

The African American Man from a Womanist Perspective with Reference to Toni Morrison's 'The Bluest Eye'

الرجل الافريقي الامريكى من وجهة نظر النسوية الافريقية الامريكية في رواية «العين الأكثر زرقة» للكاتبة توني موريسون

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Abstract

This paper explores the representation of the African American man in Toni Morrison's novel 'The Bluest Eye' from a womanist perspective, by analyzing the male characters. Toni Morrison includes her male characters in the discussion of gender in 'The Bluest Eye'. They are portrayed as victims of various forms of oppression, racism and classism, instead of narrowly judging them as oppressors of women. Through the provision of details of her male characters, Morrison gives different dimensions to depict the African American man. The womanist interpretation is adequate to read the portrayal of the African American man presented in 'The Bluest Eye'. The researcher uses the descriptive analytic approach to examine the text under discussion, 'The Bluest Eye'.

المستخلص

تقدم هذه الدراسة تحليل الرجل الافريقي الامريكى من وجهة نظر النسوية الافريقية الامريكية في رواية «العين الأكثر زرقة» للكاتبة توني موريسون، حيث تتم النظرة الي الرجل الافريقي الامريكى علي انه ضحية اضهاد للفرقة العنصرية و الطبقيية بدلا عن انه فقط قاهر للمرأة، قدمت الكاتبة سرد تفصيلي عن شخصياتها الذكور لاتاحة الفرصة للنظر الي الرجل الافريقي الامريكى من وجهات نظر مختلفة، يعد التحليل النسوي الافريقي الامريكى مواتيا لتحليل قضية الرجل الافريقي الامريكى كما جسدت في الرواية، تتبع هذه الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي.

Keywords: Womanism, Feminism, Racism, Gender, Classism
Introduction

As an inclusionary theory, 'womanism' provides an opportunity to include the discussion of the African American man from various

viewpoints. African American women realize that the feminist theory does not account for their complex experiences, while 'womanism' adequately establishes theoretical and practical framework to address African American women's concerns. The African American man is seen as a victim of long-term forms of oppression practiced by the white oppressors. Consequently, the African American man turns this oppression to African American women and children. Black men are racially discriminated against due their African race. Besides, they are exploited by whites who use them to increase their income. In addition, they are physically and psychologically destructed. Due to these harsh factors, African American women see their men as victims rather than enemies. This is obviously reflected in Toni Morrison's novel 'The Bluest Eye'. In her article 'On Incest' published in Bloom's Guides (2010), Scott states^{(1)(p99)}, On The Oprah Winfrey Show (2000), Morrison notes that, "A lot of white women write to me about The Bluest Eye because of the incest, a lot of white females who are interested in the book because of that, not the other level of meaning." Morrison's remark proposes that the novel is not merely about incest and it does not support a particular feminist reading of incest. Morrison's contribution to the development of the African society is demonstrated in her literary productions. Alsen^{(2)(p333)} states, "...Morrison always deals with the role of women in African American society."

Research Gap

The exclusion of African American women from women liberation movements, theory and history is obviously resisted by African American female intellectuals. Nevertheless, they struggle to form their own theoretical and practical frameworks to address their experiences. 'Womanism' is not recognized as a 'literary approach' yet, while it provides adequate tools to approach literary texts written by African American women writers. Studies on 'womanism as a literary approach' are supposed to be conducted to approach African American women writers' texts, which are very complex and unique, including various topics.

Rationale of the Study

This study is conducted to reflect the portrayal of the African

American man from a womanist perspective as depicted in Toni Morrison's novel, *'The Bluest Eye'*. Knowing that, the feminist analysis fails to explore issues presented by African American women writers, whose experiences are very unique, including issues of race and class while discussing gender matters. Therefore, this study is to provide tools to approach literary texts written by African American women writers, concerning the depiction of the African American man in the novel under discussion.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant due to a number of reasons: it illustrates the womanist interpretation to literature as an adequate method to account for the African American women's experiences, and shows how Toni Morrison treats African American men with relation to the discourse of gender in her novel *'The Bluest Eye'*. Furthermore, the discussion of gender is seen through womanistic eyes, elaborating other forms of oppression along with sexism and how they leave their impacts on both African American women and men and the African American society. The use of the feminist analysis to approach the portrayal of the African American man is inadequate, due to the shortcoming of feminism, neglecting issues of race, class, and culture when examining gender topics.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to

- a. Illustrate the reflection of the African American man from a womanistic perspective in Toni Morrison's *'The Bluest Eye'*.
- b. Show how the womanist interpretation adequately proposes tools to read the issue of the African American man as presented in *'The Bluest Eye'*.

Methodology of the Study

This study is a qualitative descriptive study. Books, scientific journals, articles and the internet are used to collect data of the study. For the purpose of a comprehensive analysis of the topic under discussion, the representation of the African American man in *'The Bluest Eye'*, the researcher employs the descriptive analytic literary approach. The

researcher relates the womanist interpretation to the text under analysis via exploring the womanist characteristics as revealed in the text. The sample of this study is Toni Morrison's novel 'The Bluest Eye', original text published in 2007 by Vintage International. The researcher examines the way Morrison employs tools of characterization to treat African American male characters. The character of Cholly Breedlove, main character, is examined and to some extent the researcher highlights other African American male characters to contribute to the discussion of the study.

Literature Review

This part presents the African American women's standpoints concerning theories of gender and relevant topics. Black women endeavor to form theoretical and practical frameworks to deal with their experiences due to the fact that they have been excluded from theory and history. In her article 'White women listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood', published in Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Carby^{(3)(110,111)} asserts that the experience of black women is not adequately accounted for by most contemporary feminist theory. The absence of black women is questioned and it is agreed that the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist theory are supposed to be challenged. The black women's oppression does not stem from a single source. White feminists see patriarchy as the main cause of their oppression, while black women need to redefine the term 'patriarchy' to be conceptually complex. Due to racism, black men lack the relations of patriarchal/capitalist hierarchies that white men have. To reflect solidarity with African American men, Combahee River Collective, black feminists, directly expressing their standpoint towards feminism and African Americans^{(4)(p213)}:

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual e.g. the history of rape of Black women

by white men as a weapon of political repression.

Although we are feminists and lesbians, we feel solidarity with progressive Black men and do not advocate the fractionalisation that white women who are separatists demand. Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race, which white women of course do not need to have with white men, unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors. We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism.

Price^{(5)(p260,262)} explains, black feminists in the early 1970s demonstrate the most radical revision of the African American literary tradition as a response to the marginalization of black women by both Anglo-American feminists and the masculinity presented by the Black Arts movement. Black literary feminism is concerned, at its simplest level, with the experiences and history of African American women and examining their representation in literature and criticism. The neglected works of African American women writers are recovered by black feminist scholars who develop new reading strategies for 'women-concerned' narratives which are traditionally disregarded, belittled and condemned by the male-dominated black critical establishment. Attention is drawn to forgotten narratives written by female slaves and women poets from the nineteenth century. Zora Neale Hurston who is 'infamously dismissed by Wright and largely ignored for over thirty years' is discovered by Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison is also closely associated with the project of recovering the history and experiences of African American women. Both writers focus on female characters and make the female consciousness central in the narrative. Black literary feminism is considered as far from considerable, its critics use different approaches such as deconstruction, psychoanalysis and other theoretical discourses are used by critics like Hortense Spillers while others emphasize personal experience and testimony in their works. Black feminists work very hard to critique the black literary tradition assumed by masculinity, and to create a relationship between black women writers and their history. Their crucial aim is to outline a more representative

African American literary history, rather than constructing a separate black female literary tradition. Mary Helen Washington claims, 'the making of a literary history in which black women are fully represented is a search for a full vision, to create a circle where now we have but a segment.' Formalism and structuralism are used during 1970s by those who work in African American literary studies to critique the essentialism of the Black Art movement and 'yielding a "literary" understanding' of African American literature. Gates believes that black critics are to use theories that 'defamiliarize the black text' and he recommends to 'see the text as a structure of literature and not as one-to-one reflection of my life.' African American literary critics are supposed to respond strategically to 'a long tradition of reading black texts reductively by as sociological, biographical or historical documents'. Social text of race is to be regarded by black critics while embracing theory. Houston A. Baker Jr. is an example, his work includes theories of African American literature which deal with texts formally and black history and experience in America. The demand of Black Aesthetic criticism influence Baker's work which is embraces the black vernacular and black expressive practices like the Blues. Poststructuralism influences Baker, Gates and other critics who prefer textual formal relationships (intertextuality) to biographical, historical or external social factors. Gates claims that 'black writers read and critique other black texts as an act of rhetorical self-definition', and he continues 'our literary tradition exists because of these precisely chartable literary relationships.' Baker reevaluates the Harlem Renaissance, which he describes as 'a single, exotic set of "failed" high jinks confined to less than a decade', opposing historical and social understanding of African American literary production. Nevertheless, the turn to theory is critiqued by African American literary scholars, even Gates claims 'the mistake of confusing the enabling mask of theory with our own black faces' is to be avoided. Barbara Christian warns against 'the race for theory', showing the dangers of western cultural hegemony. (Nisbet, B. and Rawson: 2008,

Womanism is an African American women's theory, originated in the African American women's culture, coined by Alice Walker. It pro-

vides a theoretical and practical platform for African American women to address their issues. The term 'womanism' is defined in a complex way due to the variety and uniqueness of the African American women's experiences, stemming from various critical conditions. In her anthology of essays 'In Search of Our Mothers' Garden: Womanist Prose' (1983), Alice Walker^(xi-xii) defines the term 'womanist' as:

1. From womanish. (Opp. Of "girlish," i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, "You acting womanish," i.e. like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered "good" for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: "You trying to be grown." Responsible. In charge. Serious.
2. Also. A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalances of laughter), and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: "Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?" Ans.: "Well, you know colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."
3. Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless.
4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender.

Walker's four-entry definition of 'womanism' suggests the variety of meanings the term holds to address different topics discussed by African American women, concerning both their community and the

globe. Each entry defines womanism from a different perspective, making the concept inclusionary.

The African American Man from a Womanistic Standpoint: ‘The Bluest Eye’

The discussion of the African American man is an essential part of the discourse of gender in African American women’s writings. This inclusionary vision encompasses all people as explored in womanism, survival of wholeness. The African American man is seen through womanistic eyes. Instead of merely judging men as oppressors, African American women deeply seek to figure out their men’s experiences which form their consciousness, interaction with their women and children, and environment. Morrison is intensely concerned to explore her male characters from an African American women’s view point in her novel ‘The Bluest Eye’. Male characters, African American, are thoroughly elaborated, reflecting the relationship between their past and current experiences and situations. Their malevolent acts against women, children and environment are due to various factors resulted from oppressive conditions against them. They experience different forms of oppression, racism and classism, affecting them physically, psychologically, socially, and economically. Cholly Breedlove is an example of the African American man who is victimized by severe contradictions throughout his life. His victimization starts when he is an orphan, saved from his mother, whose situation is worsened after being pregnant. Cholly’s mother is mad, trying to kill her son Cholly when he is only four days old. Aunt Jimmy saves and raises him, mothering him. His mother runs away. This indicates the psychological pressures growing inside her, trying to get rid of her own baby. Moreover, this mirrors the rejection of life; she does not want her baby to grow up in this environment where African Americans are humiliated. Further, his mother’s madness expresses the psychological suffering caused by the society which is racist, capitalist and sexist. African American men run away from their families due to life difficulties in the new world. Cholly’s childhood is full of sorrows, and lack of recognition. In Aunt Jimmy’s funeral, Cholly is “the object of a great attention.” The word ‘object’ is

used to refer to Cholly, which means he is not considered as a person. Black children are not regarded as human beings by their elders and this creates problems in their future. Morrison is able to discuss the complex psyche of Cholly, who is treated as an object^{(6)(p140)}, “Nobody talked to him; that is, they treated him like the child he was, never engaging him in serious conversation; but they anticipated wishes he never had: meals appeared, hot water for the wooden tub, clothes laid out.” They physically take good care of him, but psychologically they neglect him. This leaves impacts on his character. Morrison’s intention is to make people aware of the importance of considering their children as human beings who have their own feelings, perceptions and existence. It is noticed that black children are not treated the way people are treated. Cholly does not interact to the funeral of Aunt Jimmy the same way others do. He has different feelings toward her corpse. He enjoys the carnival. No one considers him as a person who is to be talked to in order to make him understand what being dead means. Therefore, he has different view on what takes place.

As a young boy, Cholly experiences the most horrible incident in his life, affecting him for the rest of his life, destroying his psyche. Cholly and Darlene are humiliated by white men while making love. Sexuality is used as a form of degrading black people, violating their privacy. Humans find it very humiliating to have sex in front of others, especially those who are hated or feared. Sexual joy turns into shame, fear, and hatred. Cholly and the girl are caught by white men with guns and flashlight, humiliating them while they make love. The white men order and threaten him to continue while they stand and watch^{(7)(p42,43)}:

“When he was still very young, Cholly had been surprised in some bushes by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl. The men had shone a flashlight right on his behind. He had stopped, terrified. They chuckled. The beam of the flashlight did not move. “Go on,” they said. “Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good.” The flashlight did not move. For some reason Cholly had not hated the white men; he hated, despised, the girl. Even a half-remembrance of this episode, along with myriad other humiliations, defeats, and emasculations, could stir him into flights of

depravity that surprised himself—but only himself. Somehow he could not astound. He could only be astounded. So he gave that up, too.”

Morrison gives an account about Cholly’s past to analyze his current character, thoughts and deeds. It seems rational to relate this terrible incident to the way gender relations and sexuality are formed in the African American community, being demeaned by whites. This leaves immediate severe psychological impacts on him and Darlene, acting accordingly. Later, this harsh experience remains in his memory, controlling the way he reacts to his wife and children, reflecting this self-hatred on his wife. The main reason of his sorry life is the white oppressors, but he cannot face them due to their intimidating power. Rather, he turns it to the new victim, Darlene, and later to his wife and children, because they are thought to be weaker and inferior in this inevitable oppressive system. There are many examples of this in the African American women’s writings, depicting how black men are victimized and how they victimize their women and children instead of fighting back. They are not able to express their rejection to this oppression so they take it and pass to those whom they can oppress, women and children. This vicious circle is mainly caused by the position of African American in oppressive America where it is impossible to live a normal life; they set to play role of oppressed and oppressor, women and children are the most oppressed. The terror and shame of the scene is elaborated^{7(p147,148)}:

There was no place for Cholly’s eyes to go. They slid about furtively searching for shelter, while his body remained paralyzed. The flashlight man lifted his gun down from his shoulder, and Cholly heard the clop of metal. He dropped back to his knees. Darlene had her head averted, her eyes staring out of the lamplight into the surrounding darkness and looking almost unconcerned, as though they had no part in the drama taking place around them. With a violence born of total helplessness, he pulled her dress up, lowered his trousers and underwear.

“Hee hee hee hee hee.”

Darlene put her hands over her face as Cholly began to simulate what had gone on before. He could do no more than make-believe. The

flashlight made a moon on his behind.

“Hee hee hee hee heeee.”

“Come on, coon. Faster. You ain’t doing nothing for her.”

“Hee hee hee hee heeee.”

Cholly, moving faster, looked at Darlene. He hated her. He almost wished he could do it—hard, long, and painfully, he hated her so much. The flashlight wormed its way into his guts and turned the sweet taste of muscadine into rotten fetid bile. He stared at Darlene’s hands covering her face in the moon and lamplight. They looked like baby claws.

“Hee hee hee hee heee.”

Morrison analyzes the psychological situation of African American men who fail to treat their women right. They are unable to fight back, so they turn their evil to their women instead of the white man. This shows the weakness of black men in front of white men who have the power used aggressively to oppress others^{7(150,151)}:

“Sullen, irritable, he cultivated his hatred of Darlene. Never did he once consider directing his hatred toward the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him. They were big, white, armed men. He was small, black, helpless. His subconscious knew what his conscious mind did not guess—that hating them would have consumed him, burned him up like a piece of soft coal, leaving only flakes of ash and a question mark of smoke. He was, in time, to discover that hatred of white men—but not now. Not in impotence but later, when the hatred could find sweet expression. For now, he hated the one who had created the situation, the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence. The one whom he had not been able to protect, to spare, to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight. The hee-heehee’s. He recalled Darlene’s dripping hair ribbon, flapping against her face as they walked back in silence in the rain.”

As an African American man, Cholly is portrayed as a victim of white men who humiliate black people. In turns, black men turn this bad treatment to their women and children instead of confronting the main source of their sufferings, European Americans. Cholly’s sexual experience affects his later life, destroying him and his family. Whites make

black people hate each other as well as they eventually hate whites. There is no peace in hatred. Cholly learns hatred from a very early age. His hatred is firstly directed to his own people, Darlene, delaying the hatred of whites for it burns him now as it is explained.

Morrison explores a very significant issue regarding her community through the character of Cholly. The theme of searching for parents, mostly a father, is a recurrent theme in literary productions of African Americans. Black children search for their fathers, rarely mothers, whom they have not seen, only told about. This is one of the main issues they meet in their early life. It is depicted in a number of works of art by African Americans, singers, writers, and intellectuals. Cholly has not seen both, nor his father nor his mother. Nevertheless he strives to meet his father after the death of Aunt Jimmy and his terrible and demeaning sexual experience. He thinks of his father as the only one whom he could resort to. Unknowing who his father is, Cholly searches for his father among a group of men, his enthusiasm is signified by his pleasure seen in his emotional and physical reaction to see his father for the first time^{7(p155)}:

He shared their excitement, and the dry-mouthed apprehension on meeting his father gave way to the saliva flow of excitement. He glanced at the faces, looking for the one who might be his father. How would he know him? Would he look like a larger version of himself?

His innocence is contrasted to those eyes which reflect the psyches of these lost black men, whose lives are entirely formed by their tough experiences. While his excitement and eagerness to recognize his father is contrasted to and interrupted by his father's rough questioning⁷⁽¹⁵⁵⁾:

“What you want, boy?”

“Uh. I mean . . . is you Samson Fuller?”

“Who sent you?”

“Huh?”

“You Melba's boy?”

Fuller showers his son Cholly with cruel questions instead of answering his son. He uses questions as replies to Cholly's questions. This seems complicated to Cholly, and that it reflects his rejection of being engaged

in a conversation with the young boy, who hesitantly replies^{7(p155,156)}, “No, sir, I’m . . . ” Cholly blinked. He could not remember his mother’s name. Had he ever known it? What could he say? Whose boy was he? He couldn’t say, “I’m your boy.” (Ironically, “That sounded disrespectful” to Fuller, so “The man was impatient. “Something wrong with your head? Who told you to come after me?” He merely answers, “Nobody.” Cholly’s hands were sweating. The man’s eyes frightened him. “I just thought . . . I mean, I was just wandering around, and, uh, my name is Cholly” Fuller Mercilessly treats his son Cholly and ends the conversation:

But Fuller had turned back to the game that was about to begin anew. He bent down to toss a bill on the ground, and waited for a throw. When it was gone, he stood up and in a vexed and whiny voice shouted at Cholly, “Tell that bitch she get her money. Now, get the fuck outta my face!”

Cholly is severely hurt by his father, going to the alley controlling his eyes not to drop tears. His psychological pain and wounds are physically interpreted although he tries to hide his tears^{7(p156,157)}:

But then the trace of pain edged his eyes, and he had to use everything to send it away. If he was very still, he thought, and kept his eyes on one thing, the tears would not come. So he sat in the dripping honey sun, pulling every nerve and muscle into service to stop the fall of water from his eyes. While straining in this way, focusing every erg of energy on his eyes, his bowels suddenly opened up, and before he could realize what he knew, liquid stools were running down his legs. At the mouth of the alley where his father was, on an orange crate in the sun, on a street full of grown men and women, he had soiled himself like a baby.

Generally, it seems that men do not show tears as the way women do, they hardly cry. Although Cholly is collapsed, he does not release his tears. This reflects two important points; on one hand Morrison shows how men react to their painful experiences, on the other hand how their organs react to these experiences. Cholly is able to control his tears, but fails to stop ‘liquid stools’. The former is his reaction to this experience, while the other is his organs’ reactions, controlled by his subconscious

mind. Morrison's idea is that, it is rational and natural to let tears drop rather than holding them, because they cause other problems which are more serious than crying. Crying is a way of healing sometimes, letting bitterness go. Dropping tears is associated with women whom are seen weak. Tears relieve the pain held inside, but Colly suppresses them not to come out. As a result, he experiences a more shameful incident, turning him into a baby.

Cholly's life is full of contradictions as reflected in the novel. Thus, his character requires psychological, social, and historical analysis from an African American women's point of view. Morrison provides elaboration to this character to revise the criticism of the African American man, instead of following other approaches to examine these complexities presented by Cholly. His attempt of correcting the mistake resulted from his sexual experience, not to run away from a pregnant woman, fails due to frustration caused by his father's humiliation. He is humiliated by the white hunters and more severely by his father. The conflict within John's inners is clearly presented when he wonders what to do; he wants to make a decision regarding his sexual experience with Geraldine. John's nobleness is reflected when he dismisses the idea of running away. This shows how he is committed to his society, though he has been humiliated due to this horrible experience. Another instance to show John's nobleness is when he marries Pauline, unlike his father who has mistreated him and his mother, who has gone insane due to her harsh experience with his cruel father. Her attempt to kill her son, Cholly, demonstrates the awfulness of being impregnated and abandoned after giving birth. Cholly's loss, defeated, is expressed by a dangerous kind of freedom, stemming from lack of hope to reunite his family, searching for his father, who has ruthlessly hurt him⁷⁽¹⁵⁹⁾:

Dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt—fear, guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep. Free to sleep in doorways or between the white sheets of a singing woman. Free to take a job, free to leave it. He could go to jail and not feel imprisoned, for he had already seen the furtiveness in the eyes of his jailer, free to say, “No, suh,” and smile, for he had already killed three

white men. Free to take a woman's insults, for his body had already conquered hers. Free even to knock her in the head, for he had already cradled that head in his arms.

In this passage many issues are discussed to summarize Cholly's experiences and their consequences. This kind of freedom is due to the harsh experiences, physical, social, economic, and psychological. In other words, this freedom is determined by Cholly's victimization, starting from the cradle. He becomes careless, having nothing to lose after losing his own dignity, living the life he wants. He is dangerous to the community which has rejected him as a little baby, young boy, and man, due to his race and class. Morrison's illustration of Cholly is obvious; he is victimized by a sequence of brutality practiced by almost all members of the society. He has no control over what has taken place nor what happens now or the future. Thus, Cholly's cruel and shameful actions, including the rape of his daughter, Pecola, are not seen in isolation. It is irrational to judge Cholly as an oppressor without referring to his past experiences, from the moment he has been born, and the relationship between his parents. To show the significance of Cholly's past experiences, Morrison relates incidents from the past to interpret his current situation^{7(p170)}, "Having no idea of how to raise children, and having never watched any parent raise himself, he could not even comprehend what such a relationship should be." When he fails to be a good father, it does not mean because he is bad. Rather, this happens because he has no experience of being fathered. When Aunt Jimmy is asked about Colly's father's name she does not recollect it, indicating the missing of African American men who are literally and metaphorically unrecognized.

Cholly is not the only male character in the novel to show as a victim. Morrison also provides other examples of African American male characters who have been victimized by racist ideologies, setting them to play certain roles. Soaphead, 'Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams' is an example a man who performs malicious roles due to his childhood experiences. Now he is an old man, but all his malevolent actions, deceiving people, especially women, sexually harassing young

girls, and causing Pecola's madness, are based on his childhood background^{7(p164)}:

“He could not remember when this distaste began, nor could he remember ever being free of it. As a young boy he had been greatly disturbed by this revulsion which others did not seem to share, but having got a fine education, he learned, among other things, the word “misanthrope.”

Later in his life he hates people due to the fact that no one has understood what he has felt, emotionally neglected by adults. They only provide him with ‘fine’ educational chances which do not help him overcome his troubles. This depicts the shortcomings of both, adults and education. Rather, he uses this knowledge destructively, deceiving people, learning misanthropy from books which have poisoned his mind. Besides, he is a colored man, giving him a sense of superiority as it is elaborated in the novel. Brainwash education based on Euro-centrism is illustrated. The discussion of gender is very complex as reflected in Morrison's novel ‘The Bluest Eye’. It is related to race, class, age, and other factors. Hence, Soaphead's attitudes are meant to be seen through a wide vision, not only as apparently portrayed. Another character, which is treated by Morrison, is Junior, known as a cruel boy, terrorizing girls, including Pecola. Moreover, he demonstrates malevolence against nature, killing the cat. These brutal actions are deeply related to Junior's familial background which shapes his interaction to the world. His mother, Geraldine, plays a fundamental role to shape his personality. Physical care is noticeable; Geraldine takes care of her child who is always too clean. While she does not see being kind to him is important, neglecting him emotionally. She merely focuses on materialistic care, not regarding intimacy of mothers to their children. Nevertheless, her love is dedicated to the cat due to its green bluish eyes, depriving her husband and child of this love, prioritizing the cat because of those eyes. Her consciousness is based on her racist perception, developing physical and emotional relationship with the cat, having white characteristics, blue eyes. As a result of his mother's deprivation, Junior becomes a victim. He loves to dominate the playground which he considers his.

He is also lonely, so he does not like to see the place empty. He loves to see it full of children but he likes dominating it. At first, Junior misses playing with black children but later he follows his mother's advice. He turns against girls, bullying them. Morrison emphasizes that, psychological reading is very significant to relate Junior's behavior to his mother's interference. His aggressiveness directed to others is resulted from the way he is raised. He is not loved by his mother, so he lacks it and turns to hatred and hurting others, those who are weaker than him. Home represents his jail; there he is frightened and bored. Therefore, he resorts to the playground where he finds his joy, joining, controlling and hurting other children. Junior throws the cat on Pecola's face and she is frightened, terrorizing her. He does this to have fun because his life is empty, lacking entertainment. After killing the cat, he lies when his mother comes home, telling her^{7(p91)}, "She killed our cat," said Junior. "Look." He pointed to the radiator, where the cat lay, its blue eyes closed, leaving only an empty, black, and helpless face." This depicts the victimization of Pecola and the cat on bases of race and gender. Junior expresses his rejection of his mother's racist attitudes presented by loving the cat due to those eyes admired by both Geraldine and Pecola on one hand. On the other hand, Junior oppresses Pecola because she is a girl, developing a relationship with the cat. Junior's hatred towards the cat is resulted from his mother's treatment. Geraldine loves the cat more than her own child Junior who directs his mother's hatred to the cat. He cannot direct this hatred to his mother because she is stronger than him, therefore the cat and Pecola fall victims, both are weaker than him. This is the way things go in the oppressive system where the victim is unable to confront the victimizer, they rather search for other victims to be victimized, making sure they are weaker. This leads to a wider discussion of gender; African American men, those who are part of the process of oppression, cannot face their oppressors, white men. They rather turn it to their women and children and those who are physically weaker than them.

Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Toni Morrison gives an account about her male characters in the novel to critically involve them in the discussion of gender. They are portrayed as victims of racism and classism, operating at different levels, social, psychological, intellectual, and economical. The womanist interpretation adequately provides tools to approach the topic of the African American man as presented in African American women's texts, exemplified by 'The Bluest Eye'. Morrison illustrates a historical background of Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father, to relate his past experiences to his cruel acts against his wife and children, beating his wife, raping his daughter, and burning the house. Another character who represents the victimization of the African American is Soaphead, whose childhood experiences and familial background determine his deeds. He contributes to the destruction of Pecola. Furthermore, Morrison shows Junior as a victim of his mother's racist views: she loves the cat more than her son due to the cat's green bluish eyes.

Through the course of the discussion of this study and other relevant studies, it is noticed that, the 'womanist' interpretation of literary texts written by African American women writers forms a new perception of text analysis. This is due to the flexibility of this concept, 'womanism', which discusses various topics within the frame of African American female literary productions. Womanism addresses issues raised by feminist analysis, nevertheless they are differently approached. The topic of gender is inseparable from issues of race, class, and culture in womanism. While feminists tend to explore texts from a very narrow perspective, only dealing with gender issues, neglecting other factors which leave their impacts on gender formation. The feminist analysis is applicable to feminist literature which mainly deals with resisting male-dominating culture and societies. Generally, the feminist analysis might be used to approach American literary texts which reflect gender issues, regardless to their writers' orientations. African American women are aware of the fact that, the feminist analysis is inadequate deal with their experiences. Moreover, 'womanism' includes cultural and social topics, such as folklore and spirituality, and how they con-

tribute to the development of the community. The womanist analysis sufficiently provides tools to approach African American women texts, as exemplified in character representation. African American character representation requires different readings, concerning race, class, gender, and culture, consequently, the womanist analysis is proved to be appropriate.

It is significant to acknowledge that, texts written by African American women writers require theories which deeply account for their complex experiences. Therefore, the researcher recommends the following topics for further studies:

- a. 'Womanism' as a literary approach to African American women's literary production
- b. The shortcoming of 'feminist theory' to address gender issues and relevant topics
- c. The essence of contextualization of gender theories in different societies

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