

Escaping the Funk in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

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Abstract

The Bluest Eye examines racism i.e. the concept of double consciousness- a sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. Pecola Breedlove is completely reified by the gaze of the dominant definition of her as the Other. Indeed the novel is as much about the plight of Pecola as it is about the collective internalization of self-hatred, the cultural segregation of a people and their mostly unconscious battle with what western civilization considers beautiful. Pecola thinks that she is ugly, by others' opinions of her, and want to become beautiful so she will be recognized and be the center of attention. The novel chronicles the search for beauty among the limitations of life, both from within and without. It documents the destruction of a young girl whose final push to insanity comes after her father rapes her. Pecola yearns for blues eyes as the next best thing to being white.

Keywords: Internalization, Identity, Blue Eyes, Funk.

The Bluest Eye depicts the force of beauty from the perspective of those who are not included in its traditional definition. It clearly demonstrates the negative effects of beauty that is controlled and defined by a single, ruling group in society. It condemns the Western concept of beauty and the politics of supremacy behind it; also it is intended as a warning tale to the blacks and human beings in general, not to emulate the example of Pecola. It suggests alternative concepts of beauty, and consequently undermines conventional, stable notions of universal beauty. Morrison's concept of beauty is Keatsian, "a thing of beauty is a joy forever" (Keats *Endymion* 27) and that "beauty is truth" (Keats *Grecian Urn* 169). Beauty associated with harassment and humiliation can neither be a source of joy, nor can be true. To know a person one must look inside one's heart, not at one's face.

Morrison presents the difficulty of maintaining cultural values in an environment where white images of beauty and success are installed as early as childhood. Blacks dwell on the images of beauty and success they receive, and the notion that being white is more prestigious. Morrison's reveals the evil that is caused by a society that is indoctrinated by the inherent goodness and beauty of whiteness and the ugliness of blackness. In *The Bluest Eye* Toni Morrison makes a judgment on the human condition. Pecola's story shows that people depend on the world to find their self-value and their self-worth. It's sad that the Pecolas of the world rely on others to see what they should see in themselves as "Pecola's tragedy is the ultimate expression of an entire community infected with distorted notions of worth" (Heinze 4). In fact, *The Bluest Eye* is "a wrenching account of how the western notion of idealized beauty and its penchant for blue eyes and blond hair turn self-esteem in the black community into self-loathing" (Heinze 2). It reveals the evil that is caused by a society that is indoctrinated by the inherent goodness and beauty of whiteness and the ugliness of blackness.

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Love is the key to survival, and that is why it is God's Greatest Commandment. With love, Pecola might have lived the life that Claudia does. "The novel is an indictment of twisted values and tangled lives and is Morrison's most blatant testimony to the impossibilities of love in a world of humanity" (Heinz 129-30). Pecola's misery is obtained through the touch of her father's hand and the voice of her community's struggle with racial separation, anger, and ignorance.

The novel uses the technique of contrast to reveal the fictitious world of the whites with the reality of life of black children. The primer of Dick-And-Jane present the grossness of standardised blond concepts projected as desirable. Although Dick-And-Jane exists only on the pages of that primer, yet its clean image pervades over the whole of American society - from schoolbooks to print and electronic media as the standard for family behaviour and beauty. Words have power and pictures have great impact on the impressionable minds of the school going children. They are led to believe that others are happy because they are pretty, are not noisy and are living an orderly life. They look for that line of demarcation they can see as marking the difference from their own existence. The more confusing, different, poverty ridden or depressed the child's life is, the more she will yearn for the norms the dominant society provides for beauty and happiness. Reality is compared to the visual word picture. The primer has been familiar to a few generations of Americans - both black and white.

As Barbara Christian writes:

the prose of our very first primer as we sat at our very first desk in our very first school and had our very first lesson in reading. ... Five year old children heard these words, saw these pictures across the landscape of America ... perhaps more than any other single word picture image (139).

The three version of the primer is symbolic of the three lifestyles that Morrison explores in the novel either directly or by implication. Embedded within the primer are the novels three level of narrative consciousness : the first level is the personal idealized consciousness of childhood, as demonstrated by Pecola's yearning for blue eyes, the second represent the less sedate, less naive consciousness of the novels central narrator, Claudia MacTeer, who as an adult recalls, the ambivalence that the idyllic image created by prose; the third version provides the social/historical consciousness of an objective narrator, who by repeating the prose and exposing the contrast between the ideal and the real, offers the reader no escape from her anger at the dissolution of black lives.

Finally, an equally innovative structural feature is the use of lines from the primer to head subsections in the novel, illustrating the vast differences between the fictional Dick and Jane world and the reality of Pecola's family life. Dividing the novel are small excerpts from the primer that head each chapter. They are printed without any spaces or punctuation marks and in some way, to do with the section that follows. For instant the section that describes Pecola's mother starts with an excerpt describing Dick and Jane's mother, and so on. They just go to show how prevalent and vital the descriptions of white world are in Pecola's life and actually and how immaterial and inappropriate these images really are. With regards to her first novel Morrison's stated aim was to show "how to survive *whole* in a world where we are all of us in same measure *victims of something*" (Bakerman 40).

The novel does not follow the chronological order; Morrison's uses many voices and points of view to describe the plight of Pecola. Narration comes from several sources. However, most of the narration comes from Claudia MacTeer as a nine year old child. Claudia's nearly detached and unsentimental mind provides the focal lens for gathering the diverse narrative strand. Her narration is truly based on the point of view of the inside narrator. She is within the mind and sensibilities of Pecola, whose quest for blue eyes act as the central imaginative interest in the narrative. But Morrison makes Claudia reflect on the story as an adult. Her narration moves smoothly from childhood reminiscent to the adult- reflection of the another, incorporating the pain and victimization of Pecola as a crucial factor in her need to be articulate. In the end - which is actually where the novel begins - Pecola is living on the edge of town, permanently isolated from the black community by her inability to rise above the crimes committed against her. But because Claudia's perspective is governed to some extent by love and youth Morrison tells the novels grimmer story through an omniscient narrator. Pecola is intentionally kept away from any first person narration of the story. Pecola's experiences will have less meaning coming from Pecola herself because "a total and complete victim" will be an unreliable narrator, unwilling (or unable) to relate the actual circumstances of that year (Step 17). Without Claudia and Morrison's story-telling, Pecola's marginalization and social death become a distinct possibility for anyone who challenges the present - invisibility of black feminist interpretation by speaking the unspeakable hell of Pecola's real life counterparts.

The novel is concerned with the question of survival. It is a question of survival versus disintegration in a racist society. But the question is who survives and why? One finds that there are some who retain the sense of identity in the face of disintegration. From the very beginning it is very clear that the MacTeer girls survive and Pecola does not. The MacTeers are shown as having the inner strength to withstand the poverty and discrimination of the racist society and to provide an environment in which their children can grow. Pecola's family on the other hand lacks this strength. Morrison seems to suggest that if some blacks are unable to cope with their situation, there are some who are stronger and able to preserve a sense of identity.

Pecola becomes a victim of her wrong values, which do not belong to her community. Claudia, from her youthful innocence, is able to see and relate how Pecola, idolize the "ideals" of beauty presented by white, blue-eyed movie stars like Shirley Temple. Whiteness represents beauty, middle-class affluency, popularity, and happiness. Claudia is so conscious that she is able to understand and interpret the tragic end Pecola. She looks beyond Pecola for the causes of her tragedy and speaks in metaphor: "It never occurred to either of us that the earth itself might have been unyielding" (Morrison *BE* 9). Claudia's comments clearly place the blame on society and not on Pecola the victim. The soil she speaks is the American values, which will continue to destroy certain people who are unable to adjust to a life of survival. Claudia by trying to gain maturity and understanding finally perceives the depth of Pecola's dissent into madness.

By providing two similar black girls, Morrison reveals how white Eurocentric standard of beauty and self-play havoc with the lives of these girls. Morrison also shows how conscious black

girl/women can evade the extreme effects of racism and sexism if she trusts herself. It is the consciousness on the part of Claudia and the unawareness of Pecola that allow the one to survive and pushes the other into madness. Although threatened by the presence of white standards of value, Claudia and Frieda deal with their situation very differently and grow into awareness and maturity.

The novel very clearly puts emphasis on the totally different family set-up in which Claudia and Frieda get nurturing care and rough and sustaining love. The MacTeers are also poor and black, but it offers a stable home where children are looked after. When Claudia gets a doll - produced by the mass-culture industry and are made according to the white ideals of beauty - she does not like and she vents her anger on it by dismembering it and the values it represent, very unlike Pecola who hankers after the possession of white beauty traits. By dismantling the doll, she responds with her anger, turning upside down the negative socializing the values, the doll presents. The egocentricity of the childhood causes Claudia to reject that which is alien and threatening to her. The awareness of her rejection develops an acute anger towards those who reject her. She does so because her parents have instilled in her positive self-consciousness.

What really supports the MacTeers is the understated love that forms the bedrock of the family. Claudia and Frieda do receive that emotional support. Mrs. MacTeer is poor and black, and thus is a harassed a grudging person. She is not able to show softness and tender affection to her children or anyone around her. But when Cholly puts his family outdoors, she immediately takes in his daughter and shows a community feeling which is essential for keeping the black people together. She grumbles when Pecola drinks too many milk, but one can see that she would have said the same thing if one of her daughters had drunk the milk. She is rough overworked and complaining. But it is her inner flow of true and deep love that sustains for family. When Claudia describes her family surroundings one understands what it is for the parents to bring up their children in such poverty and unwholesome surroundings where tender care for the children seems to be out of place. Our house is old, cold and green. At night a kerosene lamp lights one large room. The others are braced in darkness, peopled by roaches and mice. Adults do not talk to us - they give us directions. They issue orders without providing information. When we trip and fall down, they glance at us, if we cut or bruise ourselves, they ask us are we crazy (*BE* 12).

But when the mature Claudia thinks back, she understands what it was that sustained her: Love, thick and dark as Alga Syrup, eased up into that cracked window. I could smell it - taste it - sweet, misty, with an edge of winter green in its base - everywhere in that house. It stuck along with my tongue, to the frosted windowpanes. It coated my chest, along with the salve, and when the flannel came undone in my sleep, the clear sharp curve of air outlines its presence on my throat. And in the night, when my coughing was dry and tough, feet padded into the flannel, readjusted the quiet and rested a moment on my forehead. So when I think of autumn, I think of somebody with hands who does not want me to die (*BE* 14).

Claudia and her sister Frieda are parallels to Pecola.

Pecola grows up surrounded by voices that teach her to hate herself because she is poor and black. She wants to escape to the world of Dick and Jane to get away from her dysfunctional, impoverished family. Pecola has difficulty being something she's not as well as dealing with her own hatred. Human relation revolves around the experience of "the Look", for being "seen" by another both confirms one's reality and threatens one's sense of freedom. This holds a lot of truth in Pecola's life. She looks at others to figure out how she should be feeling and what others see of her she sees in herself. Pecola thinks that she is ugly, by others' opinions of her, and want to become beautiful so she will be recognized and be the center of attention. But the harder she tries the worse things get. The story of Pecola's obsession with whiteness and her intense desire for blue eyes is set exactly during the time that psychologist Kenneth Clark's research into the damaging effects of the white aesthetics on black children was a public issue. The discovery that many African Americans children in 1940 envied white children and like Pecola thought of them as more beautiful and more desirable than themselves made a significant contribution to the progress of civil rights. *The Bluest Eye* contributed to the growing awareness at the time of the damage inflicted on black children by a culture that exalts the white aesthetics. By exploring the forces that create a young black girl's image of herself as ugly and unlovable Morrison addresses the white reader who may wander as to why it is necessary to insist that black is beautiful. Everywhere in the world white skin and blue eyes are taken as signs of beauty. We see how Pecola is forced to long for blue eyes like those of white children so that she would be loved and accepted by both whites and blacks. Pecola is a "little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes. Spoiled by the seductive tug of white standards and values and humiliated by the white society, she gradually lapses into a world of fantasy. So she becomes a girl with bluest eyes, the most beautiful girl. The insanity of this flight from reality culminates with Pecola believing that she has actually acquired them. With her ubiquitous metaphor of flight, Morrison sums up the personal fate of Pecola and the novel's powerful theme:

The damage done was total. She spent her days ... walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach- could not even see- but which filled the valleys of the mind (*BE* 158).

The pathos of this young girl is choking. Being the blackest among the blacks, she feels estranged from the rest. She is indoctrinated to believe that white is worthwhile and black is worthless, meant to stay back. The whole community seems to feel better. No one pays any attention to her. "We saw her sometimes . . . After the gossip and the slow wagging of heads. She was so sad to see. Grown people looked away; children, those who were not afraid of her, laughed outright" (*BE* 158).

The townspeople could have saved Pecola They could have tried to help her. Instead, they chose to despise her and to ridicule her. They denied Pecola the love and compassion that could have saved her; they left her 'drowning in the mud'. *The Bluest Eye* is not merely a melancholic story of a little black girl driven mad by the world's hostility; it also tells the story of black community and

society that persecuted her. Pecola's trauma says a lot about the socio-political and economic oppression of little black girls as they get alienated from black and white Americans. Though slavery has been abolished in American, racism has not. The language and the law changed, but actions and attitudes did not. Black people are still subjugated by whites. White ideals filtered through black society, presenting an image of beauty that black people could never attain, nor should they want to attain. In trying to attain the ideals of a society that was culturally different, Pecola destroyed in herself that which was unique to her first as a person, second as a black person. Oddly, the marginalization and the devastation of Pecola are grounded in superficiality. Pecola thought that the outpouring of aversion towards her was her fault. She thought that if she had blue eyes, the blue eyes of the accepted white ideal, she would be beautiful and therefore loved. The acquisition of the blue eyes she so fiercely covets signifies Pecola's step into madness. It was a safe place, where she could have her blue eyes, and where she could be accepted.

When we consider Pecola's miserable home life, it is not surprising that she finds Dick and Jane's white middle-class world so seductive. Whiteness does not merely connote physical beauty. It implies pretty, happy homes, pretty, happy lives, pretty, happy friends, and even pretty, happy pets.

Pecola doesn't pray for blue eyes simply because she wants to feel pretty. She sincerely believes that her whole life would change-that her parents would stop fighting, that her father would stop drinking, that her brother would stop running away-if she possessed just this one symbol of whiteness. Pecola is the product of a rancorous marriage that supplies her with no emotional support. She tries to do whatever possible to associate with the white race. She feels that the only way she will be loved is if she is white. She does not know what love is, because she cannot even love herself. She does not know what love is "Pecola asked a question that had never entered my (Claudia's) mind. How do you do that? I mean, how do you get somebody to love you?" (BE 32). She can find no good qualities in herself, because she has been told differently all her life. Pecola's parents are uncaring. How can Pecola love herself, if her parents find her ugly? How can she resist her oppression? Pecola does not know that the discrimination she faces is wrong, because her family abuses her in the same fashion. By the end of the novel this is the deciding factor of survival-love. Pecola receives no strength from her parents. They have always considered themselves ugly, and they passed on the torch to Pecola. The Breedloves are virtually caricatures - destitute, living in squalor derelict "ugly" amoral. They despise themselves because they believe in their own unworthiness, which is translated into ugliness for the women of the family. Associated with their condition are 'funk', violence, ugliness and poverty, symbolized by their storefront house.

Both literal and spiritual poverty manifest themselves as ugliness in the world in which beauty is equated with success - poverty is ugly. Morrison deliberately invokes cultural stereotypes as a way of calling attention to error of perception. The Breedlove family's sense of utter hopelessness and helplessness is externalized in their appearance:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each

accepted it without question.... And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it (BE 34).

Ironically named, the Breedloves do not give life to love-familiar, romantic or personal. Infact they destroy any semblance of it. Because of their self imposed Cloak of ugliness, Pauline and Cholly like Pecola are victimized by the “Look”.

Pecola's stillborn child is not only a symbol of his personal violence but of the shackled life she has been made to live. By likening the death of Pecola's baby to the loss of Marigolds in September, the author skillfully and beautifully provides the reader with 'a skip in the natural order of things'. The novel is about racial injustice, but it is just as much about the tragedies of incest, which are not related to race. Incest also causes the 'unbeing' of its victims. Incest also teaches the victim that he or she is 'ugly' and 'unacceptable'. Pecola's story is a compounded tragedy, since she was forced to endure both racial injustice and incest. Incest is common. Far too common and it has no respect of person. It has no socioeconomic preference. It is found in the poorest homes as it is found in king's palaces. In the first paragraphs of the novel, Morrison discloses the 'secret', one of the many reasons for the shattering of little Pecola Breedlove. She later shows how Pecola responded to a lifetime of being used and abused by the adults in her world. Toward the end of the novel, there is a brilliantly written conversation that Pecola has with an alternate personality. In the foreword of the novel, the author calls this 'hallucination'. I suppose it is a hallucination of sorts, but at the same time it is also a child-like attempt to survive in a world that fails to nurture. The story begins with its own ending, allowing the reader to be 'in' on the secret which was kept and exposed at the same time. The exposing of the secret early in the novel prevents the reader from being later assaulted by its strong truth. Incestuous homes are homes filled with fractured people who continue to break themselves and others again and again. By going back in time and filling in the earlier details of the lives of Pecola's parents, the reader begins to see a pattern and a reason for the many routine, exceptional and monstrous rejections that became a part of Pecola's 'unbeing'. Morrison tells an ugly story of an incestuous rape of 11-year old girl by her father, creating a real beauty in the process.

Virtually everyone considers her worthless. Lighter skin black children ward off this self-hatred by verbally assaulting her and proclaim this superiority by alternatively patronizing and attacking her. Maureen Peal is a perfect example of this. Maureen, who has light skin, green eyes and strait hair is perfect in the eyes of all the other students and teachers. Her appeal is based on the fact that her looks are synonymous with white beauty. She is the envy of Claudia, Pecola, and Frieda. Claudia describes Maureen as: “A high yellow dream child with long brown hair braided into two lynch ropes that hung down her back. She was rich. . .as the richest white girls, swaddled in comfort and care” (BE 52).

Morrison describes Maureen impeccably neat because she has most of the white features. Maureen's cleanliness and impeccable outfits create in her a sense of superiority towards the other children. Claudia enviously describes Maureen's "fluffy sweaters the color of lemon drops tucked into skirts with pleats so orderly they astounded us" (BE 53). Claudia's fascination with Maureen's

clothing illustrates how white culture places an emphasis on riches, affluence and material wealth. Claudia, Frieda and Pecola place Maureen on a pedestal because of her outward appearance. Maureen feels superior to them because of her resemblance to whites. Maureen tries to befriend Pecola but only to torture her. Pecola is demoralized when Maureen accuses her of seeing, “her old black daddy” (BE 60) naked. Frieda stands up for Pecola but then Maureen makes a comment on how the girls are black and therefore ugly. She claims her supreme authority by taunting: “I am cute! And you are ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute” (BE 61). In an effort to understand the unworthiness, powerlessness and irrelevance Maureen assigns to Pecola, Claudia concludes: “Maureen Peal was not the Enemy and not worthy of such intense hate. The *thing* to fear was the *Thing* that made *her* beautiful and not us” (BE 62).

In response to this psychological violence Pecola takes up a quest for blue eyes. She drinks milk from a cup with a Shirley Temple picture and eats Mary Jane candies, hoping to be transported from common black clay into white marble. The values of light skinned Maureen Peal’s sense of superiority are as damaging as the white criterion of beauty that denies Pecola a positive sense of self.

The most damaging intra-racial confrontation involves Pecola and an adult Geraldine whose life is defined by her efforts to escape the “Funkiness” (BE 68), as Morrison calls it. Maureen was not born with the funkiness which Geraldine is attempting to rid herself of. Geraldine is darker than Maureen is. Because she is precariously on the edge of bright skin, she hates any element of ‘funk’ and she rigidly maintains her home fastidiously. “Wherever this erupts, this Funk, they wipe it away; where it crust, they dissolve it; whenever it drips, flowers, or clings, they find it and find it until it dies”(BE 68). Geraldine, who does not possess any white feature, will do anything to get rid of the stigma of being black. Geraldine would like to be seen as a "high yellow dream" woman and treated as though she is close to the superior dominant race. Geraldine allows her son, Louis Junior, to associate only with the white n or colored children. Colored children were acceptable because they were “nice” and “neat,”(BE 75) whereas "niggers were” always “dirty and loud” (BE 71). Geraldine denies Louis his childhood because of her own insecurities.

In an interview with Bessie Jones, Morrison states, "Being Black is something you have to choose to be"(149). Geraldine clearly does not choose to be black, but she does not have Caucasian features that would allow her to disown her racial heritage. Morrison portrays Geraldine as a white person trapped in a black person's body. Geraldine feels as though she is being forced to wear the cloak of blackness, which is paralleled with Pecola's cloak of ugliness. Geraldine despises herself because she has been brainwashed by whites to believe black is associated with ugliness and negativity. Geraldine embodies what white culture wants the blacks to believe, that they are inferior. Geraldine's inferiority complex creates inner conflict and the need to conform to the "dominant" culture.

When Pecola enters Geraldine's home at the invitation of Louis Junior, she is a victim of a cruel, practical joke. Rather than finding the kittens she was promised, Pecola received facial scratches from a frightened cat that Junior throws at her. It is an act of misplaced aggression for he

wishes to strike out at his own mother who failed to nurture him during childhood, prevented him from playing with 'Niger's' and heaped all her love on the cat. Later, after sending the cat flying into the radiator, Junior accuses Pecola of killing it when Geraldine enters the room. infuriated by the injury done to the cat, but feeling her middle class status threatened by the presence of a little black girl in her home, Geraldine the "pretty milk brown"(BE 76), mother of Junior, expels the innocent black girl with words that cut deeper than the cat's claws : "Get out ... you nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house" (BE 75). Although Geraldine's value system provides her with "order, precision, and constancy" (BE 70) it results in an inhibited life, unwarranted child cruelty first towards her son and then towards unsuspecting Pecola. Geraldine's penchant towards achieving a perfection associated with whites victimises and scars Pecola- an erupted "Funk" that must be wiped away.

Helping in the final leap to madness is Soaphead Church, the Charlton, who comes from a long line of people who have conducted their own quest for blue eyes, separating themselves "in body, mind and spirit from all that suggested Africa" (BE 132). For generation, Soaphead Church's family had married up choosing mates for the whiteness of their skins, thus "lightening the family complexion and thinning out the family features" (BE 133). After Soaphead tricks Pecola into killing an old dog he hates, with the promise of blue eyes to Pecola, she loses her last hold on reality. Soaphead Church is more than an agent who will grant Pecola her blue eyes and who (kind of) substitutes as a dog in the Dick and Jane primer. "His personality was an arabesque: intricate, symmetrical balanced and lightly constructed" (BE 131). His story is a study in alienated consciousness for he brings from the West Indies Anglophilia and a consciousness both deformed by subjugation. The predicament of a West Indies black and that of a black American is very similar. Both have internalized the complex social, historical formation that continually vexes their identity.

If Cholly's rape of Pecola is physical, then what Soaphead does to Pecola to grant her blue eyes is a psychological rape. But there is an inherent difference between Cholly and Soaphead Church. Soaphead is an educated gentleman who has internalized the alleged superiority of the western civilization; Cholly is the poor, uneducated black American male doomed to the underclass that thus remains outside the hegemony and class privilege. The "lightly brown" (BE 132) Soaphead has much more in common with the "milk brown" (BE 76) Geraldine. Of his family Morrison says, "They transferred this Anglophilia to their six children and sixteen grandchildren" (BE 132) and the family is described as one entity, the accomplishments and convictions of the sons are the same as the fathers. Soaphead Church, or more formally, Elihue Micah Whitcomb, inherited a penchant for appending selectively to truth and "the fine art of self-deception from his ancestors" (BE 133) tendencies to attribute lies about their ethnicity and superiority. He inherited his pedophilia from his ancestors' lecherous and lascivious practices and his religious fanaticism from his own father's secret sect. His misanthropy of his own kind enables him to understand Pecola's need for blue eyes, for whiteness. As a conjure man of the town, he gives them to her thereby completing the cycle of her insanity.

Pecola fails to understand that "beauty is not skin deep or featured wide but encompasses a black women's feeling about herself, her carriage, her style and her

heritage. True beauty is a synthesis between physical and personality attributes” (Neal and Wilson 332).

The fictional world of *The Bluest eye* focuses on racial dichotomy. The contrasts and comparisons around a pair of black girls to highlight the compounding work of racism as well as sexism and classism on the development of black girls is woven. *The Bluest eye* is a story that shows the ongoing problems that affect the black race. The story is about cultural beliefs. This story transmits patterns and problems that have a negative impact on the black girls. It not only shows these patterns and problems but also shows how they go unresolved because the blacks just accepted this way of life. The major issue in this novel is the idea of ugliness. The conviction that black is neither beautiful nor valuable is one of the cultural hindrances that blacks have had to face throughout their history in America. The five most retold fairy tales like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Sleeping Beauty* give non-whites especially black girls the harmful impression that it pays to be pretty. Almost all the stories concentrate on looks, particularly female beauty. The stories contain so many stereotypes that they are all harmful as the lurid sexual images contained in today’s popular music videos. From early childhood girls read fairy tales about princesses who achieve vast riches simply because their beauty makes them special. This is a powerful message which inhibits girls/ women who feel they do not meet society’s expectations of what it means to be attractive. The message that these fairy tales contain is not that you need to be good but that you need to be beautiful. Morrison sees the presence of a deadly and ever present superiority in the white community based on the concept of physical beauty:

When the strength of a race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble... The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the western world and we should have nothing to do with it. Physical beautiful has nothing to do with our past, present or future. Its absence or presence was only important to them, the white people who used it for anything they wanted (Morrison *The Black Book* 74)

Morrison saw the presence of a deadly and ever present superiority in the white community based on the concept of physical beauty. *The Bluest Eye* calls into question the very mood of thinking, which is authoritarian, biased and politically motivated. Morrison states that ‘physical beauty’ and ‘romantic love’ are two of the most repressive ideals in the history of any society as they leap from envy and spite, thrive in insecurity and culminate in disillusion.

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