

*The Aesthetics of Sexuality in Beloved and The Bluest Eye: The
Traumatic Experiences of Afro-American Women of Toni Morrison*

Submitted to:

Lovely Professional University



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UNIVERSITY

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A

Dissertation Submitted to Department of English

For the complete fulfillment of the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS

IN

ENGLISH

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled *The Aesthetics of Sexuality in Beloved and The Bluest Eye: The Traumatic Experiences of Afro-American Women of Toni Morrison* is a record of first hand research work done by me during the period of my study in the year 2016-2017 and that this dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Associate ship, Fellowship, or other similar title.

Place: Jalandhar

Date:

Signature of the Candidate

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the dissertation *entitled The Aesthetics of Sexuality in Beloved and The Bluest Eye: The Traumatic Experiences of Afro-American Women of Toni Morrison* for the award of M.A. degree is a record of research work done by the candidate under my supervision during the period of her study (2016-2017) and that the dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Associate ship, Fellowship or other similar title and that this dissertation represents independent work on the part of the candidate.

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Abstract

Prior to the American Civil War the Negro society was treated as commodity and were confronted with dehumanization and injustice. Slavery has brought everlasting agony to Afro-Americans where they were treated as animals and were devoid of any human right. They were a victim of white hegemony and were often subjected to violence. But the plight of the Negro women was worse as they had no respect and place in society leading a life of humiliation. They were exploited by their own male family members and then later by the white people. They were unsafe both inside and outside their homes. They were degraded to nothing and were completely ignored and kept in darkness for very long. Since the slavery passage the Negro women were devastated, misrepresented, disfigured and insulted with racism, sexism and inhumanity by black and white men together. This led to their loss of identity and created a feeling of complexity among them. This has been the driving force which caused the destruction of black women's confidence. They felt inhuman. This thesis deals primarily with Toni Morrison's portrayal of sexuality and the exploitation of the Negro women that vocalize the black womanhood. The major theme of the paper deals with the Negro women characters who are brought up from their degraded, exploited and most insulting position to a new feeling of awareness of liberty in their society. They are full of aspiring desires and ambitions and are therefore made conscious of their dignity and social respect.

Keywords: slavery, sexuality, trauma, black woman, exploitation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

My sincere gratitude is to my supervisor Dr. Jitpal Aggarwal under whose expert guidance, I completed this dissertation. It would have been very difficult to complete the project without her valuable support and guidance. She had been very helpful to me in giving valuable suggestion in my research project. I would also like to thank Dr.Ajoy Batta, Head of the Department of English for his support and valuable advice. I owe my greatest debt to my parents who encouraged me to work hard. And I would like to also thank my family for their love, affection, support and constant encouragement without which it would have been impossible for me.

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INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a biological term which has been understood differently by different people. Sex is the most powerful force in a human body which regulates his actions. Since every coin has two sides, sex has also been used as a weapon to exploit other people. It is seen as a symbol of masculinity and virility to sexually oppress the inferior. Sex is the result of what is yielded by the society and the community in a man. A person is influenced by the society and its norms since the birth and tends to follow these norms till he dies. Sexual behaviour is such norm which is highly guarded by the society the roots of which are cultivated in a man from his childhood. Sexuality is a very broad term which is often misunderstood by the people at large. Famous social theorist- Michael Foucault in his renowned essay *History of Sexuality (1976)* analysed various attributes of sexuality and urged the writers to take seriously take up the themes of sexuality. He concluded that sex should only be used for reproduction; sex for pleasure is no less than a taboo.

Many scientists today have agreed that sexuality is both- a biological phenomenon and a social construct. Sexual discussions generally mirror the beliefs and attitude of the society, and what they consider morally right or wrong, based on the time, era and location where they take place. During the last few centuries, there have been predominated gender norms which have created imbalance in the distribution of power among different sexes which has lead to the establishment of the male superiority in the society. This imbalance has become an influential force in developing moral ethics in a person.

The stigma and complexity of human sexuality as a subject interests the readers of literature by the means of feelings of, among other things, desire, love, subjugation and suppression.

Many writers thus decide to take up this unique topic as their topic of expression and research.

Toni Morrison has risen as a fearless writer who has embraced all colours of sexuality and has beautifully coloured her novels with the theme of sexuality and traumas faced by the marginalised section of the society – Afro American women. Her novels are path breaking. Toni Morrison has used sexuality to empower her characters. This study aims to investigate the sexual aspect of Morrison's two novels – *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. Both these novels deal with the oppression of the marginalised on the grounds of race, gender, class and nationality. She has used sexuality as a means of power in her novels. In both these novels sexual exploitation of young girls by older men in the black society has been profoundly depicted by Morrison.

Toni Morrison is a celebrated twentieth century writer born in Loraine, Ohio; bestowed with prestigious Nobel Prize and the Pulitzer Prize for her contribution to literature. Being an Afro American herself, she is concerned with the traumas of the Afro-American society due to the White hegemony. Her novels deal with the themes of gender, race, rape, incest, oppression, identity crisis and all possible themes of humiliation faced by the Negro society at the hands of the whites. She has broken the stereotypes of society and has brought to the world the acute plight of Afro-American women in the most realistic manner possible. She has used sexuality as a means of power, not to eroticise the readers, but to touch their hearts by revealing the true face of the society. Her novels are the mirror image of the society. Some of her refined works are "*The Bluest Eye*"(1970), "*Sula*"(1972), "*Song of Solomon*"(1977), "*Tar Baby*"(1981), "*Beloved*"(1987)

For Morrison, the incest theme is curative. She does not state the traumatised characters as individuals, but as a collective traumatic experience faced by the black girls at large. In her novels, sexuality is used to depict the inner anxieties of a woman. The themes of sexuality

and incest are in abundance in her female leads. She uses female body as a tool in her novels as many women are sexually objectified and are treated as objects to serve full pleasures to their masters. The character attitudes and background are revealed by their sexual behaviour in her novels. This shows how sexuality is an outcome of social and cultural construction.

In an interview given to Elissa Schappel in Morrison said:

“Sex is difficult to write about because it’s just not sexy enough. The only way to write about it is not to write much. Let the reader bring his own sexuality into the text. A writer I usually admire has written about sex in the most off-putting way. There is too much information. If you start saying “the curve of...” you soon sound like a gynaecologist. Only Joyce could get away with that. He said all those forbidden words. He said cunt, and that was shocking. The forbidden word can be provocative. But after a while it becomes monotonous rather than arousing.....(, *The Paris Review* “The Art of Fiction No. 134)

Sexuality is generally regarded with a person’s sexual feelings and sexual activities. Multiple theories about sexuality are produced by Sigmund Freud. It refers to a person’s sexual feelings, desires, habits, and their sexual identity. Freud in his famous book *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, (1938) says:

Freud also makes the point that people who are behaviourally abnormal are always sexually abnormal in his experience but that many people who are normal behaviourally otherwise are sexually abnormal also(562-563).

The expression of one’s self in a sexual way is also a subset of sexuality. One’s sexual orientation is a part of his sexuality which refers to who is he attracted to, wants to have sex

with and fall in love with. It is as simple and at the same time as complex as that. One is unaware of the factors that influence a person's sexual orientation and the force of attraction is not under human control. *Toni Morrison* uses female body as tool in her novels. The researcher uses the "Objectification Theory" to analyse the concept of sexuality in Morrison's novels. Fredrickson coined this term in 1997. According to this theory, young girls and women live in such an environment and culture where their female bodies are objectified and are valued upon their sexual functions and bodily appearance. This leads to cause mental problems that affect women in various forms: sexual dysfunction, unipolar depression and also eating disorders. Women begin to feel conscious about their bodies and start to vision themselves through the eyes of lecherous men.

Toni Morrison published her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. The novel deals with the story of Pecola Breedlove, a twelve year old girl who is destroyed at the hands of her father-Cholly. She is a black girl, really poor, and to her fate, also pregnant with her father's child. Morrison uses the incest theme to bring out the horrific consequence of such sexual exploitation which wounds the victim both physically and mentally. Pecola is much ridiculed by the society for her ugly looks and skin that she loses her sanity and always dreams of having blue eyes like the Whites. Her obsession of the blue eyes drives her insane and by the end of the novel she lives with the false belief that she too now has blue eyes and that she matches the so called manmade standards of beauty by the Whites. Pecola sees herself through the eyes of the whites and adores their white standard of beauty. Taylor says:

one of the cornerstones of the modern West has been the hierarchical valuation of types along racial lines...The most prominent type of racialised ranking represents blackness as a condition to be despised, and most tokens of this type extend the attitude to cover the physical features that are central to the description of black identity (Taylor,1999,16).

Pecola's incestuous rape is a consequence of her own fate of being born in an Afro-American family that faces racial discrimination, economic poverty and social segregation. The incestuous theme highly represents the trauma and oppression of the black women who suffered the horrors of slavery. The novel is the story of the oppressive social and familial forces that result from colonisation. The rape scene of Pecola is heart wrenching and a case of heightened frustration and racial discrimination. Pecola's father is a victim of the regular oppression by the Whites which make him to loath his very own being. He even fails to be a good father to her daughter and becomes a savage who ruins the life of his own blood-his own daughter. This shows the amount of humility and torture the Blacks faced at the hands of the Whites that they even fail to decide between the right and wrong.

Morrison describes the state of mind of Cholly before and after sexual exploitation of Pecola. He was dead drunk when he returns home. Morrison depicted the insight of Cholly's mind right before his unforgivable act:

Guilt and impotence rose in a bilious duet. What could he do for her – ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out man say to a hunched back of his eleven-year- old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love? (161-62).

In Morrison's works, women are always oppressed. As in the case of , firstly being a woman in this male dominated society, she always is oppressed. Secondly, being a Black woman increases her plight. Thirdly, she is molested by the whites who take away her dignity and leave her devoid of any self-love. Pecola becomes a scapegoat, she is dumped: being pregnant, ugly and mad and an object of repulsive nightmares. In the words of Morrison:

all of us- all who knew (Pecola)- 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 her, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we have a sense of humour....
(17)

Morrison's novel *Beloved* explores the traumatic experiences of rape experienced during slavery. It is a story of a Black woman –Sethe, who by any means wants to save her children from the torture and barbarism of slavery. In this novel, the house is haunted by the ghost of the daughter who was killed as an infant by her mother. The scene where she kills her daughter is really artistic:

the fingers touching the back of her neck were stronger now- the strokes bolder as though Baby Sugs were gathering strength. Putting the thumbs at the nape, while the fingers pressed the sides. Harder, harder, the fingers moved slowly around toward her windpipe, making little circles on the way.....(113).

The ghost returns to take revenge of the injustices of the slavery which forced her mother to commit such a spine chilling crime of killing her own baby. The return of the daughter depicts the return of Sethe's life and the freedom from the past that haunts her. The mark beneath the breast of her mother constantly reminds her of her mother's torture and hanging. The mark is a symbol of slavish indignity. Sethe was haunted by this thought throughout her life and felt dehumanised. She has seen a lot of killings of the Blacks in her life. The bodies of the dead slaves were mere property of the whites. Even the dead bodies of the females were not spared. The bodies were objectified as a source of sexual pleasures. The images of rape, murder and sexual abuse are in abundance in Morrison's *Beloved*. Rape and sexual abuse are two main instances that are expressed throughout the novel. The life of many black

characters, especially the character of Sethe is shaped by the ideals of white oppressors in the form of rape, murder and sexual abuse:

that anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill or maim you but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. Dirty you so bad you forget who you were and couldn't think it up.... The best thing (Sethe) was, was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, but not her best thing (251).

The sexual relations depicted in *Beloved* are not romantic love or that formed out of intimacy, but these relations are rather dehumanizing, violent and powerful. For example Sethe and Paul D.'s first sexual act is "over before they could get their clothes off "(25). Each character is haunted by the memories of sexual abuse and exploitation. There are innumerable incidents of sexual violence in the novel. The most important incident of sexual assault in the novel is the treatment of Sethe as an animal to be milked and her breast milk being sucked by two young boys, cruelly mocking her maternal nursing by doing so, they have sexualized and ridiculed the intimacy associated with maternal nursing.

Other important instances are the ones where Elia is repeatedly raped by her father and son for over a year by saying "you couldn't think upwhat them two done to me"(119). Sethe's husband loses his mental stability after he watches his wife being raped by the crew not able to bear the terror of forced suckling. Sethe is frequently raped by the crew. The killing of her infant daughter by Sethe is justified in order to save her from the indignation and humiliation faced by the black slave women. Sethe is left with no other choice than to save her daughter from the fate that Seth herself could not escape from.

Morrison had thus illustrated innumerable ways in which sex can be used a method of violence in relations that suffer imbalance of power. It is often the female that is oppressed by

the males who show their superiority by sexually exploiting and installing a feeling of fear and inferiority in the minds of the women.

OBJECTIVES

- To explore the plight of the Afro-American women and their traumatic experiences as depicted by Toni Morrison
- To explain the use of sex as a tool to depict the plight of Afro –American women.
- To explore the themes of rape and sexual objectification of Black women.
- To analyse the severe impact of the manmade standards of beauty on Black women.

SCOPE OF RESEARCH

- Critical analysis of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* with an emphasis on issues on the sexual abuse and rape of the Black women and how the sex works as vehicle of power.
- To estimate the effectiveness of methods used by Toni Morrison for advocating for the rights of the Afro-American women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

John Leonard (1970), Books of the Times

He says that Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye' delves into the very manmade definition of beauty and how it becomes an element of comparisons between various cultures. The Bluest Eye according to John refers to the blond American myth which compartmentalise the black skin and brown eyed from the fair skin

He also mentions that Toni Morrison's work is poetical in nature because of the fact that it discharges pain, emotions and feelings in prose form. Furthermore he adds that The Bluest Eye is also History, Sociology, folklore, nightmare and music. As a whole, as reviewed by him is a passage of Morrison's overwhelming sadness.

Margaret Attwood (1987), Jaunted by the Nightmares, The New York Times

Margaret praises Toni Morrison because of his witty writing style where she is careful enough to talk about the Blacks without getting vicious about them.

The novel revolves around the Africans who believe the White people as men without skin. Other than this Attwood appreciate the way Morrison has blended the tradition and the folklore to allure readers with highly original themes. Morrison always makes the readers involved in make them intrigued throughout.

Jane Smiley(2006), Ghosts of a Brutal Past, The Guardian

According to Jane, The Bluest Eye is an awe inspiring story that bring forward the standards of beauty as made by society and its consequences. He highlights the obsession of beauty. The title is derived from the desire of the protagonist to have blue eyes. Being a Black, she cannot fit in the social standards. This keeps the reader intrigued with the question "WHAT IS UGLY?"

In the end, Pecola is much obsessed with blue eyes, that she becomes insane and starts believing that she has blue eyes. Her character is never fully developed. She does not even

realise that she is pregnant with her father's child. Toni puts forward the question of beauty. This novel will make readers evaluate the dangers of social standards and change the outlook on the functioning of society.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Analytical methodology will be employed for this research work. A detailed analysis of the novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* The 7th MLA style sheet will be followed and the important libraries have been visited to collect the data on the textual criticism on Toni Morrison

CHAPTER 1

Traumatic Experiences of Pecola; Analysis of *Morrison's The Bluest Eye*

Trauma is a very common word used by the society in many norms and ways which means extreme stress which kills a person's ability to cope up with that stress. According to Pearlman and Saakvitne, trauma is in which "the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity" (65). A traumatic experience creates psychological trauma when it causes the person to lose his ability to recover and he starts fearing death, complete destruction, and he loses contact with external reality. The person gets emotionally overwhelmed. Trauma is induced by the external situations which include wrong use of power, entrapment, anguish, cheating, pain, loss, enslavement, poverty, confusion and many more factors. The term trauma is very broad. It also involves reactions to repetitive experiences such as violence, child abuse, deprivation, unhealthy relationships and neglect. It is impossible for any scholar to fixate any specific situations leading to trauma. Every individual has his own perception and response to vivid situations and events. What might cause trauma to one person, might not affect the other person at all. This notion is very well explained by Jon Allen, a psychologist in her book – *Coping with Trauma: A Guide to Self Understanding*, she says:

It is subjective experience of the objective events that constitute the trauma. The more you believe you are endangered, the more traumatised you will be. Psychologically, the bottom line of trauma is overwhelming emotion and a feeling of utter helplessness...(14).

Trauma often leads to state of extreme anxiety and anguish. Children are worst hit by trauma. Children who suffer trauma in their life are unable to maintain a loving and healthy relationship with their family. When children are in an abusive relation, they tend to make up

their minds that this world is not a safe place for them. They cannot trust anybody. When the person on whom they depend exploits and abuses them, the child starts thinking ill of him and this world. These children are more prone to stress and psychological trauma. They find it difficult to express themselves, have trouble in controlling their anger and usually respond violently to situations. It hampers their self growth and they start disassociating themselves from their true identity. A traumatized child thinks of himself as powerless and damaged entity and loses all hopes for a good life. Guilt, shame, degraded self image, low confidence are prominent traits in traumatised children with complex histories.

Slavery brought with it many traumas for the blacks. The worst kind of trauma witnessed by the society is the trauma experienced by the Afro American society or the Negroes as what they are commonly addressed as. The Negroes underwent all form of atrocities inferred upon them by the Whites. They were dehumanised in every manner by the whites. The plight of the Negroes is really heart wrenching. They were enslaved by the whites for centuries and were denied of any human rights. Treated worse than animals, the Negroes suffered immense trauma, both physical and psychological. The women were the worst hit victims of this false White hegemony. They suffered the traumatic experiences of sexual exploitation both inside and outside the walls of their houses. "Psychological Trauma" experienced by the Blacks is too intense and calls for attention of people at large to understand what the white hegemony has made out of a black man. they were subjected to violence and were demanded to be obedient and submissive to their masters. Slave owners always expected their slaves to be cheerful the whole time. They were forbidden to think of themselves, or to express their anger or any other form of expression even if they were being physically assaulted or mentally harassed by their owners. They were not allowed to raise their voice on any kind of exploitation that they or their fellow mate experienced. It was like their tongues had been ripped apart from their mouths. They had voice. But words were not allowed to come out of

their mouths. The blacks were often portrayed by the Whites as people who never looked up, who could not speak clearly, who always looked depressed, excessive drinkers, who could not control their rage. They had to meet all indignation without a frown on their face. Often the enslaved women were displayed naked to a crowd of onlookers thus adding to their humiliation. Another such trauma is the “Trauma of Poverty”. Slavery virtually looted the blacks of their wealth. They were made to live in acute poverty. No wages were paid to the Blacks, gradually making them unable to save. They had no properties. Even the house they lived in, they could not possess. Without money, it was a daily challenge to even meet two day’s ends which caused malnutrition and other diseases among the blacks. They were forced to steal for food to end their hunger. In winters, they had to walk barefoot which gave them frost bite and had no warm clothes to keep them warm which often caused sickness. Such poverty and lack of basic amenities added to their woes and caused them mental stress. The blacks could not educate themselves and their children as they were enslaved. The poor blacks were destined to work on plantations and factories, not for schools. Because of lack of education, they could not form any unions and were unable to voice their plea for freedom.

Such combination of physical and psychological abuse caused anger and resentment that harmed the blacks and their families. The Blacks would often in fits of rage do harm to their own family members. Spouse, child and sibling abuse were rampant in black families. These horrific ordeals faced by the Blacks changed their mental stability. They started living a traumatised life where they faced “Identity Crisis”. The Blacks were the people who have lost their identity, Lord, culture, dialect, respect, names and traditions and were made deaf, dumb and blind to their own existence. They have lost all respect for themselves and thought too low of themselves. The Blacks looked at themselves through the eyes of the Whites and further degraded their own being. They indulged in self loathing. They were deprived of feeling of belongingness and were mere puppets in the white hands that made them dance to

their own tunes. Trauma connects past to the present through the images of the memory of the traumatic experience which further distorts identity formation in psychological terms where:

Certain subject- positions may become especially prominent or even overwhelming, for example, those of victim or perpetrator ... wherein one is possessed by the pasts and tend to repeat it compulsively as if it were fully present (La Capra, 12).

The novel *The Bluest Eye* with great efficiency displays the traumatic plight of the Afro American society. It gives the reader an insight to the mind of characters and makes the reader understand their psychology behind their actions. Pecola Breedlove – the protagonist of this novel undergoes innumerable traumatic experiences in her life. She is harassed mentally and physically by her own members of society. She is exploited physically by her own biological father. She is a fourteen years old young girl born into an Afro American family having same fate as that of her parents who have been abused by the society in every aspect of their lives. Pecola's journey has been a devastating journey full of traumatic experiences for a young girl to bear. Her tragedies and traumas are unavoidable in this novel. She lives in a small stingy town in Ohio in utmost poverty. To add to her miseries, she is born as an ugly black girl. She has a pair of dark, unattractive eyes which puts up a question on the title of the novel '*The Bluest Eye*'. The novel begins on a happy note where a seemingly perfect family is described. With the passage of time, the reader is acquainted with the turmoil in Pecola's life. It displays a striking contrast between the lives of the Whites and the Blacks. This difference brings many traumatic experiences in the life of Pecola. Living in the world of which is plagued by the superficial values of appearance, the life of Pecola centres around the appearance. In desperation to get love by the people, especially her own family, she dreams to have blue eyes which she thinks will earn her respect of the society and she

would no longer have to live in shame. Her whole revolves around her desire of having blue eyes to match the bogus standards of beauty standardised by the Whites. Claudia observes that:

The master has said, “you are ugly people”. They had looked at themselves and saw nothing to construct the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance... (34).

Pecola is deprived of familial love. The family only believes in one form of love that is their love to reproduce. There is no hint of love between her parents, they constantly fight. Her father-Cholly is an excessive drinker and an abuser while her mother is negligent and hardly possesses any motherly feelings. Her parents don't feel shy in having sex in front of their children. They are primitive, uncivilised and lack sanity. Claudia gives many hints suggesting the turmoil in the black community. The family Breedlove are subjected to racism, poverty, class consciousness, sexism in a stereotypical manner. Claudia said that although “the poverty of Breedlove was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique” (17). Pecola received hatred from all ends. Even her mother – Pauline never actually loved her. She treated her as no mother would treat her daughter. One such instance is displayed when Frieda and Claudia visits Pecola's house only to find her getting beaten up by her mother:

Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Freda and me by implication. “crazy fool...my floor, mess...look what you...ork get out now out crazy..my floor, my floor... my floor (85).

Pauline never supported Pecola. Even when Pecola told her about her rape by her father, Pauline slapped and beat her instead of consoling and supporting her. This void of motherly

affection affected Pecola deeply. Even in her school Pecola met with humiliation. The teachers would not look at her and called her only when it was compulsive for everyone to respond. She had no friends at school and would often sit alone. Everything that her family or other people did made her loathe herself even more and long for blue eyes. She once said to herself:

Why, look at pretty eye Pecola? We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes. Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes.....Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes (37).

The life of Pecola was changed forever when she was raped by her on father. The rape of Pecola has been taken up as a case study by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*. It is not only concerned with Pecola as an individual, but all the black girls and women who were toys in the hands of White men. The trauma of rape shook Pecola to the very core and drove her on the path of insanity. One must understand the psychology of Cholly before comprehending the rape scene. Cholly is also a victim of White hegemony. Cholly and Pecola share a unique bond, which is hardly witnessed between a father and a daughter. Cholly treats Pecola not from the perspective of a father. The reason for his behaviour lies in his childhood as he never experienced parental love and was thus unaware about the boundaries and expectations of a father-daughter relationship. It is evident that Cholly was unaware how to love Pecola:

But the aspect of married life that dumbfounded him and rendered him totally dysfunctional was the appearance of children... having no idea of how to raise children, and having never watched a parent raise himself, he could not even comprehend what such a relationship should be (160).

Cholly was abandoned twice in his childhood. Firstly by his father and later by his mother when he was just a baby. He was raised by his *Aunt Jimmy*. Upon the death of his Aunt, he went to see his dad where he again was rejected by him: “tell the bitch she get her money. Now get the fuck outta my face!”(*The Bluest Eye, 156*). The void of a parent in his life made him brutal in nature. These incidents made a ruthless husband and a father, because his psychology was disturbed in his childhood. He out of frustration of the abuse that his life had become, rapes Pecola. After raping her, he feels he has done right that he has given love to his daughter which is what a father should do.

What could he do for her- ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes.What of his knowledge of the world and of life would be useful to her? What could his heavy arms and befuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love? (161-162).

The sexual frustration is also connected from an event his past, his first sexual encounter. After the funeral of his Aunt, Cholly and a young girl were having a sexual intercourse in a field which was disturbed by two white men “they want them to continue their ‘business’ while they watching them with a flashlight”(147-146). This anguished Cholly to a great extent, in a state of confusion, instead of fighting the two men, he expressed his anger on Darlene. After this incident he left Darlene and in desperation went to his dad who in return again turned his back towards him. Such incident of abuse left a never ending impact on Cholly’s psychology and his life became a mess ever since then. Every time he remembers that day, it fills him with rage.

Never did he once consider directing his hatred towards the hunters... for now he hated the one who had created the situation, the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence.(150-151)

He uses sex as a means to release his overwhelmed anger and emotions. This phenomenon, in terms of psychology is known as 'Displacement'. It is an act where a person transfers his negativity into someone else who is totally unrelated. In his case, his rage for his inability to protect Darlene and himself from the abuse of those two white men transferred into his sexual encounters with different women. He didn't even spare his daughter from this displacement and ended up raping her. Thus, the act of raping Pecola was not generated out of his erotic desires but out of displacement of anger which manipulates his psychology:

Cholly was free. Dangerously Free. Free to feel he felt- guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to knock her (a woman) in the head...free to live his fantasies, and even free to die... 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 (159-160).

Morrison has used rape scene of Pecola as a tool of empowerment of her characters. Through this rape scene, she brings to us the psychological damage that has been caused to the Afro Americans that they have lost their sensibility to distinguish between right and wrong. This incestuous rape is redemptive in nature. It is an embodiment of the dilemmas faced by humans when their mental, emotional physical identity is demolished. Pecola gets pregnant of her father's child after he rapes her twice. Nobody in the whole city wants her baby to survive except for Claudia and Freida. Everyone looks down upon her as if she had a choice to escape from the situation. She is kicked out of the school after her pregnancy.

Claudia and Frieda planted marigold seeds in the soil with the belief that if the flowers will grow, the baby will survive.

We had dropped seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt. Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair. What is clear now is that of all that hope, fear, lust, love and grief, nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth. Cholly Breedlove is dead, our innocence too(9).

Unfortunately, the baby does not survive and this further adds to the agony of Pecola. She virtually becomes insane and starts living in false belief that she finally has blue eyes.:

You scarred they might go away? Of course not. How can they go away? The others went away. They didn't go away. They changed. Go away. Change. A lot. Mr. Soaphead said they would last forever (193).

The Bluest Eye specifically displays the horrible conditions of the Negroes in America. It analyses how the ideologies of the whites have been adopted by the marginalised Black community and how these ideologies influence the degradation of the Black women. Highly exposed to the image of white beauty, the characters in Morrison's novel are highly disappointed by their own looks and indulge in self hatred. They get obsessed with the notions of white beauty and the only aim in their life is to become beautiful as whites. They eradicate their own cultural existence and just like Pecola – the protagonist who yearns for blue eyes, ultimately surrender to insanity. *The Bluest Eye* is narrated through the view point of a nine year old girl-Claudia, a young girl who lives in Loraine, Ohio. The timeline of the story is in 1940's. Claudia gives shelter to a young girl- Pecola who is homeless as her father –Cholly has burned down their house. Claudia remarked:

There is a difference between being put out and being put 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..... (18).

A brutal and anguished father –Cholly rapes his daughter Pecola when she returns back to her home. Pecola thus approaches a pseudo religious quack, Soap Head Church and prays for white beauty. For the psychological breakdown of Pecola, Claudia blames the society in which they were raised. *The Bluest Eye* as a microcosm of the traumatic world of the Blacks created by the whites. This novel is sectioned into four parts- autumn, winter, spring and summer. Morrison forms the link of the stories through these four sections and the technique of flashback and time shifts. Morrison introduces the readers the horrific ordeals and history of the Breedlove family which caused much agony to the family and the reason for Pecola’s obsession for blue eyes and her final resort to insanity. Morrison uses vivid point of views in her narration to examine different themes of racism, class, sexism. She accounted racism as the sole problem for the exploitation of the Black community. Racism in this novel pushed the protagonist in the spheres of madness. This novel deals with the problems of inter and intra racial problems. The blacks desperately want to match up the standards of white beauty neglecting their roots and culture and inability to do so further infuriate their relations in their own community. Morrison believes that “the concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the most pernicious and destructive” (Black World, 89). This novel with all its might attack on the relationship between the psychological disorders of the Black women and the white’s standard of beauty. Morrison depicts horrors of intra- racial abuse on the psychology of female child which leads to her destruction and dehumanization of their society. Pecola and her family are the focal point of attraction in this novel.

There are many incidents in the novel which degrades Pecola to the level where she adopts a completely different and false identity for herself. Her existence is questioned by a fifty- two

year old man tells her that she does not exist for many people. She is constantly humiliated by the boys in her school who use her as a means to get rid of their frustration of abuse and violence:

How he laughed when they fell down and their bloomers showed. When they got up, their faces red and crinkled, it made him feel good.(87)

A white girl named Maureen insults Pecola, Frieda and Claudia: “ I am cute and you are ugly and Black Ugly”(31). Pecola is deeply agonised by Maureen’s insult. After she faces humiliation from Maureen, she encounters Geraldine, a middle class woman who has only disgust for Pecola. She wants eradicate her blackness and her very own identity. Pecola is again devastated by rejection by Geraldine. Another episode of humiliation occurs when she visits the Soap Head Church. He again abuses her by making her poison a sod as some magic that would give Pecola her much desired blue eyes “to rise up out of the pit of blackness and see the world with blue eyes.” (174).

Though she is rejected by powerful segments of society, she is broken by her family. Pecola’s mother too is a victim of White hegemony and internal racialism who works in household of the whites- the Fishers. She showers all her love to the employer’s daughter. Once Pecola along with Claudia and Frieda visit the kitchen of the Fishers where she accidentally drops to the floor a pan of blueberry pies. Her lack of motherhood is displayed in her act of soothing the white girl or “the pink and yellow girl” (22) instead of pampering her on daughter who got burnt. There is a striking contrast in the manner in which Pauline is addressed by her on daughter and the white girl. She is called as Mrs. Breedlove by her own daughter where as Polly by the white girl. She is full of self-hatred. She does not like her roots. In her home she is seem as something ugly, which has no worth. Whereas in the Fisher’s house she is of great importance as she does all the household chores:

Mrs. Breedlove considered herself an upright Christian woman, burdened with no count man, whom God wanted her to punish.(Cholly as beyond redemption, of course, and redemption was hardly the point- Mrs Breedlove was not interested in Christ the Redeemer, but rather Christ the Judge) (42).

The final act of ruthlessness and betrayal comes in the form of her rape by her own father. The image of father as protective and tender is completely swapped with an image of lust and rage. She gets raped twice pushing her on the path of insanity. She becomes epitome of oppression of the White community on the black marginalised women. She is brutally used by the society. In her ugliness, they felt beautiful, in her sufferings they felt comfort, in her silence they found their voices. She thus becomes an immortal symbol of the atrocities of human sufferings and black women's exploitation.

Morrison in her novel *The Bluest Eye* used the technique of symbolism to a great efficiency. The horrific experiences of the Afro American children who grew up in the environment of standardised white beauty have been depicted through various images. The possession of blue eyes symbolise cultural beauty of the American society that is why Pecola yearns to have blue eyes as this would change the perception of people about her. Blue colour also symbolises grief which is prominent in the life of Pecola throughout the novel. Use of seasons is depicted to display that there is no correspondence between the seasons and the events that take place in those seasons. For example the season of spring brings joy and rejoice whereas in the novel Pecola gets raped by her father in the spring. The image of merry spring is replaced by a sad summer for insane Pecola where she is alone and has only an imaginary friend. Autumn is the season of harvesting and happiness, but in case of Pecola, she lost her baby in autumn. Barbara Christian in her "A Promise Song" comments that Pecola's story does not follow:

The usual mythic cycle of birth, death and rebirth, from planting to harvest to planting. Her will proceeds from pathos to tragedy and finally madness. (140)

Chapter 2

Marginalisation and Dehumanization of Sethe; Analysis of Morrison's Beloved

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a novel which deals in anxious motherhood of a Black slave woman – *Sethe*. It brings to light the brutal and savage effects of oppression on Negro women in a society of racists. It exhibits the traumatic experiences of motherhood of slave women under the circumstances of racism, social injustice, sexual oppression, class conflict, physical and emotional abuse. *Beloved* represents the horrors of slavery in women. It reveals how slave women had no right to love. They were merely used as commodities in the market which one could purchase and sell for sexual gratification. They were used to reproduce offspring. The children were not born out of love, but to satisfy a need for more slaves. The slave mothers had a grieving motherhood. Sethe is an example of neurotic mother who is chained by slavery and is unable to shower her love on her children like a normal mother. She has a traumatic motherhood. Though shackled by the White society, she can go to any extremes to save her children. Morrison exhibited the Afro American history from her own point of view placing importance on the effect of slavery on the black individuals and their families:

Beloved represents a working out of subjectivity through the representation of history, a history so brutal and dehumanising that it is unrepresentable, a depiction of community, which is often torn apart by the circumstances of slavery, and a construction of identity. (*Fuston-White, Jeanna* "From the Seen

to the Told”: The Construction of Subjectivity in Toni Morrison’s Beloved”.
African American Review. 36(pg. 461-73).

The novel *Beloved* is set in timeline – twelve years post the end of American Civil War. A total of nine selves reside in Sweet Home namely Sethe, Paul D, Baby Suggs, her grown son Halle with other five slaves. Out of all the slaves of Sweet Home, the plight of Sethe is the most traumatic of all. Sethe was brutally raped and traumatised by the schoolteacher’s nephews who treated her worse than animals and crossed all boundaries of brutality and ruthlessness. She was tortured and abused to such an extent that she later resorted to kill her infant daughter. Sethe’s story represent the non-fictional story of black slave Margaret Garner who also murdered her infant daughter to save her from the exploitation and the tortures of the cruel whites. Since the story is based on a true life event, the impact of the story is more powerful.

The novel starts with a meeting between an ex slave: Paul D and Sethe who meet after a long gap of eighteen years. Both of them tried to eradicate the awful memories of slavery and slavery during the years of their separation. We are acknowledged of their past when they share a talk of their mutual past on Sweet Home owned by Mr. and Mrs. Garner who represent a milder version of white hegemony. The Garners generally respectfully treated the slaves and would ask them for new ideas and even allowed the slaves to use guns for hunting. Though outcast by the whites in general, the slaves were given privileged life at Sweet Home “everything rested on Garner being alive. Without his life each of theirs fell to pieces (*Beloved*,259) The farm Sweet Home was managed by the schoolteacher with his two nephews after the demise of Mr. Garner. Though educated, schoolteacher is wicked and brutal man who dehumanises the slaves in most explicit and torturous ways. He is a symbol of white hegemony. The peace of Sweet Home was disturbed by his coming who had problems with everything that the slaves did:

He complained they ate too much, rested too much, talked too much, which was certainly true compared to him, because schoolteacher ate little, spoke less and rested not at all (259).

School teachers's cruel attitude towards the slaves will cost Sethe innumerable sufferings which are beyond human tolerance and imagination. Kaizer, Arlene wrote:

In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher is clearly the primary representative and agent of the system of white-supremacist, capitalist patriarchy in the era of slavery. His interpellations of Sethe, Paul D, Sixo and Halle lead to rebellion, madness and death (*Beloved: Ideologies in Conflict, Improvised Subjects*. "African American Review" 33 (1999):105-123)

The slaves ran away from Sweet Home to escape the cruelties of schoolteacher. Sethe was pregnant and when her husband-Halle did not arrive at the place where they were supposed to meet after running away, she safeguarded her children and sent them away with other slaves. While looking up for Halle, Sethe is captured by schoolteacher's nephew who raped and literally sucked the milk out of her breasts. She is later whipped by the nephews when they came to know about their complaint that she had made to Mrs. Garner. "Schoolteacher's nephews represent a dismissal by whites of the dehumanising qualities of slavery" (Jeanna 461). Sethe has many scars on her back which resemble trunk of a tree with branches. The scars are her reminder of the whippings. A white girl who helped Sethe in escaping calls her wounds a chokecherry tree.

For Sethe, the pain and humiliation she faced while being raped was of less importance than her milk being stolen. She had milk in her breasts because she was pregnant and it symbolised her motherhood which got ridiculed by schoolteacher's nephews. She hardly talks

about the suffering and agony of the rape, but repeatedly talks about her stolen milk which was meant to feed her hungry baby:

They used cowhide on you?

And they took my milk.

They beat you and you and you were pregnant?

And they took my milk! (20).

Sethe is deeply traumatised by her milk being robbed and any a times mentions about her stolen milk. She is grieved. The stealing of milk not only expresses physical pain, but also humiliated the sacred bond shared by a mother and her child. Sethe's milk is a representation of her affection and devotion towards her children Sethe announces her despair as:

Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to anybody else- and the one time I did it was took from me-they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby (236)

After her mistreatment, Sethe runs away from Sweet Home. She delivers her daughter Denver on the way. She is re-united with her with her rest three children when she reaches her mother in law's house and is pleased to be with them. Not after long does the schoolteacher along with one of his nephews, a sheriff and a slave catcher arrive there to take back Sethe to Sweet Home. Sethe then quickly grabs her children and take them to a shed where she tries to kill them to save them from the traumatic life of slavery. Her mother in law and Stamp Paid watched this gore action from the yard and become motionless with horror. She killed her infant baby girl; she would have also killed Denver had it not been Stamp Paid to save Denver when she swung her to smash her against the wall. Her son's too was brutally

it in their heads with a shovel: “two were lying open-eyed in saw dust; a third pumped blood down the dress of the main one--...”(176).

It affected her so much that she loses rational sanity. She disassociated herself from her on self and becomes empty. She was devoid of any life in her. Her liveliness virtually disappeared after her rape. She is physically and spiritually exhausted. It is not easy to comprehend and justify her act of killing her own baby; but analysing the brutal circumstances of slavery where she was residing left her with no other choice than to commit such a horrendous crime of killing her own child which is the least expected deed from a mother. However her experiences of slavery were so brutal and dehumanising that she didn't want her children to go through the same agony and humiliation that she went through. Fouston-White stated:

It was not madness, but the reality of slavery, that drove Sethe to kill her child, fully aware of the act and its brutality, as well as it's compassion (461).

Sethe was imprisoned to wait for her trial for assassination. Denver being a suckling baby had to go to jail along with Sethe. Sethe is saved from sentenced to death by an influential family who were against the slavery of blacks. Sethe along with Denver after their imprisonment came back to Baby Sugg's home. Sethe's life after imprisonment was no harmonious. She had become socially isolated; her past memories haunt her and make her life harder. She felt extremely guilty as the people in her new environment disapprove of her murder. When Paul D joins to live with them, she remarks: “For twelve years, long before Grandma Baby died, here had been no visitors of any sort and certainly no friends” (14).

Sethe's life after escaping from Sweet Home had been havoc and her past memories added greatly to her sufferings. Her daily life is greatly influenced by her past. Her chat with Paul D indicated that she had suffered a lot and that pain in her past memories was still causing her

pain. Her present life was too painful for her as the memories of the Sweet Home were excruciating for her to consciously recall. Her aim is to keep her memories at a distance: “to Sethe, the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay” (51). She repeatedly tried to move on from her past and the agony it gave to her. Her present life becomes unbearable for her. This is mentioned in the starting of the novel where she told Paul D: “I will never run from another thing on this earth... no more running- from nothing” (18).

Later where she was living, she discovered the spirit roaming around in the house. She looked very young and acted like a baby. She walked like a much younger person to her age. She didn't speak clearly and her bodily functions were not in her control. She represented an infant and called herself Beloved. She is a symbol of Sethe's dead daughter. Sethe felt the remorse of murdering her daughter and constantly desired to explain Beloved the reason of her killing and her feelings of guilt. She knew that in order to save her children she would have to pay heavily: “I took one journey and paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much..” (18). She tried to justify her act to Beloved:

How if I hadn't killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her. When I'll explain it she'll understand, because she understands everything already (236).

Sethe's motherly feelings were so deep that she even wanted to unite with her dead daughter in her grave but couldn't as she had to look after her other children too. She remarks how painful it was for her to be separated from her daughter:

When I put that headstone up I wanted to lay in there with you, put your head on my shoulder and keep you warm, and I would have if Burglar and Howard and Denver didn't need me, because my mind was homeless then.

I couldn't lay down with you then (241).

Sethe said that it was impossible for her to live in peace after the murder. The remorse, despondence and the flashback of her killing her daughter have haunted her since the act : “no matter how much I wanted to, I couldn't lay down nowhere in peace, back then” (241). However the only motive behind the killing was to save her daughter from traumas and brutalities of slavery. She said that she safeguarded her daughter by killing her. “I stopped him, she said, staring at the place where the fence used to be. I took and put my babies where they'd be safe”(193).

Sethe's past also affects her relation with Paul D. They both shared a relation where they were connected through mutual past. She considers that she has other responsibilities to prioritize than her romantic relationship with Paul D. “I have other things to do; worry, for example, about tomorrow, about Denver, about Beloved, about age and sickness not to speak of love” (83). Sethe's agony has no end. Besides the pain of her past memories and dead daughter, she is traumatised by memories of her mother. Lynda in *To Be Loved and Cry Shame: a Psychological Reading of Toni Morrison's Beloved* (2001) states: “Sethe is haunted by the knowledge that her mother was hanged” (183). In a conversation between Sethe and Denver, Sethe is questioned about her mother to which she had not much answers. It denotes that the trauma of suffering was present in their community since long. It is like they have Sethe has inherited the fate of her ancestors:

What happened to her ?

Hung. By the time they cut her down nobody could tell whether she

had a circle or a cross or not,,,,,”

Why they hang your ma'am? Denver asked.”

I never found out. It was a lot of them (73).

Slavery also ruined Halle- Sethe's husband. Sethe after witnessing the exploitation of her wife was deeply distressed and lost his sanity. His helplessness in saving his wife from the brutalities of the white nephews who raped and sucked the milk from her breasts left an everlasting wound on his dignity and confidence. Paul D after watching him with butter smeared all over his face stated:

I broke him, Sethe. Paul D looked up at her and sighed. You may as well know it all.

Last time I saw him he was sitting by the churn. He had butter all over his face (82).

Morrison through the character of Sethe reveals the torments of slavery by the whites which dehumanises and destroys the morality, confidence and identity of the black slaves. The novel exhibits the traumatised life of Sethe and her family working in the Sweet Home. Sethe's was raped and animalised. She had a life full of trauma which forced her to commit a heinous crime of killing her own daughter to save her from the clutches of slavery. Her husband died, she led an isolated life, got haunted by the ghost of her dead daughter and the memories of her past life took away all the sanity from her leaving her devoid of any feelings and emotions except regret and shame. Her life has been a road full of thorns on which she walked barefoot.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* expands further than the description of the black slaves who are held captive by their past memories via the investigation of human revolt to slavery. Set in Ohio, the novel circles around its protagonist- Sethe. Black women in *Beloved* are robbed of their identity, independence, consciousness and self. Sethe is a victim of excruciating sexual violence. She was sadistically exploited by the schoolteacher and his nephews, all of them belonging to the white community. Sethe was haunted by the gruesome memories of her rape and abuse. The plot displays the heart wrenching scene of her breast milk being stolen by the

nephews. Schoolteacher controls all the slaves and orders his nephews to steal Sethe's milk. Sethe's breast had milk for her infant daughter. The white men were acknowledged with Sethe's pregnancy yet they soul never shuddered while performing such awful act. The boys beat Sethe where one held her down with force and other sucked the milk out of her breasts. Upon complaining about her exploitation to Mrs. Garner, she got physically tortured by the school master. He along with her nephews whipped her mercilessly. Subsequently Sethe lost her sanity and even killed her own infant daughter to protect her from sexual exploitation from the whites. She could not imagine the horrors that were inflicted on her to be inflicted on her daughter.

Sethe underwent unimaginable amount of abuse be it physical or psychological. Her memories of her humiliation didn't allow her to lead a normal life. Her peace was distorted. She took the step of killing her daughter out of act of devoted love for her children. The arrival of the ghost in the novel marks a turning point in Sethe's life. Sethe is gifted a chance to correct her past and restructure it. The appearance of the ghost – Beloved is restorative as well as destructive. Morrison depicts the black woman's body as the "other". Sethe is looked at in parameters of physical characteristics such as hair, skin shade, and facial features. Schoolteacher orders his nephews to write down Sethe's: "Human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up"(193). Sethe remarks:

That anybody white could take whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill and maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't think it up. And though she and other lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was her children. Whites might dirty her all right, nut not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing the part of her that was clean (251).

Morrison's *Beloved* analyses inner self of the Negro women. The ghost of Beloved was adding more woes to Sethe. The ghost was there to of the injustices which took place during slavery. Nan stated that she along with Sethe's mother "were taken up by the crew"(62) in their journey. Sethe's mother was used as sexual object to gratify the needs of the members of the crew. Sethe's mother was disgusted and discontented by her exploitative experiences and therefore abandoned her baby. Baby Suggs remarked:

.... Men and women were moved around like checkers..What [Baby Suggs] called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children (27-28).

In *Beloved* Sethe observes that her status in the society is marginalised. On the grounds of the colour of her skin, she is devalued which symbolise darkness and depravity. She wants to justify her act of killing to Beloved. In her article, "Figurations of Rape and the Supernatural in *Beloved*" Pamela E. Barnett argues that:

Morrison revises the standard slave narrative by insisting on the importance of sexual assault over other experiences of brutality (Barnett,420)

Paul D states:

The box had done what sweet home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not: drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind (49).

Sethe's body is symbolised as a sexual object. Her body becomes active when mentally or sexually desired. On being touched lovingly or attentively, she does not keep mum about her past and speaks about it. Her body is healed by the touch and love of Paul D: " the kind of man who could walk into a house and make the woman cry" (17). Sethe's act of killing her

baby is symbolical. When she killed, she suffered more agony and despair. The ghost of Beloved signifies the killing of millions of Negro slaves. She symbolises every African daughter that lost her life due to slavery:

Shivering, Denver approach the house, regarding it, as she always did, as a person rather than a structure. A person that wept, sighed, trembled and fell into fits. Her steps and her gaze were the cautious ones of a child approaching a nervous, idle relative.... (29)

Sethe's daughter Denver is also a captive and the fear of sexual violence always haunted her. A black woman: Ella is also sexually exploited by her own brother and father. She thus expresses her anguish: "you couldn't think up...what them two done to me" (119). Beloved too expresses her desire to unite with Sethe: "She is the one. She is the one I need. You can go but she is the one I have to have" (76).

By telling us the story of Sethe, Morrison puts stress on the dehumanising effect of white hegemony by focusing on the ordeals of the slaves. We witness the rape and exploitation of Sethe. While trying to escape from the Sweet Home, she murdered her baby and tried to kill the remaining children. Her husband lost his sanity. This novel is the true representation of the marginalised black exploited at the hands of the whites. *Beloved* rose awareness about the plight of a forgotten community in the society which received high appreciation from the readers and the critics for coming forward as a bold writer.

Conclusion

In the study the researcher has investigated the use of sexuality as a tool to explore the plight and dehumanization of the black women by Toni Morrison in her novels *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*. For Morrison the incest themes are restorative, an attempt to restore a broken-down social order. In this study taboo sexuality is investigated to explore the traumas of the Blacks who suffered oppression because of age old slavery. Indeed, Morrison's portrayals of incest and the age taboo as not entirely violent and regressive but depicted as examples of redemptive sex acts. The scenes of incest are symbols of the human dilemmas that result from social oppression. Each character is a representative of a certain type of racial group, social class, or type of personality. Morrison challenges Western standards of beauty and observes that the concept of beauty is socially constructed She is proud of being black, portrays positive images of blackness and focuses on the damage that the black women characters suffer through the construction of femininity in a radicalized society. *The Bluest Eye* is the story of Pecola Breedlove, a twelve-year-old Black girl living in poverty who is pregnant with her father's child. Morrison uses the incest theme in the novel to call attention to social gender imbalances and the devastating consequences of incestuous rape. For instance, Madonne M. Milner in her famous article *Lady No Longer Sings the Blues: Rape, Madness, and Silence in The Bluest Eye*." Published in 1985 reads the novel as a tragic version of the rape of Philomela myth what she articulates as "a sequence of rape, madness, and silence," (176). Miner contends that Pecola "remains behind blue eyes, an inarticulate, arm-fluttering bird" (189). Pecola is obsessed with her ugly skin, her friends ridicule her for her ugly skin and she always dreams to have blue eyes like the Whites. By the end of the novel, she is driven mad by her desire to live up to White social standards of beauty

This research analyses the treatment of the use of sexuality in the novels of Toni Morrison which is used to empower the characters and restoration. It implies how Morrison has used the theme of sexuality to uplift the highly exploited and dehumanised female characters who are victims of the tyranny of the white hegemony. In her novels *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison highlights the plight of the black slaves especially the women. She shocked the world by her true depiction of the traumas that the black society undergoes in the white tyranny. Thus the theme of sexuality does not become explicit and vulgar, but aesthetic in the sense as it brings power to her characters and how it became the voice of many suppressed voices of the marginalised black women waiting for justice and social attention.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison has challenged the American image of benevolence where she has depicted even the children suffering through racism, class conflict and sexism. Through the character of Pecola and her two friends who have witnessed her dehumanisation, Morrison has depicted how the innocence of a child is snatched away if the child belongs to a marginalised community shunning the bogus ideologies and culture of innocence in America.

Beloved shows subjugation of the Negro women and highlights the nullification of the black characters in the American society where the whites are always correct. She focuses on the extent of exploitation, racism and slavery experienced by the protagonist of her novel who happens to be a black woman.

The study discovers that in the Morrison's fictional world, the extreme sufferers are the Afro Americans. She exposed that African women are the most exploited and traumatised identities in America. A negro girl is most vulnerable. They either suffer because of their family or because of the highly hostile environment outside their home where racism is out of control which forces the black woman to live a life of marginality.

Morrison's appeal and influence go further than the stories she tells in her novels. She had used her position to draw attention to the Negro conditions. She has replenished our minds and have uplifted the tired souls of the black women. She is not just a great writer, but beyond that. She herself is an example of a black woman who has risen above against all odds. She has become a symbol of black strength, integrity, beauty, determination and accomplishment. As she belongs to the black community, she could feel the agony and share the horrors of the characters she exhibited in her novels. One can therefore feel a sense of reality and authenticity in her fictional works. She is unable to detach herself from her characters therefore displaying more subjectivity than objectivity in her works. Morrison speaks the unspeakable things in the right manner.

Morrison gives insight of Cholly's state of mind before and after his act of abuse, "evidence of his conflicted emotions." Cholly was dead drunk when he returned home; Morrison describes the anguished self of Cholly immediately prior to the rape:

Guilt and impotence rose in a bilious duet. What could he do for her – ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love? (161-62)

Morrison had a passion to depict women that are real and not just contrived to live in a world without racism, sexism, and a society that does not uphold white ideals over blacks.

Indeed, Morrison is interested in studying women that are real. Instead of creating women that fit into an ideal, she gives us realistic women who believe in particular ideals that are unrealistic. From a young age many of Morrison's women are led to self-destruction by

their belief in master narratives that bring about their self-destruction. Pauline and Pecola Breedlove exemplify the wrongs done to blacks by white ideals.

Steven R. Luebke *The Portrayal of Sexuality in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye*. (2002) affirms that incest is “an expression of anger and frustration” (90). He contends that Cholly “is angry at himself, angry, perhaps, at the society he lives in, and he is frustrated by his powerlessness” (90). He further argues that Cholly “displaces his self-hatred, his guilt and impotence,” onto his innocent daughter” (90). All these critics conclude that the exposure of Blacks to sustained racial and economic oppression is used as an explanation for what is perceived to be socially defunct, harmful, even monstrous sexual behaviour. Morrison still admits that the aspects of “woundability” that Pecola experiences may be a problem for all young girls

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