

BLACK WOMEN AS OBJECTIFIED 'THE OTHER' AT CONSTANT STATE OF 'IN AUTHENTICITY': A STUDY OF BLACK WOMEN PREDICAMENTS IN TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

R. Jameel Muthu

Part - time Research Scholar in English, Alagappa University, Karaikudi

Received: 14 March 2020 Revised and Accepted: 8 July 2020

ABSTRACT: Simone de Beauvoir's main thesis is that throughout history women have been reduced to objects of men. Women are not allowed to live their own life but as 'man's other'. They have been denied the right to have their own subjective existence. They act as social construct and hence, they are not responsible for their own actions. They have been kept in 'a constant state of 'in authenticity'. It cannot be denied as per Beauvoir's famous statement 'one is not born a woman; one becomes woman'. She is a socio-cultural construction of the dominant force, exploited and victimized in the patriarchal system. In case of Black, women the case is worsen as they are doubly marginalized for being women and for being black.

This paper discuss about an attempt to investigate the predicament of Black women and to find the role of socio-cultural factors in making them as man's other'. It explores how subjectivity is denied and they are reduced to mere objectives of men. In the paper how black women are affected by the racism, why they had admired by white beauty and what are the problems they had faced their own black men and the other. I have discussed these problems in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Racism, Aspiration for White, Discrimination between and white, Horror of love, and loss of self -identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

Pecola, the little girl in *The Bluest Eye*, is a good example of class distinction; she yearns to have blue to achieve an acceptable position in the community. She is a marginalized and oppressed character. Her skin color, social class, and ancestry do not allow her an equal status with other white girls. It seems that she has always been in periphery. This is clear in the voice of the narrator in *The Bluest Eye*. Beauty is a central theme in *The Bluest Eye* and the following quote clarify this ideal well:

“Adults, older girls. Shops, Magazines, newspapers, window sign –all the world had agreed that a blue – eyed, yellow haired pink – skinned doll was what is every girl child treasured. “Here they said this is beautiful, and if you are on this day “worthy” you may have it”. (Morrison, pp.20 -21) Racism causes white – shop owner refusal to see Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* ,Pecola internalizes a negative image because of her own blackness in the face of society which only values blonde – haired blue – eyed little girls, doll like Shirley Temple types, seeing Pecola as ugly and worthless. It will also examine how their desire objectified by social conditioning.

“The fact that our bodies belong to us, that is the beginning of democracy in my view,” said Steinem.” Women have a harder time with democracy because we happen to have wombs, and patriarchy wants to control reproduction. In addition, racial caste systems only make democracy harder for women of color. However, the fact is for both men and women, our right to govern our own bodies, and use our own voices are fundamental to democracy. So if we carry it forward in that way it is very helpful.”

Toni Morrison told an interviewer: I write for black women. We are not addressing the men, as some white female writers do. We are not attacking each other, as both black and white men do. Black women writers look at things in an unforgiving loving way. They are writing to repossess, rename, and renowned (1988: 46). Morrison’s novels present a world of interlocking system of race, class and sex oppression, which is seen as a threat to Black women’s psychological survival. The racist and sexist structure of American society compartmentalizes its various ethnic groups, denigrates the colored as inferior and characterizes female and male as margin and centre, respectively.

Loss of self- identity

All her family, schoolmates, teachers and neighbors reject Pecola. This rejection leads to self-rejection finally. Pecola is craving for such a thing (The Bluest Eye) which cannot be possible and her eyes to be replaced. Black boys humiliate Pecola at school; she becomes a scapegoat for their humiliation and pain. Her encounter with Maureen Peal, the young mulatto girl, who in her schoolmate is extremely devastating. Maureen's relative affluence and popularity of being nearly white. She humiliates and attacks Pecola, Frieda, and Claudia "I am cute and you are ugly black and ugly." (Morrison 1970:31)

"Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time." (BE 44)

As a 'black' and as a 'woman' Morrison has a close relationship with black women who are more and triply marginalized in America. She projects the 'feminist consciousness' in her novels. Ran veer defines feminist consciousness as "a feminist who is awakened and conscious about women's life and problems and feminist consciousness is the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradictions in social order" (Ran veer 104).

Why women are as a group (ambiguously non hegemonic) A woman may be joined a dominant system of meanings and practices by her race (say, white), yet not by her gender ; she may be joined via her class, but not only gender ; joined thru her sexual preference, but not her gender. May be oppositional, with many sources of alternative conditions (working- class, black), but still oriented in ideology and consciousness towards hegemonic norms. (June Jardon's poem if you saw a Negrowoman speaks of possibility) (p.no.284)

II. DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE

White People in the American society most of the men are influenced by power and experience. In the Black, people are considered in to regardless of sex, uncertainty, exploitation and powerlessness. Black women are portrayed into pain, illation and vulnerability these are the distinguishing marks of black woman hood in America. Pecola's only concern is not having the bluest eye: she also wants to get rid of racist behaviors of white people. Therefore, Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*''. Bears witness not only the trauma of the incest and rape that Pecola experiences but to the trauma of pervasive racism'' (Matus, 47)

Fanons black skin, white masks in which he gives a psychoanalytic account of inferior complex suffered by the colonized societies. Here Morrison and Fanon both deal with desire to become beauty in the oppressed country.

is evidenced in the following conversation: Morrison has cast light on the clear difference between the white and the black women's languages. As their attitudes differ, their way of thinking differs. Since language is the outcome of thoughts, they omit different modes of language and different tone of language. Geraldine, in *The Bluest Eye* who assumes herself as white woman speaks very roughly with the black girl Pecola. Geraldine misunderstands Pecola that she had killed a cat so she scolds Pecola as if she is white. She humiliates Pecola not just for killing her cat but also for her ugliness. Her superior attitude as a white is indicating in her language, and she screams at Pecola, "Get out", "You nasty black bitch. Get out my house" (BE 90). White woman as a mistress and black woman as a servant differ in delivering their language. Pauline Breedlove's white mistress shows the dominance and denies giving payment to her black servant Pecola. The white mistress's dominance as a master of Pauline and Pauline's subservient language is evidenced in the following

"Are you going to leave him, Pauline?"

"Yes ma'am", "can I have my money today?"

"Only when you leave him. I'm only thinking of you and your future"

"No good ma'am". (BE 92)

This is the difference between white and black women's language in America. White woman as a mistress dominates and the black woman as a servant address her as ma'am and appeal her for her wages. Morrison's black woman language is not only submissive but also aggressive against the racist and sexist society.

Kristeva defined, as women are marginal by patriarchy, their struggle can be theorized in the same way as any other struggle against a centralized power structure thus kristeva uses exactly the same terms to describe dissident intellectually certain avant- garde writers and the working class:

As long as it has not analysed their relation to the instances of power, and has not given up the belief in its own identity, any liberation movement (including feminism) can be recuperated by that power and by a spirituality that may be laicized or openly religious ,the solution? Who knows? It will in any case pass through that which is repressed in discourse and in the relation of production call it 'woman' or oppressed causes of society'. It is the same struggle and never the one without the other. ('La femme; 24) (p.no.163)

Horror of love

Cholly Pecola's father lives a life full of total freedom. He is unable to express how to love his children and it deals with confusion by drinking. One drunken night he comes to home and he finds Pecola is washing the dishes. When Pecola scratches her leg with foot. It causes Cholly to remember when he first met his wife Pauline. The memories of tickling his wife's foot, as well as his drunken state, are factors, which leads him to rape.

“ He at any rate , was the one who loved her enough to touch her , envelop her, give something of himself to her , but his touch was fatal , and the something he gave her filled the matrix of her agony with death. Love is never any better than the lover is. (BE.204)

Irigary comments (cs64). The thinking man not only projects his desire for a reproduction of himself (for his own reflection) on to the woman, he is, according to Irigary ,incapable of thinking outside this specular structure thus the female castration complex becomes still more of the same. Woman is not only the other, as Simone de Beauvoir discovered, but is quietly specifically man's other: (p.no.133)

In *The Bluest Eye* Cholly Breedlove, a poor black man in the novel is a victim of oppressive forces of racism, which emasculate him both economically and psychologically. His life has been battered by extreme poverty and deprivation. The traumatic experiences of discriminatory humiliation, which he encounters in his life, disorient his entire being. Feeling powerless and helpless before his oppressors, Cholly attempts to purge his “personal demons” in violence against his family” (Furman 16), abusing and fighting his wife, burning his house and even raping his daughter. The emotional disaster of Cholly represents “ the entire community of black suffering under the pangs of racial discrimination, which in turn, brews hatred, anger and revolt against the white folks” (Kant 53) If some blacks like Cholly fail miserably under white duress, there are some like Mr.Macteer who refuse to bend under the social, economic and psychological pressures of white racist society and preserve a sense of self worth. Mr.Macteer is depicted in the novel as a foil to Cholly. Through him, Morrison shows that the black man is able to survive and grow amid the hostile forces of racism by forming coherent family and community ties and through hard work and a resilient spirit. Joel Kovel says that the White master “first reduced the human self of his black slave to a body and then the body to a thing; he dehumanized his slave, made him quantifiable, and there by absorbed him in to a rising world market of productive exchange (18)

Aspiration for white

One afternoon Pecola goes to the church and she meets the priest to help her in the following dialogue understand her needs why Pecola wants to change?

Pecola: I cannot go to school no more. In addition, I thought maybe you could help me?”

Priest: “ Help you how? Tell me do not be frightened “.

Pecola: “My eyes”

Priest: what about your eyes?

Pecola: “ I want them blue” (BE.172)

The priest (Soap Head) thinks that the little black girl who wants to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eye.

'NO, woman is not our brother; through negligence and corruption, we have made her a being apart, un known, having no weapon but her sex, which is not only perpetual war but in addition an unfair weapon - adoring or hating, but not a frank companion or a being with esprit de corps and free masonry- of the eternal little slave's defiance's'. (p.no.769)

III. CONCLUSION

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, a tragic tale about a young Black girl's longing for blue eyes, examines how the ideologies perpetuated by the institutions controlled by the dominant group influence the construction of Black women's self-image. W.E.B. Dubois, the noted Afro-American sociologist, who first drew attention to the deeply rooted 'double consciousness' which afflicts African-American existence. He writes: The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second sight in this American world, a world that yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (1969: 45).

Woman will find the unknown will her worlds of ideas differ from ours. She will find strange, unfathomable, repugnant, delicious things, we will take them, we will understand them.* Her 'worlds of ideas different from men's', because she will free herself by assimilating them; to know how singular she will remain and how important these singularities will continue to be, one would have to make some fool-hardy predictions. What is beyond doubt until now women's possibilities have been stifled and lost to humanity, and in her and every one's interest it is high time she be left to take her own chances.(p.no.767)

IV. REFERENCES

- [1] Beauvoir Simone the Second Sex Vintage U.K. Vintage Random House [www.Vintage](http://www.Vintage-books.Co.Uk) - books. Co.Uk
- [2] Chakravorty Gayathry Spivak in Other Worlds www. Rout ledge .com\ classics
- [3] Furman, Jan. Tonimorrison Fiction. Columbia; U of Carolina p, 1996. Print
- [4] Fanon, Frantz, Black skin White masks, Trans. Charles Lam. Mark Mann. New York: Grove Press, 1967 print
- [5] Kant, Vishnu. The fiction of Tonimorrison; A critical study. New Delhi; Sartyam Publishing House, 2009. Print.
- [6] Kovel, Joel. White racism; A Psycho history. New York; Columbia Up, 1984. Print.
- [7] Ranveer, Kashinath. "African American feminist consciousness in the Novels of Toni Morison". Colloquium on Toni Morrison - American Studies Research Centre Hyderabad, 6-7 (May) 1994. Print
- [8] Showalter Elaine the new feminist criticism Essays on Women,Literature and theory - Elaine Showalter
- [9] Mol Toril Sexual Textual Politics London: New York: Methuen, 1985 new accents (Methuen & Co)
- [10] Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*, New York; washing ton square press, 1972. Print.
- [11] Morrison, Toni.1970.*The Bluest Eye*, London: PEN
- [12] Matus, Jill (1998), critical essays on Tonimorrison, Boston: G.K Halls & Co.
- [13] Co Author Dr.K.Sathyasai
- [14] Assistant Professor in English,
- [15] Raja Duraisingam Arts College, Sivagangai.