

***Sexual Abuse and Double Marginalization in Toni******Morrison's The Bluest Eye*****A paper by****Alaa Yasser Abd El Mwla Hassan El Shokey****Submitted to****The Department of English****Language & Literature. Faculty of Arts and****Humanities****Suez Canal University****ملخص**

تصور توني موريسون الجنس كأداة للسيطرة على السلطة في جميع العلاقات الإنسانية. وهي تحلل وتتساءل عن مواقف الأفراد والمجتمع في روايتها "العيون الأكثر زرقة". تهتم موريسون بمشاكل الأفراد على المستويات النفسية والعاطفية وخاصة الاجتماعية. وتهدف إلى تسليط الضوء على البيئة المحيطة بالشخصيات، وكيف وأين نشأت ستؤثر عليهم. يظهر هذا بوضوح في شخصياتها المعقدة واختياراتها للكلمات في حكاياتها. موريسون هي نوع من الكتاب الذي لا يروي أعماله بتسلسل زمني، بل تعتمد سرد القصة بأكملها في أجزاء واحد تلو الآخر. يعكس هذا الأسلوب تعقيدات العالم الحقيقي والبشر اللذين يعيشون فيه. تهدف أعمالها إلى انتقاد المجتمع وإظهار كيف يبني المجتمع والثقافة سلوكيات الناس.

يحلل هذا البحث الاعتداء الجنسي والتهميش المزدوج في المجتمع الأزرق من خلال منهج الثقافة المادية. و هو نهج يدرس بشكل نقدي العلاقات بين الثقافة والأدب والظروف المادية للمجتمع. هذا النهج يوفر إطارًا لفهم كيفية تصوير قضايا الطبقة والعرق والجنس والتنافس عليها في النصوص الثقافية، وتسليط الضوء على تجارب الأفراد والجماعات المهمشة.

تركز رواية العين الأكثر زرقة على الألم والحزن العاطفي الذي تعيشه الفتاة الصغيرة بيكولا نتيجة الاعتداء الجنسي والتمييز والتهميش المزدوج .

**Abstract**

Toni Morrison depicts sexuality as a tool of dominating power in all human relationships. She analyzes and questions individuals' and society's attitudes in her novel, *The Bluest Eyes*. Morrison is concerned with the individuals' problems on psychological, emotional and especially social levels. She aims to shed light on the surrounding environment around the characters, and how and where they originated will affect them. This clearly appears in her complex characters and selections of words in her plots. Morrison is a type of writer whose works do not narrate in a chronological sequence, instead, she reveals the whole story in pieces and bits. This style mirrors the complexities of the actual world and its inhabitants. Her work intended to criticize society and show how society and culture construct people's behaviors.

This paper analyzes sexual abuse and double marginalization in the *Bluest* through culture materialistic approach. An approach that critically examines the relationships between culture, literature, and the material conditions of society. It provides a framework for understanding how issues of class, race, and gender are depicted and contested within cultural texts, shedding light on the experiences of marginalized individuals and groups. *The Bluest Eye* focuses on the pain and emotional grief of the young girl, Pecola, as a result of sexual abuse, discrimination and double marginalization.

*Sexual Abuse and Double Marginalization in Toni Morrison's*

*The Bluest Eye*

Morrison expresses empathy for the marginalized groups in society like women and children, so she intends to portray their

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lives during that period in American history. She also shows two types of oppression that African Americans face: oppression of blacks under the whites' power and oppression within the black societies themselves. The preferable way to understand and explain Morrison's works is to apply historical and cultural approaches. So, Culture Materialism helps in analyzing Morrison's fiction as it links them to society. The repressive society in *The Bluest Eye* is somehow familiar to both the writer and the reader as it was a part of twentieth-century society. The reader is strongly attached to society's beliefs and ideologies, and will absolutely understand the work of literature. Cultural Materialism displays "its compassion for underprivileged, marginalized individuals. ." (Griffith,179). Morrison's novel depicts behavior as a cultural and social structure. As Griffith explains, from an anthropological perspective, "culture" encompasses the entire lifestyle of a specific society, including its language, economic structures... a set of shared codes that facilitate communication among all members of that society (179- 180). In *The Bluest Eye*, when Pecola encounters Geraldine, she confirms her superiority, so Griffith says that "Power elites can consist of individuals within a society, including politicians, the affluent, those of the white race, and males. Consequently, certain individuals become "marginalized" and are left susceptible to exploitation." (180-181)

Cultural Materialism shows that the elite are capable of imposing and encouraging the ideologies and ideas that suit their position in society. The amount of control and power applied by the elite differs across societies and through time. Sexism, patriarchy

and racism represent components of the ideologies present in the societies depicted by Morrison. By narrating the story of a little girl raped by her father and how this affects her, and by illustrating how marginalized people in *The Bluest Eye* like the poor little Pecola, along with the prostitutes, become vulnerable by the standards of society. The writings of Morrison clarify human behavior as a characteristic and result of cultural and social structures. As Butler and Raynor mention critics examine how Morrison “. . . demonstrates the harmful influence of patriarchy in both mainstream American society and African American communities. Morrison's novels serve as "historical" accounts by revealing the inseparable connections between gender, race, and class.” (178). The writings of Morrison are fiction, but their care for individuals makes them discussed on the historical and biographical level. Hudson-Weems and Wilfred D. Samuels explain in their book about Toni Morrison, how she incorporates her own memories and childhood experiences into her works as sources of inspiration. Using her family's story and recorded historical events, so Morrison's writings become more reliable. Griffith mentions that authors represent 'products' shaped by their cultural environment. Culture plays a significant role in shaping an author's identity, which subsequently influences how they translate cultural norms and discourses into their literary creations. (Griffith, 181). Morrison's goal is to enlighten her readers, and by examining how specific expressions of power can destroy people, particularly regarding harmful sexual conduct. So, she takes part in showing injustice in some societies, principally those linked to issues of class,

race, and gender. Gender studies provide valuable insights into subjects related to the social construction of masculinity and femininity. African American women have a legacy of experiencing sexual exploitation, dating back to the era of slavery and persisting within their own communities. The issues of 35 sexual harassment and exploitation remain substantial challenges, and in her novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970), Morrison endeavors to illuminate a subject that has long been, and continues to be, a taboo within African American society. At the beginning of the novel; in the first few sentences, the readers are shocked by a tragic event in 1941. The narrator, Claudia, tells us about her friend Pecola who will be pregnant with her father's baby. The topic of sexual abuse is explicitly uncovered from the very beginning of the story. "We had dropped our 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. . . ." (*The Bluest Eye*, 5) This shows how the novel deals with a miserable and broken childhood and how lust or despair can blindly drive fatherhood. Morrison promptly reveals the secret of Pecola, she says: "The intimacy I was aiming for, the intimacy between the reader and the page, could start up immediately because the secret is being shared . . ." (Morrison: 1989, 21). So, Morrison engages the reader from the beginning and also through the investigation of the secret. The narrator and the reader are alike. They both want to understand why this happened. However, on realizing how hurtful the answer will be they settle for the description of how things happened. The seeds represent hope and faith, when the seeds do not grow owing to the tough earth or an antagonistic environment.

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Pecola, the protagonist, is fixated on the idea of possessing blue eyes, convinced that this change will lead to kinder treatment from others. The novel traces the impacts of insecurity, pedophilia, poverty, assault and disgrace that can all be attached to, directly or indirectly marginalization and oppression. The Afro-Americans face marginalization from the white society, and the children experience varying degrees of marginalization, whether marginalized by the whites or their families. They suffer from the absence of their families of lack of love towards them. The tale of these three girls illustrates the experiences of black children within an unhealthy community overflowed with subjection and consequently, it affects them throughout their whole life. The novel also presents the destructive way that black men exercise to impose their power in the community, which happens shamefully through sexuality. Moreover, the victims are their children and women.

Sexuality in the novel can be interpreted as a manifestation of the abuse of power, and this brutal sexuality is the factor that ultimately shatters Pecola's life. The book also explores how the transgressions of parents inevitably affect their children, offering an explanation of 'why' through the exploration of 'how.' Perverted sexuality is also used in *The Bluest Eye* to explicate the persecution in society. Shirley Temple is a well-known child actress with golden hair and shining blue eyes whom Claudia detests but Pecola and Frieda, and everybody else love. Claudia does not like the white dolls given by the adults, The white dolls and Shirley Temple represent the white society's standards. White standards of beauty

become the blacks too, regardless of the skin and physical differences. The black woman's options, in a society ruled by whites, are misery, humiliation and terrible may be more but not less. Claudia says " . . I did not know why I destroyed those dolls. But I knew that nobody ever asked me what I wanted for Christmas." (21) Claudia has a kind of strength inside her and resists the white's standards. While Pecola yearns to have blue eyes as a tool for being accepted in society.

Pecola is mentioned as a "case" by Frieda and Claudia's mother at the beginning of the novel. After her father has burnt down their house, the girl has been named a thing. Their mother is annoyed because Pecola drinks all the milk. Assuming that poor Pecola did this out of cupidity, so as not to lose her temper on Pecola, she starts yelling at the girls. " . . . As if I don't already have enough challenges, trying to provide for my own and avoid destitution." (25) The irritation of the mother and yelling at the girls shows how she is afraid of becoming poor. She is also angry from Pecola's father for not even asking about her daughter to check whether she is fine or not. Milk in literature may be used to indicate fertility, and thus this foreshadows the later events. Claudia and Frieda try hard to make Pecola feel home and welcome to avoid her feeling "outdoors". The scene of Pecola's menstruation holds in it several things. Firstly, the indecent pictures of Mr. Henry that the girls talk about; represent the motifs of oppression and Sexuality. Afterward, they hear the soliloquy of their mother in the kitchen: "But I ain't feeding no elephants" (27), the idea of the elephant may represent someone who eats a lot of food. The use of

the elephant may also connote a pregnant one. Meanwhile, Pecola is getting her period which is a sign that in fact, she could be pregnant. Moreover, when the two sisters try to assist Pecola, they are accused of “playing nasty”, a hint which means it is a sexual game. Also, the fact Claudia and Frieda decide to bury Pecola’s bloody pants, explains their oppressive and cruel society that inculcates shame in the most natural part of women’s life. All mentioned things in the sequence foretell what is coming later: humiliation, sexual abuse and Pecola’s pregnancy. Even the closing of this sequence of events, the conversation between the girls, illustrates the ignorance of the three girls when it comes to mature life. Eventually, Pecola’s incomprehension is noted on inquiring how one gets someone to love you. It is indeed intriguing how Frieda’s belief that love is a fundamental prerequisite for conceiving a child reflects the sisters’ cultural and personal background. Frieda’s perspective that love is a vital thing to be pregnant is innocent and beautiful, but sorrowfully Pecola thinks this is not true as sexuality is just the needed thing.

Pecola reticently accepts her fate of marginalization and oppression. One of the pieces of evidence is Pecola’s bullying at school, she is exposed to marginalization or harassment by other children and even the teachers. When other children annoy her, she does not defend herself but subjects the feeling of marginalization and humiliation, “ If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, “Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn’t do bad things in front of those pretty eyes” (46). Pecola is of the view that



her parents mistreat her because she is not beautiful. The same reason extends to other people around her; as if they do not like her for her blackness and ugliness. Pecola's desire for blue eyes outwardly reflects her internal longing for love and acceptance within the white community. (Sumana, 52) Another situation that illustrates how Pecola is marginalized and she does not even fight back against suppression is when Frieda and Claudia, and Maureen, a light skinned girl, locate a group of boys who taunt Pecola due to her skin color and spread rumors about her father sleeping unclothed. It is bullying by all means. In the same sequence, Pecola portrayed as a victim is connected to Geraldine and her son Louis Junior. Geraldine believes that beauty is something related directly to straight hair and pale skin, so she does not get along with other blacks. She does not want her son, Louis Junior, to deal with other blacks. Thus, she sets herself and her son away from black society. She denies her Afro-American background, she sells her blacksoul and identity and tries to buy the white middle-class and other black women like her have suffered from marginalization and oppression from white society because of their blackness. The only thing they are allowed to do is enslavement and subjection to the white supreme. These women adopt the same standards of white beauty as whites. Their own roots vanish by this cultural pressure and making them cultural orphans. They behave like the whites and try to look like them in their outer appearance, this could be an advantage from their point of view. Geraldine does not live a healthy relationship with her husband as she only feels orgasm when her cat comes to her lap and when her pad slips out of its place. Geraldine

shares her feelings and needs only with cats rather than her husband and son. Plainly, her attitude is unnatural and restrained. She inhibits her feelings from her family and prevents her son from the love he deserves as a child, fulfilling only his material needs. Her oppressed feelings prevent her from loving her son Louis, he himself becomes one of the poor Pecola's oppressors. On seeing Pecola passing by Geraldine's house, Junior intends to seduce her by saying they possess kittens. He hurls the cat at Pecola's face and attempts to poison her as a way to vent his animosity, displacing his resentment towards his mother onto Pecola and the cat. When Geraldine returns home and discovers the deceased cat, Louis Junior lies and tells his mother that Pecola has done this. She said "You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house!" So, Pecola Breedlove faces oppression not solely in terms of race but also in the realms of sexuality and class distinction. Pecola feels comfortable in two places; in the house of Frieda and Claudia and in whores' apartment which is upstairs in the same house with the Breedlove. These women serve as a stark juxtaposition to Pauline, Pecola's mother, and Geraldine as feel the presence of Pecola, laugh when she is around, and even answer her inquires about love. These whores are even ". . . capable of giving love to Pecola, whose quest for it elsewhere is futile" (Suranyi, 17).

The narrator, Claudia, in the first chapter, introduces to us Pecola's family when the little girl is taken into the care of MacTeer. The narrator portrays how the subjection that Pecola faces, explains her fate. Adults' behaviors in Pecola's life; are the reason behind her miserable childhood and even destiny. Cholly

and Pauline, Pecola's parents, act as stereotypical characters of the penniless and poor. "Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove fought each other with a darkly brutal formalism that was paralleled only by their lovemaking" (43). The connection between Pecola's parents' lovemaking and brawls clearly appears when Pecola is paying a visit to the women on the upper floor, asking about what love feels like. She is confused, as the prostitutes talk and sing about their boyfriends in a way that is far from what Pecola observes when their parents have sex. Her father's sounds during lovemaking are very disturbing but her mother remains completely silent. The love between Pecola's parents changes into a kind of power struggle, and as a result, they depend on the amount of abuse they give to each other. Pauline deeply inside her wants her husband, Cholly, to remain drunken and violent so she can be the victim who has to suffer. When Cholly was young, with a threat to use a gun, Cholly and a girl he loved then were forced to pretend to have sex, but in fact, it was a kind of sexual assault enforced on both of them. As a powerless man in this society, Cholly cannot hate or take revenge for what white men have done. His savage attitude is out of a pain that rooted in him since his youth and he cannot explain it. "As a result of that humiliating experience, his perspective on female sexuality becomes imbued with a combination of secrecy, embarrassment, and resentment." (Rubenstein, 140). Traumatized by humiliating experiences; like facing rejection from his father, the erosion of his self-esteem, and even his empathy result in making Cholly a suppressor himself. Pauline's childhood is also not a good or happy one. As a child, she is ignored and left to herself. She has suffered

from a deformed foot since she was very young and later on she loses her front tooth as she lacks self-confidence. She lives north with whites and elite blacks, a thing that makes her want to be more like the women up north. In order to be like them, will cost a lot of money. She asks Cholly for money to buy clothes. Cholly needs money to drink and Pauline needs money to buy clothes and the fact that they have a shortage of money. Pauline believes that she is not as beautiful as the women in the movies she watches. She does not even have a loving and caring husband like those white ones. Subsequently, this adds more frustration and dissatisfaction to her lack of self-confidence and worth. This leads her to pour out her anger on her children and her husband. As Suranyi writes, In the *Bluest Eye*, the black mother despises her own child, as the child serves as a constant reminder of her dire circumstances, while she holds deep affection for the young child of the white family she is employed by. Morrison clearly condemns a racist culture for its worship of white standards of beauty . . . (13). Pauline loves the little white girl in the family she works for so much, she gives the girls care and love that she deprives her children of. The white family is content with Pauline's presence, they give her a nickname, Polly, which contributes to her feeling of integration within the white society. Pauline never had a nickname during her childhood or even when she got married. The rage and discontent that embrace the life of Pecola's life, are obviously destroy Pecola's childhood. The harsh childhood of Pauline and Cholly does not make them understand the needs of their children. Maybe the reason is they were abused and neglected children. "The

Breedloves despise themselves because they hold the belief in their inherent lack of worth which is translated into ugliness for the women of that family” (Sumana, 51). It is clear in Pecola’s ideas about how her life would be different if only she possessed blue eyes. By raping Pecola, Cholly destroyed the meaning of care and love, which is rooted in his shameful childhood experience. All of this shows how the attitudes of Pecola’s parents toward love and sexuality become perverted into abuse. Cholly confused emotions make him rape his daughter: “Cholly’s rape of Pecola is, thus, the misshaping of his affection for Pecola” (Sumana, 56). He is not incapable of distinguishing between sexual lust and parental love. Cholly’s confused feelings also make him bring a blanket and cover Pecola after raping. This action shows how he cares for his child in his strange way, but also this way is not enough to stop him from raping his daughter in the first place. Pecola is eventually abused by both parents; Cholly raps her and her mother does not believe her, Pecola becomes “a victim of trauma who would be unable or unwilling to narrate the story of her extortion” (Suranyi, 15). The rape does not only relate to Pecola but: “. . . related through the eyes of the abuser” (15). This incident indicated how the traumatic experience that Pecola faced has rendered her voiceless. When Pecola becomes an expectant mother she is forsaken by the whole society whether adults or children. She is forced to leave school and adults only talk about how shameful it is. This illustrates the inconsiderate, ignorant and even offensive of the society around little

Pecola, especially when it comes to issues like sexual abuse: “She is abused by her own father and mother, made invisible or denied by other adults, but is also the target of ridicule from other children who constantly pick on her” (15). No one seems to feel sorry or care for Pecola except Claudia and Frieda. Pecola becomes increasingly fixated on the idea of having blue eyes, a desire she has been fervently praying for over an extended period, she has been pushed to the edges of despair and even insanity. In the end, her obsessions lead her to Soaphead asking for his help. A man who is already a victim of his background, and considered the reader of dreams and fortune teller of the town, but also well known as a pedophile. Soaphead hates being close to adults and even people, which makes him use little girls to fulfill his sexual desire as they are easy to manipulate. Rubenstein states: “. . . Soaphead is a pedophile; little girls are the only sexual objects who do not threaten his fragile and barren masculinity” (140) He cannot hold a conventional job, yet when he arrives in Lorain, Ohio, the women there see his celibacy supernatural and they gave him a kind of a divine status in the society: “He became a ‘Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams.’ It was a profession that suited him aptly . . . and he had numerous opportunities to witness human stupidity” (165). Soaphead feels himself special to others. His many but failed academic studies and his celibacy and being a member of a British noble family, have put him aside from the common blacks. He despises his visitors, disparaging their requests for money and love and contemplates how he could have outperformed God in crafting the universe. Moreover, when he states that his meetings with little

girls are perverted, he blames God for his lust. Thus, justifies his sexual desire for young girls. However, he realizes how he is such a cheater and a juggler when Pecola asks him to give her blue eyes: “.....A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes. His outrage grew and felt like power. For the first time he honestly wished he could work miracles.” (174) The supernatural powers possessed by Soaphead, are all forged. However, when he sees Pecola he feels pity for her. On seeing her for the first time, he sees her “pitifully unattractive” (173) and truly wishes to help this little girl and grant her request of having blue eyes. Soaphead is the man who seals Pecola’s fate and the one whom Pecola trusts and puts her faith in. To be honest the man is a product of his life and early experiences which unfortunately turns him into a pedophile and of course not the man that Pecola thinks he is. Maybe if he was a real wise man, he could have been the last straw to save Pecola from insanity. He represents a danger to society as he believes he possesses an inherent right bestowed by God to molest little girls, stating that he opted to utilize them. He does not touch Pecola physically but he attacks her mentally. Claiming that he corrects what God has mistaken. After meeting the Soaphead, Pecola becomes obsessed with seeing herself in the mirror, and with talking about her blue eyes with her fictional friend: the mirror is important here as: “She is not seen by herself until she hallucinates a self” (Morrison, “Unspeakable Things Unspoken,” 21). At the end of the story, the abused and lonely little Pecola becomes insane. She is rejected by everyone and ignored by society, she is only left to her destiny. Her encounter

with Soaphead drives her to madness, as Pecola seeks him as her final refuge. It's ironic that the man Pecola regards as an authority is, in reality, a child harasser. Many of *The Bluest Eye's* characters, each in their own different way – according to each background– have gained perverted sexuality. Holloway also indicates how Morrison in this novel “. . . portrays victims rendered voiceless . . . a victim of incest and violence, Pecola and her identity are gradually annihilated” (163). Pecola is left voiceless, which accordingly deprives her of telling anybody of the crimes committed against her. That is why the story needed to be narrated by an omniscient narrator and Claudia who offers a fatal and critical viewpoint for comprehending the felony.

Throughout history, African-American women have suffered from sexual exploitation, physical and emotional violence and manipulation. Their experience was pathetic as they were forced to face and live with the domination of white and black males. Therefore, black women have double domination due to racial segregation and black male patriarchal in society. They are not safe from oppression whether inside or outside their communities. Race and patriarchy are the main reasons behind the marginalization of black females. The title of the novel itself grabs attention to the existence of whiteness and how that existence can impact not only a group but also an individual. *The Bluest Eye* shows how society negatively affects black women. Women characters always struggle because they are not male, white or/ and not financially safe. Pecola is the abused heroine in the novel since its beginning. Through narration, we are exposed to the childhood



history of Pauline. Both the mother and daughter have been oppressed and marginalized by gender and race, they are affected by sexuality and racism in their childhoods. They fail to express how sexually and racially oppressed. Pecola experiences endless slavery, she is just a machine and a slave in society. Being a black girl makes her face racial discrimination. So, she wants her liberty from the slavery system and patriarchal domination. Black women undergo exploitation on the physical and psychological bases at the hands of land whites, meanwhile, they are abused within their families. Therefore, black women live under double marginalization as white and black males are the reason for their misery. We observe how black women are marginalized and exploited because of their gender and race. It presents the amount of violence the black female is exposed to in all their relationships. The case of a young black girl who is sexually and psychologically exploited in the community. The novel revolves around mainly Pecola and puts a good consideration to her mother Pauline who have been faced marginalization and oppression due to their gender and race. They are affected in their childhood by sexism and racism and remain silent as they cannot express themselves and unfortunately become racist and sexist oppressed. The novel sheds light on the painful experience of women in the sexiest and most racist society and how they always struggle for integrity and survival. It also focuses on the social pressure that women face to have their own independent identities out of men's supremacy. Pecola lives in a male-dominated society and she is abused by her father. The male domination exploits the little black girl even in her home. Her voice is silent

before the harshness of male domination. So, Pecola's absolute goal is to possess blue eyes; believing that these eyes will make her more lovable and accepted by others. She lives and feels oppression, segregation and exploitation of the white and black society. The white society hates Pecola for being black and the black society despises her for being a girl in a male-dominated society. African American women have been strangled because of double marginalization. Pecola feels empty and lost inside; she does not feel belonging to her own race culture and society or the white one. In fact, there is no place for her in the white society and she is prevented from having her own identity in the black society and therefore, treated as just property. Pecola sees how everyone accepts and loves Frieda. Despite being a female, Frieda does not feel marginalization as much as Pecola because of her white roots. White people have the upper hand in the American society. It is clear in Claudia's life and their happiness despite being a female of the society with Pecola. This presents the situation of blacks and focuses on women who undergo marginalization as a result of masculine dominations of both colors. She also asserts that the existence of white and black females is completely different from each other though they are of the same gender. Even blacks must learn how to obey and serve whites, it is a kind of master-slave relationship. As a result, Pecola faces both gender and racial segregation in school and in society. Women are victimized by black men and the whole white society. White patriarchy marginalizes black females because of their race, even so, 75 encourages them to categorize gender problems over racial

problems. Black females are suppressed more by sexism than by racism. Meanwhile, the black community marginalizes black women because of their gender; even so, encourages them to categorize racial problems over gender, justifying that black females are suppressed more by racism than by sexism. Since Pecola is a black girl, she has to undergo gender and racial oppression. She is not free from the chain of exploitation. Since she is black, she is poor too. The description here shows penury; "dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted where the plaits had some undone, the muddy shoes with the wad of gum coming out of the cheap soles, the soiled socks, one of which had been walked down into the heel of the shoe" (89). Cultural materialism describes societies enhancing the position of the elite are likely to be propagated and amplified throughout the system. It agrees with Marx when he declares: "the ideas of the ruling class in each epoch are the ruling ideas". Cultural materialism states that the elite encourages ideologies and ideas favorable to their 76 positions. The amount of control and power exercised by the elite differs across societies and time. The issue of slavery recreates an era of long-term domination upon blacks; while black women undergo double marginalization. Morrison raises the topics of marginalization and segregation and illustrates how black women hardly live in such a bias society. In her novel, she shows the bitterness that surrounds the black female experience. Violence against black women embodies two sides, gender and race. Violence is the main feature in the experience of African Americans in America, it has been always a history of suppression, victimization and violence. Black girls and

women suffer from the oppression of a male-dominated society; as they are not secure from black males or/and white people. Black women are obliged to sustain oppression and domination in terms of gender and race in the society. Even if they want to resist the oppression of whites, they are unable to fight because of their unprotected position in society. They cannot free themselves from the chain of male control.

The novel delineates a social structure in which black women are stripped of all and each kind of rights including their bodies, destinies and even themselves. Meanwhile, they undergo racism, sexism and gender segregation in white-dominated communities. Pecola faces unequal and harsh treatment from whites but she is obliged to face it silently due to her low status in society. . Pecola and Maureen both are young girls but Pecola is totally marginalized in the society while Maureen has some sort of freedom comparable to Pecola. Both of the girls are marginalized but the white girl is free from racial discrimination. Therefore, the viewpoint of double marginalization is one of the acceptable interpretations of the novel. Among a lot of critics, Erin Miller sees the novel as a result of psychological phenomena. So, he disputes:

the experiential and psychological experience of slavery;  
the destructive

of Christian piety and the spirituality of resistance; the  
brutal development

and destruction of continent's landscape from development  
and or neglect;

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and how these crisis's effect relationships between women and men. But

most of all she looks at how, when and why women come together in

companionship and why and how those groupings often fail. (12)

Cultural Materialism extends the class-based analysis of Marxism and adds additional focus on the most vulnerable members in the society like women, children and whoever discriminates on a different basis. Culture defeats black women's characters, identity, notions, choices and even their bodies; so, they cannot raise their voices. Here is an extraction from the novel that shows how black and white are different: Being a minority in terms of both class and caste, we navigated the fringes of existence, struggling to consolidate our weakness and hand on or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment. Our marginal presence, however, we had become accustomed to handling it probably because it seemed abstract. (15) The society differentiates between whites and blacks. The prevailing notions in white society drive them to treat others according to the degree of whiteness in color. The more your skin is white, the more respect and justice you will receive and vice versa. Race is a main standard in the American society and females are the members who suffer from 79 double humiliation; both from white society and black males. Pecola realizes this standard early, she is obsessed with having blue eyes, and she also wants a life like Maureen. Deep inside Pecola, she indirectly recognizes that being black and getting social justice is something far from happening.

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American women endure patriarchal and racial exploitation. These are the social practices that the more influential members of society impose upon the vulnerable ones. It is clear in this quotation:

The Breedloves' residence in a storefront was not a temporary result of

financial struggles .....they lived there as they were poor and black, and

they stayed there because they believed they were ugly.

While their

poverty followed a long-standing and stifling pattern it was not unique.

But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that

they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. (30)

Similar destiny but different females is the motto of African-American society. So, all women want to be free from slavery as well as white male domination. Since racism is very common, plantation owners or white people exploit their minds and bodies giving cruel torture, whereas black women are not safe from male abuse inside their families and outside.

The social structure does not allow blacks to show resistance or any attempt to resist humiliation and exploitation. During slavery, white people treated blacks as animals, they bought and sold them. Likewise, the novel portrays a story where black women slaves are segregated and exploited in terms of gender and race. Firstly, women are suppressed by the patriarchal situation of the social world. Secondly, being a black woman is a double load.

Thirdly, the cruel institution of slavery steals from them the right to womanhood and motherhood. Women try to exist and play their roles in all possible ways in society and households while men either escape from their responsibilities or are absent from their families. Women tried to exist and play their roles in all possible ways in society and households while men were either escaping from their responsibilities or absent from their families. Women struggle under the institution of slavery to play their roles as mothers as they should be. This recognition of self-identity and roles in society is the main craving of Cultural materialism. What is important is that the novel shows the reasons for women's misery are the patriarchal family structure and the racial society. White people put black in a low position in society, so they use and exploits them. Even black men make the same. Thus, black women are marginalized by white society and black males. Black men undergo humiliating treatment, this helps black men to mistreat their own female family members. When Cholly realized what he had done to his daughter, Pecola, he just covered her. However, he is supposed to try to fix the harm and make an effort to treat his family physically and emotionally in a better way. If racism and suppression never come to an end, anger will only exist, causing rape to continue. Suppression and oppression of patriarchy are what surround female characters especially Pecola and her mother, Pauline, who live a miserable and difficult life. Their freedom and identity come under crisis. Their society is sexually and racially prejudiced. So, Pecola is like a slave who has suffered in society as they do not have freedom under the double prison of gender and race. In such male-dominated

societies, men have power that has prevailed and exercised a long time before. All the members of Pecola's family are in the same situation where they are obliged to live compulsory suffering from white supremacy. Therefore, Pecola is sold and her mother decides to sell her as the man who takes her is very kind. In order to relieve her daughter from male control, Pauline insists on taking Pecola; she wants to sell her daughter. The mother thinks that if her daughter is taken away from her she will be free from sexual utilization. In a nutshell, both Soaphead and Cholly Breedlove's acts destroy the young Pecola. Nevertheless, what drives Pecola to insanity is not the father's sexual abuse or his confused emotions but the Soaphead presence. Maybe Pecola would not have been in this condition unless she sought the help of this man. Let us admit that Pecola and the Soaphead's conditions and problems are not the consequences of the actions of God, but of people. All the adults around Pecola are sick and perverted, except maybe Claudia's parents and definitely, the three prostitutes who treat Pecola with a healthy and good attitude. Pauline, Cholly, Geraldine and lastly, Soaphead are all characters of deformed sexuality. Accordingly, Pecola exists in an environment where nothing can grow; just unyielding earth. Pecola is a victim of a racist and repressive society, of oppressive and uncaring parents (who were neglected children), and of other children whose bullying of Pecola is an outcome of being subdued. Pecola's story shows why and how oppression only brings oppression. Abuse is portrayed as a thing that is bequeathed through generations. Knowing the childhood of Pecola's parents is pivotal in understanding why Cholly rapes her and why Pauline



mistreats Pecola. Thus, it is the result of dehumanizing pressures and codes. As Rubenstein illustrates, “The Bluest Eye is a narrative of both violence and violation . . . Rape and incest become metaphors for both black and white nightmares of inverted love and suffocation of selfhood” (144). No self or a shattered one is what is left for Pecola after abusing her since a very early age. A society of either gender, class or race discrimination can cause irrecoverable harm to the psyche of 70 children, and Pecola underwent to all of them. Being a girl living under gender segregation, a poor child between affluent consumers’ society and a black in a society of white supremacy is unbearable for her. Her demand for blue eyes symbolizes the various types of oppression that she faced. As Sumana states, “The Bluest Eye, thus, makes one of the most powerful attacks on the relationship between Western standards of female beauty and the psychological oppression of black women” (50). In *The Bluest Eye*, sexuality works as an indicator of how much society is sick and oppressive. Meanwhile, sexual oppression appears to be the most cruel and destructive kind of oppression. Therefore, the elements of race, social class, slavery, and sex are so significant in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Cultural Materialists interested in cultural issues investigate her novels from several perspectives. Taking advantage of the above-mentioned issues in her fiction, Morrison has made readers aware of the calamities that African Americans face in their lives. Morrison has pierced into the minds of her characters, revealing their thoughts 92 perfectly. Her works can be a great help to move the position of blacks especially black females from margin to center.