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The Representation of Hatred in *The Bluest Eye*

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Abstract

Hatred (or hate) is a deep and emotional extreme dislike that can be directed against individuals, entities, objects, or ideas. Hatred is often associated with feelings of anger and a disposition towards hostility. The present paper investigates Black community's perception of beauty, and how those perceptions may leave the impact on individual's or a community's psyche. The novel *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison is the one which shows the possible impact of hatred within the community in the name of beauty standards. She shows how the Black community people begin to hate themselves, deny their own existence, and hesitate to identify themselves with their own community members. Morrison upholds the psychological impact of white supremacy on the black. She, in fact, mocks at the Black people who hate their own brotherhood and, moreover, themselves. Her motto is to support the Black is beautiful movement, which gives back up to the Black who are regarded as inferiors just on the basis of their color. She supports to have one's own identity but not through color. She negates self-hatred which poses a threat to one's own identity.

Key Words: Hatred, Black community, Beauty standards, White supremacy, Black is beautiful, Self-hatred

In the novel *The Bluest Eye* by Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, we see Paulin's fondness for the white world. Paulin always wanted to live in her own ideal world, the world of white. She used to work at the white peoples house, cleaned their house and loved their children, but she never loved her own children because they were black in color who would remind her, her own color, the ugly color which would cut in her ideal white world. In one of the incidents, Paulin slaps and abuses Pecola for dropping the pie on the floor at Fisher's home because she disturbs her clean, white world. She goes a step forward to console the weeping Fisher girl,

"Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it." (Morrison 1999: 107)

On the contrary, the treatment for Pecola was different; she,

"Yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again and in a voice thin with anger abused Pecola directly..." (P. 107)

Pecola was deprived by all the love and affection that she had to deserve. She herself was a witness for shifting of love and affection to a white girl who is in fact none to her mother or to her. Pauline always dreamt of having a light skinned child when she was pregnant. Before Pecola's birth, she would talk to her in the womb and treat her as a mother should do. The close bond of mother and daughter comes to an end when Paulin gives birth to Pecola, who is ugly in color. She abandons Pecola as soon as she sees her,

"But I knowed [*sic*] she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly." (P. 124)

Paulin doesn't give her daughter unconditional love since she judges her daughter from physical beauty. Color stands as an obstacle between a mother and daughter's relationship.

The treatment of the society and the family make Pecola to develop a notion that she is worthless and ugly and unless she changes her ugliness, she will have been ignored by her teachers and classmates at school. She finds the only possible solution that to possess the blue eyes,

“It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that [...] if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different.” (Morrison 1999)

Both Pecola and Pauline believe in their own ugliness because they are told about the beauty consciousness; because they have seen the privileges of becoming a White; and because they have read about the ugliness, even more, others will not let them to forget that they are ugly. As Pauline says,

“[t]hrown, in this way, into the binding conviction that only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty. She would see only what there was to see: the eyes of other people.” (Morrison 1999)

Pecola's *self-hatred* (an extreme dislike or hatred of oneself or, being angry at or even prejudiced against oneself) takes a new turn, she believes in having blue eyes, so that everybody should be kind to her and they shouldn't do any dirty things in front of her. To her, blue eyes are precious, a symbol of beauty, and she desires for them so much that they drive her to insanity.

The novel, *The Bluest Eye*, also talks of the “Mobile girls” (Morrison 1999), women who attempt to control and modify their blackness. These are women who in order to hide their blackness, they straighten their hair, control their body odors, and learn to behave in a way to “do the white man's work with refinement...” (Morrison 1999). Geraldine is one such woman who moves to Lorain with her husband and son. She doesn't nurture her son, rather cares for him. One day, her son Junior manages to get Pecola into his house and then throws a cat

at her. The cat becomes hurt because of his mischievous acts. He puts the blame on Pecola when his mother Geraldine enters the house. Geraldine takes a glance at Pecola,

“She had seen this little girl all her life... Hair uncombed, dresses falling apart, shoes untied and caked with dirt. They had started up at her with great uncomprehending eyes. Eyes that questioned nothing and asked everything.” (Morrison 1999)

Pecola reminds Geraldine her own Black community in which she never wants to be existed. To her, Blacks are “niggers” (Morrison 1999). Having well comfort middle class life, Geraldine does not want to slip down from the social hierarchy. She teaches her son how to deal with blacks and wants him not to risk their [her family's] positions by having an association with “niggers” (The word *nigger* was used as an adjective denoting a Black person as early as the 17th century and has long had strong offensive connotations.)

Geraldine takes the opportunity to release her anger. She abuses Pecola because she hates darker skinned Blacks.

“Geraldine is a representative of Blacks who wish to “move up” in the world and assimilate into white culture and acorn anything or anyone that reminds them they are black. Morrison sees this kind of person as problematic in the wake of the Civil Right Movement.” (*The Quest for an Ideal Beauty in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye*)

“Soaphead, like Geraldine, is struggling with blackness and finds Pecola an easy target for his self-loathing” (Fultz 2003: 58). After her rape, Pecola goes to Soaphead Church, thinking that he is the only one to help her. Soaphead, born *half white* (a black with light white skin), feels superiority complex and would like to play God to give justice to a helpless black girl.

At school, children tease Pecola by calling her “Black e mo” because she is dark

skinned (Morrison 1999). They mean that Pecola is even blacker than they are. It is absolutely a Black's attack on another Black who shares brotherhood in his own community. Another same sort of incident takes place when Maureen meets Pecola. Maureen, the *half white* "high yellow dream child" according to Claudia, befriends with Pecola and becomes kind to her in the beginning, but later turns into hostile due to some reasons. She yells from across the street,

"I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!" (Morrison 1999)

The characters, such as Pecola and Paulin are at economically weaker section and are influenced by the western ideology of beauty. As a result, they defy themselves from being existed in the black community. Whereas, Geraldine, Soaphead Church are economically and socially at comfortable hierarchy. Being *half white*, they would like not to be identified with Black skinned and deny their own men.

Hatred against Whites:

In the novel *The Bluest Eye*, the major characters are hardly seen rebelling against white superiors. It is seen only Claudia, the narrator, and Cholly Breedlove, the father of Pecola, going against the white people. Claudia, the narrator, narrates the story from the perspective of a child and from the perspective of an adult. Though Claudia suffers from white beauty standards, unlike Pecola, she has had her own loving family. Therefore, Claudia, unlike Pecola, is a rebel who rebels against the white ideology of beauty. In the novel *The Bluest Eyes*, for instance, when Claudia is given a white doll that she doesn't want, she destroys it. Another time, when she finds a group of boys teasing Pecola for the reason she is blacker and uglier than the others, she goes to the extent to attack on them. When a society abandons Pecola for being pregnant by her own father, it is Claudia and her sister

who come to her help. Claudia's community was fond of white ideology and was encouraging the worship of Shirley Temple, who with blonde hair and blue eyes was regarded the only kind of beauty. Claudia felt wrong with the white ideology. She was curious to know what made her look ugly and the white doll so precious. She investigated the doll by tearing it.

Apart from Claudia, it was Cholly, the father of Pecola who raped her, had hatred against white people. This is so because, when Cholly was having sexual pleasure with a girl named Darlene, he was cut in by the two white men who forced him, a fourteen old boy, to perform the act of sex on Darlem for their entertainment. Since he was powerless then to encounter those men, he turned to the powerless than he Darlene, who was a witness for his humiliation.

Implementation of *white beauty ideology*, without having rationality in it by her own community, made Claudia not to accept it which she never liked. The subjugation of the Black by white for their entertainment and privileges made Cholly to hate White race. To be precise, Claudia doesn't really hate even light skinned Maureen, but hates the thing that makes Maureen beautiful:

"[a] and all the time we knew that Maureen Peal was not worthy of such intense hatred. The *Thing* to fear was the *Thing* that made her beautiful and not us" (Morrison 1999).

As Sugiharti mentions Munafu argument, "It is the ideology of whiteness that makes Maureen appear beautiful." (*Racialised beauty*).

Further, as Esti Sugiharti mentions Bouson's argument in her *Racialised beauty*,

"the 'Thing' Claudia learns to fear is the white standard of beauty that members of the African American community have internalized, a standard that favor's the

‘high-yellow’ Maureen Peal and denigrates the ‘black and ugly’ Pecola Breedlove”.

Thus, hatred of Claudia is not against *white people* rather it is against the ideology which oppresses the persons like Pecola, who became the victim of white ideology of her own people.

Claudia doesn’t want to become white. When she is exposed to the white standard of beauty she is angry and confused. When she receives a white, blue-eyed doll, she revolts against it rather than being pleased:

“I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me. Adult, other girls [...and] all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured.” (Morrison 1999)

To White doll, Claudia doesn’t want to become a mother. She candidly rejects to pretend to be a mother of the white doll. By doing so, she rejects the white standardized values:

“The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. [...] I was bemused by the thing itself, and the way it looked. [...] I had no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood. [...] I was physically revolted by and secretly frightened of those round moronic eyes, the pancake face, and

orange worms’ hair.” (Morrison 1999)

The MacTeers are another Black family in the novel *The Bluest Eye* who unlike Breedloves, both work hard to provide for their children Frieda and Claudia. The family does not deny the reality. Claudia describes her father:

“Wolf killer turned hawk fighter, he worked night and day to keep one from the door and the other from under the window sills.” (Morrison 1999)

Claudia’s family works for the survival of their family and even takes care of Pecola when her own family leaves her without a home. Claudia’s family represents Morrison’s example of black ideologies’ triumph over Eurocentric ideals. The MacTeers are able to balance their double-conscious minds.

“Instead of constant longing for the unreachable American dream like the Breedloves, the MacTeers embrace their community and their family values.” (*A Miserable Black Girl! Analysis of the Theme in Toni Morrison’s the Bluest Eye*. 23).

MacTeers family protests against dominant culture’s ideologies and supports Blacks’ ideology ‘*Black is beautiful*’ (a cultural movement that began in the United States of America in the 1960s by African Americans).

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