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Duality in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

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***Abstract**: To be a minority group in American society, black people should encounter different social and political conflicts, racism, oppression and segregation in their lives. They are affected by the beauty values of the dominated white culture, W.E.B DuBois (1903) emphasizes that the problem of twentieth century is the problem of color. Therefore, African- Americans don't have a single identity, they suffer from the duality of identity or the concept of "double consciousness" which reduces them to be a subordinated group. The struggle of African American has been so long and hard and none can deny that the past of slavery has a great impact on them, and white discrimination and oppression have destroyed them. Therefore, this paper will focus on the female characters who quest for their identities and determines cases of the suppression of the black female as Pecola by patriarchal institutions. Toni Morrison argues that the black females have been afflicted by the concept of inter-racial racism that women have suffered from double oppression by white and black males due to the "double consciousness".*

***Keywords:** "Double consciousness", Post-colonialism, Mimicry, Hybridity, Identity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, concerns itself with African American characters who are impacted by the values of a dominant white, patriarchal culture in which they live. As an African American woman author, Morrison portrays racism, discrimination, and sexism in the United States in the early twentieth century when African Americans still had to fight for the promotion of integration and equal opportunities with white Americans in all relationships of life. Morrison considers the black community in the white world of Lorain, Ohio guilty for their own self-loathing and also for the pathetic ending of the life of her female protagonist, an eleven-year-old black girl named Pecola Breedlove. Her female protagonist grapples with racial discrimination and segregation, and with her own misshapen perception of herself owing to the negative effects of a black "double consciousness".

Gerda Lerner(1979) refers to the importance of examining women's experience: "Woman have been left out of history not because of the evil conspiracies of men in general or male historians in particular , but because we have considered history only in male- centred terms"(p. 39).

Toni Morrison mainly concentrates on women in *The Bluest Eye* and portrays the cultural and racial marginalization and subordination of African Americans. She also illustrates the alienation of the protagonist as a result of racist ideologies she encounters and also as a result of the expectations of her black community she bears. Besides oppression, racism, and the dehumanization of African American people in American society, Morrison highlights intra-racial color discrimination as well. In her novel the protagonist's cultural past has a huge impact on the development of her sense of self and the formation of her personal identity. Morrison focuses on the issue of internalized racism as well and she juxtaposes light-skinned, middle class Geraldine and dark-skinned, lower-class Pecola in her novel.

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The current study focuses on the themes of "double consciousness" and the divided self of African American characters in the novel in connection to their past experience, their awareness of themselves and the external factors that shape their personal and gendered identity. This article investigates Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, particularly of the formation of the individual's personal identity in the environment where white supremacist ideals and values act as the only acceptable social, political, economic, and cultural standard. This article also first discusses in detail the reasons behind Pecola Breedlove's "double consciousness" and fragmentation caused by her failure to fight back the pressure of white standards of female beauty and her eventual withdrawal into insanity.

The current study then compares and contrasts two groups of African American characters concerning their ability to defy the stereotypical images of the black woman and to preserve their African American heritage and culture as opposed to yielding to white definitions of beauty. While the protagonist, her parents and her brother yield to the pressure of the dominant white culture and their self-perception becomes altered, the MacTeers sisters do not assimilate to the mainstream American culture and in spite of recognizing their racial and cultural differences from white people, they remain somehow true to their African heritage.

II. DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

Toni Morrison explores the struggles of African Americans against institutional racism, sexism, and classism that prevail and fragment the life of the blacks in her novels, giving rise to a sense of "double consciousness". The black characters in her novels suffer from fragmented life physically, emotionally, and spiritually. They are victims of the racist society in which they live. Toni Morrison clarifies the theme of racism in *The Bluest Eye* and how the lower-class African Americans struggle against white oppression for survival. The novel portrays how internalized white beauty standards distort the lives of black girls and women. Morrison highlights that being black and female is a double peril, and Claudia, the narrator in her novel illustrates the black women's desperate attempt for survival in white American male culture:

Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment. Our peripheral existence, however, was something we had learned to deal with—probably because it was abstract. (*TBE* p. 19*)*

In his book *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois (1903) uses the notion of duality and the trope of the veil to articulate the problem of black suffering who are not able to view themselves outside of what white supremacist society has imposed on them. Du Bois' concept of duality can be applied to the majority of the African American women characters in *The Bluest Eyes*. The characters of Geraldine, and both Pauline and Pecola Breedlove are black female characters who conform to a white-defined standard of ideal female beauty. In their attempts to adjust to the ideal image of white female beauty, these black female characters hate their own blackness which in turn incites self-loathing and self-hatred. They are taught from an early age to be ashamed of their own blackness and ugliness and adopt American standards of female beauty. Their awareness of feminine beauty comes through the gaze of white people and their adoration of white beauty. They are encouraged to consume the commodified white icons of Shirley Temple, Betty Grable, Clark Gable, Jean Harlow, Greta Garbo, and Ginger Rogers who depict physical beauty. The negation of blackness ultimately disturbs the balanced functioning of the psyche of black female characters in the novel. And they suffer from what Du Bois calls "double consciousness", that is, the struggle with the African self and the American other.

Morrison mainly focuses in *The Bluest Eye* on "how something as grotesque as the demonization of an entire race could take root inside the most delicate member of society: a child; the most vulnerable member: a female" (*TBE* p. 188). The young black female protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove, is preoccupied with racialized criteria of female beauty. She

becomes influenced by white cultural assumptions that blue eyes, blond hair, and light pink skin opposed to dark skin and kinky hair are considered the true marks of beauty which inevitably lead one to happiness. Cormier-Hamilton (1994) says, "For Pecola, beauty equals happiness, and it is difficult to fault a young girl for the misperception; certainly, both white and black communities in her world seem to support the idea" (p. 115).

Pecola becomes a victim of the manipulative power constructs of the Western culture and white supremacist attitudes and grows powerless over her life. She becomes fascinated with the allure of white ideals, which she admires so much. Her feeling of double consciousness results from the lack of an alternative model of family happiness and thus ultimately drives her into insanity. She learns to associate goodness and beauty with white Americans and evil and ugliness with black people. She becomes the typical of people who cannot fight back the standards of the dominant white culture imposed upon them by their surroundings. However, Pecola is not alone in the internalization of the white-defined standard of female beauty. Not only is Pecola Breedlove disturbed by these conditions; Pauline, Claudia, Frieda, and Geraldine all suffer from racial self-loathing, due to the impact of mass culture on black Americans.

Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs—all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. 'Here,' they said, 'this is beautiful, and if you are on this day 'worthy' you may have it' (*TBE* p.22).

"Double consciousness" in her African American characters derives from a range of sources, including educational system, American mass culture, the world of mass-produced toys, candies, and films. As a child neglected and abused by her dysfunctional family, Pecola searches for models, which she could identify with. The mass culture industry, Kuenz (1993) states, "increasingly disallows the representation of any image not premised on consumption or the production of normative values conductive to it" (p. 421). It is because, as Willis (1989) points out, all the models of mass consumer culture are white (p. 184). Pecola is crushed by the Western models and is unable to escape from the conventional American standards of feminine beauty. As Kuenz (1993) indicates, throughout the novel, there is evidence of the "process of erasure and replacement" of the African American cultural values (p. 422).

The acquirement of the right values occurs early in the childhood and educational system and mass media are used to support them. "The structural device of *The Bluest Eye*", as Pal (1994) observes, "deftly exhibits the use of the education system as a site for transmitting ideologies that objectify Blacks as the 'other'" (p. 2440). Pal goes further to state that young African American students "learn to associate beauty and order with white Americans and ugliness and disorder with the Blacks. Education thus becomes an obstruction in the process of positive self-construction and effects a submerged consciousness" (ibid.). *The Bluest Eye* opens with a text from the common 1940s and 1950s American elementary school primer that introduces the All-American, white family of Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane. The primer features the only visible model for happiness and family life:

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play. (*TBE* p. 8)

The Dick-and-Jane reader, in Powell's (1990) words, implies "the institutionalized ethnocentrism of the white logos, of how white values and standards are woven into the very texture of the fabric of American life" (p. 749). Powell (1990) emphasizes that "while the anonymous author of these children's books never explicitly states that these cardboard characters are white, it is nevertheless clear, since the mythos which they embody ... is so clearly the ideal of Western culture, which is to say white culture" (p. 750). The joy which is accepted to overwhelm inside this white family structure remains in conflict with the pain and suppression which characterizes the family life of Pecola Breedlove. As Kuenz (1993) indicates, seen as "the seeming given of contemporary life, it stands as the only visible model for happiness and thus implicitly accuses those whose lives do not match up" (p. 422). The Dick-and-Jane primer, the blonde Christmas dolls, and Shirley Temple, according to Powell (1990), are "the embodiments of the white logos, the templates which society holds up for Pecola to judge herself against". (p. 752)

Set between the harvest time of 1940 and 1941, the story promptly educates the reader that Pecola Breedlove is having her father's baby. The carefree tone of the Dick and Jane preliminary, which informs the mentality of the characters inside the content, is quickly disposed of for more practical depictions of life. Pecola's toxic environmental circumstances advance her into losing herself and a sense of double consciousness and makes her believe in her own ugliness. Moreover, her double consciousness is caused by the family and believers of the assertion that the white race is superior to other races. The internalization of shame is inflicted at her by different persons on different points in time and in different settings and drives her to accept and believe in her ugliness. For instance, when the fifty-two-year-old white immigrant storekeeper, Mr. Yacobowski refuses to see and touch her:

At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see. She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition—the glazed separateness. She does not know what keeps his glance suspended. Perhaps because he is grown, or a man, and she a little girl. But she has seen interest, disgust, even anger in grown male eyes. 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. So. The distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes. (*TBE* p. 47)

Moreover, Pecola's mother, Pauline Breedlove, inflicts the most devastating harm on Pecola's sense of double consciousness. At the point when Pauline was a little youngster, she felt bitterness and dejection. This isolation was extended after they moved toward the North, where she was not quite the same as other blacks and unaccepted by them. Pauline recalls:

It was hard to get to know folks up here, and I missed my people. I weren't used to so much white folks. The ones I seed before was something hateful, but they didn't come around too much. I mean, we didn't have too much truck with them. Just now and then in the fields, or at the commissary. But they want all over us. Up north they was everywhere—next door, downstairs, all over the streets—and colored folks few and far between. Northern colored folk was different too. Dirty-like. No better than whites for meanness. They could make you *feel just as no-count, 'cept I didn't expect it from them. That was the lonesomest time of my life*. (*TBE* p. 107, emphasis in original).

Pauline searched for an escape from loneliness and she found it in the movies. Her own idea of romantic love is validated by the movie theaters. She relieves her loneliness by going to the movies during her pregnancy with Pecola.

The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show. Every time I got, I went. I'd go early, before the show started. They'd cut off the lights, and everything be black. Then the screen would light up, and I'd move right on in

them pictures. White men taking such good care of the women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with the bathtubs right in the same room with the toilet. (TBE p. 111-112, emphasis in original)

"The end of her lovely beginning", as the omniscient narrator of the story informs, is probably "the cavity in one of her front teeth" (*TBE* p. 101). It is in losing her front teeth, while biting into a piece of candy at the movies, that Pauline decides to "let [her] hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly" (*TBE* p. 112). Pauline's unsolved issues with her lame foot, her failed marital relationship, along with the trauma of losing her front teeth, were the additional incentives that leads to Pecola's double consciousness. Pauline ultimately transfers to her daughter her own feeling of ugliness and this affects her treatment of Pecola.

As Beian (2012) states, in the case of the Breedlove family the word "ugliness" and the term "conviction" are associated with each other (p. 139). Each member of the family is "the manifestation of the sentence 'You are ugly people' imposed on them and not coming from them" (p. 139-140). According to Beian (2012), their so-called "conviction" is a metaphor for a process of society's indoctrination, pollution, and brainwashing of their minds (p. 140). In fact, their ugliness is socially constructed, a hypnotic practice which keeps them under restraint (Beian, 2012, p. 140). In its display of "the powerful mythology of 'whiteness', a pervasive ethnocentrism" (Singh, 1997, p. 226), *The Bluest Eye* characterizes the way the white dominant culture confirms the norms of truth and beauty in terms of its own biological, social, economic, cultural and political values. The novel also represents the way how African American people are excluded from the dominant discourse imposed by white America. Morison demonstrates the damaging effects of internalization of cultural assumptions of black inferiority due to white racist ideology through the voice of her omniscient narrator. All the Breedlove family members are represented as pawns of the dominant white culture.

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. "Yes," they had said. "You are right." And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it. (*TBE* p. 38-39)

Morrison reveals that while external forces of race, class, and gender might construct systems of subjugation, African American people still have an option. They can either accept or reject their oppression. Much like her family, Pecola was not innately ugly, she only considered herself ugly. Her belief generated the desperate need to have blue eyes. She became an active accomplice in her own subjugation and both the white and black communities she lived in upheld this oppression because they failed to recognize the life of this young, poor, dark-skinned, black girl. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that a white immigrant storekeeper refuses to touch her hand when giving her change; the local boys ridicule the color of her skin and the sleeping habits of her father; her mother beats her for spilling a pie on the floor of the Fishers' house while "soothing the tears of the little pink-and-yellow girl", instead (*TBE* p. 100).

The black family is an issue of great significance in black communities as the MacTeers exhibit mutual love and shared care between family members that makes them more interrelated and unified while the lived realities of Breedlove family stand in sharp contrast with those of the MacTeers, as there is desolation and segregation between the Breedlove family members. Pauline, Pecola's mother, is more enthusiastic to work outside than showing tender care and attention for her family. She is a slave to white standards of beauty. Therefore, as O'Reilly (2004) argues, mothers and motherhood are central to black

culture. As he points out, "mothers and mothering are what make possible the physical and psychological well-being and empowerment of African American people and the larger African American culture (p. 4).

The Breedlove family members experience absence of affection and consideration from white individuals. Pecola is presented to various types of ignorance and suffers from lack of caring love. She is denied of her mother's love , and the result would be her failure to battle against all shapes of injustice, oppression, abuse, and exploitation imposed on her by racist white culture. Pecola lacks the same self-confidence that Claudia will possess. All the time she yearns to be a lovely young lady with blue eyes to replace feelings of isolation and unworthiness with happiness. "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" (*TBE* p. 44). Hence, what matters most in the society is the Western way of life and the marginalized like Pecola are not included in this space of society.

The sentiment of being disregarded and dismissed by others is likewise apparent when Pauline reviews the time she was in medical clinic and needed to bring forth her second infant Pecola. She feels bigotry and racial domination there. Being a dark lady, Pauline was not under specialists' consideration, while white pregnant women took advantage of nurses' and doctors' monitoring. This type of marginalization or Othering would definitely touch the embryo's consciousness in Pauline's womb: "*They never said nothing to me. Only one looked at me. Looked at my face, I mean. I looked right back at him*". Or when she says that doctors talked to white women warmly: "*I seed them talking to them white women*" (*TBE* p. 113, emphasis in original).

A specific point which can be caught on from dark people's dialect is that they don't express words correctly or don't care to create legitimate sentences. For instance, the narrator says: "*Nasty white folks is about the nastiest things they is*" (*TBE* p. 109, emphasis in original). Their speech reflects how western culture has attempted to subjugate African Americans and consider themselves superior to others. The dominating impact is obvious even in their language. All these kinds of self-hatred, low self-esteem, and shame stem from the fact that the blacks suffer from "double consciousness".

The source of Pecola's double consciousness and psychological conflict stems not only from interracial violence but also from the intra-racial conflicts among blacks as well which are related to skin tone. Morrison reveals how Pecola perishes in her black community that is afflicted by self-loathing. The community's self-loathing drives them to look down upon a member of their own race, so as to improve their constantly threatened sense of self-worth. Cholly, Pocola's father, is depicted as the exact opposite of a white father. From his very birth, he suffers familial and social abandonment, sexual humiliation, and psychological abuse, all giving rise to self-hatred. So he finds negative perceptions of the self. He considers himself as inferior to whites. Cholly becomes a drunken, aggressive, and abusive man who transfers his anger and humiliation, directing them toward all the women who are close to him. His self-hatred is one of the factors that drives him to rape his daughter. Morrison indicates intra-racial racism, especially, When Cholly makes sexual relationship with his daughter:

He closed his eyes, letting his fingers dig into her waist. The rigidness of her shocked body, the silence of her stunned throat, was better than Pauline's easy laughter had been. The confused mixture of his memories of Pauline and the doing of a wild and forbidden thing excited him, and a bolt of desire ran down his genitals, giving it length, and softening the lips of his anus. Surrounding all of this lust was a border of politeness. (*TBE* p. 147-148)

Still, there are other characters in the novel who suffer from double consciousness. Claudia narrates an incident when "A group of boys was circling and holding at bay a victim, Pecola Breedlove" (*TBE* p. 61). Here Pecola is described as a victim. Morrison writes that the boys' behavior is a reflection of their own "smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness" (p. 61). They project their own feelings of anger and frustration onto

Pecola. Cormier-Hamilton (1994) states, "in ostracizing Pecola for looking black and having a black family with black mores, the boys censure their own cultural identities" (p. 116). Their black community has instilled into their minds not to value themselves, and they admit this value system and in turn enforce it upon Pecola.

They seemed to have taken all of their smoothly cultivated ignorance, their exquisitely learned self-hatred, their elaborately designed hopelessness and sucked it all up into a fiery cone of scorn that had burned for ages in the hollows of their minds—cooled—and spilled over lips of outrage, consuming whatever was in its path. (*TBE* p. 61)

III. MIMICRY IN THE BLUEST EYE

Black people feel deeply painful emotions because they don't have a firm identity of themselves. They try to mimic and emulate every aspect of the American culture. Mimicry, in Bhabha's (1994) words, is "the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power" (p. 86). To be equal to the colonizer, the colonized is obliged to do such state of imitation or mimicry. Postcolonial critics use the term "mimicry" to describe the attempt of the colonized to be accepted by means of imitating the dress, speech, behavior, and lifestyle of the colonizers (Tyson, 2006, 2nd ed., p. 421). Tyson points out that mimicry "reflects both the desire of colonized individuals to be accepted by the colonizing culture and the shame experienced by colonized individuals concerning their own culture, which they were programmed to see as inferior" (p. 421).

Claudia MacTeer, the narrator of *The Bluest Eye*, represents Bhabha's concept of a perfect colonial mimic, the one who adopts the mask of the dominant white culture without blindly absorbing its socio-cultural values and beliefs. Claudia appears to be the only character in the novel who is more willing to resist white cultural hegemony. Claudia censures the African American community for the acceptance of white-dominated standards of female beauty that makes Pecola its victim. Likewise, Claudia realizes that if the blacks follow Western aesthetic ideology they may gain beauty but only at the charge of others. Pecola is symbolically deserted: being raped and left pregnant, ugly, and mad and an object of repulsive nightmares:

All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking dreams we used—to silence our own nightmares. And she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength. (*TBE* p. 185)

Through Claudia as a narrator, Morrison demonstrates the danger of the transformation of western discourse into African American community which administers hierarchical power structures. Consequently, Claudia's consciousness can be perceived as decolonizing her mind from colonial oppression as she emancipates herself from the white values enforced upon the African American people. As Grewal (1998) argues, the power of *The Bluest Eye* "lies in its demystification of hegemonic social processes — in its keen grasp of the way power works, the way individuals collude in their own oppression by internalizing a dominant culture's values in the face of great material contradictions" (p. 21).

At the very beginning of the novel, Claudia, the young girl narrator, portrays herself to be uninterested in both white dolls and Shirley Temple, whom Pecola and Frieda adore. She also tries to differentiate herself from Frieda and Pecola who identify themselves with white values and white female beauty. Claudia states: "Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was. I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley" (*TBE* p. 20). Claudia also realizes that she does not really despise light-skinned Maureen but abominates the way that makes Maureen pretty: "And all the time we knew that Maureen Peal was not the Enemy and not worthy of such intense hatred. The *Thing* to fear was the *Thing* that made *her* beautiful, and not us" (p. 70, emphasis in original). Therefore, Claudia censures the ideology of whiteness that

makes Maureen look beautiful. The "Thing" Claudia comes to fear is the white Western standard of beauty that members of the black community have internalized, a standard that prefers the "high yellow" Maureen Peal and abuses the "black and ugly" Pecola Breedlove.

Claudia wonders why it is 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" (p. 22). Claudia learned quickly, however, what she was expected to do with the doll: "rock it, fabricate storied situations around it, even sleep with it. Picture books were full of little girls sleeping with their dolls" (p. 21). However, when Claudia took it to bed, she felt that "it's hard unyielding limbs resisted my flesh—the tapered fingertips on those dimpled hands scratched. If, in sleep, I turned, the bone-cold head collided with my own. It was a most uncomfortable, patently aggressive sleeping companion" (p. 21).

Instead of cradling the doll as if it were her baby, Claudia confesses that she "destroyed white baby dolls" (p. 23). She anticipates her contempt of white idols onto white child dolls by dismantling them so as to acknowledge what evaded her, "the secret of the magic they weaved on others" (*TBE* p. 23). To the outrage of her parents, Claudia tears apart her doll, pokes out its eyes, breaks off the fingers, and cracks its back against the brass bed rail. Claudia's rebellion against the doll, in Susan Willis' (1987) words, is not just "aimed at the idea of beauty incarnated in a white model. She is also striking out against the horrifying dehumanization that acceptance of the model implies—both for the black who wears it as a mask and for the white who creates commodified images of the self " (p. 90).

When Claudia crushes her white doll with its smooth blue eyeballs and the yellow hair she feels pride in her identity and reveals her ability to recognize the exploitive values infiltrating her black community (Cormier-Hamilton, 1994, p. 121). The white baby doll being assumed as the ideal of feminine beauty symbolically contradicts that Claudia's body can be beautiful. She is conscious of this dilemma. The fact that Claudia destroys white baby dolls, reveals that she has realized, in order to love herself, she cannot love the doll that rejects her black value. Claudia dismembers the dolls to discover the mystery of their beauty and power. In destroying the white doll, Claudia demonstrates what her ideas of self-worth do to the prevalent societal ideas of beauty. Morrison describes a scene where Claudia appreciates her own body while taking a bath, and delights in her own scars and dirt:

Instead I looked with loathing on new dresses that required a hateful bath in a galvanized zinc tub before wearing. Slipping around on the zinc, no time to play or soak, for the water chilled too fast, no time to enjoy one's nakedness, only time to make curtains of soapy water careen down between the legs. Then the scratchy towels and the dreadful and humiliating absence of dirt. The irritable, unimaginative cleanliness. Gone the ink marks from legs and face, all my creations and accumulations of the day gone, and replaced by goose pimples. (p. 23)

However, Claudia finally yields to society's worship of white beauty, when she herself forms a liking for Shirley Temple and the bath. She undergoes the transformation of "the conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love." (p. 23-24). Ironically, she develops her new fondness to reveal the mechanism through which the dominant society both directly and indirectly enforces mimicry on African American culture. Claudia remarks, "It was a small step to Shirley Temple. I learned much later to worship her, just as I learned to delight in cleanliness, knowing, even as I learned, that the change was adjustment without improvement" (p. 24).

Mimicry destabilizes the white cultural myth. Claudia's approval of Shirley Temple is only a kind of accommodation to the dominant discourse and not an assimilation of it. Therefore, Claudia can be a good example of Bhabha's (1994) framing of colonial mimicry which Bhabha describes as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (p. 86, emphasis in original). Even for Claudia, facing with her light-skinned classmate

Maureen Peal becomes a source of temporary instability. The extreme attention the school pays to girls like Maureen Peal reveals the lack of attention that people show to black girls with darker skin tone. Claudia is unable to explicate the lack of interest society exposes for girls like herself:

If she was cute—and if anything could be believed, she *was*—then we were not. And what did that mean? We were lesser. Nicer, brighter, but still lesser. Dolls we could destroy, but we could not destroy the honey voices of parents and aunts, the obedience in the eyes of our peers, the slippery light in the eyes of our teachers when they encountered the Maureen Peals of the world. What was the secret? What did we lack? Why was it important? And so what? Guileless and without vanity, we were still in love with ourselves then. We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness. Jealousy we understood and thought natural—a desire to have what somebody else had; but envy was a strange, new feeling for us. (p. 70, emphasis in original)

Claudia is raised in a house where "[l]ove, thick and dark as Alaga syrup" filled her childhood (*TBE* p. 14). Claudia never experiences being put "outdoors" or, watches violent fights between her parents. Claudia does not live in a dingy storefront and her mother is not absent for much of the day, working as a servant. Claudia, states Cormier-Hamilton (1994), has been armed with "the shield of self-love to combat negative influences from black and white society—Pecola has not" (p. 121). Hence, because she has grown in a less devastating situation than Pecola Breedlove, a situation that helps Claudia to feel pride, while still a young girl, Claudia has the potential to react against the values of the dominant society. And the adult Claudia embarks on a quest for identity.

Claudia is developed by the education she has obtained from the larger African American community of which she is a member. Despite her youth and inexperience, Claudia is able to associate with and employ the folk traditions of her African American community as policies for survival, growth, and prosperity. When she listens to her mother singing the blues, Claudia realizes the transformative potentials of the blues tradition, a means that will furnish her with resources for flourishing in a racist sexist, and classist society.

If my mother was in a singing mood, it wasn't so bad. She would sing about hard times, bad times, and somebody-done-gone-and-left-me times. But her voice was so sweet and her singing-eyes so melty I found myself longing for those hard times, yearning to be grown without "a thin di-i-ime to my name." I looked forward to the delicious time when 'my man' would leave me, when I would 'hate to see that evening sun go down…' 'cause then I would know 'my man has left this town.' Misery colored by the greens and blues in my mother's voice took all of the grief out of the words and left me with a conviction that pain was not only endurable, it was sweet. (p. 26)

In a structural contrast to the rituals of survival of the MacTeers, Middleton (1995) argues, the Breedloves does not impart the collective memory of the black oral tradition in their home. No laughter, soothing music, joviality, gossip, and no life-sustaining rituals are embodied in their family's story. (p. 312). Only fierce fighting rituals are performed in their home between Cholly and Pauline. Pecola does not wish to witness more fights, whispering fearfully, "Don't, Mrs. Breedlove. Don't" (p. 43). Sammy responded to this ritual with a desire to escape the home, and Pecola "struggled between an overwhelming desire that one would kill the other, and a profound wish that she herself could die" (p. 43). Pocola's as it were response to the savage battling between her guardians may be a supplication that she whispers into the palm of her hand: "Please, God," … "Please make me disappear" (*TBE* p. 44). That prayer is so fervent that Pecola immediately goes through the disintegration of her entire body. "Little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush. Slowly again. Her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now" (*TBE* p. 44). Pocola's prayer for the disappearance of her body can be extended to her craving for physical alteration.

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights—if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, 'Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes' (p. 45).

However, as Abdullatif (1999) argues, Pocola's adopting the mask of the white feminine is not considered an act of mimicry (p. 22). It is an endeavor to absorb the veil of the overwhelming white culture into an picture of the self. The veil that she has worn gets to be a "masquerade", since she looks for pictures of white female excellence such as blue eyes as an elective to the unforgiving substances of her life (ibid.). Pecola practices whiteness in order to find accommodation with the world. Nevertheless, she attains white beauty only in a distorted form, and her talk with an imaginary friend in a mirror about the splendor of the "bluest eyes" she alone has been bestowed with at the end of the narrative attests to the fact. However, Koopman (2013) argues, Pecola's blue eyes represent "mimicry" (p. 307). "The *menace* of mimicry", according to Bhabha (1994), is "its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (p. 88, emphasis in original). Therefore, as Koopman (2013) points out, even though Pecola herself does not call the white ideal of beauty into question, her "mimicry" does unsettle this ideal (p. 88).

Pecola's parents can be considered as Homi Bhabha's colonial mimic. Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father, mimics the forms of white racial domination and becomes a rapist. He makes a sexual intercourse with the black female called Darlene in front of two white men. Cholly is often drunk and quarrels with his wife and beats her. Cholly burns their house down and leaves his family outdoors. He rapes his daughter twice and makes her pregnant. Pauline, Pecola's mother, styles her hair like Hollywood star, Jean Harlow, whom she has seen in magazines. L.E. Sissman (1971) considers the overriding motif of this book, "the desirability of whiteness", or, "the imitation of whiteness" (p. 94). As a corollary, as Sissman (1971) contends, "blackness is perceived as ugliness, a perception that must surely have given rise in later years to the over-compensatory counter-statement 'Black is beautiful'" (p. 94).

In Morrison's first novel, sugar-brown Geraldine who came North from South with the desire to merge into the dominant white society, is the prototypical manifestation of Bhabha's mimicry. By de-emphasizing her race, Geraldine attempts to assimilate into American society. When she calls Pecola, "nasty little black bitch", she is displaying her self-erasing desire to be what she really is not (*TBE* p. 86). Geraldine deserts her dark community for her own advance, and the community does not criticize this but or maybe reimburses her. Douglas (2006) writes, "Geraldine can't change her race, but she can try to change her culture, and this process is described as loss rather than a gain or transformation" (p. 144). Just as Pecola desires to alter how she is perceived, Geraldine admits that she cannot alter her color but can change how she is seen. When Geraldine is irritated to find Pecola in her home, Morrison points out that Geraldine "had seen this little girl all of her life" (*TBE* p. 85). Nevertheless, she does not see Pecola at all, but only the community's stereotype. Geraldine considers Pecola just by the standards of mainstream white society.

IV. HYBRIDITY IN THE BLUEST EYE

Hybridity theory has an enormous impact on post-colonial theory. Hybridity is the process that helps to disrupt the binary opposition between the colonial self and the colonized other. Hybridity is for Bhabha the ambivalence that deposes the authority of Western logic. Bhabha's (1994) notion of hybridity represents how colonized and colonizer are realized and how colonized people have resisted colonial power. Moreover, the concept exhibits authority which is not completely secure as it appears to be. Hybridity offers a site of resistance to hegemonic forces. Toni Morrison through her novels redefines hybridity, and she retains "the openness of individual identifications" (Ortega, 2011, p. ii).

Multiple narrative identities are molded in Toni Morrison's novels through the interaction of binaries as center/margin, white/black, male/female, individual/collective, civilization/wilderness, and continuity/fragmentariness. Nonetheless, this occurs in a process in which sheer dichotomy is distorted in favor of hybridity, hyphenation, and ambivalence. In Toni Morrison's work binary logic is subverted through inconsistency and multiplicity, while conflict between opposing ideologies leads to a redefinition of norms. In her novels, immutable identity markers related to race, ethnicity, class, and gender are deconstructed, highlighting the institutionalized discourse roles. Morrison highlights the dynamic and developmental relationship between self and other or between individual and community. Morrison subverts these dichotomies by turning their dividing slashes into connecting hyphens.

Morrison characterizes the necessity of hybridity as a mechanism to survive regardless of monologic narratives of identification. Morrison cautions of the risks to adjust to postmodern hypotheses of hybridity that desire the person to remain in a steady condition of vulnerability and vacillation as the best way to destabilize the master texts. Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, indicates the dangers of this practice by contrasting two characters, namely Claudia and Pecola. The novel demonstrates the formation of Claudia's "I" within the polyphonic and dialogic structure of a system of power and oppression. However, Pecola fails to form a polyphonic identity. She gets stuck in an object's position. Therefore, she is never able to return the white gaze. Pecola's mimicry of white cultural values exposes her to a liminal reality that never quite destabilizes the master's text, but it dooms her to live in a constant double identity. Mimicry and ambivalence do not yield to a productive hybridity. The adoption of a unitary or monologic identity enforced from the outside demotes the victim of master discourses to be the ultimate reference to otherness and an unfairly constructed object of inferiority.

However, Claudia depends on the act of storytelling to challenge monologic narratives. The narrative is the mode by which her hybridity exercises control and helps the conscious dialogization of societies' deformed sense of hierarchized identities based on color, gender, and class. The narrator knows that she cannot simply reject alienating and authoritative narratives of identity. However, she portrays the restrictions that those narratives enact on the subject while revising and integrating them into personal recognition systems. On the other hand, Pecola is controlled by monologic discourses. Therefore, she becomes the victim of her African heritage. She does not try to coordinate the multiple discourses into her own system. She is unable of hybridity. Instead, she yields to unitary, monologic discourses of power, which strictly restricts her sense of self, until the fixity of an authoritative voice splits her consciousness. (Ortega, 2011, p. 217-218).

V. CONCLUSION

The investigation of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in a post-colonial system has been the most concern of this study. Morrison explores in her novel the question of what it means to be an African in a racist dominated white society. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison portrays how the alienating classist, racist and sexist systems damage the minds and souls of blacks. In this study it is attempted to deconstruct the binary opposition between the colonized and the colonizer based on theories of hybridity and mimicry proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. The idea of mimicry is applied to *The Bluest Eye* to represent the colonized mockery or parody of the colonizer's dominance. The current study shows that the simple polarization of the world into self and other is impossible and underneath this opposition there exists a complex mutual relationship. Therefore, hybridity challenges the concept that pure opposites exist.

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