

(De)Construction of Gender in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*: A Study in Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract—*The paper attempts a feminist critical discourse analysis of Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. It studies the relationship between gender and language, which in this context, implies examining enactments of power by men over women in public as well as private domain. For analysis, Norman Fairclough's model of Textually-Oriented Discourse Analysis has been combined with Michelle M. Lazar's views on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. The study not only reveals the dominant ideologies, unequal power-play, female oppression, and patriarchal hegemony but also gives a deep insight into the racial and class discrimination prevalent in African American society.*

Toni Morrison is one of the most celebrated writers of the present era and is the first African American to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Morrison's first novel, The Bluest Eye, is a story of a black girl who craves for affection and longs to have blue eyes as she feels that it would not only change what she sees but also how others see (treat) her. This girl, named Pecola Breedlove, is raped by her father, not once but twice, and there is no one to question it.

The paper analyses an extract from the novel. The analysis is divided into the description stage, the interpretation stage, and the explanation stage. Linguistic features such as Theme-Rheme, parataxis and hypotaxis, figures of speech, deixis, style, use of cohesive devices, background knowledge and shared knowledge, use of symbols and images, and modality have been analysed. Finally, dominant ideologies have been revealed in order to bring out the unequal power-play between the characters of the text. Each of the features mentioned above lends itself to Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and renders important findings. Thus, the paper makes important revelations about each of the characters and how they unknowingly or sub-consciously promote gender and race oppression.

1. INTRODUCTION

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse that views language as a form social practice and focuses on the ways social and political domination are reproduced in text and talk

(Fairclough, 1995b)[1]. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (feminist CDA), a sub-field of Critical Discourse Analysis, studies gender inequality as it is one of the most common ways in which power, domination and social inequality are exercised in a society. One comes across numerous instances where women are not only treated as subordinate to men but are also subjected to discrimination, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, control and violence. It is this branch of Critical Discourse Analysis that forms the subject of my present study as I critically analyse Toni Morrison's, *The Bluest Eye*, from a feminist perspective [2].

It is aptly said that literature is a reflection of life, and a study of language at the micro level reveals how a society functions at the macro level. The novel speaks about racial discrimination, of the ill-treatment of blacks in a white society, the omnipresent class distinction, the white standards of beauty, the rule of the patriarch and the subordinate position of women vis-à-vis men, oppression of children and females, and thereby brings to light the power struggles of the time in which it was set. Toni Morrison (1931-) is one of the most celebrated writers of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and is the first African-American woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Among her best known novels are *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*. She has also been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2012, which is the highest civilian award in the United States. In all her novels, she has beautifully depicted gender, race and class oppression faced by the African-American community, and especially by the Black women.

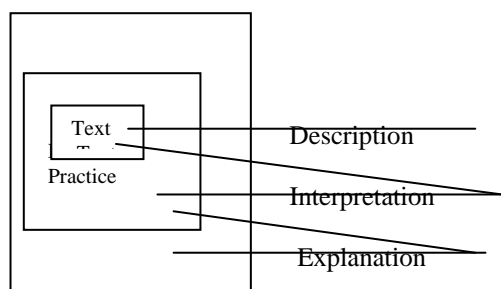
2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

A critical perspective on unequal social arrangements sustained through language use, with the goals of social transformation and emancipation, constitute the core of both Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Feminist Critical

Discourse Analysis (Lazar, 2005) [3]. For the present study, Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, has been combined with Michelle M. Lazar's principles on Feminist CDA, and her principles have been inter-woven into the three stages given by Fairclough.

2.1 Norman Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA and Michelle M. Lazar's Principles on Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's model of CDA, known as Textually Oriented Discourse Analysis is one of the most comprehensive models till date. His ideas are based on the multifunctional linguistic theory embodied in Halliday's systemic functional linguistics which outlines three important functions of language (M.A.K. Halliday 1978, 1985)[4,5]. These are the textual, the interpersonal and the ideational function. Halliday's systemic-functional theory considers language as multifunctional in that the texts simultaneously establish identities, organize social relations, and represent reality. Fairclough incorporates each of these functions in his model by classifying them under the Description, Interpretation, and Explanation Stage.



Dimensions
Dimensions of Discourse of Discourse Analysis

Figure: Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Model of CDA

Fairclough maintains that all language use is basically to be perceived as ideological. Dominant ideologies seem neutral, with assumptions that stay largely unchallenged. When people in a society think alike about certain matters, or even forget that there are alternatives to the status quo, one arrives at the Gramscian concept of hegemony (Gramsci, 1978)[6]. It is the functioning of ideologies in everyday life that intrigues CDA researchers.

Of all the contemporary feminist sociolinguists including Ruth Wodak (1989) [7], Deborah Cameron (1990, 1992) [8,9], Deborah Tannen (1990,1994) [10,11], and Michelle M. Lazar (2005), Lazar is one of the firsts to use the term Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and to publish her work under this paradigm of CDA. She outlines a set of five inter-related and overlapping principles for doing Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, both in theory and in practice. These are feminist analytical resistance, gender as ideological structure, complexity of gender and power relations, discourse in the deconstruction of gender, and critical reflexivity as praxis.

3. FROM FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSIS

In this stage, each tool has been briefly explained along with its role in the analysis; before supplementing it with examples from the text. My analysis can, therefore, be said to be a mix of both methodology and analysis. The extract that has been taken for analysis is the prologue of the novel (given in appendix). It marks the beginning of the first part of the novel, named, Autumn. Here, an unmanned narrator shares a secret with her audience that there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. At that time, the narrator and her sister felt that the flowers did not grow because Pecola was having her father's (Cholly's) baby. The two had planted the marigold seeds with the belief that if they planted the seeds well and said the right magical words over them, flowers would definitely blossom. This would in turn signal that Pecola would have a healthy baby. They later realised that it was not only their marigold seeds that did not grow (sprout), none of the marigolds in the community did. For long, the two sisters blamed each other for the failure in order to relieve their sense of guilt. However, the narrator now understands that it was not her fault but nature's fault as the land itself might have been barren. She compares their planting of marigold seeds in their plot of land to Pecola's father planting his seeds in his own plot of black dirt, which was Pecola. The narrator informs us that of all human emotions, what now remains is, Pecola and the futile earth as Cholly Breedlove is dead and so is Pecola's baby. The narrator feels that there is nothing more to state except to reason out why it all happened but since '*why is difficult*' to explain, she would rather try and tell us '*how*' it all transpired.

3.1 Description The opening of the prologue, "Quiet as it's kept..." is written in a manner that sets up an instant and intimate connection with the reader. The narrator reveals to her readers a secret that is both between them and is being kept from them. The reader pauses to decide if the voice of children can be trusted at all or if it is more trustworthy than that of the adults in the story.

3.1.1 Mood and Thematic Structure. Analysing the prologue in terms of its mood, we find that the clauses/sentences are indicative in mood, comprising only declarative sentences. The mood of the extract reflects the powerful position of the narrator as she furnishes crucial details about a major event in Pecola's life. Usually, the item most often functioning as the unmarked Theme (Subject/Theme) in a declarative clause is the first person pronoun, *I*. A Theme that is something other than the Subject, in a declarative clause, is known as a Marked Theme. Usual forms of marked Theme are an adverbial group, like for example, in the Prologue we have, "Quite as it's kept", "It was a long time", "For years", or a prepositional phrase, functioning as Adjunct in the clause. The Theme of "no marigolds" which is a complement is strongly foregrounded; it summarizes the entire content of the above passage. After a close reading of the Prologue, one can identify the following themes in it: oppression of a child, of a girl child, who is black in colour (the narrator calls Pecola "plot of black dirt"). Thus,

the prologue is not only marked by female oppression but also has traces of racial discrimination in it.

3.1.2 Significance of Functional Concepts in Structure. The significance of functional labels lies in its relationship with other functions with which it is structurally associated; and the total structure is what expresses, or realizes, the meaning intended by the speaker or writer. The Theme is a function in the Clause as Message. It is what the message is concerned with; the point of departure for what the speaker is going to say. The Subject is a function in the Clause as Exchange. It is the element that is held responsible; in which is vested the success of the clause in whatever is its particular speech function. The Actor is a function in the Clause as Representation (of a process). It is the active participant in the process; the one that does the deed. A few examples of clauses/sentences from the extract in terms of its structure are as follows,

Actor	Process	Goal
“Pecola	was having	her father’s baby.”
“(If) we	planted	the seeds...”
“The seeds	shriveled and died...”	

Theme	Rheme
“Quiet as it’s kept,	there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941.”
“We thought, at the time	that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow.”
“I	had planted them too far down in the earth.”

3.1.3 Analysing Complex Words. Analysing the prologue in terms of its grammatical constituency, we find that it is formed of complex sentence structures and complex words. As illustrated below, each of the following complex words from the Prologue, ‘father-’s’, ‘garden-’s’, ‘plant-ed’, ‘front-ing’, ‘concern-ed’, ‘deep-ly’, consists of one free and one bound morpheme. Also, all the above affixes (suffixes) are inflectional suffixes as they do not allow further affixation and are of terminal nature. Then there are also words like ‘productive’ in the prologue which have a derivational suffix attached to it. The Prologue also consists of a number of compound words or polymorphemics like ‘no-body(-’s)’, ‘every-thing’, ‘no-thing’, which consist of two roots each.

3.1.4 Parataxis and Hypotaxis. Parataxis and hypotaxis indicate if the elements of a sentence are joined by a relationship of coordination or subordination. Parataxis is the linking of elements of equal status. Both the initiating as well as the continuing element is free, in the sense that each could stand as a functioning whole. In principle, a paratactic relation is logically symmetrical and transitive. In the prologue, we find the following paratactic relations between the word complexes, “a little examination *and* much less melancholy”; “by fights *and* mutual accusations”; where parataxis has been established by the use of the conjunction ‘*and*’. Parataxis can be analysed at the level of a clause complex also, like for instance, “We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of

black dirt *just as* Pecola’s father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt.” Here, ‘*just as*’ is the paratactic element. Similarly, in the sentence, “Our innocence and faith were *no more* productive *than* his lust or despair”; the clauses exhibit a paratactic relation in being joined by the words, ‘*no more*’ and ‘*than*’.

Hypotaxis is the binding of elements of unequal status. The dominant element is free but the dependent element is not. A hypotactic relation is logically non-symmetrical and non-transitive. For example in the sentence, “We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow”, the two clauses have been joined by a hypotactic relation which establish a sort of cause and effect relationship between them. This cause and effect relation reveals a child’s psychology as the narrator tries to rationalize the unnatural events that occurred around her by attributing meaning to them and by trying to set them right in her own way.

3.1.5 Figures of Speech. Metaphor, personification and deixis have been used in this extract. The use of metaphor is interesting because it has ideological connotations and reveals important facts. In the sentence, “It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds”, the word, *green*, is a metaphor for life, symbolising that no seedling was going to come out from the marigold seeds. In the lines, “We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola’s father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt”; the narrator draws a striking parallelism between two relatively different phenomena with the use of metaphor. The first ‘*our seeds*’ refers to the actual marigold seeds while the second use of seeds in ‘*his seeds*’ is metaphorical, pointing to Cholly’s sperms. Similarly, the former, ‘*our own little plot*’ refers to actual plot of land while the latter use of it in, ‘*his own plot*’ refers to his daughter’s (Pecola’s) womb. In the same way the first, ‘*black dirt*’ is the black colour of the soil while the second ‘*black dirt*’ refers to Pecola who is dark in colour. She is referred to as “*black dirt*” because the poor African-Americans, living in America at that time, had no significance. They were treated as dirty, worthless people who lived and perished like animals, working mainly as slaves (servants) for most part of their lives.

The extract also makes extensive use of personification. Feelings have been personified to represent the person/thing for which they stand. Instead of saying that the earth was as unyielding as Pecola’s womb or the narrator’s act of planting seeds was as unproductive as the sexual act performed by Pecola’s father, the narrator rather chooses to say, “Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair. Another instance in which feelings have been personified, that is, bestowed with the properties of life and death is when the narrator tells us, “What is clear now is that of all that hope, fear, lust, love, and grief, nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth. Cholly Breedlove is dead; our

innocence too." In the end, the Wh-words, "why" and "how" have also been personified as, "But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how."

The deictic devices used in the prologue tell us that the narrator is travelling to and fro in time. She is an adult now and is recollecting past events which she had experienced as a child and which she is now going to share with us. The deictic elements referring to past events are, "We thought, at the time..."; "It was a long time before..."; "For years I thought my sister was..." The present time is indicated with the use of, *now*, in the line, "What is clear now is..." Innocence is a characteristic feature of childhood and when the narrator states, "Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too"; the reader can figure out that the narrator and her sister are grown-up adults now.

3.1.6 Cohesion. There are numerous cohesive devices in the extract that make it coherent and thereby provide texture to it. Grammatical cohesive devices present in the prologue are those of conjunction, reference, and ellipsis. Lexical cohesion is that which occurs as a result of semantic relation between words. Types of lexical cohesion present in the prologue are, paraphrase, parallelism and collocation.

Conjunctions or connecting words not only join/connect two clauses or sentences but also tell us the relation between them. For instance, in the sentence, "We thought, at the time, that it was *because* Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow", the conjunction, '*because*', sets a cause and effect (causative) relationship between the two clauses. In, "A little examination *and* much less melancholy..." the connecting word, '*and*', adds to the previous information. Another type of conjunction is the contrastive conjunction, '*but*', which sets up a kind of contrast with the previous sentence/clause as, "Not even the gardens fronting the lake showed marigolds that year. *But* so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola's baby we could think of nothing but our own magic..."

Reference is another very common cohesive device through which a text sticks or hangs together. Cataphoric reference is using words that point forward to a word that has not been used as yet, "...if *we* planted the seeds, and said the right words...It was a long time before *my sister and I* admitted to ourselves no green was going to spring from our seeds." Here, '*we*' is a cataphoric reference pointing forward to the narrator's sister and to the narrator herself who have not been introduced before. Then there is anaphoric reference which is using words that point back to words that have been used before. For instance, "It was a long time before *my sister and I* admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds. Once *we* knew, our guilt was relieved..." Here, '*we*', refers back to '*my sister and I*'. Thus, referencing brings cohesion to the text by avoiding useless repetition and monotony.

Ellipsis is the omission of a noun, verb or phrase with the assumption that it is understood from its linguistic context. In order to make sense and to fill in the gap(s), a reader needs to look back to the previous clause/sentence, as illustrated in the examples given here. "Our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's (*seeds*) did." The word, 'seeds', is ellipsed after '*nobody's*', and can be understood from the linguistic context of the clause. Similarly in, "Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too (*is dead*)", the words '*is dead*' are ellipsed.

Paraphrase is the recurrence of same content with a change in expression. It is done in order to break monotony by avoiding repetition. The expression that the marigolds did not grow has been paraphrased in a variety of ways as, "... there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941."; "... that the marigolds did not grow"; "... our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's did", and then again, "Not even the gardens fronting the lake showed marigolds that year"; and finally, "... no green was going to spring from our seeds." In all the above cases trivial information is being foregrounded against the background of a shocking revelation.

Striking parallelism has been drawn between two acts of different nature in order to depict a kind of symmetry between them. The act of planting seeds has been compared to the physical assault perpetuated by Cholly on her daughter, in the lines, "We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt." Then parallelism has been drawn between different feelings to show that none of them were fruitful, "Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair." Finally, parallelism in this extract has been used in the end to state that neither the marigold seeds germinated nor did Pecola's baby see the light of the day. The line that depicts this parallelism is, "The seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too."

Collocation is the tendency of certain words to occur together or to be placed together because of the lexical relationship between them. In the line, "Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too"; both Cholly and innocence have been collocated as they are both are dead now. Similarly, seeds and baby collocate in the line, "The seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too"; as they too are dead. The words, '*why*' and '*how*' have been collocated in the prologue as the most of obvious forms of interrogation, "But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how."

3.2 Interpretation. The entire prologue is written in a special font, which is Italics in order to highlight it and demarcate it from the rest of the novel. The prologue is in the voice of a small girl and is infested with the innocence of a child. Ancient folk wisdom has been employed to explain all occurrences of the natural world in terms of human actions. A relationship thus, has been established between the natural and human acts to illustrate that if something is out of order in the human realm, nature will also respond to it and depict it in its

own way. It is because of an act of incest (a father raping his own daughter) which is a taboo that the whole earth turned hostile to marigolds in the year, 1941. Features like, background knowledge, shared knowledge, time setting, place setting, genre, modality, symbols and images help us to interpret a text.

3.2.1 Background Knowledge and Time Setting. Our background knowledge of the time in which the novel is set, and also of the time in which it is written, reveals important facts about it. The novel is set in 1939 which was a time when the whole world was recovering from a period of economic recession, known as the Great Depression, and World War II had begun. There was widespread unemployment and poverty. Mass emigration from America and immigration into it was in full swing. It was a period of great struggle and commotion in the history of America. Also, the time in which the novel is set is the time when the writer herself was of the same age as the principal narrator of the story, that is, around nine years old. The novel is thus, believed to have shades of real life as the novelist draws upon her own personal experiences of a black child growing up in America at that time. In the foreword to the novel, the novelist mentions that the origin of the novel lay in a conversation that she had with a childhood friend when she was in elementary school. The friend, who was also an African-American like Morrison, said that she wanted blue eyes. Morrison was aghast to visualize her with blue eyes but later realised the harm that racial discrimination had done to her friend's concept of beauty. Morrison admits that the whole act of writing the book was the public exposure of a private confidence.

Morrison began working on this novel in 1962 and her work progressed through 1965. This period is said to be the most notorious period of racial mistrust, segregation, slavery, and oppression in the history of African-Americans as they were struggling for their identity and acceptance into the mainstream American society. They were still the least privileged class of America as they had a long history of being slaves and were suppressed to the core. In the prologue, we get a hint on racism when the narrator refers to Pecola as "plot of black dirt." The training in physical inferiority thus, began with children. Right from the beginning, children were taught (socialized) to internalise racism and identify with their oppressors. They were made to recognize and accept the fact that they were ugly and that the whites or the European Americans were superior to them not only in appearance but in all respects. Later in the novel, we read that racism was a barrier not only between the classes; it was rampant within the class as well; as preference was always given to the lighter-skinned African-Americans as compared to those that were dark colored.

3.2.2 Place Setting. The place setting of the novel is Lorain, Ohio. It is a town where a number of African-Americans were settling down as it offered good employment prospects. The place was, however, dominated by the white

Americans who suppressed the minority blacks to the core, depriving them of even basic human rights. It is also the same town where Morrison grew up witnessing similar incidents of gender oppression and racial discrimination.

3.2.3 Genre. From the prologue we make out that the genre of the novel is not only tragic fiction but is also a coming-of-age story as the narrator takes the charge of narrating the events that finally led to Pecola's destruction. The fact that it is a novel subsumes the fact that it is a piece of fiction. It is tragic because in the prologue itself the narrator tells us that Pecola had been raped by her own father. It is a coming-of-age story as it tells us about the (negative) growth of its protagonist, Pecola, and how it led to her loss of identity.

3.2.4 Modality. Modality is important in the texturing of identities, in the sense that what you commit yourself to is a significant part of what you are. The concept of modality is important for both relational and expressive values in grammar. Modality in the prologue has been expressed with explicit modal markers like would, could, might and must. The prologue shows instances of expressive modality where the ideological interest is vested in the authenticity of claims and in claims to knowledge. In the following two sentences, "A little examination and much less melancholy *would* have proved to us that our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's did"; "But so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola's baby we *could* think of nothing but our own magic; if we planted the seeds, and said the right words over them, they *would* blossom, and everything *would* be all right", the modal auxiliary verbs, 'would' and 'could', state the narrator's conviction in her acts. Though small in age, she is confident of her action and its final outcome as reflected here, "*would* have proved"; "*could* think of nothing"; "they *would* blossom"; and "everything *would* be all right", as if whatever she is saying is bound to happen and there is no chance of any error in her prediction. On second thoughts, the narrator presents another probability that "the earth itself *might* have been unyielding" but this "never occurred" to the narrator and her sister. With the use of epistemic that is, knowledge-based modal verb, 'must', in the lines, "There is really nothing more to say except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one *must* take refuge in how"; the narrator makes it obligatory for her audience to be content with whatever she is going to share.

3.2.5 Use of Symbols and Images. After reading the prologue, we get a hint on the title, *The Bluest Eyes*. We guess that the novel is probably so named because the protagonist has suffered so much pain that her eyes have become the bluest, that is, the saddest eyes. The novelist uses a number of symbols and images in this extract; in order to convey her story more strongly. First, the image of marigolds or rather the absence of marigolds has been used to suggest that the wrong doings of the human world has repercussions for the natural world as well. Second, the surname of Cholly which is, Breedlove is symbolic and infused with ideological

connotations. Is this the way a person is supposed to breed (spread) love; by sexually molesting his own daughter? Generally, the term "breeding" is used for the act of reproduction carried out in the animal kingdom. So, should we take it like this, that Mr. Breedlove is just being true to his name, justifying it in the real sense, by breeding (reproducing) in love. Thus, he has actually stooped to so low a level where we are compelled to compare him with animals, that is, with creatures having no mind, and no emotions.

3.2.6 Coherence. The prologue is full of connections between ideas, people, and sentences; including an association between the natural cycles of the earth and unnatural actions of humans. This connection gives coherence to the entire extract and provides a lyrical note to it. Even though the narrator believes that she and her sister were foolish in thinking that there was some connection between their flowerbed and Pecola's womb, a parallel nonetheless persists. Also, there is an emotional connect between the two sisters, Pecola, and her unborn baby, as the sisters are deeply concerned with "the health and safe delivery" of Pecola's baby. The narrator believes that there is a cause-and-effect relationship between their act of planting seeds and success of Pecola's delivery. There also seems to be a connection between actions and morality as the sisters feel guilty that their seeds did not germinate because of which Pecola's baby died, and continuously look for someone to blame.

3.3 Explanation. Explanation is a matter of seeing discourse as a part of the processes of social struggle within a matrix of relations of power. Explanation can be said to have two dimensions, depending upon whether the emphasis is on process or on structure, that is, upon processes of struggle or upon relations of power.

3.3.1 Transitivity. Transitivity is concerned with the clause in its ideational function and hence, comes in the explanation stage. Transitivity structures express representational meaning that is, what the clause is about, which is typically some process, with associated participants and circumstances. The basic semantic framework for the representation of processes is very simple and consists mainly of three components: (i) the process itself, (ii) participants in the process, and (iii) circumstances associated with the process. These components provide the frame of reference for interpreting our experience of what goes on. It is a means of representing patterns of experience and provides a frame of reference for interpreting our experience of what goes on. For instance, in this extract,

We	had dropped our seeds	in our own little plot of black dirt.
(just as) Pecola's father	had dropped his seeds	in his own plot of black dirt.
↓	↓	↓
Participant	Process	Circumstance
Nominal Group	Verbal Group	Prepositional phrase.

A process can be divided into three main types which are, material, mental and relational processes. Instances of material processes in the prologue are, "Once we knew, our guilt was relieved only by fights and ..."; "I had planted them too far down in the earth". Another type is the mental processes which are the processes of sensing. They reflect the feelings, thinking, and perception of an actor and following are the examples of mental processes from the prologue, "We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow."; "But so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola's baby ..."; "It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was..."; The third is the relational process which is again of three types, intensive which states "x is a"; circumstantial which states "x is at a"; and possessive which states "x has a". An example of intensive relational process in the prologue is, "Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too." Similarly, instance of circumstantial relational process in this extract is, "Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941." Then is the possessive relational process and its example is, "... it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow."

3.3.2 Dominant Ideologies and Power Play. The orderliness of interactions in discourse depends upon taken-for-granted background knowledge and background knowledge subsumes 'naturalized' ideological representations that is, ideological representations which come to be seen as non-ideological 'common-sense'. In the prologue we find the following ideologies at play;

Patriarchy. The prologue reflects a patriarchal society where a man is not only free, but unimaginably free to do whatever he likes. The fact that a daughter has been raped by her own father, and that there is no one to question it (as the narrator herself admits that is difficult to state "why" it so happened), illumines a patriarchal set-up where patriarchy seems not only to be a dominant ideology but a hegemony. In such a society, the female is always accorded a secondary status and peripheral position. Her role is to act in subservience to the male (head of the family) and her opinion matters only till the time it is the same as that of the male.

Oppression of children. Another ideology is the oppression of children wherein Pecola has been molested by her own father, Cholly. We realize that it is a common

phenomenon in the American society where children are granted no voice and are given no importance by their family members. They are at the mercy and at the whims and fancies of their parents and other adults who are their care-takers. The children, it seems, are trained to internalize this oppression and treat it as only just and fair.

4. CONCLUSION

The prologue thus, presents a very grim picture of the female gender. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis of the prologue brings to light several facets of the life and plight of women, especially black women, living in America at the time. It sends ripples in the backbone of the reader to even imagine what Pecola must have gone through. The prologue instigates one to immediately proceed with the reading in order to find the reason behind this shameful act. One cannot help but hate Cholly Breedlove because of the way in which he has been introduced to us. No amount of reasoning and no rationale can justify his actions; is the only thought that the reader has as (s)he prepares to read the next section. I would like to conclude this article by saying that as we read the whole novel, we are constantly reminded of a woman's peripheral existence and secondary status, aptly stated by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, 1949, "One is not born a woman rather becomes one"[12].

5. APPENDIX (PROGOLUE)

Quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father's baby that the marigolds did not grow. A little examination and much less melancholy would have proved to us that our seeds were not the only ones that did not sprout; nobody's did. Not even the gardens fronting the lake showed marigolds that year. But so deeply concerned were we with the health and safe delivery of Pecola's baby we could think of nothing but our own magic: if we planted the seeds, and said the right words over them, they would blossom, and everything would be all right.

It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to ourselves that no green was going to spring from our seeds. Once we knew, our guilt was relieved only by fights and mutual accusations about who was to blame. For years I thought my sister was right: it was my fault. I had planted them too far down in the earth. It never occurred to either of

us that the earth itself might have been unyielding. We had dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt. Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair. What is clear now is that of all of that hope, fear, lust, love, and grief, nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth. Cholly Breedlove is dead; our innocence too. The seeds shrivelled and died; her baby too.

There is really nothing more to say – except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how.

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