourse, ideology, mechanisms, and functions of racist violence embedded in Black slavery. The notion of racist violence was closely studied through critical discourse analysis, Black gender feminism, and psychoanalytic approach, and in different fields of study embedded in racism, xenophobia, Afro-phobia, animalism, dehumanization, colorism, othering, *lacification* (the whitening of the non-white) among other concepts.

Critical discourse analysis or discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) is a common interdisciplinary qualitative research method in many fields of humanity such as linguistics, psychology, and cultural studies for studying spoken or written language related to its social context. Applying CDA means studying by what method language functions and by virtue of what, meaning is constructed in various contexts. CDA is a form of discourse analytic research that mainly studies how social power abuse, inequality and dominance are performed, multiplied, and opposed by text and speech in political and social context. Teun Adrianus van Dijk's as well as Norman Fairclough's theories as researchers in the fields of CDA have contributed to the flowering of psychology of text processing. The paper in hand aims to explore how making use of linguistic resources – verbs and nouns in particular – helps create ideologies or pseudo-ideologies. Linguistic racism is a type of discrimination in which language is used as a means of oppression. Traditional approaches in Toni Morrison's narratives have regarded identity as a school, cultural, or racial prototype. However, the ongoing paper is to adopt CDA to study and analyze the topic of individual and communal African-American identity. Applying CDA throws a new light on the subject of identity and subjectivity in the minority Black literature. It is hypothesized that the ideology of violence and exploitation in Toni Morrison's novels is based on the ideological strategies of Self/Other presentation. CDA is used to uncover the hidden deception and manipulation of discourse indiscernible by Morrison's readers. According to Norman Fairclough, it is quite explicit in the case of Sexism in which language is manipulated linguistically for the interest of males against females (*Discourse* 6). In the present paper CDA is partly used as a conceptual framework for exploring racist-sexist stereotypes in Toni Morrison's target novel in political media discourse, that lead to reproduction of ideology in language usage as one of the goals of CDA. This paper also deals with critical discourse analysis of euphemism as well as the political link between deceitful language and euphemisms as linguistic terms that misleadingly attempt to conceal what is dishonorable, wrong, harsh, unethical, or taboo to present the manifestations of systemic violence normal and moderate.

Black gendered feminism, also known as Afro-feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on the African-American women's traumas and traces the intersectionality of sexism and racism. Black feminism as a social and political movement focuses on the multi-dimensional aspects of the oppression of Black women in the United States and many other countries. Black feminism as a field of study is distinguished from mainstream feminism in that it is after understanding the injustices and racial discriminations as painful experiences affecting Black women's daily lives. It is also distinguished by a long-lived emphasis on intersectionality; namely, the interaction and multiplying effects of manifold types of discrimination, including classism, sexism, and racism.



Psychoanalytic Criticism calls for the exploring of the unconscious, the suppressed psyche in order to perceive human being's life experience, language, culture, and ultimately society because to psychoanalytic critics the text can only be analyzed as if it is a dream with two contents: manifest content and latent content. This theory argues that because literature resembles dreams, the text represents the writer's unconscious fears, anxieties, traumas, and desires, and therefore through the text the writer conducts himself/herself with his or her own psychosis.

### Textual Analysis, Discussion and Findings

#### *The Racist Discourse in The Bluest Eye*

Toni Morrison presents the main idea of *The Bluest Eye* on the very opening pages: "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..." (*Bluest* 3). The next paragraph rewrites the same paragraph with no punctuations: "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 ..." (*Bluest* 3). The next excerpt removes all punctuation marks and spaces altogether: "Hereisthehousitisgreenandwhiteithas areddooritisveryprettyhereisthefamilymotherfatherdickandjaneliveinthegreenandwhitehouse theyareveryhappy..." (*Bluest* 4)

These three excerpts are from a primer book, *Dick and Jane Primer*, written by William Gray and William Elson. In the 1930s, it was broadly exercised to teach pupils how to read in American primary schools. Representing white ordinary families, the selected texts aimed at depicting children the day-to-day lives of "true and brave American boys and girls" and train them in what way they also could "become a helpful American citizen" (Werrlein). Elevated as ethical and fearless kids, Dick and Jane were concrete ideals to be admired and to be taken as a model. Dick has brownish hair and his sister, Jane has blond hair. His parents and kid sister are also milky-skinned. They are representative of a self-fashioned American model, a model that adopted the prevailing society's ethics. Anything not including this white model was disregarded and left unnoticed. As marked by Toni Morrison herself in *Playing in the Dark* (2007), the nation's literary canon had interest in developing an identity of a nation, and "American means white" (39).

From a more critical viewpoint, in the excerpts above, Toni Morrison rewrites the very paragraph thrice. In the first attempt she observes all the codes of standard speech. Morrison leaves the spacing in the passage, but removes its punctuations in the second attempt. It sounds a little puzzling, but even so it is still decipherable. In the third attempt, she deletes punctuation and spacing altogether. With everything shattered at once, it sounds chaotic and almost incompressible. As noted by critics including Carl D. Malmgren, the first passage is to portray the *ideal*, and consequently Dick and Jane's white American family. The second paragraph is attributed to MacTeer family, and the third one to Breedlove family (152). To put in more concrete words, these three versions represent the lifestyles that Morrison explores in *The Bluest Eye*. The first version of *Dick and Jane Primer* that renders *standard English* is clearly that of western world, demonstrated by the Fisher family. The second version of *Dick and Jane Primer* booklet represents MacTeer family, shaped by loving and responsible parents taking care of their kids: Claudia MacTeer and Frieda MacTeer that are trying to survive terrible poverty. The Breedloves' lifestyle



is the same as the third version of *Dick and Jane Primer* booklet, distorted run-on-version. The Breedloves live in a misshapen and chaotic world which finally destroys the kids: Pecola Breedlove and her fourteen-year-old brother, Samuel (Sam). To focus on the sexist and racist that pervade the narrative of the Dick and Jane booklet, Morrison shifts the language of Dick and Jane's narrative from faultless to faultful and finally to chaotic. More often than not, Pecola Breedlove's parents frequently have physical and verbal violent quarrels. Fights with physical and verbal attacks are their routine of life. In Patricia Hill Collins' very words, "[...] the reticence to speak about rape and sexual violence upholds troublesome conceptions of Black masculinity" (230). After suffering several violent traumas, Pecola, the female protagonist in *The Bluest Eye*, starts making a link between her identity and violence rooted in dominant ideals of white beauty, i.e., possessing not only blue eyes but also the bluest eyes to be accepted and loved by her black misogynous community.

### ***Internalizing Racist Ideology in The Bluest Eye***

During man's restless history racial minorities have always tolerated a vicious procedure of psychic colonization, absorbing the dominant racial order: "The white colonialist strategy is to get the colonized Black to undergo a process of epistemic violence, a process whereby the Black begins to internalize all of the colonizer's myths, to begin to see his/her identity through the paradigm of white supremacy/Eurocentricity" (Yancy 257).

The complicated notion of race has been a problematic issue for a long time. Given that this inescapable issue is chiefly faced by people of color, it has moved to touch novel as a widespread form of literary means. It is not surprising that the concept of race has obsessed Toni Morrison as a giant in Black literature. Morrison in her first novel tried to help the readers see into the private mindset of her characters suffering from racial discrimination. Internalized racism is a psychological issue rendered by Morrison to represent what has obsessed each one of her character's psyche. In Kira Hudson Banks and Jadah Stephens' very words, "Internalized racial oppression [is] the ways in which a member of a target group is in relationship with the dominant group's ideology and the context to which they accept their subordinate status as deserved, natural, and inevitable" (93). Western ideal beauty, for example, that is so far from the physical appearance of the Blacks', is in harmony with this debased view concerning black's self that has been considered an accepted and rarely questioned ideology. Not only internalized racism is a psychological challenge but an ideological one. This issue is cemented by "the acceptance of the negative social beliefs and stereotypes about themselves" (Banks and Stephens 94). To rephrase it, internalized black inferiority and white superiority are effective tools at the service of racism as a kind of global violence. Internalized racism begins first as a social construct then it slowly penetrates to become an embedded issue.

In *The Bluest Eye*, racism is linked with negative stereotypes as savageness, ugliness, and dirtiness. Toni Morrison has peopled her debut novel with the niggers who due to their black skin are far distanced from *cleanness* and *neatness*. Throughout the novel the color black connotes ugliness and dirtiness. These negative stereotypes that result in self-loathing pass from one generation to the next generation to stick to the niggers' attitudes and mindsets and are refashioned at the very age in the new generation. Associating blackness with dirtiness is adopted as a familiar fact. This idea is internalized



even among the black people. These bad serotypes are repeated again and again to be internalized by the victims of hate speech violence. Repetition, which is highlighted in critical discourse analysis, for Winston Lamont Brembeck and William Smiley Howell "serves to clarify and to hold attention to an idea until it becomes a part of us" (177). Similarly, Frantz Fanon in his celebrated book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) lays stress on the fact that the black young adults are more prone to accept "a white man's attitude" and take it as a kind of "sacrificial dedication" that is simultaneously a self-enslavement that lashes their own colony as black race (114). It is not shocking that Claudia, Frieda, and Pecola regard filthy places as their place and waste their time only in dirty whereabouts and "could go up the alley and see what's in the trash cans" (*Bluest* 26) wearing ragged dresses, "She looked at Pecola. Saw the dirty torn dress, that 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 ..." (*Bluest* 94). The niggers are simply dehumanized just due to their black skin. When Pecola, for instance, visits the candy store, the store keeper's quick look changes her to an insect: "He look [sic] towards her ... he senses that he need [sic] not waste the effort of a glance" (*Bluest* 48) and later when she visits the doctor to examine her pregnancy conditions, her humanity is reduced to a minimal bestiality: "They [niggers] deliver right away and with no pain. Just like horses" (124). Corrin Pinkney assumes "the black body was subhuman and didn't deserve the rights of human beings" (94). Weiqiang Mao and Miguan Zhang believe that "For Morrison white gaze would render blacks as merely low forms of animals" (25). In fact, the roots of animalization can be found in blackness.

### ***Violence Embedded in Internalized Racism in The Bluest Eye***

Practically, racism takes both forms of visible and invisible violence. The conceptual framework of racism together with other kinds of violence can be employed to first-hand and second-hand experiences of racism as a kind of physical, psychological, symbolic, and systemic violence, and in opposition to *otherness*. The antipathy of the physical presence, rituals, customs, beliefs, traditions and personalities of *othered* groups is a global phenomenon. Structural violence of racism is a kind of invisible violence that drives some people to self-harm; in some severe serious cases to commit suicide. Applying linguistic criticism in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* indicates that the black color connotes ugliness: the blacker, the uglier. Morrison's African American characters in *The Bluest Eye* are "poor and black ... they believed they were ugly ... they had each accepted it without question" (*Bluest* 39). Their black skin, crinkly thick hair and flat noses distanced them far from White standards of beauty. In Ela Przybylo's viewpoint, these main features "are essential to contributions of 'difference', 'abnormality' and 'ugliness'" (7). Blackness has constructively been criminalized. Put simply, blackness is an excuse to be othered, decentralized and marked as angry. The blacks are, in Ela Przybylo's very words, "the marginalized group often framed as inferior to or less than the group power [the whites]" (94). In contrast to negative stereotypes of blackness that are well established in the black's ego, the embodied secondary meanings of whiteness are associated with positive images such as beauty, superiority and freedom. The blacks who are deeply influenced by the authoritative ideologies of the whites long for white standards of beauty. "The ideology that being white was better than being black became imbedded into the black psyche as a result of this treatment" (Pinkney 94). Pecola, in *The Bluest Eye*, began her imaginary journey to metamorphosis into a girl possessing blue eyes by worshiping white modes of beauty as Shirley Temple and taking plenty of milk



from her white mug decorated by Shirley Temple's image. In spite of the fact that Claudia extremely disliked being submitted to the dominant ideology of whiteness, she modified her idea step by step. In her case, whiteness is associated with having romantic affairs, telltaling her prospective sexual partners: "My supply of ideas exhausted, I began to concentrate on the white spots on my fingernails. The total signified the number of boyfriends I would have. Seven" (*Bluest* 27). Moreover, the image of whiteness gains a 'sweet' connotation: "Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face." (*Bluest* 50)

Connotations and stereotypes play a great role in Critical Discourse Analysis. CDA depicts a series of approaches to the ways readers as well as researchers may critically analyze texts and cultural products to disclose connotations and stereotypes, and prolong the larger cultural narratives that these connotations hold up. Giving a name to candy after white standards with blue eyes, blond hair, and cheerful faces, associates whiteness with sweetness. Pecula cannot give up dreaming and worshiping to be granted the gift of possessing blue eyes. The black community is so obsessed by adoration of white standards of beauty that they become blind to their beauty that swells in their black race.

### ***Shadism: Black on Black Racism in The Bluest Eye***

Shadism, also known as colorism, is the racial segregation against an individual with more darkish skin color within members of Black community. Shadism spotlights how persons within the black racial societies are treated unfairly due to their darker skin. Contrary to dark-skinned black slaves, mulattos who were light-skinned were considered more active and intelligent and were assigned to perform easier jobs such as household duties. However, dark-skinned slaves performed back-breaking jobs in the plantation farmlands. In other words, dark skin slaves were connected to ugliness, poverty and inferiority; while mulattos were associated to European standards of beauty, opportunities and privileges. Adria Goldman and Damion Waymer state that: "Young women's ideas of beauty are created in part by mediated images, interpersonal influences, and social comparison" (5). In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison depicts how Afro-American females are considered ugly by their own family and the society because of their darker skin. Through some quotes from *The Bluest Eye* the reader can discern that the case of shadism has a lot to do with racialism in the homogeneous race and is under the influence of other issues as class and gender, "A new girl in school Maureen Peal ... When teacher called on her, they smiled encouragingly" (26).

Observing the internalized stereotypical fact embedded in black communities, being dark black is the most catastrophic chance one may have and it means that no boy would befriend dark black girls. The bulk of light-dark Afro-Americans preferred to be disconnected from their African roots. Maureen as a light-colored young girl forgets that she belongs to the same black community and outcries: "I am cute! And you are ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute!" (*Bluest* 73).

### ***Oppressive Cycle of Race in The Bluest Eye***

Black community seems to be trapped in the violent inhuman cycle of caste, gender bias and above all, race. Toni Morrison as an Afro-American identity explorer asks African-American females to respect themselves, their culture, their race, and not to be overmastered by Westerners superiority or their beauty



standards. Morrison arranges different types of adolescent girls in her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*. Pecola who has nobody to stand beside her accepts the white standards of beauty. She tried in vain to come into possession of a pair of blue eyes and eventually lost her sanity. Claudia, the youngster narrator of *The Bluest Eye*, incarnates Morrison's view of "emerging consciousness of black women in U.S.A. to love black identity and personality and be free from the racist white domination" (Aggarwal 110). At the hand of Toni Morrison, Claudia turns into a breathing example of Afro-American oppressed women's passage to redemption as a pathfinder of the movement of Black gender feminism. Opposed to Pecola, she does not believe in the dominant white standards of beauty. She does not strive to win social status through physical charm. As claimed by K. Sumana, Morrison is strongly on the opinion that "the concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the most pernicious and destructive" (7). Claudia comes to the terms with the fact that she is not a part of the mythical norms of beauty like Shirley Temple or even light dark like Maureen Peal. Unlike Pecola, she does not destroy herself for not having white standards of cuteness rather she started to criticize these white standards of beauty. Contrary to Pecola, she turns her head away from Shirley Temple who is in possession of pale skin, gold-colored hair, and blue eyes. She even despises the white doll she receives as a gift. By destroying the blond doll instead of playing with it, Claudia symbolically destroys the western standards of beauty. Pauline, Pecola's mother, is another Morrison's character who represents black women's strife and opposition to a racist, patriarchal society. Although she is a wife to Cholly and a mother to two kids, she performs neither the traditional role of a wife nor that of a mother. She never depends on her man for her living nor confirms male's superiority. Even in her sexual relationship with her husband she is not submissive: "When he does, I feel a power. I be strong, I be pretty, I be young" (*Bluest* 101). In Mary Anne Ferguson's words, "in a biological role, the woman is the opposite of the all-powerful woman on a pedestal: the sex object is man's prey, the fulfiller of man's sexual needs, a receptacle for his passion" (7). Pauline, like Pecola, her daughter, does not fit the mythical norms of beauty. However, unlike Pecola, she does not hate her body. She visits movie theatres to escape from her miserable condition as a black, poor, working class, handicapped, and illiterate woman and makes a colorful world of Shangri-La for herself by watching movies and participating the luxurious lives of movie stars. Pauline works for a rich white family as the most desirable job in those days for a black maidservant. In her master's house she finds order, beauty, politeness, peace, and respect which is impossible to experience in her rundown home.

The three black sex workers: Miss Marie, China, and Poland, are warm and good hearted. Whereas they stand at the lowest social hierarchy in the black community in which the accepted norms of female beauty is chastity and possessing light skin, they are happy and satisfied with their life. By rendering them as "comfortable with their bodies and sexuality" (*Bluest* 180), Morrison challenges the gender stereotypes. Pecola admires their carefree laughter, gaiety and strength. While docile women are subservient, they oppress their customers. They are strong, self-assured and not sorry for their way of making their own bread at all. They enjoy the world they have made for themselves. Whilst the black community hates Pecola, these women help her compassionately. In Birgit Kristine Holm's words, "Aware of being outcasts in society, the women perhaps recognize how Pecola is an outcast too, and feel no need to put her down" (50). Pauline, Claudia, and the sex workers all struggle to make their ways in the racist, patriarchal society. They suffer from being decentralized, discriminated and ignored; however,





they never fall into frustrations, traumas, and despair. While Pecola drowns into insanity, Claudia, Pauline as well as the black prostitutes keep on their strife to detect and enjoy what life has let them have.

In Sharon Gravett's words, "the dominant culture achieves and maintains its prominence because of its wealth; hence, the values it promotes tend to be monetary ones" (92). Sharon Gravett in addition notes that "those unable to afford the material lifestyle society values are ruthlessly pushed aside" (92). That is exactly what happens to Breedlove family. Claudia who is the narrator of some parts of *The Bluest Eye* at times narrates from a kid's point of view and at times from the viewpoint of a grown up, looking back, challenges the adoration of white beauty but she fails to perceive its mechanism, and wrongly locates the engineered idealization on her doll. She pulls to pieces the Raggedy Ann doll to tear apart the nucleus of racism's structure. The ideology of the persona, a psychological term coined by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, is manipulated in *The Bluest Eye* by adoration of being white as cuteness. In Carl D. Malmgren words, "The text composed by the adult Claudia, *The Bluest Eye*, carries on the same discovery procedure on a grander scale; it undertakes the deconstruction of the ideology that makes those dolls beautiful" (154). In the case of Pauline Breedlove, "she was never able, after her education on the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty" (*Bluest* 122). Her daughter, Pecola, was named after a Hollywood movie character by her mother, Pauline. It is not stunning, because beyond everything, at some time in her life, Pauline Breedlove felt overjoyed when she was in the movie house. She had absorbed the clear message embedded in Hollywood films that the closer to being white, the cuter one will be and she understood that as a means to be welcomed and respected by the supreme community, one was in need of being cute. When Pauline's daughter was born she discerned that her baby was sharp minded, but that was not enough for her, and she uttered that "Lord she was ugly" (*Bluest* 124).

A number of then-existing black women, as claimed by bell hooks, "have equated manhood with the ability of men to be sole economic providers in the family, and ... feel cheated and betrayed by black men who refuse to assume this role" (*Ain't I* 129). As a new moviegoer, Pauline's new interest uprooted her from her African American backgrounds thoroughly. "At the movies Pauline started to be interested in the lifestyles portrayed on the screen, such as white men taking such good care of they [sic] women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with the bath tubs right in the same room with the toilet. They [sic] pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard" (*Bluest* 121). When Pauline examined her life side by side against those white women in the movies who received costly gifts from their men, she felt dissatisfied with her marital relationship with Cholly. Pauline to some extends accepts and supports patriarchy. Through watching white families in the movies, she finds patriarchy as desirable. She feels discouraged that her own life has nothing whatever to do with it. Just after she loses one of her fore teeth, she noticed that from then on she was far from the Western norms of beauty. She was poor and had very dark skin. When she discerned that she would never be able to meet the white standards, Pauline decided to ignore her own life and family and devote her life to her housework job at the Fishers'.



## Nonviolent Resistance to Colonial Racism in *The Bluest Eye*

A portion of Black Pan-Nationalism and African American movement's slogan is that 'Black is beauty'. This expression urged Afro-American artists to turn the accepted and dominant European standards of beauty, and help the blacks quit self-loathing; though Toni Morrison did not welcome this slogan. Morrison rejects 'Black is beautiful' slogan altogether. To her the existing of any beautiful thing requires the existing of an ugly thing that implies exclusion and damaging. Therefore, Morrison does not sound to discern that connecting blackness to cuteness can value Afro-American traditions. To Morrison valuing the concept of beauty is in fact another way of dominating white values. Alternatively, Morrison suggests racial self-respect, making relationship to traditional roots of Afro-Americans that are derived from the black community including jazz and blues music, narrative myths, sagas, social rites, religious beliefs and a strong sense of belonging. Morrison argues that beauty bears "one of the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought" (*Bluest* 120). This is among the motivations that drove Pauline to disconnect herself completely from her racial and cultural backgrounds. Pauline hurts herself and her household in her self-disgust because she is removed from her community she really belongs to.

The dominant white race has dictated the racist norms of beauty with its stereotypes and prejudices. And as Black characteristics do not meet the White norms; women of color are left behind "outside of the definition of beauty, and thus outside of the confines of the hegemonic femininity" (Slatton 44). 'Ugly' blacks are hopeless to be confirmed and supported by their own circle. Systematic discrimination and racism create dysfunctional and careless families: parents who have no respect for each other, fail to look after their own kids, and in some cases exploit them as Pecola's parents in *The Bluest Eye*. Afro-American's internalization of bad racial stereotypes and negative images produce micro-aggression: the "traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 107).

In order to get rid of racial inferiority internalized in the niggers, they do their utmost to get along with western norms with the aid of beauty care and beauty practices including the process of *lacification* (the whitening of the non-white), makeup, hairdressing, surgical operation, and etcetera. The cosmetics industry has put on sale beautifying products for a considerable length of time that helped the black females appear *whiter* and as a consequence more *beautiful* by nearing American-Europeans' standards of beauty. Morrison reveals the destructive potentiality of the hegemonic norms of white female prettiness. Morrison tries to subvert racialized prettiness by means of representing approving images of blackness and reviving Afro-American self-respect. Morrison in her fiction criticizes racialized beauty standards generated by mass media, movies, advertisements, beauty products, and so on. "Morrison's critical depiction of materialism and consumerism reveals the crucial role the product manufactures and advertisers in a consumer society play as creators and enforcers of dominant beauty standards" (Jensen 4). Frantz Fanon in his seminal work *The Wretched of the Earth* argues that "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" (27). However, Toni Morrison proposes non-violence ways to achieve decolonization. Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* depicts how Afro-Americans reject their own heritage and identity, while contributing in their victimizations as in maintaining white hegemony by confirming fixed concepts of beauty. Morrison reveals how decolonization from the forced Euro-American norms of



beauty is connected to the confirmation of the black's collective and individual racial identity and self-love.

### CONCLUSION

The main conclusion the present paper is arrived at is that violence should not be studied just as a part of a life process but as a complicated and multilayered structure. In colonies in which the submissive people are of non-European races or where the native peoples are minority, racist ideology is an important part of constructing and naturalizing an unequal and unjust type of interculturality. Historically, race and its coexisting racism and racial bias are common justifications for the maltreatment of servile peoples after the expansion of the slave traffic in the Atlantic Middle Passage from sixteenth century onward. Through metaphors such as tree/branch, parent/child, and so on, the colonial system promised a national idea of improvement for the colonized, which in theory permits at an uncertain future the subaltern colonials might be elevated to the caste of the colonizer. However in reality this promised future is always postponed. Since the advent of slavery in the United States, racial separation has rested on the ideology that there are basic discrepancies between 'blacks' and 'whites'. However if we accept that race is an empty notion, racialism would fade away: in absence of race, racism cannot exist.

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### **Biodata**

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