

**CULTURE, CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE  
CHARACTERS, AND DISCOURSE OF RESISTANCE IN  
TONI MORRISON'S  
THE BLUEST EYE**

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Contemporary American literature bears witness to the view that the achievement of black women writers is compelling. Nellie Mckay rightly observes that, due to their outstanding creative contributions, they "have made drastic inroads into the American literary consciousness since the beginning of the 1970's" ("Reflections on Black Women Writers," 151). One of those outstanding black women writers is Toni Morrison (1931-), whose novels reach poetic heights in their rendering of the throb of life of the experience of black Americans. Her unflinching interest in such diverse aspects of black life as folklore, rituals, myths and music imparts to her novels a genuine ring that makes the specificity of the black experience into a concrete reality.

Toni Morrison's literary reputation rests mainly on a number of novels which include *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby*

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(1981), *Beloved* (1987), and *Jazz* (1992). Although her works were not always well received by critics and readers, she won a number of literary honours, such as the National Book Critics' Circle Award, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Award, and the Pulitzer Prize. The towering success in this respect was achieved when she was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993. As Jan Furman points out, "in its statement the Swedish Academy praised her as one 'who in novels characterized by visionary force and poetic import, gives life to an essential aspect of American reality'" (2).

In her fiction, Morrison grapples with the condition of black Americans, exploring the crippling pressures of the present and the bitter legacy of the past. In an interview with Nellie McKay, Morrison points out that "all the books I have written deal with characters placed deliberately under enormous duress" (417). This "enormous duress" is a consequence of the hideous legacy of slavery which perpetuates the misery of black Americans, turning them into marginalized human beings bereft of the simplest human rights. The crisis recurs in Morrison's fiction, thus giving it a thematic unity; it becomes, as Denise Heinze puts it, "a Yeatsian gyre that spins back on itself but inevitably

belief" (6). However, Morrison does not dwell upon a condemnation of the American ideology which perpetuates the dilemma of blacks; rather, she explores different viable solutions, taking an experimental course in their formulation. As Doreath Mbalia points out, "each novel reflects her growing understanding of what the solution cannot be and, thus... she moves closer to discovering what it can be" (24).

Most of the solutions envisaged by Morrison are anchored in black culture. In this way, she parts company with a large number of African-American writers who advocate liberation from the shackles of that culture. Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison are a case in point. As Peter Doughty points out, "Wright's perception of the cultural barrenness of black experience ... has been generally shared. Ralph Ellison, for example... perceives the northern migration unequivocally as culturally liberating" (45-46). But for Morrison the erosion of black culture has a devastating effect on individuality, as it leads finally to chaos and waste.

Moreover, Morrison reveals her belief in the value of black culture by evoking its spirit and capturing its rhythms in her novels. As Doreath Mbalia points out,

Morrison's fiction abounds with "Africanisms" because Morrison celebrates the diverse aspects of black culture through "the incorporation of superstitions, numerology, omens, herbal remedies, natural imagery, the art of naming, and language patterns such as call and response"(23). In fact, multifarious manifestations of folk culture permeate her fiction which becomes, in consequence, " *a tour de force* of American folk culture" (Furman, 9). The integration of various aspects of African culture into her fiction underscores her artistic predilections. In her interview with Nellie Mckay, she states that her strategy is to make her stories "an outgrowth of what the oral tradition was." Such a strategy not only evokes folk ways and African-American communal life, but it also secures reader participation in the construction of the story. The relation between the reader and the story as envisaged by Morrison is so dynamic that, as she goes on to say, "people who are listening comment on it and make it up, too, as it goes along" (421). In this way, Morrison both educates her readers about their African culture and induces them to relive it.

The present study is intended to examine Morrison's construction of female characters in her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, as a means whereby the

first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, as a means whereby the values of black culture are actualized. It aspires to show that Morrison conceives of her female characters as constructs modelled on a certain design of cultural patterning, which makes them inextricably interwoven with cultural contextualization. In her interview with Nellie Mckay, Morrison, when describing her creative process, points out that "I start with an idea, and then I find characters who can manifest aspects of the idea" (418). So, characters in Morrison's fiction become modes in a narrative design and actants in a culturally defined structure. In addition, the study attempts to illustrate Morrison's employment of various strategies whereby she hammers out her discourse of resistance.

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, is selected for two reasons. First, it shows most clearly the contextualization of female characters as cultural constructs. Second, it marks the beginning of Morrison's treatment of her central theme of cultural delinquency, which is revisited and diversified in her later novels. The cultural pariah in *The Bluest Eye* reappears in a different guise in Morrison's later novels, thus extending the possibilities of tragic waste contingent upon the rupture of cultural roots.

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The publication of *The Bluest Eye* in 1970 represents a remarkable initiation of Morrison's concern with African-American culture in general and with black women in their relation to that culture in particular. Her construction of female characters in this novel is based on the premise that cultural seduction entails intraracial prejudice, self-hatred, frustration, and even self-destruction. A significant part of the narrative unfolds the tragic fate of a black girl, Pecola, who is, as McKay puts it, "driven insane in her quest for the white Western ideal of female beauty --- blue eyes" ("Reflections on Black Women Writers," 161). So, Morrison couches her handling of Pecola's tragic fate within a certain narrative expression, which Peter Doughty describes as "the ascent narrative" (34). Pecola rebels against her cultural and biological reality from which she tries to free herself in order to rise up to the white ideal of beauty she sees apotheosized.

However, it should be noticed that Morrison's treatment of Pecola's motivation shows Pecola's revolt to be a consequence of victimization. Pecola becomes vulnerable to the luring ideals of white culture because she is stripped of the sense of her human worth. Cynthia Edelberg describes Pecola as "the complete victim" (221), but the backdrop against which she is

victimized should be properly understood, since the concomitant indictment is far-reaching. Pecola's cultural delinquency and the concomitant psychic damage can be attributed to her family, her neighbours, her community, as well as to white culture. Her dilemma is the result of a black female tendency to, as Patrick Bjork puts it,

internalize what it means to be beautiful and therefore worthy in the white society that frustrates and eventually incapacitates black characters to the degree that their sense of identification becomes distorted. This distortion is central to Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Bombarded and humiliated by images of white beauty and bourgeois ideals, Morrison's characters lose themselves to self-hatred and mutual ostracism until their lives cease to have any meaning beyond seeking the unattainable---to be white. (29).

Pecola in this way is different from the mulatta, a product of the co-mingling of black and white blood, who feels that she is worthy of and qualified for the advantages of white culture. Rather, Pecola is haunted by the sense of her worthlessness.

Pecola's haunting sense of being worthless is related to the view of her ugliness which is so recurrent that it becomes a conviction. In her reminiscences of Pecola's birth and infancy, Pauline, Pecola's mother, voices her view of Pecola as ugly: "*I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly*" (98).

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Pauline's view of her daughter as ugly is part of a legacy of ugliness imposed on the whole family. In the following significant extract, Morrison describes how the Breedloves are made to believe in their allegedly incorrigible ugliness:

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. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. Except for the father, Cholly... the rest of the family wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them.... 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. (28).

It is clear that the oral nature of the narrative is reflected in this passage. A corollary of this orality is the heavy presence of the narratee, as is strongly suggested, for example, by the repetition of the second-person pronoun "you". The narrator's attempt to implicate the narratee generalizes the view that the Breedloves have been misled.

Moreover, the phrasing of the above-quoted passage makes "ugliness" a highly dialogic epithet in the Bakhtinian sense. In his discussion of dialogism, Bakhtin points out that "the word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships" (*The Dialogic Imagination*, 226). Bakhtin underlines some significant dialogical relationships which contribute to the creation of a heteroglot discourse, stating that "the relations of agreement-disagreement, corroboration-supplementation, question-answer, etc. are purely dialogical relationships" (*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 156). In this way, the ugliness of the Breedloves is a construct dialogically related to white culture.

According to the ideals of white culture, blackness is identical with ugliness, a judgment which the Breedloves in general, and Pecola in particular, believe in. The judgment becomes a living experience, a constant self-denigration lurking in the eyes of the white other. When Pecola goes to a grocery store to buy candy, she imagines that there is a certain distaste in the eyes of the white storekeeper, Mr. Yacobowski, and that "the distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her

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blackness is static and dread, and it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes" (37). Free indirect discourse is superbly used in this instance; it shows Pecola's insidious belief at work, and through its double-voicedness juxtaposes that belief and the narrator's disapproving accent. So, one cannot agree with Jan Furman's view that Pecola "has no voice in this text at all" (20). Although Pecola does not verbalize her story, her voice can be heard through such devices as free indirect discourse and dialogic utterances.

The interracial prejudice identifying blackness with ugliness breeds a concomitant intraracial prejudice, which becomes in this context an expression of self-hatred. A group of black boys circle Pecola and hurl insults at her, calling her "black e mo"; it is pointed out that "it was their contempt for their own blackness that gave the first insult its teeth" (50). The black boys' humiliation of Pecola is ensconced in self-hatred, and, perhaps, in a desire to distance themselves from the meshes of blackness in which they are actually caught up.

Intraracial prejudice has its strongest expression in Geraldine, one of the cultural delinquents in the novel. She is a light-skinned black woman who strives

to distance herself from the burden of blackness. Denise Heinze describes her as one of those "light-skinned blacks bent on driving the blackness out of themselves"(23). Geraldine's motivation is externalized by her attitude towards Pecola. Pecola meets Geraldine's son, Louis, who invites her to see his house. He then kills his own cat, and when his mother enters the house he accuses Pecola of the killing. Geraldine humiliates Pecola and orders her out of the house. It is worthy of note that for Geraldine, in this situation, Pecola becomes a symbol of blacks as a whole, whom she refers to as "they", that is, as different:

They were everywhere. They slept six in a bed, all their pee mixing together in the night as they wet their beds each in his own candy-and-potato-chip dream.... Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. And this one had settled in her house. Up over the hump of the cat's back she looked... "Get out," she said, her voice quiet. "You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house." (72).

The use of free indirect discourse in the above-quoted passage to uncover Geraldine's conception of blacks before she orders Pecola out of her house is significant, because it hammers out the motivation of her inhuman action. Geraldine has dissociated herself from blacks and black culture; and when she finds

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Pecola in her house she is reminded of what she seeks to distance herself from. Doreath Mballia rightly observes that Geraldine sees in Pecola not only the blackness of her folk but their culture as well. So, Pecola reminds her of, as Mballia puts it, "their physical appearance, their behavioral patterns, their life style, their speech patterns" (32). In addition, The semiotic configuration of the scene is significant. The juxtaposition of Pecola, a sign of black culture, and the blue-eyed cat, a sign of white culture, is suggestive, because it shows how Geraldine embraces the latter and rejects the former.

It is worthy of note that black women's cultural deviation is shown to have specific sexual implications. The black woman who severs the relation with her cultural heritage becomes incapable of sexual pleasure. So, Geraldine is shown to have lost touch with her body and its associated sexual desires. Jane Kuenz observes that "Geraldine's desire to eschew inappropriate manifestations of black American culture... is connected in her portrait with a body that can give itself only 'sparingly and partially'" (427). This is due to the fact that Geraldine and the other light-skinned black women who distance themselves from African culture and internalize white culture lose, as

Morrison puts it, "the dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions" (64). Such women consider love-making repulsive, and therefore they "wonder why they didn't put the necessary but private parts of the body in some more convenient place---like the armpit, for example, or the palm of the hand" (65). Their feeling that the sex organs are misplaced, because they make the sex act contingent upon physical closeness, indicates that they are alienated from their bodies, their reality as blacks.

Pauline is another black woman whose estrangement from African culture is sexually indicated. Her sexual desire is semiotically indicated by colours. Her experience of colours accords with the vitality of her sexual desire, and thus the rupture of her cultural roots is suggested by the image of dwindling colours in her experience of sex. When she first meets Cholly Breedlove, the man she marries later, she associates the excitement of the occasion with colours:

The whistler was bending down tickling her broken foot and kissing her leg. She could not stop her laughter---not until he looked up at her and she saw the Kentucky sun drenching the yellow, heavy-lidded eyes of Cholly Breedlove.

*"When I first seed Cholly, I want you to know it was like all the bits of color from that time down home*

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*when all us chil'ren went berry picking after a funeral."* (89-90).

It is obvious that colours are related to the past and that, in consequence, their association with the vitality of sexual experience confirms the nexus Morrison establishes between sexuality and cultural rootedness. It should also be noticed how Morrison varies narrative levels, shifting from omniscient narration to interior monologue. The use of interior monologue brings the reader into direct contact with Pauline's experiencing self, giving him or her the privilege of first-hand knowledge of what motivated Pauline's consciousness at a certain point in the past. As Richard Harland rightly observes, "in the heavenly state of interior monologue, the spirit of what one wants to say is no longer clogged and trammelled by the physical integument of an external signifier, which more worldly forms of communication require" (126). Moreover, the reader is further drawn to Pauline's revelation of her experience because of her frequent use of the second-person pronoun "you", which might establish the reader as a narratee.

Pauline and Cholly get married and move up North, where she lives in the midst of an alien community dominated by the culture of the white majority. She succumbs to the values of the dominant

culture which alienate her from her African reality. As Peter Doughty points out, in the midst of white culture Pauline "learns to read a system of signs that constitute herself and her family as negligible" (36). The most destructive concept she takes from white culture is its standard of beauty, which leads not only to her self-hatred but to her dissatisfaction with her family as well. In the dream world of the movies, she loses touch with her body, which she considers ugly, and is thus stripped of her reality. In the following extract Morrison describes the dissolution of Pauline's cultural roots under the pressure of white culture:

**She went to the movies... Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another--- physical beauty... In equating physical beauty with virtue, she stripped her mind, bound it, and collected self-contempt by the heap....**

She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen....

*"The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show.... Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard. I don't know. I member one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on the magazine.... There I was, five months pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow, and a front tooth gone." (95-96).*

It might be assumed that the rupture of Pauline's cultural roots is symbolized by the loss of her front

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tooth. It is worthy of note that Morrison varies narrative levels in a way which enriches the multi-layeredness of the narrative and contributes to the creation of a polyphonic novel. The coupling of Pauline's voice and dialect posits her as a distinctive subjectivity, as a part of a polyphony. It should also be noticed how Pauline's unreliability, "I don't know", invites reader participation.

Pauline's immersion in white culture is, like Geraldine's, marked by diminishing sexual pleasure. The swirling of colours inside her during love-making and, then, the stifling of those colours chart her cultural authenticity and her subsequent bending down to the yoke of cultural servitude. In her interior monologue she underlines the change:

*"I begin to feel those little bits of color floating up in me---deep in me. The streak of green from the june-bug light, the purple from the berries trickling along my thighs, Mama's lemonade yellow runs sweet in me. Then I feel like I'm laughing between my legs, and the laughing gets all mixed up with the colors.... And it be rainbow all inside. And it lasts and lasts and lasts....*

*But it ain't like that anymore.... But I don't care 'bout it no more. My Maker will take care of me. I know He will.... Only thing I miss sometimes is that rainbow. But like I say, I don't recollect it much any more." (101-102).*

It is clear that the colours represent a semiotic rendering of Pauline's sexual pleasure, and that their

dissipation registers her alienation from her body. In addition, Pauline relates the colours to the past, and thus their loss marks a cultural rupture. It is worthy of note that Pauline's use of the present tense does not change her position as an extradiegetic narrator, since the time gap between the moment of experience and that of narration is clear.

Like her mother, Pecola is seduced by the standard of beauty envisaged by white culture. Beauty as such is a white race-related construct which, when universalized, entails a rupture of the racial and cultural roots of the other. Moreover, beauty as a white construct represents the nucleus of an insidious dialogic relation, because the other who does not measure up to its criteria is deemed ugly. What Toril Moi says about femininity as a construct developed by patriarchy can apply to beauty as a construct defined by white culture:

"Femininity" is a cultural construct: one isn't born a woman, one becomes one, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for "femininity" are natural. Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labelled both unfeminine and unnatural.... Patriarchy has developed a whole series of "feminine" characteristics (such as sweetness, modesty, subservience, humility, etc.). (108-109).

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In the same way, beauty is couched in a set of biologically and culturally defined characteristics. The aspect of beauty as a white construct which blacks find most challenging is the biological dimension, which cannot be appropriated.

This biological dimension idealizes some physical characteristics, thus making them the foundation of a universalized standard of beauty. Some of these physical features are, as Mbalia points out, "long stringy hair, preferably blond, keen nose, thin lips, and light eyes, preferably blue" (29). This means that black women are doomed to be ugly. Moreover, the effect of the white standard of beauty on black women is devastating because of its commodification and, in consequence, its wide circulation. For Morrison, the film industry plays a key role in the circulation of such a standard of beauty and, as a result, in robbing black women of a self-affirming context or, as Jane Kuenz puts it:

It is no accident that Morrison links many of these images of properly sexualized white women to the medium of film which, in 1941, was increasingly enabled technologically to represent them and, because of the growth of the Hollywood film industry, more likely to limit the production of alternate images. (424).

Other media are used to circulate the white standard of beauty, and the novel demonstrates, as Kuenz points

out, "the seemingly endless reproduction of images of feminine beauty in everyday objects and consumer goods: white baby dolls... Shirley Temple cups, Mary Jane candies" (422).

The assault of the white standard of beauty is so strong that it conquers the minds of the majority of blacks. The introduction of the light-skinned black girl, Maureen Peal, is an example of the disarray which this insidious standard of beauty causes in the black community because of its penetration into the minds of blacks. Maureen is adored by all the blacks who see her because she is "a half-white girl" (155); that is, because her physical appearance suggests white, and not black, culture. In other words, the admiration she captures is a proof that white culture has succeeded in dislodging blacks from their cultural heritage and in imprisoning them in its own value system.

In fact, Morrison attempts through the introduction of Maureen to slash at and demythologize the white standard of beauty. Maureen, who is described by Morrison as "the disrupter of seasons" (47), is extolled to the skies because of her long brown hair and green eyes. The sweeping admiration she captures is dialogically related to the sense of worthlessness aroused in black girls. However, it is made clear that the real "Enemy" is the cultural

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construct which couches beauty in certain physical characteristics. In the following extract, Claudia, a black girl who narrates a large part of the story, pinpoints the injustice of this cultural myth:

If she (Maureen) 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? .... 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... but envy was a strange new feeling for us. 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. (57-58).

In this extract, Morrison secures the efficacy of her scourge on the white myth through her realization of consensus at the compositional level. It is filtered through the consciousness not only of Claudia but also of a group of black girls as the pronoun "we" suggests.

Morrison's most elaborate study of the effect on black women of the spurious white standard of beauty is channelled through the victimization of Pecola Breedlove. Pecola's plight is that she bumps against, as Furman puts it, "a white standard of beauty that

excludes most black women and that destroys those who strive to measure up but cannot" (19). Pecola, at the early age of eleven, rebels against her alleged ugliness, and submits to the myth of white beauty, living most of the time with a self-image manufactured in terms of that myth. Being "drawn to an idealized fabrication" (Bjork, 35), she externalizes her rejection of her reality.

Pecola's submission to the white standard of beauty takes a serious turn. It begins with an enslaving preoccupation with its signs. She drinks three quarters of milk in one day, an act which is condemned because it is considered an expression of greediness, but she does that simply because "she was fond of the Shirley Temple cup and took every opportunity to drink milk out of it just to handle and see sweet Shirley's face" (16). Her contact with the signs of white beauty is an extremely pleasurable experience, an "orgasm", as Morrison describes it. She likes to buy candies because the wrapper has the picture of a beautiful white girl, Mary Jane. As the following extract shows, Pecola's longing for white beauty motivates her interest in Mary Jane candy:

Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in gentle

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disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of a world of clean comfort. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply pretty. She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane.

Three pennies had bought her nine lovely orgasms with Mary Jane. (38).

Morrison's description of Pecola's preoccupation with white beauty in sexual terms suggests her seduction by white culture; and the diverging views of the narrator and Pecola, "the eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply pretty", call the wisdom of Pecola's orientation in question.

Pecola's unwise thrust into the domain of white culture is highlighted by the attitude of the two black girls associated with her, Claudia and Frieda. Jan Furman rightly observes that "Morrison proffers Claudia and Frieda as foils to Pecola"(20), but the observation has to be modified. The two girls resist the assault of white culture, but their resistance finally gives in. Their resistance is verbalized by Claudia, who gives voice to Frieda's views. Claudia expresses her desire to "counteract the universal love of white baby dolls, Shirley Temples, and Maureen Peals. And Frieda must have felt the same" (149). The two girls' attitude in this instance embodies Morrison's denunciation of white culture's standardization of beauty, its creation of

images and values of beauty which are universalized. Claudia dismembers the white baby dolls loved by her friends, and is gripped by an impulse to do the same thing to white girls in order to

discover what eluded me: the secret of the magic they weaved on others. What made people look at them and say, "Awwwww," but not for me? The eye slide as they approached them on the street, and the possessive gentleness of their touch as they handled them. (15).

Claudia fights against a white cultural construct which has wrenched out universal support. She is confronted with the fact that "all the world had agreed that" beauty resides in being "blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned" (14); but this is a construct which she cannot understand or accept. Her overriding desire to destroy the signs of this construct is in this way an expression of her rejection and rebellion. In addition, her desire to dismember these signs in order to find out the secret of their universal appeal underlines the important fact that the validity of the construct is not self-evident and that, in spite of the wide support it commands, it might be fraudulent. However, Claudia's rebellion against the white construct, and hence her role as a foil to Pecola, dissipates when, as Denise Heinze puts it, she is "eventually enculturated to white ways... and repudiation gives way to acceptance"(13).

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As the following extract shows, Claudia has to conform to the fraudulent "religion" of beauty constructed by white culture:

The best hiding place was love. Thus the conversion from pristine sadism to fabricated hatred, to fraudulent love. 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. (16).

The temporal progression associated with Claudia's evaluation of her acceptance of the images of beauty constructed by white culture suggests that her enculturation takes the shape of a process.

However, the Process of Claudia's enculturation does not go so far as Pecola's does. Pecola not only accepts the white standardization of beauty but she also clings to the unrealizable dream of measuring up to it. It occurs to her that if her eyes become blue she will be different, because she will be beautiful and lovable. Therefore, she develops the habit of praying for blue eyes: "Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope"(35). In this way, Pecola's preoccupation with white beauty develops into a serious desire to acquire its criteria.

In her attempt to realize her impossible dream, Pecola decides to see Soaphead Church, a light-skinned black misanthrope who works as a "Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams" (130-131). When Pecola asks him for blue eyes, he feels that "it was at once the most fantastic and the most logical petition he had ever received." However, being obsessed with the superiority of the white race, he identifies Pecola's request as a quest for beauty. The thought which strikes him is that "here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty"(138). Soaphead deceives Pecola into believing that her wish has been granted, thus imprisoning her in a destructive illusion. In his abusive letter to God, he points out his deception of Pecola:

You forgot, Lord. You forgot how and when to be God.

That's why I changed the little black girl's eyes for her, and I didn't touch her; not a finger did I lay on her. But I gave her those blue eyes she wanted.... No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And *she* will live happily ever after. (144).

The idea of deception dominant in this context might be a demonstration of the falsity of the standard of beauty based exclusively on the physical characteristics of the white race.

In fact, illusion is the master epithet of Pecola's life; it not only characterizes her relation to the

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standardization of beauty by white culture, but it also lurks in her relation with her family, especially with her father. It reaches its culmination when Pecola is raped by her father, Cholly, under the illusory guise of love. The rape is actually one of the most bewildering scenes of the novel. Elizabeth Janeway describes it as a manifestation of "the inverted, desperate, rejected search for affection and closeness that can produce violence, even violence as extreme as the rape of a man's own daughter" (383). Denise Heinze sees the rape as an "act of self-affirmation" through which Cholly "turns to Pecola... in the hope of rescuing her from the dehumanizing glare of all white people" (32). Jan Furman holds that Cholly "rapes his twelve-year-old daughter because he is overcome with pity and love for her"(5); and for Patrick Bjork, "Cholly's rape of Pecola is a culminating gesture in the novel's strategy of inversion"(51). Seen in this perspective, Cholly's rape of his own daughter engineers, to use Aristotle's term, a *peripeteia*. He intends to solace his daughter by showing his kindness and love, but he ends up ruining her.

In fact, the rape is the result of misguided love, and as such it is inseparable from the nature of Cholly's character. His miserable childhood and the humiliation

he is exposed to because of his blackness result in a serious cultural mutilation. Depravity becomes his chief rule of conduct. In terms of human responsibility and civilized behaviour, he is outside the pale or, as Morrison describes him:

Cholly was free. Dangerously free. Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him. (125-126).

With such a type of temperament, Cholly tries to love his daughter, but his love is an illusion. As Claudia points out, Cholly's love for Pecola is destructive because love is always in tune with the nature of the lover:

And Cholly loved her. I'm sure he did. He, at any rate, was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, give something of himself to her. But his touch was fatal... Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly. (163).

Claudia makes it clear that Cholly's expression of his love for his daughter is destructive. She conceives and her baby, born prematurely, dies. It is a trauma which is instrumental in triggering off her madness.

Claudia's observation that Cholly "was the one who loved her enough to touch her" raises an accusation

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against the black community in general. In this context, Morrison introduces the idea of scapegoating. Having imbibed the standard of beauty constructed by white culture, the black community tries to shirk the burden of its consequent deficient self-image by heaping ugliness on one of its members, Pecola. Jan Furman rightly observes that Pecola objectifies the black community's failure "to measure up to some external ideal of beauty" (15). In this way, the black community's self-contempt results in scapegoating and victimization. The culpability of the black community is pinpointed by Claudia when she comments on Pecola's tragedy:

All our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. 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. (162-163).

By implicating the black community in Pecola's tragedy, Morrison avoids, as Denise Heinze puts it, "simplistic finger-pointing at white society and general amnesty for blacks, thereby creating a matrix as complicated as the reality it seeks to represent" (100).

Pecola's madness might be understood as a reaction against the black community's victimization of her. It is through her madness that the flight motif, which informs a large part of Morrison's fiction, is worked out. The motif is demonstrated by two major images: the image of the mirror and that of the bird. First, when Pecola is deceived into thinking that she has been granted blue eyes, she spends most of her time staring in the mirror in order to enjoy the beauty of her eyes. The mirror thus reflects her escape from her reality, from her community. Second, Pecola moves like a bird trying to fly. As the following extract shows, Pecola's abortive attempt to fly is associated with her dream of attaining to the "blue", of escaping from the reality of ugliness imposed on her to the image of beauty constructed by the master culture:

She spent her days, her tendril, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear. Elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she flailed her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach---could not even see---but which filled the valleys of the mind. (162).

It can be assumed that Pecola's madness sums up her life, which turns out to be, to use Shakespeare's words,

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a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing. (*Macbeth*, V, 219).

Morrison often succeeds in gearing her technique to the thematics of the novel, and the manifestations of her success are numerous. She underscores the cultural mutilation of her black characters through the strategy of inverting the traditional associations of the seasons of the year. For example, spring, which is mythically associated with rebirth and renewal, is made to represent suffering and ruin, as it marks Pecola's rape. The inversion of the traditional associations of spring is underlined by Claudia when she points out that "spring for me is shot through with the remembered ache of switchings, and forsythia holds no cheer" (75). This recalls the opening lines of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which hammer out the highly dialogic conclusion that:

April is the cruellest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
 Memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain. (91).

Cultural mutilation is also reflected at the textual level by the repeated and distorted use of the primer. The novel begins with three versions of a passage from a grade school primer describing family life from the

perspective of white culture. The three versions differ in the way they observe or disregard the rules of punctuation, capitalization and spacing. The first version observes all those rules, the second disregards punctuation and capitalization, and in the third there is no punctuation, capitalization or spacing. The three versions run as follows:

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.

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

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play with jane father is smiling smile father  
 smile see the dog bowwow goes the dog do  
 you want to play 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.

Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddo  
 oritisveryprettyhereisthefamilymotherfatherd  
 ickandjaneliveinthegreenandwhitehousetheya  
 reveryhappyseejanesheshasareddressshewants  
 toplaywhowillplaywithjaneseethecatitgoesme  
 owmeowcomeandplaycomeplaywithjanetheki  
 ttenwillnotplayseemothermotherisverynicem  
 otherwillyouplaywithjanemotherlaughslaugmo  
 therlaughseefatherheisbigandstrongfatherwill  
 youplaywithjanefatherisssmilingsmilefathersm  
 ileseethedogbowwowgoesthedogdoyouwantto  
 playwithjaneseethedogrunrundogrunlooklook  
 herecomesafriendthefriendwillplaywithjanet  
 heywill playagoodgameplayjaneplay.(1-2).

Morrison's use of the primer elicited various interpretations. Herbert Rice points out that the "novel begins with the primer version of reality because it is inescapable" (46). "Mbalia holds that "the Dick and Jane passages ... stress the African people's struggle against racism in the United States" (39). It is obvious that these two views take Morrison's use of intertextuality in this context to be an indictment of the hegemony and oppression of the master culture. On the other hand, Jan Furman observes that Morrison's fragmentation of the primer text is an attempt to unleash African-American culture; that is,

by deconstructing the white culture-bearing primer text, Morrison seeks to construct a black culture-bearing alternate text. As Furman puts it, "in removing standard grammatical codes, symbols of Western culture, Morrison expurgates the white text as she constructs the black" (20). However, one thinks that Morrison's use of the three versions of the primer text is intended to illustrate that blacks' absorption of white cultural ideals leads to cultural mutilation. This view is supported by the fate of the characters who cling to the ideals of white culture. In this way, Morrison's use of intertextuality becomes a means by which she develops a discourse of resistance.

Morrison's discourse of resistance in the novel manifests itself mainly in her celebration of black culture. She employs various strategies whereby the hegemony of white culture, especially its attempt to repress black culture, is resisted. Patrick Bjork points out that the "ruling ideology and literary establishment repressed any genuine representations of black culture, such as oral narratives or work songs" (2). It is against the backdrop of the repressive ruling ideology that Morrison's strategies of resistance can be understood. They represent an attempt to resuscitate the values of black culture. Peter Doughty rightly

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observes that Morrison tries through her fiction to "write the tribe into being" (32); therefore, Morrison's fiction abounds with situations in which black folklore is brought into play. The opening pages of *The Bluest Eye* capture the spirit of black folklore by producing gossip conversations of black women that centre on black folkloric traditions. Furthermore, the voice of resistance is heard in Morrison's resuscitation of those tribal values which identify black Americans as a culturally distinct community. One major situation in which Morrison celebrates tribal values, which are significantly located in the rural South, is the death of Cholly's great aunt, Jimmy. The funeral turns into a communal ritual which reveals the magnificent spirit of communal solidarity. In the following extract, Morrison shows how Aunt Jimmy's death demonstrates the tribal value of communal solidarity:

Aunt Jimmy's funeral was the first Cholly had ever attended. As a member of the family, one of the bereaved, he was the object of a great deal of attention. The ladies had cleaned the house, aired everything out, notified everybody, and stitched together what looked like a wedding dress for Aunt Jimmy, a maiden lady, to wear when she meets Jesus. (109).

Morrison attempts to realize the same purpose at the formal level. It can be said that her representational process in this respect is as

important as her represented world. She shifts narrative perspectives in such a way as to construct a multi-linear, multi-layered text which is improvisational in nature. As a result, her treatment of temporality becomes extremely complicated. Shlomith Kenan observes that "the minute there is more than one character, events may become simultaneous and the story is often multilinear rather than unilinear" (17). Chronology in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is further complicated by the fact that the story-lines of different characters intersect, move forwards and backwards, drawing heavily on *prolepsis* and *analepsis*. Mbalia points out an aspect of the temporal structure of the novel by showing that Morrison makes use of "three different levels of time":

Another prop used by Morrison to help her tell her story is the use of three different levels of time. First, the reader is introduced to a present that exists outside of the novel proper, the present of the adult Claudia. Second, the reader is given a glimpse of the future within the context of the novel... Third, the story proper actually begins in the present on page twelve. However, by page seventeen, with the introduction of Pecola, and certainly by page thirty, with the description of the Breedloves' store house, the reader does not know what time period exists. (34).

In fact, temporal sequencing in the novel is more often than not confusing. Therefore, to use the terms proposed by Russian formalists and French

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structuralists, the *fabula* or *histoire* of the novel is radically different from its *sjuzet* or *récit*.

Multiplicity of narrators is a strategy which enriches the improvisational feature indicated by Morrison's complicated treatment of time. The shifting of narrative voice from one narrator to another gives the impression that the fabric of the story is always in the process of becoming. The shift in narrative voice is often puzzling, since no clear demarcations are employed. However, this narrative awkwardness heightens the improvisational overtones of the story.

The narrators are Claudia, Pauline, and an omniscient narrator. The three narrators are different in terms of their relation to the part of the story they tell. Gerard Genette sets a typology of narrators in terms of their participation in the story they tell and their presence in or absence from the diegesis:

If in every narrative we define the narrator's status both by its narrative level (extra-or intradiegetic) and by its relationship to the story (hetero-or homodiegetic) we can represent the four basic types of narrator's status as follows:

- (1) extradiegetic-heterodiegetic paradigm ...
  - (2) extradiegetic-homodiegetic paradigm ...
  - (3) intradiegetic-heterodiegetic paradigm ...
  - (4) intradiegetic-homodiegetic paradigm.
- ("Voice", 185-186).

Moreover, Genette observes that two varieties within the homodiegetic type are distinguishable: in the first variety the narrator plays a secondary role, while in the second the narrator is the hero, and, therefore, for the latter variety "we will reserve the unavoidable term 'autodiegetic'" (185).

According to Genette's typology, the omniscient narrator in *The Bluest Eye* is extradiegetic-heterodiegetic, since he or she stands outside the diegesis and does not participate in the story. Claudia is an extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, as the difference between her narrating self and her experiencing self is marked. Pauline is an extradiegetic-autodiegetic narrator, since she tells her own story in retrospect, and, therefore, she is the heroine of that story. In fact, Pauline's status as a narrator is unique. She can be considered a reflector and a narrator at the same time, though F.K. Stanzel differentiates between the two functions. Stanzel points out that one of the techniques of narration is "the reflection of the fictional events through the consciousness of a character in the novel... I call such a character a reflector to distinguish him from the narrator as the other narrative agent"(163). But in *The Bluest Eye* both reflection and narration are effected by

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Pauline. In addition, both Pauline and Claudia are fully dramatized narrators. Wayne Booth states that "even the most reticent narrator had been dramatized as soon as he refers to himself as "I" ... But many novels dramatize their narrators with great fullness" (152). Morrison dramatizes Claudia and Pauline by making them fully recognizable characters.

It is worthy of note that Morrison's use of multiple narrators is somewhat different from that of such novelists as Conrad and Faulkner. Conrad, for example, tends through the multiplication of narrators to, as Scholes and Kellogg put it, "place the primary narrator in the position of *histor*, seeking to find out the truth from the versions he is told" (63). On the contrary, the central narrator in *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia, is the most unreliable of the narrative agents in the novel; even the omniscient narrator only complements what the character-narrators tell, and thus he or she becomes a participant in an improvisational narrative.

The way the story invites reader participation is an important strategy employed by Morrison in her attempt to construct an improvisational text. Morrison makes use of unreliability in her endeavour to drag the reader into the world of the story and to strike the note that the story is like a piece of jazz that is being

played impromptu. Jan Furman rightly observes that Morrison insists on participatory reading because she "invites readers to share in the creative process, to work with her in constructing meaning in her books" (4). The unreliability of the central narrator is the chief device used by Morrison to secure reader participation. Shlomith Kenan points out that "the main sources of unreliability are the narrator's limited knowledge, his personal involvement, and his problematic value-scheme" (100); all these sources of unreliability are embodied in Claudia. Therefore, Herbert Rice is not in the right when he associates Claudia with the omniscient narrator, stating that "we must place Claudia's narration into the context of the omniscient perspective we find throughout the novel" (30). Rice's remark might have been urged by the fact that many of Claudia's accounts are beyond the reach of a nine-year-old child.

The confusion might be due to the fact that Claudia as narrator, who is an adult, does not always reflect the perspective of the experiencing self of Claudia the child. For example, the following two extracts are narrated by Claudia, in the same situation, but they might give the impression that their narrators are completely different. In the first extract, Claudia

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relates her fears when she sleeps with her sister, Frieda, and Pecola, who has been sent to live with them:

She slept in the bed with us. Frieda on the outside because she is brave---it never occurs to her that if in her sleep her hand hangs over the edge of the bed "something" will crawl out from under it and bite her finger off. I sleep near the wall because the thought has occurred to me. Pecola, therefore, had to sleep in the middle.(10-11).

The use of the present tense in the above-quoted passage is really confusing, because it blurs the image of Claudia the adult who is narrating. However, it must be assumed that Claudia the adult is the vocalizer and that Claudia the child is the focalizer.

In the second extract, Claudia comments on the miserable condition of Pecola, who has been rendered homeless by her father's brutal act of burning up their house. Pecola is, consequently, outdoors, and, as Claudia elaborates, there is a subtle difference between "being put *Out* " and "being outdoors":

Outdoors, we knew, was the real terror of life. The threat of being outdoors surfaced frequently in those days....

There is a difference between being put *out* and being *outdoors*. If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go. The distinction was subtle but final. Outdoors was the end of something, an irrevocable, physical fact, defining and

complementing our metaphysical condition. Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weakness and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garments. Our peripheral existence, however, was something we had learned to deal with--- probably because it was abstract. But the concreteness of being outdoors was another matter --- like the difference between the concept of death and being, in fact, dead. (11).

This might seem to be mere ventriloquizing, and the reader might, justifiably, find it difficult to accept this sophisticated analysis as Claudia's. However, the improbability is remarkably reduced when the reader takes into consideration the idea that Claudia the adult is the vocalizer and the focalizer in this extract.

The persistent narrator-narratee rapport is one of the strategies Morrison employs in her construction of the improvisational fabric of her narrative. However, the symbiosis between the narrator and the narratee in *The Bluest Eye* is more often than not complicated and even puzzling. Susana Onega and Jose Landa point out that "in some tales the differences between the narratee and the implied reader are crucial and clear-cut, while in others they are only latent"(10). In *The Bluest Eye*, this categorization is often inapplicable, and the implied reader-narratee equation tends to be a question of speculation. Another generalization made

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by Onega and Lenda does not apply to *The Bluest Eye*. They hold that "narratees are less evident in third-person narration" (22); but the presence of the narratee in the portions of *The Bluest Eye* narrated by an omniscient narrator is quite marked.

In fact, the presence of the narratee in *The Bluest Eye* is quite palpable, and this is largely due to Morrison's employment of obvious signals. Shlomith Kenan divides narratees into "covert" and "overt", stating that " a covert narratee is no more than the silent addressee of the narrator, whereas an overt one can be made perceptible" (104). Gerald Prince provides a more elaborate analysis of the signals which designate the narratee, and what he says in this respect is worth quoting:

If we consider that any narration is composed of a series of signals directed to the narratee, two major categories of signals can be distinguished. On the one hand, there are those signals that contain no reference to the narratee or, more precisely, no reference differentiating him from the zero-degree narratee....

The signals capable of portraying the narratee are quite varied... In the first place, we should mention all passages of a narrative in which the narrator refers directly to the narratee. We retain in this category statements in which the narrator designates the narratee by such words as "reader" or "listener" and by such expressions as " my dear" or "my friend".... Finally, we should retain all passages in which the addressee is designated by second-person pronouns and verb forms....

But perhaps the most revelatory signals and at times the most difficult to grasp and describe in a satisfactory way are those we shall call---for lack of a more appropriate term---overjustifications (surjustifications). Any narrator more or less explains the world inhabited by his characters, motivates their acts, and justifies their thoughts. If it occurs that these explanations and motivations are situated at the level of meta-language, meta-commentary or meta-narration, they are overjustifications. (194-196).

The two types of signals designated by Gerald Prince are employed in *The Bluest Eye*, as the following extract might illustrate. When the young Cholly goes in search of his father, the omniscient narrator provides the following comment:

Running away from home for a Georgia black boy was not a great problem. You just sneaked away and started walking. When night came you slept in a barn, if there were no dogs, a canefield, or an empty sawmill. You ate from the ground and bought root beer and licorice in little country stores. There was always an easy tale of woe to tell inquiring black adults, and whites didn't care, unless they were looking for sport. (119-120).

The narrator employs first category signals, as is obvious in the repeated use of the second-person pronoun "you". The employment of second category signals is also noticeable, as the extract is a meta-commentary.

However, the level of the narratee in *The Bluest Eye* is not always clear, as the above-quoted passage

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illustrates. The narrator might be addressing an extradiegetic narratee, which means that he/she is addressing the implied reader, since, as Genette points out, "the extradiegetic narratee... merges totally with this implied reader" (*Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 131). But, nevertheless, the passage might be the narrator's answer to a question asked by a character, and in this case the narratee is intradiegetic and the passage becomes an example of *metalepsis*, which Genette defines as "any intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by the diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse" ("Voice", 183). Another illustrative example is Pauline's reminiscences of the birth of Pecola. She addresses a narratee who cannot be said to be located at a clear-cut level:

*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 .... Not like Sammy, he was the hardest child to feed.... You know they makes them greedy sounds. (97).*

The extract gives rise to speculations on the level of the narratee. With her ungrammatical English and

intimate tone, Pauline might be addressing an intradiegetic female narratee, who is supposed to have a similar knowledge of babies. Moreover, the passage might be an example of *metalepsis*, as Pauline might be addressing an extradiegetic narratee, who can be either the narrator, who complements Pauline's telling of her own story, or the implied female reader.

In fact, stratification in *The Bluest Eye* is not confined to narrative levels; it manifests itself in hybridization as well. The discourse of the narrative is in no way univocal, as the stratification of voice is often effected, thus making the narrative thoroughly heteroglot. Bakhtin provides an interesting definition of hybridization which might illuminate the novel's richness in this respect:

What we are calling a hybrid construction is an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two 'languages', two semantic and axiological belief systems. We repeat, there is no formal-- compositional and syntactic--- boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems; the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a simple sentence. (*The Dialogic Imagination* 304-395).

All through *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison weaves into the speech of the novel's narrators different views and

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perspectives. In this way, the extralinguistic implicature of the novel's discourse becomes highly significant. The central narrator, Claudia, often combines within her speech the voice of Claudia the adult and that of Claudia the nine-year-old child. More importantly, Morrison weaves into Claudia's double-voiced speech her discourse of resistance, thus serving her ideological intentions in a refracted manner. The following extract illustrates the incorporation of two distinct voices into Claudia's speech. Claudia, unlike other girls, does not adore blue-eyed dolls; and when she gets one, she cannot resist the overwhelming desire to dismember it in order to find out the secret of its attraction:

I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me. 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. (14).

It is obvious that the above-quoted passage is dialogized; it underpins the collision between two voices, two views on the white standard of beauty. On the one hand, it reveals the universal appeal of that standard, and, on the other, the way it is stylized underscores Claudia's resistant attitude.

This double-voicedness is also characteristic of the omniscient narrator's speech. Morrison employs the double-voicedness of the omniscient narrator's speech in her resistance to the hegemony of white culture as embodied in the supremacy of the white standard of beauty. For example, the stylization of the omniscient narrator's statement that the Breedloves "believed they were ugly... No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly"(28) underscores the collision between the Breedloves' self-image and the narrator's disapproving view. The narrator's description of the light-skinned black women enslaved by white culture is another telling example. Such women strive to give up their cultural heritage and to measure up to the standards of white culture:

Wherever it erupts, this Funk, they wipe it away; where it crusts, they dissolve it; wherever it drips, flowers, or clings, they find it and fight it until it dies. They fight this battle all the way to the grave. The laugh that is a little too loud; the enunciation a little too round; the gesture a little too generous. They hold their behind in for fear of a sway too free; when they wear lipstick, they never cover the entire mouth for fear of lips too thick, and they worry, worry, worry about the edges of their hair. (64).

It can be noticed that the narrator's view as embodied in the sarcastic tone collides with the view of renegade black women, thus effecting resistance through double-voicedness.

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It is clear that Morrison weaves together her message and technique; art and thought in her work are so inseparably related that all possible thematic and formal insights are needed to hammer out its message. It can be assumed that Morrison's message in *The Bluest Eye* is of universal importance. Authoritative reports uncover the disconcerting fact that Western industries export death to the Third World in the form of destructive cosmetics and related drugs which address the Third World women's desire to measure up to the standard of beauty constructed by the West. Dark and black women who seek to have, for example, yellow hair and light complexion in the belief that the Western standard of beauty is the only viable one might end up developing dangerous diseases. It seems that nature rebels against such a trend, and that Morrison touches the right chord. In addition, by dislodging the rest from their authenticity, the West enslaves them both culturally and economically. The devastation which Morrison's female characters bring about by their hankering after the constructs of white culture is a warning to the nations of the Third World in general and of Africa in particular. It is also a warning against the hegemony of Western cultural models threatening the Third World in the oncoming era of globalization.

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