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UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE FORMATION DOCTORALE EN LANGUES ET LITERATURES

RACISM AND SEXISM: A READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE* AND *SULA*

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Master's Degree in English Modern letters

Specialization: American and Commonwealth Literature

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that, this research work entitled "Racism and Sexism": A Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* was done by DENZO TALAFOUO BAUDOUIN, registration number (14U188), student of the Department of English Modern Letters in the University of Yaoundé I

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DEDICATION

To

My Beloved Family

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ABSTRACT

This work entitled "Racism and Sexism: A Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*" aims at examining Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* with a view to explaining how she uses Racism and Sexism to portray the plight of women and African-Americans in general. The intention of this work is to analyze how the concepts of, race and gender are portrayed in the novel, and how they relate to issues of white beauty standards, self-loathing and racial pride. It adds its voice to the ever vibrant conversation on the issue of patriarchy and sexism especially as portrayed in the works of African American female writers who see their stories as twice-told tales - victims of both racism and patriarchal dominance. Tony Morrison challenges patriarchal and sexist values which she sees as monolithic discourses that hold no ground. This study is based on the assumption that Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* portrays Racism and Sexism as legacies of slavery and segregation. This sexist behavior sometimes is often an attempt to create unique solutions to avoid further victimization. The study is guided by New Historicism and Feminism. The findings reveal that in a society, crippled with injustice; both the perpetrators and victims suffer its atrocities and hostilities. The findings further prove that Morison is urging black women to break away from the patriarchal system with its sexist oppression. This work shows that, by creating characters that forthrightly tell their experiences of racism and sexism, and by creating characters that challenge the given norms of society. Morrison draws attention to the root of black women's oppression and at the same time offers help to a solution for it.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet ouvrage intitulé « Racism and Sexism: A Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* » vise à examiner *The Bluest Eye* et *Sula* de Toni Morrison en vue d'expliquer comment elle utilise le racisme et le sexisme pour dépeindre le sort des femmes et des Afro-Américains en général. Ce travail vise à analyser comment les concepts de race et de genre sont représentés dans les romans et comment ils se rapportent aux questions de normes de beauté blanche, du dégoût de soi et de fierté raciale. Il ajoute sa voix à la conversation toujours animée sur la question du patriarcat et du sexisme, en particulier dans les œuvres d'écrivaines afro-américaines qui voient leurs histoires comme des histoires racontées deux fois - victimes à la fois du racisme et de la domination patriarcale. Tony Morrison défie les valeurs patriarcales et sexistes qu'elle considère comme des discours monolithiques sans fondement. Cette étude est basée sur l'hypothèse que Toni Morrison dans *The Bluest Eye* et *Sula* dépeint le racisme et le sexisme comme des héritages de l'esclavage et de la ségrégation. Ce comportement sexiste est souvent une tentative de créer des solutions uniques pour éviter une nouvelle victimisation. L'étude est guidée par le nouvel historicisme et le féminisme. Les résultats révèlent que dans une société paralysée par l'injustice ; les auteurs et les victimes subissent ses atrocités et ses hostilités. Les résultats prouvent en outre que Morison exhorte les femmes noires à rompre avec le système patriarcal avec son oppression sexiste. Ce travail le montre, en créant des personnages qui racontent sans détour leurs expériences de racisme et de sexisme, et en créant des personnages qui défient les normes données de la société. Morrison attire l'attention sur la racine de l'oppression des femmes noires et propose en même temps de l'aide pour y remédier.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* have opened the eyes of perceptive readers and be made them become aware of the plights and predicaments of the woman in general and the black woman in particular. This may be due to political and societal compromises: one may be tempted to ask if the American Declaration of Independence has dropped the condemnation of Negro slavery from its pages, do we expect any printed pages to effect drastic changes in black women's fate? Hennessy and Ingram (1997) contend, "Women, irrespective of nationality and class position, were seen to comprise a homogenous group bound together by one characteristic covered mental breakdowns, discrimination in jobs and education, sexuality, dependence on men, sex role stereotyping, and so on" (p.83).

If the quote above describes types of oppression practiced against white women, then what about oppression of black women? Women, both white and black, equally suffer patriarchal oppression. Nevertheless, black women in particular suffer an additional oppression which can be termed as racial oppression, too. This way, the dilemma of the black woman is mainly based on racial and sexist oppression that constantly marginalizes her and keeps her in a pitiful state of nothingness. This double oppression of black women is best featured and explained in Toni Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in which Morrison tackles the double oppression of black women that triggers problems hindering their social, cultural, and human roles in society. According to Smith (1985), "*The Bluest Eye* examines the complex economic, historical, cultural and geographic factors that problematize relations within the black community and the world beyond" (p.721). Thus, the problems facing black women and hindering their development in society are what Morrison attempts to highlight in this novel. The present dissertation proposes to investigate how black women are tragically falling under the destructive spell of sexism and racism, and, consequently, marginality and alienation in *The Bluest Eye*. The argument runs within the main lines of both feminist and cultural theoretical approaches.

Morrison does not only blame the white society for oppression against the blacks, but she also criticizes the sexism practiced by black men against their women. The tragedy of black women is, therefore, caused by white racism and black sexism as well. In other words, black women suffer from a dual oppression: on one hand, they are kept marginalized from sharing positively in their society and, on the other hand, they are neglected by both whites and blacks. The fact that black man is stereotypically weak and emasculated intensifies the plight.

A significant part of black woman's tragedy lies on the shoulders of black men who, in terms of racism, are viewed as weak and emasculated. In order to provide an outlet for part of their suppression, black men project their own anger and repressed feelings of their fellow women, thus completing the full circle of injustice.

Black women are represented in *The Bluest Eye* as beset with sexism and racism. These two issues, which are termed in the very title of this work negatively, work hand in hand to efface and undermine the corners of black woman's life and structure. And this is what Morrison attempts to stress through the main characters of the Breedlove family, the Peace family and some other minor characters of the novels understudy. Toni Morrison considers the patriarchal social order as a monolithic philosophy which has no basis in truth, and in her works she tries to deconstruct this social order as we see in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*. She tries to unravel patriarchy which she sees as having a built-in bias against women. She does this through the unsavory portrayal of the male characters in both works and the subversion of patriarchal values as exemplified in her portrayal of the female characters.

To better carry out this study I opted for the feminist and new historicist criticism as my guiding compass. This choice of this approach was guided by the fact that the issue of sexism and its effects on modern societies has become a central question in the feminist quest for freedom and equality with men and that all our texts understudy has a direct link to culture and the history of the African-Americans as a whole.

Toni Morrison and her Times

The live of Toni Morrison will help us to understand the context of production of the works under study, and the author's life experiences that have influenced the representation of racism and sexism in neo-slave narratives.

Toni Morrison was born in Lorain, Ohio, on the 18th of February 1931. She is the second child of four of George Wofford and Ramah Willis Wofford. She was named Chloe Ardelia Wofford and she would only begin to call herself Toni Morrison in the 1950s while an undergraduate at Howard University.

Morrison's father, George Wofford, was a ship-welder who held several jobs to ensure his family's survival; he left Georgia to Ohio to avoid the Jim Crow segregation of the South. Morrison's maternal grandparents, Ardelia Willis and John Solomon Willis, had also migrated from Alabama to Kentucky with their twelve children. Willis inherited eighty-eight

acres of land from his mother and lost it to unscrupulous white men who later turned him into a share-cropper. Morrison narrates this aspect of her family history in *Song of Solomon* (1977).

Morrison's mother and father came from Alabama and Georgia respectively- two states known as slave states and quite famous for lynching and the use of iron collars and iron bits on slaves. Morrison's father actually witnessed three lynchings in Georgia before he came to settle in the North. Carmen Gillespie affirms that: "The family's move may also have been motivated by three lynchings of African-American men that occurred in the town. Witnessing these injustices may have left a lifelong impression on George Wofford" (*Toni Morrison: A Literary Reference to her Life and Work* 4). It is therefore possible that Morrison might have been appraised of the acts of cruelty and violent suffered by her grandparents and father. These horrific deeds have actually been the stuff of her fiction and of *Beloved* in Particular.

Morrison's father was an extremist; a man who considered every white man a monster. In *Toni Morrison Explained: A Reader's Road Map to the Novels*, Ron David recounts an event whereby a white man was thrown down on stairs by Morrison's father. He suspects the white man was chasing Chloe and her elder sister. So, he first threw the man and asked questions afterwards. Toni Morrison, though a child, might have learnt from that act that violence begets violence. The black race is almost always on the defensive, owing to the insecurity created by the whites. As a child, Morrison also suffered racism.

The stigma of slavery made every minority group to think that they had an upper hand on the African-American. The frustration Morrison felt as a black person would be a theme in most of her creative works: she would unveil the plight of the African Americans in America. However, unlike her father, her judgments on whites will not be biased. Her father hated all whites and so no hope of change in them. Her mother held a different view. She had hope for the white race and believed that someday the white's attitude may change. Morrison sides with her mother; and as such creates in her works a balance of realistic world in which all whites are not presented as monsters or villains nor all blacks heroes.

In 1949, Toni Morrison graduated the top of her high school and moved to Washington D.C. where she attended Howard University. In Washington, she encountered racially segregated buses and restaurants. She joined the Howard University Players that travelled through the South and changed her name to Toni. She completed her Bachelor's degree in 1953 at Howard University and then moved to Cornell University where she

defended a Master's thesis, "Virginia Wolf's and William Faulkner's Treatment of the Alienated" which addresses the issue of suicide in both modernist writers' works.

Though Morrison aspired to become a dancer, she finally became a teacher and was employed as an English instructor at Texas Southern University and later at Howard and many other universities and colleges. She married Harold Morrison, an architect, and their short marriage left her with the responsibility of bringing up two sons: Harold Ford and Kevin Slade. Bringing up these children was a tedious task for Morrison. It is of little wonders that in her works she presents female characters who brave the hurdles of life with hardly any help from men.

Apart from family influences, Morrison was influenced by the books she read. According to Lisa R. Rhodes, Morrison read writers like Fyodor Dostoyevsky (*Crime and Punishment*), Leo Tolstoy (*War and Peace*), Gustave Flaubert (*Madam Bovary*) and Jane Austen (Pride *and Prejudice*) (Toni Morrison: Great American Writer 24). Most of these books deal with female characters who constantly suffer from patriarchy.

Tony Morrison's writing was also influenced by race. She hails from the Afro-American or black race; the race of those who were captured by force from the African coasts and shipped to America. They suffered horrifying and excruciating condition in slave ships; were chained and beaten like animals as earlier mentioned. In America, they were sold like objects and taken to plantations were they toiled from dawn to dusk. Morrison being a member of such a race, might have heard these ghastly tales from her ancestor. Also, she might have read the history of her people in books written by whites in a bid to justify slavery. Morrison therefore writes back to deconstruct all forms of cultural, gender and racial stereotypes in order to unveil the horrors of slavery.

By 1968, Morrison was the senior editor for trade publications at Random House in New York City. She had left the teaching position at Howard for lack of the Ph.D. required for tenure. In her capacity as senior editor in the fiction department of Random House, she brought black literature into the mainstream. She worked on the ground breaking *Contemporary African Literature* (1972), a collection that included works by Nigerian writers such as Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe and the South-African Athol Fugard. She discovered and promoted a new generation of African-American writers like Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis and Gayl Jones. She published and publicized the autobiography Mohammed Ali, The Greatest, and equally published the writings of Henry Dumas, a little

known novelist and poet who was shot to death by a transit officer in the New York City subway in 1968. Perhaps, her greatest contribution as an editor should be the participation in *The Black Book* (1976), an anthology of photographs, illustrations, essays, and other documents of black in the United States from the time of slavery to the 1970s.

In all, Morrison, like black artists who came before her, fights for the black cause; a fight which involves exposing the beauty of the African American culture and mindset so as to curb the stereotypical image of the black man. She died on August 5, 2019 after she had published the following works: *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1974), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2003).

The summaries of the novels under study expose the theme of racism and sexism.

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye,* and *Sula*

Toni Morrison is the first Afro-American female author who was awarded Nobel Prize for Literature. Up to now, she has published 11 novels in total, including *The Bluest Eye* (1969), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *TarBaby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1999), *Love* (2003), *A Mercy* (2008), *Home* (2012) and *God Help the Child* (2015).

Her novels have opened the eyes of the perceptive readers and have made them become aware of the plights and predicaments of women in general and black women in particular. In all her works, the principal characters are women and it is through the female protagonists that Toni Morrison creates the right kind of woman consciousness.

The stories of both *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* happened after abolishment of slavery, but the shadow of it was still hanging over American society and African-Americans were in a subordinate social position. Black women were oppressed by racial and gender discrimination at the bottom of the society. As social beings, they don't have equal civil rights, and as family member, they have to follow the male family members' decisions. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's mother was rather indifferent to her daughter's tragedy that she was raped by her own father. In *Sula*, Sula's grandma served men as God and pleased men. Black women had no rights for their kids, life and even their own body.

This section has probed into the origins, the development and the objective of Afro-American writings that is, the slave and neo-slave narratives. It has also highlighted the similarities between Morrison's life experiences and the connection it has with her writings.

This section equally targeted some key historical Factors of the U.S. in the 1980s and 2010s that have triggered the author's imagination.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to analyze Toni Morrison's ***The Bluest Eye*** and ***Sula*** with a view to explaining how she uses Racism and Sexism to create pity and compassion in the readers mind and as such evoke a feeling of indignation and rejection of any form of oppression. This research is to underline that in a society, crippled with injustice; both the perpetrators and victims suffer its atrocities and hostilities. It also seeks to explain the link between some narrative strategies and the main idea raised.

Research Problem

African American is fraught with problems of race and sex as the black woman is a hybrid personality who traces her roots in Africa yet longs for an identity in America. Black women's literature has gained a lot of considerations in the last decades and much is still to be done in terms of race and gender. For a black, racial discrimination together with gender crises is a lethal combination that is so narrow and sometimes difficult to distinguish between them. Therefore, it is necessary that these issues be dealt with through books written by female authors. With all these is mind, my thrust area in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* will be on the theme of Racism and Sexism, which are persistent and are rendered as entirely different perspectives in each of the novels.

Research Questions

Our research work will attempt to answer the following questions:

- What are the episodes of racism and sexism in *The Bluest Eye*?
- How is racism and sexism presented by Toni Morrison's *Sula*?
- What are the points of convergence between the two novels so long as racism and sexism are concerned and therefore what is Toni Morrison's vision about and African American woman?

-

Hypothesis

This work is based on the hypothesis that Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* portrays Racism and Sexism as legacies of slavery and segregation. Thus, the evils of internalized racism and sexism.

Motivation

This research was motivated by the researcher's observation of the devastations caused by racism and sexism that plagued the African-Americans and the possibility of creating coping mechanisms to survive in a society where one is considered as a minority. The selected texts beings African-American novels, prompted the researcher to investigate how Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye and Sula handle this question f racism and sexism.

Significance of the Work

The study shows how in both texts, Toni Morrison uses Racism and Sexism as a means to, or as an eye opener not only to characters but audience almost all of whom are blacks, and have been trained to understand or think of themselves as second class citizens, to hate their lot in life and in some cases to hate each other for being black, for them to strive for improvement in the society that has been constructed to make this improvement impossible a theme that is relevant to readers of all races. Justice and equality for all is therefore the watch words in the novels.

Moreover, as a woman study, the result of this study is expected to contribute and enrich in its own way other readers or researchers who are interested in understanding the feminist literary criticism on literary work in the future.

In addition, this analysis equally looks at how Toni Morrison uses some narrative strategies to add more meaning to her narratives. The study claims that, forty-nine years after the publication of ***Sula*** and fifty-two years after that of ***The Bluest Eye***, the condition of the African Americans in the United States of America still gives cause for concern. It is therefore significant as far as literary influences are concerned.

Scope of the Study

This study is limited to two novels namely; ***The Bluest Eye*** and ***Sula*** by Toni Morrison. Other works by critics will be used to unveil the evils done on African Americans through some themes like Racism and Sexism.

Structure of the Work

This work is divided into an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introduction states the research problem, the research questions, the hypothesis, the objectives of the study, the significance of the work, the scope of study, the definition of the key terms and the structure of the work.

Chapter One entitled "Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature" explains the theories that are used to analyze, evaluate and interpret this work. The theories suggested for this study are Feminism and New Historicism. Feminism is used to show the reaction of some of these characters when they become victims of sexist and racist society. These ideas influence the development and formation of black female identity. New Historicism will be used in finding the creative power that shapes our texts outside those narrow boundaries in which it has hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries. In addition, this chapter examines the literature that has been written on the author, the texts and the topics of discussion, looking at our points of convergence and divergence with other researchers in this domain.

Chapter Two, "Representation of Racism in *The Bluest Eye and Sula*" will analyze those aspects of racism with the intention of examining Toni Morrison's response to the prejudices of race in the novels understudy. Additionally, this chapter looks at the past and the effects on black people like Pecola, Claudia, Frieda and their respective families.

Chapter Three, "Episodes of Sexism in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula"* analyses aspects of sexism with the intention of examining Toni Morrison's response to the prejudices of gender in the texts understudy. Additionally, this chapter looks into the efficiency of female bonding and communal attitude towards outcasts like Sula.

Chapter Four entitled "points of convergence between *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* so long as racism and sexism are concerned and Toni Morrison's vision about African-American women" focuses at looking on those commonalities in the two novels understudy so long as

racism and sexism are concerned. We shall equally be looking at the author's vision about an African-American woman.

The conclusion provides a summary of the study, states the results and suggests other avenues for further research in our area of study. It equally gives recommendations to individuals and the public at large.

Definition of Key Terms

The key terms in the topic of this work are "Racism" and "Sexism". These two terms need definitions because they have other meanings in different fields of study.

In the nineteenth century, many scientists subscribed to the belief that the human population can be divided into races. The term racism is a noun describing the state of being racist, i.e., subscribing to the belief that the human population can or should be classified into races with differential abilities and dispositions, which in turn may motivate a political ideology in which rights and privileges are differentially distributed based on racial categories. The term "racist" may be an adjective or a noun, the latter describing a person who holds those beliefs. Most biologists, anthropologists, and sociologists reject the taxonomy of races in favor of more specific and/or empirically verifiable criteria, such as geography, ethnicity, or a history of endogamy. Human genome research indicates that race is not a meaningful genetic classification of humans.

The revised Oxford English Dictionary cites the shorter term "racism" in a quote from the year 1903. It was defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition 1989) as "the theory that distinctive human characteristics and abilities are determined by race"; the same dictionary termed racism a synonym of racialism: "belief in the superiority of a particular race".

By the end of World War II, racism had acquired the same supremacist connotations formerly associated with racialism: racism by then implied racial discrimination, racial supremacism, and a harmful intent. (The term "race hatred" had also been used by sociologist Frederick Hertz in the late 1920s.)

Racism can equally be looked at as some sort of a Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their

membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized.

Clark et al. (1999, p. 805) define racism as

> *The beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation.*
>
> *Racism is a stressor that contributes to racial/ethnic disparities in mental and physical health and to variations in health outcomes within racial and ethnic minority groups (Anderson 1989; Clark et al. 1999; Mays et al. 2007; Paradies 2006; Williams and Williams-Morris 2000). Racism exists at multiple levels, including interpersonal, environmental, institutional, and cultural.*

It seems from the above that the critics have made mentioned of superiority, racial discrimination, exclusion and supremacy. It is therefore reasonable to assume that when a person is treated worse, excluded, disadvantaged, harassed, bullied, humiliated, or degraded because of their race or ethnicity, we can then refer to it as racism. In the same light, this study affirms Clark's definition in the fact that racism is a stressor that contributes to racial/ethnic disparities in mental and physical health and to variations in health outcomes within racial and ethnic minority groups which is very much glaring in Morrison's writings.

The next key term to define in the context of our study is "Sexism".

According to Fred R. Shapiro, the term "sexism" was most likely coined on November 18, 1965, by Pauline M. Leet during a "Student-Faculty Forum" at Franklin and Marshall College. Specifically, the word sexism appears in Leet's forum contribution "Women and the Undergraduate", and she defines it by comparing it to racism, stating in part (on page 3):

> *When you argue ... that since fewer women write good poetry this justifies their total exclusion, you are taking a position analogous to that of the racist—I might call you, in this case, a 'sexist' ... Both the racist and the sexist are acting as if all that has happened had never happened, and both of them are making decisions and coming to conclusions about someone's value by referring to factors which are in both cases irrelevant.*

Also, according to Shapiro, the first time the term "sexism" appeared in print was in Caroline Bird's speech "On Being Born Female", which was published on November 15, 1968, in Vital Speeches of the Day (p. 6). In this speech she said in part: "There is recognition abroad that we are in many ways a sexist country. Sexism is judging people by their sex when sex doesn't matter. Sexism is intended to rhyme with racism."

Sexism may be defined as an ideology based on the belief that one sex is superior to another. It is discrimination, prejudice, or stereotyping based on gender, and is most often expressed toward women and girls.

Early female sociologists Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Ida B. Wells, and Harriet Martineau described systems of gender inequality, but did not use the term sexism, which was coined later. Sociologists, who adopted the functionalist paradigm, like Talcott Parsons, understood gender inequality as the natural outcome of a dimorphic model of gender.

Feminist author Bell hooks defines sexism as a system of oppression that results in disadvantages for women.

Feminist philosopher Marilyn Frye defines sexism as an "attitudinal-conceptual-cognitive-orientational complex" of male supremacy, male chauvinism, and misogyny

According to Kate Manne, sexism is one branch of a patriarchal order. In her definition, sexism rationalizes and justifies patriarchal norms, in contrast with misogyny, the branch which polices and enforces patriarchal norms. Manne says that sexism often attempts to make patriarchal social arrangements seem natural, good, or inevitable so that there appears to be no reason to resist them.

Manne equally makes an important distinction between misogyny and sexism. In her model sexism is the ‘justificatory’ branch of the patriarchal order, which rationalizes and justifies male dominance through beliefs, theories, stereotypes and cultural narratives that present women as naturally inferior.

Psychologists Mary Crawford and Rhoda Unger define sexism as prejudice held by individuals that encompasses "negative attitudes and values about women as a group. Above all, Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on one's sex or gender. Sexism can affect anyone, but it primarily affects women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles, and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another.

Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence which is very evident in Toni Morrison's narratives under study.

Looking at all the above definitions of our key terms namely; "racism" and "sexism", we can attest to the fact that the author and the neo-colonial narratives chosen for this research best suit the context.

CHAPTER ONE
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter gives an insight into the critical tools that will be used for the analysis of the novels. It equally examines the literature that has been written on the texts, the topic and, the author under study.

Theoretical Framework

Criticism aims at, evaluating, criticizing, and interpreting texts. It is a complex art owing to the fact that its methods are subject to debate. It is therefore the task of the critic to enhance understanding of the text. The critic can only succeed if he/she chooses the approach suitable for that purpose. According to Shadrach A. Ambanasom:

> *No single approach is valid for all works. No matter its claims and supposed validity, one should not carry a single approach blindly to a work of art; it is rather the work that calls for the type of approach suitable for its apprehension. An approach that is only remotely relevant to a work of art may mislead its conceiver to condemn the creative writer for the wrong crime; it may force the critic to judge and crucify the artist for what he never set out to do in the first place. (Education of the Deprived: A Study of Four Cameroonian Playwrights 120)*

From this, one can say it is the work of art that determines the kind of theory to be used for its analysis. If the content and the form are ignored, and a theory forced on it, then the outcome will be faulty. In other words, the approach used should suit the work of art. In this light, the two approaches judged suitable for this investigation are Feminism theory and New Historicism. Feminism is used to show the reaction of some of these characters when they become victims of a sexist and racist society. These ideas influence the development and formation of black female identity. New Historicism will be used in finding the creative power that shapes our texts outside those narrow boundaries in which it has hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries.

Feminism

Feminism requires a theoretical account of embodied gender differences that is grounded in the complex realities of women's everyday experiences. Susan Arndt in *African Women's Literature: Orature and Intertextuality* States:

> *Feminism is a worldview of way of life of women and men, who as individuals, in groups and or organization actively, oppose social structures responsible for the oppression of women on the basis of their biological and social gender. Feminists do not only recognize the mechanism of oppression; they aim at overcoming them (324).*

Bell Hooks in *Aint I a Woman: Black Woman and Feminism* says it is simply "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression" (17). Helen Chukwuma (2003) stipulates:

> *Feminism means therefore a rejection of inferiority and a striving for recognition. It seeks to give the woman a sense of self as a worthy, effectual and contributing human being. Feminism is reaction to such stereotypes of women, which deny them a positive identity. Women conditioning in Africa is the greatest barrier toward a fulfillment of self (12).*

Feminism aims to redefine the existing unequal power structures between men and women in their spheres of interaction.

Feminism Movement

The feminist movement (also known as the women's movement or feminism) refers to a series of Social movements and Political campaigns for radical and liberal reforms on women's issues created by the inequality between men and women. Such issues are women's liberation, reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. The movement's priorities have expanded since its beginning in the 1800s, and vary among nations and communities. Priorities range from opposition to female genital mutilation in one country, to opposition to the glass ceiling in another.

Feminism in parts of the Western world has been an ongoing movement since the turn of the century. During its inception, feminism has gone through a series of four high moments termed Waves. The First-wave feminism was oriented around the station of middle- or upper-class white women and involved suffrage and political equality, education, right to property, organizational leadership, and marital freedoms.

The Second-wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities. Although the first wave of feminism involved mainly middle class white women, the second wave brought in women of different social classes, women of color, and women from other developing nations that were seeking solidarity.

The Third-wave feminism continued to address the financial, social, and cultural inequalities of women in business and in their home lives, and included renewed campaigning for greater influence of women in politics and media. In reaction to political activism, feminists have also had to maintain focus on women's reproductive rights, such as the right to abortion.

The Fourth-wave feminism examines the interlocking systems of power that contribute to the social stratification of traditionally marginalized groups, as well as the world around them.

History of Feminism Movement

The base of the Women's Movement, since its inception, has been grounded in the injustice of inequality between men and women. Throughout history, the role between men and women has been one of a patriarchal society, citing the law of nature as the justification, which was interpreted to mean women are deemed as inferior to men.

According to Allan Johnson, a sociologist who studies masculinity, wrote of patriarchy: "Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire"(Johnson 26). During the pre-feminism era, women were meant to be proper, delicate, and emotional nurtures of the household. They were raised in a manner in which gaining a husband to take care of them and raising a family was their ultimate priority.

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote of the lesser sex in her 1792 novels *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*,

> *..for, like the flowers which are planted in too rich a soil, strength and usefulness are Sacrificed to beauty; and the flaunting leaves, after having pleased a fastidious eye, fade, disregarded on the stalk, long before the season when they ought to have arrived at maturity (Wollstonecraft 9).*

Feminism Movement in Western Society

Feminism in the United States, Canada, and a number of countries in Western Europe has been divided by scholars into three waves: first, second and third-wave feminism. Recent

(early 2010s) research suggests there may be a fourth wave characterized, in part, by new media platforms.

The feminist movement's agenda includes acting as a counterpart to the putatively patriarchal strands in the dominant masculine culture. While differing during the progression of waves, it is a movement that has sought to challenge the political structure, power holders, and cultural beliefs or practices.

Although antecedents to feminism may be found far back before the 18th century, the seeds of the modern feminist movement were planted during the late part of that century. Christine de Pizan, a late medieval writer, was possibly the earliest feminist in the western tradition. She is believed to be the first woman to make a living out of writing. Feminist thought began to take a more substantial shape during the Enlightenment with such thinkers as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Marquis de Condorcet championing women's education.

The first scientific society for women was founded in Middelburg, a city in the south of the Dutch republic, in 1785.Though the feminist movement had already begun in America with the Temperance Movement, the First Wave of Feminism, known as the Suffragette Movement, began on 19–20 July 1848 during the first Women's Right Convention in Seneca Falls New York. The convention drew over 300 people, who were predominately white, middle-class women. Sixty-eight women and thirty-two men signed the "Declaration of Sentiments", which called for equal rights for women and men on the basis of education, right to property, organizational leadership, right to vote, and marital freedoms.

For the Suffragette's first major display, they held a parade on 3rdMarch 1913, in Washington DC. The first suffragette parade, which was also the first civil rights march in Washington, was coordinated by Alice Paul and the National American Suffrage Association. The parade drew over five thousand participants who were led by Inez Milholland. The parade was strategically scheduled for the day before the inauguration of President Woodrow Wilson, which drew in a lot of people to Washington. The women gathered in front of the US Capitol and then traveled fourteen blocks to the Treasury Department. The parade proceeded through the crowd of angry spectators who became verbally and physically abusive toward the women. By the end of the demonstration, there was reported at least one hundred people taken to the hospital due to injuries.

In 1918 Crystal Eastman wrote an article published in the Birth Control Review, she contended that birth control is a fundamental right for women and must be available as an alternative if they are to participate fully in the modern world. "In short, if feminism, conscious and bold and intelligent, leads the demand, it will be supported by the secret eagerness of all women to control the size of their families, and a suffrage state should make short work of repealing these old laws that stand in the way of birth control." She stated "I don't believe there is one woman within the confines of this state who does not believe in birth control!"(Eastman 1918).

The women who made the first efforts towards women's suffrage came from more stable and privileged backgrounds, and were able to dedicate time and energy into making change. Initial developments for women, therefore, mainly benefited white women in the middle and upper classes. During the second wave, the feminist movement became more inclusive of women of color and women of different cultures.

The 1960s second wave of feminism was termed Le Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (the Women's liberation movement). It was the largest and broadest social movement in US history. The second wave was based around a sociopolitical-cultural movement. Activists fought for gender issues, women's sexual liberation, reproductive rights, job opportunities for women, violence against women, and changes in custody and divorce laws. It is believed the feminist movement gained attention in 1963, when Betty Friedan published her novel, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan wrote of "the problem that has no name"(Friedan 1963), as a way to describe the depression women felt about their limited choices in life. While reading *The Feminine Mystique*, women found they related to what Friedan wrote. Women were forced to look at themselves in a way they had not before. They saw within themselves, all the things they had given up in the name of conformity.

The women's movement became more popular in May 1968 when women began to read again, more widely, the book *The Second Sex*, written in 1949 by a defender of women's rights, Simone de Beauvoir (and translated into English for the first time in 1953; later translation 2009). De Beauvoir's writing explained why it was difficult for talented women to become successful. The obstacles de Beauvoir enumerates include women's inability to make as much money as men do in the same profession, women's domestic responsibilities, society's lack of support towards talented women, and women's fear that success will lead to an annoyed husband or prevent them from even finding a husband at all. De Beauvoir also

argues that women lack ambition because of how they are raised, noting that girls are told to follow the duties of their mothers, whereas boys are told to exceed the accomplishments of their fathers. Along with other influences, such as Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir's work helped the feminist movement to solidify the second wave. Contributors to The Women's Liberation Movement include Simone de Beauvoir, Christiane Rochefort, Christine Delphy and Anne Tristan.

The defining moment in the 1960s was a demonstration held to protest against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City on 7 September 1968, termed the "cattle parade". The purpose of the protest was to call attention to beauty standards and the objectification of women.

Through this era, women gained equal rights such as a right to an education, a right to work, and a right to contraception and abortion. One of the most important issues that The Women's Liberation movement faced was the banning of abortion and contraception, which the group saw as a violation of women's rights. Thus, they made a declaration known as Le Manifeste de 343 which held signatures from 343 women admitting to having had an illegal abortion. The declaration was published in two French newspapers, *Le Nouvel observateur* and *Le Monde*, on 5 April 1971. The group gained support upon the publication. Women received the right to abort with the passing of the Veil Law in 1975.

The 1980s and 1990s drew a different perspective in the feminist movement and was termed Grrl Feminism or Riot Grrl Feminism. The ideas of this era took root with the popularization of the Riot grrrl feminist punk subculture in Olympia, Washington, in the early 1990s.

The feminists of this era strived to redefine what it meant to be a feminist. They embraced individualism and diversity, and pushed to eliminate conformity. The twentieth century woman had the mindset of wanting to have it all. They wanted a professional career, as well as be a wife and mother. Harriet Kimble Wrye PhD, ABPP, FIPA wrote of her research on the psychoanalytic perspectives of being a feminist in the twentieth century, "So many of us look back, and recognizing the pressures under which we struggled, wonder how we did what we did and at what price" (Wrye 2009).

On 11 October 1991, the first televised work place sexual harassment case was aired. Anita Hill, who was a law professor at the time accused Supreme Court nominee Clarence

Thomas of persistent sexual harassment. Anita Hill recounted the details of her experience in court to an all-male panel. Despite there being four corroborating witnesses, the case was dismissed and Clarence Thomas was confirmed into the Supreme Court. Though the case was dismissed, it encouraged other women to speak out on their own experiences which led to Congress passing the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which gave legal action against workplace sexual harassment.

The United Nations Human Development Report 2004 estimated that when both paid employment and unpaid household tasks are accounted for, on average women work more than men. In rural areas of selected developing countries women performed an average of 20% more work than men, or 120% of men's total work, an additional 102 minutes per day. In the OECD countries surveyed, on average women performed 5% more work than men, or 105% of men's total work—an additional 20 minutes per day. However, men did up to 19 minutes more work per day than women in five out of the eighteen OECD countries surveyed: Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Israel, and The Netherlands. According to UN Women, "Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property."

During the course of the women's movement in Western society, affective changes have taken place, including women's suffrage, the right to initiate divorce proceedings and "no fault" divorce, the right of women to make individual decisions regarding pregnancy (including access to contraceptives and abortion), and the right to own property. It has also led to broad employment for women at more equitable wages, and access to university education.

So long as feminist novels are concerned, they must posit aspects of female ideology. Theodore A. Ezeigbo in “Reflecting the Times: Radicalism in Recent Female Oriented-Fiction in Nigeria” quotes Chukwuenye Ogunyemi who defines a feminist novel as “a form of protest literature directed at both men and women; protesting against sexism and patriarchal power structure …” (64). Bases exist as a result of cultural, racial and historical constructs rather than differences in the biological realities of different sexes.

New Historicism

In practicing New Historicism, Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt emphasize that new historicism is not aimed at

> *Demoting art and discrediting aesthetic pleasure, rather, it is concerned with finding the creative power that shapes literary works outside those narrow boundaries in which it had hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries (12).*

New historicism developed in the 1980s primarily as a reaction to the excesses of the formalists and the new critics who emphasized the autonomy of the literary text and dismissed any reference to historical and socio-cultural contexts in the process of wringing out meaning from the literary work. New historicists stressed the literariness of history and the historicity of literature. Bennett and Royle note that: "New historicists argue that to ask about the relationship between literature and history is the wrong question. The form of the question presupposes that there is literature on one side and history on the other" (114). This is the distinction that new critics and formalists make while insisting that the meaning of a literary work can only come from its internal linguistic/literary elements. However, Bennett and Royle hasten to point out that:

> *New historicists may be understood as a reaction against suchPresuppositions: put briefly, it may be defined as recognitionof the extent to which history is textual, as a rejection ofthe autonomy of the literary text and as an attempteddisplacement of the objectivity of interpretation in general… new historicists argue that the production of literary textsis a cultural practice different only in its specific mode orformulation from other practices – from furniture-making toteaching to warefare to printing. No absolute distinction canbe made between literary and other cultural practices (115).*

The advocates of this theoretical method include Stephen Greenblatt, a renaissance scholar, Louise Montrose, Catherine Gallagher, Louise Althusser and Michel Foucault. As a theory, it incorporates some diverse discourses such as post-structuralism, reader/response, feminism, Marxism, cultural materialism and psychoanalysis.

Ross Murfin and Supriya Ray in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* define new historicism as "a theory that incorporates diverse discourses … as it both influences and is influenced by historical reality" (293). New historicists like formalist critics acknowledge the importance of the literary text (239). The point of departure for the analyses of the

literature is the literature text itself. Stephen Greenblatt in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* defines new historicism as: "a practice rather than a doctrine" (321) while Forrest G. Robinson identifies it as "a principle of flexibility" (320). This flexibility can be seen in the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of new historicism. The intrinsic is the manner in which the text is written, the language, the devices and narrative strategies that are manipulated in the text. The extrinsic includes the socio-cultural, political, religious, economic and psychological realities that constitute everyday realities in the society the writer originates from, which must have influenced his creativity, the biography of the author and the content of what his contemporaries are writing. Hence Lois Tyson, in *Critical Theory Today: A User's Friendly Guide,* emphasizes that a work of art is critically analyzed through the "author's life in order to discover his/her intention in writing the work, to study the historical period in which the work was written" (288). In the same manner Jerome McGann states that the new historicist critics study a literary work's "point of origin" through biography and bibliography (*The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 241).

They further note that literary texts are embedded within the social and economic circumstances in which they are produced and consumed. New historicists argue that these socio-economic and cultural circumstances are not stable in themselves and are susceptible to being rewritten and transformed. Literary texts are therefore "part of a larger circulation of social energies, both products of, and influences on, a particular culture or ideology" (*ibid*). The difference between new historicism and the old is that the former recognizes "that history is the 'history of the present', that history is not in the making, that rather than being monumental and closed, history is radically open to transformation and rewriting" (*ibid).*

A new historicist reading of a text situates the text in a particular social, economic, cultural and historical perspective since literature re-textualizes history and history contributes in the development of literature. Thus a literary work should be considered a product of time and place and circumstance.

Review of Related Literature

According to E.C. Osuala, the review of literature surveys the research that has been done on the topic under study and, pointing out the similarities and differences between works by other critics and our current study, clearly defines what has been done and what has been left undone (*Introduction to Research Methodology* 31). On the whole, the review of literature opens new research horizons. To this effect, we will proceed to examine the critical works written on *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* by Toni Morrison.

Striving to discuss racial issues in the works of Toni Morrison is neither an easy task nor pioneering enterprise. This is because the works of Morrison have perceived significant volumes of criticism from critics all round the world. To Stanley Crouch, Morrison's works contains an excess of sentiment. He accuses her of "almost always losing control" (154), and not resisting the temptation of the trite or the sentimental. This statement appears excessive, for Morrison's writing is based in the common and mourning experience of blacks and particularly the black female in America. On the other hand, it is this sensibility with a mixture of imagination which awakens the consciousness of the black community. In the same vein, Denis Heinz holds that:

By combining political consciousness with aesthetic sensibility, Morrison achieves a very deliberate balance, without directly denouncing white society, she illustrates the demise of Blacks who have adopted the corrupting influence of the white community. (5).

Heinz enhances the important role played by sensibility. To him, it is the catalyst that enables Blacks and whites to express a rebirth through a Black community. Contrary to Crouch, this dissertation therefore postulates that, examining the problems of racism and sexism as Morrison does is no way suggests the loss of control and sentimentality. It rather depicts bitter reality.

Jill Matus looks at Morrison's work as a type of cultural memory which focuses on obscured or erased history of African Americans from slavery to continued racial oppression of the second millennium and as a history which encapsulates the traumatic experiences of African Americans. Her novels dwell on scenes of horror and highlight the political and historical contexts wherein several actions take place. This assertion ties in with Morrison's heritage of story-telling in her family.

Many have considered the way *The Bluest Eye* alludes to earlier black writings in order to express the traditionally silenced female point of view and uses conventional grotesque imagery as a vehicle for social protest. Scholars also have been attracted to *The Bluest Eye* by its deconstruction of whiteness along racial, gender and economic lines, while feminists have equated the violence of the narrative with self-hatred wrought by a wide range of illusions about white American society and African American women's place in it. In addition, some have examined the influence of environment on the novel's characters, identifying stylistics affinities with literary naturalism. Others have offered Marxist interpretations of the novel's formal aspects in terms of the ideological content of its representation of African American life. Acknowledging Morrison's achievement in the novel, critics have generally acclaimed *The Bluest Eye* for deconstructing a number of literary taboos with its honest portrayals of American girlhood, its frank descriptions of interracial racism or "colorism" in the African American community, and its thoughtful treatment of the emotional precocity of prepubescent girls.

Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos writing about *The Bluest Eye in New Dimensions of Spirituality*. *A Biracial and Bicultural Reading of the Novels of Toni Morrison holds that The Bluest Eye* is in two ways Morrison's depression novel. First, it comes out a spiritual loneliness when she was a divorced single mother, with two preschool boys, and was trying to establish herself in herself in the work world with little support system. This experience helped her to develop a healing imagination especially as she maintains that writing the story in the evening when her children were asleep had a healing effect on her. Demetrakopoulos investigates the image of the woman as mother earth, rejecting the image of the earth as mother. She considers that Morrison rejects the natural impulses of human beings themselves as forces to have faith in. By rejecting the seasons, the earth, human society, she exposes the romanticism of faith in these abstentions. The seasons themselves are experienced by the children as different styles of whipping, and Pecola,s family life is defined by what degree of violence her parents daily mount against each other.

The critic equally looks at the issue of rape in *The Bluest Eye*. Making allusions to the Greek Mythological fate of Philomela, she considers that Pecola is crippled and brutalized by the act of rape. Demetrakopoulos contends that Philomela, unlike Pecola, a grown woman, means a tapestry revealing her wrongs; sometimes she is transformed into a nightingale or a swallow that sings or can only twitter. So her human experience is finally cancelled forever by the gods. Pecola who is finally insane regresses to a negative state, becomes one with the sun

flowers; what Demetrakopoulos describes as “the silence proto-poet” (34) who stands mute because she cannot even twitter. While in the Philomela story, the sister avenges her death, for Pecola even vengeance is not possible. To Demetrakopoulos, Claudia’s attempted vengeance is thwarted by the novel’s shift in narrators. The use of stream of consciousness and the closed form of the novel emphasize the Philomela archetype; Pecola truly cannot tell her story except as a writer like Morrison can imagine it. The closed form of the novel – the finished life stories or the protagonists, the Breedloves – symbolizes her characters trapped, fixed lives.

Demetrakopoulos end the story by arguing that “No one is indicted for Pecola’s destruction, but then in another way we all are”, she continues to point that “if no one is guilty, there is no scapegoat; the vision becomes more akin to the ancient Necessity, the bleak, irrevocable, futile-to-resist, faceless impingement of an inescapable destiny” (36). *The Bluest Eye*, it is clear, is a story of silence imposed on the fragile woman which is none of her making.

In her article “The Language and Music of Survival,” Karla F.C. Holloway contends that *The Bluest Eye*is a journey into Black Memory. She holds the view that the memories belong to black readers. She affirms this with the view that the funerals, the love, the hopelessness and hopefulness, almost all of the events in the text apart from the incestuous rape of Pecola are “identifiable Black events” (37). The article focuses on Claudia’s ability to survive the horrors of this story of despair, hopelessness, incest and even abandonment.

To Holloway:

> *Claudia who survives this journey, has he attitude that enables her survival. Her anger is appropriately directed towards the whiteness of her adversary. She hates*
> *Shirley Temple, the white child in the kitchen, and all things associated with herrepression. Rather than embracing the enemy as does Pecola - she rejects it in avitricolic. (41)*

Holloway sees this as Morrison’s suggestion that those children who are victims often embrace their captors. In all, Holloway suggests that perhaps Morrison is saying that the extremes of dark childhood memories etch themselves against the present, ensuring the survival of the past, clarifying Black adults living, and signaling our future. But it could also mean that Morrison is suggesting that when we take time to reflect, we could all find some potential for more than we are, smoothed over by the passage of time and the inevitable crowding out of growth.

Barbara Rigney looks at self and identity in Morrison's fiction. In her "Hagar's Mirror: Self and Idenrity in Morrison's Fiction" Rigney studies the dangers of mirror in Morrison's fiction. She argues that in *Song of Solomon* what destroys Hagar is not merely Pilate's oppressive look (her gift of the mirror being evidence of this) nor Milkman's failure to love, but the vision of herself that the mirror reflects. Rigney argues that:

The mirror lies in telling her that she's not beautiful, for mirrors represent onlywhite standards of beauty: but the greater lie is that illusion of un united self hood which mirrors also perpetuate, for the 'self' in Morrison's fiction is always multiple,contradictory, and ambiguous-if, in fact, a self can be said to exist at all. (52)

The issue here is that the mirror gives a false image of the character, but it is a falsity that eventually destroys the character as she struggles to attain that standard. This is particularly true as Rigney argues because there are no 'hole truths' or 'whole' men and women is Morrison's novels, at least not in any traditional fiction sense. Just as she challenges the dominant cultural view of language and signification, so Morrison also subverts traditional western notions of identity and wholeness. Overall, Rigney's argument which draws from a plethora of feminist thought is that selfhood and identity are determined by white male standards and in this way they subvert the realities of women and therefore their own identities.

Pecola blames the standard of beauty-those blue eyes, the opposite of her blackness- as the cause of her having such a terrible life. Pecola links beauty with having a good life and being loved- and if she had blue eyes, she would be beautiful and be worthy of love. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison challenges western standards of beauty and demonstrates that the concept of beauty is socially constructed. Morrison also argues that if the whiteness is used as the standard of beauty or anything else, then the value of blackness is decreased and this novel works to demolish that tendency.

In a book review by Dana Paramita, the critic focuses on certain strengths and weaknesses of The Bluest Eye. Dana looks at the first strength of the novel being at the level where the author, Toni Morrison, criticizes the white beauty which is the main theme of the novel. Whereas, beauty is something that is relative, it means that there are differences in the view of some people about the beauty. Knight Dunlap through Alfred Strom states that "Beauty varies distinctly from race to race, so that such concepts cannot be accurately compares across racial lines, though he acknowledges that darker races sometimes change

their standards when influenced by Whites, and some even come to desire White mates – a phenomenon with which we are all too familiar in our century" (*American Dissident Voices* Broadcast of October 2, 2004). Nevertheless, black people sometimes change their standards when confronted with the white race. In fact, standards of white beauty cause distress for black women. When a woman cannot meet the applicable standards of beauty in society, she feels a sense of insecurity, loneliness, and low self-esteem. This is what happened to Pecola, the main character in the novel who, feels like the ugliest person alive due to not having the white beauty standard.

> *"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 of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes." (Morisson, 1970: 46).*

The quotation above indicates that Pecola blames that her ugliness making herself rejected by the society, including her own family. She is certain that without blue eyes and white skin, she will never be seen as beautiful, and therefore, cannot ever see her own life as beautiful. In addition, if she meets the white beauty standard, people around will treat her better. This mindset puts Pecola in a big question, why she is different from others: "Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike" (Morrison, 1970: 45).

Through Pecola, Morrison exposes the power and cruelty of middle-class American definition of beauty, which makes Pecola driven madness by her consuming obsession for white skin, blonde hair and not just blue eyes, butthe bluest ones. The pressures of society and her own self-hatred lead Pecola into a state of madness. Pecola is such a victim of popular white culture and its pervasive advertising, where she believes that people would value her more if she were not black: "Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. "Here," they said, "This is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it." (Morrison, 1970: 21)

The Bluest Eye shows that whiteness is desired by everyone. The society blindly accepts that the true beauty means having blue eyes, blonde hair, and white skin. It makes heartache for all the non-blue eyed and brown or black skinned children who never got to see their beauty reflected in the eyes of those around them. Through what happened to Pecola, the

author wants to speak up that beauty is not simply something to behold; it is something one can do.

Another strength Dana talks of in this novel is the point of view of *The Bluest Eye*. Point of view refers to the narrator's position in relation to a story being told. "To understand imaginative narrative we must consider the author's point of view or angle of narration as well as the content of his work. Point of view or angle is not the author's general attitude toward life or toward his story, but is a specific concept that we must understand clearly" (Potter, 1967: 28). The point of view used in this novel makes the readers feel not boring to read the novel.

Morrison is famous for her use of fragmented narrative with multiple perspectives. In this novel, she uses Claudia as a narrator in *The Bluest Eye* that narrates the story for two reasons; to provide a child's perspective as well as an adult's perspective. Unlike Pecola, Claudia has strong feelings of high self-esteem and worth. Claudia is proud of being black and has learned her values from her supportive family environment. It is because there is love in Claudia's house, but it is absent in Pecola's.

> *I hated Shirley. Not because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles, who was my friend, my uncle, my daddy, and who ought to have been soft-shoeing it and chuckling with me. Instead he was enjoying, sharing, giving a lovely dance thing with one of those little white girls whose socks never slid down under their heels (Morrison, 1970: 19).*

The quotation above conveys the thoughts and perceptions of a 9-year-oldClaudia which is giving the novel an aspect of innocence. Different from Pecola and friends who idolize Shirley Temple (a hugely popular child actress of the day), Claudia hates her. Claudia's rejection of white beauty is expressed in herself-confessed hatred of Shirley Temple. As time goes by, in this novel little Claudia grows up into an adult one, which her point of view is different with when she was a child.

As a weakness, Dana thinks that Toni Morrison's criticism through the novel *The Bluest Eye* can give misunderstanding for the readers who are not critical. Criticism in the novel is the strength of the novel, but it can become otherwise if the readers do not really understand what Toni Morrison is going to say in this novel.

Then the screen would light up, and I'd move right on in them pictures.

White men taking such a good care of the women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with bathtubs right in the same room with toilet. The pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard (Morrison, 1970:123).

In the quotation above actually Toni Morrison satirizes about the white beauty. It makes black women envy with the life of white women that are treated well by white men. In particular, they envy the monetary security, comfort, and romance they find in white women. However, for those who are not critical, it can be an invitation to be a white beauty that will make them craving for blue eyes, blonde hair, white skin, symbolizing the white concept of beauty, so that people will treat them very well.

In "Wounded Beauty: An Exploratory Essay on Race, Feminism, and the Aesthetic Question", Cheng seems to have an inquiry similar to that of Morrison's in The Bluest Eye. Both writers seem bothered not only about those excluded by the white concept of beauty, but about the concept itself. As Cheng says,

> *the insurgence of strategies to combat the history of aesthetic denigration through revaluing notions of difference or alternative beauty offers only short term cures since the fundamental logic of aesthetic and moral judgment remains intact. A revaluation of "bad looks" as something positive inadvertently reconfirms the existence of "good looks." Similarly, efforts at racial reclamation through slogans such as "Black Is Beautiful" seem to announce injury more than remedy. Both strategies replace the object of aesthetic value without questioning the primacy of that value. We continually run into a double bind wherein liberal discourse wants to rehabilitate beauty without having to assent to its seductions. (Cheng 193)*

Morrison's wariness towards the "Black is Beautiful" slogan and the necessity for the claim seem to align her with Cheng's view. The existence of something beautiful will require the existence of something ugly–always excluding and harming someone. Both Morrison and Cheng seem to think that the fact that whiteness is considered the most important or only kind of beauty is not the only problem, but also that the whole importance attached to this particular value is misguided.

There are signs in the novel that point to Morrison's concerns towards the "Black is Beautiful" slogan, and not all of them are subtle. Perhaps, the most explicit one is when the narrator refers to the notion of physical beauty Pauline learns at the picture show as one of the most "destructive ideas in the history of human thought" –the other being romantic love (TBE 120). Therefore, the novelist does not seem to feel that associating blackness to beauty is the

best way to value African American traditions, as BAM artists wished to do. To her, valuing beauty is actually another way of assimilating white values as the most important.

As an alternative, Morrison proposes that racial pride and connection to African American roots can be more successfully achieved through traditions that come from the community, such as music (blues and jazz, for instance) and storytelling (seen in oral traditions such as call-and-response and in acts as signifying and testifying). It is not an accident that Claudia, who learns about Black traditions through listening to her mother's blues, and who receives support in her self-confidence from her sister Frieda manages to survive and grow up healthily in the story. However, Pecola, who is only exposed to aspirations of white values and does not learn to connect to African American traditions, cannot find peace or love.

Author Carl Malmgren argues that, even though The Bluest Eye is a multi-textual and polyphonic novel, it is entirely organized by Claudia MacTeer (Malmgren 146–151). One of the evidences he proposes for that claim is that Cholly is referred to as a "free man" in two very distinct passages: the first is in Cholly's section of the Breedlove version of the Dick and Jane primer, narrated in the third-person. The second is in Claudia's coda, narrated in the first-person by an adult MacTeer woman. Claudia can only know to connect the coda to Cholly's primer section if she in the persona organizing the story (Malmgren 150).

That analysis seems to align with a declaration Morrison has given about her books:

> *"I want very much to have every book I write end with knowledge (...) You begin at a certain place, a literary journey, and at the very end there has to be the acquisition of knowledge which is virtue, which is good, which is helpful–somebody knows something at the end that they did not know before." (Morrison "Goodness". Web)*

Somebody, in this case, does not seem to apply solely to the reader. Claudia MacTeer seems to have learned something throughout the narrative of The Bluest Eye too. At the very beginning of the novel, she affirms that nothing else can be said about Pecola's story, except for the reasons for it to have happened. Even though the narrator says the focus will stay on how the events unfolded, since "why is difficult to handle" (TBE 4), both how and why seem to be analyzed throughout the book.

Claudia is the character who fights the imposition of white beauty standards the most in the novel. While Pecola and Frieda adored Shirley Temple, Claudia hated her. Her reason

for it is definitely very interesting: the girl did not hate Shirley Temple because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles, an African American tap dancer and actor. According to Claudia, he was her friend, her uncle, her daddy, and he should have been dancing and laughing with her (TBE 17). Claudia did not hate Shirley Temple because she could not imitate the girl's appearance like Pecola wanted to do, but because she felt Temple was taking something–or someone in this case–she felt belonged to her, to her culture. It is interesting because while Pecola and most of the characters in the novel seem intent on holding on to the Shirley Temples, Mary Janes and other white models, Claudia focuses her admiration on an African American figure.

Fredirick R. karl illuminates: Sula, the character, disrupts every expectation the black community has for a woman, consciously damning herself in the eyes of others to prove to herself what a black woman can do. She is unpredictable. She is defined as "bitch" (145).
It is supposed that she sleeps with white men, she discards black men, even she sleeps with the husband of her best friend Nel. The lives and the social status of black were very poor. They are more rooted to past and values handed over from centuries. That's why they needed different strategies to represent in the community. And here Morrison envisioned a bold female character named Sula who seeks for sexual liberation, freedom of movement and indifference to social commitments. "Each had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male" (which again emphasizes the double oppression of the black women, based on race and gender) "and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be" (19). However, in the end, only Sula appears to take charge of her own existence without the permission or approval of her family or community. Nel's approach to becoming whole is to take refuse in an unequal marriage. For Nel's mother, marriage is one of conditions of living that defines a women's place and Nel accepts a similar arrangement for herself. In marrying Jude, Nel gives up her youthful dreams of "trips she would take" (21) and being independent. Nel becomes "obedient and polite", as her mother gradually "drives her daughter's imagination underground" (24). Therefore, it is obvious why, years later, Nel has difficulties in reconciling her individualism with the roles the black community expects her to play.

According to Mel Watkins in *Sexism, Racism and Black Women Writers* argues that inthe great majority of their novels, black women indicate that "sexism is more oppressive

than racism" (36). He continues that blacks are always portrayed in a negative manner without exception. As Sula and Jude treated and dominated which is an example of it.

Again, Karl remarks "Toni Morrison, in *Sula* as well as in *The Bluest Eye, Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby* works through many of those lower class concerns but with the added dimension of the black women struggling to assert herself (579)". She resists any authority or control, an aspect obvious even from Sula's childhood days when would go up to her attic to run away from and mark her resistance to tradition. She rejects the advice to settle down and have babies, replying "I don't want to make somebody else, I want to make myself" (25). Sula's manner and tone of voice make her much more forceful female than what the society during 1930s, the time during the novel is place. It could be argued that her economic position within the working class served to free her from the stereotypical gender constraints and allowed her to be the type of person she really wanted to be - a dominant, independent, single woman. Later on she is surprised and saddened by Nel's choosing Jude over her, since she had not expected Nel to behave "the way the others would have" (26). Nel criticizes Sula for her independent behavior, saying, "You can't do it all. You a woman and a colored woman at all. You can't act like a man," (142). And Sula simply tells: You say I'm a woman and colored. Ain't that the same as being a man?" (142). In her conception, the two terms, "woman" and "colored," serve to cancel each other out, to make her, in effect, a man. Sula's passionate rejection of feminine roles is perhaps which is defeminizationof the Black woman: yet in her own culture, Sula is viewed with suspicion and even outcast for "acting like a man" (142)

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois in *The Crisis* he says, "We want everything said about us to tell of the best and highest and noblest in us… we fear that the evil in uswill be called racial, while in others, it is viewed as individual" (55-56). Sula, a girl, who rebelsagainst the rule that exist in the black community which is off course against racism and sexism.

Whatever they do is evil for other. They never treated in individual.

Toni Morrison places black white relations on a secondary level to allow for a greater focus on the struggles within the African-American community: Sula and Shadrack are pushed aside by the blacks just because they do not adhere to their norms and expectations. The use of racism and sexism as a means of highlighting the double oppression felt by African-American women are: To what extent does the African- American family and community influence decisions and about important events in life. The novel links these

issues to adolescence and portrays how two young girls, despite belonging to the same community, come to, on account of their very different backgrounds, lives when becoming adults. The familial backgrounds of the two girls, Nel and Sula are founded on very different moral codes, one following the conventional gender roles of the community, and the other not. Sula has many affairs, some with white men. However, she finds people following the same boring routines elsewhere, so she returns to Bottom. Upon her return, the town Bottom regards her as the personification of evil for her blatant disregard of social conventions and their hatred in past of her rest life. And because of social conventions and international disregard for rules and norms, her best friend Nel also breaks her friendship.

In order to better understand the oppression of black women in the United States, one must look at the way the social structures and social environment are influenced by race, class or gender. Of course, there are many other intersecting dimensions that can be taken into consideration, depending on the social group that is investigated: for example, sexuality, religion, nationality, disability etc. Toni Morrison has juxtaposed the world of Nel next to the world of Sula who seeks her own life exploring her emotions and imagination. Her life is her own, she does not care for other's business unless it pleases her. She is not interested in nailing with anybody else, so much. Sula pursues herself she is estranged from others.

Kalerie Smith rightly mentions: "*Sula* centers on a character who believes that she can create for herself an identity that exists beyond community and social expectations" (276). Sula tells the story of two women who renegotiate the pressures of place and person through their long friendship, which is not without moments of rupture and discord. The growing bond between Nel Wright and Sula Peace as well as their complementary personalities are first revealed to us by the contrasting features of the land. The Mother-Daughter Relationship is firmly contextualized mostly in the society.

Diane Gillespie and Missy Dehn Kubitschek point that "women-centered psychological interpretations of female experience emphasis the web-like nature of women's social relationships" (29). In most of Nel and Sula personifies debased aspects of conventional female morality; her mother largely shapes this phase of development.

The protagonist, Sula is entirely succeeded to set up her full autonomy by protesting against the patriarchal pre-existed social values and norms of Afro-American society. As Sula walks through streets and people stare at her. Finally, she gets Eva's house. Eva says that "I might have knowed them birds meant something" (91). Their relationship is cold. Eva tells Sula to marry and settle down but Sula denies and says "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself"

(92). She exposes the quest of self-identity. Sula embodies the Black radical feminist, which seems to be selfish for the society of the Bottom: "selfish. Ain't no woman got no business floating around without no man" (92). She never wants anybody. She wants to be free from rules and traditional norms. In the town people are shucked by Sula's behavior. Then people take her as evil and trouble for bringing accident, drought and deaths. The people of Bottom outcast her and make her as a Pariah.

Critic like Addison Galye on Blueprint for Black Criticism continues, "these men and women are positive" characters, functional "alternatives to the stereotypes of blacks," and thus warriors in the "struggle against American racism" (44). Here critic's view is the portrayal of black characters which is uniformly as "Negative". But either men or women they are positive. We can find the lives of black people victimized and exploited by non-other than white.

Self-definition is a dangerous activity, for any woman to engage in, and especially for Black woman. Thus, Sula's attempt for self-definition earns her pariah status in Medallion. Morrison pictures her as an embodiment of a radically new Black feminist and her character has been an effect of freeing the fettered minds from the oppressive tentacles of a past which prevents them from progressing and projecting a new vision. Since the first leading of Black people in America, they have been exploited by the white people. Mostly the black women are victims of both racial and sexual oppression. For Sula "nothing was ever different, they were all the same… that's the same sun I looked at when I was twelve, the same pearl trees" (147). She doesn't find any newness in life and thinks that if she lives a hundred years, her hair will grow from the same holes; the urine will flow the same way. She is fed up at the sameness of life.

"There are not any newer signs and I have sung all the ones there are" (137). Eva acts like a phallic mother who assumes godlike powers of control over naming, creation and destruction.

Eve loses her leg in patriarchy, so she is defined as woman who lacks something i.e penis. For the sake of her survival, she cuts off her leg. And same self-mutilation of Eva is repeated in the scene in which Sula cuts off the tip of finger to threaten the boys while returning from school. Sula courageously says "if I can do that to myself, what do you suppose I'll do to you?" (54-55).

She exposes such action to prove her violent nature. Morrison's protagonist character, Sula, showing her courageous and challenging activities in the novel. She has successfully

established her New World Woman in the Afro-American community. She has presented feminine struggle and challenges the restrictions imposed by Black community over Black women.

Jerome Bump in his article entitled "Racism and Appearance in*The Bluest Eye*: A Template for an Ethical Emotive Criticism", classifies the novel as a template for the practice of ethical emotive criticism, which in its turn relies feelings to thoughts; to appearance then to emotions. He argues that Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* focuses on emotional aspect which destroys the individual, as it creates a blank in a human psyche where it pushes him to feel shame about his being as well as his appearance, these feelings led to the emergence of racism toward the blacks. He claims that Morrison focuses more on the ugliness side to make the white readers feel the blacks suffering of being marginalized and oppressed. The novel according to Bump is based on the relation between us and what is kept from us. This relation enables the white reader to understand the feeling of ugliness. The novel illustrates Morrison's anger and not Pecola, that anger was a prominent behavior led by the characters, because of their pettiness that drives them to feel anger and hatred toward the danger, but they are so weak since they are secondary emotions.

Another illustrative critic of *The Bluest Eye*, is Amanda Putnam who analyzed in her article "The idea of Mothering violence: Ferocious Female Resistance in Toni Morrison 's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved* and *A Mercy"*. She states that female characters in Morison's *The Bluest Eye* are marginalized at different levels, sexually, emotionally, as well as racially due to their surroundings. Most black women prefer the use of verbal and physical violence, as a response to the white oppression. Black young girls prefer the use of physical violence in a way to empower themselves and others prefer verbal violence to resist white beauty in order not to damage their self-identity. These violent actions create a new vision of African American femininity where the black women are not powerless or weak any longer, they stand and resist against social gender as well as racial identity that try to weaken them.

As for Patrice Cormier-Hamilton, he analyses *The Bluest Eye* in a naturalistic perspective in his article entitled "Black Naturalism and Toni Morrison: The Journey away from Self-love in *The Bluest Eye*, in which he focuses on black naturalism since most Morrison's works are related to black issues in the American society, in addition to that, Hamilton wants to shed light on how male and female protagonists fail and succeed to catch their freedom through self-awareness. Through this article, Hamilton aims to illustrate the way naturalism in African American writings is fostered and has changed in order to justify a

literary genre that gives importance to cultural heritage, the latter, comes back to blacks, problems of assimilation, conflicts between self and community. In addition to the psychological and economic barriers raised by the issue of racism, through *The Bluest Eye*, black naturalism treats the different challenges African American witnessed. Besides to the raise of several conflicts between the self and community, it also depicts how black characters are influenced by the western culture and see it as more important than theirs.

Concerning Mohammed Dib, Ralima koucha, in her doctoral research about les dernieres oeuvres de Mohamed Dib un usage historien des guerres Littéraires that studies *La nuit sauvage* , Si diable veut, *L'arbre à dires*, *Comme un bruitd'abeilles* and *Simorgh*; she analyzed the different stylesand genresused by Mohammed Dib in his writing according to a historical context.She considers that Dib divided his style into three parts , the first is in the context of Algeria in the 1950s,and the second is Dib's new exploration in the 1970s that gathers fiction, reflection, religion , art and literature from his realistic Dib's novels. The last part concerns Dib's shift to the fantastic and symbolic novels *Qui se souvient de la mer*(1962).She argues that the style transformations are based on tragedies which are shown in Dib's *La nuit sauvage*(1995)thatexplores the Algerian Black Decade of the 1990s.In addition to Ramila koucha'sstudy, Mohammed Salah Zeliche proposed that Dib was in struggle, looking for a new writing style symbolizing a new way of thinking, and he argues his choice of using the name of Nafisa that according to him means in Arabic ''breath'' which shapes his new creation. Therefore, "Qui se souvient de la mer "is considered as a new exploration of M. Dib's new way of writing. All in all, we come to notice that Jerome Bump, Amanda Putnam and Patrice Hamilton studied *The Bluest Eye* only in terms of physical appearance, female resistance and black naturalism.

Concerning Dib's criticism, Ramila koucha and Mohammed Zeliche studied *La nuit sauvage* only in terms of experimentation of a new style of writing, however, their readings are limited to the way Mohammed Dib wrote his novels without exploring that issue of resistance to the society.

Bearing in mind that *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison's first novel was published in 1970. It is a personal story from Morrison's past, centering on a disturbing memory of her classmate who prayed for blue eyes. Critical reviews of the novel were positive but the sales were modest. Several newspapers and book review journals such as The New York Times Book Review, The New Yorker, The Chicago Tribune and News week reviewed *The Bluest*

Eye and praised Morrison for her writing style. Especially, The New York Times Reviews praised Morrison for her attempt to look an honest look at American racism and its damaging effect on the mental health and spiritual development of African American people.

Haskel Frankel found flaws in the coherence of Morrison's books but congratulated her for being able to reveal beauty underneath the harshness of the world. Likewise, L.E. Sissman was impressed by the skill of novice writer to address black issues beyond generation barriers.

In the novel, Morrison challenges Western standards of beauty and demonstrates that the concept of beauty is socially constructed. Morrison also recognizes that if whiteness is used as a standard of beauty or anything else, then the value of blackness is diminished and this novel works to subvert that tendency.

According to Jill Matus, *The Bluest Eye* would be "an imagined history of what it was like to grow up black in the 1930s and 1940s". He points out that the rhetoric of the 1960s and 1970s was behind the story of the African American girl who wanted blue eyes to become beautiful. He states: "However self-affirming assertions such as 'black is beautiful' were in the 1960s and 1970s, they were too simple to redress the complex and long-prepared effects of valuations based on color" (37).

Morrison's fiction, shows how the destructive effect of the white society can take the form of outright physical violence, but oppression in Morrison's world is more often psychic violence. Morrison rarely depicts white characters, for the brutality here is less a single act than the systemic denial of the reality of black lives. Morrison kind of avoids the picture of black person, 'visible' in white life. One can think that Morrison instead 'inverses the reader in black community; the white society's ignorance of that concrete, vivid, and diverse world is thus even more striking.

Doreatha Drummond Mbalia quotes Morrison having inquired about the case of race and the victimization of blacks. She comments like this: "In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison's emphasis is on racism. Specifically, she investigates the effects of the beauty standards of the dominant culture on the self-image of the African female adolescent. The role of class, the primary form of exploitation experienced by African people . . ." (28).

Similarly, Trudier Harris takes *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* as stories of racial subjugation. It is about the dominance of white culture that paralyses the self-pride of African American individual. And, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola has been traumatized by the white

standard of beauty. Besides this, he says: "*The Bluest Eye* is not only the story of the destructive effects of inter- and intra-racial prejudice upon impressionable black girls in the mid-west; it is also the story of Afro-American folk culture in process. Through subtle and not-so-subtle ways, Toni Morrison suggests that . . ." (68-76). Through Pecola, Morrison exposes the power and cruelty of middle-class American definition of beauty, which makes Pecola driven madness by her consuming obsession for white skin, blonde hair and not just blue eyes, but the bluest ones. The pressures of society and her own self-hatred lead Pecola into a state of madness. Pecola is such a victim of popular white culture and its pervasive advertising, where she believes that people would value her more if she were not black: "Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs, all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. *The Bluest Eye* shows that whiteness is desired by everyone. The society blindly accepts that the true beauty means having blue eyes, blonde hair, and white skin. It makes heartache for all the non-blue eyed and brown or black skinned children who never got to see their beauty reflected in the eyes of those around them. Through what happened to Pecola, the author wants to speak up that beauty is not simply something to behold; it is something one can do.

In an interview with Jane Bakerman, Morrison has said that Blacks' subjugated culture is made visible by her literary representation. She has given a voice to the black minority. As an African-American female writer, her writings are abundant in information about black culture. Her responsibility as a black artist is to cultivate black cultural consciousness, to enlighten and strengthen the values of black cultural heritage.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison writes about black people, particularly black female children, surviving the values imposed by the dominant white culture. The narrator, Claudia MacTeer, survives while Pecola Breedlove does not.

Lynne Tirell states: "Pecola is destroyed by the cultural values she adopts" while Claudia MacTeer "rejects just those values Pecola accepts . . ." (13).
Pecola is very vulnerable to white cultural values, because as literary critic Barbara Christian puts it as: "The more confusing, different, poverty-ridden or depressed that a child's life is, the more she will yearn for the norm the dominant society says provides beauty and happiness".

Another literary critic Carolyn Denard comments that "… the self-esteem of both Pauline and Pecola Breedlove is summarily destroyed by their and the black community's

acceptance of the standards of feminine beauty glamorized by the majority white culture. They believe that the closer a woman is to Anglo-Saxon standards of beauty the more desirable she becomes" (172).

Morrison proposes that racial pride and connection to African American roots can be more successfully achieved through traditions that come from the community, such as music (blues and jazz, for instance) and storytelling (seen in oral traditions such as call-and-response and in acts as signifying and testifying). It is not an accident that Claudia, who learns about Black traditions through listening to her mother's blues, and who receives support in her self-confidence from her sister Frieda manages to survive and grow up healthily in the story. However, Pecola, who is only exposed to aspirations of white values and does not learn to connect to African American traditions, cannot find peace or love.

Literary critic Donald B. Gibson points out the importance of Morrison's inclusion of the primer's text. He says: . . . The role of education is both oppressing the victim and more to the point – teaching the victim how to oppress her own black self by internalizing the values that dictate standards of beauty. The reading primer with its white middle class values is dangerous for black children because the act of learning to read and write means exposure to the values of the culture from which the reading material emanates.

Toni Morrison, in her novel *The Bluest Eye*, explores the tragedy of the oppression or violation of children, especially poor children and she explores a problem specific to groups targeted by racism, that of internalized racism. Pecola, the protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*, is the girl who is badly oppressed by racism either it be in her school or in her community. All people except the Mac Teers hate Pecola simply because she is black and ugly. This is a kind of thinking produced when members of the targeted group, in this case African Americans, begin to believe the stereotypes about themselves and imagine that European Americans are superior in beauty, morality, and intelligence. Morrison focuses on this problem of internalized racism as it affects children.

Another important critic of Morrison's fiction is Cynthia A. Davis whose article "Self, Society and Myth in Toni Morrison's fiction" attempts and understanding of these three issues at stake in the article. Davis starts by affirming that a truism that Morrison's novels have attached both popular and critical attention for their inventive blend of realism and fantasy, unsparing social analysis, and passionate philosophical concerns. To her, the combination of social observation with broadening and allusive commentary gives her fiction the symbolic

quality of myth, and in fact the search of a myth adequate to experience is one of Morrison's central themes. Davis equally claims that because Morrison's world and characters are inescapably involved with the problems of perception, definition and meaning, they direct attention to Morrison's own ordering view and its implication.

All of Morrison's characters, Davis argues, exist in a world defined by its blackness and by the surrounding white society that both violates and denies it. Morrison's fiction, Davis suggests shows how the destructive effect of the white society can take the form of outright physical violence, but oppression in Morrison's world is more often psychic violence. He asserts that Morrison rarely depicts white characters, for the brutality here is less a single act than the systemic denial of the reality of black lives. While arguing that Morrison avoids the picture of black person, 'visible' in white life (27), Davis thinks that Morrison instead 'inverses the reader in black community; the white society's ignorance of that concrete, vivid, and diverse world is thus even more striking (27).

Davis' article calls attention to the particularity of Blackness. The position of the black woman is doubly difficult. Black women in Morrison's fictions discover "that they [are] neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph [are] forbidden to them" (Sula 1.44 qtd in peach ed. 31). No doubt therefore that Davis holds that womanhood, like blackness, is other in the society and the dilemma of woman in a patriarchal society is parallel to that of blacks in a racist one: they are made to feel most real when seen. Thus the adolescent Sula and Nel, parading before young males who label them 'pig meat' are 'thrilled' by the association of voyeurism with sexuality. (31)

However, the image of these two girls is complicated by their blackness. They are not just women in a society that reduce women to such cold and infantile images that Corinthians Dead can think that 'she didn't know any grown-up woman. Every woman she knew was a doll baby, a blonde and blue-eyes Shirley Temple. Even if they accept their reification they will always be inadequate; the black woman is 'the antithesis of American beauty'. No efforts, Davis argues, at disguise will make them into the images they learn to admire. Defined as the other, made to be looked at, they can never satisfy the gaze of society. Morrison, Davis continues to argue shows the look taking on monstrous proportions as the humiliated black male allies himself with the third by making the black woman the object of his displaced fury.

In yet another article "No Bottom and No Top: Opposition in Sula," Madhu Durbey places Morrison's fiction in the context of ideas about a Black Aesthetic while most critics

have concentrated on the relationship f her novels to works by other black writers. Durbey contends that while *The Bluest Eye* obliquely explores the black feminine difference from Black Aesthetic, the difference occupies the centre of Morrison's *Sula.* To Durbey,, *Sula* a radically new black femininity that upsets all the oppositions (between past and present, individual and community, absence and presence) that structure Black Aesthetic discourse. She goes further to equally argue that Sula combines feminism and nationalism against each other, staging the encounter of these two ideologies as a dynamic contradiction. In a difficult move, Durbey affirms, the novel assumes a feminist perspective to clarify the limits of nationalist ideologies, but withdraws from a full development of its own feminist implications. The ideological ambivalence thus produced should discourage any programmatic political reading.

And Durbey equally insists on *Sula* not being read as a feminist text. She holds that:

> *The novel's treatment of black female relationship exhibits a similar uneasy judgment to the terms of black nationalist discourse. All the major black male-female unions in Sula end with male desertion, and with a bleak vision of*
> *heterosexual femininity as characterized by loss and absence. Heterosexuality in thenovels is insistently associated not just with loss but with death. Reflecting upon the*
> *lives of the women in her community, Sula observes that "those with husbands had folded themselves into starched coffins". (72-3)*

while privileging newness and change, Sula according to Durbey embodies a specifically feminine newness that cannot be easily assimilated into Black Aesthetic ideology. Sula rejects the reproductive function so valued by her community: when Eva advises her to become a mother, Sula replies, 'don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself (76). Sula's refusal to reproduce is her greatest point of difference from her community; it is what renders her evil and unnatural to the people of the Bottom. Sula's return to the Bottom is heralded by an unnatural plague of robins, and her death is followed by an untimely frost in October and a false spring in January. These natural disorders symbolically parallel the disorder that Sula's 'unnatural' refusal to be a mother unleashes on her community.

Durbey's reading of *Sula* is an interesting one because it stresses the novel's rejection not only of the black man as the prime victim of racism but also of the black woman as nurturer. Durbey returns to what has become a key premise in feminist interpretations of *Sula*, that *Sula* affirms the black subject freed from vicious stereotype. Feminism reading of the novel emphasize that *Sula* is different from earlier representations of black women in fiction

in that she maintains a radical stance against heterosexuality. Durbey argues that on closer analysis, Sula's responses to heterosexuality are contradictory. Although the novel offers a critique of the black community's commitment to a reproductive definition of femininity, it does not unreservedly endorse Sula's absolute rejection of motherhood.

There have been psychoanalytical readings of Morrison's works. Amongst these is Jennifer FitzGerald's "Selfhood and Community: psychoanalysis and Discourse in Beloved". In this essay, Fitzgerald sees herself as addressing not only Morrison's Fiction but also larger debates in black literary criticism. FitzGerald is concerned with the way in which psychoanalysis has isolated psychic experience from the diversities of ethnicity and class. For this reason, she suggests that psychoanalysis may not be a wholly appropriate methodology with which to approach African-American literature. FitzGerald's argument in her paper is that among psychoanalytic schools of thought, object relations theory may be the most appropriate because it proposes that the psyche is constructed within a wide system of relationships. Her paper addresses how external, social, cultural and political forces become internalized within the psyche. FitzGerald focuses on the process of "projection" and "introjections" which she sees as characterizing most relationships in the novel; this process is evident in each character who encounters psychic trauma.

Like many critics of Morrison's works, FitzGerald has found that discussion of the wider relationship in which African-American psyches are constructed demands a complex theoretical base. In order to analyse the different subject positions to which Morrison's characters avail themselves in response to traumatic experiences, she draws both on object relations theory and on discourse analysis. This dual approach together with the widened perspectives of object relations compared with classical psychoanalysis enables FitzGerald to explore not only the psychic damage of slavery but its therapeutic alternative, the supportive community.

Linda Jean Cowan, in her thesis titles "The 'Literary' Folklore in the novels of Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon,* and *Tar Baby* holds that Morrison's works seem to focus on the same use of abuse on black women characters found in Traditional folkloric patterns. These women are devalued by male. She therefore wonders if all women are to be sacrificed to community or masculine growth; what does that suggest about the feminist perspective in Morrison's work? Must all women be judged by the standards set by men?

All these questions remain pertinent since the feminist quest consists of a woman finding a place of her own, as Virginia Woolf suggests. Hagar dies after Milkman abandons her in *Song of Solomon*. Cholly drives Pecola mad. Eva commits a crime to save Plum from drug addiction. Sula dies because she cannot conform to the society's structure at the Bottom. Yet, Williams fails to observe that these killings illustrate the strength of Morrison's women and their ability to take risky decisions once their objectives are not reached. The killing of Plum for example liberates Eva from the sorrow and burden of watching her child ruin his life in drugs.

The end of Sula ties in with the definition of the black heroine as underlined by Claudia Tate in her introduction to *Black Women and Work*. She says:

> *Many heroines suffer from a loss of pride and personal growth … A chain of reaction is set in motion as her self-esteem deteriorates, she becomes more and more trapped in destructive relationships, which erode her self-esteem still further*. (xxii)

By prostituting herself with most of the men in the community, Sula earns the hatred of all the women, thus leading to her being estranged in her own community. Her death occurs early and it is beneficial to all the youths and all the members who might have understood that being and outcast in one's community puts one's life in jeopardy. Besides, in a patriarchal system, if a woman cannot be owned or controlled, like a slave, then she must be beaten or destroyed rather than be left to get out of hand and out of place like Sula.

CHAPTER TWO

REPRESENTATION OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

This chapter will look into racism and sexism with the goal of examining African-Americans' response to the prejudices of race and gender issues in *The Bluest Eye.* This chapter equally sets out to look at the impact of the past and its effects on the lives of the black people through girl children like Pecola, Claudia, Frieda and their respective families since they perpetuate to some extent, the white man's ideal and life principles. Race and racism is a very peculiar and relevant topic since it addresses a theme which actually remained unexamined until the 1970's and which many have equally been in complete denial about.
The struggles of Morrison's protagonists uncover some of these myths such as the standardized beauty of western culture which drives Pecola into madness and light skinned characters like Geraldine and Maureen Pearl in The Bluest Eye into the demonization of blackness.

The highly contested concept of race has adversely shaped the lives of millions of people. In the many instances of this novel, it is notably Native Africans and African-Americans who have been victimized on the grounds of their skin color. Women of African descent have suffered a double jeopardy due to the intersection of race and gender. For a great number of African-Americans, men and women alike, literature has become an important vehicle to represent the social context, to expose inequality, racism, and social injustice.

Manifestations of Racism and its Repercussions in *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye, scrutinizes the problem of growing up black and female in a society which equates beauty with blue-eyes whiteness. Consumer goods, the media, adult approval and a dismissive attitude towards her mislead the protagonist Pecola Breedlove to internalize white beauty standards. Morrison points out how the internalization leads to self-loathing and eventually to self-destruction. This debut novel underline that the search for culprits is very complicated as perpetrators in crimes happen to be victims themselves.

The Civil Rights Movement in 1960s was triggered by the denial of basic rights and insisting on the protection of equal opportunity. The novel *The Bluest Eye*, even though without riots in the sense of those prevalent in the society, abounds in disturbance and violence; therefore, it can also serve as a unique footnote for the period.

The novel presents an unfortunate state of being "outdoors". Since people couldn't control their income, being outdoors becomes an aspect of life. This kind of poverty is not confined in a few families; actually, it is quite common. The novel also reveals that the African Americans, as an ethnic group, had long been deprived of equal employment opportunity in the 1960s and before. In the novel, the father Cholly was determined to go to the north where he believes "steel mills were begging for workers." However, life in the north was not as good as they expected, the reason why the African Americans endure these severe bitterness lies in the fact that the "Negroes" are invisible. When Pecola harbors a "sweet, endurable, even cherished irritation, full of promise and delicate security" to buy Mary Janes candy in Yacobowski's store, she notices "the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge", and "this vacuum is not new to her" because she has seen it "lurking in the eyes of all white people". The harmful living environment both inside and outside home thwarts her sound development.

Race and racism are complicated issues in *The Bluest Eye*. Unlike typical portrayals of racism, involving white hatred against blacks, *The Bluest Eye* primarily explores the issues of racism occurring between people of color. There are few white characters, yet racism remains at the centre of the text. Because the novel involves mostly black characters, "whiteness" exists in a spectrum. Racism is not only defined by the color of the skin, the shape of one's features, or the texture of one's hair but also by one's place of origin, socioeconomic class and educational background. "Whiteness" is associated with virtue, cleanliness and value while being black is associated with immorality, dirtiness and worthlessness. Internalizing these ideas of race ultimately leads to racial self-hatred among the characters of *The Bluest Eye* which creates various forms of dysfunction in the characters' lives.

Toni Morrison begins the novel with reference to the "Dick and Jane" reading primer. As the story progresses, Morrison repeats the passage of the primer, first without punctuation, then without spacing between the words. What this shows is that while the words remain the same in the passage, there are missing elements creating some sort of dysfunction of sorts. This example carries over to the main text. The reader finds a family; mother, father, sister and brother but key elements are missing. Father is a drunk and mother is self-loathing, they are not capable of being good, loving or nurturing parents. Pecola's only recourse to escape a tragic world without love is to gain insane, thereby creating an alternate world of her own and blocking out the ugliness of the real world. This shows to us the readers that racism has more consequences that just the physical. It is even more psychological as we find our main

protagonist struggling in her insight because of rejection she faces in and out of the family circle.

From the viewpoint of new historicists, every text is the adaptation, citation, transposition and collage of previous texts rather than an isolated creation. Thus, an intertextual study of the novel with other pre-texts proves necessary.

The novel was arranged by the author in such a particular structure that each of its sections provides a gloss on the key phrases from the Dick and Jane. This technique employed by Morrison is to deconstruct the bourgeois myths of ideal family life. "By removing the punctuation from these fragments," as Barbara Christian put it, "Morrison heightens the lack of internal integrity essential to their simplistic order". Each element of the myth proves to be deceptive and inaccurate when it comes to African American life. Taking into account the fact that the primer appears in the text books of primary schools and its short structure of sentences like chansons, we can conclude that the prevalence of this myth actually is negation of the black done by the dominant white. Once the blacks are to be convinced that ideal family, the social stigma will impose a strong conviction on children who are different that they are abnormal and unacceptable.

The Ugly Duckling, a well-known fairy tale recounts the bitter experience of an ugly duckling in a whole year. The same story is retold in *The Bluest Eye*; however, the author manages to extent its touch to a much broader background of American reality. In the fairy tale, the ugly duckling is only an isolated case, while when things come to Pecola, it becomes much more universal. In fact, she is not the only ugly person in the community, and a majority of the black in the community under strong erosion of white-dominant culture feels that they are ugly. Pecola's existence just reminds them constantly of their own ugliness; consequently, Pecola serves as scapegoat in the community. Thus it is not only the dominant white culture that is responsible for Pecola's tragedy. The black community, devoid of any sympathy, fails to render necessary help to the both physically and psychologically fragile creature.

Claudia takes her anxieties and discomfort and cherishes Pecola Breedlove, as well as Pecola's unborn child, 'just to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples and Maureen Peals" (Morrison, p.148). Nothing about Pecola or Claudia is stable and coherent. It is through this instability and incoherence of place and sense of self that the characters in Morrison's novel continually 'become': they are embodied processes rather than passive recipients of cultural subjugation.

The whole Breedlove family believes themselves to be ugly and the truth lies in their thinking, not in their appearance: “Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique” (*The Bluest Eye* 38). Sammy, the eldest son, burst his ugliness by hurting and giving pain to others and always elopes from home. Pauline encourages her son’s fault and ignores her daughter and as a result, Pecola fears people, life and being an adult. She feels her ugliness differently: “Concealed, veiled, eclipsed—peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom, and then only to yearn for the return of her mask” (*The Bluest Eye* 39). Her conceived repulsiveness separates her from self and society, making her apprehensive and timid: “looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of the ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike.” (*The Bluest Eye* 45) The whole family wore the nasty unpleasant belief; it is not their looks or poorness that was ugly but their assessment made them so. “It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question.” (*The Bluest Eye* 39) The novel moves around Pecola Breedlove, the protagonist, a quiet, passive girl from a loveless poor broken home. She feels her ugliness is the cause of all problems and develops a longing to be beautiful as a solution. She leads a nomadic life throughout the story “a girl who had no place to go” even when her parents are alive because they are responsible for her isolation and being a pariah. (*The Bluest Eye* 16).

With Pecola, it is always another level of racism as her own exists first in her family before going out to society. Because of the mentality she has and what the world has made her believe, she is always depressed because of the stigma she gets in the home, with her only crime being her skin hue.

New Historicism holds that literature, as a constitutive and inseparable agent, plays important roles in the making of history, and this novel is no exception. The novel not only criticizes the standard of beauty among the white and black people, but also make a satire of American democratic creed. The novel illustrates a recurring interest in black people who have accommodated themselves to white society by appropriating white values which was represented by the standard of beauty: white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes. The opposite of beauty is ugliness. To embrace white standard of beauty means that the African Americans are ugly. And this subtle and pervasive power is quite destructive to individual as well as a whole race. Morrison insists that African-American’s emphasis should be on spiritual beauty rather than physical one. If they succeed in achieving that, they would be able to rid themselves of

the internalized racism. Just as Hooks cautions: "if internalized racism enters the souls of Black folks through years of socialization then we are not going to be rid of it by simply giving shallow expression to the notion that "Black is Beautiful."

With the pronouncement of the *Declaration of Independence*, the founding father of America set up the well-known creed that all men are created equal. However, if things come to the African Americans, a great satire to this so-called creed emerges. The civil rights movement broke racial segregation and won real political and legal freedom for American blacks; however, direct racism turned into a more indirect and subtle form of discrimination, depriving African Americans of lots of opportunities. In a seemingly democratic country, it seems abnormal for such an immoral and unfair fact to last for that long.

Another victim of racism is Pecola's mother, Pauline. During her adolescent period, she tries hard to be like the whites and even named herself 'Polly' which only whites keep. Her fascination for white splendor worsens after her marriage, as all her fantasies and desirability are left unfulfilled. During her pregnancy months to overcome her dullness, she went to see a movie, but it stimulated her deep-seated yearning for whiteness. Gradually, her expectations increased which her husband could not fulfill, so she reduced her dignity and identity as a perfect servant in a white house to achieve her dreams. She felt that the real world should be like the film world and build her castle in the air. "Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another-physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion. In equating physical beauty with virtue, she stripped her mind, bound it, and collected self-contempt by the heap." (The Bluest Eye 122) She tried to adopt good qualities and high merit as a plus point to her side and step by step detached from her familial issues. Because she so wants to become like the whites, she is ready to forgo the time she could spend with her family to work as a servant in a white home.

Like her mother, the protagonist's aspiration for blue eyes seems heritable as she believes that it will make her beautiful; and bring all the missing warmth and happiness in her life. Because when her parents fight, all her body parts freeze and disappear except her eyes and they are the sole witness of their nasty fights. She prays each night to Him, for blue eyes and believes that possessing them will make her adorable in the eyes of her parents, teachers, and schoolmates; and even change the gaze of the white shopkeeper. Furthermore, her parents will say, "(...) look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes." (The Bluest Eye 46)

From the narration, it can be concluded that she wanted to be loved. She wanted to feel the love of her parents and mates at school. Unconsciously, her desire to be loved makes her obsessed with beauty because she believes beauty brings love which her environment fails to give her. At one point, she begins asking God for blue eyes. Based on the novel, the reason why she wanted the blue eyes is because a white skin portrays the beauty standards of that time. Pecola's obsession with blue eyes makes her come to Soaphead Church and asks him for blue eyes. She knows that Soaphead Church can do magical things to help other people and she wants him to help her change her eyes into blue. Pecola believes she can have blue eyes like the white girls and even bluest than them. This leads her into the insanity which happens in the end of the story.

Considering her ugliness, Pecola is trying hard to be beautiful. As explained in the previous paragraph, Pecola asks Soaphead Church to give her blue eyes. Soaphead Church is known as a spiritualist and a psychic reader. Those who wanted to know the meaning of their dreams, fixing things, making someone love them, finding things, and many others, came to see Soaphead Church so did Pecola. Surely, Soaphead Church shocked with her demand, but he is too mercy to say he cannot change her eyes because logically, only God can do it. He just wanted to make her relieved by telling her to give a piece of meat for the dog in front of his house. He says that if the dog is acting weird after eating the meat, she can get her eyes blue. Pecola immediately gives the meat to the dog without knowing the meat is poisoned.

> *"Take this food and give it to the creature sleeping on the porch. Make sure he eats it. And mark well how it behaves. If nothing happens, you will know that God has refused you. If the animal behaves strangely, your wish will be granted following this one."*
> *The girl picked up the parket; the odor of the dark, sticky meat made her want to vomit. She put a hand on her stomach.*
> *"Courage, Courage, my child. These things are not granted to faint hearts."*
> (The Bluest Eye 175)

At this time, the dog jerked his body, Pecola believed that she will have blue eyes soon, as what Soaphead Church told her. Besides asking for blue eyes, Pecola has two habits which she believes can change her into a beautiful girl. First is that she likes drinking milk from a cup with Shirley Temple's picture on it. When Pecola lived with the MacTeer's family for a while, she drank three quarts of milk using the Shirley Temple cup.

We knew she was fun of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face. (The Bluest Eye 23) Pecola's

behavior while using the Shirley Temple cup to drink milk shows that she wanted to be as beautiful as Shirley Temple. In her thoughts, if she drinks from this cup as often as possible, she will become a beautiful girl just like Shirley. The same thing happened when she eats Mary Jane Candy, her favorite popsicles.

> *Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in little disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of a world of clean comfort. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To pecola, they are simply pretty. She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane. (The Bluest Eye 50)*

Based on those three acts; asking Soaphead Church for blue eyes, drinking with Shirley Temple cup and eating Mary Jane Candy, it is clear that Pecola is channeling her obsession for beauty through acts which did not break the society norms. This act is known as sublimation. Sublimation is characterized by transferring emotions or thoughts into something positive and not against the norm and considered as a mature habit.

However, Pecola's sublimation did not last for long because there is a disruption which comes from her father, Cholly Breedlove. As the novel unfolds, there is a chronology where Cholly Breedlove comes home drunk and finds Pecola in the kitchen when he rapes her.

> *She was washing dishes. Her small back hunched over the sink. Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt. Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable; next he felt the discomfort dissolve into pleasure. The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love. His revulsion was a reaction of her young, helpless, hopeless presence*
> *… the confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him, and a bolt of desire ran down his genitals, giving it length, and softening the lips of his anus.*
> *… he wanted to fuck her- tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear*.
> (The Bluest Eye 161-163)

The second disruption also comes from Cholly who raped her for the second time. This happened when she was reading on the couch (200) Yet she wanted to dismember her memory about being raped by her own father. She denies her father had raped her twice. Forgets about it, but then she remembers it again towards the last parts the novel. In the ending of the novel, Pecola is talking to her imaginary friend. This imaginary friend kept

asking about her rape incident. Pecola indeed remembers the incident but she wants to forget it by saying "*Then leave me alone about Cholly… There's nothing more to say about him, anyway. He's gone, away*. (The Bluest Eye 200) Pecola's act shows that she defenses herself with suppression. Suppression is an act on consciously avoiding to remember something which had happened, while if someone unconsciously avoids to remember, something, it is called repression. Based on this, it is clear that Pecola did suppression towards the rape incident by Cholly.

Pecola seems jealous of her classmate Maureen Peal, as she gets special attention from teachers and schoolmates. She also desires to get favoritism like the light skin colour girl, she presumes that the mulatto girl has something in her which she lacks. All of a sudden, the feeling of unwantedness grips her which is both painful and humiliating. Then she walks towards the candy shop to buy the candies which has a picture of little Jane smiling. She loves the candy because the moment she eats the candy it washes away all her mortification. "Three pennies had bought her nine lovely orgasms with Mary Jane. Lovely Mary Jane, for whom a candy is named." (The Bluest Eye 48) While Pecola was walking towards the candy shop she saw the dandelions near the telephone pole and stops to look at them. She likes the yellow head of the dandelions and could not understand why people want to get rid of them from their garden? She starts comparing herself to the wild plants and the cracks on the road and hates to be like them. But, she is Morrison's 'Touchstones', set as the benchmark for judging others moral values and principles. "They were the codes and touchstones of the world, capable of translation and possession. She owned the crack that made her stumble; she owned the clumps of dandelions (...). And owning them made her part of the world, and the world a part of her." (The Bluest Eye 47-48).

In all of these, we notice that Morrison speaks to the masses, both white and black, showing how a racist social system wears down the minds and souls of people, how dominant images of white heroes and heroines with blue eyes and wonderful lives show young children that to be white means to be successful and happy, and then they look around and their own lives of poverty and oppression and learn to hate their black heritage for keeping them from the Dick and Jane world. The novel shows how the meaning of being black in a white-dominated society, in The Bluest Eye at least, is illustrative of complex subjectivities that are situated in places, communities and nations that deny comfortable and coherent lived experiences.

The way people see Pecola makes her feel less worthy than anybody else. Her low self-esteem makes her believe that she is worthless because she is ugly. Someone with a low self-esteem usually feeling unimportant and deserves to be treated that way because they believe that they do not believe to be loved. This happens in Pecola's personal psychology. She is willing to be maltreated such as when there were four boys; Bay boy, Woodrow Cain, Junie Bug and Buddy Wilson insult her by calling her black.

> *…like a necklace of semiprecious stones they surrounded her. Heady with the smell of their own musk, thrilled by the ease power of a majority, they gaily harassed her. "Black e mo, Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e moyadadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo…"* (65)

At this moment, Pecola did not do anything. She only cried and covered her face with her hand. She did not fight with the boys until Frieda and Claudia MacTeer came to save her. This shows that Pecola thinks she deserves to get mock and insulted. The reason is just as simple as because she is black and ugly. Pecola believed that she does not deserve to be loved though she wanted it.

Another episode of Racial and Sexual Humiliation is When Pauline was in the hospital for delivery of her second child Pecola, she underwent discrimination for being a woman of colour by the white doctors who took her as a specimen. Her private parts were demonstrated but what was hurting was the ignorance of the white doctor about her emotions. The white doctor said to his students that black women don't feel pain and reproduce like animals.

> *"He must never seed no mare foal. Who say they don't have pain? Just 'cause she don't cry? 'Cause she can't say it, they think it ain't there? If they looks in her eyes and see them eyeballs lolling back, see the sorrowful look, they'd know."* (*The Bluest Eye* 125)

Somewhere, the remark of the white doctor created an irreparable wound inside Pauline's mind which she couldn't share with her husband and the numb feeling further alienated her from him. On the contrary, Cholly Breedlove in his adolescence was made a butt of ridicule, by two white armed men and the humiliating part was that his racial shackle made him to be a victim. He wanted to revolt back against the intruder who tried to enter his private moment but kept silent because he knew the consequences and the law. The helplessness he felt because of his weak race paralysed his perception and a wound was formed deep inside

his psyche which touched his conscience every now and then. The incident took place after the death of Great Aunt Jimmy, to attend her memorial service all the distant relatives and neighbors entered his barren life. His life was in a steady line when the irretrievable incident changed his life forever. He, Darlene and two more boys went out in the evening to nearby muscadine woods to taste the Muscat grapes but in the process of running and chasing, they were separated from Jake and Suky. They found themselves tired and pulsating in the pine woods under the moonlight; they were drowned in the passion of love, unexpectedly a flash light fell on Darlene and she separates from him. They were caught by two white men in the middle of their lovemaking. The men were bigger than Cholly and were having weapons; most importantly they were whites so revolting against them could kill him. Without his own knowledge he was following their instruction and continued the intimate act openly for the pleasure of those whites. "He was small, black, and helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess—that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke." (The Bluest Eye 150-151) This unpleasant incident wretched Cholly as he felt helpless because he could not show his anger on them, instead he hated the girl. He held her responsible for putting him in that uncompromising position which created a cruel memory demeaning his future. "Sullen, irritable, he cultivated his hatred of Darlene. Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters." (*The Bluest Eye* 150) Later secure at home, he considers the entire incident and in fear of making Darlene pregnant he absconds from his home. Looking at these two embarrassing episodes where Pauline is used as a specimen during child delivery and when Cholly is forced to continue his sexual act with Darlene, it is very obvious that the society was highly racist and discrimination against blacks was at its apex and the order of the day. They would not have done that had it been these were whites of course without thinking of the psychological repercussions.

At the end of the day, Cholly who directs his hatred and disgust towards Darlene and to some greater extend his family and Pecola in particular, is only a victim of circumstances as well.

Years after the abolition of slavery, sex and race discrimination is still prevalent in the American society. It is reflected in the form of race-based prejudice, loathe, oppression and violence. The belief of the whites that their race is intrinsically greater than the blacks is shown intentionally or unintentionally on the innocent blacks in the day today life either in the form of behavior or actions. Though hardcore laws are passed to prevent racial discrimination, unfairness on the basis of colour, ancestry, or ethnic origin still the blacks are

unable to enjoy the constitutional rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic and communal life.

Looking at the relationship between Cholly Breedlove and the daughter in detail, one can say it is a strange relationship. As a father, Cholly did not treat Pecola the way a father should treat his daughter and this is because Cholly never had experience about parent-children relationship. In his early life, Cholly was an abandoned child by his father and mother when he was still a baby. Therefore, he lived together with Aunt Jimmy. When Aunt Jimmy died, he went to see his father at Macon (The Bluest Eye 151-152). Unfortunately for Cholly, his father chased him away instead of welcoming him home.

What happened to Cholly might affect his childhood which makes him become rude and brutal. All these make him to become a ruthless husband and father because, while a child in his/her childhood still developing and has a disruption in the development stage, their psychology will not be able to develop well. In Cholly's case, there is a disruption in his latent period and genital stage.

In Cholly's latent period, the disruption is the fact that he was rejected by his father. When Cholly was a baby, his father Samson Fuller, left him with the mum who later left him too with Aunt Jimmy. And when Cholly wanted to meet him and probably live with him since he has no one except his father. However, his father once again rejected him and cursed him, "*Tell that bitch she get her money. Now, get the fuck outta my face*!" (The Bluest Eye 156) The absence of his father makes him lack father parenting and no idea about raising a child. Therefore, when he raped Pecola, he thought that was what fathers needed to do, which is giving love to their daughters.

> *What could he do for her-ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness will irritate him-the love would move him to fury. How dare she love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? What could his calloused hands produce to make her smile? What of his knowledge of the world and of life could be useful to her? What could his heavy arms and befuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love?* (The Bluest Eye 161-162)

From the above excerpt, it shows that Cholly did not know how to love his daughter. He did not know what he should do as a father. This might be related somehow with his childhood

development which did not develop accordingly because of the disruption like explained above.

Another disruption is at the genital stage which is related to Cholly's sexual experience. After what the two white people did to him when they caught him and Darlenen in the field like explained above. Instead of fighting and chasing the white people, his anger is channeled towards Darlene. He later runs away from Darlene after that incident and begins to search for his father whom unfortunately chased him away. Since that moment, Cholly's life became a total mess.

Every moment Cholly remembers that day he had sex with Darlene, and the day he was rejected by his father, he is filled with pain, and anger. In order to release his anger and emotions, he chose to release it through sex. (158-159) In psychoanalysis, this habit is known as a displacement. Displacement is an act when someone is transferring his negative emotions from someone or something into unrelated thing. In this case, Cholly's anger for being unable to protect Darlene and himself from the two white men is later transferred into his sexual activities with other women. He even displaces his past anger to Pecola by raping her. This rape incident shows that, for Cholly, raping Pecola is his displacement from his past anger which later affects his psychology.

Her desire to be beautiful becomes worse and makes her obsessed with Shirley Temple, Mary Jane candy, and the blue eyes.

Episodes of Sexism in *The Bluest Eye*

Women are not only subjected to racial but also gender discrimination.The behaviors expected from women and men in society are different. In other words, the gender perception of the society determines male and female behavior. Pecola's brother, Sammy, and his attitude towards his parents is another example of sexism in *The Bluest Eye*. While Pecola must stay at home, Sammy is able to resist and leave home. "He cursed for a while or left the house or threw himself into the fray…Pecola, on the other hand, restricted by youth and sex,experimented with methods of endurance" (Morrison: 32).

This is some sort of "a male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself between activity and passivity". In *The Bluest Eye*, men are active, and women are passive. One of the narrators of the novel, Claudia tells the women as the victims suffering in silence because of the discrimination created by white society, especially males. Black

women judge themselves based on the forms of appearance constructed by a society, which makes them feel inferior.

Queen Bee Syndrome in *The Bluest Eye*

In the queen bee syndrome, to be the woman who holds power is to classify another woman in terms of weakness. According to Mavin (2008:75), "The Queen Bee is commonly constructed as a bitch who stings other women if her power is threatened and, as a concept, the Queen Bee blames individual women for not supporting other women". The female characters in the novel not only suffer from racial harassment but also from the oppression and abuses of the male dominated society. As if that were not enough, some women face additional oppression from the hierarchal system led by the queen bee.

Pecola's mother, Pauline, may be given as one of the best examples of women who have queen bee syndrome. Pecola is exposed to unjust treatments even by her mother. Pauline always beats her. Even the black mother, Pauline, acts as oppressive whites and despises her black child. Pauline feels alienated from society. She is surprised to see the strange behavior of other women and feels worthless. Feeling this way, she hates her daughter, Pecola. She turns into a person who cannot love and is afraid to show love.

When Pecola was raped by her father, she was treated hostile by her mother. At first, she only feels bewilderment, and she realizes her mother isn't going to believe her when she tells her. Pauline does not believe Pecola, and Pecola is raped again. As Pecola struggles with her feelings, her mother hates her. She sees Pecola as a threat because she is pregnant by her husband. As a result, Pauline develops ''queen bee syndrome'' in terms of social constructs and self-hatred.

The most interesting part is that Pecola, the victim of rape, has been rebuked by women in society. Their neighbors claimed that Pecola was responsible for this rape.

- *Well, they ought to take her out of school.*
- *Ought to. She carry some of the blame.*
- *Oh, come on. She ain't but twelve or so.*
- *Yeah. But you never know. How come she didn't fight him?*
- *Maybe she did.*
- *Yeah? You never know.*

Pecola's pregnancy is so cruelly criticized in society, especially by women that it reveals the cruelty and irresponsibility of women in society. The society has no compassion for Pecola and does not help her. Pecola is forced to leave school due to her pregnancy and is isolated from other children; moreover, she is the subject of gossip by women.

In *The Bluest Eye*, sexist oppression is seen through the actions of the character of Cholly Breedlove who is depicted as a sexist person. Having the feeling of self defeat in a white-dominated society, Cholly compensates this feeling by violently beating and mistreating both his wife and daughter. Once, he is seen making love and ordered by two white men to continue his act: "Go on," they said. "Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good, make it good". (Morrison, 1982, p.320). Here, women are generally viewed as sexual objects. Cholly, an alcoholic, unemployed black man is viewed as just a sexual entertainer by a group of whites. Stripped of all the privacy a person needs while having sex, he is diminished to the state of a forest animal who is copulating in the wilderness. The image of diminishing might extend to show how Cholly, behaving like a patriarch monkey toward one of his harem females as he, "poured out on her [his wife] the sum of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires" (Ibid., p.230). Cholly, like a patriarch monkey, again, comes later to rape his eleven-year-old daughter in a fit of drunkenness, exactly as it normally happens in the animal world.

On the other hand, part of Cholly's sexism can be partly traced to his childhood. Even when he was a baby, he was rejected by his mother. As Morrison puts it, "When Cholly was four years old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad" (p.240). Likewise, when he was a teenager, he was rejected again by his father who refused to admit him as a son. As a result of the rejection of his family and the racism of the dominant society, Cholly turns into both a victim and a victimizer. As a victimizer, he projects his furious antagonism against the dominant society by exercising oppression against his wife and daughter.

A character like Junior equally picks on girls especially the defenseless ones to feel superior and better about himself. He uses this attitude to boost his masculinity. This is very apparent when he lures Pecola into his home and attacks her.

"Here is your kitten!" he screeched. And he threw a big black cat right in her

Face. She sucked in her breath in fear and surprise and felt fur in her mouth. The cat clawed her face and chest in an effort to right itself, then leaped nimbly to the floor.
Junior was running and going around the room clutching his stomach delightedly. Pecola touched the scratched place on her face and felt tears coming. When she started towards the doorway, Junior leaped in front of her.
" You can't get out. You're my prisoner , he said. His eyes were merry but hard. (The Bluest Eye 89-90)

The above excerpt tells to what extent the male characters no matter the age, is aware of the fact that the society is highly dominated with predetermined gender roles which are put in place to favor the men, thus a highly patriarchal society.

Culturally, he is treated like an outcast. Ironically enough, he has been rejected by his black community, the arena where he is supposed to feel secured and sheltered. At the same time, he cannot secure a place in a white-dominated society. In such a morbid life, he, as a black outcast, loses any sense of affiliation, which Said (1986) terms as the "belonging exclusively to culture and society" (p.605). Therefore, we do not expect such a person as this to belong to anywhere else. As his life has been determined earlier by the rejection of both his society and the white one, Cholly, in terms of animality, merely exists in a state of "filiation", or better to say, where his biological needs are to be fulfilled (eating, drinking, reproducing).

According to Said, "filiation" is the biological ties that link people together (eating, drinking, reproducing... etc). If people normally advance from "filiative" to "affiliative relationships" in order to achieve cultural and ideological homogeneity, Cholly's heavy burden of inherited rejection inevitably hinders his advance. In other words, Cholly simply loses his "affiliation" towards his culture and the dominant white society and only keeps "filiation" as a means of animalistic survival.

There is a profound historical and cultural basis for Morrison to employ blues in her novel. The blues contains plenty of cultural information of African Americans. W. E. B Du Bois calls it "the soul of Black Folk."[7]
The blues is often associated with sadness and desperation. As an African American writer, Morrison is always concerned with the experience of the black people. In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison sings her novel in a blues fashion. Claudia tells Pecola's tragedy in the tradition of blues narrative. The question of "Why am I so black and blue?" lingers in Pecola's mind throughout the novel. Again and again, she is convinced that she must stay back because of her blackness in a world where white skin and blue eyes are taken as standard of beauty.

Firmly griped by the sense of ugliness, self-hatred, Pecola is made speechless. It is, in fact, through Claudia, sometimes the omniscient narrator, that Pecola's stories are revealed. But Morrison doesn't stop at Pecola's personal tragedy. Her intention is to touch the shared experience through a little black girl's story, as a blues singer does, to give an individualized account of collective suffering. In a sense the novel is also the community's blues; Pecola may be the central character, but she is far from the only victim of the bluest eye. The community's lack of sympathy and the role it plays in Pecola's tragedy may be found in Claudia's reflection. Thus, the author sings Pecola's story in the tradition of blues and through which, she expands the themes of the novel.

Conclusion

In Morison's *The Bluest Eye,* all women characters suffer from being a woman and a black one at that. The expectations created by male-dominated society is that women must adapt to survive under the pressure of never-ending hierarchy, and they need to create themselves every day and each second, to exist in the unmerciful world. In Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, the passive resistance of women toward men is the primary topic throughout the entire story Women are always affected by a pre-existing male-dominated culture. This situation led to the alienation of women, especially black women, from society. In *The Bluest Eye,* all of the women, suffer from past traumas related to their own race and also seek to be accepted into existing culture and society. The differences between women and men in this society can be explained in terms of dominant power.

The black women are excluded from a universe of love and understanding where only madness and silence are present. The empathy that the author evokes from her readers through this novel is used as a tool to learn a lesson about the evils of internalized racism and sexism.

CHAPTER THREE
EPISODES OF RACISM AND SEXISM IN *SULA*

The focus of this chapter is to examine the development of racial and sexual difference and antagonism and show how it affects every character and the coping mechanisms put in place by the affected persons. The novel *Sula* sets a new agenda for black women's social and narrative possibilities. The main protagonist Sula, revolts against whatever is societal and restricted, therefore; she loses her social liberation. She intends to assert her identity by rebelling on her community. Sula works very hard to escape all the traditionalism related to women.

Episodes of Racism in *Sula*

In this book, the black protagonists face the weight of a past in which white Americans have repeatedly swindled Blacks out of their wealth and freedoms by handling legislation, social criterion and even language.

The novel opens with the destruction of the "Bottom", the black community's land to make way for suburban development. However, a tone of loss and reminiscence through the community tales about the Bottom was once a lively community with luscious trees, a pool hall, a beauty parlor, a church, a restaurant and many black inhabitants. There were music and familiarity among the inhabitants, and laughter could be heard as far away as the nearby valley. While this black community literally becomes homeless, it makes the pain of dislocation with humor in its perpetuation of the white man's joke that set up the community in the first place (Schreiber, 2010,19).

The Bottom got its name from a cruel joke played on a slave. A white farmer once promised his slave freedom and rich bottom land in exchange for some very difficult work. On completion of the work, the farmer did give the slave his freedom, but instead of fertile bottom land, he gave him a hilly parcel of land worn away by erosion. The farmer told the slave that the hilly land was indeed bottom land, for it was " the bottom of heaven"(5). The slave unfortunately did not know any better, so he accepted the land. Before long, the unfortunate slave found out the truth. He had been tricked by his master and given a piece of land that was worthless for farming.

The master said:

"Oh no! See those hills? That's bottom

Land, rich and fertile".
"But it's high up in the hill," said the slave.
"High up from us," said the master, " but when God
looks down, it's the bottom. That's why we call it so.
It's the bottom of heaven- best land there is."(5).

This framing of the novel encompasses the trauma of black life in white culture: scapegoat, butt of jokes, a lesser other. For a long time, the Bottom remained inhabited by the black people in the area, the white people stayed on the rich valley floor, at the start of the novel. However, the white inhabitants have discovered the beauty of the Bottom and have bought up the land, forcing the blacks to move out the Bottom with all its rich history and comfortable familiarity, is being for a wealthy golf course(Ibid).

For better understanding, these episodes of racism in the novel will be structured into different bodies or organizations.

Racism in the Army

The events of the novel open in (1919) when African American soldiers returned home from Europe after world war I and they did not receive as much respect for their service as the white soldiers. When they returned, many began working for civil rights. This part will tell us the story of another resident of the Bottom, Shadrack. He is the founder of the National Suicide Day (January 3). He suffers from shell shock, or what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), because of disturbing things he saw in combat.

In 1917 France, Shadrack goes to first encounter with the enemy. As he is running with other men in his unit, dodging bullets and other artillery, he sees the man next to him get killed. Shadrack sees the man's " head disappear… under the inverted soup bowel of his helmet» (8).

As Shadrack recovers in the hospital, he finds that he has no control over his hand and other body parts:" anything could be anywhere"(8). He breaks down and cries when he emerges from the hospital and realizes that" he didn't even know who or what he was… with no past, no language, no tribe, no source, no addressbook, no comb, no pencil, no clock… and nothing nothingnothing to do"(12). Like the freed slaves in Beloved and the orphaned Cholly in The Bluest Eye, shadrack lacks a sense of self and has no clear idea of how to live in the world. (Bloom,1999,27).

After dismissal from a mental hospital to make more room, he is taken back to Medallion.

National Suicide Day

On his way to Medallion, Shadrack starts to think about some big issues like fear and death. He realizes that these things doesn't scare him, but the " unexpectedness"(14), does so he devises a way to deal with unknown by creating National Suicide Day. At this point, it isn't really national, since only the people in the Bottom know about it.

He thinks that a good way to control death would be to make it all happen on a single day, January 3 of every year, so " everybody could get it out of the way and the rest of the year, would be safe and free"(14). So he walks all around the Bottom that day and invites people to kill themselves, or someone else. The town people are understandably freaked out by Shadrack and the fact that he's carrying a noose probably doesn't help, but as the years pass by, people get used to him. National Suicide Day becomes just another part of life in the Bottom. It's not that people actually commit suicide or kill on this day, but they start to refer to the day in conversation and as a way to mark time. Sharack creates a new home for himself. The community members separate themselves from Shadrack just as those in The Bluest Eye kept a distance from the Breedloves and Pecola, but without the vicious aggressive production. (Beaulieu,2004,335).

Shadrack began a struggle… to order and focus experience.
It had to do with making a place for fear as a way of
Controlling it…It was not death or dying that frightened him
, but the unexpectedness of both… in this manner he institute
National Suicide Day(14).

Shadrack, like other black people, also suffers from racism because he is black. The white officers send the black soldiers to the dangerous places in the front, while white people stay at safe places. Shadrack recognizes the oppressive plight of African American People cause by the dominant society. Morrison produced Shadrack's story to show how racial prejudice against black destroy their psyche. National Suicide Day is a metaphor for a real event that took place during world war I, when 350,000 African American soldiers and people who served in the war, then were denied their right (Mbalia,2010,44).

Racism in Transportation

In November, Hellene gets a letter that her grandmother is dying, she hasn't been back home since she left with Wiley, and she isn't thrilled about going back, since she feels she is so far. But she decides to go and take Nel with her. Though Helen's conventionality is implicitly linked to the rich whites of Medallion, Helene still suffers from racism, as can be

seen by her experience on the train. The order and boundaries of her conservative, religious, middle class respectability do not protect her from racism. When Helene and Nel board the train that will take them to see Cecile, they accidentally step into the car meant for "whites only". Helene quickly realizes what has happened, but she keeps moving through the car to get to the "colored only car".

The white conductor looks down on her and orders her to move into the other car which is less statues because it is prepared for blacks. He calls Helene by bad words saying " what you think you doin', gal?"(20). The word "gal" very bad word and makes Helene " hard tremble"(21). It meant to make her small and inadequate and it does.Helene feels humiliated, apologizes for her over sight and smiles at the conductor. African American soldiers, who sit by,watch Helene with hatred in their faces and thy disgusted to see an African American woman smiling at the white man who has just insulted her.

Helene's encounter on the train with the conductor suggests that race does not initially or instantly create a sense of community or shared experience. The black soldiers are unable or unwilling to help her out with the conductor because they may need to be careful too. This reminds us to resist the urge lump all people of one race together without accounting for differences and distinctions.

Nel shocks to see her mother smiling to the conductor. It could be a sign of defiance or resignation. Nel surprises with this incident she has never seen her strong and respectable mother act so shamelessly, eager to make up for the fact that she is black. Nel vows never to allow anyone to make her act in such a pathetic manner. She doesn't ever want to be "custard" like her Mom .Nel hates the white society because the bad treatment for the blacks. When they discover that there are no toilets for the "colored" and that they must go in the grass with the other blacks, Nel further experiences the degradation of the greater culture that Helene has avoided by living in Ohio.

By the time Helene and Nel arrive New Orleans, Cecile has already died. Instead of meeting Cecile, Helene meets her mother Rochelle. Nel is happy to see her grandmother. Nel is shocked by Rochelle's appearance and behavior. Nel likes her grandmother and realizes that woman can be free in defying the conventional boundaries whether of feminism or community. She is struck by the fact the conventions are not necessarily equate to strength person's identity or personality and Helene's humiliation by the white conductor is best example. Two things on the trip greatly influence Nel: the Pathetic groveling of her mother toward the sneering white conductor and her prostitute grandmother.

The Struggle for Individual Fulfillment

When she returns to the Medallion, Nel realizes that the trip has changed her, she feels a more like an individual. Nel looks into the mirror and she whispers " I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me… I want to be wonderful. Oh Jesus, make me wonderful."(28,29). She hopes to see more of the world and develop into a wonderful adult. Nel meets a young girl named Sula. Helene initially disapproves for Sula's mother; Hannah has a wild reputation in town. Sula, however appears to be quiet and Helene allows the friendship between them to grow.Nel enjoys visiting Sula at her house, for she prefers the chaos and wild behavior she finds there.

Sumana said that: Nel and Sula represent the two sides of the coin that stands for the total human personality. Morrison says that " Sula and Nel very much a like". They complement each other, they support each other, together could have made a wonderful single human being.

Their friendship was as intense as it was sudden. They found relief in each other's personality. Although both were unshaped, from less things, Nel seems stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotion for more than three minutes. (53).

This is exactly how these ladies in *Sula* find solace in each other's companionship when toasted around by the hard knocks of racism directed either to them directly or to their immediate families.

Racism and Womanhood

In both Sula and Nel there is a quest for social and gender identity to which bonds created between them bear testimony and relevance. Morrison describes how Sula" had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both and other and a self, only to discover that she and Nel were not only one and the same thing"(55). Nel and Sula are drown towards each other out of their awareness that their lives as black females, are restricted by their community and by the outer society.

Barbara Smith writes that the friendship between Nel and Sula is an example of " the necessary bonding that has always taken place between black women for the barest survival. Together the two girls can find the courage to create themselves". Together Sula and Nel enter puberty, together they discover boys and together they become aware of their own sexuality.

Although Nel and Sula share these strong bonds, they are different from each other in several respects. Sula is emotional and adventurous and Nel is cautious and consistent. Whereas Nel becomes a slave to sexism and racism, Sula becomes a liberated woman. The standard of womanhood that Nel represents is not the pure image of the ideal southern lady, but one based on the status of working – class black men in the society. This role is seen by Nel's community as good, while Sula is seen as evil. For Sula not only refuses the role, but steps outside the case of women, beyond any class definition within the caste, when she insists on making herself. The men in the Bottom accuse Sula of sleeping with white men, and this very possibility elicits fury. The only way the townspeople can tolerate the idea of a white man and a black woman sleeping together, is if the woman is raped. The Black people have no wish of interaction with the White people. In that way, they regarded integration with precisely the same venom that white people did.

She is interested neither in being beautiful nor becoming a mother. She keeps herself outside the sex, race, and class definitions of the society(Christian, 1980,34). Nel and Sula found the dilemma of their lives and its solution.

Racism and family Structure

In the section entitled (1921) of the novel, Morrison visualizes the house of Sula, which consists of her grandmother Eva, Hannah, Pearl, Eva's son, Plum, just returned from the war, a white man called Tar Baby who is quite alcoholic and three adopted indistinguishable boys named Deweys. Plum is unable to adjust after war and becomes a drug addict. Eva does not accept this change and sets him on fire. Hannah also burns to death, she is caught in a yard fire. Eva tries to save her by jumping out of an upper level window, Sula watches from the porch.

Morrison wants to make a comparison between Nel's and Sula's house. Nel's house is bound by the social standards that define the conventional meaning of "family". Sula's household is built on an unconventional family structure. She lives in a multigenerational household run by woman. Whereas Nel's household is static and repressive, Sula's household is vibrant, active and subject to constant change. A constant stream of boarders complement the long- term residents of her house. The differences in the houses are evident in the Physical structure themselves. Nel's house is always in order and well-kept, Sula's house is huge and rambling, as Eva has added on additional rooms piece by piece over time. The houses symbolize the differing potential for growth and change in the girl's families (Goyal, 2013, 177).

Sula Peace lived in a house of many rooms that had been built over a period of five years…Eva Peace, who sat in a Wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children, Friends, strays, and a constant stream of boarders. (30).

Eva likes other inhabitants of the Bottom faces humiliation and racism. Eva Married to Boy Boy whose name speaks to his maturity and sense of responsibility, and they have three kids. One is Hannah (Sula's mom), Pearl and their son's name is Ralph nicknamed (Plum). Eva's marriage to Boy Boy is very short, and he is really a horrible guy. He drinks, abuses her, and cheats on her. When he finally takes off, he leaves her with three kids to take care of. Eva suffers a lot because she is black woman. She has no any opportunity to work. So she depends on help from neighbors to feed the kids. But they are just as poor as she is and she knows she cannot count on them forever. One day, Eva left her children with neighbor. She told them she would return after few hours, but she comes back after eighteen months.

She returns with one leg and ten thousand dollars. " Somebody said Eva stuck it under a train and made them off.

Another said she sold it to a hospital for 10,000"(31).

Carmean says that "Precisely how Eva loses her leg becomes the topic of speculation in the Bottom, though it is suggested that Eva sacrifices it in a train accident for an insurance settlement".

Morrison depicts the miserable situation of blacks during the 1920s. Eva cut off her leg intentionally in order to collect the insurance money to feed her family. Upon her return to Medallion with the money, Eva built a house for herself and the children. Plum goes to world war I and Pearl marries at the age of fourteen and moves to Michigan. Hannah marries Rekus, Sula's father who died when Sula was a baby. (Ibid)

Eva and Hannah live together in the same house. Because there were no men in the house, they loved all men, "It was man love that Eva bequeathed to her daughter"(41). Eva enjoys flirting with men although she does not sleep with them. Bell says that " Eva is a women without man but she is not without men, they are there to comprehend that feminine, spiritual, physical and emotional part of herself".

As for Hannah, she "simply refused to live without the attentions of a man, and after the Rekus's death had a steady sequence of lover, mostly the husbands of her friends neighbors"(42). Hannah often had sex with many different men like the whores in (The Bluest Eye). It makes no difference to her if they are married or not. The majority of them are the husbands of her friends, and neighbors.

Hannah is afraid to have any kind of permanent relationship with a male. Hannah frequently enjoys sex with any man who comes to visit the house, even the newly wed husbands who have rented a room in the Peace's house for their honey moon. Hannah seems to be addicted to casual sex and what Eva actually bequeaths to Hannah, who in turn passes this on Sula. It is a thwarted love of men, leaving both her daughter and grandmother incapable of committing themselves to any healthy relationship.

Both Eva and Hannah make their way to secure their financial state. At the time 1920s the only paid work in Medallion for black women is either domesticity for the white families or prostitution(Shukla,2007,29).

Plum has returned from the war depressed and hopelessly, addicted to the heroin. He steals from the family in order to buy his drugs and sleeps in his room for days with record playing on. Eva as a mother feels sorry to see her son suffering in this way. One night in late 1920, Eva goes into Plum's room to confront her son about his miserable life and his addiction to painkiller. He is barely conscious because of the drags. She sits on the bed crying and holding Plum for one last time. Eva, then pours Kerosene on Plum's bed light it, and returned to the room. When Hannah wakes and comes to tell Eva , what is happening, the two women look into each other's eyes with full realization of what has happened. The neighbors help put out the fire, but Plum is already dead.

So late one night in 1921, Eva got up from her bed and put
On her clothes… she arrived at Plum's door and pushed it
Open with the tip of crutch…she sat down and gathered
Pulm into her arms… she rolled a bit of newspaper into
a tight stick about six inches long, lit it and threw it onto
the bed where the Kerosene- soaked Plum lay in sung delight. *(*45,47).

Eva's action of killing Plum, her son, represents the ambiguous power of love. Of all her children, Eva clearly loves Plum more. This has not changed even with his return from the war as a heroin addict, and Eva's decision to kill him is an expression of her love for him. At one level, this is a sacrifice: a mother putting her son whom she loves out of his misery and thereby losing him. At another level, it is an act of selfishness, because she loves him, Eva believes that she has the right to decide what is best for him, and believes that death is better than addiction(Goyal,2007,118).

The relationship of Eva and Plum Morrison makes the claim that love is far more complicated than the way in which it is usually perceived. Love is not merely a thing of

beauty and moral good. Morrison claims it is rather a forceful amoral emotion that drives people to actions both selfish and selfless(Sumana, 1998,77).

The year 1922 sheds light on the development of the relationship between Sula and Nel. We know that each girl has come from a different house regime and found in the other a complement for her dimension. The oppression of African- American women in the united states , especially in the first quarter of the twentieth century, is documented throughout the novel. The manner in which Morrison chooses to explore the nature of the women's oppression is unique. She creates two female characters, Nel and Sula. The idea that Nel and Sula represent two halves of one person reverberates through the novel.

When Sula and Nel become friends they become inseparable, but with their very different homes upbringing and mothers. They choose different lives when entering adulthood. Nel and Sula seek each other out. " They were solitary little girls whose loneliness was so profound it intoxicated them."(51).

Sula and Nel both twelve years old, are in their way to Edna Finch's Mellow House, an ice cream parlor, where children are welcome. The men of the Bottom sit outside and watch every female in sight walk passed them. As Sula and Nel pass, one of the men named Ajax calls" Pig meat"(50),(which is apparently some sort of sexual reference).(Lang, 1996, 55).

The girls are both embarrassed and Pleased. Although the two girls have only dimly began to understand the mysteries of sexuality, they are becoming interested in the opposite sex. As they are black girls, they face racism from the Irish immigrants who come to Medallion, and experience discrimination against blacks. The Irish kids start bullying the black kids, and one day Nel becomes the unfortunate object of their attention. On her way home from school, a group of Irish boy grabs Nel and pushes her from hand to hand "until they grew tired of the frightened helpless face" (54).

She does everything she can to avoid them after this, including taking the long way home. Sula at first accompanies her on these long walks home, but one day she decides that they are not going to hide any more. “Let us go on home the shortest way"(54). They encounter the boys of course who step in front of them to stop them from passing. This is when Sula shows us her tough side. She pulls out Knife, which at first does not scare the boys but then she cuts off part of her own finger and says " If I can do that to myself", she tells them, " what you suppose I'II do to you?" (55). That does the trick and the boys take off without touching the girls.

Sula is careless about her bleeding finger because she used to see many severe incidents in her family and this is cause that makes her dare to do that.

Though Sula frightens Nel with her severity and strange behavior but their friendship goes on. Nel is now able to escape from her strict mother. She notices that Sula does not care about her physical shape of her hair style though she is strong and can do whatever she wants. Nel is free to express herself, which is something she cannot do when she is at home, because she must be obedient girl. Nel starts skip the cloth spin from her nose at night, and leaves her hair as it is without straightening it(Davis,1999,5).

One day during summer, Sula hears her mother talking to her friends. She tells that loving your children is different from liking them. The other women agree and say that children are a pain even though they love them. Not realizing that Sula is nearby and listening. Hannah tells the women that she loves her daughter, but does not like her. Sula shocked by her mother words, but hides her feelings." Sure you do. You love her, like I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference."(57)

Sula loses her trust in herself after hearing her mother saying these words. Hannah's words cause Sula to feel unworthy and this leads to a feeling of shame caused by her mother. Lack of love has its impact on Sula for the rest of her life. She runs outside to join Nel. The two girls run down to the river to play. Hannah's comment makes Sula feel insecure and upset. It is the hardest shock she got in her shattered life, but not the last.

Another example of Bottom's own racism is Helene Wright's concern over her daughter Nel's physical features. Although she does not want Nel to be fair skinned as she is, because this advantage can mean trouble in the color-conscious-society, she still forces her daughter to pull her nose and make it narrower and yet Helene herself is a victim of racism. For having grown up in New Orleans, she knows the dangers of breaking Jim Crows Laws, the mandates that segregated white society from blacks.

People who suffer from racism and discrimination are also capable of racism and discrimination. The residents of the Bottom condemn interracial relationships and liken the offspring of suck relations to mules. Nel is a perfect example as the narrator considers her skin color as the color of "wet sandpaper". Just black enough to escape the blows of the "pitch-black true bloods and the contempt of old women who worried about such things as bad blood mixtures and knew that the origins of a mule and mulatto were one and the same. 1922

There is a complete disregard for humanity in the bargeman's racism. Had Chicken not been a child, he would have been left in the river to rot, his family never knowing where he was or what happened to him. He was not left there alone just because it was not an old black man as it first appeared.

Not even death brings an end to racism. Sula is buried in a segregated cemetery, in a segregated town, suggesting something eternal about tacial discrimination.

"just over there was the colored part of the cemetery. She went in. sula was buried there…1965.59"

White bargeman finds Chicken's little corpse washed ashore at the river's edge. Annoyed at the inconvenience of having to tote the black child's body, to the sheriff, he reacts as though it is not a human life that has been lost. White immigrants are given preferential treatment for menial jobs while blacks, with long history of living in the valley, are mistreated, even by the white immigrants who are themselves looked down on by the established white community and one of the ways they regain their self respect is by harassing blacks.

Through Sula Morrison shows the readers that African American still face many difficulties when they try to assimilate into main stream society. Discrimination of African American is still strong which is clearly visible in the denied job opportunities for African American in Medallion. Morrison visualizes the friendship between Nel and Sula. The girls realize at an early age that their situation in society is complicated, because they are blacks and females. Sula and Nel help each other define their personalities, they provide each other with production they lack, and they fight together against oppression.

Facets of Sexism in *Sula*

The two main characters are Nel Wright and Sula Peace. They are both female characters and are often disadvantaged due to their gender. Nel is considered a good woman because she plays a socially acceptable role as a woman, submissive wife and mother, while Sula conforms to no social stereotypes and let almost noting hold her back. Thus, she is viewed as evil by the people in her community.

Sula gains her strength from defying all conventional values and beliefs in her community. In order to see the different aspects of the world, Sula has to be different and

unconventional. She is different in the sense that she is true to herself. She refuses to be blindly obedient and submissive to the needs of her community. Morrison says:

> *I always thought of Sula as quintessentially black, metaphysically black, if you will, which is not melanin and certainly not unquestioning fidelity to the tribe. She is new world black and new world woman extracting choice from choicelessness, responding inventively to found things. (Morrison, 1989, p. 34)*

She does not care if people look at her as an outsider. She uses men as she likes. After she has sex with them, she disregards them and continues her life normally. She rejects the stereotypical roles assigned to black women. Men are afraid of her evil and they describe her as a devil. Morrison comments: their conviction of Sula's evil changed them in accountable yet mysterious ways. Once the source of their personal misfortune was identified, they had let to protect and love one another. They began to cherish their husbands and wives, protect their children, repair their homes and in general bond together against the devil in their midst. (p.117).

Through Sula, Morrison disputes society‟s norms of what a woman should be. *Sula* was groundbreaking because it challenged patriarchy by portraying the relationship between two women, told from a female perspective, and contesting traditional gender norms. Through Sula, Morrison shows African American women‟s need to "create their own notion of selfhood" and challenge men‟s control and dominance (1973: 54). It is evident that double standards prevail in a sexist society; Sula is "labeled a bitch" because of her promiscuity and also because she is said to have sex with white men. Black men resent that Sula has sex with white men, even though it is accepted for a black man to have sex with a white woman (1973: 112-113).

Sula‟s refusal to conform to the norms of society creates a fear amongst the men. This fear is shown as prejudice and double standards: Every one of them imagined the scene, each according to his own predilections - Sula underneath some white man – and it filled them with choking disgust. There was nothing lower she could do, nothing filthier. The fact that their own skin color was proof that it had happened in their own families was no deterrent to their bile. Nor was the willingness of black men to lay in the beds of white women a consideration that might lead them towards tolerance (Morrison, 1973: 113).

By rejecting Sula people in her community unite together against her evil doings. She unifies her community by objectifying its danger. People in her society do not hesitate to label her

evil even though they know quite well that evil are part of human nature. By treating her grandmother violently, other women in her community start treating their children differently with love and compassion for fear of being treated like Sula's grandmother. Morrison states:

> *It was like getting the use of an eye back, having a cataract removed. Her old friend had come home. …Talking to Sula had always been a conversation with herself…. Sula never competed; she simply helped others define themselves. Other people seemed to turn their volume on … when Sula was in the room* (p.95).

For her, if women do not revolt against the injustice and oppression they would be like dead living things. Her family dislikes her because of the unlimited freedom she has. She is the kind of woman who affirms her place strongly in her society and gains the power of her invented freedom. Women at her time are living brutally and dreadfully waiting for their final doom. Without enough strength, she will not be able to break the wall of the convention. She has no desire for material things and she does not want to have a privileged place in her society. The only thing she desires is to be a woman who can guide other oppressed black women and help them to resist and challenge the social domination of oppressive male rule. Revolting on their traditions and values symbolizes the black woman's search for self-affirmation in the patriarchal society

Sula has a feminist spirit and refuses to melt into the typical mold of a woman. She discovered years before that she was neither white nor male and that all freedom and triumphs was forbidden to her and because of this, she decides to live her life in her own terms. In attempting to break these boundaries, she is hated by the town and viewed as an evil person.

Sula's rebellious nature appears when she encourages her best friend, Nel, to assert and affirm her freedom and identity. She lives according to her principles refusing anyone controlling her wishes. She tells Nel: "I got my mind. And what goes on in it." (Morrison's Sula, p. 43)

Sula wants to affirm her selfhood apart from society. She inherits her courage and rebellious nature from her grandmother, Eva, who is the most important and influential person in the family, and she survives alone when she is deserted by her husband.

She belongs to the groups "of sexually free mothers […] who refuse to be restricted or pressed to be defined in terms of maternity only" (Ghasemi, 247). Eva, along Helene's mother, Sula, and Hannah are what Morrison is using to represent her revision of the concept

of black womanhood, someone able to live freely, with a sense of individuality and have a life on their own, mothers who are not really maternal, but deals with the same struggles than the ideal mothers.

Having to take care of her children alone since her husband Boyboy abandoned them, she had to leave them with a neighbor for eighteen months to go to work and came back without a leg, being disabled the rest of her life. This circumstance is seen by Ghasemi in his article *Negotiating Black Motherhood in Toni Morrison's Novels* as "Eva's initiation into her awareness of a free and distinct selfhood" (Ghasemi, 242), and it is true that she changes her attitude towards motherhood after her husband leaves. However, it should also be taken into account that she was forced to that "freedom" but it taught her that somehow, she could live without a man, an opposition of what was stated before by hooks that most black women think they need a man to have full happiness (hooks, 82).

Eva managed to bring her children up with being as what can be described as the role of the "matriarch" of her family. Many black women have thought for years that the black society was a matriarchal one because white supremacists created that myth, reasoning that women were powerful providers and workers in black households, and the ones to blame for the demasculinization of black men (hooks, 75). Nevertheless, that is what they wanted to make them believe, since black women still held no power in the household whatsoever: "black women represented one of the largest socially and economically deprived groups in America whose status in no way resembled that of a matriarch" (hooks, 72).
However, in the case of Eva, an arrogant provider and head of the household, she could be seen as a great example of a matriarch of her household, not outside of it though, because "the term matriarch implies the existence of a social order in which women exercise socialand political power" (hooks, 72) and that has nothing to do with the real condition of black women in American society.

She refuses to surrender, and she thinks that life continues with and without the existence of men. She decides to survive to save her children from starvation and death. Eva's matriarchal personality makes people respect her. She is a tough woman who bears the responsibility alone when her husband deserted her. She enjoys independence and freedom other women do not have. She is not responsible for emasculating her husband who let the house deserting his wife and children. In fact, she is unduly blamed and stereotyped for something outside her sphere of influence. Eva's rebellious nature is not the reason behind her

husband abandoning the family but he is a self-interested man who does not have the courage to bear the responsibility of taking care of his family. Eva is an independent woman who gains strength from her tough experiences in the absence of the male member. Eva takes on a man's role and found a way out of the patriarchal and chauvinistic system that denied her the means of taking proper care of her family. People talk that Eva intentionally placed her leg on the railway track to assert the insurance money to assist her children from painful starvation. Eva stands as an example of how African American woman survives despite repression, prejudice or limitations in life and still tolerate suffering and pain.

Eva loves her family to the point that makes her ready to sacrifice anything and everything for them. When Eva sees that her son, Plum , sinks into addiction and is unable to save him from sinking further she takes a dramatic decision to relieve him from his addiction by killing him. She burns him in his sleep. Eva explains that she could not tolerate seeing her son behaving like an infant again due to the drug addiction:

> *I done everything I could to make him leave me and go on and live and be a man but he couldn't and I had to keep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man* (Morrison's Sula, p.72). Out of love, she saves him from his misery. She thinks that death is better than addiction.

What makes Eva stronger is her hatred for her irresponsible husband. It is this hatred that keeps her alive. She is not emotionally and mentally sad after his sudden departure. However, Eva's prejudice towards her husband does not prevent her from having sex with other men:

Those Peace women loved all men. It was man love that Eva bequeathed to her daughters. Probably, people said, because there were no men in the house, no men to run it. But actually, that was not true. The Peace women simply loved maleness, for its own sake". (Morrison, Sula 41).

Despite her being an old and crippled lady, she is also having many sexual relationships with men visiting her house. Morrison describes her as having "a regular flock of gentleman callers" (Morrison's Sula, p.41). She does not make love to them, but she has a great deal of fun in their company. Men liked to be with her because she makes them feel more proud of themselves and she strengthened their ego, which opposes the belief concerning matriarchs' behaviour towards men.

Eva peace resists the patriarchal script of motherhood that demands women to mother children in a nuclear family in which the mother is subservient/ inferior to the husband" (Morrison's Sula, p. 81). She raises her children by herself, but not out of choice. A woman choosing to be alone is improper for Eva.

Nevertheless, even though she could be pictured as the greatest example of the independent woman in the novel, it could be seen just as a façade as well, because she was forced to live independently without her husband, and she was still concerned about her relationship with her husband, as most black women were about their relationship with men, because they all thought they needed to have a man by their side to live happily. One of the instances of how positive Eva thinks marriage is for women is when she was talking to Sula after she came back from the city after 10 years: "when you gone to get married? You need to have some babies, I'll settle you. […] Selfish, Ain't no woman got no business flouting around without no man." (Morrison, 92)

Helene is Nel's mother. Coming from a really poor background, she is the daughter of a creole New Orleans prostitute, raised by her grandmother, who taught her to be a "respectful" woman and tries to distance from her past as soon as possible, moving to Medallion after marrying Wiley Wright, "a seaman […] in port only three days out of every sixteen." (Morrison, 17) who, therefore, was always away. There, she somehow forgets about her past and lives in a respectable house within the black community because her husband "put her in a lovely house with a brick porch and real lace curtains at the window" (Morrison, 17), therefore providing her with all her needs, as every husband was told they should do. Because of that, she was alone most of the time with their daughter Nel, who made her "rose grandly to the occasion of motherhood" (Morrison, 18). In Medallion she also "joined the most conservative black church" (Morrison, 18) and was really participative of the activities that took place there.

Thus, Helene was pictured as what society of the mid 20th Century would say the perfect black women should be "The images of black women that are seen as positive usually are those that depict the black woman and longsuffering, religious, maternal figure, whose most endearing characteristic is her self-sacrificing self-denial for those she loves" (hooks, 66).

Helene, although pictured positively by the white standards, was still a black woman, nevertheless, and she struggles and is reminded that even though she lives in a somehow good position within the black community, she will never be an equal, and that is pictured when she

takes the train with Nel to go to her grandmother's house because she had passed away and she mistakenly enters one of the zones that only white people can enter:

> "*Helene and her daughter entered a coach peopled by some twenty white men and women […] Helene decided to spare herself some embarrassment and walk on through to the colored car. […] they saw a white conductor coming toward them 'What you think you doin', gal?' […] Back to her grandmother's house in the city […] and already she had been called 'gal'"* (Morrison, 20).

In this paragraph it is stated how not only she had to sit in a different place because she was black, but she was discriminated as well, and treated poorly for being a woman, being called a 'gal' which brought her to her past a slang word used by lower classes to refer to girls. This word was something that someone of her current social position should never have been called, but she was still black and a woman nevertheless, and as they did with every black woman: "They reminded her, that in the eyes of the white public, she would never be seen as worthy of consideration or respect" (hooks, 55).
Helen is pictured by Toni as the way black women were considered to be under the slavery system: "as nurturing forces that protected and provided for their children at any cost without any concern for their own individuality and selves" (Ghasemi, 238). She, along her daughter, is pictured the complete antithesis of the rest of the mother figures in the novel.

Jude Greene is Nel's husband, whom later becomes Sula's lover. Nel sees Sula and him making love, and he leaves her with their two children right after the betrayal. His biblical name could be seen as a sign of betrayal to his wife, as Jude betrayed Jesus.

At the beginning, and almost throughout all his appearances in the book, Jude is pictured as a frustrated black man. Firstly, because he did not get the job he wanted and he had to settle for a job he was shamed about, a waiter, which was a woman's job, and, secondly, because he still had not married Nel, and therefore, could not take any man's role, neither on the household, nor on his job. Some of his thoughts about this are stated in the book: "So it was rage, rage and a determination to take on a man's role anyhow that made him press Nel about settling down." (Morrison, 82), and he also said that "Without that someone, he was a waiter hanging around a kitchen like a woman. With her he was the head of a household pinned to an unsatisfactory job" (Morrison, 83). Two connections with the ideas of bell hooks can be done here. First of all, the need of Jude to play a man's role, tofeel like he

was not demasculinized because of having supposedly a woman's job, since the white society usually attacked black men for being demasculinized due to the fact that black women used to work outside on such jobs in order to provide for their families and "the worst that can happen to a man is that he be made to assume the social status of a woman" (hooks, 20). Moreover, the embarrassment and shame Jude felt because of having to take on a woman's role at a job, because black men of lower classes could feel shame and even reject some jobs if they felt like they were losing their masculinity or their dignity whereas women could not do that because they had to provide for the house and they would be seen as uppity:

> *"lower class black men in our neighborhood commenting on the fact that some jobs were not worth doing because of the loss of one's personal dignity […]. The black female who thought herself "too good" to do domestic work or other service jobs was often ridiculed for being uppity. Yet everyone sympathized when unemployed black men talked about their inability to accept "the man" bossing them."* (hooks, 77).

In Jude's eyes, as Karen F. Stein states in her article *Toni Morrison's Sula: A Black Woman Epic:* "Nel is to become a part of him, […] signifies the death of Nel's already fragile sense of self"(Stein, 147), therefore, Nel just does what she's told by her husband becoming one with him and completely losing herself to her husband and children.

At the end, Jude is pictured in *Sula* as almost every other man that appears on it: betraying his significant other and leaving them behind to take care of the house and the children and to provide for the family alone. Therefore, he represents a pattern followed on most of Morrison's male characters, the fathers that as a result of social and economical oppression leave the household and that are not considered responsible for their children anymore (Ghasemi, 240).

Hannah, on the other hand, is a negligent mother who will sleep with any man, regardless of her neighbours' or friends' feelings. Hannah teaches Sula to regard sex as "pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable" (Morrison's Sula, p. 40). Many of Hannah's qualities emerge in Sula as an adult. Perhaps this is a commentary on the legacy that mothers pass onto their daughters. Hanna also rebels on the traditional norms and principles in the society because she does not have any emotional engagement. Ever since her husband died Hanna never indulge in a real relationship with a man. In fact, "She would fuck practically

anything." (Morrison's Sula, p.43). She was disliked by other good women in town. Morrison says:

Hannah exasperated the women in the town – the "good" women…the whores, who were hard put to find trade among black men anyway and who resented Hannah's generosity, because Hannah seemed too unlike them, having no passion attached to her relationships and being wholly incapable of jealousy (Morrison's Sula, p. 44).

Hannah's sexual relationships are physical. She is not selfless. She thinks of herself as a woman when she leads the men of the Bottom to her bed. Her relationships are best described as: "sweet, low and guileless... nobody, but nobody could say 'Hey sugar' like Hannah" (Morrison's Sula, pp. 42-43) Sula has bequeathed Hanna's self -interest and Eva's courage and their love of men outside the concept of marriage. She is aggressive with her mother because she hears her confessing to one of his friends:" I love her but I just don't like her. That's the difference"(Morrison's Sula, p.57) Sula learns self- indulgence from her mother. As a child, Sula sees many men coming to the house to sleep with her mother. Sula refuses the idea of marriage. Morrison says:

> *Marriage, apparently, had changed all that, but having no intimate knowledge of marriage, having lived in a house with women who thought all men available, and selected from among them with a care only for their tastes, she [Sula] was ill prepared for the possessiveness of the one person she felt close to* (Morrison's Sula, p.119).

Sula finds that keeping only one, man is a ridiculous idea.

Sula becomes a "sexually desiring subject rather than as an object of male desire. In her discussion with Nel who tells her why she cannot keep only one man with her, Sula answers: *Is that what I'm supposed to do? Spend my life keeping a man? They ain't worth more than me. And besides, I never loved any man because he was worth it. Worth didn't have nothing to do with it.* She adds: "My mind did. That's all." (Morrison's Sula, p.143-144).

Morrison says: Sula was distinctly different. Eva's arrogance and Hannah's self-indulgence merged in her and, with a twist that was all her own imagination, she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full reign, feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her (Morrison's Sula, p.118).

Although Sula inherited fearlessness, arrogance, self-indulgence and independence from her mother and grandmother, she is still different from them. Tough situations teach her never to surrender, and she must invent her own ways to survive in a tough and inconsiderate society. Sula is not guided by anyone in her family.

African-American mothers try to protect their daughters from the dangers that lie ahead by offering them a sense of their own unique self-worth. This sense of care and protection does not exist in Sula because Hanna does not care to encourage Sula to develop a self –worth. She is greatly disappointed to see black women oppressed and ill-treated by both black men and white community. She does not like to see them victimized and controlled just because they are black and she is angry that these women do not even struggle to free themselves from the tie of oppression. She refuses the roles of mothers and wives because these stereotypical roles do not make women happy. She negotiates with her friend Nel:" Every man I ever knew left his children."(Morrison's Sula, p.143).

She realizes that married life causes women from fatal suffering. She looks upon conventions and traditions as barriers to self-discovery. Different from other black women Sula makes her own decision to live on her values and beliefs. She does not depend on anyone to guide her or teach her how to live her life. As Morrison writes: “The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either”. (Morrison's Sula, p.118-119)

Sula embodies self-determination by refusing to observe social codes and conventions. Despite the changes that occur during the novel’s time span, Sula remains at odds with her context, untouched by those cultural forces which gain prominence as the century progresses. (p.31) Sula is irritated because women accept their inferiority, and they are so week to fight for their rights. Therefore she does not like to be like those weak and inferior women. She even dislikes them because they are passive. She is amused when something wrong happens to them, therefore; she was called the demon. When her mother is burnt she stands aside looking at her without offering any help. People said that she was so shocked and paralyzed that she did not know how to help her mother. But her grandmother contradicts them saying: "

Sula had watched Hannah burn not because she was paralyzed, but because she was interested" (Morrison's Sula, p.78). When Sula is very sick she confesses to Nel: "I never meant anything. I stood there watching her burn and was thrilled. I wanted her to keep on jerking like that, to keep on dancing" (Morrison's Sula, p.147) Sula thinks her inability to feel

sad is part of her success and strength. When Eva asks her to think of marriage she refuses because she thinks marriage strips her of her freedom. She does not intend to cling to the old stereotypes. She is determined: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself." (Morrison's Sula, p.92). Marriage, Sula thinks, gives freedom to men and strips women of their identity. She does not intend to be controlled by men under the concept of marriage. She is determined to enjoy her freedom, and she does whatever she likes without being led by anyone. Nel reproaches her: "You can't do it all. You a woman and a coloured woman at that. You can't act like a man" (Morrison's Sula, p.142). All the women in her family are victims of her rebelliousness. Nel associates Sula liberation with a kind of masculinity.

She [Sula] is a masculine character. She will do the kind of things that normally only men do, which is why she's so strange. She really behaves like a man. She picks up a man, drops a man, the same way a man picks up a woman, drops a woman. And that's her thing. She's masculine in that sense. She's adventuresome, she trusts herself, she is not scared.

Sula forgets her womanly role and embodies the role of a man in forming an emancipated woman and this is what Morrison regards as irrational thought of Sula. She treats these women violently when they cling to their stereotypical roles. Morrison observes: "And like any artist with no art form, she became dangerous" (Morrison's Sula, p. 26). Eva who used to be the controller in her house loses her freedom confronting Sula who sends her to the elderly house. Eva is no longer the controller in her house. When freedom is lost Eva has no decision of her own. Morrison points out:

Her once beautiful leg had no stocking and the foot was in a slipper. Nel wanted to cry, not for Eva's milk-dull eyes or her floppy lips, but for the once proud foot accustomed for over a half century to a fine well-laced shoe, now stuffed gracelessly into a pink terrycloth slipper (Morrison's Sula, p.199).

Violence becomes the tool through which she defies the stereotypical roles assigned for black women. Another example of violence she uses against the boys who try to make fun of her. Morrison says:

> *Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate toward her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashes off only the tip of her finger. The four boys stared openmouthed at the wound and a scrap of flesh* (Morrison's Sula, p.54).

She cuts her finger to terrify the boys who annoyed her. She threatens the boys by saying "If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you" (Morrison's Sula, pp.54-55). In doing this, Sula determines to tell the boys that she is not afraid of them and remind them of what they will get back if they do anything harmful to her.

She kills a boy because he makes fun of her. Killing this boy makes her fearless and more confident. From this situation, Sula has learned that violence is useful for her in crisis. Her success in preventing herself from being insulted by using violence confirms Sula of her strong power.

Nel is Sula's best friend. Nel represents the other half of Sula. Nel and Sula seek comfort in each other's company for they share the common link of being young, black and female in a world that is commonly geared to meet the designs of white men. Despite having a different background both are close friends because "they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for". (Morrison's Sula, p.52)

Both Nel and Sula "search for themselves in an alien world- white and male."(p.32). Sula wishes Nel behave differently from other conventional women. Nel appears as a traditional and conventional lady and lives with limited self-expression of these gender-identified roles. After marriage she solidifies into her wifely role, becoming one of the women who had "folded themselves into starched coffins" (Morrison's Sula, p. 122).

Sula and Nel are "two selves, the 'monstrous', passionate, sexual woman, and the 'good', rational, controlled woman". Morrison describes: "Because each had discovered years before they were neither white nor male and all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them they had set about creating something else to be". (Morrison's Sula, p. 52)

Barbara Smith writes that their friendship is "the necessary bonding that has always taken place between Black women for the barest survival. Together the two girls can find the courage to create themselves". (p.168) Although they share a strong bond, they are different from each other. Sula is passionate and Nel is a traditionalist. Nel accepts slavery to racism and Sula turns into a liberated woman. Sula denies the traditional role of a woman. She refuses the sex, race and class definitions of the society. Sula not only refuses the role assigned to her by her society, but she also steps outside the caste of woman, beyond any class or definition, she insists on making herself. Morrison compares these two women: "Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain

any emotion for more than three minutes" (Morrison's Sula, p.53). Nel's obedience and Sula's stubbornness are constantly linked. Sula does not have but Nel who always stands on her side and listens to her and she is always there when Sula needs her. But Sula betrays Nel intentionally when she sleeps with her husband. This *act of betrayal is described by Morrison:*

> *Sula had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both another and a self, only to discover that she had no thought at all of causing Nel pain when she bedded down with Jude. They had always shared the affection of other people: compared how a boy kissed, what line he used with one and then the other. "She adds:" Marriage apparently, had changed all that but having had no intimate knowledge of marriage, having lived in a house with women who thought all men available and selected from among them with a care only for their tastes, she was ill prepared for the possessiveness of the one person she felt close to* (Morrison's Sula, p.119).

Her justification for betraying her best friend is that she is supposed to share everything with Nel because she is her best friend. This justification is not accepted by Nel. Sula does not think of her action as an act of betrayal. She supposes Nel to be more angry with her husband for betraying her and for being an untrustworthy man. She cannot understand Nel's pain when her husband's reality is revealed. Morrison says: "It had surprised her a little and saddened her a good deal when Nel behaved the way the others would have" (Morrison's Sula, 120) Sula is senseless therefore she does not apologize to Nel for betraying her and she does not realize the harmful thing she does to her best friend. "Sula's independence and freedom do not permit her to feel shame herself" (Morrison's Sula, p.197) Nel refuses Sula's action because she is a traditional woman who does not have a personal identity but she intends to maintain her social identity. Sula succeeds in creating her personal identity not caring about losing her social identity because she is a liberated woman whose stubbornness and inflexibility places her at odds with the culturally rich black society. Nel is like Sula in her rebellion on her mother who controls Nel's life. Nel dislikes her mother's control and she struggles to set herself free. When her mother goes to New Orleans to visit her grandmother she unintentionally sits in the white people's section. She is reproached by a white man who humiliates her. Helene feels humiliated, apologizes for her oversight and smiles at the conductor "like a street pup" (Morrison's Sula, p.21). Nel is pleased to see people hate her mother and are not under her control. Morrison says :"She [Nel] felt both pleased and

ashamed to sense that these men, unlike her father, who worshipped his graceful, beautiful wife, were bubbling with a hatred for her mother" (Morrison's Sula, p. 22)

When Nel sees her mother's weakness she determines to be herself. She decides that she will not be led by her mother again. She whispers to herself: "I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me". (Morrison's Sula, p.28). Rebelling on her mother is important for Nel to create her identity. She wants to enjoy life outside her mother's domination. This rebellion brings her close to Sula who rebels on her family and her society. Nel likes the way Sula lives her life. They both, according to Beaulieu, find a sense of belonging in their friendship with each other.

Although they are different they need one another because as M.L. Montgomery observes, they "experience a profound sense of alienation in a patriarchal world which evolves no terms for their existence". (p.132) After Sula's death, Nel realizes that she has lost everything. She runs to her grave calling her name: "Oh Lord Sula, girl, girl, girl, girl, girl." (Morrison's Sula, p.174) Nel realizes that she did not lose her husband because of Sula but, in fact, she lost a best friend to gain social acceptance. Nel says:

> *All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude.' And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. 'We was girls together,' she said as though explaining something…. It was a fine cry —loud and long— but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow* (p.174).

Sula does not have a good reputation in her community. She sleeps with all the husbands in the city without considering these sexual relationships as real. Eva rebukes her for the irrational practices of prostitution in return of misleading herself "You sold your life for twenty-three dollars a month" (Morrison's Sula, p. 93).

Sula's death is significant for her community because "the community's role of defining itself through acceptance and disapproval of one of its members' shifts. No longer is the she-devil the focus of their collective energies" (Marie Nigro. 1998, p.731.)

Sula discovers men through her mother who sometimes takes them to her bedroom, where her daughter also sleeps. Sula as a child sees her mother goes out with men and comes back home happy. Hanna teaches Sula that sex is "pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable" (Morrison's Sula, p.41). She is indulging in these sexual relationships only for pleasure. She dislikes marriage.

Sula's expression of sexuality is unencumbered by marital laws and expectations.Sula 's sexuality is not like Nel's in that it is, as McDowell points out, "not attached to anything

outside herself or expressed within the institution of marriage that legitimates it for women [. . .]. Rather it is in the realm of sensory experience and in the service of the self- exploration that leads to self-intimacy"(156).

Conclusion

Morison has acknowledged that Sula is a “masculine character”. She is independently bold and treats men the way men treat women (1973:53) Sula is urging black women to break away from the patriarchal system with its sexist oppression. By creating characters that forthrightly tell their experiences of sexism, and by creating characters that challenge the given norms of society. Morrison draws attention to the root of black women’s oppression and at the same time offers help to a solution for it. Morrison‟s female characters are fiercely independent and subvert the traditionally assigned roles of dutiful wife, mother, and daughter. Of this category, Sula and Eva are the most prominent. Nel, who is raised by her mother to accept without question the passive roles of wife, mother, and daughter, comes to recognize the power of womanhood by the novel‟s end, although it remains unclear just what she will do with this newfound knowledge.

Through *Sula*, Morrison also tries to describe that survival is also very important for black American women. Eva and Hannah know that they do not have much opportunity being black and female, so they prepare for the winter by canning food in the summer. To the community of Bottom Sula is a pariah. She is different from everyone else and she does not care about what others think. The price of Sula‟s independence is her isolation from the community. But Sula is not concerned; she just wants to live her life the way she wants to.

CHAPTER FOUR
COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *THE BLUEST EYE* AND *SULA*

This chapter is centered on two characters who have been conceived and raised by standards and a situation of sexual orientation, "sex" and love that shape their identities. The female heroes Pocola and Sula speak to two distinct assessments and frames of mind toward the sexist and racist society in which they find themselves. Pocola pursues the customary standards of society; while Sula for a mind-blowing duration rejects the conventional ideas "of ladylike" duty and declines to consider ladies to be just spouses and moms. In other words, we shall be looking at the commonalities and differences that exist at the level of the different elements of Literature with racism and how the two main female protagonists in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* differ in the way they deal with the sexist society they find themselves in.

Almost all of Morrison's characters suffer from the issues of African Americans, especially the women, who suffer from slavery, rape, and humiliation due to their social status and their skin color. However, she even talks about how these women challenge their fates and society. Sula Peace from *Sula* and Pecola Breedlove from *The Bluest Eye* are both outcasts in their communities. Sula does not follow the rules of the Bottom, and she breaks many social conventions in her relationships with others. For example, Sula sleeps with her best friend Nel's husband Jude, and Sula does not understand why Nel is so angry with her afterwards. Other members of the Bottom consider Sula wild and brand her as an outcast. Similarly, Pecola is an outcast in her community because she comes from a family that is known for violence and abuse. Pecola goes to live with the MacTeers after she is raped by her father, and everyone in town (except the local prostitutes) looks down on Pecola. She is seen as ugly because of her skin color by those around her and she internalizes these views of herself.

Similarities between *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in Relation to Sexism and Racism

Looking at the similarities that exist at the level of the characters (protagonists) in both novels, it is customary to say that Sula and Pecola are similar in their upbringing. Both are young black women who are raised in Ohio in lower-income homes that are comprised of multiple characters who are biologically unrelated. Sula does not follow the rules of the Bottom, and she breaks many social conventions in her relationships with others. For

example, Sula sleeps with her best friend Nel's husband Jude, and Sula does not understand why Nel is so angry with her afterwards. Other members of the Bottom consider Sula wild and brand her as an outcast. Similarly, Pecola is an outcast in her community because she comes from a family that is known for violence and abuse. Pecola goes to live with the MacTeers after she is raped by her father, and everyone in town (except the local prostitutes) looks down on Pecola. She is seen as ugly because of her skin color by those around her and she internalizes these views of herself. Thus, she, like Sula, is an outcast in her community. In relation to these characters, one can say they almost go through the same experiences so long as the racist and sexist society they live in is concerned. They are discriminated against primarily by people of the black community. In other words, blackness exists in a spectrum in the two novels and the blacker you are, the more trouble you will get from blacks who believe to be better than you which is the case with Sula and Pecola. In this case, it is clear that racism here is very much the internalized type. That is, within the same (Black) community.

In both novels, patriarchal values are the order of the day. Right from the cradle, children are educated according to gender roles and stereotypes. In this light parents offer their daughters mostly baby dolls during the period of Christmas. To these parents, these dolls represent what every girl cherishes. Claudia, one of the protagonists of *The Bluest Eye*, puts it clearly: "It had begun with Christmas and the gift of dolls. The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. From the choking sounds of adults, I knew that the doll represented what they thought was my fondest wish" (20). Apart from the racial undertone of this statement, there is also the sexist aspect as well. In this society, girl children are taught to perform particular roles in society. Uppermost amongst these are childbearing and nurturing. The baby dolls are there to remind the girls of their function in the community. No one cares to know whether these girls love the baby dolls. Society dictates that dolls are for girls, and so must they be.

Talking about this gender role stereotyping, Hester Eisenstein writes that "Instead of being openly coerced into accepting their secondary status, women were conditioned into embracing it by the process of sex role stereotyping" (6). Claudia, for example, is not interested in these dolls, but no one cares about what she thinks. As a girl, she must start playing with dolls as a prelude to her future role as a mother. She says, "I was bemused by the thing itself and the way it looked. What was I supposed to do with it? Pretend I was its mother? I had no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood. I was only interested in humans my own age and size, and could not generate any enthusiasm at the prospect of being

a mother" (20). These are young girls who are still in their teens. Since society is not only a racist one which makes them think they are not as beautiful as the "standard" demands, their parents make sure they buy them funny-looking dolls with blue eyes to quench their thirst and owning something white and "beautiful" if they cannot be beautiful. Looking at the sexist side of it, we realize that these dolls are bought just for females therefore preparing them psychologically about what awaits them as they become women which is no other thing than making babies.

This story is not too different from that of the female characters in *Sula as* they are made to adore marriage as the only source of happiness. An excellent example in this case as she is presented as an orderly, proper young woman who tries to find peace in the face of jealousy and sexual danger. She grows up to admire Sula for her might and the capacity to outwalk every challenge of her life. At the end of the novel, Nel finds herself alone in the world as she gives up on Eva and Sula and tries unsuccessfully to get a new husband. Only when it is too late does she realize that she should have ignored her instincts to remarry and instead stayed close to Sula, her oldest and best friend.

Another similarity between the two novels, so long as sexism is concerned, is the irresponsible nature of the male characters. These men are hardly made to answer for their misdeeds. Cholly Breedlove rapes his twelve-year-old daughter twice and impregnates her, but the community shows no compassion for her and offers no help. It is a society that considers the victim responsible for her predicament. Morrison manages, through her strong voice and poetic imagery, to peel away the layers of many of the central characters. This allows the reader to feel a measure of empathy for a moment to even the hardest to like. We learn the dynamics of the relationship between Pecola's parents and the events that lead up to the horrible act revealed in the book's opening chapter. The poisonous actions of the adults in this novel, those that are looked to as caregivers, are blended with the childhood innocence of Pecola and her friends, the sisters Claudia and Frieda. Pecola is forced to leave school because of her condition and is isolated from other children. Moreover, she is the subject of titillating and judgmental statements by adults. Some say she has to "carry some of the blame" (189). And to crown it all, her mother beats her almost to the point of death for allowing herself to be raped. This is a clear case of victimizing the victim. There seems to be a major conspiracy of silence engendered by this patriarchal social order which looks the other way when men commit crimes. Nobody seems ready to raise a finger in denunciation of what Cholly Breedlove has done to his own little daughter. Some are even amused. Claudia and her elder sister, Frieda, are the only voices of reason in this community. At their young ages, they are already a

menacing force to unreason. Claudia's assessment of Pecola's tragedy is very thought-provoking. She says:

"They were disgusted, amused, shocked, outraged, or even excited by the story. But we listened for the one who would say, 'Poor little thing' or 'Poor baby', but there was only head-wagging where those words would have been. We looked for eyes creased with concern but saw only veils" (190).

Pecola is the victim of men's brutality and sexist injustice. A man commits a heinous crime against a little girl, and the girl is considered responsible for the man's crime. In this context the home is no longer the place of protection and fulfillment, but rather the centre for the perpetuation of patriarchal dominance and injustice. Cholly Breedlove epitomizes all these traits. His stock-in-trade is fighting with his wife each time he comes home fuddled. And this is done mainly in the presence of the children. In his house, the nightly fights have steadily become a nightly ritual that must be performed before going to bed. If this is not done, then the pathetic scenario will be re-enacted the following morning.

The narrator says: "Cholly had come home drunk. Unfortunately, he had been too drunk to quarrel, so the whole business would have to erupt this morning. Because it has not taken place immediately, the on-coming fight would lack spontaneity; it would be calculated, uninspired and deadly" (40). Cholly sets the pace for most of Toni Morrison's male characters to follow. He is a man with a fragmented life. Morrison even says that only a musician could make sense of the fragmented nature of Cholly's life, and Cholly himself cannot make sense of or find coherence in his own life since he lacks the sense of purpose to do so.

Just like Cholly Breedlove, we equally have BoyBoy in *Sula* whose actions are not different from his. He epitomizes the hopelessly irresponsible nature of practically all the novel's male characters. He is an inveterate wife molester, drunkard, and womanizer. He lives up to his name because, though a man, his behavior is that of an immature person who knows not what he wants in life. That is why his marriage lasts just for five years: "After five years of a sad and disgruntled marriage, BoyBoy took off. During their time together he was very much preoccupied with other women and not home much. He did whatever he could that he liked, and he liked womanizing first, drinking second, and abusing Eva third" (32). Despite BoyBoy's cavalier behavior, Eva does not run away. It is he who chooses to walk out on his wife and kids. He does not bother to ask himself what will become of his family now that there is no breadwinner in the house. He leaves in the heart of winter, and there is nothing to

fall back on, and the children are too young to be left alone for hours. As such, it is difficult for Eva to pick up a job because it would imply leaving the children alone – the last being a suckling. And to make matters worse, BoyBoy has made Eva cut off all links with her family. So there is no one to aid her during these trying moments.

Still, in *Sula,* we find Jude, who marries Nel not out of love for her but rather out of anger at not getting the road work. Morrison writes of Jude, "So it was rage, rage and a determination to take on a man's role anyhow that made him press Nel about settling down" **(page**). Nel accepts him and thus fulfils her mother's dream of hosting an elaborate wedding at the community's expectation that Nel will assume the traditional female role of wife and mother. With Nel to smooth the rough edges and "shore him up," Jude will shelter her, and "the two of them will make one Jude". Nel has taken her mother's counsel to heart: She will be good and rub away any glow or sparkle of the unpredictable black community, including Nel's mother, wants her to do.

With all that is said above, we realize that most of these male characters have been made to understand that everything has to turn out for their good. The male characters are so sexist that it becomes difficult for these females to cope with them. When they cannot revolt against the racist society in which they find themselves, they pour out that anger and rage on their female counterpart, thus, making them suffer a double edge sword from the whites and later from the males. Cholly Breedlove is a prime example of a victim who acts outside the range of expectations; he internalizes the hate and prejudice used to hurt him and displaces the hurt unto others, like his daughter, thereby transforming himself into an assailant. Morison makes it a distinct goal not to gloss over Cholly's initial victimization. In the novel's introduction, she wrote, "I did not want to dehumanize the characters who trashed Pecola and contributed to her collapse" (Morrison xii). Victims-turned-antagonists like Cholly exist in reality, and if literature is sometimes how to understand reality, it is essential to recognize once in a while the grimness of victims who do not display their hurt in a societally-accepted way, to attempt what brought them to the point of hurting others while also condemning their actions as inexcusable. By writing an extensive back-story for Cholly and by writing the scene of Pecola's rape from Cholly's perspective, Morrison gives the readers no choice but to grapple with their conceptions of what a victim should look and act like she humanizes a black man, gives depth into pathology, when society will otherwise immediately demonize him as another stereotypically aggressive and violent brute.

Cholly Breedlove is, first and foremost, a victim, and it serves the narrative best not to forget that. The trauma resulting from his first sexual experience characterizes everything he thinks and does after that. Cholly loses his virginity to a young black girl named Darlene, and "their bodies begin to make sense to him" in its initial moments of bliss before the moment is shattered "with a violence born of total helplessness;" two white men approach the two and force them to keep having sex at gunpoint while they watch (Morrison 147-8). He is seized of his bodily autonomy and forced into sudden helplessness. It is rape by proxy, an ultimatum to die or be voyeuristically raped. Pitted against two white men who already systematically oppress him by their whiteness and his blackness, there is no mistaking him as anything but a victim in this situation, both to the racism that drives the white men to antagonise him and to the very act of being forced to have sex. However, Cholly, already in this moment, begins his conversion to antagonism, making a walking paradox out of himself: he becomes both victim and assailant simultaneously. Rather than direct his anger and humiliation at the white men who are directly responsible for hurting him, Cholly "cultivates his hatred of Darlene," his fellow victim, because it is impossible for him to hate the "big, white, armed man as a...small, black, helpless" teenager without destroying himself in the process (Morrison 150).

To hate something bigger than you, something systemic that has existed since long before you were born, is to hate something you have no power over. So instead, he hates the one person "who bore witness to his failure, his impotence…the one whom he had not been able to protect" because at least then he has the power to ignore her. While Cholly's transformation from victim to antagonist begins as a way for him to seize back control in his life, to channel his rage outward onto something other than himself or racism, he later cultivates it further by emulating with his wife Pauline the sexual violence of his early adolescence. In this period of his life, Cholly's victimhood and antagonism enter a state of moral greyness. Sex, for him, became something irrevocably laced with violence and aggression. When he meets Pauline and falls in love with her, a little bit of romance is spiked with sexual aggression mixed into their relationship. In narrating her life story, particularly those moments pertaining to her husband Cholly, Pauline states that she "regard[s] love as possessive mating," implying that Cholly is possessive and controlling (Morrison 122). Furthermore, explicit passages describe their sex life using violent imagery, such as when Pauline admits that Cholly often rapes her now by "thrashing away inside me before I'm even woke, and through when I am" (Morrison 131). Even Pecola notices the aggression Cholly imbibes into sex, having overheard her parents having sex and remarking about the noises: "Maybe that was love. Choking sounds

and silence" (Morrison 57). Sex, for Cholly, is something that cannot be separated from humiliation and aggression, so he does what the white men did to him with Pauline. Now, though his trauma is still evident, he is physically emulating what white men's crime against him by outright raping his wife by choice. He calls it love, and he probably does love her, love being a relative term, but his actions have become inexcusable.

Morrison also implicates the audience in the event when writing the rape scene and the marriage scene in both novels from the "antagonists" perspective. The audience is refused the satisfaction of seeing Cholly, and Jude is immediately condemned. Just as she refuses to dehumanize Cholly because it would spoil the message that Cholly is himself a victim beneath it all and human beings perpetrate that rape, so too does she refuse the opportunity for the audience to dehumanize Cholly as they would with a rapist in real life. The audience has to conclude that Cholly's crime is inexcusable after sifting through his tragic backstory. In other words, the audience has no choice but to first recognize them as humans who were first systematically injured before they can see them as the men who committed those atrocious crimes; they have to bear witness to the crimes of Cholly's society before any judgment about Cholly himself can be passed. Cholly's victimhood manifested as corrupted views on love and violent sexual encounters, but he is nonetheless a victim of the systemic racism so prevalent in the setting of this novel. This system portrays black men as inherently aggressive anyway, denying its role in narratives like Cholly's or Pecola's by taking the initiative to dehumanize all black men. Morrison counters even this by denying its reach into this novel; she forces Cholly to exist as a full-fledged human against all odds to spite anyone who would dare to do otherwise blindly. Morrison's intent with *The* Bluest *Eye* and *Sula* is, in part, to humanize every character as a person with their thoughts and motives. Characters like Cholly Breedlove may do awful, inexcusable things, but that does not change that fact that they may have once been victims themselves to a larger systemic issue or that victims do not always act how we believe they should. Additionally, her intent holds the audience accountable for recognizing not only these facts about victimhood but also the fact that crimes are not perpetrated by nameless, faceless monsters; every crime ever committed was committed by a human being, and the gravity of understanding the dark potentialities of mankind is immense.

Another aspect of similarity in relation to racism and sexism that cannot be left out is the setting of the novels. Setting situates the story's events, characters, and mood through place, time, and weather. Without the different dimensions of setting, a story would not have the diversity to introduce new or changed characters, define their true identities, compare

societies and reveal hidden emotions. Through Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, the setting is used as a key factor behind every event that occurred in relation to racism and sexism. Both novels are set after the Great Depression. Economic security is of particular concern to African Americans, who have far fewer opportunities for mobility than do their white counterparts.

In order to introduce a changed character back to a story, the author must first present the character to a new different environment. In Morrison's novels, we see Shadrack, Plum and Sula in the one hand and Mr and MrsCholly on the other. When we get Pauline and Cholly's stories, we can view their moves north to Ohio from the South as part of the Great Migration of African Americans that occurred from 1990 to1940. Waves of African Americans seeking better jobs and more racial tolerance moved from rural southern towns to more industrial northern ones. Once up 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, different beauty norms, etc. These characters are either changed by their previous or new setting.

In *Sula,* it is with Sula that Morrison linked setting with her character. After being in "" Nashville, Detroit, New York… San Diego" (Morrison, 120). Sula returned to Medallion, "accompanied by a plague of robins" (Morrison, 89), as a city woman. The reason why Morrison links setting and character is to make the readers understand that a human being does not exist if he cannot fully understand his society and the realities of the place. The present setting becomes inhabitable for the characters of both novels because of the sexist and racist unrest that has enveloped that area. In this case, Morrison is obliged to displace her characters to a safer place, or send them out to prepare them for better coping personalities when they will finally return.

Like *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* is beautiful, dense and poetic. Morrison manages to paint a fantastic picture of life in the community known as "The Bottom". It is a complex story that tackles many themes, but it also manages to encapsulate beautifully this tragic female friendship. In just under 200 pages, we are taken on a journey through roughly 40 years in the lives of these women. While Nel and Sula are the book's primary protagonists, it's through the side characters that we truly learn about them. The fact that their story must be told through so many different people is more proof that a woman's role in society is seen as

dependent on others. Their stories become entangled in the lives of other people, so why not tell the story this way?

Morrison used a unique narrative style in both novels where the female characters even when they are victims of societal injustice, the readers still them get their point of view directly. They speak through so many other characters which means that the sexist system is so intense so much so that the women do not have a voice of their own thus, implying that women must be dependent on others or on men to be at their best.

As another major similarity between *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in relation to racism and sexism, is the projection of the Queen Bee Syndrome. This term that was first coined in the 1970s by a researcher named Rosalind Chait Barnett. It is used to describe a phenomenon in which a woman in a position of power is less likely to be supportive of other women who are seeking to advance in their careers. It is equally a derogatory term applied to women who have achieved success in traditionally male dominated areas. These women are unable to fight for their position in the sexist societies in which they find themselves in and the only way to release their pain and grudge is directing to frustration towards their own gender.

In both novels, Toni Morrison, as a realistic writer does not portray women as sexless alabaster virgins; she paints the picture of women in the real world with all their strengths and frailties. These women struggle to make a place for themselves in a difficult world. Sula, for example, is a thorn in the flesh not only of her mother and grandmother, but that of the other members of the community. Whenever any unfortunate incident occurs Sula is sure not to be far away. Eva, her grandmother, is convinced that it is Sula who burnt her mother (Hannah) to death:

> *When Eva … mentioned what she thought she'd seen to a few friends, they all said it was natural. Sula was probably stuck dumb, as anybody would be who saw her own mother burn up. Eva said yes, but inside her she disagreed and remained convinced that Sula had watched Hannah burn not because she was paralyzed, but because she was interested. (78)*

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One realizes that in her quest for the freedom and emancipation of women, Morrison does not just opt for glorifying women as faultless alabaster angels and vilifying men as bad people. Therefore, her fight is for the deconstruction of the sexist and patriarchal discourses that prevent women from expressing their full potential. However, she is not out to romanticize or deify them. She portrays them as human beings like anyone else. Sula is a rebel against the social order but against any authority. As such, she is always at loggerheads

with Eva (her grandmother) because she represents authority, something Sula abhors. She never misses an opportunity to insult her grandmother copiously. When the latter tells her that nobody speaks like that, she hits back in an even more biting tone: "This body does. Just because you were bad enough to cut off your own leg, you think you got the right to kick everybody with the stump" (92-93). This is a horrible thing to say when one thinks of the fact that in spite of her handicap, Eva still fought hard to build a home for her children and herself and that it is this home that offers shelter to Sula. But Sula's hatred for her grandmother stems from the fact that Eva represents authority in the eyes of Sula, who hates authority like the plague. She is a self-opinionated nihilist who abhors whatever may stand in the way of the total expression of her freedom.

Eva feels that her grand-daughter has misconstrued the essence of the talk about women's quest for freedom and liberation. She tells Sula that the "Bible say honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land that God gives thee" (93). But Sula retorts "Mama must have skipped that part. Her days weren't long" (93). And to crown it all, Sula threatens to burn up her grandmother: "Maybe one night when you dozing in that wagon flicking flies and swallowing spit, maybe I'll just tiptoe up here with some kerosene and who knows - you may make the brightest flame of them all" (94).

This is a terrible threat from a granddaughter to a grandmother whose house the granddaughter lives in. To an African (feminist or not), such a statement is quite unpalatable. The image of Eva sitting in a wheelchair, "flicking flies and swallowing spit" shows how old and helpless she is. One sees that though Eva is a free and independent woman, she does not reject all symbols of authority. She even quotes the Bible to advise her granddaughter against her wayward ways. Eva feels that to be free does not mean to hate everyone and go against the entire social edifice. Her quoting of the Bible is of paramount importance. It shows that her freedom differs from the anarchistic and nihilistic freedom propounded by certain radical feminists. Hers is a womanist vision of the world. But as for Sula, her grandmother's quoting of the bible makes her even angrier, and she makes a mockery of it by replying that if such were the case, then her mother, Hannah, certainly forgot to obey. That is why she died young. By making fun of this Biblical verse Sula is in line with the teachings of certain radical feminists who see the Bible as the manifesto of patriarchal dominance, and to whom the Christian doctrine is inimical to the women's liberation movement.

We find this same aspect of the Queen Bee Syndrome in Pecola's mother, Pauline, may be given as one of the best examples of women who have queen bee syndrome. Pecola is exposed to unjust treatments even by her mother. Pauline always beats her. Even the black

mother, Pauline, acts as oppressive whites and despises her black child. Pauline feels alienated from society. She is surprised to see the strange behavior of other women and feels worthless. Feeling this way, she hates her daughter, Pecola. She turns into a person who cannot love and is afraid to show love.

When Pecola was raped by her father, she was treated hostile by her mother. At first, she only feels bewilderment, and she realizes her mother isn't going to believe her when she tells her. Pauline does not believe Pecola, and Pecola is raped again. As Pecola struggles with her feelings, her mother hates her. She sees Pecola as a threat because she is pregnant by her husband. As a result, Pauline develops ''queen bee syndrome'' in terms of social constructs and self-hatred.

The most interesting part is that Pecola, the victim of rape, has been rebuked by women in society. Their neighbors claimed that Pecola was responsible for this rape.

— *Well, they ought to take her out of school.*
— *Ought to. She carry some of the blame.*
— *Oh, come on. She ain't but twelve or so.*
— *Yeah. But you never know. How come she didn't fight him?*
— *Maybe she did.*
— *Yeah? You never know.*

Pecola's pregnancy is so cruelly criticized in society, especially by women that it reveals the cruelty and irresponsibility of women in society. The society has no compassion for Pecola and does not help her. Pecola is forced to leave school due to her pregnancy and is isolated from other children; moreover, she is the subject of gossip by women.

The Differences Between *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in Relation to Racism and Sexism.

The Bluest Eye shows black people aware of the danger of conforming to Western beauty standards. In the beginning of *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia describes herself as indifferent; She realizes that she does not really hate Maureen but hates "the thing that made her beautiful" (Morrison, page 58). Claudia always asked herself, "What was the secret? ...Why was it important? And so what?" (Morrison, page 57). It was the ideology of whiteness

that made Maureen Paul beautiful. When Claudia and Frieda were younger, they were happy with their blackness. “We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness” (Morrison, page 57). This may suggest that Claudia resists the pressure to conform to Western beauty standards. Claudia recognizes that if we conform to the Western standard of beauty, we may gain beauty but only at the expense of others. However, Claudia learns to love Shirley Temple; Claudia “learned much later to worship her” (Morrison.16).

This central idea in *The Bluest Eye* is the survival of the black community that is confronted by a white supremacist society. The stereotypical reaction of the white bargeman who finds Chicken Little’s body and immediately thinks that his black parents were to blame, there are racial and class differences within the black society of Bottom which are portrayed through the Wright and Peace families. Morrison uses shades of “blackness” to depict class differences within the black community. However, many characters rebel internally against the stereotypes awarded to them by racialization and therefore overbridge the typical class differences within the black community.

While *The Blues Eye* focuses on how societies’ racist and false beliefs in beauty can be seriously destructive if believed and taken to heart. Toni Morrison displays the destructive nature of racialised beauty through the character in the novel, Pecola Breedlove. Pecola lacks self-esteem and believes that she is the blackest and ugliest girl and that white is the only beautiful race. Morrison challenges Western beauty standards and demonstrates that the idea of beauty is socially constructed. Toni Morrison shows how when one race is used as the standard of beauty, the value of the other races is diminished. This becomes the contrary in *Sula* as the main character Sula is an emancipated female ready to fight and break every racist and sexist rule put in place to the detriment of black females. While Pecola impersonates her ugliness and carries it like a mask, Sula embodies freedom, adventure, curiosity, unpredictability, passion and danger. Sula takes little from others and gives even less. She is not ruthless; instead, she is spontaneous and unable to moderate or temper the sudden impact her actions might have on her community. Faced with the racist world and sexist community, Sula defends herself by creating a life, however bizarre, that is rich and experimental. She refuses to settle down for a woman’s traditional lot of marriage, child raising, labor, and pain.

Another alarming difference between the two novels is the fact that, unlike *The Bluest Eye* where the main characters are a mixture of both genders are a mixture of both genders are

a mixture of both genders with men being at the leading front, *Sula* as females as main characters. We follow the main character Sula from her early teens in the year 1921 to her death in 1940, from being a lonely little girl to someone who, due to her promiscuous behavior, has, at the time of her death, become the object of hatred and superstition in the Bottom (the black, segregated part of the town of Medallion where Sula lives). In this case, we are forced to conclude that when Morrison was writing *Sula*, three years after the publication of The Bluest Eye (1970), she realized it was important for women to stand as single entities. Morrison does not discourage the union called marriage but he does not create depressed characters who are psychologically disturbed because they are not married. Instead, a character like Sula lives her best of life; exploring her potential and building what readers cannot find in female characters in *The Bluest Eye*.

Conclusion

Toni Morrison is one of the most noteworthy writers who bring to lamplight the challenges her social class is experiencing. She gives us many dark characters as the central worry of her two books, not to glorify her social class but to uncover the genuine realities of her race. In all her works, she is involved in a war of attrition on two fronts; the racial front and the sexist front. On the racial front, she lambasts the racist ideology that gave birth to slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and all the other forms of racial essentialism and discrimination. On the sexist front, she challenges patriarchy and deconstructs sexist stereotypes that stifle women's freedom and self-expression. Alongside these stereotypes, the representation of Pecola and her mum Paulin in *The Bluest Eye* and Sula and Nel in *Sula* is of incredible note-worthiness to feature the issues of ladies in the cutting-edge age. Once again, Morrison plays with how closely aligned notions of race and gender are; the two cannot be separated.

As a black female writer, Morrison cannot be indifferent to the racial and gender-related issues of her time and society. By painting a horrible character like Cholly Breedlove, Morrison is lampooning what, according to her, are the unacceptable sexist injustices of her society where man's unwarranted brutality is exercised at will. She is also deconstructing the notion that the patriarchal system protects women because it considers their inherent biological weaknesses.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study entitled Racism and Sexism: A Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* aimed at analyzing Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* with a view to explaining how she uses Racism and Sexism to create pity and compassion in the readers mind and as such evoke a feeling of indignation and rejection of any form of oppression. This research is to underline that in a society, crippled with injustice; both the perpetrators and victims suffer its atrocities and hostilities. It also seeks to explain the link between *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* in relation to the main ideas raised.

The researcher has argued throughout this work that this sexist behavior sometimes is often an attempt to create unique solutions to avoid further victimization. Throughout the analysis of this work, we realized that Morison is urging black women to break away from the patriarchal system with its sexist oppression because she creates characters that forthrightly tell their experiences of racism and sexism, and equally creates characters that challenge the given norms of society. Morrison draws attention to the root of black women's oppression and at the same time offers help to a solution for it.

This part of the work will therefore conclude the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions. It will equally discuss the limitations of the study and propose opportunities for future research.

In order to better analyze the novels, two approaches have been used: New historicism and Feminism. New historicism as a theory examines the relationship that exist between literature and history and the influence they have on each other. It also looks at the fact that literature is influenced by social and political circumstances in which a literary work is produced. Bearing in mind that literature is not written in a vacuum, this theory is useful since through it, we were able to understand and interpret the texts under study through its history and also through the biography of the author. As such, new historicism helped put the novels under study in its right context.

Feminism requires a theoretical account of embodied gender differences that is grounded in the complex realities of women's everyday experiences. Susan Arndt in *African Women's Literature: Orature and Intertextuality* States:

> *Feminism is a worldview of way of life of women and men, who as individuals, in groups and or organization actively, oppose social structures responsible for the oppression of women on the basis of their biological and social gender. Feminists do not only recognize the mechanism of oppression, they aim at overcoming them (324).*

The feminist movement (also known as the women's movement or feminism) refers to a series of Social movements and Political campaigns for radical and liberal reforms on women's issues created by the inequality between men and women. Such issues are women's liberation, reproductive rights, domestic violence, maternity leave, equal pay, women's suffrage, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. The movement's priorities have expanded since its beginning in the 1800s, and vary among nations and communities. Priorities range from opposition to female genital mutilation in one country, from opposition to the glass ceiling in another.

The choice of feminism as one of the frame works to this analysis is because it is used to show the reaction of some of these female characters when they become victims of sexist and racist society. These ideas influence the development and formation of black female identity in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*.

The present study consisted of four chapters: Chapter one entitled “Theoretical Framework and Review of Related Literature” explains the theories that are used to analyze, evaluate and interpret this work. The theories suggested for this study were Feminism and New Historicism. Feminism was used to show the reaction of some of these characters when they become victims of sexist and racist society. These ideas influence the development and formation of black female identity. New Historicism was used in finding the creative power that shapes our texts outside those narrow boundaries in which it has hitherto been located, as well as within those boundaries. In addition, this chapter examined the literature that has been written on the author, the texts and the topics of discussion, looking at our points of convergence and divergence with other researchers in this domain.

Chapter Two which was titled “Representations of Racism and Sexism in *The Bluest Eye*” analyzed those aspects of racism and sexism with the intention of examining Toni Morrison’s response to the prejudices of race in the novel understudy. Additionally, this chapter looked at the past and the effects on black people like Pecola, Claudia, Frieda and their respective families.

Furthermore, chapter Three “Episodes of Racism and Sexism in *Sula”* focused on aspects of racism and sexism in *Sula* with the intention of examining Toni Morrison’s response to the prejudices of gender. Additionally, this chapter examined the development of racial and sexual difference and antagonism and show how it affects every character and the coping mechanisms put in place by the affected persons.

Lastly, chapter four entitled, Commonalities and Differences in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula was* centered on two characters that have been conceived and raised by standards and a situation of sexual orientation, "sex" and love that shape their identities. It equally looked at the similarities in the texts understudy in terms of characters, themes, and even other elements of literature and the differences on the different strategies these characters use to free themselves or as coping mechanisms to the racist and sexist societies in which they find themselves.

Reading through Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, it was discovered that the scars of the slavery still exist and continue to hunt the African-American society. The novels portray the realities African-Americans and black women in particular are faced with while trying to survive after slavery. It is no doubt that slavery had done more harm than good on these survivors. The two novels are somehow involved in a war of attrition on two fronts; the racial front and the sexist front. On the racial front she lambastes the racist ideology that gave birth to slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and all the other forms of racial essentialism and discrimination. On the sexist front she challenges patriarchy and deconstructs sexist stereotypes which work to stifle women’s freedom and self-expression. Alongside these stereotypes, the representation of Pecola and her mum Paulin in *The Bluest Eye* and the representation of Sula and Nel in *Sula* are of incredible note worthiness to feature the issues of ladies in the cutting edge age. Once again, Morrison plays with the notion of how closely aligned notions of race and gender are; the two cannot be separated.

Firstly, it was found during this research that Morrison has punctured into the brains of her cases uncovering their considerations brilliantly. Her works understudy can be an exceptional organization to impact the place of blacks and particularly diminish females from edge to center. Also, the imperativeness of these fictions falls on its vitality to consolidation issues of race, sexual introduction and social class. Morrison has shown the impacts of white culture on dark individuals

It was also discovered that the expectations created by male-dominated society is that women must adapt to survive under the pressure of never-ending hierarchy, and they need to create themselves every day and each second, to exist in the unmerciful world. In Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, the passive resistance of women toward men is the primary topic throughout the entire story Women are always affected by a pre-existing male-dominated culture. This situation led to the alienation of women, especially black women, from society. In *The Bluest Eye*, all of the women, suffer from past traumas related to their own race and also seek to be accepted into existing culture and society. The differences between women and men in this society can be explained in terms of dominant power. The black women are excluded from a universe of love and understanding where only madness and silence are present. The empathy that the author evokes from her readers through this novel is used as a tool to learn a lesson about the evils of internalized racism and sexism.

Again, we noticed that Morison has acknowledged that Sula is a "masculine character". She is independently bold and treats men the way men treat women (1973:53) Sula is urging black women to break away from the patriarchal system with its sexist oppression. By creating characters that forthrightly tell their experiences of sexism, and by creating characters that challenge the given norms of society.

Furthermore, discoveries made proved that as a black female writer Morrison cannot be indifferent to the racial and the gender-related issues of her time and society. By painting a horrible character like Cholly Breedlove, Morrison is lampooning what according to her, are the unacceptable sexist injustices of her society where man's unwarranted brutality is exercised at will. She is also deconstructing the notion that the patriarchal system is protective of women because it takes into account their inherent biological weaknesses.

Looking at the above findings, this work entitled Racism and Sexism: A Reading of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* has validated its hypothesis which stated that "Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* portrays Racism and Sexism as legacies of slavery and segregation and that the empathy that the author evokes from her readers through this novel is used as a tool to learn a lesson about the evils of internalized racism and sexism." This was seen through the representation of Pecola and her mum Paulin in *The Bluest Eye* and the representation of Sula and Nel in *Sula* which are of incredible note of worthiness to feature the issues of ladies in the cutting edge age. Once again, Morrison plays with the notion of how closely aligned notions of race and gender are; the two cannot be separated.

In choosing this topic, the researcher came across some difficulties, which might have distorted the quality of the work in one way or the other. Firstly, it became a difficulty to get novels which handle similar ideas needed to be raised in the research endeavor. This explains why one text; *The Bluest Eye* seemed limited to the aspects of racism but rather focused on its effects.

Secondly, considering the fact that this research has been carried out by a novice in the field, it became a difficulty in analyzing the data in relation to the selected theories. All these presented a mental disability to the researcher, which were however overcome.

Since a research endeavor is aimed at discovering new ideas and improving knowledge, more research can be carried out on deconstructing Patriarchal and sexist discourses. Some researchers might want to focus on subverting the patriarchal social order and talk of men who are generally failures and social underachievers. Others might further search on absurdism in Toni Morrison's novels. Clearly, there is a great deal of work to be done in this area in the future.

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