

# Double Marginalization of female characters in the novel *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison

Aniksha M <sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. M. John Suganya <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Department of English

<sup>1\*,2</sup> PSG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

<sup>1\*</sup> [aniksham2@gmail.com](mailto:aniksham2@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> [suganyajohn@gmail.com](mailto:suganyajohn@gmail.com) +91 9994924381

## Abstract

Double Marginalization of black females in racist society is explored in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. In a racist society where black women have to be a victimization of both race and gender. *The Bluest Eye* is Toni Morrison's first novel which reveals a story of a little black girl called Pecola who grew up following the Great Depression and Racial society. The novel shows the sufferings in a white dominated society and the tribulation of black families. The aim of the article is to explore the double oppression of women in a racial society. The novel's women not only suffered the horrors of racial oppression but also the tyranny and violation brought upon by the men in their lives.

**Key words:** *Oppression, Racism, Female subjectivity, Inferiority complex, Sexual violence*

## Introduction

Toni Morrison, a black American feminist writer has written a novel *The Bluest Eye*, in which the tribulation of most black families exposed. Due to white oppression, Marginalization affects the black society. Marginalization of black causes various depression to black community such as negatively impact individual's physical, psychological and emotional health. Through the lens of feminism and racism, double marginalization of the black female character in the novel *The Bluest Eye* is explored in the article. Pecola, the protagonist of the novel *The Bluest Eye* grow up in a poor, black chaotic family. She is consistently regarded as 'ugly' due to her dark skin and mannerism. As a result, she develops an inferiority complex, which fuels her desire for

blue eyes that equate with whiteness. The death of self-esteem occurs to Pecola at a young age due to constant mockery by the society.

The protagonist of this novel experiences both racial and gender discrimination. The article examines both racial and sexual discrimination of black women that is practiced by the society in the novel. The patriarchal behavior of the black society with white dominance leads to sexual violence and female subjectivity in the society. In the novel, Pecola is raped by her own father Cholly Breedlove, who is an abusive and alcoholic black man. Cholly is an abandoned child and his first sexual encounter is ruined by two white men. Traumatizing events like these influence Cholly to become a violent husband and father who beats his wife and eventually rapes his daughter. Cholly's aggressive and violent behavior towards women has been caused by white oppression and discrimination of black. Another female character in the novel, Pauline Breedlove who is the mother of Pecola, lives the life of loneliness and isolated character. She escapes into the world of dreams, hopes and fantasy that turns into the movie she enjoys viewing. The character Pauline depicts the female passiveness and the misery of the black women. In the novel, the movies watched by the characters portray white and behavior of white as a standard of beauty. These scenarios explain the oppression and the destruction of the black race and community. These beauty standards create an inferiority complex in the black women. As a result black women consider them as ugly and clash with their own identity.

### **Double Marginalization through Race**

Race, a term which originated in the 17th century can be assigned manifold meanings, ranging for example, from linguistic and religious to ethnic groups. The racial ideology of the United States attributed an inferior social position to African Americans and Native Americans. This “myth of black inferiority” which white people cultivated and institutionalized, resulted in racial segregation, oppression and discrimination in all domains of everyday life. The two characters in the novel Pecola and Pecola's mother Polly are traumatized by racism. They are considered ‘Ugly’ by their physical appearance. Both their lives are ruined by societal racism.

Societal racism causes inferiority to Pecola and she lost her identity and life to search for blue eyes which indicates the ideal beauty.

### **Double Marginalization through Gender**

Gender can be regarded as a socially constructed dimension of being male or female. Men and Women associated with distinctively different roles, representations and values. The patriarchal system followed by world we see the power of men and assumed the inveterate inferiority of women in general. Hence the black women had undergone double jeopardy and placed at the bottom of the chain of being. The black women were considered as a sexual tool and maid to men of their and others. Even in the novel, Pecola is a victim of incest. The passive and black nature of Pecola turns her into an unworthy, ugly, marginalized girl by her own society. Many black women characters in the novel work as a home maid and sex worker for their living. Most of the black women work as maid in a white man's home or as a sex worker for their survival. Female subjectivity and sexual violence of black women by both white and black men are depicted in the novel which is the keen observation of the black society by Toni Morrison.

### **Conclusion**

Racism and Gender inequality of the black society depicts double marginalization of black women with the novel's reference. As Toni Morrison says, *The plight of Pecola in the novel The Bluest Eye shows the vulnerability of youth with indifferent parents, dismissive adults, and a world, which, in its language, laws and images, re-enforces despair and the journey to destruction is sealed.* Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could do. The novel *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison explains the black woman suppression and mistreat by society of theirs and the world. Each black character in the novel undergoes various depression and oppression by white which result in their loss of one's own identity and ethnicity. Loss of identity and ethnicity result in marginalization. As second gender, women in black community face double suppression.

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