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Performing Gender and Racial Identity in *The Bluest Eye*

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Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to all whom I love

A special feeling of gratitude to my loving parents, whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. I will always appreciate their unconditional support.

Special thanks to my lovely sisters and dear brother for their support and help whenever I needed it.

Also, I would like to thank my dearest Friends for their love, encouragement and support.

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Abstract

This study is conducted to investigate the issue of gender and racial identity in the work of Toni Morrison *The Bluest Eye* (1970). In this novel she depicts the African-American women's life in the twentieth century whom were deeply affected by the beauty standards set by society in which racism is prevalent. Moreover, they suffer from racism and discrimination and are doubly oppressed by a patriarchal society. The primary purpose of this dissertation is to examine the effect of beauty standards on black female attitude toward her own beauty and blackness. It also provides an effective demonstration of how racial and gender stereotypes that formulate identities. Racial and gender Performance of blackness and femininity by black women based on the performativity theory concepts and basic tenets to portray the ways in which race and gender intersects to perform the role of woman as an oppressed black female.

Key Words: Gender, Race, Black female, Beauty Standards, Performativity.

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الأطروحة لدراسة قضية العرقية و الجنسية في عمل طوني موريسون العيين الزرقاء سنة 1970 . و التي قامت بتجسيد صورة حياة المرأة الأفرو-أمريكية في العشرينات و معاناتها الشديدة الناتجة عن معايير الجمال التي ضبطها المجتمع ، كذلك معاناتهن من العنصرية والظلم و من المجتمع الذكوري بشكل مضاعف. الغرض الأساسي من هاته الأطروحة هو اختبار تأثير معايير الجمال على المرأة السوداء و مدى سوادها، كما تسعى الدراسة الى عرض القوالب النمطية للعرقية و الجنسية التي تشكل الهوية. يعتمد الأداء العرقي و الجنسي للمرأة السوداء على نظريته و مبادئه الأساسية لتجسيد طرق أداء المرأة السوداء المضطهدة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : العرق، الجنس، الأداء، معايير الجمال، المرأة السوداء

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Introduction

In the African-American community, racism, identity, gender-bias, slavery and marginalization have been major issues that black people experienced every day for many decades. Therefore, for the African-American authors, literature has been adopted to be their effective weapon to defend themselves, to impose their existence, and to make their voices heard. The African-American literature is filled with messages to the universe, since the main focus of Black writers is to expose to the world how crucible, dehumanizing and racist the white society was. They attempt to uncover the mistreatments and unjustified hate of the white people toward black people. Toni Morrison is among the notable Black authors who write about the suffering born out of racism and discrimination during the twentieth century. Morrison in the foreword of *The Bluest Eye* that:

There can't be anyone, I am sure, who doesn't know what it feels like to be disliked, even rejected, momentarily or for sustained periods of time. Perhaps the feeling is merely indifference, mild annoyance, but it may also be hurt. It may even be that some of us know what it is like to be actually hated— hated for things we have no control over and cannot change. When this happens, it is some consolation to know that the dislike or hatred is unjustified—that you don't deserve it. (IX)

The Bluest Eye is one of Toni Morrison's novels that tackle the issue of doubly oppressed black women in the American society. Morrison addresses the minority groups in the Black community. She wants to shed light on the suffering of children from racism too and not only adults, by focusing on the role of the young black female Pecola who was consciously obliged to perform her racial identity considered as Black "ugly" and her gendered identity as female child abused by her society around.

Pecola commits herself to seeking for blue eyes and acceptance. The fact that she was being continuously neglected by her family and society because of her ugliness is the main reason that led her to shift from the idea of being ugly black young female to pretending to have the bluest eyes in the world and therefore she acts based on that concept in order to be loved by her family and society identification codes.

Research Problem:

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* explores how can a society construct identities and beliefs of a young black girl and the effect of race and gender norms on constructing the self-image of Pecola. Thus, this research is carried out to investigate the issue of the double consciousness of black females in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*; by examining the case of Pecola's interactions with the other characters and reason behind her longing to have blue eyes as an effective standard of beauty and acceptance within her society and her family. We investigate how Pecola internalizes racism and perform her constructed identity hanging between what she is and what she wants to be.

Hypothesis:

This research question directs us to the hypothesis that double oppression and society's racist standards negatively affect Pecola's self-identity and as well her self-image of beauty.

Research Questions:

This problematic raises many questions that the following research paper aims to answer:

1. Why did Toni Morrison choose to unmask the effect of racism on the Black oppressed women?
2. What is performativity? And what literary genre implies gender and race performance?
3. In what way Pecola portrays the black oppressed female?
4. How can race define standards of beauty?

Research Objectives:

To answer these questions, it is necessary to put forward the following statements around which the present work gravitates. These statements are in fact the research objectives which are formulated with reference to the already set research questions.

1. To discover the impact of racial segregation on African Americans.
2. To discuss the concept of performing gender and race identities in literature.
3. To identify female gender norms through Pecola's image in her society and family.
4. To illustrate the reasons behind Pecola's formulated racial identity.

Significance of the Study:

The choice of *The Bluest eye* was not arbitrary. Toni Morrison has great sense of literature and dealt with the issue of marginalized groups in her novel. Especially the black female childhood

experiences and how it helped on shaping their identities whether it was miserable or joyful events. Morrison is a writer who aims to expose the hidden suffer side of African-American's in the Western societies. Therefore, I wanted to understand the reasons of Pecola's desire to have blue eyes and to explore why she chose to perform what she is not according to her gender and race.

Methodology and General Approach:

The Bluest Eye is a novel that deals with the issue of African-Americans women role in society where dark-skinned people were treated as inferior in a way that make them question their existence. Consequently, they arrange the solution of performing roles that society imposes on them and consider it beautiful and ideal, in order to fit this norms. Pecola's decay of self-esteem was through the daily events and different interactions made by the writer in the novel's sections. She invited different characters in which they are a big part on her collapse. She also describes the damaging forces on black females caused by gender and race discrimination.

Hence, Judith Butler Performative theory is adopted to provide a better understanding of the concept of performance and performing gender and racial identity in the case of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*. The theory is applied to expose how society can construct self-identity, and how gender and race Performativity produces series of effects on self-realization. It also helps on exposing the social expectations of ideal female by deconstructing and analyzing the character self-loathing and performance as result to previous trauma and collapses she experienced with the other characters.

Another theory is also adopted and intersects with this latter is the critical race theory to help in understanding Pecola's constructed racial identity by her society perceptions and the way in which social codes work with the issue of racism and black people.

Moreover, a need for the post-colonial theory in order to link the critical race theory with racism analysis to expose the characters reasons behind admiration to white beauty. Post-colonial theory helps us to reveal what text tells about the white supremacy legacy in the back people souls and identities.

Structure of Dissertation:

This research paper is divided into four main chapters. The first chapter is entitled respectively the Historical and personal background, and Theory and Methodology. It includes an overview of

the history of racial segregation and the effect of the great depression on the black community especially black people life which influenced writers like Toni Morrison to write about black people suffer or racism in their lives.

The second chapter exposes the theoretical and methodological framework we used to analyse the novel of *The Bluest Eye* the concept of performance of gender and race in literature and society as well. It reviews Judith Butler gender performativity theory to analyze gender gendered identity in the novel. Then it briefly tackle the issue of racism in African American literature in hand with the tenets of Critical race theory the of race social construction also it review the double consciousness concept and elements.

The third chapters entitled Performing gender in *The Bluest Eye*, It goes into details of the social construction of gender and self-identities and the role of a dominant society and mundane things in shaping identities.it focuses more in the female role and position in oppressed society.

Chapter four discusses performing race in *The Bluest Eye* with the analysis of Pecola's case as black female. The chapter basically focus on the race issue with the little black girls and the minor characters' and how the superior society defines black people, and affects on the self-image of beauty, so that the internal racism Pecola faced also help on her tragic end.

Chapter One

Historical and Personal Backgrounds

Introduction

This chapter gives a brief definition of racism and its origins in the United States, in order to facilitate the comprehension of the subject and the nature of African American life in the twentieth century especially during and after the period of Great Depression. Then, we review the historical background of the racial segregation issue in the 1930's, and introduce its types and forms at that time. Then, we move from the historical background to the Personal background of the author, referring to her earlier and personal life in order to show the relationship between the writer and the African Americans as she is a Black writer by giving a review of her themes and writing style. At the end we mention few of her major works.

1.1. Historical Background

1.1.1. Life of Afro-Americans in the 1930's

Race and racism are complex and disputed notions not only in the United States but everywhere in the world. We do not intend by the present research, to place emphasis on the historical stages of racism rather than to illuminate its darker side, complexity and impact in the African-American society.

Black skinned people did not born as slaves or chose to be that, they were forced to the slavery situation without their consents. Thus, the color bar concept emerged strongly and racism as the consequence of slavery. After the end of civil war in 1865, Abraham Lincoln announced the freedom of slaves in the US and the end of slavery, about 186,000 black soldiers would join the Union Army, and about 38,000 lost their lives, although his primal aim of this ordinance at first was not to abolish slavery but to preserve the United State as an nation and to save the union. However the end of slavery was not the end of racism and even after the Emancipation Proclamation announcement January 1, 1863 the social and cultural legacy of slavery continued impressing on the history of African-Americans people (History.com.Editors).

During the 1930's racism in America expended its roots deeply in the life's of black people, they were discriminated through verbal and physical violence, the white supremacy was imposed on colored people again, because of the great depression economic downfall devastation in 1930; which effected every citizens in America, Greenberg 2010 states that no group could escaped it,

"rural and urban, skilled and unskilled, black and white the federal government in 1930 estimated that 17 percent of the white population and 38 percent of the black population could not support themselves without assistance but the African-Americans were the more affected group and suffered worse" (21). They were not only facing racial and gender discrimination but also job discrimination appeared which was the most important issue at that sensible period, where Black people were the last to hired and the first to fired from jobs. White men and women took the jobs and places of black men and women even in the traditionally and low wages jobs.

Consequently, black people lost their own homes due to this whit work seizure. While the Black unemployment rate was 50%, the white one barely reached 30%. However, during the Great Depression women had the chance to gain jobs more than men as nurses, teachers, maids and other domestic work with less pay but stable during the banking crises. Eleanor Roosevelt, the wife of the president was an effective voice on helping African-Americans in their sufferings as she attempted to speak in public against the racial segregation and to defend black people (Klein).

Black people in the rural south areas suffered more and according to Greenberg in (1940) about 1.75 million sharecroppers and frame workers struggled to stay on their lands or they choose to migrate to the north and west cities to riddance from debts and hoping to find works there and for a better life (Klein). That's to say that Black workers had to face great competitions for the worst kind of jobs and wages to stay alive (Greenberg 21).

1.1.2.Racial Segregation in 1930's

The New world encyclopedia defines racial segregation as the practice of separating people of different races either by law or by action in all daily life activities, opportunities and facilities such as education, employment, transportation ("Racial segregation").

When the United States abolished slavery officially under the Thirteen Amendment, white Americans refuse the idea of not being masters any more on Black people and share the same road, so they derived the racial segregation system to keep the African America's inferior and in theirpalace under the doctrine of "Separate but Equal" and to ensure that Blacks will live apart from Whites.

1.1.3. History of Racial Segregation

Before the Civil war African-Americans raised in the South in rural areas, farms and geographical isolation which made the contact whit people infrequent, for that segregation was less spread than it was for colored people who lived in cities and towns in the north and upper south, they experienced segregation more in various forms, since they were more attached with Whit people. Hence, in the twentieth century the state began to involve and create systematic lows to separate Whites and Black's people in all domains, to debase them of their dignity, in addition to bury down their identity and existence. In 1896, the federal government sanctioned racial segregation, fashioning the constitutional rationale for keeping the races legally apart (Segregation, Freedom's story).

The Jim Crow Laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation; this organization lasted for about 100 years after the Civil war. Its main objective is to marginalized Black people, oppress them and legalized discrimination toward them (History .com. Editors, Jim Crow Law). African Americans and whites could not mingle in most public arenas and Blacks were forced into degrading and insulting social roles; whereas, breaking any of its low by Black people will cost him or her life by lynching violence acts or jail sentences.

1.1.4. Segregation in the Great Depression

Racial segregation lasted for years and took different forms. However, during the 1930^{'s} the issue of separation highlighted more the life of African-Americans, with the doctrine of Separate but Equal, which in fact there was no equality. The great depression period reflects a part of racial segregation and unequal treatments. The symbol of Jim Crow Low " Whites only " and "Colored only " hanging in every corner , a sign is used to isolate black people in schools, buses, restaurants, renting houses, work etc. During the 1930 African-Americans had no civil right to protect theno political or economic right, opportunities were negatively impacted by the Jim Crow lows, they were denied jobs, and accessing a good school was impossible (Segregation, AAPF).

1.1.5. Forms of Segregation in the 1930^{'s}

At the beginning, the effect of Great depression on African-Americans hits their life particular hard. Job opportunities were less than before, and unemployment was rampant. White people felt

that any available job belonged to Whites first; regular jobs like householding, servants, janitors or farming were now going to Whites, while Black people have no right to claim or reject. They were not allowed to serve in any political position. In 1932 approximately half African Americans were out of work. In addition to that, landownership was barely possible and very limited; for instance if a Black family owns a land, White family can take it from them and use it.

Second, Black people had to face not only job discrimination but also racial violence began to rise, lynching became more common again, they were devoid of justice, it was common for them to be arrested, often guilty with no crime. The incident of the Scottsboro boys represent a concrete example of falsely accuses toward Black people. In this case nine black teenagers from 13 to 19 years-old were riding the rails and accused for raping two young white women; eventually all the white juries rushed the trial and convicted the boys and sentenced all but one to death. They were not officially pardoned by the state of Alabama until 2013. This case cited an example of the miscarriage of justice in the United States legal system (Burrell, HCC, US History).

Third, segregation issue comes to touch the educational side, as an example the belief of White people that they are superior to Blacks in terms of intelligence and morality. An article in the African Americans Policy forums about segregation clarify the issue of school discrimination:

Segregated schools were more often than not unequal. Black students in black schools often had substandard curricula, less resources and lower quality teachers and facilities. In some rural areas, most black schools offered a shortened school term so that children could be let off earlier to help weed and pick the cotton fields. At the college level, segregation led to the development of black private and public colleges in the South, often supported by the federal government. Some of these higher education institutions taught curricula at the secondary level because no public high schools for black children existed. Although successful black high schools and excellent black colleges produced many African-American leaders, segregated education in general severely curtailed the economic opportunities of blacks. (Segregation, AAPF)

1.2. Personal Background

1.2.1. Toni Morrison's Earlier Life

Toni Morrison or Chloe Anthony Wofford is a winner of Noble prize and Pulitzer prizes. She was born on February 18th, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio. Morrison grew up in the American Midwest, in a family that possessed intense love and gave big appreciation to the Black culture, both her father and mother's family suffered from racism; they did escape from sharecropping and debts and settled in a steel-mill town.

Once Morrison learned how to read, it became one of the things that she loved spending time doing it. When she was at high school, she began to read the works of great authors such as Jane Austen (1775–1817), Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), and the nineteenth-century French writer Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880). Morrison was impressed by the specific way these writers portrayed the things that they were familiar with. Their talents motivated her to write in such a way about the things she was most familiar with, particularly her African American culture.

In 1949 Morrison went to Howard University in Washington, D.C. to study English. She changed her name to Toni because people at Howard had trouble pronouncing the name Chloe. She was a member of the Howard University Players, a theater company that presented plays about the lives of African American people. Morrison received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Howard in 1953. After that she received her master's degree in English from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1955, she taught for two years at Texas Southern University in Houston. Then she returned to Howard University to teach. She graduated from Howard in 1958, and then she continued her education at Cornell University. Her thesis was about the works of Virginia Wolf and William Faulkner. She completed her master's degree in 1955 (Gillespie 1-12).

1.2.2. Toni Morrison's Impact on Literature

1.2.2.1. Themes

The American writer Toni Morrison grew up in America's stumble period of the great depression and the post-depression that destroyed a whole society and specifically Black society. She witnessed the struggle of existence among her society and family. Therefore, the theme of racial tension between African-Americans and white society overwhelm in most of her novels represented

by her through the perspective of African-Americans characters. Settings in many of her novels are during the injustice of whites on the Black community, such as in the slaves' era or during the great depression, in novels like *Beloved*, *Sula*, and *The Bluest Eye*.

Identity struggle is noticeable in her characters, by their resistance to find themselves, often the characters struggle unsuccessfully to establish their identity. However, Morrison's other themes like Ancestors, Beauty standards are commonly used in her novels to provide cultural background of Black history, and also as one of the characteristics of Black history writings, she gives a voice to the Black minority in social and economical states as inferiors, under the themes of loss of innocence, through young characters, together with the theme of inside battle between evil and good usually appears in her writings.

This writer examines the Black people's experience, especially the black female conditions of life. Toni Morrison attempts also to show the sacrifices and suffering of Black women in the White society as well as in the Black community. She was the first African-American woman who held great works qualify her to win many prizes in literature field.

1.2.2.2.Style

Toni Morrison's writing style is very extraordinary and easily distinguishable literary, due to her unique use of language, exquisite and vivid vocabulary, Morrison's writings concentrate on the African-American communities through details where reader is involved and can picture the events. Her novels are easy to read, and she incorporates many different styles into her works, such as switching the voice of narration throughout her stories for a change of perspective. Some of her most commonly used techniques are the use of descriptive analogies, important historical references, and varied sentence structure.

Morrison is generally known for her use of unusual yet effective comparisons that give further description to the details she presents. More specifically, she utilizes similes in her writing to help the reader connect the content with alternate images and experiences.

Morrison as a feminist writer focused on the Black female character in her writings, where it is notable that the themes of racism, beauty searching for identity, and family are always present to reflect a part of her life. The minority issue takes a part of Morrison fictional and creative mind, that

helps her on portraying events in a very foggy way, where the question "why" rises into the readers mind.

1.2.3.3.Major Works

The great novelist Morrison left considerable legacy to the literature field by her long list of great works; which reflect a whole culture. Morrison's first book *The Bluest Eye* (1970), is a novel of initiation concerning a victimized Black adolescent girl who is obsessed by whit beauty standards and long to have blue eyes. The second book *Sula*(1973) examines the dynamic of friendship and the expectations for conformity. In 1977 *Song of Solomon* was published, which is another great novel that brought national attention to Toni Morrison.

Beloved (1987), a true story based, which won a Pulitzer prize of fiction, it talks about a runaway black slave who kills her baby in order to spare her life of slavery. Besides too many other known novels and short stories and story for kids such as *Jazz* (1992), *Mercy* (2008), *God help the child* (2015), that reflect a side of her fictional writings and deep detailed style.

Conclusion

Overall, this chapter provides a historical background about the issues of racism and discrimination toward African-American in the USA during the 1930^s, and part of what they had suffered in order to establish and confirm their identity. Also it gives a brief Personal background to the novelist Toni Morrison and her impact on Black literature, an incredible writer, with her great sense of literature and huge honor to present her Black culture to the world through her literary works.

Chapter Two

Theory and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter deals with the theoretical and methodological framework that is used to analyze the novel and to explore the concepts of Performativity and race performance via the novel's events and characters. It starts with introducing the theory of Judith Butler's *gender Performativity*, by reviewing its origins and basic premises she draws in, crossing by the definition of sex and gender from a feminist perspective. This is followed by an overview of racism concept in the AfricanAmerican literature and how African Americans authors depict this issue through literature. In turn we discussed to one of theoretical race theory tenets that says race is a socially constructed and has no biological basis and society assumptions shape identities. This led us to review the double consciousness concept.

2.1. Sex and Gender

Feminism has distinguished between sex and gender, "sex" is fixed abiding and determined by biology; while "Gender" is socially and culturally constructed. Butler argues in her book *Gender Trouble* about this doctrine suggesting that is needless to assume there are only two genders, she implies that male or female bodies do not necessarily interpret masculine or feminine genders and if "the status of gender is theorized as racially independent of sex; gender itself becomes as free-floating artifice", thus, man can easily signify the female body and vice versa. Additionally, she interrogates about the nature of sex and views gender as sex, it is constituted through scientific and historical discourses, and thus there is no actual difference between sex and gender since both are constructed.

Butler emphasizes on the idea that gender is the apparatus by which sexed nature produces as discursive. She pointed to this formulation of gender as it is achieved through performing particular discourses and continual reiteration identities than are the effect of this discursive practice or act(Butler8-10).

2.2. Gender Performativity

The concept of gender Performativity was first conceived by Judith Butler in her 1988^s essay *performative acts and gender constitution*; next she expanded the idea further in her book *Gender Trouble* in 1990. Butler calls on the claim of Simone de Beauvoir that “One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman” (Butler 519). By this, Beauvoir does not denote to believe that no one is born with genital organs but that the social role of "women and man" comes from the set of habits which are socialized into, on that account behaviors constitute gender identity.

In this sense, she illustrates that gender is not a stable identity, nor locus of an agency that requires certain actions rather “it is an identity tenuously constituted in time –an identity instituted through stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 519). Further, she mentions that gender is constructed through the Body, so that mundane things such as body movements, gestures, utterances, and activities help to establish the illusion of an abiding gendered self, which are performed in front of a social audience, people that persons interact with; Hence " the audience and the actors themselves come to believe and perform in the mood of belief "(Butler 520).

The second statement of Beauvoir cited on her book *The Second Sex*, in which Butler focuses on her philosophical claim that the gender is not a natural fact, but a historical idea which only gains its meanings from a set of possibilities in cultural and historical specific discourse " it gains its meaning through a concert and historically mediated expression in the world " (Butler 520-521).

Butler again underscores the claim that to be female is a natural fact but to be a woman is "to have become a woman ", to confirm the concept of a woman by enforcing and naturalize the body with historical fixed possibilities. She termed this conceptualization to persons who perform their gender as “strategy” rather than “project” since it suggests an apparatus for survival, while the project has a cultural survival, the term point out to the strong agency over identities performed by people to their gender. On the other hand, if gender is performed wrongly the consequences will be tough and followed by punishments (Butler 522). Indeed Butler focuses on the utterances that make people uncomfortable inside society so that they look for a solution to escape that feeling and jumping out of the regular box to create their comfortable one.

The history of Performativity concept predates and goes beyond Butler's approach of gender; it is a term originally derives from the work of language and linguistics philosopher J.L.Austin *How to do things with words* 1962. Austin was mainly concerned about what can we do with words and how can language describe actions, Austin pointed to the difference between constative and performative language. The former indicate certain status on statement of fact that can be evaluated as true or false" (Austin 3). Performative language or and utterance is part of the doing of the action, performing it in the appropriate circumstances and status (Austin 5-6). That is to say to carry out the act itself through the process of pronouncement (Lloyd 6). Butler is among the scholars who are influenced by Austin's philosophy in hand with Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault.

Butler developed her notion of gender Performativity drawing its premises from Austin's speech act theory and Derrida's deconstruction of texts. By redefining the concept of performative Butler has given a juncture to constitute subjective identities (Lloyd 4).

2.3. Definitions of Racism

Racism, also called racialism, is any action, practice, or belief that reflects the racial worldview. The ideology that humans may be divided into separate and exclusive biological entities called "races" (Smedley).

Racism is defined in Oxford dictionary as prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed 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. And the belief that different races possess distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another ("Racism: Definition of Racism").

Racism is the most important issue faced the black people in the United State. Therefore literature was used by African American writers to describe their lives and to express their philosophical ideas and rooted pain. African American literature was their weapon to fight against racism. They have not only represent themselves through literary writings but also their race, culture, believes and strengths.

African American literature can be defined as writings by people of African descent living in the United States of America. However, just as African American history and life is extremely varied,

so too is African American literature. Black writers like Fredrick Douglass, W.E.B Du Bois, Maya Angelo and Toni Morrison writes about the history of black life harsh experiences and the traces of slavery legacy on black's identities they also attempt to expose the daily different forms of racism they faced in the larger America society such as discrimination in education, jobs, laws, right and duties as well. Writers of this genre mainly focused on themes of African American culture, background, religion, language, slavery, racism and sense of home among other. ("African American Literature").

2.4. Race as a Social Construct

Race is not a scientific classification of humans and there is no agreed upon a fixed definition of race. As a concept it has been scientifically, politically, and philosophically rejected. Whereas biological studies considers race as a meaningless concept. Hence, this leads us to the idea that race has no biological or scientific basis to be used to defines humans. However, this does not mean that there is no scientific genetic diversity that characterized individuals solely, such as physical features, accents, skin pigmentations. This variation of genetic dose not means that it has reached the threshold for scientific classification to be reliable in defining race. Rather, it is below what taxonomists would call a sub-species (Binary, 00:00:48-00:01:17).

Otherwise, the Critical Race theorists claim that race is a social constriction at the same time it is one of the theory basic tenets that help on looking at race from a social perspective in which society produce a cultural meaning to the body, molding it and defying people through certain norms set by society. Therefore, race can be constructed and deconstructed since it is not natural but learnt notion based on society determinations. As Delgado and Stefancic argued about the race social construction theme saying that: "The "social construction" thesis holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient (7).

In this sense, Critical Race Theory cited race composition is a result of persons social interactions, relations of inert and intra society members, the others perceptions and multi-mentalities lives within a community. So it has a subjective premised which make race essence

changeable and non-inherent concept since it has no genetic reality. Contrariwise the constructed races are categories invented by society assumptions to serve the dominant group interests and implicitly control the minority group. Nevertheless, it also review that if race is social constructed does not alienated the idea that race is not real or purely exist in social view, Critical race theory discussed that:

People with common origins share certain physical traits, of course, such as skin color, physique, and hair texture. But these constitute only an extremely small portion of their genetic endowment, are dwarfed by that which we have in common, and have little or nothing to do with distinctly human, higher-order traits, such as personality, intelligence, and moral behavior. That society frequently chooses to ignore these scientific facts, creates races, and endows them with pseudo-permanent characteristics is of great interest to critical race theory. (Delgado and Stefancic 7, 8)

That is to say that the shared physical features like eyes color, hair texture, skin color of people from the same background such as family, kindred or people coming from the same region are micro share of genetics endowment to what really people have in common. Indeed, attitudes and morals of human beings or even the intelligence and what is called higher-order traits are unattached with human traits; but it is the society that creates races and ignored this scientific facts in order to avoid giving justifications and explanations to the fixed constitutes premises of defining race.

2.5.Double Consciousness

In Social philosophy double consciousness is a concept originally refers to a source of inward twoness, putatively experienced by African Americans because they racialize oppression and devaluation in a white dominate society (Pittman).

Double consciousness is in important term often associated with W.E.B Du Bois that he first explores in his book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) to describe individuals whose identity divided into several fact. It also describes the conflict of tow identities in one body and one soul. As a theoretical tool double consciousness reveal the psych-social divisions in American society and expose the problematic of the relationship of two personal identity and cultural identity. Du Bois

mainly focus was on the Blacks experiences in America. The term was first used in an Atlantic Monthly article titled *Strivings of the Negro People* in 1897. It was later republished with minor edits under the title *Of Our Spiritual Strivings* in 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*. Du Bois illustrate it as:

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. One ever feels his twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, -- this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Du Bois 2)

In this sense, blacks suffer from damaged self-image constructed by society view and perceptions in hand with treatments of white supremacy. This uncompleted image provoke the internalization of black people to acquire whiteness aspects in order to be seen and perform blackness in way that it is not underestimated or threatened. As result black life turn to be shaped by stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream culture and creates inter conflicts as they struggle; often unsuccessfully; to reconcile their identity as back persons and as American inhabitants.

Double consciousness as sub-categories of the post-colonial theory that analyze human consequences of the colonialism and imperialism cultural legacy and how do social and political oppression over control on individual minds. Like critical race theory, Post-colonial theorists contended that racism and race is a result of social identification and reproduces by cultural meanings. Then critical race theory studies the construction of race and post-colonial studies

consequences of the dominant hegemony over the colonized group. Both theories help to show that race and racism have social sources and consequences and critique the systems of racial dominance. Thus the double consciousness realization is a result of social, political, cultural, historical constricted identity that interact with power of dominant legacies to creates a conflict in term of the real identity to the ideal identity that fit society living in.

Conclusion

This chapter involves the selected theories and methodology aligned with the topic of the thesis study. How the novel represents gender and racial identities performance. Butler's work combines Performativity and gender; she gives an understanding of how society standards shape identities and internalized gender norms through repeated acts. Her Feminist orientation provides a variance explanation toward sex and gender concepts. In the other hand race is the main focus of the African American literature and black authors who experienced racism, literature allowed to analyze races issue from different perspectives so that social stereotypes and norms construct race and shaping identities. This norms set by society construct not only a concept to race but also a conflict on the black people identities which make them adopt the aspects of the whites life style and perform the ideal gendered and racial identity according to what fit society.

Chapter Three

Performing Gender in *The Bluest Eye*

Introduction

This chapter is allotted to illustrate the different themes used by Toni Morrison to involve readers with the novel's extremes, through the critical analysis of *The Bluest Eye*. It explores how gender identity is constructed through social norms and cultural standards they live in. Starting from the Personal identity formulation through the daily repeated interactions of protagonist Pecola with other family and society members such as Pauline, Cholly and the MacTeer's sister. Then it discusses the concept of womanhood in *The Bluest Eye*. In the gender analysis, the study depends on Butler's claim of gender social construction and Performativity.

3.1. Birth of Self-identity:

Toni Morrison's major works share many common themes that she depicts in her novels. Identity is a highlighted theme in the epic novel *The Bluest Eye*. She expressed the importance of self-identity construction concerning the surrounding society's rules that can influence the development of the identities. Identity shape begins from the moment of birth until the moment of death. When Pecola was born, Pauline's first impression on her was not what she expected before she said:

Anyways, the baby come. Big old healthy thing. She looked different from what I thought. Reckon I talked to it so much before I conjured up a mind's eye view of it. So when I seed it, it was like looking at a picture of your mama when she was a girl. You knows who she is, but she don't look the same. They give her to me for a nursing, and she liked to pull my nipple off right away. She caught on fast. Not like Sammy, he was 125 the hardest child to feed. But Pecola look like she knowed right off what to do. A right smart baby she was. I used to like to watch her. You know they makes them greedy sounds. Eyes all soft and wet. A cross between a puppy and a dying man. But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly. (Morrison 123-124).

The scene shows how Pecola first identifies as an ugly girl and how her gender self-identity is constructed. Pecola's internalization of her ugliness begins with her mother. This is met with Butler's argument that individual gendered identity is produced from the moment of birth, through utterance and social expectations. Internalizing the concept means to perform it. This is what Pauline infuses in Pecola's self-image; she grasps this attributive and acts upon it.

Pauline already realize what beauty standards are according to society and through historical fixed possibilities, beauty has always walk with perfect physical features like whiteness, small nose, soft skin, straight hair, she internalize the perfect beauty image in her deep mind and so that any other impurities to this image will destabilize her concept of beauty and consider it ugly exactly like with her daughter with her flat nose and bulky curly frizzy hair and dark skin it not what society see as beautiful that is justifies the reflection of the mother and how Pecola comes to be an example of a triple oppressed female. By the white society, and by Black society and also by her mother. Pauline infuses in Pecola's self-image ugliness. this meet with Butler claim that gender is not natural fact but a historical idea that gain its corps from discursive of people round Pecola, she was call "ugly" from her first day with no chance to change society audience view on her because through time she grasps this attributive and acts upon it here it comes the claim of Butler that audience and actors which in this case are Pecola and the society member come to perform upon a belief, Pecola believe she is ugly female and society treat her upon that sense.

Cholly Breedlove is Pecola's father, his miserable childhood caused him a self-confusion about his identity and real ancestors which expresses his aggressive attitudes and violence. Cholly is abandoned by both father and mother since he was born, raised by his aunt Jimmy. After 4 years he gets the courage to ask her about his father's name, but the answer was "When I got you, I named you myself on a ninth day", and that she gives him her brother's name. "You are named after my dead brother. Charles Breedlove." (Morrison 131).

In this sense Cholly's identity was not only affected by parent abandonment but also by the name he is holding which belongs to a distant relative who passed away a long time ago. One's origins are very essential in the construction of self-identity; the feeling of being anonymous is enough to destroy the personality.

Cholly was ten years old when he faced a sub-sexual experience. He was caught by two armed white men and enforces him to have sex with the girl Darlene and put his hands over her face as Cholly began to simulate what had gone on before; he could do no more than make-belief. "The flashlight made a moon on his behind" (146). This was his first juncture to a life full of anger and free violence toward females. His experience enchain with Butler and Du Beauvoir view that one is

not born but become woman or man, which means that not only the genitalorgans hat define the gender identity as male strong violent as Cholly is but also his social role, habits and he is socialized into constitute his violence identity or his perception of the use of his genital organs.He was a child having no idea about how doing sex then experiencing it scandalously formed a fixed idea inside him whichappears further, the aggressive fights with Pauline, when he rapes his daughter Pecola.Again the Butlerien view of how gender identity is the effect of performing discursive practice.

3.2. Female Sexualization

Female subject is the major issue to the writer. She concerns with the ideal female image that society expected to see or to formulate her according to her gender. It means how female typically acts, speaks, dresses, feel based on their assigned sex as women.

Claudia confusion of her body and the source of her failure to arouse the honey voices of adultsindicatethat she has not yet developed a sense of maturity and not yet experienced her body as alienated entity; as her sister did when she had molested by Mr. Henry. On account of Frieda's lack of awareness, she thought that she has ruined since Mr. Henry pecked at her "She pointed to the tiny breasts that, like two fallen acorns, scattered a few faded rose leaves on her dress."(Morrison, 97) In the other side Claudia curiosity and desire to discover her body drag her to ask a wrong question "Really? How did it feel?Oh, Claudia. She sounded put-out. I wasn't asking the right questions"(Morrison 97). It explains a part of haw Claudia meant when she declared that she sees herself "Younger than both Frieda and Pecola, I had not yet arrived at the turning point in the development of my psyche which would allow me to love her "(Morrison 17) Claudia is still fascinated with her body and not understanding the mechanism of her body as female and what really distinguishes a black woman from a white woman.

The nine years old girl Claudia often questions the reasons behind adults admiration to white people as well as her sister Frieda and Pecola admiration to Shirley Templewhilst she destroys her dolls to discover it combination or what make it different and loveable while her body don't. Claudia wants to discover her escaped desirability toward beauty portrays in this dolls and the whole world and grown people agrees on the power of white supremacy draw the ideal beauty

through a cultural milieu and surrounding aspects of life by portrayals of white women with perfect shape and exposing them to the world as the perfect acceptable image of women, Claudia reveals what when she realizes that "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" (Morrison, 18). By this society provides women with certain models of beauty meaning; thus a longing for achieving this idealization formed inside inferior black women as a result their real self-image cracks. Frieda and Pecola's admiration of Shirley Temple is because the girl is famous, beautiful, feminine and white girl and loved by the entire world. For Pecola and Frieda she is a complete female moreover she demonstrates the femininity concept in society and fits all female norms that nominate her to be a good idol especially for black women.

It is noticeable that black females are excluded from the canon of beauty and seen as passive persons within a patriarchy society and white society; therefore they attempt to produce femininity through feminine skills and various body parts in order to fit the norms of beauty. When Pauline and Cholly got married and moved to Ohio both of them start accommodating with their new life beginnings. On the one hand Cholly gets better along with people of the town and occupies with other things; on the other hand Pauline could not reconcile with black women of the town, they looked different from where she came from, always amused her and made gossip over her because she does not straighten her hair and make-up never suited her face. For Pauline performing what women of the town do is because she wants to fill the vacant places that Cholly left on her life, she turned to changing her appearance and outfits so that other women accept her. This situation developed to a problem of making money to buy new clothes which later on caused a new problem of money with Cholly, the narrator describes it as: "Money became the focus of all their discussions, hers for clothes, his for drink. The sad thing was that Pauline did not really care for clothes and makeup. She merely wanted other women to cast favorable glances her way" (Morrison 116). However, Pauline's passion with physical beauty continues to rise up with romantic ideas of love and couples, she always felt happy when she goes to the picture show to watch movies of whites with pleasure, she loved to see how white men take good care of their women and she amuses and admires their life style to the point that she hates going back to her poor house and looking at Cholly's face was harder.

Not far from Pecola's admiration of Shirley Temple, Pauline likewise fabricates her femininity over the image of famous women faces in magazines and films who indicates the American beauty idols; moreover, the perfect image of women in the eyes of men. Pauline examines her sexuality whenever she went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow she fixed her hair as they do in attempt to imitate her and be beautiful too, she declared that " I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine. A part on the side, with one little curl on my forehead. It looked just like her. Well, almost just like" (Morrison 121). It explains how Pauline tries to produce her femininity by importing the image of the white women as well Pecola did with her big desire to acquire blue eyes, not only because society see dark ugly but also because society agree on socializing white skin, blue eyes and yellow light hair as standards of beauty by exposing this norms to the world with common figures. The writes choice of white faces is not arbitrary , she focused on the constant circulate one during the twentieth to represent its effect on black women self-image and how the surrounding society participate on contribution the standards of femininity. Consequently damaged the self-esteem of black women because they could not suit this imposed standards.

Apparently , the spreader culture in the novel and in 1940s in general circle around certain norms of beauty that sexualize females and deeply affects on black women , they have supplanted both by the repeated historical culture of beauty is white and the physical appearances of public figures; The example of Mr. Henry when he first move to the MacTeer's house, he was introduced to Frieda and Claudia greets them with " You must be Greta Garbo, and you must be Ginger Rogers"(Morrison 14) fellow this greeting by giving the girls money as gift; similarly this gesture repeated later on when he want the little girls out of the house so he can comfortably entertain China and Maginot Line. This incident suggest the way in which the repeated circulation of femininity images negatively affects black women objectified area of sexuality by negatively affecting the attitudes and thus behaviors of people with whom they interact.

3.3. Womanhood

The term womanhood or the state of being a woman. It is also the next station in the journey of female from being girl to be a woman with some changes in the psychical appearances and the body composition. Women start to perform their femininity inside society and being more mature.

Womanhood is revealed in Pecola when she gets her menstruation, it is a very important change in the life of every woman. When Pecola was sitting in the stairs with Farida and Claudia and noticed the blood between her legs, Frieda realizes the situation and that Pecola is getting her menstruation. She was directed by the sister's mother, cleaned and well dressed, and went to bed. Morrison emphasizes on the importance of the case in defining woman "We were full of awe and respect for Pecola. Lying next to a real person who was really menstruation' was somehow sacred. She was different from us now—grown-up-like. She, herself, felt the distance, but refused to lord it over us." (30). Although Pecola does not understand what she is going through, and Farida explains the new situation with the ability to have a baby. So her externalized performance must change to conform to the idea of womanhood.

The writer attributes the theme of womanhood through the status of women in their houses and the controlled society. The traditional role of women as the stable idea they should follow to fit within. Pauline is an example of how womanhood is supposed to be. She took good care of the white baby and address her with a sweet voice "don't worry now, baby" (Morrison 107) although few minutes ago she hurt her daughter mentally and physically. Pecola calls her mother Mrs. Breedlove instead of Mama, she received an abnormal treatment from her as if she is pointless thing, Pauline has no feeling of motherhood toward her daughter and she abused her mentally and physically whenever she has the chance. This loss of motherhood is heightened by the narrator Claudia when she and Farida went to Pauline's place of work and witnessed a moment of Pecola's suffering. She states: "In one gallop she was on Pecola, and with the back of her hand knocked her to the floor. Pecola slid in the pie juice, one leg folding under her. Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me..." (Morrison 107).

The scene shows the kind of relationship between Pecola and her mother. Pauline has no emotion for her daughter; she doesn't deserve to be loved. Pauline internalized the performance of black womanhood in her youth; she grew up taking care of the family house in Kentucky. Pauline suffered from family ignorance because of her foot, but in her turn she practices that on Pecola, as she believes in how womanhood should be with imperfect girls like them.

Pecola grows with self-internalization of the societal expectations of a black woman from the moment she was born as ugly black baby; she assimilates the poison and conforms to the idea of becoming a black ugly woman. This is in line with Butler and Du Beauvoir of one is not born a woman but has become a woman through stylized repetition of acts and social and cultural expectations.

Conclusion

It is very important to study female gender norms in *The Bluest Eye* novel to better understand society's ideal beauty standards. Butler's notion of gender clarifies the identification that female are categorized from the moment of birth by being female means pinky world full of femininity. Females of *The Bluest Eye* symbolize several characteristics that should identify every woman as the weak whereas these norms obliged them to dress, speak, and act in a certain manner. Females are not allowed to reject orders and cultural assumptions.

Chapter Four

Performing Race in *The Bluest Eye*

Introduction

Race has been a major issue in the African-American society in the Twentieth century, in *The Bluest Eye* the reader sympathizes with the Black people's suffering and understands the reasons behind adopting whiteness aspects and performing a double role and identity with one body and why they ignore the fact that their blackness is not something they can change and the race concept is not inherent but constructed by society. This chapter deals with the racial identity themes that cover a different part of the novel by analyzing different factors that shape identity then it discusses the double consciousness issue through Pecola's awareness of her dark ugliness but seeking of the new identity and blue eye in hand with other characters that represent how the internalized concept of doing whiteness with a Black body. Last but not least, it reviews the daily racism Pecola has gone through, caused to her tragic end and a rooted hate toward her self-image.

4.1. Racial Identity

It is noticed that the theme of racial identity occurs through the characters of the novel, first with the Breedlove family internalization of their ugliness, the narrator depicts how they live saying that:

The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. (Morrison 36)

They were convinced that they are ugly and have to isolate themselves from the eyes of society. It is also shaped in Pecola. Apart from the disharmony in her house, the outside world puts her life into echo and endless vortex. Everyone tries to remind her with her dark skin and ugly face, "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, 43). She questions herself about where the ugliness comes from. Teachers at school "... tried never to glance at her and called on her only when everyone was required to respond." (Morrison 43-44).

The antecedent with the white man immigrant storekeeper Mr. Yacobowski who ignored looking at her "He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see." (Morrison 46) and " He

hesitates, not wanting to touch her hand.", "His nails graze her damp palm." (Morrison 47-48). This shows the mistreatment of the white male to the little black girl by his gazed contempt look. Pecola realized that his total absence of human recognition in his eyes toward her is because of her blackness which "is static and dread", his white distaste was not new to her "Yet this vacuum is not new to her. It has an edge; somewhere in the bottom lid is the distaste. She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people." (Morrison, 47). She can recognize hate and contempt look of white as well black people of her society toward her from the first look.

The boys in neighborhood mocked on Pecola with curses, dance the Macabre ballet around her calling her "Black e mo Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps nekked." (Morrison, 63) Her reaction was calm she set in the edge 'crying' and "covered her eyes with her hands". The choice of setting 'edge' was not arbitrary; Morrison wanted to show the alienated Pecola's place in society. She wanted to highlight the fact that the internalized ideas can completely change the natural order of an entire culture by creating a young man who detests the black color of their skin and feel humiliated to represent their own culture.

Pecola's accident with Junior the boy from a rich black family that see themselves privileged who invites her to his house to join him to play, he then aggressively irritates her by throwing the cat on her; the cat died. When Geraldine was backing home he falsely accused Pecola of killing the cat. With harsh words the mother shouted on Pecola "Get out," she said her voice quiet. "You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house" (90).

Finally, and the most important element of Pecola's racial identity performance and internalization, is the incest sexual experience she had with her father. Cholly expresses his insecure and repressed feeling on the delicate valuable Pecola. It's like "The confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him..." (Morrison, 160). While Pecola's feeling was empty and described by the author in: "So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy quilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her " (Morrison, 161).

All the personal experiences Pecola passed through reflect the racialized identity she constructed through time. Family interaction, social discourses, acts, and the double operation from both the

white supremacy and Black minor power; these factors are essential in performing racial identity and race conceptualization of Pecola's self-image. She accommodates with all what is ugly belongs to her.

4.2. Wearing whiteness

Toni Morrison attempts to provide an insight into how the internalization of white beauty standards destroyed the self-image of Black people and the women living in a double oppressed environment. She questions the origins of the alleged truth that whiteness means superiority over Black people. The white beauty stand is defined in terms of not being black. Consequently, Black people come to equate beauty with doing whiteness.

Performing whiteness appears from the title of the novel *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison consciously transmits a message and explores the result of the beauty inferiority complex of Blacks. White idealization starts from Maureen Peal, the newcomer to Pecola, Frieda, and Claudia's school. She is the mulatto girl who attracts everyone's attention in school. Morrison characterized her with special detail which is not random. Starting from her skin color "high- yellow dream child" then she adds: "long brown hair braided into two lynch ropes that hung down her back. She was rich, at least by our standards, as rich as the richest of the white girls, swaddled in comfort and care."(60) Moving to her high quality of clothes she wears, neat and new "Brightly colored knee socks with white borders, a brown velvet coat trimmed in white rabbit fur, and a matching muff". On the other hand Frieda and Claudia and Pecola wear simple and used clothes. This indirect comparison Morrison exposes the class issue in black society. Hence, the light-skinned girl is the vivid example of the legacy consequences of the colonial group affect the "Other" or the persons who acquired white aspect and act upon the belief that if they wear, speak and act like white they would be seen and considered superior. Maureen position and situation in society as, beautiful , lights kinked and rich allow her to believe that she is not black, thus this performance she does is deeply rooted in her mind" I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute!" (Morrison 71) she recognizes her privilege from Black people and acts upon this concept.

Doing Whiteness in the Black body is shaped also in Geraldine, the women from Mobile, where everyone in this place acts differently from Black people in poor neighborhoods considering

themselves rich with the needed beauty standards that allow them to treat poor black people contemptuously and lesser than them. It show with the look of Geraldine to Pecola and her thought about poor black girls:

She looked at Pecola. Saw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had come undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum peeping out from between the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel of the shoe. She saw the safety pin holding the hem of the dress up...They had stared at her with great uncomprehending eyes. Eyes that questioned nothing and asked everything. Unblinking and unabashed, they stared up at her. The end of the world lay in their eyes, and the beginning, and all the waste in between. (Morrison 89, 90)

The author described the Mobile citizens as thin, brown girls, narrow, tall, and still with an eye that can tell you time by the color of the sky. They live in "quiet black neighborhoods where everybody is gainfully employed" (81). They own all standards of white beauty in black body but they believe that those standards can hide their blackness and escape the reality Morrison pointed to that in this statement "When they wear lipstick, they never cover the entire mouth for fear of lips too thick, and they worry, worry, and worry about the edges of their hair."(81). This highlighted that no one can escape reality, and adopting white culture will eventually lead to empty race performance. Geraldine categorized herself and her son Junior in the colored group and explaining to her son that the former is " neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud." (Morrison, 85) and he is not supposed to play with the theme even if he wants to.

Last but not least, the most suffering character who suffered from white beauty standards is the protagonist of the story Pecola. Pecola longing to have blue eyes appears in all seasons of the novel with different characters implicitly and explicitly. Pitiful Pecola is the little black girl who wanted to rise out of her ugliness body and to have Blue Eye. She thinks Beauty is Blue eyes and having ones means that she will be a loved one welcomed by the Eyes of others, "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." (Morrison44).

Pecola's admiration of whiteness and beauty comes from the surrounding echoes, a poor black female is repeatedly called by ugly, therefore she internalizes the nickname and is convinced with, which caused her sense of self-loathing hatred and confusion, she was doubly marginalized.

When Frieda brought to Pecola biscuits and milk in the Shirley Templar cup, Pecola drunk four cups just to keep holding the Shirley Templar cup and see the picture of the white girl "She was a long time with the milk and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face."(Morrison 17).Her consciousness that white girls are beautiful while she is a black ugly girl justifies why she never misses a chance to interact with white girls. It is represented also with Mary Jane candy that she bought, because she believed that "To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane."(Morrison 48).

In that miserable summer, she had a conversation with her imaginary friend about her blue eye; she told him that Mr.Soaphed gave it to her by magic. Through Pecola's talk the reader can understand that her suffer tragically ends.

Why don't you look at me when you say that? You're looking drop-eyed like Mrs. Breedlove.

Mrs. Breedlove look drop-eyed at you?

Yes. Now she does. Ever since I got my blue eyes, she look away from me all of the time.

Do you suppose she's jealous too?

Could be. They are pretty, you know.(Morrison 193)

Pecola allegedly acquire the bluest eye in the world, and she believes that people around her are getting jealous of her and the reason of her mother ignorance of looking at her is because of her eyes, but the fact of these discarded glances is because she lost her sanity.

4.3. Abuse and Trauma

Every day Pecola face racism and abuse by almost all people she lives with except her friend Claudia and Frieda, she experiences racism not only from the whites but also from her society and family. Pecola grow up in violent atmosphere and aggressive parents whose verbal and physical fights never ends, the narrator describe this battles as

She ran into the bedroom with a dishpan full of cold water and threw it in Cholly's face. He sat up, choking and spitting. Naked and ashen, he leaped from the bed, and with a flying tackle, grabbed his wife around the waist, and they hit the floor. Cholly picked her up and knocked her down with the back of his hand. She fell in a sitting position, her back supported by Sammy's bed frame. She had not let go of the dishpan, and began to hit at Cholly's thighs and groin with it. He put his foot in her chest, and she dropped the pan. Dropping to his knee, he struck her several times in the face, and she might have succumbed early had he not hit his hand against the metal bed frame when his wife ducked. (Morrison 41, 42)

The deadly battles were a big part of Pecola's fear and trauma which caused her sick feeling and stomach colic. Pecola as child and oppressed female cannot escape the fights alike her bother Sammy. Thus Pecola only solution to avoid seeing her parents fighting is by closing her eyes and covering her head with quilt and imagining that she is vanishing, she keeps praying to God to make her disappear "“Please, God,” she whispered into the palm of her hand. “Please make me disappear””(Morrison 43) so she can get over of that horrible profound feeling and never witness her parents fight and to end her miserable life.

Another incident that provokes a deep injury on Pecola's soul is her relationship with her mother. Pauline alike any other normal mother construct a hate toward her daughter and dissatisfaction because of her appearance, the sense of shame of her daughter and mistreatment show an oppressed and oppressor relation instead of mother-daughter loveable relationship. When Pecola accidentally dropped the blubbery pie in the floor, Pauline furiously slapped her and pay no attention to her burns. Claudia describes Pauline yelling "Crazy fool . . . my floor, mess . . . look what you... work . . . get on out . . . now that . . . crazy . . . my floor, my floor . . . my floor"(Morrison 107) her reaction make the girls realize Pecola's sufferings, she adds "Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries, and we backed away in dread"(Morrison 107). Pecola is hurt by the insulted painful words from her mother thrown on her more than the burns in her body.

Furthermore, Pecola relationship with her father is unstable and wonky as well, Cholly have never been the ideal father to Pecola, and he never protects her from the outside world or defends on her. But he success on being the drunk violent father and most important the source of her major

traumatic collapse. Pecola was raped by him twice, at the first time she tried to tell her mother seeking for protection and security but then later did not believe, This point that lead Pecola to break the trust wall with her mother and all people around her as well :

I did tell her!

I don't mean about the first time. I mean about the second time, when you were sleeping on the couch.

I wasn't sleeping! I was reading! You don't have to shout. You don't understand anything, do you? She didn't even believe me when I told her.(Morrison 198)

The second time was raped by her father she get pregnant, Pecola rape scene clearly defines the silent oppressed female in the time of the story; they were powerless and obliged to keep their mouth closed and normalize the aggressive and controller role of a man. The author shows sympathy toward Pecola saying "She appeared to have fainted" (Morrison 161), adding: "So when the child regained consciousness, she was lying on the kitchen floor under a heavy quilt, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her." (Morrison161).

The lack of reaction of the mother shows toward her husband's rape of Pecola may go back to the rooted belief that a woman should not speak up against her harasser. This active blaming mentality can be found within the oppressed communities as there is a set of standards, woman should abide by; one of them is not blaming a man or disrespecting him, even when he is wrong. Or it can be justified by the love and marital feelings she holds for her husband.

At the end her impossible wish is realized but on the coast of losing her mind and sanity. In that miserable summer, she had a conversation with her imaginary friend about her blue eye, she told him that Mr.Soaphed gave it to her by magic. Through Pecola's talk reader can understand that her suffer tragically ends.

Why don't you look at me when you say that? You're looking drop-eyed like Mrs. Breedlove.

Mrs. Breedlove look drop-eyed at you?

Yes. Now she does. Ever since I got my blue eyes, she look away from me all of the time.

Do you suppose she's jealous too?

Could be. They are pretty, you know. (Morrison 193)

Eventually, being betrayed by all people around her was a good reason to trace traumatic pain on her innocent soul. Pecola's attempts to be white and beautiful caused her mental break down. She lost her self in the journey of achieving her wish.

Conclusion

It is interesting to study how one's race can alienate a person and get mistreated just because he is considered ugly or inferior. As a result, the inferiority complex constructs and to escape the problem, he/she adapts the standards of the superior group and performs it as a solution to hide behind it. Pecola and Pauline worship whiteness and considered all what is white is beautiful as the other characters did as well. Not only they performed something which they but also believed on it too. The white culture hegemony on black peoples mind hegemony as consequence it made o conflicts in terms of performing identities. The seek for perfection and whiteness was the main focus of any oppressed female such as Pecola who in turn face daily racism and hate specially among her family whom were the major reason of traumatic development in her life at the end she was raped by her own violent father and distrusted by her mother so the lost her mind alienated by hersociety.

General Conclusion

Conclusion

The Bluest Eye is a work that depicts the Black females' experiences and how they were brutally assailed by the female beauty codes which eliminated them and prevent them from any sense of well-being. The beauty standards set by the American white society strongly brunt on the protagonist mantel state which made her interrogate herself, identity, and seek for another ideal identity that fit the society standards . The African American female suffered from different form of racism, haters, and total rejection of American white society as well males of their race. The story is narrated by two voices. Shifts between Claudia Macteer's and the omniscience merge. Toni Morrison is the writer of the novel and she uses this technique in order to gain greater validity for her story.

In the first chapter we have seen that racial segregation issue in The United States during the 1930^s, has a deep effect on the African American's life. After the Great depression America witness a huge collapse in it economic and political field. The crises affect on social classes but Black people hardship was worse. Slaver was abolished but racism was not, they suffered from segregation in different aspects and places. Job offers were limited and Blacks were the last to hire the first to fired, in schools with teachers and schoolmates. The roads and public places were all separated with the placard of "for colored only". The low hid it racist rules behind the statement of "Separate but equal", they also suffer from lynching. Toni Morrison as an African American writer who lived and raised in time of Great depression, could study and achieve a large success in her life through her literary works and epic style. She reflects the Inter and Intra suffer of the Black's in most of her novels.

In the second chapter we have studied the work of the philosopher and professor Judith Butler on gender Performativity theory, where she argued that gender in socially constructed and is not natural fact but a historical idea internalized by human mind through the stylized repeated acts that persons perform in front of social audience. She refers to Du Beauvoir claim that one is not born, but, rather become a woman. We have discussed the race and racism issue in the African American literature and how did black authors dealt with racism through text and life experiences and how it come that race is a social construction that society shape it concepts through the social and cultural

interactions with the white supremacy that control implicitly and explicitly on black life thus this power overwhelmed on black souls and identities.

In the Third chapter we have analyzed the identity of female characters in *the Bluest Eye* using Butler gender performative lenses. Pecola as the major character of the story is analyzed first when she was represented by her mother, the moment she was born as black ugly baby, it shows the first gender norm given to her as black female, and sticks with her till the end. We have discovered how black female are sexualized in the time of the novel according to the white famous faces as Shirley Temple, Jean Harlow by analyzing the black female performance of imitating white women style and appearance. Mrs. Breedlove and Mrs. MacTeers, are both mothers and females performed their female identity from different visions, we have seen Mrs. Breedlove's relationship with her daughter when she was burned and harassed by her mother, but instead tacking good care of the white baby girl. In the other hand Mrs. MacTeers who takes care of her little daughter who was sick, two controversial image of black mother performance.

In the last chapter, we have expose the race issue and in what way black female in *The Bluest Eye* constitute their racial identity, by interactions with white society life in contrast to their poor black life, and how they perform racial identity. We have analyze Pecola's conscious of her dark skin and ugly face, and her longing to have blue eyes as a solution to riddance her ugliness, in addition to the huge love she hold for whiteness. We have also pointed on race performance of Maureen and Geraldine, who are light-skinned females and consider themselves above the Black people, because of the features that allowed them to act like they are beautiful, cute and clean. The double consciousness is speeded through the characters story special with the light skinned girl Maureen and Geraldine who considers them slave above black people and acquires the white aspects to perform it is part of their identity but also have the black features in their souls and blood.

Through this research we have realized our objective by answering the research questions we set. We have discover the impact of racial segregation and discrimination on the life of African American in America during the hardship crises of the great depression period, it affect all society members and black people worse. They faced racism every day in everyplace, lynched, fired from jobs, mugging houses, everything was separate by lines and for colored signboard. The

mistreatment and daily racism did not hold them from defending their rights and attempts to find solutions. Literature helps black writers like Toni Morrison to talk about the harmful experiences they lived. We have discussed the different literary genre and that guide us through the process of analyzing our research topic, Judith Butler notion of gender performativity helps on defining the gender norm in society and that identity is constructed from the moment of birth. In the other hand the Critical race theory tenet that say race is a social construction help in discovering the basic elements of racial identity construction and how the daily racist experience shape identities. This lead to the an unstable identity and conflict of double consciousness of what black people is to what he wants to be according to what make hem accepted and seen in society.

Furthermore, we have identified the aspect of performing gender norms through Pecola self-image the society and family set for her. By calling her ugly the moment she born classifies her in one of society categories and create a self-internalization on her mind thus she perform on the base of ugly girl. The daily family and society interactions she passed through as the ugliest dark girl in the whole world and believes on too. Pecola was sounded by negativity and violent verbal and physical attitudes and the performativity concept help us on construction the black female ugly image through Pecola, Pauline, Cholly behaviors .After the deep analyses we have understand the reasons behind Pecola collapse ii because of her mother abuse and the hate she transmit to her daughter in a picture of slapping, ignorance and breaking Pecola truest her mother. Geraldine, Junior, Maureen words also help on destroying the innocent soul of the little girl and built a strong longing to have bleu aye to be accepted and seen beautiful.We come to illustrate that the major reason of Pecola loss of mind and tragic end is her father who raped her twice; this horrible damagedexperience was the drop that over flooded the cup.

To conclude, *The Bluest Eye* is Morrison's first novel. It portrays the issue of Black female in the American society through the most innocent and delicate member of the society a little black abused girl. Pecola is double oppressed and mistreated by the society and family as well. The self-Image she built through the eyes of others and racist beauty standards are the main cause of her yearning to have blue eyes as a solution to escape from her ugliness also for the negative impact on

her self-identity. The Novel provides a close and clear picture of Black female traumatic life especially the Black children.

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