

Analysis of *The Bluest Eye* from the Perspective of Post-colonialism

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Abstract: Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* centers on the tragic fate of Pecola Breedlove to reveal the self-destruction of the Black community resulting from the internalization of white aesthetic standards. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony from a post-colonial perspective, this thesis analyzes the alienation of Black identity, the estrangement of cultural identity, and the possibility of spiritual emancipation. It first elucidates how white cultural hegemony leads to self-hatred and identity alienation among Black subjects, and then reveals the mechanism by which racism is internalized and reinforced through intra-community victimization. Finally, by examining the resistant practices of the MacTeer family and the marginalized prostitutes, the thesis explores pathways toward cultural self-awareness and self-redemption. This study argues that the novel not only critiques the spiritual colonization of white cultural hegemony but also implies the potential for cultural self-restoration, offering significant literary insights for understanding identity construction and resistance strategies in the post-colonial context.

Keywords: Cultural hegemony, post-colonialism, *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison.

1. Introduction

Toni Morrison, a Pulitzer and Nobel Prize laureate, is one of the most influential African American writers. Her works are acclaimed for their "visionary force and poetic import, which give life to an essential aspect of American reality" (Nobel Prize Committee). Focusing on African American women's experiences, she integrates oral tradition, magical realism and postmodern techniques to voice marginalized women in white-dominated American society.

Born in Lorain, Ohio in 1931, Morrison received higher education at Howard and Cornell Universities and was passionate about literature. Unlike other Black writers, she focuses on racial relations and Black life, with an emphasis on Black women's dilemmas. Her debut *The Bluest Eye* (1970) explores white cultural hegemony's oppression on Black girls, earning her great reputation. Subsequent works like *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977) and *Beloved* (1987) solidified her status: *Beloved* (about post-slavery Black women's trauma) won the Pulitzer Prize, and she got the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. By revealing Black people's neglected history and deep-rooted racism/sexism, Morrison became an iconic 20th-century American writer.

As Morrison's debut, *The Bluest Eye* reflects her concern for racial and gender discrimination. Set in Lorain, Ohio, it tells the tragedy of Pecola Breedlove, a Black girl craving blue eyes to escape prejudice. Tormented by maternal rejection, school isolation and paternal sexual assault, Pecola collapses into insanity. Through her fate, Morrison exposes internalized racism's harm to young Black girls and white aesthetic standards' impact on Black identity.

Based on the perspective of post-colonialism, the thesis is devoted to analyze the loss of black identity, the alienation of black culture and pathways for liberation under the white cultural hegemony.

2. Literature Review

The Bluest Eye has garnered extensive global research,

with foreign studies focusing on narrative techniques, feminism, post-colonialism, and themes. Similarly, domestic studies adopt diverse perspectives, including narrative strategies, white cultural hegemony, gender, and psychoanalysis. Both strands enhance readers' multidimensional understanding of the novel.

2.1. Foreign Studies

As the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, Toni Morrison has achieved remarkable literary success. Her works have garnered significant attention and acclaim in the academic community. Research on her debut novel, *The Bluest Eye*, is flourishing.

Some scholars have analyzed *The Bluest Eye* from its narrative techniques. Christian [1] asserts that using Claudia as Pecola's narrator appears to be Morrison's best technique. Claudia serves as an omniscient narrator, capable of traversing time and space freely and breaking the constraints of a single human consciousness. Catherine Romagnolo [2] acclaims that Morrison employs chronological and causal openings to explore the deep-rooted racism and sexism in American society, urging readers to reflect on their own guilt.

A recurring discussion has focused on the fate of African American women. Scholars have analyzed this novel from the perspective of feminism. Amanda Putnam [3] examines several African American female characters in four of Toni Morrison's novels who have endured racial exploitation, sexual assault, and frequent emotional humiliation. These black female characters make violent choices. Amanda contends that this violence becomes an act of rebellion and resistance to oppression. The decision to embrace violence enables African American women to redefine their roles as powerful women, reframe their perceived disabilities, and transform their identities. Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak [4] regards *The Bluest Eye* as a revisionist work that takes the body as a source of happiness and wisdom. She argues that by depicting the young Pecola as a character permanently controlled by social discourse, Morrison highlights the urgent need to critically reflect on the social construction of gender

and race.

At the same time, some have examined the themes in the novel. Ogunyemi [5] contends that the novel delves into the “scapegoat.” Through the violent ceremony, the cat, dog and Pecola became the scapegoats in American culture. When black people despise Pecola, they would not consider themselves the ugliest one. Then, they found their fortune from the Pecola’s misfortune. Denise Heinze [6] acclaims the “double-consciousness” dilemma faced by African Americans in Toni Morrison’s novels, focusing on the conflict between racial and gender identity.

Some scholars also analyzed the novel from the perspective of post-colonialism. Jane Kuenz [7] analyses how the American culture capitalism influences the lives of black people. Jane Kuenz contends that the interaction with dominant culture for any individual not presented therein, and especially for African Americans, usually required abandonment of identity or the feature to see oneself in the body of another.

Therefore, *The Bluest Eye* has attracted extensive research globally. The related foreign studies focus on the narrative techniques, feminism, post-colonialism, and novel’s themes. Through former studies, the reader can understand the whole novel better.

2.2. Domestic Studies

After Morrison won the Noble Prize for literature, domestic studies began to flourish. The studies on *The Bluest Eye* become diversified, which help readers understand the novel completely and thoroughly.

Some scholars have analyzed the narrative strategies in the novel. Zhang Ruwen [8] argues *The Bluest Eye* has three discourses: the black community’s self-denying and constructive discourses, and American society’s racist discourse. She notes that through these discourses, Morrison achieved her creative purpose: the self-denying discourse reveals black people’s inferiority and self-loathing, the constructive discourse shows their hope, and the racist discourse deepens understanding of their psychological trauma. Zhang Qian [9] argues Morrison reveals black women’s oppression and her feminist ideas through two kinds of narrative voices.

Many scholars have analyzed the influence of white culture on African Americans and black culture. By examining three African American women and their families, Chen Xu and Chen Qianqian [10] argue that cultural erosion can inflict trauma on the black community. They also emphasize that in their pursuit of equal political and economic power, African Americans should not forsake their valuable cultural heritage. Zhang Hongwei [11] concludes that abandoning black culture and revering white culture leads to severe consequences, and upholding black culture is vital to maintaining black people’s self-esteem and confidence.

Moreover, some scholars have analyzed the novel from a gender perspective. Zhao Wenshu [12] employs the notion of “repetition and revision,” to compare *Invisible Man* with *The Bluest Eye*, and argues that Morrison revisits and reinterprets Ellison’s literary ideas through the recurring theme of incest. In addition, Morrison challenges the male-dominated ideology, enriches the representation of female consciousness, and expands upon Ellison’s critical awareness of social class issues. Ma Qingxia [13] explores the self-identity of black women in Morrison’s works by applying black feminist theory and white cultural values. She analyzes how the

dominant culture influences black women like Pauline, Pecola and Geraldine, and concludes the tragedy stems from the loss of self-identity and their culture.

In addition, some scholars have focused on the psychoanalysis perspective. Zheng Yuping [14] uses Lacan’s mirror stage to analyze the character and the fate of the protagonist Pecola. Zheng Yuping asserts that influenced by the surroundings, Pecola takes white aesthetics as the criteria for pursuing desires, so she is desperately seeking her own “bluest eyes”. Li Chunling [15] applies Freud’s theory of the structures of mind to delve into the inner factors that result in colonized African Americans’ self-loathing, self-contempt and self-destruction.

In conclusion, domestic studies on *The Bluest Eye* are characterized by diversified perspectives. Those domestic studies analyze the novel from the following aspects: narrative strategies, white culture hegemony, gender and psychoanalysis, which help readers grasp the whole novel from different perspectives.

Undoubtedly, Toni Morrison is a renowned figure in literary history, and her debut *The Bluest Eye* is highly valuable in guiding black people who have lost their identity to move from self-hatred to self-recognition. Research on *The Bluest Eye* from a postcolonial perspective is still limited. An Analysis of the novel this way not only offers more diverse interpretations, but also helps readers better understand the content of the novel and colonialism.

3. Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism provides a critical lens to examine racial oppression and cultural domination in *The Bluest Eye*. Drawing on Gramsci’s cultural hegemony theory, scholars can analyze how white supremacy shape black identity and self-worth. This perspective reveals Morrison’s critique of internalized racism and systemic power structures.

3.1. An Overview of Post-colonialism

Post-colonialism, a new kind of consciousness, was prevailing in the end of the 1970s and the early of the 1980s. Zhang Jinyuan [16] concludes that “postcolonial” has two meanings: first, the end of colonial control and rule; second, the disappearance of colonialism itself. Formal colonial rule has ended, yet its influences endure. Colonizers maintained control via cultural hegemony, leaving deep racial trauma that still affects public cognition. Yang Jincai [17] regards that postcolonialism refers to Western cultural expansion toward underdeveloped nations after the Cold War, inherently embodying cultural colonialism, hegemonism and imperialism. Postcolonial studies critically analyze the physical and mental impacts of colonial rule on oppressed communities, especially how colonial ideologies distort indigenous self-perception. Additionally, it explores the strategies employed by the colonized to reconstruct their cultural identity.

Tao Jiajun [18] concludes that postcolonialism’s evolution falls into three phases. The first stretches from the early 20th century to the 1970s, represented by key theorists including W. E. B. DuBois, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Frantz Fanon. The second covers the late 1970s through the 1990s, when scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha published landmark works in this field. The third phase has continued from the 1990s to the present, witnessing the emergence of a new generation of prominent researchers.

W. E. B. DuBois, a prominent black American scholar,

stresses the significance of African cultural identity. In his works *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), he proposes the concept of "double consciousness", referring to the dual identity of being both American and Black. Meanwhile, Léopold Sédar Senghor invents the notion of "negritude", a core concept defining African inherent characteristics, aesthetics and values. And then, "negritude" becomes the theoretical basis of black people to resist the racialism and imperialism. Franz Fanon proposes that the colonized must use violent measures to win liberation. He contends colonizer countries rely on violence for invasion, so the counter-violence of the colonized emerges as the inevitable result of colonial violence. He pays attention to the third world in his works, which makes him a leading anti-colonial theorist in the 20th century.

Edward Said is the pioneer of post-colonialism. His masterpiece *Orientalism*, which focuses on studying the Orient and the Third World and described how the western countries treat the marginal third world, their former colonies, has a profound impact on the latter thinkers and promotes the development of postcolonial theory. Gayatri Spivak is another crucial theorist who is considered as the one of co-founders of postcolonial theory. She focuses on studying class, history and geography related to females in her works. Homi K. Bhabha is the last outstanding theorist at the second stage. Bhabha's theoretical contributions for the post-colonialism can be found in the combination of Marxism and post structuralism in critical works, hybridization theory, concept of mimicry, and his cultural translation theory.

Generally speaking, postcolonial studies cover imperial cultures, indigenous colonial cultures, anti-imperial resistance traditions, and the cultural interplay between First World metropolitan centers and Third World peripheral regions.

3.2. Antonio Gramsci's Cultural Hegemony Theory

Antonio Gramsci, as a groundbreaking Marxist thinker and co-founder of Italy's Communist Party, pioneered the concept of "cultural hegemony." This theory revolutionized people's understanding of social control. In Antonio Gramsci's opinion, cultural hegemony means ruling class uses moral value and knowledge to lead the society rather than simply controls the whole society by military force.

Antonio Gramsci's cultural hegemony is implemented by compulsion and consent. First, the ruling class spreads its values and beliefs relying on its developed economy and the dominant role in the politics. Then cultural hegemony obtains public consents, and the ordinary people accept the values and beliefs willingly.

Cultural hegemony has three unique features. First, cultural hegemony, as a new form of colonial rule, is different from hegemony in economy, politics and military. After the independence of colonial nations, it seems that the colonial rule is ended. However, the ruling class just change their ways of control, propagating values and beliefs to the public. Second, the influence of cultural hegemony on the colonized is intangible and unconscious. The colonizer relies on mass media, education and religion to propagate the western values and standards. In the early stage of cultural hegemony, religion plays an important role. The missionaries of the western cultures spread the culture of Christian so as to change the tradition and culture of the colonized, thus the colonized would accept the western civilization gradually and

even abandon their own culture, which is the ultimate goal of the cultural hegemony. The mass media also plays a vital role in cultural hegemony in the postcolonial stage. The colonizer spread the white aesthetic standards and the happiness of white family through the movies and broadcasts. The harmonious scenes on the movie touch the colonized deeply, which makes them dislike their unhappy life and long for becoming "white". Moreover, the colonizer exerts cultural hegemony through education. The books, magazines and school education instill the white values to the black children so the colonized adore the beliefs of the colonizer. Third, the purpose of cultural hegemony is to change the minds of the colonized and win the recognitions of them instead of occupying the territory or obtaining the financial support, so as to make the colonized accept the lifestyle, morality and values of the white people.

Therefore, cultural hegemony is a new form of colonial rule. The colonizer occupies the spiritual worlds of the colonized through religion, mass media, and school education, and lets the colonized accepts the values willingly. This study, from the perspective of post-colonialism, by analyzing the black characters who are subjected to the white culture hegemony, deny their identity and lose their subjective consciousness, aims to reveal the destructive harm of white cultural hegemony on black communities, while exploring potential outlets for spiritual liberation and cultural self-redemption.

4. Analysis of *The Bluest Eye* from the Perspective of Post-colonialism

Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* reveals the devastating effects of colonialism through the loss of black identity and alienation from indigenous culture. Yet, it also hints at resistance as an outlet for reclaiming agency, offering a critique of internalized oppression while affirming cultural survival.

4.1. Alienation of Black Identity

The black culture is assimilated into the mainstream white culture owing to political oppression, racism and backward economy. The black people are marginalized and oppressed for a long time in the white cultural hegemony. To keep their superiority and dominance, the white keep instilling the black that blackness means inferiority and ugliness. Therefore, the black people despise themselves, which make them lose their subjective identity gradually.

4.1.1. Pecola's Fantasy of Blue Eyes

In Morrison's opinion, the worst situation is not the commercialization of the white standard of beauty but the acceptance and internalization of this standard by black people. Samuels and Hudson-Weems [19] argue that Pecola's suffering stems not just from external racism, but also from internalized colorism within black communities. As a poor black girl, Pecola unavoidably suffers contempt when measured by the white beauty standard.

In Pecola's mind, blue eyes symbolize beauty and nobility. Everything around her unconsciously reinforces this idea. Adults, older girls, stores, magazines, newspapers, and advertisements-all seem to reinforce that every little girl cherishes a doll with blue eyes, golden hair, and pink skin. In this environment, it is no surprise that Pecola longs for the white beauty.

In the black community where Pecola resides, there exists a pervasive sense of self-loathing among African Americans.

They perceive themselves as innately unattractive. Pecola, from the moment of her birth, is deemed uglier than others by the black community and does not enjoy the same happiness as white children. Her longing for white beauty stems from the fact that her family fails to provide the crucial elements for her healthy development, such as a sense of identity, socialization, security, and love. Her neglectful parents have a detrimental impact on her. In reality, it is not their physical ugliness that truly matters, but rather their conviction in their own ugliness that makes the difference. Morrison [20] points out that poverty and racial discrimination forced the characters to live in marginalized spaces, while their internalized sense of ugliness kept them there. Their poverty was shared and oppressive, but their self-perceived ugliness was unique.

Due to their conviction in their own ugliness, the Breedloves feel hatred rather than love for each other, and they hurt each other physically and mentally. Their home is like a battlefield. In Morrison's [20] narration, Cholly and Pauline fight in a harsh and violent way. Every time they fight, Pecola is overwhelmed with fear and wishes to vanish entirely. She once attempts to conceal herself beneath a quilt, silently praying to God to make her disappear.

Pecola's fragile heart is constantly wounded by her parents' endless fights. Morrison [20] argues that Pecola yearns to escape home, renounce her Black identity, and gain blue eyes, believing that beauty and a different appearance might change her parents' behavior and earn her kindness. Pecola regards blue eyes as a universal cure and prays for them devoutly every night. For a full year she has kept praying with unwavering persistence; though slightly disheartened, she still holds onto hope, believing such a miracle will take a long time to come true. From her cold mother and cruel father, Pecola only learned to hate her black self. The fantasy of blue eyes is not just about wanting a beautiful appearance. It is her desperate signal to throw away her original identity and integrate into the white world. She firmly believes that only by becoming white and having blue eyes could she escape being discriminated and ignored, and finally get love and respect.

Growing up in Ohio, surrounded by hostility and white cultural values, ignored by her mother, abused by her father, mocked by her community and tricked by Soaphead Church, she is destined to split herself. Therefore, her dramatic downfall is unavoidable.

4.1.2. Geraldine's Abandonment of Black Identity

In the novel, Morrison poetically portrays the sorrow of both dark-skinned and light-skinned black people. Under the white cultural hegemony, the figures in this novel distort themselves to integrate into a white culture. The dominant white culture forces them to accept the lifestyle, morality and values of the white people, and considers their blackness as miserable and dirty.

Different from Pecola and her family, who are dark-skinned, the light-skinned figures experience the nebulous condition. In the case of Geraldine, a middle-class black woman, and her son Junior, though they think they are superior to dark-skinned people, they also face the dilemma due to their skin color. In Morrison's narration [20], the boundary between light-skinned Black individuals and those labeled "nigger" was ambiguous, requiring constant vigilance against subtle signs that might blur this fragile divide. This shows that light-skinned people have pathological preoccupation with skin color boundaries.

Without doubt, Mrs. Geraldine is a symbol of an ideal black middle-class. In Morrison's [20] novel, there she settled down, tending to daily chores, caring for flowers and her cat, and gave birth to her son Louis Junior. She almost meets all the criteria of a good wife, however, at the same time, goes through a process of metamorphosis, because she must erase all the "funkiness" inherent in a black. As Morrison [20] notes, such traits are relentlessly erased and resisted wherever they appear, a struggle that persists until death. Since the standards and values in America have been historically coded in white terms, the blacks' exposure to them is based on the abandonment of their own race.

Pecola has the characteristics that Mrs. Geraldine strive to eliminate. The unexpected visit of Pecola in her house surges a vomit and infuriates her, not only because Junior gets together with Pecola, but also because Pecola reflects her past which arouses crisis in her psyche. As a pretty milk-brown lady, a middle-class woman living in the pretty gold-and-green house, the blackness, funkiness, and poverty of As Morrison [20] notes, Pecola becomes unbearable to her, driving her to angrily expel the girl from her home with vicious, racially charged insults. The light-colored people, abandoning their identity and colluding with white society, banishes Pecola.

In Morrison's [20] narration, Geraldine tries hard to distance herself from dark-skinned people. She identifies herself and her family as light-skinned colored people, while stigmatizing those with darker complexions as unclean and unruly.

Geraldine thinks only by staying away from the dark-skinned people could she keep her "dignity" and get closer to white culture. But she does not realize that she is losing expose to who she really is, and getting more and more confused about her own identity.

4.2. Estrangement of Cultural Identity

In the white culture hegemony and the positive portrayals of white people created by it, the black people tend to accept and follow the white culture. They imitate the behaviors and dress style of the whites, while black culture is gradually neglected and alienated, and ultimately marginalized.

4.2.1. Pauline's Self-Loss in Hollywood Movie

As a vital component of mass media, Hollywood movie has played an important role in propagating white-dominated culture and values. The Hollywood movies construct a virtual world and it makes audience have illusions that will never come true. In terms of Pauline, she succumbs to the hegemonic force of the white-dominated society. She emulates white people's dress-up, hairstyle, and the manner of speaking to conform to the white standard of beauty.

Scholars have discussed the issue of the influence of western dominant culture on the marginal black people. Dates and Remark [21] contend that cultural control serves as the most effective mechanism for establishing ideological dominance, as it creates a unified worldview across all societal strata. The mass media also plays a vital role in cultural hegemony in the postcolonial stage. The colonizer spread the white aesthetic standards and the happiness of white family through the movies and broadcasts. The harmonious scenes on the movie touch the colonized deeply, which makes them dislike their unhappy life and long for becoming "white". In Morrison's [20] narration, Pauline admires white popular culture and even styles her hair after the actress she admires from magazines. From the films

Pauline internalizes the racist standards of female beauty, and in equating physical attractiveness with moral virtue, she gradually empties her mind, confines her thoughts, and accumulates self-loathing in large amounts.

While Pecola admires Shirley Temple and Mary Janes, Pauline admires Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. Both of them unknowingly embrace the white beauty standard and lose their sense of self under the influence of mass media.

In Morrison's [20] narration, the visionary movie gives Pauline mental satisfaction, which she could not feel in the real life, where imperfection is healed, weakness is redeemed, and spiritual comfort replaces daily suffering. Pauline believes she has found a pathway for her repressed creativity by replacing her youthful orderliness with the "perfection" of Hollywood's silver screen so as to escape from her miserable black situation. Nevertheless, the negation of her blackness only escalates her indigenous alienation.

Pauline works in a rich white family, which is affectionate, appreciative and generous. In Mr. Fisher's house, Pauline finds the perfection she has seen in movies. For her, the meaning of her life roots in her work in the Fisher house. She rejects any beef that is too dark or poorly trimmed. While she tolerates questionable fish for her own family, she will angrily return similar quality to the fish vendor if it is intended for the Fisher household. In this household, she enjoys authority, admiration, and privilege.

Sadly, Pauline totally devotes herself to such a sense of pride. She does not realize that the seemingly power and luxury life will not belong to her, and she will never truly go into white people's world.

Morrison [20] considers that Pauline devotes care and perfection to her work but withholds it from her own family. She gradually neglects her home, children and husband, regarding them merely as marginal, unremarkable parts of her life that only serve to highlight the beauty and refinement of her time with the Fishers.

Pauline loathes the ugliness of her house, her family, herself and ascribes her sense of unworthiness to being black and poor. In order to keep her marginal position in the white world, Pauline alienates indigenous culture, gives up her family and retreats into the luxury and order in the Fisher household.

4.2.2. Geraldine's Pursuit of White Culture

Under the white culture hegemony, black people often try hard to conform to white culture to gain better economic opportunities and social recognition.

Geraldine lives next to the playground of Washington Irving School. This gives her more opportunities to contact white culture. She believes that adopting white cultural values and beliefs will grant her family the same privileges as white people. In Morrison's [20] novel, they are taught to cultivate thrift, patience, morality and politeness, essentially abandoning their inherent Black characteristics to fit white norms.

Under the miseducation of the white culture, Geraldine suffers from a serious identity crisis. She tries hard to suppress her black nature and emotions, refuses to connect with traditional black culture, and becomes blindly obsessed with white culture. She loses the right understanding of her own identity, turns herself into a follower of white culture, and finally loses her true self.

The superficial resemblance to the white middle-class docile women can not obscure the fact that Geraldine is doubly oppressed by both the white man's request for the

womanhood and whiteness. In Morrison's [20] novel, White culture promotes an ideal of womanhood that values purity, beauty, and the ability to serve gracefully. But this ideal creates problems for Geraldine in her marriage. In her relationship with her husband, any disorder or intimacy conflicts with her ideal of femininity. During intercourse, he supports himself on his elbows ostensibly to protect her, yet in reality to spare her from excessive physical contact with him. This shows that the cultivation of an ideal woman is a complete failure.

Geraldine is a tragic figure oppressed by white culture. In this distorted educational system, she lost her recognition and love for her own ethnic culture. While chasing after white culture, she gradually lost herself. Her experience vividly shows the pain and struggle of black people under the impact of white culture.

4.3. Possibility of Spiritual Emancipation

In the novel *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison calls on the black community and families to preserve their own culture and traditions. She encourages black women to embrace their beauty and maintain their own identity and dignity despite the various oppression they face. The novel offers a glimmer of hope through some resistant black women, such as Mrs. Macteer and the three prostitutes who live on the margins of mainstream society. These women reject the influence of white culture and demonstrate the traditional values of black women.

4.3.1. Preservation of Black Cultural Traditions

At the beginning of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison portrays the idealized white middle-class family life through a Dick and Jane schoolbook reader, which presents cheerful children and affectionate parents. This portrayal unconsciously suggests that black families should conform to this model. Different from the Breedloves and the Geraldine's family, the Macteer family has strong kinship and tight links with their cultural heritage, which protect its members from white standards' erosion and let them live by their own mores and beliefs.

In Morrison's [20] narration, the Macteer family, though poverty, strives to create a decent life, deals with life's pain and resists the allure of the illusionary world depicted in the Dick and Jane reader. Mr. Macteer is diligent and responsible, struggling tirelessly to protect his family from all kinds of threats and hardships. Mr. Macteer, as father and protector, works tirelessly to fend off hardships.

While Cholly savagely rapes his own daughter, Mr. Macteer valiantly defends his daughters and almost kills a boarder who sexually harasses Frieda. Mr. Macteer's protection of his daughters is not only motivated by paternal love but also serves as a defense of black culture and identity and a resistance to the oppression of white culture. He upholds family dignity and sets an example of resilience for the black community.

Though residing in the same community as Pauline and being exposed to the same white-dominated propaganda, Mrs. Macteer appears largely indifferent to the embodiment of the white-oriented images depicted by Shirley Temple or the Dick and Jane reader. This is primarily because she is practical and lives free from illusions. She usually grumbles about life's hardships, loves and protects her daughters. In Morrison's [20] narration, Mrs. Macteer deeply loves and guards her daughters, quietly caring for them even in their moments of illness. Pauline, influenced by white cultural hegemony, has a distorted and deficient love for her children. In contrast, Mrs.

Macteer, unaffected by this, loves her children in a pure and natural way, providing warmth and security for her children.

Mrs. Macteer, as a positive role model, significantly impacts Claudia and Frieda's ability to build connections with their community and develop healthy identities. In Morrison's [20] narration, even amid disasters and chaos, Mrs. Macteer remains calm and hopeful, her inner strength unshaken. This shows that Mrs. Macteer maintains a link to ancestral knowledge, which is crucial to survival in their current situation.

In Claudia's narrative, compared to the warm and positive interactions among the Macteers and their townspeople, Pecola and her family remain largely silent. Morrison suggests that those who engage with their community, prioritize communal values over individualism, and uphold their community's values can find strength and support to resist negative external influences and thrive as themselves.

4.3.2. Resistance to White Value Standards

In the novel, the three prostitutes who live on the margins of society are able to uphold community values and the rich Afro-American tradition. Although they are considered outcasts by others and rejected by mainstream society, they remain comfortable with who they are and do not feel the need to conform to white standards. They distance themselves from white values and never consider being anyone other than themselves. Through their rejection of imitation and their acts of resistance, the three prostitutes reclaim their own sense of self.

The novel depicts Pecola seeking refuge and forming a bond with the three prostitutes—China, Poland, and Miss Marie—who live above her family. Pecola visits them and helps with their errands. In return, these women do not reject her but show pity and offer some comfort in her difficult life. They demonstrate that their lives hold meaning despite societal contempt because they define themselves, independent of the white beauty standards epitomized by Shirley Temple. This contrasts sharply with Pecola's mother, Pauline, who denies her true self to conform to a narrow white beauty ideal. Unlike Pauline, the prostitutes embrace their physical bodies rather than shunning them. In Morrison's [20] narration, Miss Marie makes even belching seem beautiful to Pecola, who perceives it as "softly, purringly, lovingly". However, Pecola fails to adopt this self-embracing image and instead becomes a replica of her mother, leading to her tragic downfall.

Unlike Pauline and Geraldine who suppress their desire for life's passion, these prostitutes assert control over their bodies, which grants them a sense of freedom. They sell their bodies partly to survive under the conditions of racism and poverty, and partly because they harbor hatred for all men, regardless of race. In Morrison's [20] narration, apart from Marie's legendary affection for Dewey Prince, these women harbored unapologetic hatred toward all men, treating their clients with routine, cold scorn. In the prostitutes' view, these men are scoundrels who need them yet also ravage and belittle them. They use their bodies to express their rage against the onslaught of oppressive forces.

These three women's strength stems from their determination not to be dominated by white standards of values. They embrace being labeled as "whores in whores' clothing." They choose to live genuinely and do not succumb to the dominant power. Each of them maintains her own standards of beauty and is content with who she truly is.

5. Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is a powerful narrative that delves into the profound impact of white cultural hegemony on African American identity and culture. Through the tragic story of Pecola, a young black girl, and other characters such as Pauline and Geraldine, the novel vividly illustrates the loss of African American identity and the alienation from their cultural heritage.

Pecola's tragic descent into madness, driven by her obsession with blue eyes, symbolizes the internalized racism and self-hatred that result from the imposition of white beauty standards. Her belief that blue eyes would grant her acceptance and love reflects the deep-seated impact of white cultural hegemony on her self-perception. Similarly, Pauline's alienation of her own cultural traditions in favor of white cultural norms further highlights the disintegration of the African American family structure under the pressure of white cultural hegemony. Geraldine's pursuit of white cultural ideals represents the broader trend among middle-class African Americans who distance themselves from their black identity, believing that assimilation into white culture will elevate their social status. However, this pursuit leads to a profound loss of identity and alienation of their own culture. The Macteer family's preservation of black cultural traditions—embodied in their storytelling, folk wisdom, and communal values—offers a counter-narrative to cultural erasure. Their household becomes a sanctuary where black identity is nurtured rather than negated. Similarly, the black prostitutes' resistance to white value standards challenges dominant value systems, asserting alternative modes of black self-definition beyond assimilation.

Morrison's novel not only exposes the destructive effects of white cultural hegemony but also calls for a reclamation of African American cultural identity. By highlighting the importance of cultural heritage and self-acceptance, the novel encourages readers to resist cultural oppression and to value their own unique identities. In conclusion, *The Bluest Eye* serves as a poignant reminder of the need to recognize and celebrate the richness of African American culture, to challenge white cultural hegemony, and to foster a sense of belonging and self-worth among marginalized communities.

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