

# RACIALISED BEAUTY TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

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## ABSTRACT:

In the bluest eye , beauty lies deeper than just skin .Toni Morrison's novel tells the tale of a young African American girl's drive to become perfect , to be beautiful during an era when standards of beauty were set by white Americans . Pecola breedlove descends into madness because she yearns for something she cannot have the bluest eye of a white girl. Indeed she "epitomizes the American obsession with whiteness". Morrison's book describes the painful efforts of one African-American family struggling to live up to the cultural standards of beauty that have imposed upon them, overcoming both racial prejudice and their own ugliness.

KEY WORDS: Racial difference, feminism, cultural difference.

Bluest Eye Morrison's challenge western standard of beauty and demonstrate the concept of beauty is socially constructed. Morrison does not simply portray positive images of blackness. She focuses on the damage that the black woman characters suffer through the constructing of femininity in a racialized society.

The Main protagonist in the story was pecola breed love (black girl) who wants to have blue eyes. But she is regarded by most of the character in the novel as ugly. The standard of beauty that her peers subscribe to is represented by the white child actress( Shirley Temple) who has the desired blue eyes. The novel shows how these black characters respond to the dominant culture differently and this reflects easy binary social distinctions.

Even in the world of today many women have a problem of beauty for they feel that being thin, tall and beautiful is that magic to the solution of some of the problems they have in life for they will be loved. Pecola hates herself because many of the adults think of her as an ugly bastard. Example in according to Morrison pecola receives some hateful remarks "Black e mo. Black e mo. Some of the adult abuses

received included “You nasty little bitch, Get out of my house”. Whereby she was abused by the people who had given shelter. Pecola does not only encounter racism that makes her feel ugly just from the white folks but from her own black race who tell her that she is much too dark and that kind of darkness symbolizes inferiority.

Pauline breedlove, Geraldine, Maureen peel and pecola are black characters who try to conform to an imposed ideal of femininity. They are absorbed and marginalized by the culture icons portraying physical beauty. Consequently, in trying to conform to the ideal of white femininity, the black women characters despise that blackness which in turn leads to self harted .They see themselves through the eyes of white people and their worship of white beauty also has destructive effects on their community.

Claudia recognizes that if we follow the white ideology of aesthetics .we may gain beauty but only at the expense of others .Claudia blames the black community which adopts a white standard of beauty that makes pecola its scapegoat”. Pecola is symbolically’ dumped’: being pregnant ,ugly, and mad and an object of repulsive nightmares.

Claudia narrates the story from two different perspectives . In the prologue and the final chapter the adult Claudia uses the past tense to describe events that happened back in 1941 in lorain .But for the bulk of her narration, Claudia uses the present tense to describe these events ,which has the effect of showing us things through her 9 year old eyes.

Occasionally Claudia will move between the two modes allowing us to see how she is reflecting on her own experience and highlighting the act of narration. Claudia is a highly empathetic narrator, and while she doesn’t have access to the minds of the people she describes, she does her best to try to understand them, especially pecola.

All of us- all who knew (pecola) felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humour. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her walking dreams we used –to silenced our own nightmares.

According to Morrison, the white skin is associated with power beauty and purity. This is depicted by the adoration of the Shirley temple doll which was given to Claudia and also Maureen being cuter than all the black girls. The idea of racial self loathing also brought about by Bell hooks in his article “ Baby” contained in the book “signs of life” whereby he says that many American girls are given dolls during Christmas time so that they can be molded into future wives.

However, the girls are in a dilemma for they are raged by the fact that they are not as beautiful as the dolls they are being given and this is also reason as to why Claudia a minor character in the Bluest Eyes tears Shirley temple doll . The white dolls are perceived by the girls to be a remembrance of how ugly they are just as pecola is trying to change herself so that she can resemble the dolls or white folk's beauty. Pecola also hates herself due to her social class. This is due to the fact that she belongs to the lowest class of drunkards and rapists who always make her wish that she could disappear and become somebody else.

Pecola when she decides to be associated with dirt or un-cleanliness due to the mistreatment experienced from the community and family. This is because pecola befriends some prostitutes are always associated with excessive drinking and smoking. The racial self loathing of pecola is also propelled to the mother (Pauline) who despises her daughter due to the ugliness she sees in her .

Pauline and Cholly arrive in the north ,their lives don't necessarily change for the better, and this geographical complexity is one of the most important aspects of the novel. Once up North, the couple has to face a different set of problems : disdainful whites, people judging them on the basis of their southern accents,differing beauty norms.

Towards the end of the novel ,Claudia realizes that fantasy it was ,for we were not strong, only aggressive, we were not free, merely licensed ; We were not compassionate, we were polite; not good but well behaved. We courted death in order to call ourselves brave, and hide like thieves from life. We substituted good grammar for intellect; we switched habits to simulate maturity; we rearranged lies and called it truth, seeing in the new pattern of an old ideas the revelation and the world.

#### WORK CITED:

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