

Triangle of Hatred: Sexism, Racism and Alienation in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Maher A. Mahdi^[a]*

^[a] Ph.D., Taif University, KSA & Helwan University, Egypt.
*Corresponding author.

Received 19 May 2015; accepted 20 August 2015
Published online 26 September 2015

Abstract

The dilemma of the African American woman is based on racial and sexist oppression that constantly marginalizes her where she is confined in a pitiful state of nothingness. This double oppression is best featured in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. The present article purports to investigate how African American women have tragically fallen under the destructive spell of sexism and racism and, consequently, marginality and alienation. My argument runs within the main lines of both feminist and cultural theoretical approaches.

The Bluest Eye addresses three important issues: sexism, racism and alienation. This triangle relationship exposes the African American women's intricate situation. Morrison criticizes both the oppressing forces in her (black) culture and white racism, whereas the whites take advantage of history to justify their own right to rule on the basis of the inferiority of a race and the superiority of another. This view of the justification of history conforms to Althusser's concept of falsified ideology exploited to hegemonize others, where the black man justifies his sexism against his fellow women. Thus, the idea of the justification of history and the falsified ideology establish cultural and ideological oppression leading to the alienation of black women.

Key words: Alienation; Hatred; Oppression; Racism; Sexism; Marginalization

Mahdi, M. A. (2015). Triangle of Hatred: Sexism, Racism and Alienation in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. *Canadian Social Science*, 11(9), 45-51. Available from: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/7481>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/7481>

INTRODUCTION

Since Ibsen's Nora in *A Doll's House* has slammed the door behind her and walked out in the street, the sparkle started to enlarge and become a huge fire, asking for women's liberation, justice, and equality. Hundreds of voices have volunteered for the rights of white women, and a very few number of voices have done the same for black women. 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 novel *The Bluest Eye* in which Morrison, Nobel prize winner in 1993, 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 article 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 black woman, 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, racism and alienation. These three issues, which are termed in the very title of the article as the sides of the hatred triangle, 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 and some other minor characters.

1. SEXISM

Sexism is the first side of the triangle of hatred that contributes to the effacement of black womanhood in the novel. In her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*, Hooks (1981) argues that sexism is temporarily disregarded and postponed by women activists, compared to racism: "When the women's movement raised the issue of sexist oppression, we argued that sexism was insignificant in light of the harsher more brutal reality of racism" (p.1). Hooks confesses that this was a big mistake made by black feminists at that time as it worsened the problem of sexism and led up to more devaluation of black womanhood. He further quotes S. Truth's warning that "If colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs...the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before" (qtd. in Hooks, 1981, p. 4).

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. 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 "belong[ing] 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. As Ghosh (2014) writes, "Black American males were in general considered to be sexually impotent; from the political point of view they nurtured deep-rooted rage and unlimited agony. The black slaves were doomed to an ill-fated life of enslavement" (p. 24).

2. RACISM

If Cholly is relentlessly subjected to a double-edged rejection by his black tribe as well as the white society, the cultural status and identity of his wife Pauline is not dissimilar from her husband's. Pauline is destined to be isolated and unworthy from the time she has a deformed, crooked, archless foot. As a black woman, she is "the other", as an image of not belonging created to "emphasize the significance of belonging" (Collins, 2008, p.70). She is equally subjected both to sexist and racial oppression. Unlike her husband, who falls an easy prey to his oppressors, Pauline struggles, however faintly. In her book *Sexual Politics*, Millet (1977) explains how racism affects blacks:

The study of racism has convinced us that a truly political state of affairs operates between the races to perpetuate a series of oppressive circumstances. The subordinate group has inadequate redress through existing political institutions, and is deterred thereby from organizing into conventional political struggle and opposition. (pp. 44-45)

Millet's commentary on racism helps understand the situation of Pauline. As a black female, she does not possess the sufficient power to change her lot and keeps in her mind how she is treated. As Morrison puts it,

Everybody in the world was in a position to give them the black females orders. White women said, "Do this." White children said, "Give me that." White men said, "come here." Black men said, "Lay down." The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other. (p.381)

Thus, black women are structured in the hegemonic society just to serve both the white race and the black male gender. Their identities are oppressed and demolished. It is no wonder that the role assigned to Pauline as a black female is that of a servant. Her work as a servant in the Fischer family highlights the bad economic situation of black women. In this regard, H. Carby discusses in her article "White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," the situation of black women as working labor:

What does the concept of "reproduction mean in a situation where black women have done domestic labor outside of their own homes in the servicing of white families? In this example they lie outside of the industrial wage relation but in a situation where they are providing for the reproduction of black labor in their own domestic sphere. (qtd. in Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997, p.115)

Carby's words are suggestive of the economic status of Pauline. What worsens her living condition is the economic oppression based on racism which she has to tolerate in her society. One of her sad memories of racism is when her white employer compels her to choose either between her work and her husband: "She said she would let me stay if I left him. I thought about that. But later on it didn't seem none too bright for a black woman to leave a black man for a white woman. She didn't give me

the eleven dollars she owed me, neither. That hurt bad" (Morrison, 1982, p.369). Here, Pauline is economically exploited on the basis of her subordinate race and oppressed gender. The fact that she is compelled to choose between her husband and her work represents a state in which the black woman is seen as an economic slave by the dominant white society. Therefore, the black woman can never attain respectability as she is often financially unable to be a stay-at-home mother and her ability to nurture her children and her husband has been mystified as "bad" motherhood and wifehood, which makes it impossible for her to embody the definition of good womanhood that Jordan-Zachery (2009) describes. The black woman is the binary opposite to what is considered to be the "good woman", which is usually Euro-American. The stereotypical images of the black woman are the opposite of "good womanhood". Jordan-Zachary explains that the image of "good" womanhood is connected to the image of the good wife and the good mother, who stay at the "woman's natural sphere of activity" which is her home (2009, p.27).

The sexist oppression of Pauline by her husband takes the form of beatings and use of violence:

Cholly picked her up and knocked her down with the back of his hand. She fell in a sitting position...He put his foot on her chest...He struck her several times in the face...Mrs. Breedlove took advantage of this momentary suspension of blows and slipped out of his reach. (Morrison, p. 321)

Thus, Pauline suffers from a series of sexist and racial oppression. In this consideration, Carby refuses to separate racism from sexism: "racism and sexism are similar. Ideologically for example, they both construct common sense through reference to 'natural' and 'biological' differences" (Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997, p.116). Carby's words are significant enough right here as they shed much light on how racism and sexism are intertwined. The two reasons explain how black males take advantage of their biological strength to oppress their women, very much like the way the whites get privilege over blacks by their white skin. Thus, taking advantage of natural and biological differences as two of the major components of the falsely-based ideology leads to sexism and racism. This state of double oppression against Pauline leaves its tragic influence on her daughter Pecola.

Similar to her mother, Pecola Breedlove has low self-esteem and lacks self-love. This is the reason why she searches for approval and acceptance in both the black and white communities. She is victimized by patriarchal oppression represented by her own father, Cholly who rapes her and leads to her madness, and by the racial oppression incarnated in the society in which she lives. As a black girl, Pecola is scolded by other black schoolboys as being inferior because she is dark black. She is made to believe that she is ugly and inferior. Consequently, she hates her black skin and aspires to attain some of the

white physical features, believing that this might give her the badly-needed pass into the real world. In this respect, Cormier-Hamilton (1994) points out,

Many African-Americans still suffer from a dangerously low sense of self-esteem originating from their internalization of the prejudices of white culture... Morrison's novel reflects this dangerous internalization of racist values and the cycle of self-hatred passed on from parents to children. (p. 22)

Similarly, Pecola's concept of beauty and a better life takes the dream of having blue eyes. Morrison writes,

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...If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they would say, why look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes. (p. 323)

The reader is told that Pauline is obsessed with categorizing faces according to conventional beauty, which she learns from the movies. Regarding Pauline's fascination with the movies, Kuenz (1993) states that it is the absence of alternative portrayals of beauty and a social network "whose own lives would provide a differing model and the context in which to erect her own," (p.426) that drives Pecola to the movies.

This is Pecola's tragedy: It is a tragedy that is based on skin-hatred and a dream to be beautiful. Her fantasy of having "the blue eyes"—so that she will be loved in her family and respected in the society—strongly indicates the influence of racism. The standard of the ideal of beauty and family life is whiteness, while ugliness is associated with black skin. In addition, ugliness is a state of inferiority and skin hatred that intensifies the tragedy of Pecola, who sees everything related to her life and her family as ugly: "The Breedloves did not live in a storefront.... They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (Morrison, 1982, p.317).

As it is evidently clear, Pecola's dilemma is that she is poor, black and ugly. Racism breeds up ugliness in the minds of both the white and the black races. In one situation, Pecola is completely ignored by the white storekeeper who does not even bother to look at her: "How can a fifty-two- year old white immigrant...see a little black girl?" (Ibid. p.234). This situation is ultimately significant in portraying how racism works in the dominant society and the way that blacks are viewed by some whites. G. Joseph states that "Racial prejudices have become so ingrained in white U.S. society that a typical racist anti-Black mentality has developed, with emotion and ignorance ruling over the intellect" (qtd. in Hennessy and Ingraham, 1997, p.108). In Joseph's words, the storekeeper represents the "racist anti-black mentality" (p.108).

It is racism that compels Pecola to try to beautify her race, which she sees as ugly and inferior. This character

is reminiscent of N. Larsen's Clare Kendry in her novel *Passing* (1929). Though Kendry is light-skinned, she has a black side in her family, a fact she hides from her husband. Here, the representation of the black race as inferior to the white race might find an answer in the argument of Althusser (1986) about ideology, who believes that the power usually obscures ideology in order to repressively control the masses. In his opinion, the powerful "base their domination and exploitation of the 'people' on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to control other minds by dominating their imagination" (1986, p.240). Althusser's words help identify the essence of racism which is based on "a falsified representation of the world": The black race is inferior to the white race.

In her short play *The First One: A Play in One Act*, Z. N. Hurston (2008) dramatizes the inconceivable biblical essence of difference and conflict between the whites and blacks. After accusing Ham, whose "skin shall be black ... He shall serve his brothers and they shall rule over him", the minion of his father Noah, of setting his father stark naked. Noah, out of hasty rage, asks God to blacken the one who has stripped him, completely unaware that it is an intrigue done by the elder brothers against their younger brother, Ham. Blackened after his father's prayers, all the family members, including the mother, get detached from their black brother. The play significantly ends with a prayer that invokes God to interfere: "O Jehovah, we all belong to Thee" (Hurston, 2008, p.33). Accordingly, if Althusser (1986) sees "the Repressive State Apparatus" with its Commanding Unity" as possessing the State Power, the concept itself taken the other way around, could too. To put it another way, the relationship between races in a capitalist country like the U.S, The whites, either explicitly or implicitly, are the representation of the Repressive State Apparatus, and the other races, especially the blacks, are a representation [not even of the proletarian class] but to the dregs of society, the nobodies, those whom the train of equality always overlooks and whose backs are kicked until they are numbed.

In support of my argument and in terms of Althusser's concept of the Repressive State Apparatus, which is embodied in the whites, Ehrenreich (1976) argues that the class conflict might include within its entrails the "ethnic divisions, especially the black/white division" the thing which creates "isolation" instead of "collectivity" and "dependency" on the powerful class, instead of "self-reliance." Ehrenreich (1976) furthers her concept believing that the "forces which have atomized working class life" and the blacks by implication are the "same forces which have served to perpetuate the subjugation of women in a capitalist society". Of course, the subjugation of women strips them of both their domestic and non-domestic identities. If this has been the case for women in general, how could the case be for women who happened to be black?

For Pecola, the little black girl, passing the inferiority of her race to the superiority of the white race takes the dream of the blue eyes. She believes that a pair of blue eyes would be the end of her troubles. She, for example, believes that the blue eyes would furnish her with the required credentials of acceptance in this society: to be loved, to be virtuous and attractive both to friends and teachers. She even believes that her parents might stop fighting due to her attainment of the blue eyes. In fact, her relentlessly tragic yet futile quest for a pair of blue eyes leads her to envision the white world as a perfect image of the Garden of Eden. This white Eden includes the angelic Maureen Peel, “a high yellow dream child,” who is treated with respect mainly because of her light skin, brown hair and green eyes: “Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty” (Morrison, 1982, p.405). Here, the standard of beauty as determined by the white race dominates the ideology of people. This standard is based on white complexion and beautiful eyes. Pecola’s identification with the black cat and the blue eyes is a strong argument of her need for the blue eyes:

The cat rubbed up against her knee. He was black all over, deep silky black, and his eyes, pointing down toward his nose, were bluish green. The light made them shine like blue ice. Pecola rubbed the cat’s head; he whined, his tongue flicking with pleasure. The blue eyes in the black face held her. (Ibid., p. 351)

The above lines indicate that Pecola is possessed with the cat’s blue eyes. The strong association with the blue eyes of the cat suggests her obsession with the blue eyes, which are seen as her passport to a superior world. The black cat’s blue eyes, as Fulton (1997) points out, “signify the realization of the beauty myth” that Geraldine, Polly and many others in the black community aspire (p.47). Likewise, obsession with the blue eyes intensifies Pecola’s real tragedy when she goes to Soaphead Church to make her eyes blue:

“What can I do for you, my child?”

“Maybe, maybe you can do it for me.”

“Do what for you?”

“I can’t go to school no more. And I thought maybe you could help me.”

“Help you how? Tell me. Don’t be frightened.”

“My eyes.”

“What about your eyes?”

“I want them blue.” (Morrison, 1982, p.405)

This dialogue between Pecola and Church indirectly condemns the impact of racism and “the destructive power of white cultural values such as beauty and family, and how they breed self-hatred” (Abdallah, 2014, p.30).

Despite Morrison’s presentation of the sorrows of the blacks encounter, she does not save her people from bearing a big sense of the responsibility. For her, as much as we, the black community, blame the oppressor, the whites, we have to blame the oppressed as well. For her,

the blacks have to get rid of some of the falsities afflicting them:

We were not strong, only aggressive; we were not free, merely licensed; we were not compassionate, we were polite; not good, but well-behaved. We courted death in order to call ourselves brave, and hid like thieves from life. We substituted good grammar for intellect; we switched habits to stimulate maturity; we rearranged lies and called it truth, seeing in the new pattern of an old idea of the Revelation and the Word. (p.424)

This strong critique of the self expresses Morrison’s dissatisfaction with some defects in the black culture. This self-critique of the black culture by a black writer is one of the strengths in *The Bluest Eye* as Morrison looks at the black culture as the oppressor and the oppressed as well: the oppressor of black women and the oppressed by racism of a white-dominated society. In this respect, contrary to Morrison’s, Das (2015) adapts R. McGill’s point of view that “the human condition always has had three yearnings: to be treated as a human being, to have an equal, fair chance to win respect and advancement and freely to seek spiritual and cultural happiness” (p.230). Denied these three basic human yearnings, Das argues, the blacks have almost forgotten to live with dignity and self-respect: “Such a social anathema left indelible scars on Black psyche that simply refused to heal” (p.257)

Claudia’s critique of the black community is narratively equaled by Soaphead’s critique of the white one. Of course, Soaphead is more powerful, aged and experienced than Claudia. Besides, his role is highly significant simply as he represents the church—the religious institution which, one way or another, intensifies the heavy burden of racism by magnifying the whites sense of superiority, and by relating this superiority to biblical bases. In this regard, Church’s letter to his God emanates from his own realization that no power on earth could put an end to the racial impasse: it is only the Supreme Power, God, who can do that. However, one cannot claim that Church’s letter is an expression of his own sense of guilt towards Pecola, whom he deceives by falsely telling her about the possibility of attaining “blue eyes.” In his letter to God, Church criticizes the racial ideology in American society:

In retaining the identity of our race, we held fast to those characteristics most gratifying to sustain and are least troublesome to maintain. Consequently we were not royal but snobbish, not aristocratic but class-conscious; we believed authority was cruelty to our inferior...we mistook violence for passion, indolence for leisure, and thought recklessness was freedom...our manhood was defined by acquisitions. Our womanhood by acquiescence. (Morrison, 1982, p.407)

In his letter, he lists some of the points which racism draws on. The bare truth in Claudia and Church’s critiques might lead to an awareness of the nature of racism in the American society. Through the two critiques, the cultural discourse of the novel attempts to enlarge our own perspective of the racial question. Elaborating more on the link between racism and sexism, Morrison, on Church’s

tongue, clarifies this fact: "Our manhood [power and patriarchy] was defined by acquisitions. Our womanhood by acquiescence."

3. ALIENATION:

Racism and sexism inevitably lead to alienation. This is what Morrison presents through Pauline and Pecola, who represent a state of complete subjugation, since they are oppressed either in the black or in the white culture. In their black culture, they are confined by the patriarchal figure Cholly who practices the most terrible kind of sexist oppression against them. They are violently beaten, mistreated, and later Pecola is raped by her sexist patriarchal father. In the white culture, they don't belong, too, because of their black skin. This way, they are inhumanly treated by both the blacks and whites. Hence, these two female figures are seen suffering the dreadful repercussions of being female and black.

Pauline and Pecola are also alienated in a society where sexist and racial oppressions are daily practices. Pecola's feeling of alienation starts in her family where she is neglected by her mother and badly treated by her father. The feeling of alienation grows inside her when she decides not to go to school after she is scolded as being a certain kind of black in at school. Then, her obsession with blue eyes and her going to church to make her eyes blue further indicates her feelings of alienation and estrangement within the two communities. Her state of alienation and estrangement might find an answer in J. Kristeva's concept of "foreignness". According to Kristeva, the term "foreigners" reflects ages of inequality and injustice:

In the fascinated rejection that the foreigner arouses in us, there is a share of uncanny strangeness in the sense of depersonalization that Freud discovered in it, and which takes up again our infantile desires and fears of the other-the other of death, the other of women, the other of uncontrollable drive. The foreign is within us. (qtd. in Moi, 1986, p.191)

In the light of Kristeva's argument, one could say that Pecola is seen as "the other" in the society, and because "the other" is always foreign, so Pecola is a "foreigner." The fact that Pecola's rape by her father conveys the same meaning that she is seen as a "foreigner" even by her family. Because she is a "foreigner", her baby is the same. The baby never turns to 'he' or 'she' but remains 'it':

I thought about the baby that everybody wanted dead, and saw it very clearly. It was in a dark, wet place, its head covered...I felt a need for someone to want the black baby to live-just to counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals. (Morrison, 1982, p.414)

The arrival of the baby fails to make any change in Pecola's condition, since an alienated mother can never bring a belonging son. Alienation takes the form of inheritance that is transmitted automatically from parents

to children. Also, the fact that Pecola ends tragically as an insane person is not surprising at all. She has tried to change her lot, but how she can change her life in a society that looks upon as her ugly and inferior. Moreover, her tragedy worsens when her father rapes her. Her dream of having blue eyes is shattered because how can an ugly black girl have blue eyes? Her dream seems like a nightmare: "A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of fulfillment" (Ibid., p.423).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* discusses three important issues or sides of a triangle: sexism, racism and marginality. This triangle relationship deeply portrays the dilemma of black women at large and exposes their intricate situation. Sexism includes patriarchal oppression represented in black males who, under the stereotype of weakness and emasculation, practice the most sexist oppression against their fellow women. For instance, Cholly is the father figure who tragically shares in the plight of his family. His feeling of inferiority and rejection by his family makes him a sexist person.

At the racial level, Morrison deals with racism as impacting black womanhood more than black manhood. Morrison conveys this through the victimization of the characters of Pecola and Pauline. Though Morrison strongly criticizes white racism, she also criticizes the oppressing forces in her culture. On the other hand, Church's letter to God is significant enough as it clarifies the nature of the institution of racism. It is a strong critique against the social ills that produce racism in the American society. Within racism, the author shows the relationship between racism and economic exploitation. The economic situation of black women is miserable as they are only offered chances to work in domestic labor in the white families' houses or become prostitutes. The industrial prosperity does not reflect on them because they are still doing domestic labor. The novel shows how Pauline is economically exploited and used. This bad economic situation explains the dilemma of black women as domestic workers. What worsens the economic status of black women is the way they are dealt with by their white ladies: Pauline is compelled to choose between her work or her husband, and she is denied her wage.

As for alienation, it is explored through the oppression of cultural and ideological discourses of black women. Both Pauline and Pecola are oppressed by both sexism and racism. These two women figures are alienated and represented as "foreign" in both the black and white cultures. In terms of the theory of Benjamin (1986), the ruling class takes advantage of history to justify their own right to rule, so this could be the justification made

by white people about the inferiority of a race and the superiority of another to establish a ruling based on racism. Benjamin (1986) further extends his view that the oppressed live in a permanent “state of emergency” (p.679). This view of the justification of history conforms to the concept of falsified ideology adopted by Althusser (1986), which is exploited to hegemonize others. This is applicable to the novel where the black man justifies his sexism against his fellow women on basis of a historical superiority of the female gender. Similarly, the white man historically justifies racism on the basis of superiority to the black race. Thus, the idea of the justification of history and the falsified ideology establishes cultural and ideological oppression leading to the alienation of the African American women.

REFERENCES

- Abdalla, F. (2014, Spring). *Resistance of female stereotypes in the bluest eye: Destroying images of black womanhood and motherhood*. Södertörns University, the institution for Culture & Learning, the Department of English. Retrieved from: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:746603/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Althusser, L. (1986). Ideology and ideological state apparatus. *Critical Theory Since 1965* (pp. 239-50). In H. Adams & L. Searle (Eds.). Tallahassee: Florida UP.
- Benjamin, W. (1986). Theses on the philosophy of history. *Critical Theory Since 1965* (pp. 9-85). In H. Adams & L. Searle (Eds.). Tallahassee: Florida UP.
- Cole, J. L. & Charles, M. (Eds). (2008). *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP.
- Collins, P. H. (2008). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Cormier-Hamilton, P. (1994). Black naturalism and Toni Morrison: The journey away from self-love in *the bluest eye*. *Melus*, 19(4), 109-127.
- Das, K. (2015). Problematic of racism and sexism: A dialogue in Toni Morrison’s *the bluest eye*. *International Journal of Research*, 2(6), 556-560.
- Ehrenreich, B. (1976). What is Socialist Feminism? *WIN Magazine*. Retrieved from: <https://www.marxists.org/.../ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>
- Fulton, L. (1997). An unblinking gaze: Readerly responsibility and racial reconstructions in Toni Morrison’s *the bluest eye* and *beloved* (MA thesis). Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Ghosh, A. K. (2014). *Multi componential African American fiction*. West Bengal, India: Avenel Press.
- Jordan-Zachery, J. (2009). *Black women, cultural images, and social policy*. New York: Routledge.
- Kuenz, J. (1993). The bluest eye: Notes on history, community, and black female subjectivity. *African American Review*, 27(3), 421-431.
- Hennessy, R., & Ingraham, C. (Eds.). (1997). *Materialist feminism*. New York: Routledge.
- Hooks, B. (1981). *Ain’t I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Boston: South End.
- Hurston, Z. N. (2008). *Zora Neale Hurston: Collected plays*. Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers.
- Millet, K. (1977). *Sexual politics*. New York: Avon.
- Moi, T. (Ed.). (1986). *The Kristeva reader*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Morrison, T. (1982). *The bluest eye: Seven contemporary short novels*. In C. Clerk & L. Leiter (Eds). New York: Harper Collins.
- Said, E. (1986). Secular criticism. *Critical theory since 1965* (pp.604-621). In H. Adams & L. Searle (Eds.) Tallahassee: Florida, UP.
- Smith, V. (1985). The quest for and discovery of identity in Toni Morrison’s *song of Solomon*. *The Southern Review*, 21(3), 721-732.