
The Bluest Eyes: Re-thinking Beauty Myth and Identity

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Abstract:

Toni Morrison a famous African American woman writer portrays the plight of black women in her works. The status of African American women was pathetic, and oppressed by the patriarchal society. In the contemporary world still, they are not able to come up with their own identity, because of the male and whites' domination. The African American woman themselves were enmeshed by desires and despairs, loves and hates, marital discord, and male chauvinism. 'The Bluest Eye' deals with the issues of racism and sexism, and impact on the young black girls growing up in poor Ohio. Morrison's chief thematic concern is with woman's struggle in the African American society and believes that it is important for the people in black culture to know their values and get identity by them in the society.

Keywords: Blue Eyes, Symbols, Beauty , Identity, Black Feminism

The Bluest Eye (1970), Toni Morrison's first novel, is written during her teaching at Howard University, focuses on the oppression of the Black female characters Pauline, Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda. The American concept of beauty becomes necessary for black African- American in order to mingle into the mainstream. Pecola suffers an inferiority complex since from her childhood because she is ugly and black and nobody loves her as Pecola comes from a poor family, cut off from the normal life of a community and faces final humiliation and betrayal from her own father. Cholly rapes Pecola. Pecola's move to the company of the whores shows the signals of her utter sense of loneliness. Pecola Breedlove in the novel is oppressed not only due to racism but also due to classism and sexism. Ugliness, poverty and violence are the reasons of her humiliation. Sufferings are the friend of Pecola and her hunger for love and respect leads her to the world of fantasy.

The *Bluest Eye* is linked to the Black Power movement of the 1960s, which aroused the concerns of white America. The political activists of the 1960s advocated African-American features for black dolls, declaring "**Black is Beautiful.**" As Morrison accepts in the Afterword of the novel,

"The reclamation of racial beauty in the sixties stirred these thoughts, made me think about the necessity for the claim. Why, although reviled by others, could his beauty not be taken for granted within the community? Why did it need wide public articulation to exist? The assertion of racial beauty was not a reaction to the self-mocking, humorous, critique of cultural/racial foibles common in all groups, but against the damaging internalization of assumption of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze." (Morrison *The Bluest*, 167)

This study aims at investigating how beauty discourse in the novel encourages me to find out the construction of the discourse represented and examining the beauty myth that shackles the female character's mind. The writer applies two appropriate approaches to give clear description and further explanation in accordance with problems: Feminist and Marxist approaches. Feminist approach is taken into account because the black women's characters in the novel suffer through the construction of femininity in a radicalized society; it constructs femininity in a radicalized society. The data of this study is qualitative. The writer collects data from the statements and narration in the novel focusing on the obsessions, efforts, and discourse of beauty particularly spotted to the main character. Those data are then analyzed using inductive method. This study finally reveals that the construction of Caucasian beauty is counterfeit because human race cannot be singularized.

❖ **Beauty Myth:-**

Beauty myth is very sensitive thing. Which is always dominated in society & as well as worldwide. According to NAOMI WOLF,

"Beauty myth is used to mean by females has created a notion in the mind that they do not measure up when it comes to their looks. They feel unhappy and insecure with them which is just but a myth." (Naomi, Beauty)

She also described that in 1970's women's most significant problems associated with societal pressure are a 'fairly recent invention.' As a result Wolf suggest that the 'beauty myth' is the,

**"Last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control those women."
(Naomi, Origin)**

In her another definition she defines beauty myth as,

"The beauty myth changes over time and varies cross- culturally but denotes the various ways in which women are encouraged to measure up to ideals of beauty and men are encouraged to possess beauty." (Naomi, Beauty)

❖ **Beauty Myth in The Bluest Eye:**

The novel deals with very sensitive point 'beauty', but why she chosen this topic? Because author had suffered from the pain of being black in her childhood. The genesis of the novel in a childhood incident has already been potential out. Toni Morrison insists that her novels are not autobiographical. But there are some parallels between some details in the Bluest Eye.

The story of the novel deals with the tragic search of a poor black girl for Blue Eyes. But why 'Bluest eye'? Because in America everyone wants to be superior to others. They want their own superior prestige in order that they are suffering from a lot of crisis. Pecola also belongs from this soil so that her desire only in her life is "the bluest eye" that is representing the superlative degree and being a most popular. The reason why Peacola wants Bluest eye isn't because it complies with white standers but because she hopes their beauty will control her fate for the better as Claudia thought in a the Novel that,

**"It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights- if those eyes were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different."
(Morrison, *The Bluest*
46)**

The Beauty is the most important thing in American Society. Beautiful people are at the top of the society and black people are at the bottom In America there is a 'Ceiling Glass' between Black and white people. The white are consider black as poor and law. We can see that how thing is made conflict in the mind of Claudia as she says in the very beginning of the Novel.

"We will say no. We don't know what we should feel or do if she does, but whenever she asks us, we know she is offering us something precious and that our own pride must be asserted by refusing to accept." (Morrison, *The Bluest 46*)

The Bluest eye first into study of American Novel because it tells the story of a group of American Men and Women and children who are decedents of slaves, and live in a society where, even though many people deny it, the colour of your skin determines who you are and what privileges you are entitled to. I think that Morrison did a wonderful job of telling a story that is real, that makes the reader feel something, and that makes the reader relate, regardless of your skin colour. As on the Novel Claudia says about beauty that,

"Adults, Older girls, shops, Magazines, Newspapers, window sign- all the world had agreed that a blue eyed, yellow haired, pink skinned doll treasured. 'Here' they said, 'this is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthily' you may have it." (Morrison, *The Bluest 46*)

In the section on the Breedlove family which shows violent quarrel between Pauline and her husband cholly, Pecola prays for blue eyes and infect thinks of them as a penance. She feels that even her parents would stop quelling if she had blue eyes. At this point appears five lines in italics which presumably constitute her prayers.

"Pretty eyes, pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes; jerry has blue eyes. Jerry Runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Blue sky eyes. Blue- like Mrs. Forrest's blue-bolus eyes. Morning- glory- blue –eyes. Alice- and – jerry-blue-story book-book.

(Morrison, *The Bluest 46*)

Morrison's use of myth and on the tension her writing explores between universal myths and the unique experience of black people. In the novel, Morrison seems less interested in depicting universal experiences than in using myth to grieve over American society in general and black American experience in particular. The plague that ravages the land scape and infects people in the world of the novel and generation is racism. Racism denies truth, freedom, justice, and the opportunity to experience identity and dignity. The tragic victim is neither a girl but an entire people, the question of fate and free will. Terry Otten conveys that,

"For Morrison, the artistic struggle involves achieving the balance between writing a truly black literature and producing a fiction that Faulkner's phrase grieves on universal bones." (Otten *The Crime* 56)

In American society black people are always hated by whites Pecola is not only representation of one cast or one family or one person only but she represents the whole community of blacks who have to suffered from many circumstances in that society. The disallowance of the specific culture and histories of African- Americans and black women especially is figured in *The Bluest Eye* primarily as a consequence of or sideline to the more general annihilation of popular forms and images by an ever more all-pervasive and insidious mass culture industry. According to Matthew Wilde,

"While the *Bluest eye* examines a wide variety of topics ranging from inequality to the innocence of youth, no theme is more pronounced than the difference between what is 'pretty' and what is 'ugly'. It is interesting note; however, that the general consensus in the novel of the public regarding the affirmation topic is often, if not always, the opposite of what the reader feels it should be the author presents a multitude of situation I which the opinions of the people are wrap by prejudices and unwritten social "laws". Through both the use of common examples as well as dramatic occurrences, the author is able to successfully engage the reader and convey her message." (Wilde *Black Female* 70)

American women base their lives on a myth, a beauty myth, which impairs their self-image and distort their views regarding their peers, unlike their male counterparts who are not affected by such a myth. Women see a female fashion model and immediately turn her into the guideline of what every American woman should look like. American stereotype women to fit the myth by suggesting that they either have beauty or intelligence but cannot have both the beauty myth have spread like rumor, and most women believe it to be entirely true. Many models admit to having an eating disorder, which unfortunately is tolerated in the modeling industry. Stamp recognizes,

"White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin were jungle..... Handguns ready for their sweet white blood.'....'while folks planted in them." (Shukla Feminism 86)

Conclusion:

Thus, we can say that throughout Morrison's novel she does not use whites for main characters often she is criticizing for this. Morrison's upbringing has additionally contributed to her novel and how she views white people. So that we can say that the novel is deal with such a topic in which the everything is combined. Black community and their pain, they were hatred by white peoples and become victims of feeling of shame for themselves. This is horrible in America to being a child, being a black and being a girl. All the women and men, as well as by black men. In this regard New York Times says,

"The Bluest eye is an inquiry into the reasons why beauty gets wasted in this country. The Beauty in this case is Black: The wasting is done by a cultural engine that seems to have been designed to murder possibilities... and she does it with a prose so precise. So faithful to speech and so charged with pain and wonder that the novel becomes poetry." (Morrison, *The Bluest*)

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