



Subaltern African American Female Silenced Voice in Tony Morrison's "The Bluest Eye"

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Abstract— Toni Morrison, a renowned African American woman author, depicts the predicament of black subaltern women in her writings. African American women's situation was poignant, as they were subjugated by the patriarchal culture. Because of male and white dominance and oppression they were unable to develop their own identity in the society. They have plenty of aspirations, but they never have a place to showcase them. Their hard work and ability are never supported, and society and their community often suppressed their voice. The African American women experienced a variety of conflicting emotions, including hope and gloom, love and dislike, marital turmoil, and male chauvinism. 'The Bluest Eye' deals with class conflict, racism, sexism, gender difficulties, and identity crises. Morrison's main theme focus is the struggle of women in African American society. She also feels that it is crucial for people in black culture to recognize their principles and find their own identity in society.



Keywords— Subaltern, black African American female, silenced voice, oppressed, racism.

INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison, formerly Chloe Anthony, has done a tremendous job of bringing African American literature to the forefront with a unique viewpoint. According to her, Afro-American literature is literature generated in the United States by African American writers. African American literature addresses issues such as racism, misogyny, class, oppression, and enslavement. In 1993, Toni Morrison became the first black woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. She has created indelible characters and has tackled racism, inequality, oppression, misogyny, and enslavement as sources of psychological pain in her works. As a writer, Toni Morrison is well-known for her examinations of the lives of black women. Due to their race, black females had to endure physical, mental, and sexual assault during their formative years. The battle that black female fought to defend their right to exist in this world robbed them of their girlhood and their voices were silenced. The reason for caring about this topic is to bring attention to the ways in which young black girls have been mistreated, marginalized, raped and killed.

Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* revolves around Pecola Breedlove, a black young girl who is obsessed by all white standards of beauty and yearns for blue eyes, which she associates with whiteness, as a means of escaping the sufferings that are the consequence of her dark skin. Because of the constant criticism she receives for her dark complexion and coarse features, Pecola develops an inferiority complex. This fueled her want to have blue eyes because she thinks that if she had blue eyes, all the bad things in her life will turn out for the better. Toni Morrison essentially throws the light on the black African American experience and her characters strive for their existence and their own cultural identity. Women of African origin have faced a dual issue as a result of their sex and ethnicity, and Morrison's books explore how racism and sexism may have devastating consequences.

Pecola encountered split awareness as she and her family entirely embrace white beauty norms. Pecola was motivated by the idea that only actual physical attributes of beauty are blond hair, fair complexion, and blue eyes. It was hard for Pecola to conceive of herself as attractive because of an aesthetics that elevates European standards of beauty while

lowering African American standards of beauty. This demonstrates Pecola's explicit desire for blue eyes, which she associates with whiteness and supports her split awareness. Because Pecola was black, Pecola's mother Pauline refused to acknowledge that she was her own daughter. She believed that black females were not worthy of being loved. Pecola's knowledge of her split awareness may be highlighted by this. Pecola had therefore gotten the most of her sense of split awareness from her mother.

Tony Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* sheds attention to the lives of all the subaltern females who go unnoticed. Due to their battle for survival in the Afro-American culture, where beauty is linked with whiteness and there is sexist bias everywhere, black females are deprived of their femalehood. The black community people recognized themselves as the Others imposed by the white community. The same is true for Pecola Breedlove, who has been awarded the position of other by blacks inside the black community.

The Bluest Eye features young black females like Frieda Macteer, Claudia Macteer, Pecola Breedlove, etc. The book's narrator is Claudia Macteer, and Frieda is Claudia's 10-year-old sister. They both share a home with their parents and two tenants, Mr. Henry and Pecola Breedlove. The protagonist of the narrative, Pecola Breedlove, yearns for blue eyes because she associates them with purity and beauty. She thinks that being white is beautiful and that being black is intrinsically unattractive. Due to sexist prejudice, these girls' lives were extremely difficult. They attended a school where the white children were given preference. Even the so-called respectable white individuals, shopkeepers, family members, and educators exhibit abhorrent behavior toward blacks. Many incidences are present in *The Bluest Eye* to show how subaltern females voices were suppressed and silenced. Claudia is helpless in many ways. She loathes Shirley Temple and the blue-eyed, blonde-haired baby dolls she received for Christmas. Claudia questions why everyone believes that white dolls and girls are more attractive than black ones and claims that this is why she was never asked what she wants for Christmas. She despises white dolls and females because of the black girls' ignorance in a racist culture. She deals with the stress of having to deal with such things at such a young age, which creates disturbance. Henry, a renter in Mactier's residence, had the unfortunate experience of touching Frieda's breast at one point. She was left in the dark about the experience of coming into her sexuality, which left her bewildered. She was unable to provide any details on what had taken place. She is just aware of the fact that he is acting inappropriately, but she does not understand what this suggests. She was more concerned about what had been done to her as well as how her parents would respond to the

situation. All of this was due to the ignorance of her parents, who never provided her with a proper knowledge or education on such matters. But nonetheless Frieda being enraged by her experience was willing to act rather than suffering. However, Pecola, the main character, had a challenging home life. Her parents used to quarrel all the time because her father, Cholly Breedlove, drank alcohol and used to physically assault her mother, Pauline Breedlove. Her father once burnt down the family home, forcing Pecola to live as a renter at Macteer's house at such a young age when she should have spent her childhood with her own family in her own parents' house. Pecola is certain that if she were born with blue eyes, she would be more attractive, her parents would stop fighting, her dad would give up drinking, and her brother would stop running away from home. Pecola acquired a sense of inferiority in herself, which fueled her yearning for blue eyes, which she believed were comparable to the whiteness and beauty she had. Cholly Breedlove returned home one night under the influence of alcohol, and the next morning, when Mrs. Breedlove began to harass Cholly about buying coal for the stove, he refused to comply with her demands. Both parties immediately engaged in combat with one another. While Pecola is lying in bed, she feels anxious and lonely, so she prays to God to make her invisible. "Please, God, she whispered into the palm of her hand. Please make me disappears" (*The Bluest Eye* 45). Those nasty eyes, she thought. She reasoned that if she could switch her eyes, her whole identity would shift. Because of how unbalanced she was, she missed out on being a normal little girl. She suffered emotionally from seeing her parents' arguments.

The ugliness and otherness of these females is reflected in their choice to wear black clothing. When Pecola goes to a store owned by a white shopkeeper whose name is Mr. Yacobowski, she gets afraid of buying sweets from Mr. Yacobowski who is white since she has the impression that he did not even notice her when she entered the store to buy candy from him. "At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He doesn't see her, because for him there is nothing to see" (*TBE* 48). Mr. Yacobowski claimed outrage that he touched her hand to collect money because she was black, as shown between the lines. "He hesitates, not wanting to touch her hand... Finally, he reaches over and takes the pennies from her hand. His nails graze her damp palm" (*TBE* 49-50). The existence that these black girls are forced to live is one of hardship and neglect. All these black females went to schools that have a history of repressing black female students and subjecting them to emotional and verbal abuse. Even within the confines of the educational system, white students are given preference. Pecola is subjected to teasing by the black schoolboys, some of whom are also black,

since she is a black female. Pecola asks Elihue Micah Whitcomb, also known as Soaphead Church, a psychic faith healer, to give her blue eyes. Soaphead instructed her to feed his landlady's dog meat, and if the dog behaves unusually, her request for blue eyes would be granted. Unfortunately for the dog, Pecola is being used as a poison delivery system, and he doesn't even want to be bothered with trying to hide his hatred for the dog from her. She thinks that if she feeds the dog meat, the dog will get her blue eyes, so she rushes away in shock. As thus, racism has catastrophic consequences. One more horrible incident occurred which shook Pecola from tip to toe when she was 11 years old, her father Cholly came home drunk and raped her while she was doing the dishes. He did it out of a mixture of compassion and wrath, and he left her unconscious on the floor. Therefore, the phenomenon of destroying young women's lives is exemplified in Pecola's Story.

CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison's work, *The Bluest Eye*, in many ways serves as a reflection of her unwavering sense of duty for the situation of subaltern African American women. Because of sexist prejudice, the lives of women like Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda are often weird and unpredictable. Along with sexist prejudice, additional variables such as racism, poverty, enslavement, and oppression play a significant role in stunting the development of women in these situations. In this novel the voice of all the subaltern African American female was suppressed or silenced when they tried to raise it for their existence and identity. Morrison is doing a service to young black women by bringing them from the margins into the spotlight by referencing them in her writings. Morrison has been hailed for portraying the difficulties that black girls face and for bringing the experiences of black girlhoods to the forefront of public discourse. Every female in that culture is at risk of being a victim of sexist prejudice, regardless of the color of their skin, if the society of their times is racist and rules or restricts female of color based on their race, then all girls in that society are at risk.

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