

# IN PURSUIT OF BLACK IDENTITY:A POST-COLONIAL READING OF TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

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## Abstract

Toni Morrison, in her novels, deals with the problems and challenges involved in establishing identity of the black migrant population in America. The cultural practices of the Black people are accepted by the American population without any hindrance. The constitution of every country respects its citizen irrespective of their race and culture, Even after experiencing all the privileges in America, the minority black people feel an unhealthy situation around them, because the white people always underestimate them as they cherish racism. The black who are the settlers with all fortunes like education and wealth cannot expect recognition or equality from the dominant white. So they feel like alien and reminiscent of their past glory and culture which they have abandoned back in their native land. In the outer world they lead a smooth life but mentally they are not happy and they want to get the identity that they have lost.

**Keywords:** oppression, insecurity, slavery, post colonialism, the trauma.

Toni Morrison was born on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 1931 at Lorain, Ohio, U.S.A. Her original name was **Chloe Anthony Wofford**. Her writings are about her Black experience, particularly about the Black female experience in the white dominated society and within the Black community.. She became a Nobel laureate in 1993..Morrison was brought up in the American Midwest in a family that respected the Black culture much. She was accustomed to Storytelling, songs, and folktales, in her childhood. She completed B.A DEGEREE at Howard University in 1953 and M.A. at Cornell University in 1955. After teaching at Texas Southern University for two years, she taught at Howard from 1957 to 1964. In 1965 Morrison became a fiction editor at Random House, where she worked for a number of years. In 1984 she began teaching at the State University of New York at Albany, which she left in 1989 to join the faculty of Princeton University; she retired in 2006.she earned name and fame in the field of literature for her themes, language,and narrative techniques. Her stories express her personal experiences and also they travel with the life events of the American-Africans. Since she speaks the problems of ordinary and suppressed people, she became popular. She was in the height of popularity when she died on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), is about a victimized adolescent Black girl who is obsessed by white standards of beauty and longs to have bluest eyes. In 1973 her second novel, *Sula*, was published and it examines the friendship between two girls and the expectations for conformity within the community. Her third novel *Song of Solomon* which was published in 1977 narrated by a male narrator in search of his identity; its publication brought Morrison to national attention. In 1981 *Tar Baby*,her another novel was published and it deals with the conflicts of race, class, and sex.

The racial tension between African-Americans and white society is always the common theme of Toni Morrison's novels. She expresses her views on the problems between Nigger and White in the point of view of African-American characters and through the challenges that African-Americans face. She started her writings during the time when African-Americans faced many injustices, Most of the main characters of her novel struggle to find their identity and they face the damage of not only their lives, but their way of life, their ancestors, their traditions and practices.

Bluest Eye is Toni Morrison's first novel. It was released in 1970 and was appreciated for its different language and unused subjects. It is a tragic study of the struggle of a black suspect to achieve normality and acceptance and to achieve her own self. We find that Pecola Breedlove who grew up in Ohio in the 1940s, desires blue eyes and white beauty and cannot love herself in both a racial and patriarchal culture. With low self-esteem, Pecola grows up. Her parents and the dark and white environment hate her. She feels ugly because of the hate she immerses. A young child recognizes herself in a bubbling mirror reflecting only people's hideousness and graceful hearts. The source of hideousness lies in your vision and your unconscious minds that shape the identity. In her community, she has depressing relations. Her mother, children in schools, and even her teachers are mocked and shunned by Pecola. She is harassed by her own dad and is sexually abused. She sees her parents' queer and tormented love, leading to her falling down and insanity. She cannot therefore attain her stable personal identity. By depicting another protagonist in a different way, Morrison's words have brought into existence an impressive novel with a complexion and simplicity. In imaginary low community among the period of world wars we are taken from the world of small girls to that of the young black women, the protagonist is a little child. The keynote of the novel, *Sula*, is influenced both by social institutions and by the patriarchal and racist society through her journey to individuality. This novel explores African American women's possibilities for realizing their personal identity against a homophobic and patriarchal society. *Sula*, the novel's unusual protagonist, is a female who tends only to make herself up and satisfy her own needs and not changes anything about people and society stereotypes. She is unhappy and unbelieving. *Sula* is a student and has uncounted polyamorous relations with black and white men with only the aim to satisfy her needs far from the social conventions. The black-feminist theory lenses both *Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, since the author herself is a black feminist. The black-feminist. The study's primary focus is on the aspects of black feminism and the approach by the author to patriarchy and racism's influence on the individual identity of black women. Morrison makes a clear image of the struggle of the protagonist when trying to shape his identity in the above-mentioned novels. This description clarifies the impact of racism and feminism on the search for identity by the 5 distorted relationships and love. The distress of African American women is the result of a long-term bondage, which results from racial segregation. It is also the result of sex discrimination by both white and black men. The Black women have unique challenges that the White women have never experienced, which is why, because it is based on real, long harsh experience, the new Black literature becomes the most arresting. The modern activist writers are encouraged to think and write about subjects mainly related to the effects of their miseries and to engrave in a country that has a famous history in discriminating black people unforgettable memories. This paper therefore focuses on the ways in which Toni Morrison portrays black women in America in racist, repressive and patriarchal society and how relationships and experiences intersect with the love they perceive, in particular racism and patriarchy, have been influenced and determined. In addition, the various challenges which heroines face, especially relationships and love, while striving to achieve their individuality and the difference between their journeys, constitute another problem which this thesis addresses. The reader can respond to and evaluate things in Morrison's novels. The proper deal that was worse than hell. For hell, you die and finish your torture, but they want to die in that space, but they can't, and it becomes your company for endless regret and denial. They have nothing more than life, and you are recognized with amputated dreams that grow up in black American scripts if life becomes a harder thing than death. In the history of the race, African six American women suffer most. It should not be forgotten that mutilated soul struggling to live. It is worth saying, reconsidering, reviewing, studying and investigating such a black history, to prevent abominable actions from repeating. This motivates us to select these two novels and to explore them. The objective of this research is to gain more insight into the various key aspects that influence the individual identity of the female character. Moreover, the main aims of this research are to portray the indisputable effects of double colonization's on African Americans' love for each other and their direct impact on the protagonists. Moreover, a black feminist theory is used to analyze the way in which Pecola and *Sula* have developed such a complexity in themselves, and to show the causes of the tragic ends of both romances. The study aims to compare the protagonists during their journeys of these two novels. There are some

similarities and differences that are to be emphasized to show the singularity of every novel in which many notifications are to be explored and many different themes used to deepen the life and life of Afro-Americans. The author expresses his opinions, desires about homophobia, sexism and love in an intense way to characters and their relationships. The blues are debatable news stories with various themes and symbols such as racism, patriarchy, stereotyping and oppression. *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye* of Toni Morrison. Novels by Morrison are recognized for their profound treatment of major problems and diversity that attract the attention of the researcher. Toni Morrison discusses the different kinds of racism and their impact on the lives of Black Americans in *Sula*. The novel also discusses how the black struggle to live under White rule. Through his work, he explains that black women are urged to form bonds in the face of various obstacles. The first novel by Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, develops a story about a young African-US girl at the beginning of the 1940s. It looks at the catastrophic effects of the imposition of American beauty ideals on Africans of white middle class. As a case study for countless researchers, Morrison's novel is used. An example of eight such studies is the paper of Karen Ruiz, "Feminist Critique of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*." The aim of Ruiz's work is to demonstrate how Morrison criticized America's racial and sexist ideology during that era.

In all of her novels, Toni Morrison portrayed the wounded psyche. It shows how the psychological wounds of blacks are felt. The novels are full of the episodes of the black psyche being wounded. Cholly is raping her daughter, Guitar has been turning into a terrorist, Sethe's killing her very own daughter. The wounded psyche of the blacks is the result of all these sensational events. These episodes show how difficult they are in a whitish society. Black characters are the injured like Pecola, Cholly and Sethe. In the face of oppression and segregation of the whites, Toni Morrison portrayed the distressing psyche of the Black. Terry Otten (1989) argues that "the history of Black people in American history in Toni Morrison's fictional characters is one way or the other". Trauma means "wound" with psychoanalytical terminology, but involves "external injury" in medicine or "psychological damage." Freud and Adler expressed differences of opinion on trauma. It may be the result of an emotionally shocking, repressed memory. The French psychologist, Martin Charcot, studied the relation between diseases and mental illness. In patients with hysteria Martin Charcot examined the symptoms of palsy, amnesia and sensory loss. Often, trauma occurred in women raped or mercilessly beaten. The whites are often marginalized by the black characters of Toni Morrison, and slavery is the principal cause of trauma. Human and social relations are lost and women are dehumanized and degraded. *The Bluest Eye* of Morrison, takes up the black American psychology problem. The theory of the structure of Freudian personalities provides a perfect account of the roots of Pecola's conduct. The psychological development of Pecola is very informative in the novel. Because of her obsession with whiteness and her jealousy of Shirley Temple, Pecola loses her rational approach to life. Even though she was black and baby doll was white Claudia felt alienated by the doll. She thought that pretending to be the mother of the baby was unrealistic because she didn't look alike. Claudia begins to realize that the beauty standard of blonde hair and blue eyes.

Pecola begins with her dreams and fantasy on the traumatic journey. Blanche weaves fake illusions and fictions as at the end of the drama Stanley raped her Tennessee Williams. Pecola's fantasy is used to solve her family's household problems. She imagines that her blue eyes will mitigate her parents' aggression. Her fantasy leads to her loss of oneself, rape, and madness. The black girl, Pecola Breedlove, grows up in a small community that wants to be as lovely as the white girls in movies. She contends she will be glad when Pecola wants to love and accept only a blue eye. The story starts when Pecola had been sent to the MacTeer family following her father's attempt to ignite the family house of Breedlove. One of the storytellers, Claudia MacTeer, is with Pecola, and she remembered the events during one year of her early 1930s. Claudia's eyes allow us to track down Pecola's tragic story and her greatest breakdown following her father's rapes. The novel also describes Pecola's inability to assist the community and the problems faced by the black community in a society in which whiteness is both a standard and an ideal. We learn that from the start of the novel Pecola has happened something terrible, although it does not yet come to pass: 'Silent as it was kept, in the autumn of 1941 there were no marigolds. We

thought, then, that the marigolds didn't grow because Pecola had the baby of her father's. Claudia MacTeer tells us some of the story about Pecola and the society in which they live. As one of the story-tellers, and as an equilibrium to Pecola, Claudia is important. Beside Claudia, there are many more focal points and narrators like, at the end of the novel, Pauline Breedlove's monologues of consciousness, Cholly Breedlove, Soap Lead Church and Pecola's own split figures. One of the reasons why Claudia takes so much interest in Pecola can be the contrast between her life and that of Pecola, and in showing the girls' somewhat differing life experiences we see the miseries involving the family Breedlove. Pecola's story is told through Claudia's memorabilia and Claudia admits that she's guilty and disappointed to let Pecola down and not assist her as an adult.

The protagonist in her story, Pecola Breedlove, undergoes many difficult circumstances in her life. Those difficulties gave her a sense of refusal. Her father attempts to set the house on fire and she is allowed to live with the family of MacTeer for a long time, she feels a rejection first. In addition, for the third time, Pecola is cast out of the house of Mrs. Geraldine and is subjected to the oppression of shopkeepers, students and school teachers. The company as a whole will not be rejecting it only by its parents. Pecola appears to be floating because her location is unable to find it. She doesn't think things will get better as long as she looked ugly. She lost hope that her life as a black girl was beautiful. She believes the reason for her suffering is her own membership in the black community. A few strange ideas are being developed by Pecola. If she had blue eyes, she starts imagining her life. Their parents would be doing otherwise," they might say, "Why, looks at Pecola, who has good eyes. In front of those lovely eyes, we must not do evil things. The opinions of Cholly Breedlove reveal this misguided wrath. Morrison explains in an interview in 1978 that Cholly "would love Pecola in the weakest of all good ways since he cannot and cannot. He can't do it healthily, generally and that it can close up in rap." Cholly's important case is a result of years of fighting and seeking selfishness. Morrison explores his controversial nature for a long part of her novel. In a complicated scene, Cholly wags to sexually abuse his own daughter where the reader senses the need to hate Cholly. This queer Cholly's love to his daughter is among the novel's most controverted thoughts. Pecola is being raped by her father while she is trying to find a solution to her doomed reality. She doesn't believe her and she hardly beats her when she tells her mother. She was still searching for a way out despite the heavy load of problems she had. She wanted a couple of lovely blue eyes. Every night she prayed desperately to have them. She knew her desire needed a miracle in order to be realized. So, she had never lost hope and was patient. Pecola moved into madness. Her decision to critique nature shows that her personality has been massively destructed. The Pecola story reveals the effect of family interactions and social beliefs on the 69 searches for individual identity. Pecola was eventually influenced by her family as a child. She formed her view of herself and those in terms of their attitude and their treatment of her. Her family and society had oppressed her both physically, psychologically and culturally. To make her wish come true, Pecola goes to Soap head church. In Lorain's African American community, he is a reader, adviser and dream interpreter. He's really called Elihu Whitcomb. In the novel he was described as a light-skinned West Indian man that had an extremely peculiar viewpoint to the people and his mixed blood proudly made him feel better than other people of color. He was another instance of how Pecola prefers whiteness and asks him to turn blue eyes at the door of the Soap head. Although he considers his physical appearance to be "pitifully unattractive," he says. He has compassion for her. His attractions for whiteness and hatred of all the other races made her wish very logical and understandable for him. He wants to help her. A piece of meat is brought on by the soap head and poison is sprinkled on. He informs Pecola to offer it to the dog and her desire is realized if it reacts. He sympathizes Pecolo but does not hesitate to kill his landlady-dog, which he hates, aggressively in a highly conflicting scene. The dog dies before her with pain. She's getting shocked and gone home. Pecola gets her desire finally. She receives blue eyes and loses her mind; she can no longer understand and function as a normal person in the world that surrounds her. In order to accept society, she wanted blue eyes. The blue eyes, however, strengthened their loneliness. Her imaginary friend is the only one she can communicate with. The one who can see her blue eyes, she is the only one. This invisible friend is her blues eye's only confirmation but does not prevent her from bad remembrances. Here, Morrison is trying

to show that the insecurity Pecola doesn't really get rid of. They are hidden in her greatest mind, because her imaginary friend constantly requires reassurance as to how blue eyes were and becomes irritated if she takes her dad incident to life. Pecola thus fails to establish her identity as both a black girl and the magnificent blue eyes. At first her African American existence and culture was not embraced. Actually, she is not prepared to wage such a fight to create herself as she should be. Secondly, she doesn't get the love and acceptance she's looking for when she feels she's blue eyes. Apart from her imaginary friend, nobody sees her beautiful blue eyes.

This research paper has made an attempt to analyse how Toni Morrison portrays black people's nostalgia to get their specific identity for them and to follow their own culture which was taught by their ancestors. But these people face a lot of struggles to do so. The same topic is discussed by many researchers.

D.Sarulatha & Dr.N.Geetha in their research paper entitled QUEST FOR IDENTITY IN TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE, published in Asia Pacific Journal of Research Vol: I. Issue XXXIII, November 2015 ISSN: 2320-5504, E-ISSN-2347-4793, emphasise Bluest Eye is the novel that expresses black people's search for identity and their painful experiences to get recognition from the dominant white. The following words explain Toni Morrison's focus on the search for identity.

“The novels of Toni Morrison have penetrated deeply into the traumatic effects of identity of African American and its people. Her novel The Bluest Eye responds to the traumatic effects generated by the clash between the two cultures. It deals with the plight of black people who have been exposed to western values. As the story unfolds, the reader is made aware of the conspicuous shape of the slavery. Ironically, the fruits of freedom and independence appear to be out of reach of the people as they painfully reflect on the endless sacrifices made during the struggle. In the Bluest Eye Morrison reflects how Pecola quest for true women identity which according to socially structure culture is being white with blue eye. Above that Morrison clearly mentions that even the black man sees white beauty as something to be admirable that's why Cholly Breedlove hates her daughter. Being a black woman is like a crush during that time they are often exploited by white man as well as by black man. Hence, it is observed that Morrison probes the mind of the reader to examine the socio-economic, political and cultural problem during the time”

Nehdeep Lakraa , V.M. Berlin G//raceb and D. David Wilsonc in their research article entitled ‘Quest for Identity in the novels of Beloved and The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison’ speak the truth in the search for identity by the black people in the USA. They discuss the search for identity by the black as follows.

“The issue of Black – American identity The case of the Black- Americans is rather peculiar one, as far as the issue of their quest for identity and the process of the creation of their identity is concerned. The ‘Blacks’ as they are generally referred to, are Americans of African descent, who have been part of a very long history of slavery, that is, the legal enslavement of humans, primarily of Africans and African – Americans, that existed in the United States of America, in the 18th and 19th centuries, after it gained independence and before the end of the American Civil War.”

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