

# **ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

School of Graduate Studies  
College of Humanities, Language Studies Journalism and  
Communication

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

**A Feminist Reading of *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison**

**Samiya Mohammed**

**June, 2015**

**A Feminist Reading of *'The Bluest Eye'*  
by Toni Morrison**

**By**

**Samiya Mohammed**

**Advisor: Dr. Birhanu Matthews**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of Foreign Languages  
and Literature Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English  
Literature**

**Addis Ababa University**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**June, 2015**

School of Graduate Studies  
College of Humanities, Language Studies Journalism and  
Communication  
Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

**A Feminist Reading of `The Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison**

**By**

**Samiya Mohammed**

**Approved by Board of Examiners**

Birhanu Matthews (PhD) \_\_\_\_\_

(Advisor) Signature

Melakneh Mengistu (PhD) \_\_\_\_\_

(Examiner) Signature

Olga Yazbec (PhD) \_\_\_\_\_

(Examiner) Signature

## **Declaration**

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis is my original work and has not been presented before. All sources used in writing the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Samiya Mohammed

Signature: .....

Place: College of Humanities, Language Studies, Journalism and Communication

Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Addis Ababa University

Date of submission: June, 2015

## Abstract

The main aim of this study, *A Feminist Reading of The Bluest Eye*, is to show the miserable life experiences of black American women. And to demonstrate essentially how black women writers use their literary productions to tell the stories of black women who try to find out the truth about them and the world they live in through different circumstances and in different cultures by taking Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in focus. Black women writers use their literary productions to tell the stories of black women who try to find out the truth about their life and the world they live in through different circumstances and in different cultures. *The Bluest Eye* (1972) is a pillar of black American women's literary tradition which was ignored and not even recognized as American literature. To achieve the goal of this study, the researcher found it necessary to employ textual analysis of the novel.

Concerning feminist issues, different studies have been conducted, but black American women literary works are rarely treated. So this study might be important for critically analyzing the life experiences of black American women throughout the novel 'The Bluest Eye' by Toni Morrison, considering the discrimination and the violence black women experienced due to their gender. Hence, it is expected that studying and analyzing the experiences of black women in the selected text would enable us to create an understanding of the misery and discrimination they experienced in their respective society. It would also help the readers to raise the knowledge of black feminist criticism and awaken the society to take an action of combating gender bias, stereotypes, and discriminations.

MA theses based on feminist perspective have been reviewed to confirm the current study is different from the other studies conducted on feminism previously. In conceptual framework detailed explanations on the central concepts of Feminism and Feminist criticism, waves of feminism (The first, the second and the third wave of feminism), trends of African American literature, Black American literary criticism and black women and feminism were given.

The common features of feminist issues which are dealt with the experiences of black American women like Stereotype, Sexual abuse, Physical violence, Psychological violence, prejudice, Poverty and Discrimination are the themes that have been explored in the feminist reading of the select novel.

Finally the researcher concluded the overall concepts that were raised in the previous chapters. As it has been seen in the textual analysis; *The Bluest Eye* not only reflects the issues of race, class and gender, but also presents the cultural, economical and social burdens black American women experienced in American society.

## **Acknowledgements**

This study can't be completed without the support, help, guidance, suggestion and reinforced criticism of others.

Firstly, My deepest and heart-felt gratitude goes to my Thesis advisor Dr. Birhanu Mathews for his prudent and unreserved Suggestions and guidance in conducting the research.

I also extend my thanks and indebtedness to Ato Tesfaye Lemma, Ato Boresa Beyen, Olyad Gadisa, Lensa Tefaye and Birqe Beyen for their incalculable support materially and morally and after all giving me the chance to be a student of MA. My gratitude for their support goes beyond words. It was their Moral and support that has greatly contributed to my success in continuing my education.

I would like to express my earnest thanks to my Ummi and Abi in addition to my sister Fetiya Mohammed who shouldered the responsibility of fulfilling my needs for the last few years while I was learning in the University.

My intense thanks go to my friends Zelalem Tenagashawu, Aduket, Alex who were toiling to find me books for my paper and motivated me. Diro, Your intelligence, advice and encouragement had been crucial in conducting this study.

Last but not least gratitude goes to all of my classmates who were giving me care, supports and motivation as I was the only girl in the class. Anyhow let's get it on guys.

## Table of contents

Abstract.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	III
Table of contents.....	IV

### CHAPTER ONE

### PAGES

1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Notes about the author and her major works.....	3
1.3 Statement of the problem.....	3
1.4 Objectives.....	4
1.5 Significance of the study.....	5
1.6 Methodology.....	5
1.7 Scope of the study.....	5
1.8 Organization of the study.....	6

### CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Review of Related studies.....	7
2.2 Conceptual framework.....	8
2.2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2.2 Feminism and Feminist criticism.....	9
2.2.3 Waves of feminism.....	12
2.2.3.1 First wave of feminism.....	12
2.2.3.2 Second wave of feminism.....	12
2.2.3.3 Third wave of feminism.....	14
2.2.4 Trends of African American Literature.....	14
2.2.5 Black American literary criticism.....	18
2.2.6 Black women and feminism.....	20

### **CHAPTER THREE: A FEMINIST READING OF ‘THE BLUEST EYE’**

3.1 Introduction.....	25
3.2 Plot summary of the novel.....	25
3.3 Stereotype.....	26
3.4 Sexual abuse.....	29
3.5 Physical violence.....	31
3.6 Psychological violence.....	32
3.7 Prejudice.....	34
3.8 Poverty.....	36
3.9 Discrimination.....	38

### **CHAPTER FOUR**

<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>41</b>
------------------------	-----------

References

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

African Americans are referred to as Black Americans or Afro-Americans. They are an ethnic group of citizens who are residents of the United States with total or partial ancestry from any of the native populations of Sub-Saharan Africa. The term may also be used to include only those individuals who are descended from African slaves. As a compound adjective, the term is usually hyphenated as African-American.

African Americans are largely the descendants of slaves—people who were brought from their African homelands by force to work in the New World. Their rights were severely limited, and they were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States. Nevertheless, African Americans have made basic and lasting contributions to American [history](#) and culture. (Wikipedia).

The black skinned societies were protesting against the whites for their status. They tried to reflect their sorrow and sympathy in different forms. Concerning the very discrimination of black people Hans Partens (1995) says ``Until fairly recently critical interest was primarily focused on the three areas of difference, those of gender, race, color, and class that seemed to be most central in the way Western culture has over the ages structured itself.

Black Women are the first victims of marginalization due to their gender in addition to class, color and race. Even though there exists racial and class discrimination on the black people, gender discrimination and marginalization could be an additional type of burden for the women who are black Americans.

African American literature was ignored and the writers and their contribution to culture in general was being rejected and overlooked for a long time. After 1970's it began to enter the

mainstream of publishing and be read by black and white audiences. African American authors and artists present an important part of American culture and literature.

Black American women writers share a common interest in representing the black female characters as a seeker for selfhood and independence. They began to achieve success as novelists, poets, writers and artists. They explain their literary relations as a natural affinity which brings them together in a common feminist struggle for freedom and equality.

Broadly defined by Lois Tyson (2006) `` feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. However, just as the practitioners of all critical theories do, feminist critics hold many different opinions on all of the issues their discipline examines. ``

So many female and male writers reflect the unequal treatment of women in their books by proposing different solutions. These books include Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792); Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which vividly portrays the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood; *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker who does not limit herself to describing the sufferings of African American women but suggests to all women a path to follow in order to free themselves from the evils of patriarchy and sexism. *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou, reflects multiple oppressions of Black women in America. She indicated her feminist vision through the portrayals of optimistic, thoughtful and faithful characters. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), which has an important section on the portrayal of women in the novels of D. H. Lawrence and male contributions to this tradition of feminist writing include John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Woman* (1869) and *The Origin of the Family* (1884) by Friedrich Engels.

Toni Morrison is also one of the prominent writers who focused on the depressed life experiences of Black women. She elaborated black customs, ideas and values, specifically those of black women. The oppressive life experiences of African-American women in a racist and sexist culture are also treated with a distinctive voice in Morrison's novel `*The Bluest Eye*` which the researcher selected for analysis to full fill the study.

The goal of this study is to make a Feminist Reading of Toni Morrison's Novel 'The Bluest Eye' published in 1970 by examining the miserable life situations black women encounter due to their gender. The need for studying feminist novels calls for analysis of feminist issues. Feminist theory and literary criticism have ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. Gender issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience, including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not. Since it is very necessary to study how black women writers use their literary productions to tell the stories of black women.

### **1.2 Notes about the author and major works**

Toni Morrison is the first African-American novelist who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993 for "Beloved". Her novels are known for their epic themes, vivid dialogue, and richly detailed characters. She is an American novelist, editor and professor. She wrote ten novels. Among her best known novels are "The Bluest Eye", "Sula"(1974), "Song of Solomon"(1977) and "Beloved"(1987). In 2012, an interview in The Guardian, she tells that she became a Catholic at age 12 and received the baptismal name "Anthony", which later became the basis for her nickname "Toni". She did her post-graduation in English from Cornell University in 1955, for which she wrote a thesis on suicide in the works of William Faulkner and Virginia Wolf. Morrison began writing fiction as part of an informal group of poets and writers at Howard who met to discuss their work. She wrote a short story about a black girl who longed to have blue eyes. She later developed the story as her first novel, "The Bluest Eye" (1970). She wrote ten novels, the latest one is "Home" (2012). She also wrote for Children's literature as well. In contemporary woman novelists of America, Toni Morrison is the rare one who thinks highly of nature in her works. As the emerging of eco-feminism, some studier began to research these novels in terms of feminist Critics.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

African American literature has become an inevitable part of American literature and culture. It has examined the problem of gender discrimination in all its philosophical, existential and epistemological aspects. The emergence of African American Women writings brought an illustration about the life situation of black American women. The reflection of discrimination

and marginalization in their writings has opened a new line of thinking on Feminism and Black Feminism.

Concerning feminist issues, different studies have been conducted, but black American women literary works are rarely treated. In fact there are studies like Birhan Asseffie (2012) which is conducted with better depth and indicates the experiences of marginalized Black American Women. And apparently more studies haven't been conducted about the marginalization and discrimination of black American women especially by their fellow black American society in general and a feminist reading of black women in specific. So that this study might be important for critically analyzing the life experiences of black women throughout the novel `The Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison, considering the discrimination and the violence black women experienced due to their gender.

#### **1.4 Objectives**

Toni Morrison's novel is rich in black women customs, values, experiences, and her writings aim to be representative of black culture specifically those of black American women. Her being "black" and "female" still constitutes a particular perspective in her writings.

The main objective of this study is to conduct a feminist reading on the novel `the Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison. In line with the general objective, the study has got the following specific objectives.

- Critically examine the deprived life experiences of black women
- Critically analyze the ways in which female characters are portrayed.

This study specifically focuses on women characters, with the purpose of showing how black women are marginalized and discriminated by their own fellow Black Americans.

The researcher tries to apply feminist literary theory in general and black feminism in particular focusing on the method of the author portrayed the characters via investigating the feminist issues through feminist reading of the novel `The Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison.

## **1.5 Significance of the study**

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the life experiences of black women and how they are represented in `The Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison. It is expected that studying and analyzing the experiences of black women in the selected text would enable to create an understanding of the misery and discrimination they experienced in their respective society.

It will also help to raise the knowledge of black feminist criticism and awaken our society to take an action of combating gender bias, stereotypes, and discriminations. Since few research studies are conducted on the black feminist novels, this study may initiate students of English Literature to analyze black American Feminist novels in depth.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The study is limited to the novel `the Bluest Eye, ` in which the life experiences of black American women are critically examined. The researcher critically analyzes the novel by using feminist literary theory which is Black feminist approach. Based on the concept of feminist issues, I tried to analyze the novel by showing the miserable life experiences of black women, how they are represented and their society's attitude towards them.

Therefore, as a main source the researcher uses extracts from the novel to make textual analysis. Regarding data collection, reference books of different writers collected from library and an internet sources are used to define and clarify the subject in the related literature review.

## **1.7 Scope of the study**

The study is limited to the feminist reading of `the Bluest Eye` by Toni Morrison. Actually there are some studies conducted on other black feminist novels. But the very reason to select this novel is; Morrison clearly made visible Black's subjugated culture in her literary representation. She lodges a severe indictment against the dominant society for its unjust oppression of African-Americans. Morrison takes American experiences and characteristics, such as discrimination, stereotypes, violence and prejudice and illustrates them in a way that is so clear, yet so painful. As an African-American female writer, her writings are abundant in information about black women experiences.

Therefore the researcher has limited herself on a feminist reading of Toni Morrison's novel `The Bluest Eye` to complete the study within the time frame work. The study also concentrates only on the experiences of black American women by focusing on the issues related to feminism that are reflected in the novel. Toni Morrison's other literary texts and other literary aspects of the novel are not considered in this study.

### **1.8 Organization of the study**

This research is intended along the line of analyzing the life experiences of black American women reflected in the selected novel. To tackle Toni Morrison's Novel `The Bluest Eye` the study is presented in four chapters. In the preceding chapter, background of the study, notes about the author and her major works, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, methodology, Scope and organization of the study are presented. The second chapter is devoted to the related studies and conceptual framework. Under Chapter three the common features related to feminism are analyzed through a feminist reading by using extracts from the novel to show clearly the life experiences of black American women and the negative treatment given for them from their respective society. Finally the last chapter is the conclusion of the thesis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of related literature

The aim of this chapter is to review the related studies conducted on the area of the study. Studies focused on local as well as global literary writings are reviewed. Different researchers employ different literary theories to conduct their research. In relation to this the current study employs the feminist literary theory to handle the analysis. Due to that it is important to review the previous studies related to the current research topic to show how they are related, what makes the current study different from the preceding ones and to fill the gap between them. Since one local study and two global studies are reviewed. Among the studies; Birhan Assefa's (2012) MA Thesis entitled 'Experiences of Marginalized women in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird sings*' is one of the local studies and 'Blindness and Invisibility in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*' by Radka Nosková (2013) and Veda Kimber's (2011) 'It's All About Color: An analysis of Color Symbolism in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye*' are among the global studies.

Firstly we consider Veda Kimber Jackson's (2011) MA thesis entitled 'It's All About Color: An analysis of Color Symbolism in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye*'. In her study she examined Toni Morrison's use of symbolism in *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye*, especially archetypal and color symbolism, in an effort to recover the culture that has been lost to Diasporic Africans. Moreover, she focused on the color symbolism and symbolic archetypes Morrison employs in both novels.

Birhan Assefie (2012) in his MA thesis entitled *Experiences of Marginalized women in Maya Angelou's novel I Know Why the Caged Bird sings*; he has tried to explore the experiences of Africa American women revealed in the novel. He has discussed the sexual abuse, prejudice against the black women and response to the injustice had been discussed. The researcher finally discussed the nature of black feminist resistance from helplessness anger to outright protest. What makes the current related to Birhan's thesis is both of the studies focus on Black Feminist literary work. Even though Birhan selected Auto biographic feminist novel by Maya Angelou, the current study will focuses on the special reference of Toni Morrison's Novel the *Bluest Eye*.

On the other hand the current researcher does not treat the black feminist resistance rather the gender bias, prejudice, discrimination and marginalization black female characters encounter throughout the story of the novel.

Finally, Radka Nosková (2013) has made a study on `Blindness and Invisibility in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.` He tried to analyze, compare and contrast two novels written by African American authors Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. He focused on the themes of blindness and invisibility of African American characters in the novels in connection to their past experience, their perception of themselves and the external factors that affect their personal development. Two groups of African American characters are analyzed separately, based upon their attitude towards adopting the values of white culture. In this he pointed the differences between those who have self-centered motives and the one their lives being invisible to the rest of the society, and those who aspire to become visible and exhibit a high motivation to fight for the advancement of African American people in American society.

Generally, what makes this study different from most of the works reviewed is that the study is conducted on Toni Morrison's novel `The Bluest Eye`. The researcher tries to analyze the deprived life situations of black American women, the misery the black women experienced by their own fellow Black American men as well as women and the hindrance that prevent them from achieving their goals by applying black feminist approach.

## **2.1 Conceptual framework**

### **2.1.1 Introduction**

It is important to review the theoretical aspects of African American literature as well as feminist literary theories to show the conceptual model which is going to be applied to the current study. The trends and developments of African American literature and specifically feminist approaches which are applied to study are reviewed. A feminist critic is also one of the theories which help to make feminist literary analysis of a text. As the researcher specifically focuses on feminism, the review includes the concept of black feminism which is the main approach to conduct the study. By and large this section covers the theoretical concepts by referring to different sources about the issue.

## 2.1.2 Feminism and Feminist criticism

Feminism is a movement which stands in support of women towards the problems they are facing due to their gender. Feminism could be a motive to fight the social, economic and political discrimination of women to enhance them with the possibilities of self determination. Regarding this issue Catherine and Jane (1989) asserted that ``The words 'feminist' or 'feminism' are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s`` Now a days there are a number feminist activists who are engaged in fighting women based violence. Even in the past few years different feminist movements were conducted to realize women self determination and to fight the abuse they experience due to their gender.

Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. It tries to see the social and economic hindrances that prevent women from achieving their goals in literary writings. Not only this, but it looks in to how women are represented, the images given for them and the misery and problems they encounter in their particular society. Wikipedia the free encyclopedia clearly defines feminist critics as:

It can be understood as using feminist principles and ideological discourses to critique the language of literature, its structure and being. This school of thought seeks to describe and analyze the ways in which literature portrays the narrative of male domination in regard to female bodies by exploring the economic, social, political, and psychological forces embedded within literature. (Wikipedia)

On the other hand feminist critics also focus on the critical concerns on the issues of sexuality and sexual difference, female literary traditions, the representation of female in male literary products and the role of gender in literary creation and critics. Some authors represent women as highly dominated object. In their literary text they give a character which undermines the capacity and quality of her being. Not only this, some women writers themselves don't portray women as strong and heroine character due to their life experience and other attitudinal problems. This kind of representation in literary texts waves a way for the development feminist critics to examine the issue. ``Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women. However, just as the practitioners of all critical theories do, feminist critics hold many different opinions on all of the issues their discipline examines. (Tyson, 1950)

Language is one of the most powerful things which affect the day to day communication among people. It plays a great role in examining literary texts. Through language the writer employs the message of his literary text. The language the writers use may help the reader to develop some kind of interpretation to the text. Male authors especially in the previous periods use words that are harsh and undermine women. This kind of reflection is due to the attitude they have on the status of women.

Feminist critics also focus on the language the male writers use in literary products and the experiences of women writers in use of language to communicate. M.A.R Habib clarifies the significance of language in literature as follows:

The significance of language rests ultimately on its expression of male ways of thinking that go all the way back to Aristotle: the laws of logic, beginning with the law of identity, as well as the Aristotelian categories divide up the world into strictly demarcated entities. These binary oppositions, as many modern theorists have argued, are coercive: for example, according to Aristotle's laws, *either* one is a man *or* one is a woman; a person is *either* black *or* white, *either* master *or* slave. (M.A.R Habib, 2005)

However, feminist critics hold different opinions on all of the issues their discipline examines; Feminist critics have displayed a persistent concern with both experience and language. The past life experience of women in decades are not successful and blessing. In every corner of the world women were depicted as an evil entity. They were not counted as human beings. This kind of experience is one of the initiating concepts for feminist critics. On the other hand feminists were also investigating the way language is used in describing women. They were giving arguments whether to use the existing male dominated language by modifying or to have female languages. This kind of argument and suggestion is well viewed by Habib.

Is there a specifically female experience that has been communicated by women writers? And how do women confront the task of being historically coerced into using a language dominated by male concepts and values? Some feminists have urged the need for a female language, while others have advocated appropriating and modifying the inherited language of the male oppressor. (M.A.R Habib, 2005).

Reason for the arose of feminist critics is the deprivation of women from education and work, marginalization due to patriarchy, and economic dependency. This kind of prejudice arose due to patriarchal assumptions that women are not productive on their work rather than home tasks.

Even though she has a capacity to handle, they didn't believe in her ability. If we take education for example it is believed that science courses are very difficult for women to study with an effort equal to men. M.A.R Habib clarifies this as:

For most of this long history women were not only deprived of education and financial independence, they also had to struggle against a male ideology condemning them to virtual silence and obedience, as well as a male literary establishment that poured scorn on their literary endeavors. Indeed, the depiction of women in male literature – as angels, goddesses, whores, obedient wives, and mother figures – was an integral means of perpetuating these ideologies of gender. It was only with women's struggles in the twentieth century for political rights that feminist criticism arose in any systematic way. (M.A.R Habib, 2005)

This patriarchal ideology also pervades those writings that have been considered great literature. Such works lack autonomous female role models, are implicitly addressed to male readers, and leave the woman reader an alien outsider or else solicit her to identify against herself by assuming male values and ways of perceiving, feeling, and acting.

On the other hand the issue of black female rose from the point of view of black feminist critics. It is the type of critics towards politics of black women sexism, race and gender marginalization. Showalter (1981) in her essay defined the black feminist critics as 'Black critics protest the "massive silence" of feminist criticism about black and Third-World women writers and call for a black feminist aesthetic that would deal with both racial and sexual politics.

In general, Feminist criticism concerns itself with stereotypical representations of gender. It also traces the history of relatively unknown or undervalued women writers, potentially earning them their rightful place within the literary canon, and helps create a climate in which women's creativity may be fully realized and appreciated. It intends also to closely examine how women marginalization and powerlessness manifest themselves in specific aspects of society through a text.

### **2.1.3 Waves of feminism**

Wave of feminism is the theory that focuses on the history of feminism within time and space and how women raise the questions of gender in relation to social, power and self position. The history of feminism will be reflected in three phases: -

### **2.1.3.1 First wave of feminism**

First-wave feminism arose in the context of industrial society and liberal politics but is connected to both the liberal women's rights movement and early socialist feminism in the late 19th and early 20th century in the United States and Europe. Concerned with access and equal opportunities for women, the first wave continued to influence feminism in both Western and Eastern societies throughout the 20th century.

As Beasley (2005) stated First-wave feminism argued that: "women were regarded as irrational creatures, were not permitted to vote, own property once married and had little legal control over their children or their bodies."

First wave feminist criticism includes books written by Marry Ellman's *Thinking About Women* (1968) Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969), and Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970). An example of first wave feminist literary analysis would be a critique of William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* for Petruchio's abuse of Katherina.

### **2.1.3.2 Second wave of feminism**

The second wave emerged in the 1960s to 1970s in postwar Western welfare societies, when other "oppressed" groups such as Blacks and homosexuals were being defined and the New Left was on the rise. Second-wave feminism is closely linked to the radical voices of women's empowerment and differential rights and, during the 1980s to 1990s, also to a crucial differentiation of second-wave feminism itself, initiated by women of color and third-world women.

As Beasley stated Second-wave feminists called upon an inevitable social change which would emerge from women's emancipation from the neglect and marginalization of the past, and insisted on the assimilation of women in the social landscape. This universal mode of reasoning seeks the truth about power and aims at throwing off macro structures of power that oppress women and other subordinated groups.

Despite the accounts upon which these forms of feminism had been characterized, they all shared an emancipatory standpoint. They called for a: "compensatory reversal in which masculine bias

was exposed and a woman's theorizing and activities were rescued from obscurity.”(Beasley, 2005)

Elaine Showalter pioneered gynocriticism with her book *A Literature of Their Own* (1977). Gynocriticism involves three major aspects. The first is the examination of female writers and their place in literary history. The second is the consideration of the treatment of female characters in books by both male and female writers. The third and most important aspect of gynocriticism is the discovery and exploration of a canon of literature written by women. gynocriticism seeks to appropriate a female literary tradition. In Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, she proposes the following three phases of women's writing:

1. The 'Feminine' Phase - in the feminine phase, female writers tried to adhere to male values, writing as men, and usually did not enter into debate regarding women's place in society. Female writers often employed male fictitious names during this period.
2. The 'Feminist' Phase - in the feminist phase, the central theme of works by female writers was the criticism of the role of women in society and the oppression of women.
3. The 'Female' Phase - during the 'female' phase, women writers were no longer trying to prove the legitimacy of a woman's perspective. Rather, it was assumed that the works of a women writer were authentic and valid. The female phase lacked the anger and combative consciousness of the feminist phase.

Second wave feminists altered the conventional Liberal universals of “reason”, “individual” and “human” and expanded them to accept the reason and individual specificities of women. (Beasley, 2005)

### **2.1.3.3 Third wave feminism**

Mid-1990s onward was the emergence of the third wave of feminism, springing from the emergence of a new postcolonial and post-socialist world order, in the context of information society and neoliberal, global politics. Third-wave feminism manifests itself in “girl” rhetoric, which seeks to overcome the theoretical question of equity or difference and the political question of evolution or revolution, while it challenges the notion of “universal womanhood” and

embraces ambiguity, diversity, and multiplicity in transversal theory and politics. Third wave feminists considered greatly the ability of women to be responsible for their choices, beliefs and status.

As a final point the second wave of feminism found voice amid so many other social movements, including a black feminist movement which was the reflection of marginalization and associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, discrimination, gender bias and the woman's role as daughter, wife and mother. This study too focused on the discrimination, gender violence and stereotype black American women experienced through black feminist perspective as reflected in the second wave of feminism.

#### **2.1.4 Trends of African American Literature**

African American literature is a product of black American writers who are claimed as `Negro` or `colored` people. However their contribution to the development of United States is incalculable; their economic, social, and political rights were strictly limited, and black literature was ignored and not defined until 1970. After this period black writers picked their pens to express their sorrow and misery through different literary genres. Black poets, novelists and writers emerged. Their literary works started to be defined and analyzed. In contemporary periods black literary works get recognition and read by the white people as well and get literary standards which help the writers to write more. They have opened up their art, including literature, to their own voices to larger considerations than reaction to white oppression. Blackness is still a major theme of almost of all of black writers since the issue is still responsive. Johnson (1932) writes,

The record of the Negro's efforts in literature goes back a long way, covering a period more than a century and a half, but it is only within the past ten years that America as a whole has been made consciously aware of the Negro as a literary artist. It is only within that brief time that Negro writers have ceased to be regarded as isolate cases of exceptional, perhaps accidental ability, and have gained group recognition. It is only within these few years that the arbiters of American letters have begun to assay the work of these writers by the general literary standards and accord it such appraisal as it might merit.

As I mentioned above Africa American literature gets recognition after the year 1970's but even now the major themes of their writing are slavery, discrimination, protest and accommodation.

The recent bad attitude and supremacy of the white population towards the black people still forced the black writers to be committed.

The economic tension existed in the state and the racial discrimination calls black writers to stick on committed literature. This is a very common way to express African American literature because we can also see the black American sufferings and killings due to their race and color in America even today. Thus, black literature is expected to be a remedy against the problems and experiences of their own.

To expect literature to serve as an indictment of this economic stress and racial opinion is to make an instrumental demand on literary practice; to expect African American writers to produce great literature once economic stress and persecution wane is to take an indexical view of literature. Du Bois (1986).

African American Literature gets the recent recognition by the contribution of well known writers. They were not only writers but activists to underline pride in their race and color. Among the leading ones who greatly contributed for the survival of Black American literature ***Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa)*** (c. 1745-c. 1797) Equiano was the first black in America to write an autobiography. In *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789) Equiano gives an account of his native land (he was an Ibo from Niger) and the horrors of his captivity and enslavement in the West Indies. ***Jupiter Hammon*** (c. 1720-c. 1800) Poet Jupiter Hammon, a slave on Long Island, New York, is remembered for his religious poems as well as for *An Address to the Negroes of the State of New York* (1787), in which he advocated freeing children of slaves instead of condemning them to hereditary slavery. His poem "An Evening Thought" was the first poem published by a black male in America. ***Lucy Terry*** (1730-1821) thought to be the author of the oldest piece of African-American literature, "Bars Fight" a poem written in 1746, about an Indian raid on settlers in Massachusetts. ***Harriet Jacobs*** (1813-1897) Her slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) is the most comprehensive biography of an African American woman prior to the Civil War. In it she recounts her life in slavery in the context of family relationships reshaping the slave narrative genre to include women's experiences. List but not last ***W.E.B. DuBois*** (1868-1963) One of the founders of the NAACP, DuBois published the highly influential *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

which created a black intellectual and artistic consciousness. He was an essayist, novelist, academic and the preeminent African American scholar-intellectual of his time.

The contribution of black writers awakens the black society to give concern to their own literature. It makes them contribute their own share in the growth of Africa American literature which wasn't counted even as literature of the state.

Not a single race that has no literature is classified as great in the eyes of the world where people have not the habit of reading there will not be much writing. The future progress of the Negro race calls for an awakening on the part of the people to the necessity of cultivating the habit of reading and stimulation of the art of making literature as indispensable aids to the development of the spirit of patriotism. Griggs (1901)

A social and political force in the black community in the 1960s and 1970s is another factor to change the way African Americans were defined and treated. The Black Arts Movement sought to change how blacks were represented and portrayed in literature and the arts. Black societies are drawn in literature as an inferior body. The Black Arts Movement was anchored in political change and the concept that the artist is a part of his or her community and their work should speak to the needs and aspirations of that community. The movement is also credited with motivating a new generation of poets, writers and artists. One of the most important figures in the black arts movements is Amiri Baraka. Whose volume *Black Magic Poetry* is one of the finest products of energies of 1960's an era of social change for African Americans.

The Black Arts Movement also called into question the appropriateness of white critical theories for the interpretation of black literature. After all, it was a Eurocentric definition of "great" literature that marginalized black authors in American literary history and virtually excluded them from the American canon.

Internalized racism results from the psychological programming by which a racist society indoctrinates people of color to believe in white superiority. Victims of internalized racism generally feel inferior to whites, less attractive, less worthwhile, less capable, and often wish they were white or looked more white. The economic hardship and social marginalization caused by institutionalized racism are common knowledge; internalized racism and intra-racial racism illustrate the devastating psychological experiences that also result. (Tyson, 1950)

Black women's have also a greater share in the development of Africa American literature. They were fully participating in the movements including black arts movement. They prioritize race, class, and gender as a more effective means of combating the various forms of oppression. They were viewing race class and gender as separate entities that must be handled in a sequential order.

In speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature and criticism, besides Africa American literature. A parallel Black feminist movement has been much slower in evolving but it has an impact upon the situation of Black literature. The above mentioned active participation of black women helps to the increasing number of black women writers. Black women began to achieve success as novelists, poets, writers and artists.

As Dickson-Carr argues,

African American women authors have become dominant forces in creating and contributing to the larger tradition after many decades of being virtually silenced by outright neglect from publishers who considered them irrelevant. As with so much literature by and about women, that silence has been broken, giving voice to the infinite complexities of African American women's lives, including women's roles as leaders, creators of culture, mothers, lovers, among many other. (Dickson-Carr, 2005).

Generally, African American literary history was more productive between 1970 and 2000 decades. The number of well known black authors' increases and more of their literary products begin to be produced. Black writers begin winning several prizes. (e.g. Toni Morrison won the Nobel Prize in 1993). The number of successful black authors has not only increased, but they also sell more copies, begin winning several prestigious prizes and are more than ever present in anthologies and literary courses at the academy.

Black writers have entered the mainstream of American readership and publish in many genres: romance, mystery, science fiction and literary fiction. The Black Arts Movement was also anchored in political change and the concept that the artist is a part of his or her community and their work should speak to the needs and aspirations of that community.

### 2.1.5 Black American literary criticism

African American literature is not the same with that of other countries because of the real experience black society have in America. Black societies are deprived of their rights because of race, gender and color. Even today blackness isn't an appreciated gift of humanity. They are discriminated and deprived of their rights. This is the very reason black writers make the theme of their literary works. Blacks were leading different resistant reaction for the unjust circumstances that existed in America. African American Literature is the manifestation of this kind of situation and quest of the bad situations to the positive ones. Issues of identity, race, color and gender are still prominent topics of contemporary African American literature. Lois Tyson suggested:

African American literature deals with racism—as a literary record of African American experience, how could it not?—let's take a moment to define some key concepts concerning that issue about which many people still have misconceptions. *Racialism*, a word we don't often hear in everyday speech, refers to the belief in racial superiority, inferiority, and purity based on the conviction that moral and intellectual characteristics, (Tyson, 1950).

The black writers, who were reflecting in depicting merely the helpless condition of the black people, were also interested in probing the challenges and complexities of African American experience to understand their own cultural identity in America.

Dickson-Carr further argues the time is characterized by the “rapid inroads that both African American women and men are making into the academy. This has not only implied that attention is drawn to contemporary works by black authors, but also and possibly more importantly, that the work of previously ignored or denied authors is recovered “in order to create a stronger, more complex black identity” (Dickson-Carr, 2005).

The African as well as American African literary tradition and literary critics, has always been about survival and liberation of Negro society. It has similarly always been about probing, challenging, changing, and redirecting accepted ways of thinking to ensure the wellness and the freedom of its community cohorts. Regarding consciousness of Negro society Due Bois argued that:-

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. This history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, this longing to attain self conscious manhood, to merge his double self in to a better and truer self. (Due Bois, 1986)

Black writing comes out of a sociological, political, ideological and cultural situation marked by oppression and marginalization. Black reading then must negotiate the difficult boundaries between textual and cultural meanings, between aesthetic and ideological impacts.

Criticism is inevitably ideological and political, and that black experience which is a historical and cultural formation of oppression. The black art is inevitably, then, a very complex cultural formation. Black criticism has substantial ties to post-colonial criticism by focusing on the challenges and survival of the society.

### **2.1.6 Black American women and feminism**

Feminism is a multifaceted idea and beliefs about what culture is like for women. As Catherine and Jane (1989) defined `words like feminism, sexism and patriarchy would seem be more complex than in the case of female/male or feminine/masculine, possibly because of the political nature of the terms.` The assumption in feminism is that women are not treated equally to men, and that women are disadvantaged in comparison to men. Black feminism is one part of feminism which refers to feminist thought regarding Black women. Black women are the prominent ones in inscribing race, gender and ethnicity in feminist literary critics. The special aspect of black women is not only that of gender issue but double oppression of race and color. Since black feminist approach is suitable to study African American feminist novel.

The existence of discrimination and marginalization because of gender, race and color quest their participation in different movements. The feminist movements offered an understanding of feminist issues. Eagleton explains the importance of feminist movements, in creating a female literary tradition:

It is the women's movement, part of the other movements of our time for a fully human life that has brought this forum into being; kindling a renewed, in most instances a first-time, interest in the writings and writers of our sex. Linked with

the old, resurrected classics on women, this movement in three years has accumulated vast new mass of testimony, of a new comprehension as to what it is to be female. (Eagleton: 1999)

The black woman especially has been reluctant to participate fully in the feminist movements in America. They were involved in the struggle to end racism and discrimination. Moreover, in the political and aesthetic constructs of liberation movements, women have been mythologized, romanticized and cast in an ideological bind that compromises their association with Europeans and European-Americans. Black women prominently are a voice to their society and they were reflecting the miserable life experiences of black women through literature. According to Dickson-Carr (2005), ``As with so much literature by and about women, that silence has been broken, giving voice to the infinite complexities of African American women's lives, including women's roles as leaders, creators of culture, mothers, lovers, among many other.

The lives of black women are different from that of whites. They don't have equal opportunity towards education, health and work. Regarding education, once government funding was appropriated for the construction of black public schools, the inequality in education and resources was institutionalized throughout the South. Black schools were ill equipped with textbooks and resources for learning. There were no school buses; so, students were forced to walk miles if they wanted to receive an education. Furthermore, the textbooks used in such schools were discriminatory, stigmatizing and ridiculing black Americans. In this sort of educational climate, it was impossible for black students to attain the skills necessary to compete in the workforce. Institutional sexism also prevented black women from receiving the same educational opportunities as black men. Although black educational institutions were coeducational, the types of career opportunities available for black women were limited. If married, they were expected to work since black men's wages were not sufficient to provide for a family. Structural racism prevented black women from achieving economic mobility and stability. The jobs available to them were usually within the domestic realm, working as maids, servants, or laundresses in white households, where they were underpaid for their services. As a whole they live untrue life. They cover their sorrows and anger by their surface smile to handle life. However black women living in the same country with the whites, they await new day and new world to exist. Richard Wright also agreed the idea black women are living the unreal life. He tried to explain their life and emotional condition in his autobiography *Black Boy/American Hunger*, he recalls black women:-

They were an eager, restless, talkative, ignorant bunch, but casually kind and impersonal for all that. They knew nothing of hate and fear, and strove instinctively to avoid all passion. I often wondered what they were trying to get out of life, but I never stumbled upon a clue, and I doubt if they themselves had any notion. They lived on the surface of their days; their smiles were surface smiles, and their tears were surface tears. (Richard, 1991)

On the other hand theorizing conflict from a gender perspective is very quickly leads us to the realization that for women living in patriarchal societies, all of which are characterized by a general taste for violence, peace and security are elusive, limited and precarious. Even in times of supposed peace, many women do not enjoy peace and security in their homes, workplaces or on the streets. They have remained steadfast in their attempts to attain liberation from the oppressive structures of race, gender, and class over the centuries, using different forms of resistance to receive better education and more citizenship rights. It is not surprising that black women became active agents in the Civil Rights Movement, serving in a number of capacities, as bridge leaders, organizers, etc. They used their structural position to assist the movement where necessary. Structural racism was influential in the development of black male-female egalitarian relationships because it made black women's labor necessary for family survival. Although black women had no institutional power (due to race and gender), financial contributions to the family income gave black women some power in their own right. Patricia (2001) explained this notion as follows:

African American women could not possibly possess a superior vision of what community would look like how justice might feel, and the like. This presupposes that such a perspective is arrived at without conflict, intellectual rigor and political struggle. While black women particular location provides a distinctive angle of vision on oppression, this perspective comprises neither a privileged nor a complete standpoint. (Patricia, 2001)

The other imposition laid on the black women is the terms appealed to express them. Women of the color; is an appealing term because it implies an alliance of non white people. Although all visible people color suffers under the white gaze, this doesn't mean that non black people of color can blame all infractions against black people on white supremacy. All are susceptible to internalizing anti blackness, but they are not holding themselves accountable when they pretend that white supremacy is the sole reason for their faults. Radical Feminist Adrienne Rich, in her observation of the accountability of white females in her essay: *Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism and Gynophobia* assert ``If black and white feminists are going to speak of

female accountability, I believe the word racism must be seized grasped in our bare hands, ripped out of the sterile or defensive consciousness in which it so often grows, and is transplanted so that it can yield new insights for our lives and our movement. An analysis that places the guilt for active domination, physical and institutional violence, and the justifications embedded in myth and language, on white women not only compounds false consciousness." (Rich in Hooks, 1982)

In speaking about the situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature. The fact that a parallel Black feminist movement has been much slower in evolving cannot help but have impact upon the situation of Black women writers and artists and explains in part why during this very same period we have been so ignored. Regarding feminist movements and violence Bell Hook (2000) suggested ``It is essential for continued feminist struggle to end violence against women that this struggle be viewed as a component of an overall movement to end violence. So far feminist movement has primarily focused on male violence, and as a consequence lends credibility to sexist stereotypes that suggest men are violent, women are not; men are abusers, women are victims.``

On the other hand, before centuries the black women were having no chance to produce a literary work. Even if they got the chance to the right of authorship; there was no room the texts to be read as equal as white woman writers and not considered as universal. In the late century the literary work of black women started to get recognition. This has made many black women to turn towards each other for a better introspective and analytical understanding of Black Women's problems. Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1970) and Tony Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) addressed the question of how self-identity and respect is achieved by black women in a society.

Related to this Tyson explained as follows:

The literary works of (white) male authors describing experience from a (white) male point of view was considered the standard of universality—that is, representative of the experience of all readers—and universality was considered a major criterion of greatness. Because the works of (white) female authors (and of all authors of color) do not describe experience from a (white) male point of view,

they were not considered universal and hence did not become part of the literary canon. (Tyson, 1950)

A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity. As Michele Wallace states in her article "A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood ``We exist as women who are Black who are feminists, each stranded for the moment, working independently because there is not yet an environment in this society remotely congenial to our struggle-or our thoughts`` (Michele, 1975)

Until a Black feminist criticism exists any one will not even know what these writers mean. The citations from a variety of critics which follow prove that without a Black feminist critical perspective books by Black women are misunderstood. Focusing on the literary canon of black literary critics Henry Louis Gates (1988) asserted that in African American literary criticism black feminists have been creating alternatives to the dominance of great black male thinkers. The concern to establish a canon or tradition is a conventional literary project.

At a final point the related studies are the basic tools to show the significance as well as the gap in comparison to the current study. On the other hand, the theoretical frameworks were essentially meant to put into evidence the main issues related to black feminism. In view of the fact that in this chapter the concept of feminist literary critics, the literary tradition of black literature and finally the concept feminism and black feminism is largely covered for the reason that this paper uses black feminist perspective as a model to show the marginalization of black women along lines of race, class and gender.

In the coming chapter discussions on issues like discrimination, poverty, racism, physical and psychological violence against black women will be analyzed through a feminist reading of `The Bluest Eye` By Toni Morrison.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A Feminist Reading of `The Bluest Eye`

#### 3.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the plot summary of the novel, to investigate the historical, social, and cultural experiences of black women and to show how they are suffered based on gender which leads them towards a dark tunnel. Gender violence is a subject the study will focus on to describe the pain black women suffered as they were beaten, raped, humiliated, discriminated and abused merely because of their gender.

Under this chapter issues which are dealt with the experiences of black American women like stereotype, Sexual abuse, Physical violence, Psychological violence, prejudice, Poverty and Discrimination will be analyzed by using extracts from the text.

#### 3.2 Plot Summary of the novel

The Bluest Eye is a story of black American female character named Pecola Breedlove. She started to live with the MacTeers as her father Cholly had burned his house and had put his family outside. All the Breedloves were represented ugly. Pecola often looked at herself in the mirror wondering at her ugliness. She settled on her eyes as her ugliest feature and wished to have blue eyes. The narrator Claudia and Frieda became preoccupied with a new girl at school, who is admired for her beauty, being light skinned, Maureen who always taunts Pecola for her black skin. Claudia and Frieda's parents took in a renter, Mr. Henry. One day he found Frieda at home alone and tried to sexually abuse her. When she told her parents, they beat Mr. Henry up and ran him off.

There was also woman who lived in Lorain, Ohio named Geraldine. Geraldine taught her son that light skinned African Americans were better than dark skinned African Americans and should remain separate from them.

Pauline Williams Breedlove, the mother of Pecola, began life in Alabama. She married Cholly Breedlove who is abandoned by his father before he was born and then abandoned by his mother, left to die, when he was only a few days old. Their marriage quickly disintegrated. One Saturday

afternoon in the spring, befuddled with alcohol, Cholly raped his eleven year old daughter, Pecola, and left her being lifeless on the floor.

By the end of the novel, Pecola has completely lost touch with reality. Unable to process and accept the fact that she has been raped by her father, she becomes convinced that everyone in town is looking at her strangely because she received her wish of blue eyes. Finally She realized the entire community even the country used Pecola as a scapegoat.

Here under in the following section of the study the researcher will present the miserable life situations of black woman based on the topics like stereotype, sexual abuse, physical violence, psychological violence, prejudice, poverty and discrimination in relation to feminism.

### **3.3 Stereotype**

The multi-faceted nature of stereotype is clearly reflected in *The Bluest Eye*. This is manifested in the situation where the life situation has divided the lower class as deprived and the higher class society who are white as privileged. Characters like Geraldine, Junior, and Maureen Peal represent the privileged division of black culture. On the contrary, the less privileged division is represented by Breedlove's family. Tension between the divided African American societies is clearly represented by such characterization throughout the novel.

The character named Maureen tried to portray black skinned girls like Pecola (the major character), Claudia and Frieda as black and ugly. She presented herself as cute because of her light skinned color. Even if Maureen is African American being light skinned and wealthy makes her to have hierarchy of the black skinned girls. As we can see from their conversation; at any situation Maureen tried to insult the black skinned girls due to their color as inferior being.

Safe on the other side, she screamed at us, "*I am* cute!

And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. *I am* cute!" (Ibid, P.73)

Maureen and the people she represents, portray black people as unsuccessful, poor, and ugly. We get the feeling that not only whites are superior, but lighter or wealthier black societies are as well. Someone who has lighter skin and/or money obtains greater privileges in society and thus more accepted. Maureen is the honored character on account being light skinned as we observe

from the attitude her classmates have towards her. ``She enchanted the entire school. When teachers called on her, they smiled encouragingly. Black boys didn't trip her in the halls; white boys didn't stone her, white girls didn't suck their teeth when she was assigned to be their work partners`` (Ibid, P.62)

Here, what we have to notice stereotype is not reflected only between the black and white American societies; there was the same race stereotype like that mentioned above in case of Maureen. Morrison also intentionally portrays Maureen as lighter skinned (in a sense, she is a mix of black and white) in order to ease her readers from the idea of white versus black to the notion of a same-race stereotype. The other character named Geraldine, who is also lighter skinned, is the essence of a racist within the black race. Geraldine's stereotype outlook is evidently reflected when she tells her son that there is clear difference between light skinned (niggers) and colored people (white). She is not only warning her son of these differences, but she is also spreading a racial stereotype against black women. We can clearly grasp Geraldine's reflection from the narrative of the story below.

White kids; his mother did not like him to play with niggers. She had explained to him the difference between colored people and niggers. They were easily identifiable. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group. (Ibid, P. 87).

Many African Americans try to find reasons for their cultural divides. The reasons which most find is that the middle class (the light skinned) make a division in hopes of attaining equality with white people. This is consequently diminishing the equality within their racial community.

Morrison uses symbolism and imagery to make her theme stronger. She connected stereotype with nature. Blue eyes stand as the definitive symbol of whiteness and beauty. Characters that possess whiteness and beauty are privileged, empowered, and secure. This fact leads to Pecola's desires for blue eyes, as she believes blue eyes would change the way others see her. Likewise, she thinks that blue eyes would give her the ability to perceive what she sees in a different way. On the other hand the hollyhock flower is used to represent the beauty, confidence, and strength of the privileged black society. Dandelions in the novel symbolize the less privileged black society. As we see from the story:

They are thin brown girls who have looked long at hollyhocks in the backyards of Meridian, Mobile, Aiken, and Baton Rouge. And like hollyhocks they are narrow, tall, and still. Their roots are deep, their stalks are firm, and only the top blossom nods in the wind. They have the eyes of people who can tell what time it is by the color of the sky. (Ibid, P. 82).

Symbolism also reflected in various ways through characters in the *Bluest Eye*. Pecola is symbolized as a dandelion which means less privileged part of black American society. By combining characters and symbolism Morrison shows a racial tension created in black people's actual environment.

On the other hand, Christianity is one of the strongest sets of norms and values that the characters internalize in *The Bluest Eye*. For instance Geraldine's behavior implies that she wants to be a good (white) Christian. She is one of the girls who "do not drink, smoke, or swear, and still call sex 'nookey'" (Ibid, P. 64). This in line with Pauline's vision of a virtuous person: "She was an active church woman, did not drink, smoke, or carouse" (100). The views of the two women are obviously internalized from the dualistic world of the Christian church. In addition to cleanliness, Christianity, with its strong dualistic mode, seems to be the key to get as close to whiteness as possible for these characters.

*The Bluest Eye* presents a more complex representation of stereotype in the fact that there are no instances where Black American women mistreated. The characters in the novel deal with stereotype that challenges their values within their families and community. The simple comparison of Maureen's light skin to be considered cute and Pecola's dark skin to be ugly is a perfect example. This is a pressure racism put on African American race to adapt destructive cultural principles and standards. It is also the collective impact of actions by numerous people which affects and remains within mixed society.

### **3.4 Sexual abuse**

Morrison highlighted the sexual abuse black women experienced by their fellow black American men. Black women have been profoundly affected by sexual hierarchy. They inhabit a gender hierarchy in which inequality of race and social classes have been sexualized.

From the main fragile sexual abuse is rape. The rape is committed on Pecola by her father Cholly who is black American man. As we discover towards the end of the novel Cholly has

experienced sexual degradation at the hand of a white man. Aside from the degrading and difficult work of the steel mills which cause Cholly to drink more often or make him come home and just fall asleep instead of spending time with his wife Pauline and the children. As usual Cholly returned home drunk and saw his daughter Pecola washing dishes. She was bending over the sink and with her toe was scratching her calf. When Cholly saw her, he was at once reminded of his wife's gesture which was exactly the same when he first met her. Cholly feels that he is free of responsibility even towards his own daughter Pecola, he is free from all family relations. Cholly raped his own daughter cruelly.

She was washing dishes. Her small back hunched over the sink. Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt. Then he became aware that he was uncomfortable; next he felt the discomfort dissolve into pleasure. The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, and then love. His revulsion was a reaction to her young, helpless, hopeless presence. (Ibid, P.161).

Cholly's life background is closely connected with Pecola's rape. He was deprived of his families care and love. He has a limited knowledge and quitted his education. He was also abused by the supremacy of white men because of blackness. Since this is a very reason for abusive and violent behavior of Cholly.

Simultaneously Cholly's rape of Pecola shows the mentality of the men who hurt defenseless women for the sake of their sexual pleasure or exerting their masculine power. The rape makes pecola's life journey worse since she was pregnant. However Pecola was expected to be treated well by her parents, the failure of parenting, irresponsibility and inhumanity of her father made her to be excluded from the community.

On the other hand Frieda was one of the characters who were exposed to the sexually abusive condition. Frieda's being alone at home paved the way for Henry's (black American man) misconduct. He touched her body in a sexual way and he started to pinch her tiny breasts. Henry has an intention to sexually abuse Frieda. He waits Frieda's reaction if she remains silence about his sexual advance to proceed with his sexual drive. We can see from the conversation Frieda has made with her sister Claudia:

“He . . . *picked* at me.”

“Picked at you? You mean like Soaphead Church?”

“Sort of.”

“He showed his privates at you?”

“Noooo. He touched me.”

“Where?”

“Here and here.” She pointed to the tiny breasts that, like two fallen acorns, scattered a few faded rose leaves on her dress. (Ibid, P.99).

Girls were not fully aware why they became center of attention by men and they suffered all kinds of submission, some of them did not know how to react and consequently became helpless victims and their lives were marked by hopelessness and frustration. Opposite to Pecola's family Frieda's father knew about rape attempt, he decided to dismiss Henry from his house as a punishment of what he did towards her daughter. The stand of Frieda's father is contrasted with Pecola's father, how the latter neglected her daughter and even involved in sexual relation. Here we can see the role of father in family is vital in securing and the refusal on the part of parents to teach girls about sexuality makes their transition in to sexual maturity difficult. Generally, Black females were double oppressed. First, they have been sexually oppressed by white masters under the institutionalized slavery. Second, they have been victimized by family members and social institutions.

### **3.5 Physical Violence**

The Bluest Eye is rich in instances of physical violence against black women by their fellow black Americans. Inside Breedlove's family physical violence seems to be daily occurrence. Cholly Breedlove and his wife are constantly fighting when their marriage starts to fail. “Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove fought each other with a darkly brutal formalism that was paralleled only by their lovemaking” (Ibid p.43). Their love, respect and affection represented by violence. Since he thinks Pauline is not worth to respect because she is woman, he physically abused her.

Cholly picked her up and knocked her down with the back of his hand. She fell in a sitting position, her back supported by Sammy's bed frame. She had not let go of the dishpan, and began to hit at Cholly's thighs and groin with it. He put his foot in her chest, and she dropped the pan. Dropping to his knee, he struck her several times in the face, and she might have succumbed early had he not hit his hand against the metal bed frame when his wife ducked. (Ibid, p.44).

Pauline herself even treated her daughter in a violent way; she believes that violence is the best way to treat her child Pecola. When her friends Claudia and Frieda visited Pecola at Pauline's workplace; Pauline asked them to wait for lunch until she done laundry, Pecola, accidentally the pan full of boiled blue berries and the entire juice was spilled on the ground. Pecola's feet were injured. After seeing this Pauline beat Pecola heartlessly and barred her from her house. The narrator told in the story how Pecola is physically abused by her mother "In one gallop she was on Pecola, and with the back of her hand knocked her to the floor. Pecola slid in the pie juice, one leg folding under her. Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me by implication" (Ibid, p.109).

Pecola is seen to be the worst victim of physical violence by Junior, a black boy who uses violence against Pecola by torturing her. Junior invites Pecola to his house to play with him. When Pecola entered to his house; Junior throws his mother's cat, which he hates, in Pecola's face. He is delighted at her injury and fear. When Junior attacks Pecola's face and attempts to hold her hostage, he is taking his abhorrence for his mother out on both the cat and Pecola. Like Pecola, Junior is mistreated by his mother in a different way. He is not beaten or shouted at, but Junior never receives affection or love from his mother. His emotional carelessness and adoption of white culture by his mother drives Junior to perform physical violence on his fellow black child, Pecola.

### **3.6 Psychological violence**

Excepting sexual and physical violence, *The Bluest Eye* also shows examples of psychological violence against black American women by their own fellow black Americans. In most cases characters speak with each other in a harsh way. For example, Maureen Peal shouts conceitedly at Pecola, Claudia and Frieda as, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e moss. I am cute!" (Ibid p.56) Maureen is unconsciously hateful towards people in her own race, linked her hatred for their physical features and skin color as she is light skinned. By expressing such a harsh speech, Maureen attempts to negatively affect their psychology by telling them that they are inferior. She overestimates herself and underestimates them as human. Maureen's attitude affected them psychologically and makes them not to respond to her speech even a word.

At the same time, Geraldine is another light skinned female character who is blinded with white beauty standard, and hates people black in color. She expresses her view when she was insulting

Pecola. “Get out. You nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house” (Ibid, p.92). Geraldine’s word causes Pecola so much pain, misery and planted the seeds of inferiority in her heart. All these treatments of violence makes Pecola feel an outcast from the entire society.

The novel also shows what occurs in the mind of a black protagonist when she was raped and mistreated. Furthermore, it indicates what may happen to Pecola where there is a lack of support from her family as well as the community. Pecola in her earliest youth faced a worse kind of treatment by her father; she was subjected to a terrible trial and got raped by her father in their own house. The rape makes Pecola sense of helplessness, loss of self-esteem, confidence and left her unsupported emotionally. Her mother Pauline did also the same by ignoring the rape and she didn’t even believe her daughter. She fails to offer the safe from abuse instead she rejects Pecola and brings her to mental breakdown.

Then why didn’t you tell Mrs. Breedlove?  
I did tell her!  
You don’t understand anything, do you? She didn’t even believe me when I told her.  
So that’s why you didn’t tell her about the second time?  
She wouldn’t have believed me then either.  
You’re right. No use telling her when she wouldn’t believe you. (Ibid, p.200).

Similarly, Pauline is playing a negative role in affecting Pecola’s psychology by obsessing white beauty standard as well. The white culture makes Pauline work as a servant in a white family. Although she is a servant to the family, Pauline feels whole in this white world, enjoying the nickname of Polly and getting great satisfaction out of cleaning the beautiful house. Pauline gives her love freely to the white child, finding pleasure in brushing the yellow hair and enjoying the roll and slip of it between her fingers as she compared to her own children’s tangled black puffs of rough wool.

Pauline used beautiful calling names like `honey` when dealing with white child and contrary she harassed and insulted Pecola since she accepts the ugliness of her child. Therefore, she directly affects Pecola’s psychology to adopt white beauty standard. She shaped all her feelings in her search of being light skin and has a bluest eye. Pecola is psychologically fragmented and broken

down by the denial of her blackness both by her mother and as well by the community. Society members are also a very reason for mental breakdown of Pecola by making her carry all the blame. They portrayed her as stupid for being raped by her father.

“What’s she gone do? The mama?”

“Keep on like she been, I reckon. He taken off.”

“County ain’t gone let her keep that baby, is they?”

“Don’t know.”

“None of them Breedloves seem right anyhow. That boy is off somewhere every minute, and the girl was always foolish.” (Ibid, p.189)

Additionally, Pecola was unaccepted, disliked and almost hated by her colleagues. She was mocked by her teachers, classmates. Therefore, she desires that if she has blue eyes, others would love her. “Here was an ugly little black girl asking for beauty...A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes” (Ibid, p. 174).

Morrison deals not only with the occurrences of psychological violence but also portrays how it affects numerous aspects of black women’s life. The major consequence of the violence, as has been presented in the novel, is breakdown of the families. The characters inflict pain and suffering on their own family members in such a way that they are no longer in a condition to live together and their psychology is also affected highly.

### **3.7 Prejudice**

It may be true that beauty is a central focus of many women. In a society part of the people are marginalized and discriminated; there are standards which demarcate. The ideal of beauty in the novel is a woman with light skin and blue eyes.

The Bluest Eye tells the story of an eleven year old black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who wants to have blue eyes, because she sees herself, and is regarded by most of the characters in the novel, as ugly. The standard of beauty her peers subscribe is represented by the white child actress, Shirley Temple, who has the desired blue eyes. On the other hand Claudia and her sister Frieda were happy with their color, which is blackness.

The author presents in the novel portrayal of the effects of prejudice. This is stated in quotes to tell Breedlove's family was ugly:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. (Ibid, p.39).

Claudia, the narrator, at the very beginning of the novel, describes herself as indifferent to both white dolls and Shirley Temple. She also realizes that she does not really hate light-skinned Maureen but hates the `thing` that makes Maureen beautiful. It is the ideology of whiteness that makes Maureen beautiful and blackness makes Pecola and other black girls ugly. Maureen is unconsciously hateful towards black people in her own race, linked her hatred for their physical features and colors of skin. By expressing such an attitude in her speech, she has tried to tell being light skinned or white in color could be the symbol of beauty. Maureen shouts at Pecola, Claudia and Frieda as, "I am cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I am cute!" (Ibid,p.73).

At the same time Geraldine is another black female character who blinded with white beauty standard and hates black women. She portrayed black girls as horrible entity. She always tries to exclude herself from black community since her mind is embedded by white culture. She imitates the ways of white community and taught to deny people in black color. She fails to appreciate their own gender and race in terms of beauty; she believes beauty means being white. Geraldine imagined that Pecola was the representative of hated black women. She insulted her with bad words which make Pecola feel inferior. "Get out," she said, her voice quiet. "You nasty little black bitch get out of my house." (Ibid, p.92).

Pecola was deeply influenced by the social environment and fully internalized the white aesthetic view which referred that white skin stands for kind, beautiful and clean, black skin stands for ugliness and dirty. White skin and blue eyes were criteria of beauty to become respected by others. She always thought that if she had blue eyes, everything would change. Teachers and classmates would like her, her parents will adore her. She assumed blue eyes would give her more happiness and love and less pain. She might certainly have thought that it was her color which was responsible for such neglect.

Literally, she is not ugly, but the prevailing standard of beauty regarding the color of skin, eyes and hair never let to see her beautiful. Since Pecola strongly believes she is ugly; the only thing that rescue her from this ugliness is possessing blue eyes. In order to get the blue eyes, she goes to Soaphead Church.

Do you know what she came for? Blue eyes. New, blue eyes, she said. Like she was buying shoes. "I'd like a pair of new blue eyes." She must have asked you for them for a very long time, and you hadn't replied. (Ibid, p.180).

In the end, she tried her best to have blue eyes, which were unable to get attentions and love from as she wished. She blinded her own eyes, losing ability to recognize the world where she was the despised one. She seems to be insignificant in other's eyes. Pecola accepting white aesthetic view and value and trying to have blue eyes, denied herself, entering in a daydream at the end. ``A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceeded only by the evil of fulfillment`` (Ibid, p.204).

### **3.8 Poverty**

In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison illustrated the economic condition of the female characters to relate the issue with the desired theme of the novel. She also clarifies how the characters were feeling inferior because of the economic level they have in the society. Since, they always tried to spank the wealthy and privileged characters.

When Claudia introduces herself and her surroundings, she comes an observant, strong, but angry girl who would like to spank the rich, white girl next door, Rosemary Villanucci, when she and her sister Frieda sees her eating bread. The car and the bread are images of wealth for Claudia who is living in a cold, old house. Her family's poverty is emphasized when she and her sister have to collect coal along the railroad tracks in order to help keeping the house warm. Claudia's environment of poverty and oppression makes her hate not only the white dolls, but also white little girls and everything they represent.

Then again when Polly (Pauline) takes a day job, her husband Cholly feels bad. Although Cholly was previously aggravated by his wife's dependency on him, he becomes even more aggravated by her independence. When he suspects that she is growing independent and becoming her own

person outside of him, he feels scared. Ultimately, he shows up at her job which causes her to lose it. We can see also the poverty condition of Pauline when Polly asks her employer for a loan, after she has fired her, she receives the advice to leave her husband. Pauline says:

Then I got so desperate I asked her if she would loan it to me. She was quiet for a spell, and then she told me I shouldn't let a man take advantage over me. That I should have more respect, and it was my husband's duty to pay the bills, and if he couldn't, I should leave and get alimony (Ibid 120).

Her husband is so poor that he cannot even afford alimony. Polly's top priorities are to feed herself and her husband, and she is too busy surviving that she does not have any time to think of things. The novel is engaging the reader to understand the economic differences between the black and white women that something given to one social group can be an impossible to another one.

Being poor, black and a female makes Polly an open target for discrimination. Although being a maid is generally a much great job for women in patriarchal society, Cholly is worried that Polly might feel independent and confident enough to ignore him, thereby blurring the boundaries of gender. He does not fear equality but he is afraid to become subordinate to her. The quarreled condition of their life makes them picks fights: The narrator says:

The tiny, undistinguished days that Mrs. Breedlove lived were identified, grouped, and classed by these quarrels. They gave substance to the minutes and hours otherwise dim and unrecalled. They relieved the tiresomeness of poverty, gave grandeur to the dead rooms. In these violent breaks in routine that were themselves routine, she could display the style and imagination of what she believed to be her own true self. (Ibid, p.41).

The house of Mrs Breedloves is a symbol of which clarifies the poor living standard of black American women in contrast to the white people. It is described as a house that stands out in its ugliness, as it does go with its surroundings. The most interesting thing that can be noted about the house is the furniture and even it "had aged without ever having become familiar" (Ibid, p.35). It is also described with unpleasant smell, a symbol for the inability for most people to live in the house. "And the joylessness stank, pervading everything," the narrator says, explaining how it is the lack of joy, the void, that leaves the family members unsettled in the house (Ibid,

p.35). The joylessness pervades all the things and humans in the house that is why Polly runs to her job and fears a breakdown of her work and home life.

Generally, as Morrison clarified in her novel the reason women experience an equal burden of poverty is numerous. First, women have regularly been excluded from higher-paying jobs like Pauline in the course of the story. And secondly, Women's employment opportunities were also limited primarily to clerical work, service work, nursing, and teaching. Even today, when education and employment opportunities for women are restricted, women disproportionately occupy lower paying jobs. The economic powerlessness of the black community makes white society economically endowed.

### **3.9 Discrimination**

The other issue which is reflected in the novel is discrimination against black women by their own society. Pecola is one of the victims experienced discrimination. She was unable of getting warm care from her family; instead she became main object for her father and mother to fulfill their emotions. It was imaginable that how others also treated her. Boys around her and at school always made fun of her. The new friends she made did not comfort her with true heart, instead of trying to mock her. ``Heady with the smell of their own musk, thrilled by the easy power of a majority, they gaily harassed her`` (Ibid, p.65).

The irony in the novel leads readers to think about racial discrimination. Pecola symbolizing self-hate and self-ugliness was one type of discrimination in black community.

The black community poured all of the dirty to her, which made her scapegoat among them. Those members in this community were scare of black skin and ugly appearance became Pecola's personal stress. Oppression from their black inside community continuously strengthened her desire for blue eyes. Figure of Pecola always lingered in black people's mind, reminding their own ugliness and intensive hatred. The author proved that:

They had extemporized a verse made up of two insults about matters over which the victim had no control: the color of her skin and speculations on the sleeping habits of an adult, wildly fitting in its incoherence. That they themselves were black or that their own father had similarly relaxed habits

was irrelevant. It was their contempt for their own blackness that gave the first insult its teeth. (Ibid, p.65)

African-American mother Pauline Breedlove feels isolated from the rest of society. She is occupied with black-and-white movies and they have taught her all she needs to know about (her lack of) physical beauty and love. Pauline Breedlove escapes her family and their terrible lifeless home in Lorain, Ohio, by going to work as a maid in a white household. She and her daughter Pecola Breedlove both have low self-esteem and lack self-love, and therefore they are discriminated in both the black and white community.

At the final point of the novel having internalized the values of the white culture, people of the community turn Pecola into a scapegoat, but they are only projecting onto her their own experiences of discrimination. The discrimination their ancestors have been subjected to for centuries. Of course, it becomes clear that such feelings are not something that one has designed or cultivated or control but arise from the racial frustration caused by hundreds of years of discrimination and internalizing the oppressor's values.

Additionally, black women were discriminated from movies and TV. There were no black women at all in the movies and on TV. The lack of black women in popular media is noticeable in the scene where the young Claudia expresses a great sense of hatred and Frieda's adoration against the white movie star Shirley Temple. She says:

Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was. I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley. Not because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles, who was *my* friend, *my* uncle, *my* daddy, and who ought to have been soft-shoeing it and chuckling with me. Instead he was enjoying, sharing, giving a lovely dance thing with one of those little white girls whose socks never slid down under their heels. (Ibid, p.19)

The Bluest Eye shows how discriminations are socially and psychologically constructed and how the age old myths of blackness and whiteness can be internalized by the victims of those myths and creates discrimination in a quite homogeneous community.

To summarize Afro-American women were beaten, raped, degraded, and abused simply because of their gender. In the novel black males used all types of violence against their wives, daughters and lovers as a means of oppression as we saw above in the analysis. The usage of violence against black females is a reflection of their white master suppressors as indicated in the novel. Black men embraced the culture of white masters and applied on their wives, daughters and lovers, they further suppressed black women instead of reducing their dilemmas.

When black people were enslaved they suffered from the lack of self-esteem and were victims of a society that classified them as inferior beings. Hence, blacks see themselves inferior and the lack of self-worth leads them to self-destructive behavior which let them never be fully accepted as equal members of society. The next chapter will present the conclusion of the thesis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Conclusion

African American authors and artists present an important part of American culture and literature. Their work and contribution to culture in general was being rejected and overlooked for a long time. On account of the former slavery and racial segregation, they were regarded as inferior and so were their thoughts and works. They were also marginalized because of their race, class and gender.

Being both black and female, the black woman's situation and oppression go far beyond that of black men or light skinned and white women. Consequently, black women find themselves socially, politically and especially emotionally marginalized and discriminated. That is why; black women have claimed their own rightful place and have created a specifically black feminism.

In this study, we have tried to define briefly the feminist issues and how they affect the literary productions of the African American women writers who explore the theme of the quest for selfhood males always take over most aspects of life like economy, social life, business, and education.

The issue of gender plays a central role in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Black American women were beaten, raped, degraded, discriminated and abused simply because of their gender. In the novel, black American men used all types of violence against their wives, daughters and lovers as a means of oppression. The usage of violence by black males against women is a reflection of their white master suppressors as indicated in the novel. As we have seen in the analysis, women were also one reason for violence against women.

Black women say something about class oppression, endure the sexist oppression of their black men and survive the oppression of white people and light skinned. The black women identity is inseparably linked with racism, sexism and class oppression. As we have seen in the textual analysis; *The Bluest Eye* reflects the issue of gender by presenting the cultural, economical and

social burdens black American women experienced in American society. Since, it is a very suitable novel to make analysis on other social issues besides feminist reading.

As a future prospect, the present study may be used for further investigations of the common connection between black female writers and their artistic uniqueness in the black American literary tradition.

## References

### Primary Source

Morrison, T. (1970). *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Random House.

### Secondary Sources

Beasley, Chris. (2005). *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers*. London: Sage Publications.

Birhan Assefie (2012). *Experiences of Marginalized Women: Maya Angelous I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Master's Thesis: AAU.

Chaterine Besely and Jane Moore. (1989) *Essays in Gender and The Politics of Literary Criticism*, New York: Basil Blackwell.

Dickson-Carr, Darryl. (2005) *The Columbia Guide to Contemporary African American Fiction*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Eagleton, Mary (1999). *Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (1988). *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro- American Literary Criticism*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Hooks, Bell. (1982). *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. London: Pluto Press.

Hooks, Bell. (2000). *Feminism is for Everybody*. South End Press: Cambridge.

Jackson, Veda K. (2011). *It's All About Color: An analysis of Color Symbolism in Toni Morrison's Sula and The Bluest Eye*. Atlanta: B.A. Spellman College

James Weldon Johnson (1932). *Introduction*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Co.

Lois Tyson. 1950. *Critical Theory Today*. A user-friendly guide .2nd ed. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

M.A.R Habib. 2005. *Modern Literary Criticism and Theory*. UK: Blackwell Publishing.

- Michele Wallace. (1975). *A Black Feminist's Search for Sisterhood*," Village Voice.
- Patricia Hill Collins (2001). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall
- Radka Nosková (2013). *Blindness and Invisibility in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye*. Brno: Masaryk University
- Raman Selden, Peter Widdowson and Peter Brooker (1997) Contemporary literary critics
- Richard Wright, (1991). *Black Boy (American Hunger)*. New York: The Library of America.
- Showalter, Elaine (1981). *Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness*. University of Chicago.
- Showalter, Elaine (1985). *New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Showalter, Elaine (1977). *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Sutton E. Griggs, *Overshadowed: A Novel* (Nashville, Tenn: Orion, 1901)
- W.E.B Du Bois, (1986). *The Souls of Black Folk. Writings*. New York: The Library of America.
- Du Bois, "The Negro in Literature and Art" in *Writings*,

URL: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/grhf/WoC/>

URL : <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/feminism/enpo.html>

Wikipedia the free encyclopedia