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**Invisibility and Blindness in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye
1970**

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Dedication

This work is dedicated: To my beloved parents, who encourage and support me while doing this work, morally and emotionally

To my dear sister Chahinez, and my brothers: Nabil, Youness, and Safouan

And special thanks to my fiance and to all members of my family and finally to my best friend: Noor El Houda.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research work is to examine the issues of Invisibility and Blindness in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Their interconnectedness renders the process of identity formation nearly impossible. Answering the question who am I? which has become a recurrent question among non-whites in general and among African Americans in general. Brought to the American shores to serve the economic aspirations of the British colonizers centuries ago, those Africans, men and women, were far from imagining that their people across the Atlantic was but the beginning of a longer struggle their future generations would have to endure in order to gain back some sense of existence. Through her novel, Morrison depicts the plight of a young girl who because of other people's judgment finds herself helpless. How do beauty standards and colorism foster Blindness and invisibility is the main question behind this research. What are those forces behind the main character's breakdown? Did Pecola voluntarily fall into the trap of colorism and white beauty standards? Pecola is but one victim among others, whose colour was the curse of her life.

Table of contents

Dedication	I
Acknowledgements.....	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents.....	IV

General Introduction.....1

Chapter one: Invisibility, Blindness and Identity

I.1 Introduction.....	4
I.2 Defining Identity.....	4
I.3 Defining Race and Identity	5
I.3.1 what is Race?.....	6
I.3.2 what is Ethnicity?	7
I.3.3 what is Gender?.....	8
I.3.3.1 Simon du Beauvoir (the second sex1940).....	9
I.3.3.2 Don Zimmerman (Doing gender 1987).....	9
I.3.3.3 Judith Butler (Performing Gender 1990).....	10
I.4 Invisibility and Blindness in the eyes of R.Ellison.....	10
I.4.1 Blindness and the Eye Metaphor.....	10
I.4.2 the Invisible Man	12
I.5 Double consciousness' implications in the linearity of Identity, Invisibility and Blindness.....	13
I.6 Conclusion	15

Chapter two: The story

II.1 Introduction.....	18
II.2 About the author	18
II.3 About the story (the bluest eye).....	19
II.4 The bluest eye's characters.....	21
II.5 the major themes in the bluest eye.....	22

II.5.1 Beauty vs. Ugliness.....	22
II.5.2 Women and Femininity	23
II.5.3 Race and Racism	23
II.6 Pecola Breedlove as “the Invisible Girl”.....	24
II.7 Conclusion.....	26

Chapter three: Analytical framework

III.1 Introduction	28
III.2 White beauty Idealization	28
III.3 Colorism and Invisibility	32
III.3.1 The notion of colorism	32
III.3.2 Colorism and the Bluest Eye.....	33
III.4 Conclusion	35

General conclusion.....	36
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Works cited	37
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General introduction

After the abolition of slavery in 1863, African-Americans found themselves in a society where they were not accepted by the white community. They realized that their freedom was only an illusion, and the liberty they were looking for, was not achieved yet. Blacks suffered more from the social divisions derived from white imposed rules and which set the white race as superior to the black one. They also underwent racial segregation and inequality at different levels; education, employment and housing for example. The fight for an identity that is African and American at the same time is by far one of the most significant challenges different generations of African American had to rise. They did so through several attempts known as the Civil Rights Movement whose leaders have dedicated time and personal commitments.

During the twentieth century, Afro-Americans faced many social problems, either physically such as violence or psychological problems that destroyed their personality like self-esteem and confidence. Among these psychological aspects: invisibility and blindness are considered as major themes of 40's and 50's black literature in the United States. Blindness, simply put, refers to white people's voluntary denial to see and confront the truth that black people are members of society, a situation what makes African Americans feel invisible, neglected and unaccepted.

Many writers succeed in depicting these both major issues, Invisibility and Blindness in their novels for instance: Ralph Ellison's *Invisible man* 1952 who is the first to succeed in portraying this issue through his unknown and unnamed character. Richard Wright also tackles these themes in his novel, *the Native Son*.

This research paper focuses on Toni Morrison's *the Bluest Eye*, published in 1970. Morrison succeeds in portraying Invisibility and Blindness in her novel through her female character Pecola Breedlove, an African-American young girl who has dark skin, and her desire to have blue eyes. Her desire to have blue eyes stands behind her need to feel beautiful the white beauty standards, in favour of light skin, blue eyes and fair hair.

The aim of this research is focused on both concepts Invisibility and Blindness that Toni Morrison highlighted in her novel *the Bluest Eye*, mainly on the protagonist Pecola Breedlove. The objective is to pick out all the cases and incident in which invisibility and blindness occur and analyze them in order to show the major factor/s that lead to this young

girl to invisibility and makes the others neglect her. To explore these both issues the following questions should be answered:

1. How does Toni Morrison depict these key concepts-invisibility and blindness in her novel through her female character?
2. What is /are the major factor/s that affects Pecola's life to make her invisible through the story?

It is hypothesized that the female character was unaccepted and unloved by her family as well as the society member because she is considered ugly and not beautiful due to her skin color that it doesn't correspond to white beauty standards. It is also supposed that because she is not beautiful, she faces many obstacles in her life leading her to prefer to hide though she sometimes makes efforts to be seen, accepted and loved .through the novel, Morrison attacks the propaganda that whiteness refers to purity and beauty whereas blackness underlines ugliness and dirtiness. Daily ignored by her parents and deeply affected by her classmates' judgments, the young girl becomes emotionally and psychologically fragile and vulnerable and starts praying for blue eyes as suitable solution to bring happiness.

This research paper is based on analytical and descriptive methods intended to investigate on the link between the story, Blindness and invisibility as articulated, mainly, through colorism and white beauty standards. . Data collection is from library and internet. It follows two sources: primary sources and secondary sources as articles, journals, magazines and websites. This work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is in the form of theoretical framework that provides definitions of important concepts in relation to invisibility and blindness. The second chapter represents all plot summary and details of the Bluest Eye. The third chapter is the analytical part that digs into the factors that led the female character to be invisible.

Chapter one

Invisibility, Blindness and Identity

Chapter I: Invisibility, Blindness and Identity

I.1 Introduction

Invisibility and blindness are considered as important themes developed during twentieth century afro- American literature through the articulation of the necessity to live as free black American individuals. Blindness refers to people who willfully avoid seeing and confronting the truth, some white people for instance refuse to accept non-whites such as blacks as member of the American society. Such an attitude led many African Americans feel invisible, unseen, unaccepted, and ignorant.

First, this chapter will tackle the issue of identity in Afro-American history and how African-Americans struggled to gain some sense of liberty. The section will start with theoretical frame work providing definitions of some concepts: identity, race / ethnicity, gender, and invisibility and blindness as first evoked in R. Ellison's *The Invisible Man* and how they rendered the process of identity construction and self- definition so challenging in the eyes of the main character. Finally, this chapter will end with an important concept that of double consciousness presented by W.E.B du Bois in his book "*the soul of black folk*" (1903) as a psychological consequence that appears from the problem of invisibility and blindness.

I.2 Defining Identity

Identity has been and still is at the heart of great debates especially in the United States and more particularly during the twentieth century when African –American fought against social inequalities and racism. Identity plays an important role in any individual's life. Identity is defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary as "*the distinguishing character or personality of an individual*" which means that it is a distinctive feature that each individual owns in the process of constructing his /her personality. The concept of identity is described in various ways for instance I, me, personality, self and essence; these elements help anybody to understand who is he internally within the external world. It is considered as an essential perspective of how anyone sees or identifies himself to the others, for example all people in the world have specific features physical and intellectual which make them feel unique and distinct from the rest of people, whether they are living in the same area or in different places.

Among the scholars who tried to give a definition to identity, one can mention: The scholar *James D. Fearon* in his article *what is Identity* (1999) states that identity has two related meanings classified as "social and personal" and "Identity in its present incarnation has double senses. It refers at the same time to social classes and to the origins of an

individual's self-respect or dignity." According to him identity has two meanings identity within society or group of people within the same category of group that share the same features and the second sense identity with person himself as pride or honor for his dignity. Identity depends on the person or individual can present himself or how they are defined by others under the principles of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture. (Deng, 1995)

Based on these theories an individual could identify himself to the others for instance someone from France can identify himself as an Arab, Muslim although he is living in French society. Hogg and Abrams (1988) in James F.D .defined identity as related to people and to who are they? And which kind they are and to which social classes they are belonging to and more than that how each individual is related to others mainly in society in terms of language, religion, customs and traditions. From these explanations and definitions one can conclude that nowadays scholars are working to present identity as a non-static but dynamic process involving different overlapping forces that help individuals introduce themselves to others indicating personal properties peculiar to their bodies and minds and different from others. Additionally identity refers to differences among collectives such as ethnic groups whose differences will distinguish one minority from another say, Chinese American from Indian American. Thus, identity is not shaped independently but rather influenced by other aspects such as gender, class and culture in addition to skin color. All these components once intermingled will shape one's personality and help them find themselves.

I.3 Defining Race /Ethnicity

Race, ethnicity and gender are considered as significant identity markers that have been of great interest in recent years. These three concepts play an important role in identifying oneself as different. Race and ethnicity are two terms usually used interchangeably or synonymously whereas these concepts are initially separated. *"These two terms are often confused, and one reason for the proliferation of racial categories is the conflation of the terms "ethnicity" and *race".* Ethnicity is a term that is widely applied, but it is difficult to define its differences from the notion of "race". This conflation between ethnicity and race reflects a polarized dimension based on visibility". (Minelle.k, 1999p.p 15). Race refers to those biological qualities whereas ethnicity puts the accent on cultural phenomenon, in fact, the term race appeared during the seventieth century exactly in Europe. Malik (1996) in Minnelle,k explains that by giving an important critique concerning smith's definition by insisting that the term ethnicity was promoted as an alternative definition to race

besides that *Malik* tries to clarify these separable words ,ethnicity replaces race in describing social differences in which race demonstrates a biological distinctions and ethnicity describes a cultural distinctions. (Minnelle, k 1999)

Race as any words has a variety of senses and it can be used in different contexts. Race can be found in everyday life “human race” for example, other meanings of race are more technical for instance some biologists studied used race in their scientific studies as the variety of races referring to particular species of plant or animals. In general some anthropologists used this word race in their examination of biological and cultural variability that exists within humanity as Scott mentioned in his article *the concept of race in contemporary Anthropology*).

I.3.1 what is Race?

Before defining race at first, what is the origin of the word race: the precise origin of the word race is unknown, but it was originated in Latin root, ratio, with meaning similar to terms like spices, or kind. Five hundred years ago, race was used in English to determine a group of people who shared some common features or the same physical appearance, and after this period, the word race was used similarly as the words groups like nation or people (smedley in Scott, 1999). Nowadays many scholars in different fields argue that race is social mechanism, invented during the eighteenth century to refer to those populations who were brought to those colonies in the Americas. Race is not only fixed to colonial period, indeed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, it was used by Europeans to classify people and to justify social, economic and political inequalities among them. According to Audrey smedley(2007) in his article *the history of the idea of race* , he points out that during the nineteenth and twentieth century , the ideas and beliefs about race is originated as a folk idea and ideology about human differences in fact it was rather socially constructed not a products of science. “In general, race was described as biological, innate, and based on physical attributes such as skin color and facial features. They used the term “race” as a general term for people of certain regions or color “(*Janelle, 2004 p.100*); this means that race refers to a particular group of people who have similar biological features (physical appearance such as: eye color, nose shape and pigmentation.) Or a category of people that shares a distinctive physical trait. Some researchers state that one race may inherit certain physical characteristics that classify people into groups. Research argued that even though some scientists have agreed that race is a social construction rather than a biological fact enhanced by the

inheritance of certain feature, the word race refers much too physical characteristics as Young (1995) in Minelle. K explained:

Race is a regulatory fiction, an imaginary construction with its origins in biological myth. There remains a profound and painful relationship between perceived phenotypes (physical characteristics) and genotypes (biological and genetic characteristics). Phenotype remains the main determinant of race division, which includes, but is certainly not limited to, skins, hair Texture and facial features (p.13)

I.3.2 what is Ethnicity?

Ethnicity another key concept used in relation to identity as it represents a source of group identification. One group of people may share in common some cultural practices and some other visible features that make them different from other groups properly termed “ethnicities” sharing the same ancestry, history, language, culture, religion and traditions.

The concept ethnicity is a derivative of the adjective 'ethnic' in the English language and goes back to Middle Ages. The English adjective 'ethnic' derives from ancient Greek 'ethnos' used as a synonym of gentile that is, non-Christian and non-Jewish pagan in New Testament. In French, the term survives as 'ethnie', with the associated adjective 'ethnique' (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996). It is considered as a recent concept that appeared in the 1950's in the English language and recorded in oxford English dictionary of 1953. It means the essence of ethnic group or a particularity of belonging to a certain community. (Hutchinson *and* smith in Jessie 1999). The term ethnicity is more broadly defined as a large group of people that are classified in society according to their common features as Ronald I ,Jackson defined in the article *social realism and ethnic identity ,chapter 2*: “Ethnicity is a way to identify how individuals are grouped or group themselves according to some shared national or regional heritage, religion, class, language, or culture”(p.67) .In other words ,ethnicity consists of a group of people that construct their identity under cultural relationships. This category of people unites together through specific and similar features. Thus it distinguishes **us** from **them**. Cornell (1996) argues that ethnicity is a way in which any individual introduces or identifies himself; and it is more about cultural aspects rather than natural, from this you can understand that ethnicity is acquired, not innate as race which consists of biological features. All in all, ethnicity reflects cultural differences, it sometimes overlaps with race but they are not so similar. Race consists of the classification of people based on their physical differences

whereas ethnicity emerged to replace that Eurocentric concept of race to reflect that people or groups of people should not be categorized on their biological basis. . It is more about that; ethnicity is the cement that brings together a group who share the same historical and cultural heritage.

I.3.3 what is Gender?

Gender as other important identity marker like, race and ethnicity has a significant importance in many fields. Gender refers to boys and girls, men and women playing different roles and having different positions. Both of them behave differently and do not have similar attitudes and interests and activities. In fact, these dissimilarities between male and female are

Genetically appointed whereas recent studies had confirmed that both of them are essentials in society based on the term gender. Winsome (2000) in his module of gender and sensitivity, defined gender:

The word was used by Ann Oakley and others in the 1970s to describe those characteristics of men and women which are socially determined, in contrast to those which are biologically determined. This distinction between gender and sex has important implications, which are elaborated throughout this manual. Essentially, the distinction between gender and sex is made to emphasize that everything men and women do, and is expected of them, with the exception of their sexually distinct functions (impregnation, childbearing and breast-feeding), can change, and does change, in time and according to changing and different cultural factors.
(introduction,p.1)

During the mid of 1970's, **Gayle Rubin** suggested the concept of "sex-gender system" to show how biological sexuality changed into gender as an important social term. From that period, gender has appeared as an essential term in feminist studies through many theoretical disciplines that construct this domain. Some feminist historians and sociologists use gender as an analytical notion to refer to the creation of social meanings, relations and identities. Others concentrate on gender and an important element in social position especially in social institutions and still others use the term gender an everyday social practice. Therefore, this notion adds and helps in understanding many things in different fields such as history, culture. Moreover these differentiations have helped to understand the relation between womanhood and manhood, muscularity and femininity (Evelyn, 2004). So, gender is a social term that

categorized men from women. It refers to the social and cultural characteristics that distinguishes male from female (Cherlin, 2008). It is known to be socially constructed and is learned through individuals' interactions in society and their influence on each other.

Feminist scholars adopted the notion of gender in order to liberate previous views from the bands of naturalness and biological certainties in relation to the concept of sex. Among the most influential theorists on gender stand the French philosopher Simone De Beauvoir, Judith Butler and D. Zimmerman.

I.3.3.1 Simone de Beauvoir (The Second Sex 1949)

Simone de Beauvoir is French philosopher, writer and politician activist. She wrote a book called *The Second Sex* 1949, in which she discusses the treatment of women throughout history as she gave particular attention to women's position from the beginning of civilization to modern day. According to de Beauvoir, women have been obliged to play the second role to men. She rejects the Aristotelian point of view that because of the biological features of women, they have to play a limited role in society. She also refuses the idea of Freudian psychology that states that women are passive whereas men are active due to their physical characteristics of the genitalia. She supposes that the role of women is limited because of the conditions imposed on them by the dominance of male role in society. Furthermore, she argues that women have been defined as the “**other**” as they are different from the natural and deviate from normal male. In other words, men are classified as essential, central and independent while women are inessential and mere objects related to men. Moreover, DeBeauvoir points out that in the long run women have learnt to accept such as categorization and submit to these differences and accept their roles in society. She also adds, it's up to women to change their position as wives, mothers and housewives, which according to her will destroy their creativity and destruct them psychologically. (Thurman, 2010)

I.3.3.2 Don Zimmerman (Doing Gender 1987)

Doing gender is a classical sociological concept developed by Candace West and Don Zimmerman in their article “gender and society” 1987. They were the first to talk of this concept in sociological perspective essential to the creation and affirmation of gender inequality between male and female in western society. The purpose of their article is to propose an understanding of gender as a routine and everyday accomplishment. Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys; men and women. According to them

doing gender is what a person does or act in interaction with others; it is a product of social interaction in other words, it is series of traits; not role but rather something which is performed and done. As they mentioned in their article “Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine “natures.”(p.126) for instance, little girls are taught to value their appearance more than little boys, and boys are taught different things than little girls. The difference between male and female occur only through acting their everyday activities.(Candace and Zimmerman,1987)

I.3.3.3 Judith Butler (Performing Gender 1990)

The theory of “gender performance” or “gender performativity” was first presented by Judith Butler in 1990 in his book “Gender trouble”. Butler’s works can be linked with J.L.Austan’s work on the notion of performativity and relying also on Derrida’s work on reiteration and repetition. She also uses Foucault’s ideas on how the self-identity is constructed in order to develop the performative theories of gender. Butler argues that gender performance is regularly and continually acted and performed in everyday life. It is an act based on repetitions and imitations or miming of the dominant convention of gender. More precisely, performing gender is not based only on communication but on performance through repetitions and reiterations, we create self-identity. So, an important aspect of performativity is repetitiveness of the acts that are being done. She states also that the view that gender is performative gives details of how gender identity is formed through set of acts. (Jauriek, 2018).

I.4 Invisibility and Blindness in the Eyes of R. Ellison

I.4.1 Blindness and the Eye Metaphor:

Invisibility and blindness are two major themes of 40-50’s black literature. Both concepts are used in many African-American novels among them *The Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison and *The Native Son* 1940 by Richard Wrights. They are used in a metaphorical way in order to refer to essential issues like racism and loss of identity.

The Oxford English dictionary defines invisibility as “the states of being ignored or not taken into consideration” and it is defined also in the article of Ralph Ellison and the metaphor of invisibility in black literary tradition that invisibility as “the situation of men

whose individual identity is denied” (Lieber, T, 1972). From these both definitions invisibility refers to a person who is neglected and ignored by others and someone who is not seen and cannot exist, and remains rejected by those who refuse to see him as explained by Todd Lieber. Anderson J. Franklin in his article Invisibility syndrome: A clinical Model of the effects of racism on African-American Males (2000); gives an explanation to this issue of invisibility within a divided society which was affected by the prejudice of racism and segregation. According to him when you encounter someone from racial slights, it can create a problem with the individual which this feeling of not seen or not even observed by them, this can cause psychological problems inside himself; as he mentioned a struggle with inner feelings and beliefs in which all his capacities and abilities would not be noticed by others and even by society due to racism. In addition to that this issue of invisibility not only creates a problem with others but also as Franklin states This experience of invisibility also creates inner conflict for the individual because it requires choices about ways in which to make oneself visible, while striving for acceptance (2000), which means this issue causes an internal conflict inside the person himself because he will struggle and fight for his existence, to show that he is visible and makes them accept him.

“Blindness is the state of those who refuse them as individual beings” (Lopez Miralles, A .2013.p.59) .Blindness represents how people willfully avoid seeing and confronting the truth .People’s inability to see what they wish not to see, their inability to see that which their prejudice does not allow them to see. Blindness or sight is also a metaphorical concept used by writers to reflect to the idea that the whites refuse to see the blacks and they put a barrier between them and they did not accept them interfere in society . In UK essay Invisibility and Blindness African American novels English literature states that “blindness in African American novels means to be ignorant towards black people” in other words this ignorance refers to those people who are ignorant and none recognized by the whites in fact these themes are complimentary to each other. They cannot be separated; hence, they go hand in hand together .Invisibility is concerned with the blacks while blindness is related to the whites. The blacks feel ignorant and unseen simply because the whites refuse to recognize them in other words, whites’ blindness leads to blacks’ invisibility.

Invisibility and blindness are presented for the first time by Ralph Ellison in his novel Invisible Man. Ellison succeeds in giving an exact explanation of these two terms through his story with a very evocative title –invisible man – which is very suggestive and tells a lot about the convergence of invisibility and blindness.

1.4.2 The Invisible Man

The Invisible man is a novel written by Ralph Ellison in 1952. It is the story of young educated black man, struggling to survive in racially divided society. The author introduces his protagonist as someone invisible, unseen and unnamed. The novel sheds light on the issue of racism during the fifties and how it was difficult for Afro-Americans to live in segregated community. The story is, too, about a journey searching for identity. Moreover, Ellison highlights two major problems; Invisibility and blindness. These two key concepts in the novel are considered as an obstacle for the blacks to get their self-identity or for their existence. Therefore, Ellison narrated some events and anecdotes that the protagonists had experienced in society in which blacks were inferior to whites and because of their blackness were not accepted by the white community.

Ellison depicted invisibility from a psychological perspective rather than a physical one through the use of signs, metaphors, stereotypes. The novel opens with prologue where the narrator from the beginning declared himself as an “invisible man”

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (Ellison p.3)

He explains that he is invisible because people decline to accept him as human being in society despite the fact that he is man of flesh and bones. This thing caused him a psychological problem, a form of emptiness at times. He continues explaining that his invisibility was not due to an accident or something born with it. It was a matter of existentiality. He did not exist in society where the white people were blind to see the blacks. This issue caused him a psychological trouble. He was living an internal turmoil which made him ask question if he really existed or not as when he went on talking about some anecdotes that had highly impacted in his life as a black man. He recounts, for instance an incident where he bumped into a white man in the street because the white man had insulted him and which led him push and attack the stranger because he demanded from him to apologize yet the white man refused. Suddenly the narrator discovered that white man did not truly see him. As a consequence the narrator said that the world is full of blind men and sleepwalker who are dangerous around him and who must not be awakened.

Another key event enhancing the theme of invisibility of blindness might be noted in the episode of the “Battle Royal.” Taking place at the beginning of the story, the unnamed

protagonist is invited to deliver a speech about freedom in front hundreds of whites however before doing that, he found himself taking part in a trick meant for the amusement of the white audience. He was obliged to participate in racist battle where he was humiliated because of his skin color. He was put in an uneasy situation where he was obliged to fight his friends even being blindfolded. This incident shows the extent to which skin color, in occurrence, “blackness” is devalued by those whites, the event also highlights that both blacks and whites are invisible to each other (Miralles, 2008). As the story evolves, the protagonist is once again confronted to another situation that foreshadows his invisibility. One day an explosion happens in the factory where he works, he is led to hospital after being injured. When he was hospitalized, doctors had tried many experiments, these events made him realize that he was really ignored by others especially when he found himself in a box, like a rat in a laboratory he became an experiment rather than a patient. This a third instance of Invisibility and blindness, according to the white doctors the man was not less than a human being and they were blind to him, a fact that leads the protagonist feel useless and unaccepted all this due to his blackness.

At last, all the events that happened with the narrator were about his invisibility and how the others were blind to him, a situation that led to a form psychological breakdown and which eventually led him to seclusion. He woke up every morning asking the same question do I exist. In the end the narrator decided to stay quiet and escaped from the outside visible world into the basement, the darkest place in town, what an irony! as a means to become visible, the man decided to steal electricity from the monopolized power company and to bring light to his rent-free basement and illuminated his apartment with the amazing number of 1,369 light bulbs in order to consume energy and give his existence some sense of visibility . Besides, he also shows his love of music, having only one radio phonograph, he spends his time listening to the songs of Luis Armstrong “what did I do to be so black and blue? “ In addition to that the narrator was considered irresponsible in society, he stated that how can I be responsible in society while I am invisible. Because of his dark skin, he was considered inferior by whites; he was not accepted as a true member of the American society.

I.5 Double Consciousness’ Implications in the Linearity of Identity, Invisibility & Blindness

Double consciousness is term coined by W.E.B du Bois in 1903 to describe an individual whose identity is divided into two facets. Double consciousness appeared in United

States when society was divided into two communities, the white and the black and Du Bois himself stated that the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the color line. This duality was considered as psychological issue that affected blacks during the twentieth century, as they were puzzled as to whether they were Americans, Africans, or both. Ernest Allen, Jr states in her article du boisian double consciousness: the unsustainable argument that this term was first presented in his essay-du bois- “strivings of the negro people «in the Atlantic monthly in 1897 .six years later, with the same essay, he modified it and renamed it “*of our spiritual strivings*” that is the first chapter of his book “*soul of black folk*” (p.2). Double consciousness is a concept in social philosophy which means the source of the internal twoness, the latter was an inner problem among African Americans due to racism and the white dominance (Pitman, John 2016) accessed on 19 March 2019.

Dickens D and Bruce Jr, *American literature* (1992) argue that “Du Bois spoke of an African American double consciousness as two-ness of being an American, a negro: two warring ideals in one dark body...” (p.299). This means two conflicting identities in one black body , they further explain that Du Bois uses this idea of twoness to refer to the issue of racism and the problem of achieving identity, as well.

Duality or double consciousness underlines to the situation African Americans are confronted to in their daily lives and which leads them into a kind of malaise about who they really are. According to blacks it was difficult for them to live with two strife of identities, either Americans or Africans or it could be both. For the social conditions of United States at that time, it was very harsh for them to survive because they were unaccepted in society. W.E.B Du Bois gives his own point of view concerning double consciousness in his book *the Soul of Black Folk* (1903)

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p.8)

In this passage, the author defines and explains this psychological dilemma a person of color might witness and which is translated via that feeling about oneself and about the way a

black person strives to see himself/ herself through other people's eyes, provoking an inner struggle inside them, they become concerned by the question how do white people see us? Africans or Americans. This twoness let them feel that they have two souls, two thoughts ... in one body.

Moreover, after the emancipation proclamation (1862-63) African Americans found themselves in a society divided between whites and non-whites and in which they were still denied most of their rights despite the fact that slavery was abolished. As Jordan Javelet mentioned in her article double consciousness and the perception of identity in Nella Larsen's passing, the Du Bois' notion of double consciousness was built from his experience as a black citizen in a country where whites were superior to blacks. This is what Du Bois tried to present in his book the soul of black folk, particularly in beginning of the first chapter "*our spiritual strivings*" he raised a question "how does it feel to be a problem"(p.7) . He believes that the blacks were seen as a problem in society or as foreigners. They were a problem simply because of their color of skin "black" and many whites took it as a duty to remind those blacks as different and thus inferior beings. A behavior that led to a form of bridge a "veil" as termed by Du Bois, that separated blacks from Whites and which made whites blinds and blacks invisible , giving birth to a feeling dehumanization and leading to exclusion and isolated from the white society. After exposing this problem Du Bois suggests a solution as he points out that the African could not be eradicated from the American and it would be better if whites worked to accept the black community and live together in a peaceful way rather than in conflicts. According to him this is the only way to avoid crisis and clash between these two groups as it would help blacks find their identity.

I.6 Conclusion

The problem of identity is a central issue in the history of the Afro-Americans in United States. All the events that happened after the emancipation of slaves in 1863, and the many reforms brought in the train of the Civil Right Movements by the half of the twentieth century were but attempts to eradicate the gap that exist between whites and blacks and against all forms of segregation and inequalities. Invisibility and blindness are considered as obstacles for blacks to survive in racial divided society. They were feeling invisible because the others were blind to recognize them or refused to accept them although they were visible enough because of their blackness. This is what Du Bois tried to explain in his book, the soul of black folk 1903, the issue of double consciousness; the feeling which the Afro-Americans see

themselves in the eyes of the others. The theme of invisibility and blindness in going to be further explored in one of America's most famous novels "the Bluest Eye," and the core of this research paper's key chapter.

Chapter two

The story

Chapter II: The story

II.1 Introduction

Among the African American novels that have tackled the issues of invisibility and blindness besides Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* or Richard Wright's *The Native Son*, stands Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* 1970. The story takes place in Lorain, Ohio in 1940-1941 at the end of the great depression in United States and Morrison started writing the novel in the mid of 1960s during a famous movement called "black is beautiful"¹

This part will devote to give a short biography about the author and a summary for the story with its major characters followed by the major themes that are tackled in the novel, in addition to that it explains the issue of invisibility and blindness on the female character Pecola Breedlove.

II.2 About the Author

Toni Morrison is an African-American writer and professor. Her original name is Chloe Anthony Wofford, and she was born on February 18, 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, United States. She studied English at Howard University and Cornell University, before teaching English at various universities and working as an editor. She wrote her thesis on the works of Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, and completed her master's degree in 1955. She then moved to the Lone Star State to teach at Texas Southern University. She taught at Howard from 1957 to 1964. In 1965 she became a fiction editor. From 1984 she taught writing at the State University of New York at Albany. Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970. She continued to write and gradually garnered national attention before publishing *Beloved* in 1987. *Beloved* was hugely successful, winning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and is regularly included in the discussion of the best novel written after World War II. In 1993, she was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Her writings often focus on the experiences of black women in the United States. She is currently a professor at Princeton University. (Jacobs, 2013).

¹ **Black is beautiful** is a cultural movement that was started in the United States of America in the 1960s by African Americans. It later spread beyond the United States. it aims to dispel the notion in many cultures that black people's natural features such as skin color, facial features and hair are inherently ugly. <https://http25048.wordpress.com/2017/02/15/black-is-beautiful-movement-history/>

II.3 About the Story

The *Bluest Eye* is the first novel written by Toni Morrison during 1960s and published in 1970s. It is a tragedy that tells a story of a black adolescent girl who struggled to achieve the ideals of beauty. Morrison portrays the African American community of Loraine, Ohio. And focuses on the female character and protagonist Pecola Breedlove.

Pecola is the only daughter of Breedlove family which consists of mother Pauline, father Cholly and the son Sammy. Pecola is a black young girl, she is eleven years old, and lives her "blackness" as a burden in a society where black skinned people victims of racism. She is also suffering from self-hatred; she dislikes herself because she encounters racism from her family and from members of society simply because she is dark skinned even her family hates her and does not love her because and according to them she is ugly.

The story events are introduced in a chronological way and the events are narrated by many voices not just one narrator, besides that the chapters are presented in the name of seasons winter, spring, summer and autumn. The first section of each season is narrated by Claudia Macteer; a woman whose memories frame the events of the novel. The story is all about Pecola Breedlove. Pecola was raped by her father by the end of the story; it ends tragically when she gets mad.

The story began, when Cholly Breedlove, Pecola's father attempts to burn their house and Pecola is sent to stay temporarily with the Macteer family and both Macteer Frieda and Claudia feel sorry about her, after a period of time, Pecola moves back to live with her family and her life continues to be hard. Her father Cholly is alcoholic and her mother Pauline is neglectful and irresponsible woman. Her parents are always quarreling over one thing or another and sometimes end with violence. This difficult life, leads her brother Sammy to run away from home.

Among the Macteer family; Claudia's father is someone strict and who punishes his daughters sometimes not to hurt them but to educate them. He works hard to fulfill the needs of his family. During her stay with the Macteer, Pecola could notice the difference with her own family as she could not stop thinking that she was not loved by her parents because she was black and thus not beautiful. Her feeling pushes her to pray and wish for blue eyes according to Pecola this is the best way to be accepted by her family and the people and even to be accepted or loved by her because she hated herself too. In fact all what happened to Pecola may be due to what her parents experienced in their lives. Pecola's parents have had tragic lives. The father Cholly was abandoned as a baby and another incident happened to him

which makes him feel humiliated as he was obliged to continue a sexual act with the girl he was with. This event led Cholly hate women whereas Pauline, Pecola's mother has a lame foot and she is always isolated; passing her time watching movies about white actresses which makes her beliefs that she is ugly and all her family members are ugly. She is working for a white family and prefers the white family children to her own daughter.

Many incidents happened to Pecola and damaged her not only physically but psychologically, too. For instance, Pecola was most of the time teased by her classmates in school. One day a group of boys had encircled her and made her cry by insulting her about her skin color. She was also teased by her classmate Maureen who made fun on her saying what Claudia could not accept and she tried to punch her but the punch touched Pecola instead of Maureen . Beside that one day Pecola and her friend enter into a quarrel with Maureen when this mulatto girl starts insulting them "I am cute! And you are ugly! Black and ugly black e mos" (B.E p.56). Pecola was attacked one day by her neighborhood boy called lures. He attacks her with his cat, later the cat died which makes him blames Pecola and makes her responsible about the death of his cat and he caused her mother who kicked Pecola out. One day during spring of 1941, cholly was returning home drunk and he saw Pecola washing dishes, he saw her and felt hatred to her and because he was unable to take care of her, he raped her and left her in the kitchen. Later Pauline knows about what happened to her daughter Pecola and she beats her. Pecola found herself in a desperate situation when Pecola met the Soaphed Church who caused her a self -destruction after the rape. She narrates to him her story who claims that he can help her, so she asked him for blue eyes. That man he tricks her and demanding from her to kill a dog. He exploits her for his benefit that he has long wanted to kill that dog by declaring that if the dog acts funny, it signs that her wish would realize. As Morrison described on her book:

The most fantastic and the most logical petition he had ever received. Here was an ugly little girl asking for beauty...this seemed to him the most poignant and the most deserving of fulfillment. A little girl wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes. (p. 175)

He was a bad person; he plays a role that he can make her dream become true. Unfortunately, when summer arrives, Pecola gets pregnant from her father. Claudia and Frieda wanted the baby to live. So, they had bought all marigold seeds with the money that they have saved to buy a bicycle in order to help Pocola, they plant this marigolds in hope that if this plant grows up, the baby will live but the marigold did not grow up and the baby died.

After this event Pecola gets mad and finds refuge in an imaginary world still wishing that she will get blue eyes.

II.4 The bluest eye's characters:

There are many voices and characters participating in this story; these are the major ones that and have predominant roles in the story, the first to start with is the protagonist **Pecola Breedlove** who is the daughter of Pauline and Cholly. She is an eleven-year old, black girl living among a horrible family with abusive parents. Her best friends are Claudia and Frieda Macteer. She is described as an ugly girl and is emotionally and socially demolished as she suffers from the cruelty of her parents, classmates and other individuals in the community. She wishes to have blue eyes, according to her with blue eyes her life would change for the best and most importantly she would be LOVED. Unfortunately her life ends tragically; she becomes mad because she would be raped by her father, losing the baby at the end. Pecola's mother, **Pauline also known as** known as Polly and Mrs. Breedlove has an intense, violent relationship with her husband Cholly. She has a lame foot and is harsh and abusive to her children. She believes that she is ugly and always blames her foot about her ugliness especially after she loses her front tooth. Her life with Cholly was difficult thus she viewed herself as martyr. She is religious in a vengeful way, hoping that God will help her in her war against Cholly. She lives in an imaginary world made of movies that she likes watching as she is fond of new hair styles. She is a good housekeeper for a wealthy white family. Pecola's father, **Cholly Breedlove** was abandoned by both of his parents. The trauma he suffered from while he was young was to affect his family relations for the rest of his life and more particularly with his daughter. He is strict, unfaithful man, violent, and addicted to alcohol. He has no concept of parenting and commits incest by raping Pecola, skipping town when she becomes pregnant. **Sammy Breedlove, the last member of the Breedlove family, is** Pecola's fourteen-years-old brother. Like his sister, he is an unhappy young teenage boy who suffers the same abuse his sister undergoes but in contrast to Pecola, Sammy does not accept the way that his parents treat him and as he could not cope with his family problems, he just runs away from home. **Claudia Macteer** is the primary narrator of the book. She is a sensitive young girl, growing up in Loraine, Ohio. She is loved by her parents. Her narration is interesting; she moves from the innocence of a child to the wisdom of the narrator. Claudia is a rebel character throughout the novel unlike Pecola and Frieda. She rebels against adults' tyranny over children and against the black community's idealization of white beauty

standards. She is consistently kind to Pecola throughout the novel; she loves her and feels genuinely guilty about Pecola's fate. **Frieda Macteer** is Claudia's ten years old sister. She is smart and funny. Frieda and Claudia share a childhood friendship with Pecola Breedlove. She has intimate connection with her sister Claudia; teases each other, support each other. Frieda is more vulnerable to her community's equation of whiteness with beauty. Frieda is more knowledgeable about the adult world and sometimes courageous than Claudia. **Soaphead church** is mysterious man who is another monster, a man of mixed race white and black from Caribbean. He is a reader, advisor and interpreter of dreams. He hates all kinds of human touch, with the exception of the bodies of young girls. He is a religious hypocrite. At the end of the story, Pecola comes to him and ask him for the blue eyes. He exploits her for his demand and asks her to kill a dog in order to realize her dream.

II.5 The major themes in the bluest eye:

II.5.1 Beauty vs. ugliness

The major theme that Toni Morrison sheds light on in her novel is about beauty and ugliness. The characters are affected by the images of whiteness that are presented on TV through movies, advertisement, books, images, toys. Beauty is best defined by whiteness according to Pauline and her young daughter whereas ugliness is equated to blackness. These equations were, in the eyes of the author, common to many Afro-Americans of that time, degrading themselves because of their color was probably due to the way they were perceived by the white community (double consciousness). A feeling of dehumanization, mainly due to the sentiment engendered by difference and inferiority. For example, Pecola and her friend Frieda were impressed with Shirley Temple's beauty; a white girl, this leads Pecola to drink milk out of Temple cup in hope that she will became white and pretty. On the other hand, her mother Pauline spends her time watching movies about white actresses. Many characters in the novel believe that the relation between beauty and whiteness reflects the beauty of the physical character of the person as a result beauty and ugliness are only standards of their values in society. The characters become convinced by the idea that white skin alone can really give sense to their existence, a belief almost an obsession with whiteness that damages the story characters at the psychological level. The protagonist Pecola believes that she is ugly in the eyes of her parents, which in the long run can but convince her that she is really ugly which in its turn is due to her careless parents and the recurrent insults she is subjected to at school from the part of her classmates. Her unloving parents and her coldhearted friends

altogether work to diminish her self-esteem as she cannot stand looking at herself in the mirror. The urge to make peace with herself is crystallized through her desire to have blue eyes for blue is more than a color it is the key to a happier life where she would not be seen as Pecola the black swan, the bad looking girl but as Pecola the blue eyed the one the others would envy and not hate.

II.5.2 Women and Femininity

Women and femininity is the core in the *Bluest Eye* and women oppression is an important theme within the novel. Women in addition to suffer from the horrors of racism do also experience the tyranny and desecration imposed by men and many different stages of woman's development into womanhood such as (Pecola, Frieda and Claudia)are depicted as young characters confronted at a very early age to the harshness of individuals . Despite the fact that women of the *Bluest Eye* experience oppression from their husbands or fathers they strive to remain strong enough and impose their authority on their children at times through physical force and verbal abuse; and they do the same thing over other women through slander and gossip. The way that women are oppressed by men is also revealed via the need to attack those who are weak, for example Pecola's mother was oppressed by her husband Cholly and tried to defend herself either through verbal or physical attacks. Pauline is considering herself a martyr that is why she takes out her anger over her daughter Pecola and imposes authority over her. This theme of men oppression over women in the *bluest eye* reaches its brutal limit when Cholly rapes his daughter Pecola; this incident sums up all means of violence and abuse against women.

II.5.3 Race and racism

There are two complicated issues in the *Bluest Eye*; the first one involves white hatred against blacks. Morrison explores the issue of racism towards the blacks in different manners. In the story, race is not only defined by skin color, the physical features of an individual, but also rather by the origins, social class and culture. In fact whiteness is related with purity, cleanliness and value while blackness is associated with immorality, dirtiness and worthlessness. This idea of race, which has relation with cleanliness and value, spoils colored people lives. These distinctions that occur among the characters of the *Bluest Eye* last in racial self-hatred. In the novel, the characters who do own any "markers of whiteness," suffer

more like Pecola Breedlove, as young black girl she daily faces all the brutal ways of racism either from her classmates in school or people in community.

II.6 Pecola Breedlove as “The Invisible Girl”

As far as Invisibility and Blindness are concerned, it might be pointed out that Pecola Breedlove incarnates the interconnectedness between these two facets of the “color line” with racism and discrimination as its main visible results. Before suffering whites people’s judgment, the young girl undergoes the mistreatment and even discrimination of her own peers and more particularly that of her own parents. Pecola is a black girl; this blackness caused her a problem either within her family or with society. Because of her skin color, she is considered ugly, and sees in blue eyes a remedy to her pain.

Toni Morrison introduces many victims as Pecola but in the story she focuses more on the character of this young girl who suffers from self-hatred, she rejects her identity without any voice or resistance. She is victim in a society where the white beauty is dominant in their culture which means that the blacks are inferior to the white people. She is an African American girl from the beginning of the story and remains invisible till the end of the story.

Pecola grows up in an abusive family that does not like her or in other words her parents do not accept her as is treated badly inside and outside her home. Pecola is considered invisible in the novel simply because of her blackness and thus unattractiveness. She does not have the beauty criteria that Morrison alludes to the one that sees beauty limited to whiteness. This issue destroys her internally and leads to self-hatred; more clearly Pecola is invisible in other people’s eyes within herself too because she is psychologically destroyed creating an internal trouble within herself as she is rejected by others. As Morrison mentions at the beginning of her book “there can’t be anyone, I am sure, who doesn’t know what it feels like to be disliked, even rejected, momentarily or for sustained periods of time ...”(BE, foreword)

Pecola as a child is unaccepted by her family first and by her friends, she suffers consequently from a form of double- oppression in Lorain, and Pecola is humiliated and hates who. Morrison begins her book with school primer readers describing a house by beautiful colors “here is the house, it is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. “Her is family mother, father, dick, and Jane live in the green and white house” (p. 1). This part reflects to the characteristics of white beauty as Noskova argues that in school, young African American pupils learn to associate beauty with white Americans and ugliness with African American people to stick in the mind of black children that whiteness is superior to them as

blacks. (2013). Pecola lives in very difficult situation because all the features that Dick and Jane text defined about their house, do not correspond to Pecola's house, another fact that contributes to her feeling of inferiority and it impacts on her psychologically.

Morrison depicts the relationship of Pecola with her family and her surroundings where she lives. She depicts more the ugliness of Pecola and the dirty entourage where she lives that is the major factor that leads her to become invisible and unaccepted by others. Moreover, her father Cholly is an abusive and alcoholic man who hates women for his past experiences, her mother Pauline believes that her family is ugly, and her daughter Pecola is not beautiful. She doesn't care about her because according to her that her family features do not correspond to the white ideal of beauty (Noskova, 2013). Another event happened to Pecola that confirms that she is hated and unaccepted by her mother; when Pecola comes to the fisher's house to fetch Laundry and spills pie juice on the floor, Pauline punishes her and kicks her out of the house without caring that she is her daughter the fact that she wanted her child to have the pink, white and blue eyes " she Yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger abused Pecola directly ..." (p. 109) Therefore, the lack of interest and love besides the bad treatment she is exposed to pushes the young girl to choose invisibility. Moreover, Pecola prays to God to make her disappear especially when her parents and brother fight together as shown in the following passage:

She squeezed her eyes shut. Little parts of her body faded away. Now slowly, now with a rush. Slowly again. Her fingers went, one by one; then her arms disappeared all the way to the elbow. Her feet now... The legs all at once. It was hardest above the thighs. She had to be real still and pull. Her stomach would not go. But finally it, to, went away. Then her chest, her neck. The face was hard, too. Almost done, almost. Only her tight, tight eyes were left. They were always left ». (Morrison, BE 33)

This quote reflects Pecola living in so a hostile environment that gives her the sentiment that she is not desired among a family where there is no room for love and protection; she prefers to disappear from this terrible life because of the fight and troubles at home. And as she is a young girl; she is unable to change these circumstances or protect herself, the only solution for her is to disappear. Indeed, Pecola experiences many events that make her feel inferior and useless within people, she drinks milk from Shirley temple cup and buys Mary Jane candies with hope that if she eats enough of them, she will become blond and looks like white models in order to be beautiful. One day Pecola found herself confronted to a situation in which she really felt invisible with others refusing to see her; she goes to buy candies when she demands sweets from Mrs. Yakobouski, he is doubtful whether to look on

her or not. His eyes draw back and hesitating. He does not see her because for him there is nothing to see. (p.36) this incident built up a psychological problem because the reaction of the guy prevents Pecola from showing which kind of candy she wants as if she were visible or distorted .Even though, she faces racism, the girl focuses on eating her candies as Morrison describes her “each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of little Mary Jane, to eat candy is somehow to eat eyes .eat Mary Jane, love Mary Jane, be Mary Jane ...” (BE .p 38) this leads Pecola to imagine herself while eating the candies, nice, pretty and lovely white girl. She eats ingest the advertising on the picture that associate with a candy.

The relationship between Pecola and her family; her mother and father in particularly, is the first reason behind her feelings of inferiority and inequity. Because her parents are unable to express love and show some interest over she just sees herself as unaccepted, ignored and invisible. In addition to this, she becomes convinced that she doesn’t deserve love because she is ugly. All in all, Morrison in her novel the Bluest Eye portrays Pecola Breedlove as one who is victim of social discrimination; she incarnates the invisible and powerless character. There are many factors that influence the development of Pecola as child and destroy her psychologically for instance: her family ties, the bad treatment of her parents, her physical appearance, I sum that she hated not only herself but also her environment. Pecola was not ugly; she was just living in an ugly family with horrible parents. Had Pauline and Cholly shown more attention to their daughter, she would have never been ugly Pecola.

II.7 Conclusion

This chapter is entitled: the Story and is divided into five main parts. The first point introduces a short biography about the author-Toni Morrison –her life and her major contribution to Afro-American literature. The second part is concerned with a summary of the story highlighting he most important events that happened to the protagonist Pecola. The third one is devoted to the major characters that play in the story, followed by the major themes that are exposed in the novel. The last point is about how Pecola remains invisible in the whole novel and the factors that led to invisibility.

Chapter three

Analytical framework

Chapter Three: analytical framework

III.1 Introduction

White beauty standards and colorism, with their relation to invisibility and blindness, are the two main points of this third and last chapter. The association that exists between white skin and beauty is an engrained belief imposed by western culture on the black community used as a means to destroy their personality and take down those values related to their past ancestry and African heritage. Colorism is another interesting point that refers to the preference of those who have fairer skin over black or the opposite preference of dark over light skin and this is well exemplified through the character Mrs. Pauline Breedlove.

III.2 White Beauty Idealization

One of the major themes that Morrison depicts in her novel is related to the link between whiteness and white beauty. She explores how western standards of ideal beauty are spread among the black community. The novel portrays how those dark skinned characters have lived prejudiced existence and baffled their relationships within their peers, first, and with the white neighborhood in the second place. As a consequence, individuals psyche is trapped into a body governed by self-hatred and lack of self-esteem. Morrison spoke about those Afro-Americans women who were daily confronted to whiteness, blue eyed, blonde hair as perfect standards of beauty set by western culture and media.

These white beauty standards are presented by Morrison through many female characters in the story. First, Claudia Macteer and her inability to understand why standards of beauty are represented on the doll as an object that is worthier than black people. Secondly, it occurs on the protagonist Pecola Breedlove as a young girl who has been affected by the idea of beauty and the way that society views her blackness and which leads her at last wishing for blue eyes. Thirdly, white beauty also affected the mother; Pauline Breedlove represented through movies and advertisements, the mother is fond of.

First of all, the Macteer family was living a comfortable life and accepted their blackness and their physical appearance unlike to Breedlove family which is poor and sees blackness as an obstacle to a better life and see that whiteness is superior to blackness. This is demonstrated when Claudia had received blue eyed, yellow haired and pink skinned doll for Christmas, this white doll is represented as standard of perfection and brought to the little girl as beautiful and perfect doll. Claudia is convinced that if you do not have blue eyes, blonde

hair and white skin, you are not considered as worthy human, as Morrison described the beauty through the doll:

“The big, the special, the loving gift was always a big, blue-eyed Baby Doll. [...] I was bemused by the thing itself, and the way it looked. [...] I had no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood. [...] I was physically revolted by and secretly frightened of those round moronic eyes, the pancake face, and orange worms hair” (p. 13)

. This makes Claudia think that beauty can be bought and wealth can bring beauty. Because of the doll, the girl comes to hate the little white girls as she desires to hurt them, she starts looking for something that can surprise or impress those looking at her. At last, Claudia could understand that because she is black, society will never see her pretty and beautiful.

Morrison focuses more on her female character Pecola Breedlove who suffers the consequences of those beauty standards. Pecola as a black young girl is affected from the white race superiority and becomes aware of her difference. She was considered ugly, simply because she had a dark skin and dreamed of blue fair hair and pink lips, whiteness for her was of different shades on the contrary of blackness which was horrible . Through this, Morrison narrates the story and she really succeeded to portray the cruel ground that affected Pecola and led her to self-hatred, praying for blue eyes as a solution to her confusion. The Breedlove family is considered ugly by the members of society and the media has helped to vehicle those beauty standards as a reminder of their no- attractiveness as put forward by Morrison when saying:

The eyes, the small eyes set closely together under narrow foreheads. The low, irregular hair lines, which seemed even more irregular in contrast to the straight, heavy eyebrows which nearly met. Keen out crooked noses, with insolent nostrils. They had high cheekbones, and their ears turned forward. Shapely lips which called attention not to them but to the rest of the face. You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly (p.34)

So, Pecola found herself in a place where importance is given to white skin. Someone lacking blue eyes, pink skin and blonde hair, is described as ugly as embodied I Pecola's character. Additionally; each one of the Breedlove family uses their ugliness in different ways. For instance: Pecola is always hiding herself from the surroundings. She prefers using a mask to hide herself and also escapes from what has been presented in media concerning the ideal beauty ad which reminds her that she is black, and will never be beautiful. She is sure that if she were beautiful, her life would be nice and full of happiness and more important, she would be accepted by her family and society too. The feeling of inferiority, In addition of

being accompanied by the bad economic conditions of the family was further intensified by the clash between her parents and sometimes her mother punished her for trivial reasons and Pecola chooses to disappear completely from this hostile life as described in the words of Morrison: “please make me disappear, she squeezed her eyes shut, little parts of her body faded away ...”(p.43) As Bronwyn explain in his essay *white beauty standards in Toni Morrison's the bluest eye*, **Pecola always** sees her eyes as a reminder of her blackness and ugliness, too. She is persuaded that with blue eyes she would be the cherished daughter she is not or the good friend everybody would like to be with, she would be living in peace with herself and with others. Her wish for blue eyes is very intense and making it true would mean that she is a beautiful girl. With blue eyes, Pecola would be no more teased by her peers and classmates at school and as she would not be treated as a weed. For instance there is a little girl who was studying with her, called Maureen Peal, who is a mulatto girl –light skinned girl – she is always showing in off and insulting Pecola telling her that she is better than her even though Pecola was nicer than her. But Maureen's clothes made her look more fashionable and neat than Pecola, because she was rich and light skinned, she won other children's respect on the contrary of Pecola.

Another important scene occurs when Pecola went to the sweet shop to buy Mary Janes a sweet, the shop showed the picture of beautiful girl with blue eyes, she was known as Shirley Temple who was also white skinned and had blonde hair. Pecola was so naïve that she thought that if she ate enough from these candies, she would become as beautiful as Shirley. The milk incident is another important event that influenced Pecola's personality. Pecola drinks “three quarter of milk” (p.21) out of the cup that are printed with Shirley temple's image who was a child television actress who became famous due to her charm and she is a girl that at young age represented the beauty standards. In the novel, Morrison presents this character as symbol to shed light on the importance of white beauty and its effects mainly, on black girls and women. Morrison describes the scene when Pecola loves drinking milk out of cup with a picture of Shirley temple. In fact this action at first means, as any child likes having something that has relation with his /her favorite cartoon. Pecola prefers holding Shirley temple's cup because she thinks that it is the only way to have blue eyes as a maker of white beauty. In other word, milk is white and Shirley is also white and beautiful as a result Pecola desperately believes that she would get rid of her black skin thanks to the cup of milk, her desire to do so as it is explained in Glendy essays.

Unlike Pecola, Pauline Breedlove the mother represses her “ugliness” differently from her daughter. She seeks refuge in movies and cinema as a direct demonstration of beauty.

Pauline lives in her imaginary world, passes her time watching films that inspire her about western ideal of beauty imagining herself fitting the mould of whiteness. As Hopkins explains in his essay *white beauty standards in the bluest eye* that Pauline was like a baby the first time he looks at himself on the mirror, and everything is perfect till he comes in contact with society. Although Pauline is not a baby but rather a mature woman, she had not understood yet that this perfect ideal beauty that she admires is behind a screen. She was affected by what cinema and TV program presented in the form of movies or advertisements. In fact, «cinema introduced to her the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought” (Morrison, 1999. p.120) the movie screen becomes Pauline mirrors, she sees herself through the standards of ideal beauty. But as Pauline was physically deformed, her dream was broken down when she lost her tooth while eating sweets and from that day on saw herself as ugly and she continued blaming her ugliness on her laming foot. More precisely without any of these disfigured things; her skin color is sufficient reason to feel distorted. She is not noticed, but rather ignored and useless to others because her physical appearance does not fit into the western standards of beauty. She is overcome with others in society and takes out her anger of ugliness and self-hatred on her family especially her daughter Pecola.

In addition to that, Pauline was working for a white family, the Fishers, where, on the contrary of her family, she found beauty, cleanliness and purity. The Fishers represented the ideal family she would have liked having everyone and everything with them was so lovable, Pauline loved the fisher’s daughter more than she loved her own children simply because this little girl was white and thus more beautiful than her daughter.

Pauline does not hesitate to take care of her employer’s girl when needed and neglects her own family. Spending the day among the white family is for Pauline more than a job, it gives her the impression that she is another woman and whereas the family called her Polly instead of Pauline, Pecola called her Mrs. Breedlove because there was no mother daughter relationship (Ridha, 2010) Pauline, may be considered as being an important reason behind her daughter’s feeling of rejection and then destruction. She is also the first to have introduced Pecola to western ideals of beauty instead of loving her for what she was, a young black girl strong enough to break out of such beliefs and propaganda.

Among the black female characters that are presented by Toni Morrison, Pecola is the saddest example, a victim of the idea whiteness as the ideal beauty. Pecola believes that she is ugly in fact she is black she must be ugly due to the spread beliefs about the black race in general and about black women in particular. Pecola thinks if she owns a blue eye, she will be liked and accepted by others, unfortunately this would never be realized.

III.3 Colorism and Invisibility

Colorism is an issue spread particularly amongst many ethnic groups. For example colorism is associated to the culture of African Americans. . This idea that is always used in African American community refers to those who enjoy particular privileges (jobs with more income, better accommodation and a better social life) because they are light skinned whereas those who have black skin , are jobless, less successful and treated differently by others. The question now, what does colorism mean?

III.3.1 The Notion of Colorism

Colorism is defined by the Oxford English dictionary as “a prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a dark skin tone, typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group”. Colorism is type of acting discrimination based on the color of skin. It has affected on African American culture and community. They face discrimination with their own ethnic group as well as with other ethnic group. This issue is back to slavery dated that the idea of light skin is better than dark ones. Howard in his theses titled an exploration of Colorism and its effects on African American and white American communities, he states that Colorism has many negative impacts on various ethnic groups, particularly African Americans and according to him there two different types of Colorism “interracial similar to race bias and interracial” with members of the same race expressing bias against fellow members based on skin color. As Howard (2011) also mentioned Colorism is “constructed social hierarchy based on the graduation of one’s skin tone within and between various racial/ethnic groups” (p.11). Colorism is discrimination or inequality based on the skin color, hair texture and facial features among a group of people or within the same race. Jaynes in Davis ,2015 states that colorism means that this act of discrimination can be even within the black community in which some people prefer fairer skin to dark and the opposite ,they refers to the preference of dark skin over light. These beliefs were spread more precisely during the era of slavery “when light skinned racially mixed slaves were often treated better than the darker skinned (p.9). So, colorism is the belief that one skin color is superior to another or the belief that lighter skin is superior to the dark skin.

III.3.2 Colorism and the Bluest Eye

Morrison tackles many interrelated issues in her novel, these are: identity, invisibility, white beauty standards and colorism. The major character Pecola Breedlove as a young girl struggles and suffers more her family's ignorance as well as from community's mistreatment verbal and physical. She believes that in order to be loved and accepted, she has to be pretty and nice so she prayed for blue eyes as suitable way for her problem.

Through the story, Morrison explores the issue of colorism through Pecola and other characters like Pauline, Maureen Peal, Claudia and Frieda. She succeeded in showing the negative and damaging aspects of colorism. As Walker in Davis (2015) in her work a study of black feminism and womanism in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* states that Pecola as an essential character in the novel, due to her blackness and dark skin is doubly victimized. First of all, she is pressured by white racists in society because she is black. Secondly, she is victimized from people of her own race and black community. As consequence she hates and is disgusted by her skin color, and she supports white beauty.

There are many reasons that drove Pecola to wards colorism and thus prefer one race over another which is first expressed through her relation with her parents which is far from being synonymous of harmony she is verbally harassed by her mother and physically tortured by her father. The mother who was working for a white family used to feel she was living a perfect life for she was surrounded by whiteness and thus cleanness, on the contrary of her own house where everything was associated to blackness and thus dirtiness.

As colorism is defined as "a bias treatment of individuals based on their skin color by identifiable features such as hair texture, lip shape, nose shape ,eye shape and eye color"(Beery in Davis, 2015 p.). So, through the novel one can see Pecola struggling to see herself beautiful and loved as result she idealizes whiteness and its features. This idea of colorism appears also when Pecola went to live with Macteer family, their daughters Claudia and Frieda who were her friends and Pecola found herself seeking love in another place. During this period, Pecola begins realizing that whiteness is a means of love for example; she becomes enamored with Shirley Temple as Claudia introduces Pecola to Shirley Temple:

Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley

Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-

Ute Shirley Temple was. I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley (the bluest eye, 1999. p.19).

Pecola starts loving this character, because she admires her physical appearance as shown through the milk incident. Pecola is indeed much affected by colorism because she is rejected by her parents who participate in their daughter mental break down at the end of the story. Besides Shirley Temple, Pecola was also impressed by Mary Jane another white girl who also represented beauty to Pecola she was described in the novel as "...smiling white face, blond hair in gentle disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of world of clean comfort, the eyes petulant, mischievous..."(p.50). Pecola likes eating Mary Jane candies because she wants to have the same looking. Morrison through these scenes stresses the way Pecola is affected by whiteness and white beauty standards. As Alice walker notes in her journal the study of black feminism and womenism 2011 when saying that Pecola believes that if she had blue eyes, she would be loved and her life would be changed too, and more than that she was seeking for happiness and love because she was abused by her parents and by members of community.

In addition to that, Pecola was teased by her classmates at school, they were insulting her and calling her "black e mo" and because Pecola was unable to change her skin color and her eyes, these boys were subjecting to her colorism. In fact, her classmates are too victims to this issue because they saw that Pecola's skin is problematic as Turner in Davis 2015 states that this problem is based on how color is taught and becomes an issue that is passed through generations but when did this really start? According to him this idea developed throughout the interaction in society that is divided into two groups, blacks and whites. This society saw black people as ugly and they did not have any beautiful features that this category includes Pecola and other Afro-Americans females. On the other hand, society prefers those who were lighter for instance in the bluest eye, Morrison has presented a character who is totally the opposite of Pecola in order to explain the notion of colorism. This is demonstrated in Maureen Peal, a light-skinned African American girl who also experienced colorism but differently from Pecola. Morrison described her as a yellow child with lacing brown hair and a rich girl. Maureen had experienced colorism in positive way because her skin color was accepted by her community members unlike Pecola who experienced colorism in negative way due to her physical appearance that didn't fit her society and her family too. Maureen is seen more pretty, feminine and everyone wanted to be her friend moreover she was rich and living a comfortable life. This example refers to how Pecola, Claudia and Frieda who were less beautiful compared themselves to Maureen Peal who was nice and loved by others.

Pecola's mother also experienced colorism and she plays an important role in destroying her self-image and personality. Pauline as it was mentioned previously, loses herself in watching movies. She gets inspired by white beauty which leads her hating herself and her family especially her daughter Pecola. She believes that whiteness is preferable to blackness. She sees that white beauty features are ideal standards to be loved. She was always blaming her lame foot and broken teeth which were the two main visible aspects of her physical imperfection. She only enjoys working among the white family and looks after their little girl and she thinks that living with them will provide her purity, cleanliness and peace of mind.

Colorism drives Pecola to insanity, after she had been raped by her father Cholly she lost her baby. She got mad and passed her time in front of her mirror talking to her imaginary friend.

III.4 Conclusion

This part is devoted to the analysis of the reasons that led the issue of invisibility and blindness. The criticism of White beauty standards may be taken as important theme within the novel. Many female characters were the victims of this categorization which sees that whiteness always refers to beauty and the expense of blackness which stands as it's opposite. Colorism is also revealed I the story as a driving force behind racism inside and outside the black community.

General conclusion

Toni Morrison is one of those African American writers who always succeeded in depicting the problems faced by blacks from the era of slavery to the twentieth century and their struggles to obtain their rights. Morrison in her novels focuses mainly on the oppression and white supremacy upon black Americans. This study takes the *Bluest Eye* 1970 as an example. Morrison concentrates on black female characters who suffer more in racially divided society.

Invisibility and blindness are major themes that Morrison mentioned in her novel *the bluest eye*. She uses these concepts as issues that confronted the Afro-Americans in their lives. Morrison through young black female character succeeded in portraying these issues as problems in society where the others do not accept you or refuse to see you as a member of community. This research had studied the factors and the effects that led the African-Americans mainly females in this novel remain invisible and ignored in their society. The research paper follows analytical technique in order to find what are the reasons that led society reject those people and refused to recognize them.

The work is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is based on theoretical framework which gives some definitions to key concepts in relation to the topic like Identity, race, ethnicity and gender. It also gives an explanation of other concepts such as invisibility and blindness in relation to the novel *the Invisible man* by Ralph Ellison. The second chapter presents a short biography about the author and a summary plot concerning the story itself and an overview about the major themes and characters besides that it analyses the female character. Finally, the third chapter is an analytical framework that analyses the factors that result from the issues of Invisibility and Blindness.

Through this analysis, it is apparent that the factors that lead the protagonist the young black girl and other females' characters feel invisible in society is the idea that whites are superior the whites blacks and which is vehicle through white beauty standards. Through the novel we may notice that the majority of black females are inspired by an ideal beauty that is always related to whiteness and which reinforces the idea that whites are beautiful and thus visible on the contrary of blacks who are dark but ironically invisible being and women were the ones much exposed to blindness and invisibility in the novel.

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