



SOCIAL PREJUDICE IN TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

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Abstract

This study explores social prejudice in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. The novel is seen as a portrait of social prejudice dealing with antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. This is a qualitative study; the primary data source is the novel *The Bluest Eye*, while secondary data are taken from books, journal articles, and relevant online sources. The analysis combines the literary sociology theory of Wellek and Warren, which sees that, literature is a reflection of social reality, and Gordon Allport's concept of prejudice to analyze the causes and types of prejudice antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination, shown in the novel. In conclusion, Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* vividly conveys how social prejudice destroys a person's identity and hope for life, especially those who are most vulnerable.

Keywords: social prejudice, antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, extermination.

I. Introduction

Social prejudice is a preconceived attitude or assumption about others, usually based on stereotypes and misconceptions, that leads to negative perceptions. It manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as believing that some persons or groups are incapable of achieving a specific status or objective. While specialists may differ in their interpretations of societal beliefs, the common opinion is that bias primarily leads to negativity. It promotes discrimination, widens social disparities, and restricts chances for people who have been unfairly evaluated (A'yun 2).

In Indonesia, colonialism's legacy has had a major impact on social notions of beauty, resulting in entrenched colorism and a preference for lighter skin tone. During the Dutch colonial era, lighter complexion was linked with higher social position and privilege, a belief that has lasted to this day. This historical setting has created a societal prejudice that favors Eurocentric characteristics, often marginalizing people with darker skin tones (Annisa 4).

Colorism in Indonesia also displays itself

in discrimination against indigenous groups, such as the Papuans, who have darker skin and curly hair. They frequently endure prejudice and social marginalization because of their looks, highlighting societal biases (Timmerman 3-5).

Social prejudice in Indonesia is visible in various aspects of life, including inter-ethnic interactions, religious differences, and skin color-based discrimination. Research in Kemayoran Sub-district, Central Jakarta, shows that social relations between Chinese ethnic group and natives are less harmonious than those between other groups. In addition, a study in Cigugur Sub-district, Kuningan Regency, West Java, found that a lack of understanding of religious events triggered fears of domination of one religious group over another. Furthermore, the phenomenon of colorism still occurs, where dark-skinned individuals are often treated unfairly because lighter skin is considered superior (Kompasiana 1-7).

In this case, the government has taken several steps to deal with cases of social prejudice. Komnas Perempuan, in



collaboration with the National Resilience Institute (Lemhannas), in December 2021 studied strategies to accelerate the handling of discriminatory policies that arise in the name of regional autonomy (Komnas Perempuan 1-2).

Komnas HAM also contributes to addressing social prejudice in Indonesia, particularly through the role of the press in eliminating discrimination. The media is expected to raise public awareness and reduce stereotypes and biases that reinforce discrimination (Komnas HAM 2).

One of the authors who deeply concern with this issue is Toni Morrison. Morrison, born Chloe Ardelia Wofford on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio, was a distinguished American novelist known for her profound exploration of the African American experience. Her parents shared personal narratives of racial injustices, profoundly influencing Morrison's literary voice. She pursued a Bachelor of Arts in English at Howard University, then earned a Master of Arts in English at Cornell University. Her academic background emphasized themes of racial identity and systemic oppression (Alexander 1-5).

The Bluest Eye (1970) tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, a young African-American girl who grows up in poverty and internalizes societal prejudice. She faces abuse from her parents, rejection by her community, and ultimately loses her sanity, believing she has attained blue eyes, a symbol of white beauty. The novel critiques how racial prejudice and beauty standards affect identity and mental health.

Prejudice and discrimination influence individuals' access to opportunities, self-esteem, and societal participation. Tajfel's Social Identity Theory explains how group affiliation leads to intergroup discrimination. Gordon Allport identifies prejudice as a rigid negative attitude toward a group, resistant to change (6). He developed a five-level scale of

prejudice; antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, extermination. (6-9)

This study focuses on prejudice's psychological and emotional impact, especially regarding race and beauty standards. Despite civil rights advancements, Eurocentric beauty ideals dominate media and culture. Morrison's novel offers critical insight into how these ideals perpetuate self-hatred and inequality. Literature, as a mirror of society, helps readers understand the lived experiences of marginalized groups.

This research employs literary sociology and Gordon Allport's theory to analyze the representation of social prejudice in *The Bluest Eye*.

II. Review Of Literature

2.1 Clarification of Terms

Social prejudice refers to negative judgments about individuals or groups based on stereotypes or group membership. Gordon W. Allport defines prejudice as "an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalization" Prejudice may be expressed subtly or overtly, and can be classified into five stages: antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination. Each stage marks a different intensity of bias and social impact (6).

2.2 Theory and Method

This study applies the theory of literary sociology and Gordon Allport's theory of prejudice. Wellek and Warren state that literature represents life and is influenced by social contexts. They divide the relationship between literature and society into three: the author's sociology, the content of the literary work, and the impact of literature on society (112). This study focuses on the second point, which views literary works as reflections of social reality.

Allport's theory offers a five-level framework for analyzing prejudice: antilocution (negative speech), avoidance



(deliberate exclusion), discrimination (unequal treatment), physical attack (violence), and extermination (mass elimination). These levels help reveal how prejudice evolves and impacts individuals and communities.

The method used is narrative qualitative research. The primary data source is the novel *The Bluest Eye*, while secondary data include scholarly books, articles, and online sources. The data were analyzed by identifying narrative elements dialogue, character interaction, setting, and events that illustrate social prejudice

III. The Analysis

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, published in 1970, is a vivid representation of social prejudice rooted in American racial history. The novel tells the tragic story of Pecola Breedlove, a young African-American girl who longs for blue eyes and the acceptance that comes with them. The desire for white beauty standards and the constant rejection she experiences from her community serve as a powerful critique of the racism and internalized self-hatred produced by a prejudiced society. Using Gordon Allport's five levels of prejudice antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination—this analysis reveals the multi-layered experiences of prejudice Pecola endures, which ultimately lead to her mental collapse.

3.1 Antilocution

The author represents antilocution by creating characters Pecola and Miss Della. These characters suffer from social prejudice not through violence, but through harmful words and gossip spoken by the people around them. This kind of prejudice shows how words alone can cause pain and make a person feel unwanted or ashamed. Pecola Breedlove is a young Black girl who is constantly told that she is ugly and worthless. Many people, including children and adults, say mean things

about her skin color, her appearance, and even about her family. Pecola does not fight back. Instead, she starts to believe the cruel things people say. She wishes she had blue eyes because she thinks that if she looked like white girls, she would be loved. The community never shows her kindness. Their words destroy her self-esteem.

Miss Della is another character who experiences antilocution. Her real name is Della Jones. She once lived with a man who left her for another woman. This heartbreak causes Della to lose her mental health. Instead of helping her or showing concern, the women in the community talk about her in a mocking and cruel way. They describe her as "crazy" and make fun of her sad situation. They also insult the man who left her, using racist and offensive language. Della becomes a topic of gossip and a source of laughter for others. No one defends her or comforts her. Della's husband is also judged harshly. The people around them do not ask why he left or try to understand his side of the story. They simply call him names and assume he is worthless. These judgments show how quickly people in the community use language to shame others without care.

The people who perform antilocution in this part of the novel are mostly the neighborhood women. They enjoy talking about Della's personal life. They feel powerful when they speak badly about someone else. But their words are full of hate, not truth. They don't help Della; they only hurt her more. The consequences of these cruel words are serious. Della is left without support. The pain of losing her partner is made worse by the shame and judgment from her community. Instead of healing, she becomes more isolated and hurt. The conversation shows he sometimes uses cruel words:

"Oh, yes." Her friends do not hide their curiosity. "I been wondering how long he was going to stay up there with her. They say she's real



bad off. Don't know who he is half the time, and nobody else." "Well, that old crazy nigger she married up with didn't help her head none." "Did you hear what he told folks when he left her?" "Uh-uh. What?" "Well, he run off with that trifling Peggy—from Elyria. You know." "One of Old Slack Bessie's girls?" "That's the one." (13).

In this conversation, a group of women talks about Miss Della. They sit together and gossip about her life as if it was something to laugh at. They do not show any sympathy, care, or understanding, instead, they treat her pain like a joke. They say she is "real bad off," which means that they believe she has lost her mind or is mentally broken. Rather than being concerned for her health or feelings, they talk about her in a way that makes her seem less than human.

The women also insult her husband by calling him "that old crazy nigger," using a very harsh and offensive term. This word is racist and full of hatred, even though these women themselves are black. By using such language, they show how deeply racism and self-hatred have affected their minds. Instead of lifting each other up, they bring each other down with cruel words. They laugh about how Miss Della's husband left her for another woman, as if her heartbreak is entertainment. They mention the other woman's background and speak of her in a low and disrespectful way too.

The words above are not spoken with kindness or any real desire to understand Della's suffering. They speak to judge, mock, and feel superior. This kind of talk, or antilocution is dangerous because it hurts without using hands and spreads hate, not healing. Even though Miss Della is a member of their community someone who probably shares their struggles and background, the women treat her as if she was different, or not

worth kindness. They talk about her as if she was already lost, and no longer part of them. Allport shows that antilocution is not always based on race or class; sometimes, it comes from within the same group (66). People can hurt each other with words, even when they are from the same community, the same race, or even the same gender. Sometimes, people use harsh words because they are afraid to face their own problems. By talking badly about someone else, they feel stronger, more normal, or less broken themselves. But in doing so, they add more pain to someone who is already suffering. Instead of creating unity and support, they create division and loneliness.

Morrison shows how powerful and damaging language can be when it is used without empathy and words can destroy a person's sense of self. They can push someone who is already in pain even deeper into isolation. Della is not just hurt by her husband is leaving but she also is hurt by the way her own community chooses to talk about her. This makes her suffering worse and shows how cruel judgmental gossip can be.

Another antilocution in that the author show in the way the community talks about Pecola Breedlove after she becomes pregnant. Instead of getting care, protection, or understanding, Pecola is blamed and judged through gossip. People in her neighborhood talk about her situation with shock and curiosity, but not with sympathy. Their words are harsh, cold, and full of blame even though she is just a child who has been hurt in the worst way by her own father. The one who caused Pecola's pregnancy is Cholly Breedlove, her father. He is the direct cause of the trauma, but the community also causes harm in another way. They talk about Pecola behind her back. They say it is her fault. Instead of trying to help her or her family, they only talk about how "ugly" and "strange" the Breedloves are. These comments are an example of antilocutiona form of social prejudice where people hurt others through



negative speech. The community does not take any action to protect Pecola. They only talk, judge, and distance themselves they say:

“Did you hear about that girl?. What? Pregnant?. They say it’s Cholly. Cholly? Her daddy. Lord. Have mercy. Well, they ought to take her out of school. She carry some of the blame. She be lucky if it don’t live. Bound to be the ugliest thing walking.” (189).

This conversation is between neighbors who are talking about Pecola’s pregnancy. Instead of feeling concern for her safety and well-being, they more focus on blaming and insulting her. Some even suggest she is partly responsible, even though she is only twelve years old and others say that the baby should not live. These are not just cruel statements they show how people refuse to see Pecola as a victim. They talk as if she brought this pain on herself. One woman even uses a hurtful word to describe Cholly. This shows how the community is full of anger, but they don’t direct it in a helpful way. They don’t ask how to support Pecola or prevent more harm. They just speak about it and move on. Their response is full of judgment but empty of action.

During this time, Frieda and Claudia begin to hear bits of these conversations as they go from house to house selling seeds. From these whispers, they slowly understand what happened to Pecola. The most painful part is not only the fact that Pecola was hurt by her own father but also that no one is willing to help her recover. The people act as if the Breedloves are less than human. They talk about their appearance, their past, their worth—all in negative ways. Pecola does not just suffer from one act of violence. She suffers from the silence, gossip, and rejection of the entire community. The people around her make her feel like she is dirty and unwanted. This is what makes the community part of the harm not through action, but through words,

judgment, and lack of care. Pecola’s breakdown her mental and emotional collapse is not caused by one person alone. It is caused by many people who chose not to help. Morrison uses condition to show how dangerous and powerful antilocution can be. When a community uses gossip instead of love, and silence instead of help, they allow suffering to grow. Pecola needed safety and healing, but all she received and were cruel words.

The Breedlove family becomes the target of constant gossip and judgment from their community. People do not speak kindly or fairly about the Breedloves, instead, they talk as if the family was less human, like they are strange or not worth caring about. The community does not ask why the Breedloves live in poverty, or why they feel broken inside. They do not offer help, understanding, or kindness but they only offer gossip. Through casual words and whispered conversations, the people around them show their belief that the Breedloves are ugly, poor, and hopeless not just in appearance, but in spirit too. This gossip is not based on truth, but is based on the community’s own fears and prejudice. The Breedloves are seen as different, not because they actually are, but because others have decided to treat them that way. Their poverty becomes something shameful and their dark skin becomes a reason to be ignored and their sadness becomes a joke. Instead of seeing them as people who are suffering, the community talks about them like they deserve their suffering. This is the heart of antilocution hurting someone with words, even when they are already in pain (67). It is narrated:

“They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly... No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly... Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy Breedlove, and



Pecola Breedlove—wore their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them...”(39).

This quotation shows how the Breedloves have come to believe they are ugly not because they truly are, but because the world around them has made them feel that way. The words people speak about them, the way they look at them, and the silence they receive, all send the same message: "You are not good enough." Even though they are victims of racism, poverty, and violence, the community still treats them like they are to blame. The “ugliness” they carry is not real, but they wear it like a burden, because others treat them as if it’s true. Pecola, Sammy, and Mrs. Breedlove experience antilocution from the Black community around them, which judges them harshly due to deep prejudice, internalized racism, and fear of facing uncomfortable truths.

As a result, the Breedloves feel rejected, ashamed, and stuck in the identity that others have forced on them. This kind of gossip is more than just talk; it is a way of keeping the Breedloves separated from the rest of the community. People talk about them like they are strange, as if they did not belong. They speak about them in quiet voices and full of judgment. This gossip becomes a form of social control that makes sure the Breedloves stay in their place, stay quiet, and invisible. They are treated like they are different by nature, as if being poor, dark-skinned, or emotionally broken is their fault. Morrison shows how powerful words can be. The community uses speech not to help, but to push the Breedloves further into shame and isolation. Instead of being seen as individuals who need care and support, they are treated like they are meant to suffer. Gossip becomes a weapon that protects the people who tell it and hurts the people it targets. This is how antilocution works in the novel not through violence, but through the daily, casual way

people speak badly about others who are already hurting. By doing this, the community helps to keep the Breedloves in the role of “the ugly ones,” the unwanted and the forgotten. Their pain is made worse by the way of others speak about them and by the silence that follows.

Pecola also experiences antilocution in school. A group of boys Bay Boy, Woodrow Cain, Buddy Wilson, and Junie Bug surround her and begin to mock her in a cruel and loud chant. They laugh and shout insults, not because Pecola has done anything wrong, but because they see her as weak. These boys are also Black, just like Pecola, but they still insult her dark skin and make fun of her family. This shows that antilocution is not only about race between different groups it can also happen within the same race, when people have learned to look down on others who remind them of their own fears or pain. The boys say things they do not fully understand but their words are full of hatred. They call her names and chant about her father in a disrespectful way. The school is full of other children and teachers but nobody stops them and nobody tells them to stop. Pecola stands alone while they surround her, helpless and silent. This silence—both from Pecola and the adults nearby makes the bullying even more painful. It shows that no one thinks Pecola is worth defending. The boys laugh louder as she stays quiet, feeding off her pain (67). They feel powerful for a moment not because they are strong, but because they have made someone else feel small, it is narrated:

“Bay Boy, Woodrow Cain, Buddy Wilson, Junie Bug—like a necklace of semiprecious stones they surrounded her. Heady with the smell of their own musk, thrilled by the easy power of a majority, they gaily harassed her. ‘Black e mo. Black e mo. Yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo ... “(65).



The boys chant the words “Black e mo” over and over again, mocking Pecola’s skin color. They also make a joke about her father, saying he sleeps naked. The chant sound silly and it is actually full of hatred and shame. The boys are not just teasing this is name-calling meant to humiliate. Even though they are also Black, they attack Pecola as if she was the “wrong kind” of Black. Their words are shaped by what society has taught them: that dark skin and poverty are ugly and should be laughed at. By bullying Pecola, they feel better about themselves, even if only for a moment. Pecola is the one who experiences antilocution, while the boys Bay Boy, Woodrow Cain, Buddy Wilson, and Junie Bug—are the ones who cause it.

They have learned from society that Blackness and poverty are shameful, and they turn that shame against Pecola. As a result, she feels isolated, invisible, and worthless, while the boys gain temporary power at the cost of someone else’s dignity. This is not just a simple case of kids being mean. It is a clear example of how children can repeat the hate they see around them. The boys' chant is loud, but the silence of the adults is louder. No one speaks up for Pecola, and no one tells the boys to stop. That silence sends a message that Pecola is not important enough to protect. The pain she feels is ignored, and the words spoken to her stay in her mind. She absorbs them like they are true, even when they are not. Morrison uses this moment to show how cruel words can be. Antilocution do not always come from strangers. Sometimes it comes from the people closest to us (67). When society teaches children that some people are less worthy because of their skin color or class, those children can turn on each other. The boys hurt Pecola, not just with their voices, but with the hate they’ve learned from the world. And once again, Pecola is left alone, carrying the weight of words that are meant to destroy her sense of self.

3.2 Avoidance

Morrison shows avoidance through the character of Pecola Breedlove. Avoidance happens when people do not just say hurtful things, but actually distance themselves from someone they see as different or less important. In Pecola’s case, people do not want to be close to her. They ignore her, look down on her, and act like she doesn’t belong. This includes her classmates, her teachers, her neighbors, and even her own family. No one wants to truly see her or understand her pain. They avoid her not just with their actions but with their silence. They walk away from her needs, her suffering, and her identity. This kind of emotional and social rejection causes Pecola to feel invisible. The most painful part is that Pecola starts to believe she is the reason people avoid as stated by Allport (68). She thinks she is ugly, unwanted, and unloved. These thoughts don’t come from inside her but they come from the way people treat her. Every time someone ignores her, mocks her, or chooses not to care, they push her further away from the world. She becomes used to being avoided that she no longer sees herself as someone worth loving. This is what leads to her deepest wish: to have blue eyes. She believes that if she had blue eyes like the white girls in magazines and movies people would treat her differently; her parents would stop fighting, her classmates would stop laughing at her and her neighbors would finally see her, talk to her, and even care. She is sadly expressed;

“Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope... a miracle could relieve her...” (46)

This quotation shows how deeply Pecola wants to escape her life. She is not just asking for pretty blue eyes but she is asking to be someone new, someone who is seen, loved, and accepted. In her deep inside, Pecola



believes that if she had blue eyes like white girls in movies or magazines, people would finally treat her with kindness. Her parents will stop fighting, her classmates will stop laughing, and her neighbors will finally notice her in a good way. This dream also reveals something heartbreaking: Pecola believes she is not good enough as she is. She has absorbed the message that being Black, poor, and unwanted makes her unworthy of love. This painful belief does not come from nowhere, it comes from the way everyone around her treats her. The people in her life do not say kind things to her, and worse, they often act like she doesn't even exist. This is what avoidance has done. Her family, her classmates, her teachers, and even her neighbors avoid her not just physically, but emotionally. Their silence, distance, and coldness have made her feel invisible. She starts to avoid her own identity because the world has already rejected it. In her mind, the only way to be seen and loved is to stop being Pecola. Morrison shows that avoidance can be just as damaging as bullying or insults. It teaches people that they don't matter that their presence means nothing. In Pecola's case, this emotional neglect causes her to slowly lose her sense of self. Her dream of blue eyes is not just about looking different; but it is about being accepted by a world that refuses to love her as she is. Through Pecola's quiet suffering, Morrison reveals the deep pain caused by being ignored, and how that pain can lead someone to disappear not just from society, but from themselves.

3.3 Discrimination

Morrison shows of discrimination in through the experience of Pecola Breedlove, especially in her encounter with Mr. Yacobowski, a white storekeeper. When Pecola enters his store to buy candy, she expects a normal, simple interaction. But Mr. Yacobowski does not smile, greet her, or even look her in the eyes. He hesitates, acts uncomfortable, and treats her like she is

invisible. His actions are quiet, but they are full of meaning. He shows no hate with words, yet his silence and refusal to acknowledge her presence are a form of discrimination (70) To him, Pecola is not worth seeing—not as a customer, not as a child, and not as a human being. This quiet rejection hurts just as much as loud insults. It is narrated: She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition the glazed separateness (48).

This statement shows that Pecola notices something deeply wrong she feels the emptiness in his eyes, he looks through her, not at her. Pecola is the victim in this moment, and Mr. Yacobowski is the one who causes it. He may not say anything cruel, but his behavior shows what he truly believes that Pecola is not important enough to be seen or respected. This experience leaves Pecola with a deep emotional wound. She does not fully understand what is happening, but she feels ashamed, confused, and invisible. She begins to believe that she is really worthless just like society who keeps telling her. Morrison uses this short moment to show how discrimination is not always about violence or insults. Sometimes, it is in the way people look or don't look at you. Pecola's pain builds from moments like these, where even buying candy becomes a reminder that the world sees her as nothing

Mr. Yacobowski is actions are shaped by racial prejudice he sees Black children, especially girls like Pecola, as less than human. He does not speak to her or make eye contact, and through this cold behavior, he silently sends the message that she is not worth acknowledging. As a result, Pecola feels invisible and ashamed. She begins to internalize this rejection, slowly believing that she has no value. This moment shows how powerful and damaging quiet discrimination can be. Morrison uses this scene to show that ignoring someone's humanity—especially a



child's—can deeply hurt their sense of self. When Mr. Yacobowski looks past Pecola, he makes her feel like she does not matter, and the saddest part is that Pecola believes it.

Discrimination can happen not just through individuals, but through systems of beauty, race, and social status. Pecola Breedlove experiences this kind of discrimination from her own mother, Pauline, and from the society around her. Through movies, Pecola learns to believe that only white beauty blue eyes, pale skin, and golden hair is good, pure, and lovable. She starts to see herself as ugly and unworthy, because she does not match what she sees on the screen. She was never able, after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty (122).

This shows how deeply Pecola has internalized society's beauty standards. Her dreams of transformation only bring her more pain, because they are based on false promises. The more she watches, the more she feels invisible in the real world. Pecola's own mother, Pauline, also treats her with coldness and neglect. Pauline works as a servant for a white family but ironically gives more care and love to their white daughter than to Pecola. This is not only personal rejection, it is discrimination that comes from internalized racism. Pauline sees whiteness as beautiful and valuable, and because Pecola does not fit that image, she sees her own daughter as less important. She does not protect Pecola or comfort her, instead, she treats her like a problem, not a child. This favoritism hurts Pecola deeply and it teaches her that she is unlovable and unwanted. Her mother's rejection mirrors what society tells her every day that being Black and poor means she is not good enough.

Pecola is also treated as an outsider by the community. People around her use her as a symbol of everything they hate about themselves. They laugh at her, avoid her, and gossip about her, making her carry their shame

so they can feel better. She becomes a scapegoat, a way for others to feel clean by calling her dirty. As Morrison shows, Pecola is not just a victim of individual cruelty, but of a system that teaches people to fear, reject, and look down on those who are different. She is left alone, stripped of love, kindness, and even identity. Discrimination makes her believe she does not deserve to exist. Pecola's story shows how powerful and painful discrimination can be when it comes from everywhere: family, community, and culture.

Morrison shows the most painful impact of discrimination through how the whole community treats Pecola Breedlove. She is not only hurt by individuals but she is rejected by society itself. The community sees her as ugly, poor, and different, and uses her as a scapegoat to project their own fear, shame, and self-hate. Pecola becomes the person they blame for everything they do not like about themselves. Instead of helping her, they silently agree that she is not worth saving. She starts off as a little girl who only wants love and acceptance, but gradually little, she is pushed aside, treated as if she was less than human. Her story is not just about personal pain it but also shows how a society can destroy someone by setting rules about who deserves love, beauty, and care.

Even after Pecola is abused, abandoned, and driven into madness, the community still do not show her kindness. They do not admit their part in her suffering, do not speak up, do not ask how she feels. They just whisper behind closed doors and act like her fate was natural, like it was bound to happen because she was always "different." They ignore her pain and carry on with their lives, feeling secretly relieved that it was her not them who suffered. People say:

"We tried to see her without looking at her... So we avoided Pecola Breedlove forever" (190).

This quotation shows how they look



away not because she is scary or strange, but because they know they did something wrong. Deep down, they know they failed her, but instead of making it right, they choose silence. This kind of discrimination is not loud or violent—it is quiet and cold. It hides behind silence, gossip, and the refusal to care. So it makes just as harmful, and when people ignore suffering, they help keep it going. The community's failure to help Pecola shows how society often decides whose pain matters and whose pain can be ignored. Pecola is a young Black girl, poor and unwanted, so her trauma is treated as unimportant. Her suffering is not seen as wrong it is seen as expected. That is the most painful kind of discrimination: when someone is treated like they don't deserve to be helped just because of who they are. Morrison uses Pecola to show that when a community stays silent, they become part of the harm. In the end, Pecola is left alone not just because people hurt her directly, but because everyone else stood by and did nothing.

3.4 Physical Attack

Morrison delivers one of the most devastating depictions of physical attack through Cholly Breedlove's assault on his daughter, Pecola it is a horrifying moment that embodies the tragic intersection of personal trauma, broken masculinity, and systemic oppression. This violent act is not just the result of Cholly's individual moral failure but a grim consequence of the abuse and racism that have consumed his life. Morrison does not excuse his behavior, but she does provide insight into how deeply embedded pain, when left unresolved, can lead to unthinkable harm. Cholly's assault on Pecola is the final, most brutal betrayal a moment in which a father becomes the perpetrator of the very violence he once suffered, directing it toward the most innocent and vulnerable person in his life. Cholly's background is filled with pain, abandonment, and racial humiliation. He was

left by both parents, raised without love, and stripped of dignity by white men who forced him into public sexual humiliation. These moments in his past are not just cruel they shaped his understanding of love, manhood, and control. They taught him that being powerful meant dominating someone else, that emotional connection was dangerous, and that vulnerability makes one weak. So when he looks at Pecola, his daughter, who gazes at him with love he feels overwhelmed by guilt, shame, and a kind of self-hatred that turns violent.:

“The oneness of his enjoyment and his confusion, the tightness of his embrace, the looseness of his smile made her own breath go heavy and thick. Then the pain and the sound of the tearing broke through her frozen attention, and she let go.” (162).

“The confusion was not so complete that he did not know what he was doing. He was not so blind with rage or drunk with wine or stricken with lust that he did not know what he was doing. And he did it anyway.” (162).

This quotation reveals the twisted mix of emotion that fuels his assault: a desire for connection, disgust at himself, and confusion over how to respond to her love. His physical violence is not a loss of control but it is a deeply rooted act shaped by his inability to process his emotional wounds. Rather than facing his pain, Cholly mirrors it. He uses his physical strength not to protect but to destroy. This attack on Pecola is not only sexual and physical but also it is psychological and symbolic. It represents the full collapse of trust, safety, and love within the family. Pecola, has been already treated as invisible by her community, now becomes a literal object of abuse, her body bearing the consequences of a system that failed both her and her father.

The aftermath of this physical attack is



not just trauma but also silence. No one speaks up for Pecola and no one protects her. This silence is a second kind of violence, as destructive as the first. After Cholly's assault, Pecola begins to lose her grip on reality. The physical trauma is so intense that it fractures her mind, leaving her in a state of delusion where she believes that blue eyes something she longs for as a symbol of worth and love will finally make her seen and valued, but this belief is a coping mechanism, born from unbearable pain.

The physical attack destroys her not just as a child, but as a human being who once hoped for love. Morrison uses Cholly's violence to explore the intergenerational cycle of trauma. Cholly, once a victim, becomes an abuser. His suffering, caused by racism and a lack of care, is passed down in the most horrific way. Morrison does not forgive Cholly, but she forces the reader to consider what happens when a society continuously dehumanizes Black men and fails to offer them healing. What happens, she asks, when no one teaches them how to love or be loved? Cholly's violent action is unforgivable, but it is also a symptom of larger systems poverty, racism, abandonment that push people toward desperation and destruction.

In this way, the physical attack on Pecola is more than just a plot point but it is the emotional and thematic climax of the novel. It shows how violence can be passed like a curse from generation to generation, especially when families are isolated, unsupported, and surrounded by a society that teaches them they are worthless. Pecola's suffering is the final result of years of silent pain, ignored trauma, and normalized abuse.

3.5 Extermination

Allport explains that extermination is the most extreme stage in the scale of prejudice, where certain individuals or groups become targets of physical or symbolic elimination (70). In a social context,

extermination can include genocide, systematic killings, or the destruction of a group's cultural identity through oppressive social and economic policies. In the novel, extermination does not take the form of direct physical murder but rather the psychological destruction and erasure of identity experienced by the main character, Pecola Breedlove. Since childhood, Pecola has lived in an environment that devalues her because of her dark skin. She constantly receives messages that she is not beautiful, not worthy, and not wanted. The social exclusion and humiliation she endures create conditions in which she is psychologically "erased" from society. Pecola ultimately suffers a mental breakdown, leading her to believe that she has blue eyes a symbol of white beauty standards that she perceives as the only way to gain love and acceptance. This reflects a form of psychological extermination, where racial and social prejudice destroy an individual without the use of physical violence.

After experiencing sexual abuse from her father, Cholly Breedlove, Pecola becomes completely alienated from her community. Not only does society fail to support her, but it also turns her into an object of ridicule and scorn. Pecola is seen as something filthy and worthless, demonstrating that prejudice against her has reached the point where her very existence is no longer acknowledged by those around her. The communities say:

“We tried to see her without looking at her, and never, never went near. Not because she was monstrous, but because we had failed her. Our flowers never grew. The seeds shriveled and died; her baby was dead before it was born. She was so sad to see. We looked away” (192).

In this passage, Pecola is not only ostracized but also completely ignored by her community, even by those who once felt pity for her. Her existence is no longer regarded as



significant, which represents a symbolic form of extermination—the erasure of her identity as a valuable individual.

Morrison reveals the final and most heartbreaking form of discrimination through the encounter between Pecola and Soaphead Church, a man who commits a psychological attack that is just as cruel and destructive as a physical one. While Soaphead does not hurt Pecola with his hands, his actions are violent in a different way. He abuses her mind by pretend is to be a spiritual man, someone who can help her, but instead of offering kindness or truth, he takes advantage of her deep pain. He knows that how desperate Pecola is to be loved and accepted. He knows she believes that blue eyes will make her beautiful. Instead of telling her that she is already worthy, he lies. He tells her that her wish has come true, that she now has blue eyes and with this lie, he does not heal her but pushes her further into madness.

Soaphead Church's manipulation is dangerous because it looks like kindness on the surface. He uses soft words and the language of miracles, but it is all fake. His lie is not just about beauty but it is about power. He wants to feel like a god, someone who can change reality, and he uses Pecola to do that. He says:

“I gave her the eyes... No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after” (182).

This quotation shows how he tricks her into believing she has been transformed. But no one else sees the change. Pecola is now completely cut off from reality, and worse she believes her suffering is over. In truth, she is more alone than ever. The damage Soaphead causes is not seen on her body, but is deep in her heart and mind. It is the kind of pain that cannot be undone. This moment is especially painful because Pecola has already gone through so much: abuse from her parents, bullying from children, and rejection from her community. She is at her weakest point when

she meets Soaphead. Instead of helping her stand back up, he uses her to make himself feel powerful. This is a form of emotional exploitation, where someone in a position of authority takes advantage of another's vulnerability. Soaphead sees himself as holy, but his actions are selfish and cruel. He uses Pecola's suffering to fulfill his own twisted desire to feel important. His lie gives him satisfaction, while it destroys the last bit of Pecola's connection to the real world.

Black girls like Pecola are often unprotected; they ignore, judge, and leave to carry pain alone. People like Soaphead who seem helpful on the outside, use their pain for their own gain. Morrison uses this condition to show how deep the damage of racism, colorism, and beauty standards can go. Pecola does not just want blue eyes, but she wants to be loved. She wants someone to tell her she matters, but what she gets is a lie that leaves her even more broken. By giving her “blue eyes,” Soaphead reinforces the idea that Pecola must change to be accepted. He does not challenge the cruel standards saying that whiteness is beauty even he confirms. In doing so, he makes sure Pecola stays trapped in a world where she believes her only value is in being something she is not.

His so-called “miracle” is not a blessing, but it is a final blow to a child who has already lost everything. Morrison shows us that physical attacks are not the only way to destroy someone, but words, lies, and false hope can also tear a person apart, especially when they come from someone who pretends to care. In the end, Soaphead Church's actions leave Pecola in a deeper form of suffering. When she believes she has her blue eyes, but no one else sees them. She is alone in her delusion, and the world moves on without her. This act of manipulation shows how discrimination, power, and emotional abuse can be just as violent as any physical harm. It reminds us that the most dangerous people are sometimes the ones who smile while they hurt



you (75).

IV. Conclusion

The Bluest Eye is a profound exploration of social prejudice and its destructive power on individuals, especially vulnerable Black girls like Pecola Breedlove. Morrison skillfully constructs a narrative in which societal standards, internalized racism, and systemic neglect coalesce to oppress, isolate, and ultimately erase Pecola from her community. Through Allport's five stages of prejudice—antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination—the novel demonstrates how deeply racism is woven into the fabric of daily life. Every level of prejudice Pecola encounters brings her closer to psychological collapse, showing that the damage caused by bigotry extends far beyond the physical world and into the very core of identity and self-worth. Morrison's work reminds readers of literature's power not only to reflect society but also to critique and transform it. *The Bluest Eye* remains relevant as a mirror of contemporary prejudices and a plea for empathy, justice, and human dignity.

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