

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS / INGLÊS E LITERATURA CORRESPONDENTE

A TROPOLOGICAL DISCUSSION ON TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*:  
FROM METAPHOR TO IRONY

por

ALEXANDRE COHN DA SILVEIRA

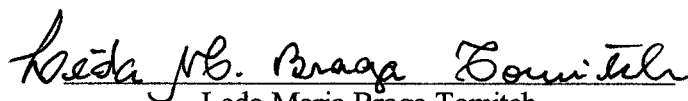
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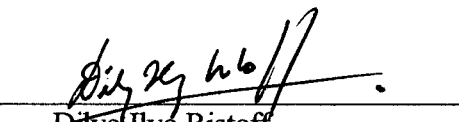
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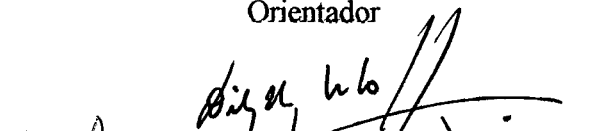
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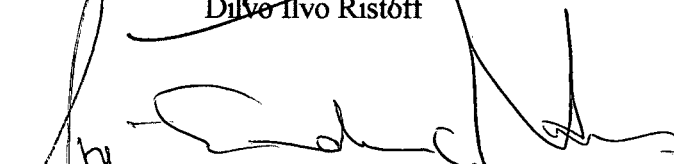
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Opção: Literatura de Língua Inglesa

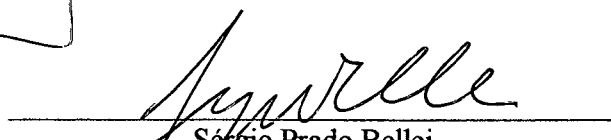
  
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Florianópolis, 28 de fevereiro de 2002.

## **Acknowledgments**

This work is a result of moments of pleasure, pain, and friendship. However, in all of them I was not alone and maybe that is the reason for having finished it. Many people were involved in what I consider the longest two years of my life and if I could put the last period on the last sentence of the last paragraph I would have to thank thousands of time for those who, in one way or the other, have contributed for my academic and personal growth.

First of all, I would like to thank God for giving me the opportunity of improving my knowledge in order to grow up as a man. Thus, my parents Luiz Cláudio and Sonia deserve all my gratitude too, for the opportunity of living, for my absence throughout those long two years and for supporting me emotionally in all the innumerable moments of weakness, discouragement, and panic. My brother Luiz Henrique, for the incentive and company that made me feel stronger in many moments. My sister-in-law Ana Paula, who is more than a friend, helping me in my moments of doubt. My best friend Rita and unconditional partner, for the special words said in special moments. My whole family, for loving me even when I was completely crazy.

Of course, I have to thank a lot my advisor and professor Dilvo Ristoff, for having introduced me to Afro-American studies and for contributing to enlarge my literary perception. Also, I would like to thank all my teachers at PGI program for the precious knowledge we produced together, my classmates and my friends.

I would like to say a special thanks to my ex-teacher, my friend, and my colleague Celia Ferrarezi Beckdorf for believing me and for teaching me a new way of understanding life. The same to my dearest friend Diva, for motivating me to continue improving my academic knowledge and my personal growth.

To all of you, I must give my best feelings of gratitude for the rest of my life.

Thank you

## ABSTRACT

### A TROPOLOGICAL DISCUSSION ON TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE*: FROM METAPHOR TO IRONY

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2002

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Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, first published in 1970, has been considered a document in opposition to racial prejudice against the Afro American community. Although the story is situated in the 1940s, it pictures a reality of the present days. The plot of the narrative is the character narrator (Claudia) and her family (The MacTeers) that counterbalances the main character (Pecola) and her family (The Breedloves). Pecola suffers rejection, in as many ways as possible, from the lack of love and respect of her family, to the segregation by the black community where she lives in. The only way she finds she can be loved and respected by everyone would be by possessing blue eyes. In fact, she desires the bluest eyes anyone could possibly have. By novel's end, after being raped by her father and losing her faith, with the betrayal of the local minister Soaphead Church, Pecola goes mad, turning into her own insane and unbalanced world, believing she has obtained her blue eyes. This thesis uses Hayden White's theory of tropes in order to analyze the level of perception of the world, presented by the characters in the story, mainly Pecola and Claudia. According to White, the human being possesses four distinct levels of apprehension of the external world. The first one is limited by the self and, therefore, the comprehension of anything beyond the limits of individuality becomes complicated. At the moment the other is seen and understood, in spite of the individual, the human being reaches a metonymic perception, which characterizes a wider view of the world. At this point, the individuals' apprehensions made as far as they are deconstructed, and comparisons are established in relation to the other. The third level of such development is related to the reconstructions made, derived from the conclusions that arise after the confrontation between the 'self' and the 'other'. This stage is called synecdochic. From the moment the human being acquires a

greater conscience of the external world and of the individual participation in such world, including the differences between those individualities and their interactions, a new stage of the human perception development is characterized. At this level, humans acquire an ironic view of things, through which their critical perspective and their capacity to make a choice provide a more complete comprehension of the facts. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola perceives a destructive and cruel world at the very moment she tries to go beyond the limits of the 'self'. However, the reality she realizes makes her retrocede in that process, becoming stuck to a metaphorical world, considered insane and unbalanced, but in which she can make her dreams come true, having her desires granted. The important fact Morrison really wants to point out is the capacity of self-destruction the black community has, instead of preserving their own cultural values and defending their interest. Therefore, the understanding of that community is pictured as limited, what contributes to the lack of solution for a long time problem. In 1993, Morrison added an afterwork section to that edition because her message had not been completely understood, requiring an elucidative complementation. This thesis will discuss the irony behind that requirement of reflection, almost compulsory suggested by the author. The consequence of the whole problematic is a symbolic metaphoric text related to the superficial comprehension presented by the characters and even the black community, however ironic in relation to the reflection and self analysis embedded in the novel.

Number of pages: 92

Number of words: 29.407

## RESUMO

*The Bluest Eye*, da escritora americana Toni Morrison, foi publicado em 1970 e serve como documento contra o preconceito racial sofrido pela comunidade negra americana, embora a estória tenha sido ambientada na década de 40, o romance retrata uma realidade enfrentada até os dias atuais. O enredo da história gira em torno da personagem narradora (Claudia) e sua família (The MacTeers) em contraposição com a personagem central da trama (Pecola) e sua família (The Breedloves). Pecola sofre todos os tipos de rejeição possíveis, desde a falta de amor e respeito em sua própria família, até a segregação da comunidade negra a qual pertence. Para Pecola, a única forma de se sentir amada e considerada por todos seria se possuísse olhos azuis. Na verdade ela desejaria ter os olhos mais azuis possíveis. Ao final do livro, após ter sido estuprada pelo pai e ter perdido as esperanças através da influência do pastor local, Soaphead Church, Pecola fica louca, e volta-se para um mundo próprio, insano e desequilibrado, dentro do qual acredita ter conquistado os olhos azuis que desejara. Esta dissertação utiliza a teoria dos tropos de Hayden White no sentido de analisar o nível de percepção de mundo que os personagens do romance apresentam, principalmente Pecola e Claudia. De acordo com White, o ser humano possui quatro estágios distintos que representam o nível de apreensão do mundo externo. As primeiras apreensões dos homens limitam-se ao próprio ser e, por isso, a compreensão de algo além dos limites da individualidade torna-se complicada. No instante em que o outro é visto e entendido apesar do espaço individual, o ser humano atinge uma percepção metonímica, caracterizando uma percepção mais ampla do mundo. O ser humano desconstrói as apreensões individuais feitas até então, pautando suas comparações no outro. Um terceiro estágio do desenvolvimento das apreensões humanas diz respeito às reconstruções feitas resultantes de todas as conclusões tiradas a partir do confronto do “eu”

com o “outro”. Esse estágio denomina-se sinedóquico. A partir do momento em que o ser humano adquire uma consciência maior do mundo externo e da participação individual neste mundo, englobando a diferenciação entre as diversas individualidades que interagem no mesmo, é caracterizado um novo estágio do desenvolvimento das percepções humanas. Neste estágio, os homens adquirem uma visão irônica das coisas, através da qual seu ponto de vista crítico e sua capacidade de escolha possibilitam um entendimento mais completo dos fatos. Em *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola percebe um mundo destrutivo e cruel quando tenta transpor os limites do “eu”. No entanto, a realidade que enxerga faz com que ela retroceda no processo e se prenda num mundo metafórico, considerado insano e desequilibrado, mas no qual ela consegue realizar seus sonhos e ter seu desejo atendido. O que Morrison realmente quer é mostrar a capacidade de auto destruição que a comunidade negra possui ao invés da preservação dos valores culturais e da defesa dos interesses da própria comunidade. Porém, o entendimento da comunidade é retratado como limitado, o que contribui para a falta de solução de um problema vivenciado por muito tempo. Morrison acrescenta um comentário na edição de 1993 do romance justamente por que sua mensagem não foi compreendida em sua totalidade, necessitando uma complementação elucidativa. Essa dissertação discutirá a ironia que há por trás dessa necessidade dada a reflexão, quase que induzida, proposta pela autora. A consequência de toda essa problemática é um texto simbólico metafórico com relação à compreensão superficial demonstrada pelos personagens e pela própria comunidade negra, porém irônico no que diz respeito à reflexão e a auto crítica embutidos na mensagem do romance.

Número de páginas: 92

Número de palavras: 29.407



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## Introduction

Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear,  
and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and  
say the victim had no right to live.

Toni Morrison - 206

Based on Hayden White (1992), this thesis will analyze how the theory of tropes can be applied to Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and how the tropes can explain the differences between viewing of the world and understanding it throughout the narration of the story, which is made by one of the characters: Claudia. Many gaps affect the meaning of the text as a whole and maybe that is one reason for the addition of an afterwork section by the author in which Morrison seems to provide some forgotten or omitted information in order to fulfill possible gaps. That is one reason to include the afterwork in the discussion, making a kind of dialogue or comparison with the main text in order to contribute to the discussion on the meaning of the text by using the theory of the tropes.

Hayden White explains that human discourse is divided into four main parts through which, according to him, a kind of movement is developed. The first part of the discursive movement is related to the trope of metaphor and it is the individual limited perception or apprehension of the world in which the individual can only perceive himself or herself. In this phase of the discursive movement, human perception can be compared to the sensory-motor phase of children's cognitive development explained by Piaget. In this phase the child lives in a world of objects that are all centered in his/her body, although there is not any coordination among them.

In a second stage of discursive movement, the human apprehension involves more than the individuality. It understands the external world despite the individual, which means that the discourse is broader and little bit more complex because external forces are involved in human apprehension. That is why White says that this stage is the tropological stage of metonymy. Piaget suggests that the second stage of children's development is representational because the child starts to pay attention around and makes representations to understand and apprehend the world. Such representations are understood as an outside world, which is separated from the child's individuality.

White discusses that the discursive movement has a third stage, which is represented by the trope of synecdoche. In this stage human apprehension is reconstructed as a result of the confront between individuality and the external forces. In this stage the point of view is formed and decisions are made. This is the operational phase of Piaget's theory in which children are more willing to react and to decide according to their decisions, even though such decisions cannot be considered the best ones, but they represent the reaction of the child in life.

The last stage of the discursive movement is related to the trope of irony because of the level of awareness involved in human perception of the world. It means that, in this stage, the human perception is the broadest possible one. In this stage people are able to decide about whatever they want. Also they can manipulate reality according to their intentions and ideology. They persuade, complain and accept or not what is exposed to them. Piaget calls this stage as rational because of the ability the human being has to deal with reality and to use his/her capacity of choice. It is also the stage in which people analyse their choices and the results of them in order to change their position in life according to their procedures and experiences.

Through the discussion of such aspects, the thesis will try to establish a comparison between the sections of *The Bluest Eye* (autumn, winter, spring and summer) and the four tropological phases of the discursive movement presented by White according to the perception of the characters of the novel and the message of it. Although the discussion will try to demonstrate the presence of the four tropes in the sections of the book, there is a predominance of the tropes of metaphor and irony that explains why this thesis will be more emphatic on them. The afterwork section of the novel will be also discussed in order to demonstrate Morrison's intention to explain something that was misunderstood in the novel.

Taking into account the aspects covered by each seasonal section of the Morrison's novel, the comparison proposed by this thesis will demonstrate how the characters, and the plot as well, will develop in a kind of movement that is not the same for all the characters due to their trajectory of life. Pecola and Claudia, for instance, cannot be understood as equals in terms of development. While the first one could not reach the mature stage of conscience, the other one shows a broader perspective of facts and a critical point of view of her own attitudes. Pecola faces the reality and does not have enough emotional structure to struggle for stability, so she goes back to a more limited perception of things, which gives her security and acceptance. Claudia overcomes the repressive reality and perceives that she could also be blame to the oppression suffered by her social group.

Thus, the plot movement of the novel characterizes the movement of perceptions people normally have, specially the black community that is represented throughout the novel, and their culpability in their own suffering.

### **The author and her work**

One of the most renowned black writers, Toni Morrison is acclaimed in all literary circles. Born Cloe Anthony Wofford in Lorain, OH on February 18, 1931, Morrison is one of the United States most significant novelists of the twentieth century. She became textbook editor for a subsidiary of Random House in 1965, and then in 1968, became the senior editor in the trade department of it - a job she kept until 1983. In her position, Morrison was instrumental in getting the works of several young black writers published.

In 1993, Morrison won the Literature Nobel Prize and the National Book Foundation's Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Morrison's fifth novel *Beloved* (1987), about the legacy of slavery, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1988.

Her most successful novel, *Song of Solomon*, written in 1977, sold 3 million copies and was on the New York Times bestseller list for 16 weeks. The novel re-emerged on the bestseller list in 1996 when Oprah Winfrey chose it for inclusion in Oprah's Book Club.

Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), received mixed reviews, didn't sell well, and was out of print by 1974. Critical recognition and praise for Toni Morrison grew with each novel. She received the National Book Critics Circle Award for her third novel *Song of Solomon* (1977) and the Pulitzer prize for *Beloved* (1987). She received the Nobel Prize for Literature for her "visionary force and poetic import" which gives "life to an essential aspect of American reality."

Published in 1970, *The Bluest Eye* came about at a critical moment in the history of American civil rights. Morrison began Pecola's story as a short piece in 1962; it became a novel-in-progress by 1965. It was written, as one can see from the dates, during the years of some of the most dynamic and turbulent transformations within Afro-American life.

One of those transformations was a new recognition of Black-American beauty. After centuries of over-valuing white dolls and decades of longing to look like Caucasian Hollywood stars (and thinking that it was perfectly appropriate to do so), Black-Americans began to struggle for a new standard of beauty. This new standard was meant to be racially inclusive, allowing blacks to see black as beautiful, but the need of this new standard reveals how firmly the white standard of beauty was entrenched.

In a new Afterword to the novel's 1993 reprint, Morrison says that she got the idea for *The Bluest Eye* in part from an elementary school classmate. The girl, whose wish for the eyes of a white girl revealed her contempt for her own racial identity, raised troubling questions about beauty and oppression. As an emerging writer, she remembered the girl and became interested in the mechanics of feelings of inferiority "originating in an outside gaze." Pecola's tragedy was not meant to be typical, but by showing social and situational forces working against an extremely vulnerable little girl, Morrison hoped to get at some truth about those societal forces. The effect is like speeding up a slow process by looking at the extreme case of Pecola, through which we learn the truth about our world, a truth that we are normally incapable of noticing.

The novel also set up many of the issues which Morrison has been concerned with ever since. The style is fragmentary, a kind of democratic narrative in which many voices of narrative are privileged to be used. Morrison has used variations of this system in other novels, favoring this strategy as a way to look at a story from many angles, without giving too much control to one voice. Also Morrison's concern about oral Black-American traditions is apparent in the very first lines of Claudia's prelude.

In this particular novel, Morrison has attempted to examine the forces that can make the oppressed take part in his/her own oppression. How can it be that a little girl could be made to feel so ugly? How come black children in the novel use the word 'black' to insult

one another? What does it mean (and what does it do) when a black woman wishes she could look like a Hollywoodian movie star? How has this happened? What has been lost? Is there a way out?

*The Bluest Eye* enjoyed some, however far from universal, critical success on its first publication, but the novel was a commercial failure. In 1993, after Morrison had won the Nobel Prize for Literature, Plume published a new edition with a new Afterword by the author.

The first four novels Morrison wrote are called evolutionary, as one comes out from the other. Especially the first two: *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* which were written as a sequence. Both are good representations of black people. *Beloved*, the next one, is a romance between two ex-slaves reunited in post-Civil War America. The historical context makes their relationship special, for under slavery black people were not allowed to have free physical and emotional relationships. In some aspects, *Beloved* draws upon the black aesthetic discourse of the 1960s in which, as Butler-Evans (1989) points out, narratives, as opposite or alternative texts, provoked self-reconstruction and redefinition through deconstructing Western assumptions about blackness.

Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* focuses on the African Americans place on commodity culture and on white standards of beauty and success. The characters in the novel are consumed by the desire to attain the same level of economic success in white America. In the novel's time period, 1941, African Americans faced social barriers in their efforts to achieve class status beyond the working class. The social norms American culture imposed on African Americans contributed to their fragmentation, alienation, and the loss of their sense of community, as well as of identity.

Although black people have lived in large communities, which can be seen as a way to preserve their social and cultural identity, the white influence on them has been

severe. Black communities have been forced to accept several elements of white culture, such as religion, language, social behavior and even custom. The consequences of the former fact can be perceived through the adaptations black people have made inside themselves in order to make their participation in society possible, and through the beliefs they have had to accept so that they could be considered normal and common human beings.

Given that African Americans were generally confined to the lowest levels of class status, the importance of attaining a higher level of success was essential. Therefore, many African Americans migrated from the south to the north to achieve economic gain. Although the move increased the probability of success, many African Americans began to conform to white standards.

The desire to conform to white standards plays a significant role in how African Americans view themselves. Morrison exposes the effect consumer culture has on the characters in the novel. The obsession for property and material ownership creates conflicts within the novel's urban African American community. The novel illustrates how ownership starts to replace the sacredness of the community's ties. Communal ties are lost due to the competitive nature affiliated with consumer culture. African Americans establish a pattern of self-hatred because they compare themselves unfavorably with white standards of living. Morrison presents the difficulty of maintaining cultural values in an environment where white images of beauty and success are instilled as early as childhood. African Americans internalize the images of beauty and success they receive, and the notion that being white is more prestigious.

The novel's basic theme revolves around African Americans' conformity to white standards. Although beauty is the largest theme, Morrison scrutinizes the dominant white culture's influence on class levels. Morrison sets the foundation of the novel on issues of



beauty in an attempt to make African Americans aware that they do not have to conform to white standards on any level.

*The Bluest Eye* can be considered as a document of protest against the prejudice suffered by the minority, in which two repressed groups express their points of view: the women and the black community. Both have been devalued and oppressed by the white sexist society, which historically has occupied the dominant place. Since *The Bluest Eye* was published in 1970 it served as a loudspeaker to two social movements at that time. On one hand, the Black Power movement of the 1950's and the 1960's, which wanted to establish equal rights for all citizens, such as voting right and others civil rights. African Americans wanted to be valorized as participants on American cultural formation. On the other hand, the feminist movement of the 1960's and the 1970's, which claimed for changes in women's economic opportunities and social roles in general.

By discussing such important aspects of American history, *The Bluest Eye* contributes to the expansion of American Literature. Before its publication, books about racism had concentrated their focus on adults and incest as a theme and had remained almost entirely on a symbolic level. According to Kubitschek (1998), Toni Morrison expands these treatments in two ways

First, it analyzes the destructive psychological effects of racism, on both children and adults. Second, it explores familial rape much more thoroughly and realistically than earlier novels. In its brilliant synthesis, *The Bluest Eye* shows the interconnectedness of racism, psychological damage, and rape. (30)

In order to raise the discussion, Morrison uses the narrator of the story (Claudia) to expose her own ideas, and it is possible to notice two different attitudes in the character-narrator's behavior. One is more naive and simpler whose personality reveals her childish perspective of the world. The other is omniscient, which can clearly see everything and

everywhere, showing an ironic perception of the facts. Both perspectives go together revealing a twelve-year-old girl's point of view and a critical approach that guides the discussion.

The childish perspective concentrates its preoccupation on simple and naive aspects of life, such as games, candies, and other interests young people commonly have. Such perception sees the world through a limited understanding of problems, and that is one reason for the use of many comparisons and metaphors to highlight the limited perception and also the necessity of using symbols to represent it

Frieda looked placidly down the street; I opened my mouth, but quickly closed to it. It was extremely Maureen to buy us some ice cream, that for the past 120 seconds I had been selecting the flavor, that I had begun to like Maureen, and that neither of us had a penny. (69)

At the same time, metaphors sound as an ironic perception of the problem through which the author plays with words and shows her criticism. However, this criticism is not clear, which provokes some reflections on the conflict shown and reveals the ideology behind the words. The reflexive understanding is an evidence of a more mature view of the world, which characterizes an adult point of view. This can be noticed throughout the ideas in the whole text, but especially whenever a conflict is presented, as when Claudia says, "She was rich, at least by our standard, as rich as the richest of the white girls swaddled in comfort and care", for instance. (62)

Both ways of understanding the aspects used to discuss topics of human nature have their own limitations and problems as any other way of expressing people's troubles. The words are not precise enough to say what they intend to or what people mean by using them. The problem of divergent opinions about the same fact is always present, especially when the topic discussed is people's behavior. According to White (1978), the discourses

take account of such differences by questioning their own "authority", which they display on their text.

As one of the social groups which have most suffered prejudice from society, African Americans are a good example of struggling for life in American history and in world history as well. They represent the dominated minority over whom a new culture was imposed without any chance of choice. Their religion, their clothing and eating habits, their beliefs and even their physical appearance were considered inadequate for living in society. They have had to accept a white standard of living and serve under whites' interests since they were treated as inferiors.

The *Bluest Eye* is a text in which it is possible to perceive the voice of female black American people asking for help and respect in a society that normally gives opportunities to those who fulfill their physical and economical at rules. Stereotypes that distinguish them concerning those patterns of superiority society conceives.

Morrison's main character, Pecola Breedlove, unquestioningly accepts the ideology that white features correlate with beauty. Yet Morrison wrote this novel at the height of the "Black Is Beautiful" era during which African Americans were being reconditioned to believe that their looks are synonymous with beauty.

The novel is a retrospective story told by Claudia, one of Pecola's childhood friends. Claudia's account allows the reader to sympathize with Pecola's self-hatred. As an adult, Claudia best articulates how her environment causes Pecola's victimization. Telling the story almost three decades later, during the sixties, Claudia reflects on the pain of wanting to be something you can never become. According to an interview entitled "Toni Morrison's Black Magic" in *Newsweek*, Morrison states that Pecola's character was formed based on the fact that "Black is beautiful was in the air. . . .So I wrote about a child who was ugly-Pecola is the perfect defeated victim-only she was beautiful" (Strouse 56).

Morrison's depiction of a victimized Pecola addresses how the dominance of white consumer society can affect the psyche of a young African American girl.

Morrison writes the novel as a coming of age story about three elementary school girls, Claudia, Pecola and Frieda. Through their eyes, she illustrates how harmful consumer culture is, and how it affects the ways in which African American girls view themselves. Morrison incorporates several experiences children encounter. She makes it clear that the socialization process is fostered in the school system. For this reason Morrison introduces the novel with the all too familiar Dick and Jane story. These stories are synonymous with beginning childhood reading. Unfortunately, the Dick and Jane stories depict only the all American dream of a "pretty house. . .Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane. . .They are very happy" (7). Morrison infers that the primer clearly does not speak to the black family of this time period, which cannot realize the myth of the nuclear family (usually white) residing in a beautiful house.

The Breedloves all believe they would have attained a higher level of success, if they were born beautiful. Morrison implies that they believe success correlates with beauty. She states, "As long as she [Pecola] looked the way she did, as long as she was ugly, she would have to stay with those people" (39). Do white standards of beauty situate beautiful people in a higher-class status? According to Morrison, the Breedloves attribute their storefront residence to the fact that "they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (34). The Breedloves' mentality is instilled in them by their surroundings. Moving from the south to the north, African Americans' moral values changed from valuing the community and family to fetishizing material possessions.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison urges to establish some kind of intimacy between the reader and the page, what can be seen analyzing the opening lines of the book where a secret is being shared with the reader. In fact these lines give an overview of the book

introducing at first the consequences of the facts that are going to be presented during the book. The book can be seen to open with its close. The reader can easily acknowledge that a disruption of “nature” in the social context is implicated. These lines also put the reader in contact with African American reality where women talk to each other, telling stories, anecdotes, gossip about someone within the circle, the family, the neighborhood.

“Quiet as it’s kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at that time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow” (5) In this passage, Morrison advances to an equally moving examination of Pecola’s life – her unloving childhood, her repudiation by nearly everyone she encounters, and finally the complete disintegration of self, highlighting the ones who promulgate standards of beauty and behavior that devalue Pecola’s sensitivities and marginalize her.

While Pecola herself feels devaluated and internalizes some kind of self pity and guilt about her own inability to reach the external standards of beauty and behavior, Geraldine’s life is shown as something only validated by the exclusion of others.

Pecola is also a victim of her parents, a reflection of their own despair and frustration. Their surname Breedlove must be taken as irony meant to emphasize their expected position in front of their daughter. In a curious and studied way, Morrison develops the plot, presenting Pecola’s story as a complete disruption of nature, emphasizing the length of the girl’s tragedy: the story begins with the dormancy of autumn, in spring she is violated and in summer she is annihilated.

Many characters in *The Bluest Eye* are involved in a quest: Pecola for love and an identity, Cholly for his father, Claudia for meaning, and Soaphead Church for a place. Identity, the ability to find/express love, the parent-child relationship, friendship, a white standard of beauty, a belief in "romantic love," child abuse, and racism are major themes. Image clusters in this novel include nature, the seasons, eyes, white dolls, and splitting.

Pauline is the mother who works for a white family and favors them over her biological family. She is reborn as a self-righteous martyr after finding in the Fisher house power, praise and comfort, feelings that she could not experiment at home. Her husband was a drunk and her children sloven. As a woman she is not only incapable of mother's love and forgiveness, but also has unfulfilled dreams and foolish notions of romantic love taken from the films she watched for a long time. Following the social pattern, although being black, she is the image of prejudice.

Cholly is Pecola's father, who is abusive to his wife physically, and his daughter sexually, and is drunk quite often. He is romanticized by Morrison and assumes the figure of a victim from the system. Abandoned by his mother inside a garbage can and rejected by his father he tried to find comfort, care and support on his own. Near the river, curled for hours on the fetal position with closed eyes, he could feel as being reborn. Within this reality he became a man full of unsuspected frustrations that were reinforced by the episode of his first sexual experience.

All of these previous experiences resulted in the episode of Pecola's rape where Cholly showed at the same time the two different faces of his internal conflicts: anger and love.

In fact, presenting this last episode, Morrison shows that not only Cholly, but also, Pauline were guilty of their daughter as madness. This fact is clearly shown when, after being raped and fainting, Pecola recovers herself believing she had fallen on the floor of The Fishers' kitchen. This situation had really occurred some time before leaving deep impressions inside her soul, which made her connect the present facts with the past. Cholly's love is corrupt and tainted, but Pauline is unloving.

Feminizing language leads Morrison to a sensitive treatment of the complex emotions that determine character, male and female. There are no easy villains to hate; there are no predictable behaviors.

Morrison chooses two characters to show the opposite side of black women position in American society: Claudia who conducts the story, narrating Pecola's tragedy with compassion and understanding, and Frieda. They try to help Pecola, but failing they experiment the loss of their innocence. This happens as a part of the natural ritual of growing up in spite of what occurs to Pecola's short-circuited innocence.

As a result of their education, Claudia and Frieda became strong and sturdy. In fact their parents gave them support to face a hostile environment, developing not only their sense of survival, but also an ingenious faith in themselves.

As Pecola could not find the support she wanted in Claudia and Frieda, she tried to find it in China, Marie and Poland, characters who stand in opposition to the Geraldine in the community. These new friends could tell her the story of their lives and experiences but could not teach her how to be loved and accepted by their parents, by the community and by the society. For that she turns to Soaphead Church a pedophile and con man hidden behind the mask of an itinerant spiritualist. Of course, he was not able to help her in reality, but "gave" her the blue eyes she wanted so much and which led her to a complete state of madness. Now, she could have the love and compassion she had wanted for so long.

Perception is a key element in *The Bluest Eye*: how the individual is perceived or is seen by others, how the individual internalizes that perception, and how the individual perceives others. The interaction of these perceptions helps to create and reinforce the individual's sense of identity or lack of a sense of identity.

Some psychologists theorize that the process of identity building begins when the infant sees itself reflected in the mother's eyes; this gives the child what is sometimes

called a sense of presence. This experience enables the infant to see others and to give presence to them. This reciprocal exchange-seeing oneself and being given a presence through the eyes of others and in turn giving them presence continues through childhood and adulthood.

In *The Bluest Eye*, characters in the black community accept their status as the Other, which has been imposed upon them by the white community. In turn, blacks assign the status of Other to individuals like Pecola within the black community. The Other, according to the Wordsworth Companion to Literature in English, is an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Any stranger becomes the Other. The group sees itself as the norm and judges those who do not meet that norm (that is, who are different in any way) as the Other. Perceived as lacking essential characteristics possessed by the group, the Other is almost always seen as a lesser or inferior being and is treated accordingly. The Other in a society may have few or no legal rights, may be characterized as less intelligent or as immoral, and may even be regarded as sub-human.

The language used by Morrison to tell the story, and mainly, the way that language is worked on is a relevant aspect for a better understanding of the message that the book carries on. The figures of speech used can be considered, according to Hayden Whites' theory of Tropes, different perceptions or apprehensions of the world, which can vary accordingly to the maturity of each person involved in the discourse. In the case of *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola and Claudia have different understandings of things and they demonstrate it throughout their particular way of narrating the story. While Pecola has a childish apprehension and represents the metaphorical apprehension of things, Claudia, due to her maturity, represents an ironical and critical, apprehension.



## Hayden White's Theory of Tropes

The task of discussing human problems is not an easy one since the language used to do it can not express the right idea of the subject discussed. It is quite difficult to avoid any interference of people's consciousness on their discourse in order to let it be a simple data analysis of the topic observed. Besides that, topics related to human behavior tend to make people expose their personal opinion on a discussion which varies according to their point of view, their level of knowledge, their culture, etc.

In order to establish a wide ranging problematization of a topic, the discourse takes into consideration the differences between opinions, especially if the authority of the discourse is put under discussion. In other words, when a discourse is being analysed, its limits are carefully observed in order not only to define its working area, but also to identify the elements of the discourse which will be studied, and to establish the kind of relation that link them. Here, according to Hayden White (1992), the discourse itself must "establish the adequacy of the language used in analysing the field to the objects that appear to occupy it"(1) And such adequation is done by what White calls a "pre-figurative move"(1) which is more tropical than logical.

White argues that tropics can be understood as a process in which all discourses constitute their objects realistically described and objectively analysed. And since the word tropic comes from the Greek word "tropikos", "tropos", which means *turn, way or manner* the meaning of tropic can be interpreted as "metaphor" or "figure of speech" according to what it meant in Latin. Such meaning suggests, under a grammatical or rhetorical overview, the idea of deviations from the literal usage of language, or in otherwords, from a logical perception of a conventional use of language to a more meaningful perception.

In this case, the relationship between the elements involved is relevant for an understanding of what the language can express itself in different ways. White adds that troping is the “soul of the discourse” therefore “the mechanism without which discourse cannot do its work or achieve its end”(3). White agrees with Harold Bloom (1975) when he says that a trope can be a “linguistic equivalent of a psychological defense mechanism”(91). By saying that, Bloom, and also White, points out the idea that a trope can work not just as deviation of a possible sense of what is being said, but also as deviation to another sense which in White’s words focuses a “conception, or ideal of what is right and proper and true ‘in reality’.”(2) Thus White’s ideas come to an agreement with Bloom’s when he says that “all interpretation depends upon the antithetical relation between meaning, and not on the supposed relation between a text and its meaning.”(76)

In fact, a literary analysis of a text can either leave something out of the developed study or add something that is not essential to an adequate description. Besides, in any literary text, even trying to be as realistic as possible by showing things as they really are, there is a failure of intention. So according to White, it is possible to demonstrate how “every mimesis can be distorted and conserve therefore, as an occasion for yet another description of the same phenomenon, one claiming to be more realistic, more ‘faithful of the facts’.”(3)

Of course, there is a specific technique to measure the validity of a discourse which consists in examining its concern with the fidelity to the facts analysed. By observing the criteria used to establish the logical coherence of the discourse, a discourse, according to White, constitutes the realm in which it is possible to decide what will be considered as a fact and to determine which is the most adequate way to reach an understanding of the constituted facts. Besides that, an etymological view of the word “discourse” reveals its origin in the latin word “discurrere” which suggests a movement “back and forth” or a

“running to and from”(4). Such movement can be considered as a representation of the discursive practice. Saying that, White states that the discourse can be understood as a mediator between the facts and the interpretation.

Although many discourse analysts and scientists of language say that the movement of the discourse is dialectical, Hayden white proposes another term, which according to his understanding shows a concept of a dynamic movement of a discourse. That is “diatactical” (4). Such term suggests something different in relation to the discourse, its theme and the convergent interpretations of the latter. The diatactical movement of the discourse does not divide discourses about reality into hypotactical (conceptually overdetermined) or paratactical (conceptually undetermined) groups. Instead of saying that, White explains that “if the discourse can be considered genuine, that is as self-critical as it is critical of others (discourses) – will radically challenge the notion of the syntactical middle ground itself.”(4) Through this point of view, the author puts in doubt all the “tactical” rules of the discourse, including the ones that have primarily governed its own formation. That is why the discourse assumes an ironic characteristic just because it escapes from the grasp of logic, always asking if logic is adequate to expose its theme or to keep it clear. By saying that, according to White, it is possible to state that discourse always tends towards a reflexive discourse, or, in White’s words, towards a metadiscursive perspective of the discourse. The author adds that ‘this is the reason every discourse is always as much about itself as it is about the objects that make up its subject matter.’(4)

In addition to White’s ideas about the ironic characteristic of the discourse, it seems to be relevant to spend some time making some considerations about irony. Without any question, irony is a mode of discourse that intends to convey a latent meaning which is different from the ostensible one, indeed, usually opposite to the original form. The

Wordsworth Companion to Literature in English (1998) makes a discussion on irony in order to clarify its meaning and importance in literary texts. It is written in this way:

If irony is thought of as a dissembling, in keeping with its origin in the “eiron” ( a dissembler), then it becomes a term still broad but limited enough to be critically useful. Like Socrates, though, the eiron dissembles not to deceive but to enlighten. So irony, properly speaking, is a dissembling that is meant to be seen through. (470)

Irony, in this sense, is a way of enlarging the meaning of things by saying something else. It is necessarily either textual or structural, inherent either to verbal construction or to constructions of plot or story which depends on memory. While the first makes an immediate impression the other involves the content and the links made on it.

Since comprehension is a process in which a non-familiar idea becomes familiar, or a strange perspective is clarified in order to be considered normal, adequate or acceptable, such process, according to White’s theory, can only be tropological in its essence because what is involved in the conversion from non-familiar to familiar ideas is a creation of tropes, that is, in general, figurative. White also adds that the comprehension process is developed through the exploitation of the main figures or “main tropes” of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. White also argues that within the process there is an “archetypal pattern for tropologically construing fields of sequence of modes indicated by the list of main tropes given.”(5)

The movement of the narrative “I” in the archetypal plot, presented by White, goes “from an original metaphorical characterization of a domain of experience, through metonymic deconstructions of its elements to synecdochic representations of the relations between its superficial attributes and its presumed essence.”(5) At the end of such movement an expression of any contrasts or oppositions can be observed in the product identified during the discursive representation. White points out that the discourse itself,

as a product of consciousness effort to establish an agreement with problematic domains of experience, “serves as melogical operations by which consciousness effects such comings to terms with is milieux, social, or natural as the case may be.”(6) The metaphorical apprehension of reality is complete or guides the analyst through a certain way in which he/she could take into consideration the elements that, treated as parts of a whole, occupy the domain analysed.

Once all the elements of a given discursive domain have been studied concerning their temporal characteristics or their spatial field, White explains that the analytical process can be ended or can be developed by an integration of such elements. In this case it is possible to give them different orders, classes, genres, species and so on. White calls it as hypotactical order which makes it possible to establish their status either as essences or merely as attributes of these essences.

Another step of the process presented by White, which is not logically determined either, comes from “a synecdochic characterization of the field under scrutiny to ironic reflection on the inadequacy of the characterization with respect to the elements which resist inclusion in the hypotactically ordered totality.”(6) The author makes a comparisson between the steps of the comprehension process of the discourse and perceptual field which Jean Piaget has identified in the development of children’s cognitive capacities. Such development moves from its “sensorimotor” through its “representational” and its “operational” phases, to the “rational” understanding of the nature of classification in general.

According to Piaget (1973), the power that generates such formulation is not logical, however it affects the “tropological” restructurations of the discourse by combining people’s inner skills, their capacity of assimilation, and their accomodation to their external world. All of these restructurations are considered tropological according to White’s theory

either because of the spontaneity of their successive beginnings or because of the kind of relationships between children and their reality.

Jean Piaget's theory demonstrates the same kind of continuity which comes from an initial phase essentially "metaphorical" to a kind of adult manipulation essentially ironic. While in the first phase the human being expresses a childish relationship with the world in the ironic phase the human being uses its own rational side and manipulates the facts and ideas creating a specific opinion. The changes that happen during human development, which were studied by Piaget, show the improvement of people's perception of the world and how they react whenever their consciousnesses are facing new situation or challenges. The first stage of human consciousness is centered in itself, in the human body and in concrete things related to the body, however some kind of relationship is established between them. Then the child starts to make comparisons and find similarities and differences in the comparisons made. In this phase, according to White's theory, the child's consciousness changes from a metaphorical perception to a metonymic perception, by following his theory of tropes.

Piaget calls such move as "Copernican Revolution" in which the child suffers a kind of "deviation" in its development from an egocentric stage to another one that makes possible a perception of the world. The move, of course, is completely unconscious and reflects a child's movement towards its apprehension of the world, which involves the simbolization of things, the language acquisition and the organization of thoughts.

Then again, at about the age of even, according to Piaget's ideas, another decisive and fundamental stage can be observed in the development of children. In this stage, children are able to have a certain logic, they can coordinate operations, and have a more global view of things. Piaget calls such stage as "preadolescent logic" which "is not based on verbal statements but only on the objects themselves." According to White, Piaget had

discovered the genetic basis of the trope of synecdoche, the rethorical and poetical figure that takes objects as parts of a whole or put elements of a whole in the same group according to the similarities they have. At first, such operation is still pre-logical and restrict because of children's ability in manipulating things and ideas they face in life. Then, by following Piaget's theory, they start to control their perceptions and to order their apprehension of reality which results in their adult consciousness. In this stage, the human beings is able to order their thoughts and their apprehensions of life not only logically but also ironically. Here it is possible to say that human beings are able not just to say things about the world but also to do it through a particular and alternative way which constitutes their own identity. Their capacity of saying things or reflecting about ideas is absolutely illogical and exclusive, making possible the expression of a critical point of view and also the usage of a specific way of saying things intending to say something else, which is an evidence of an ironic speech.

An understanding of children development through the lens of the Theory of Tropes demonstrates that the first stage of huma consciousness, which is unconscious as it was said before, is a primitive form of knowledge in human consciousness development process. Since it puts the subject and the object in the same level, it is called by Whyte as metaphorical, exactly because of the language used to express human thoughts. White understands discourse as "the opposition of metaphoric to ironic consciousness suggested by Piaget's theory of the ontogenetic pattern of cognitive development in the child" (20) It means an opposition between the individual development (ontogenic) to the groupo development (phylogenic). What is missing here, according to White, are the affinities and oppositions between the four modes of cognition identified as sucessive stages in such theory of child's development.

In order to justify his theory of tropes, White says that since a discourse is being analysed some verbal elements are being taken into consideration, so a specific terminology comes to be relevant to name different terms, expressions and ideas. Moreover, since in a discourse analysis process the analyst is dealing with structures of human consciousness, the apprehension of the contrast between the active and creative aspects of the consciousness and the passive and reflexive ones is easier to be gotten in the discourse, specially if the discourse is guided by formulated intentions. In White's words: The tropological theory of discourse helps us understand how speech mediates between these supposed oppositions, just as discourse itself mediates between our apprehension of those aspects of experience still 'strange' to us and those aspects of it which we 'understand' because we have found an order of words adequate to its domestication.(21)

The tropological theory of discourse can give the analyst a way to classify different kinds of discourse by linguistic modes that predominate on them. Such classification facilitates an understanding of "practical" discourses, such as the ones about social issues (suicide, rape, madness, sexuality, politics, etc), and for a better classification of "formal" discourses, such as plays, novels, poems, and others. Since classification is the first step to the comprehension of something, the tropological analysis can be considered important for an analysis not just based on contents but in the way such content is expressed. Also, if the discourse, as it was said before, is a manifestation of what human consciousness intends to comprehend, the trope classification would make possible a tipology of ways of comprehension. And finally, as White explains, such classification can help the analysis of the discourse because "we would recognize that it is not a matter of choosing between objectivity and distortion, but rather between different strategies for constituting 'reality' in thought so as to deal with it in different ways, each of which has its own ethical implications."(22)



The study of the Theory of Tropes also allows some reflections on human behavior throughout history. Hayden White affirms that history is a kind of art because historical data have been manipulated by historians so it is possible to interpret history as a discourse itself. Thus it is quite difficult to establish a limit between what is fact and what is fiction in history. Some historians have said that only in history can Art and Science be seen together as a perfect combination, exactly because of the artistic way of telling something previously considered as scientific. In this sense it is possible to understand history as a novel or a story about human life, which has true characters and doubtful interpretations. However, even in such fictional history it is possible to see how human behavior has changed and can be quite understood through a tropological perception of reality. Such way of telling the history, which is somehow fictional, is criticized by White when he says: We should ask only that the historian show some tact in the use of his governing metaphors that he neither overburden them with data nor fail to use them to their limit; that he respect the logic implicit in the mode of discourse he has decided upon and that, when his metaphor begins to show itself unable to accommodate certain kinds of data, he abandon that metaphor and seek another, richer, and more inclusive metaphor than that with which he began – in the same way that a scientist abandons a hypothesis when its use is exhausted. (47)

As it is said above, the metaphorical view of history is a comparison historians make according to their own perceptions of reality which is a personal process and truly interferes in what can be considered facts, changing them to fiction. Thus, in spite of the lack of a complete transparency in history, it does not avoid its tropological analysis.

Based on the *New Science* of Giambattista Vico, which was published in 1725, Hayden White explains that human beings can only know what they actually have done, or what they are able to do. In this sense, human culture can be considered, according to him,

as a product of the interaction between its consciousness with its life conditions (social and natural), which makes art, religion, philosophy and even science as ways of mediation between people and their environment, therefore, it involves human experiences, perceptions, and comprehension of what they are facing, which is closely related to Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development process.

White uses Vico's ideas to support his overview of human history by dividing it into historical human ages. The first age is similar to the first steps of children's cognitive development presented in Piaget's theory. Human beings, in such age, establish a relation between themselves and their own world. It is a kind of relationship which is derived from a naive religious consciousness and based in immediate experiences. Vico calls the age as the age of gods just because human beings project their own passional and sensual nature on the nature world. They believe that all the aspects of nature have their own spirit which can rule people according to their imagination.

The second age of a culture is called by Vico the age of heroes because in this age people identify themselves with the spiritual power they believe nature has. This is a way to justify the social growth of a certain group within the community which is considered more powerful, wiser, or the one which has the wisdom of its culture and because of this can control the whole community. Such attributes make people explore the weakest group of the community such as children, women, and foreigners for instance. Hayden White points out that social institutions of that age reflect "the fractured nature of the society they sustain: class division, disparity of privileges and responsibilities between strong and weak."(200) Ideologically speaking, the members of a higher social class assume the position of gods or heroes, and the lower classes are considered as beasts, from which they are supposed to originate.

However, in the third age, called the age of men by White, humanity, effectively shared by higher and lower classes, gives rights to the members of the community and rules everyone in order to organize the society. Although many conflicts can happen within such social organization, in this case a reflexive way of solving problems predominate. But the rational nature, according to White, tends to have a relative morality and a failure in the faith. Because of this, a social backlash is possible which means a second barbarism, as it is called by White, that can be worse than the primitive wildness since it is not controlled by people's fear or ignorance.

Hayden White uses Vico's words to explain that the linguistic representations of humanity throughout its transformation reflects people's perceptions of reality and the relationship between human consciousness and expressions. And according to Vico's ideas, metaphor is a kind of primary trope, which is generic, while synecdoche and metonymy can be considered as improvements of metaphor because of their broader perception of things. Irony, by its part, is viewed as the opposite of metaphor. Thus, if metaphor is the base of all stories, including history, the transition from a childish perception to an apprehension consciously figurative is possible only because of the ironic sensibility people have.

According to Vico, the brightest trope, and therefore, the most needed and frequent, is metaphor, but he is referring to one specific kind of metaphor, that is the one in which sense and passion are given to insensible things, the relation between the sound of thunders and the idea of anger, which primitive human beings used to make, is an example of a metaphorical apprehension of reality. Also they used to distinguish different levels of anger by the different sounds produced. Such differentiation requires an additional classification which is based on emotional or sensorial perceptions. As Vico clarifies, it is just possible because of the tropes of metonymy and sinecdoche. Then, when human consciousness,

after some reflections generated by the first three tropical stages, expresses an improvement in the language used to identify its ideas with reality, the trope of irony is perceived and explains such behavior. According to White, irony

Represents a stage in the evolution of consciousness in which language itself has become an object of reflection, and the sensed inadequacy of language to the full representation of its object has become perceived as a problem. Ironic speech presupposes an awareness of the possibility of feigning or of lying or dissimulating. (207)

The essential metaphor of Vico's conceptions of history then, is found in the theory of linguistic transformation that, according to White, he used as a model to both consciousness' relation to its object and to the dynamics of consciousness' transformations in time. White adds that Vico intends to show that his new science provides a way of dissolving the ironic consciousness. Within this point of view modern philosophers of chance, on one side, and strict determinism, on the other, are representatives. According to White's ideas, Vico's *New Science* purposes an inversion in relation to the components of ironic consciousness so that the false is seen not as the opposite of the truth, but yet as a stage which is necessary to get the whole truth.

In this sense, madness is not the opposite of sense or sanity, but it is dialectically related to it as the basis or the first step to get rationality or health. And White clarifies, based on Vico's, the idea that death is part of life and life is part of death, thus "savagery is contained in civilization and civilization in savagery and, perhaps more importantly, based on the recognition that the bestial exists in the human in the same way that the human exist in the bestial."(217)

On the other hand, an overview of human behavior in time shows that whenever men were not sure of their sense of humanity, they made use their wild side to state their point. It means that anytime men have been threatened they have attacked as animals in order to

show power and dominance. Such behavior, according to White, can be justified by the fact that human consciousness needs to affirm itself, its values and its ideas. And he adds that “a given culture is only as strong as its power to convince its least dedicated member that its fictions are truth.”(153) Therefore, the persuasion, the corruption and the manipulation of facts, which are commonly found in modern society, are attempts to demonstrate power, but also they are evidences of human savagery. Related to this White writes that:

... instead of the relatively comforting thought that the Wild Man may exist *out there* (the civilization) and can be contained by some kind of physical action, it is now thought (...) that the Wild Man is lurking within every man, is clamoring for release within us all, and will be denied only at the cost of life itself. (154)

Besides that, the Wild Man, as it is called by White, according to him, does not enjoy any of the three guarantees given by Christian institutions within the civilized life, which are guarantees of sex (family), sustenance (economical, political and social institutions), and salvation (church). He adds that the Wild Man does not take advantages of the civilized sex by constituting a family. Thus he can not live in a social ruled organization or develop his faith through an institutionalized religion. That is why his life is unstable and why he assumes the characteristics of glutton, lascivious and promiscuous, “without even consciousness of sin or perversion”. White continues saying that “his physical power and agility are conceived to increase in direct ratio to the diminution of his conscience.”(167)

Nowadays, wildness and barbarism are not so easily found in the modern society, except on a psychological or social analysis, as in the case of Nazism, street gangs, vandals, or the like, for instance. Wildness and barbarism are terms used, according to White, primarily to designate “areas of the individual’s psychological landscape, not whole

cultures or species of humanity.”(179) The wild personal characteristic is human potentiality that people commonly have within their hearts, either if they are primitive or civilized. Such characteristic is shown as soon as the person is not able to be integrated in the social world he/she lives in.

In the next chapters, the behavior of some characters of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* will be analysed through the ideas shown in this theoretical section, in order to demonstrate that the theory of tropes can be applied to the perception of the world the analysed characters have. It will also be explained how the wild side of some characters are shown and how it influences the plot of the story.

Also it intends to be a contribution not just to literary studies as a suggestion of reading Toni Morrison by deciphering her way of writing and her intention of saying things behind what is actually written. The following ideas will try to answer why the author of the novel adds an afterwork section to her book. Is it a way of explaining something unsaid during the story or a kind of correction to something wrongly shown? Does not the behavior of the characters show her ideas? Is there something missing? These and maybe other questions will be treated throughout this work.

## Autumn: the trope of metaphor

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

Toni Morrison - 6

As Hayden White points out, metaphors are much more than a mere figure of speech. Actually it is the trope that represents the first stage of human apprehension of the world and because it is a beginning it is limited in its essence. In this stage of human apprehension, the individuality is the limit for any kind of perception. The human beings cannot distinguish anything apart from themselves, and even the objects or other external factors are centered in their own image. There is no coordination among such elements and the human being cannot establish any relation between his/her own individuality and the external world.

Jean Piaget in his theory of children's cognitive development says almost the same when he explains that in the first phase of children's development they can only perceive themselves and the things that they interact are considered as parts of them. Piaget calls this phase as sensory-motor and adds that the world of a child in this phase is limited in itself and in its own basic perceptions. The apprehension of the child is limited by his/her feelings and perceptions.

In *The Bluest Eye* it is possible to see metaphors, as a way of saying things, which is quite obvious, but it is also possible to analyse the metaphorical apprehension of life that some characters have. Moreover, it is possible to notice that such characters are metaphors to represent black community, then the metaphorical apprehension shown by Morrison is in fact the apprehension that her own community has. Such apprehension can be analysed

through the interaction people have with the world within which the language is one of the most important channels of communication. There are many gaps in language. In many situations when people want to say something, and in order to highlight a particular point of view or description, people use comparisons and establish a relation between the former, trying to understand how people are basing their ways of seeing and perceiving things. In this sense it is possible to understand metaphors as a way to make comparisons between the elements of reality and ideality. According to Aristotle in *Poetics*: "The greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor." It is "a sign of genius, since a good metaphor implies an intuitive perception of the similarity in dissimilar."

Toni Morrison has a special ability to show different points of view of the same thing and it can be demonstrated by the way the story is told. A restricted perception of things or a childish understanding of the facts can be seen through Pecola's behavior and ideas. Claudia's attitudes demonstrate a more developed consciousness which reveals maturity and security, and because of that, her perception of things is broader. The immaturity shown through Pecola's behavior is translated by her limited view and metaphorical apprehension of reality. Since she cannot understand things and cannot react to them accordingly, she compares the problem she and her family have to things of which she can, at least, perceive the importance. However, such procedure does not represent reality neither in its dangerous nor in its destructive characteristics.

*The Bluest Eye* uses a complicated narrative structure, which combines third person omniscient, third person intimate, "oral history" and first person narratives. The first section of the narrative, the "epithet," involves a fairytale story about a family, mother, father, Dick and Jane. It is a simple story of apparent domestic harmony, love and happiness. Although the family could be Black or White, one gets the sense that it is White. Nothing much happens apart from the fact that when Jane is looking for someone to



play with, her parents (laughingly) appear to say no, but she ends up playing with a friend. This story is "re-told" in *The Bluest Eye* except that Jane becomes Pecola, and she is brutally rather than laughingly "rejected" by her parents, and by everyone else, and finishes up "playing" with a "friend" who is a tragic and "imaginary" face of her destroyed personality.

In the first part of the prologue it is possible to notice an amazing picture of Pecola's mind in contrast to the second part in which the problem is introduced by Claudia's speech. From the language used in both parts to the content of them the differences on the speeches are huge. On one side the author presents a disconnected view of the Breedloves' home with different scenes and introductions of the members of the family in a way that the fragmented thought of a child is evident. The characters are introduced one by one, with familiarity and intimacy giving the reader the feeling that something is going on and the idea that there is a problem within the family. At least there is something strange in the way Pecola see things.

First she describes the house in a very childish way. In fact she only pays attention to the colors of it and establishes a relation between them and the idea of beauty, which will be an important aspect in the development of the girl's problematic life. After that, the family is introduced and, one by one, she presents her relatives in a very different and interesting way. The ways she presents her mother and her father are instigating. Pecola's mother is shown as a very nice and laughing person while her father is described as big, strong and smiling. Besides that, Pecola introduces their animals, a cat and a dog, in a way that it is possible to see a relation between them and her parents. At least the proximity that such animals have in relation to their parents is expressive.

The cat is presented before her mother's introduction and the dog comes right after her father's introduction. There is a sort of comparison between the importance of her

parents within her life and the behavior, and the characteristics of the two animals. First dogs and cats are considered enemies with completely incompatible habits and likes, which from a child's view, represents the opposition between her father and her mother. They have fought several times in front of her, and the idea of incompatibility is completely clear for her, although, as a child, she does not accept or does not want to take it into consideration. Not even a child wants to see his parents separated or as enemies because it means lack of protection and security.

Pecola seems to be worried about Jane and she demonstrates this by asking everybody to play with her. "Who will play with Jane?" she asks all the time to the person she is introducing. But instead of playing with her everybody goes away expressing happiness (laugh, smile, etc.), even the animals. Just a friend, whose name the reader does not know, comes and plays with her, which makes her happier, or at least, calmer, when she says "Play a good game. Play, Jane, play."<sup>(3)</sup> On the other hand she does not say a word about Dick and about herself. It seems as if she does not belong to this scene, or at least, as if at that moment she cannot take part of the family.

The colors, is another point that deserves some comments, having a particular importance in such description. The house, for instance, is represented by green and white, which highlights the problematic familiar life The Breedloves have. While green is a representation of balance and reconciliation, according to Chevalier (1982), white demonstrates a judgmental immaturity and also hope and purity. White combined to another color purifies and refines the meaning of that color. It shows Pecola's hope in seeing her parents, and even her whole family, living together in peace and integrity. The door, which is the opening for the family intimacy, is red, the color of sexuality. It is a representation of aggression and animal passion, which is an evidence that although

everything seems to be perfect in the Breedlove's home, something really bad is happening, especially from Pecola's view.

The same description is presented three times but the two repetitions are particularly different from the first paragraph that uses standard spaces and punctuation. The second uses much smaller spaces between words and omits both capital letters and punctuation, so that the sentences go together. The third version runs together not only the sentences but also the words. Without having read the first story, the third would be like a cipher, which needs to be deciphered. In the context of the novel, this third section suggests that language itself is a problem, that it does not clearly or easily reflect the complexities of family life, that family life itself is a sort of descent into madness. The effect is striking although readers may not realize its significance at this point in their reading.

Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddooritisverypreetyhereisthefamilymotherfatherdi  
ckandjaneliveinthegreenandwhitehousetheyareveryhappyseejaneshewantst  
oplaywhowillplaywithjaneseethecatitgoesmeowmeow...(6)

Kubitschek(1998) says, "the breakdown of order on the language of the story suggests the breakdown of order in Pecola's mind." Many parts of this third version reappear throughout the novel to highlight the contrast between Pecola's family experiences and this of the primer's idealized white family.

According to Furman (1996), Toni Morrison creates a new text in removing standard grammatical codes, which are symbols of Western culture, and adds that she "expurgates the white text as she constructs the black."(20) And Bell (1990) agrees and points out that "Morrison is literally deconstructing the essential white text, removing capitalization, punctuation, and finally the spacing until the white text is nothing more than a fragmentation of its former self at the beginning of the chapter."(24) For Pecola, home is not the green and white one presented previously which is an example of the white myth.

Actually for her home is a place where parents fight, brothers run away from home and girls wish to have beauty, and blue eyes for instance.

It is interesting to contrast such idea with the fact that in the Middle Ages punctuation had not been invented yet, so that in old manuscripts there is no space between words and they look very much like the passage in the novel. So, in this sense, the black resistant writing is, historically speaking, white. That is why it is very complicated to affirm that a behavior is revolutionary, thus to create a revolutionary way to show disapproval of something because, in fact, the revolutionary way can work in the other way round. It can reaffirm something considered dangerous, evil or dominant, instead of state an opposition of it.

If such ideas are taken into consideration, the prologue section of the book should be considered as ironical, according to Hayden White, because it provokes a reflection on the text, on the language used and on the problem discussed, which is the reaffirmation of an ideology that is represented in the last stage of the discursive movement. Such reflection appears throughout the novel, which seems to remind the reader, the purpose of the text or to establish a new reflection on the chapter that follows the epigraph. However the way through which the prologue is presented to the reader is metaphorical on it. Pecola's point of view is shown as childish, unbalanced and sick. Her perception is a mixture of reality and dream, which confuses her thoughts and makes her loose the logical and critical apprehension of facts. It is possible to say that this mixture of reality and ideal life destroys Pecola's sense and feelings.

The second part of the prologue comes from Claudia's consciousness. It tells the reader the problems that happened with Pecola and, following Kubitschek's ideas, "suggests that her tragedy corresponds to an interruption of nature's cycle, a spring season which nothing grows." (32) Through this point of view, Morrison's narrative invites the

readers to find the reason for the four sections of the book: “Autumn, Winter, Spring, and Summer”. According to Kubitschek, Morrison “expands a conventional literary genre, the *bildungsroman*”, which “recounts how an individual, often an extraordinary person, grows up.”(31) She goes on by stating that such narrative technique on novels focused on more ordinary people “often shows a world in which their characters are victims of powerful social or natural forces.” In *Pecola and Claudia, The Bluest Eye* focuses ordinary African American girls and claims for them the status of earlier heroines in the *bildungsroman*. While it is shown the girl’s struggle against social prejudice, involving racism and poverty, the novel points out the results of such problematization: the destruction of Pecola’s personality and the survival of Claudia’s personality which means a triumph.

Claudia speaks in first person “I”, about her life and the experiences she had, especially those connected with Pecola. The way the narration goes on shows some aspects that Claudia could not have seen (such as the intimate events in the Breedlove’s house) or things that she could not even have known (the past of Pauline and Cholly). Such evidences demonstrate an omniscient narrator, which reveals even the thoughts of the characters and their desires.

Morrison, through Claudia’s words, introduces the problem discussed throughout the book in a different and very particular way. She says that “...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.”(5) The fact that no marigolds have grown is related to the problem of Pecola’s pregnancy which is a way to say that no hope and no purity were expected at that time because a nine-year-old-girl was pregnant by her own father.

On the other hand Claudia points out that instead of being a victim of a familiar tragedy, Pecola’s baby can represent this hope that was thought as lost. Besides that, every tragedy, even the worst and the most destructive one, can bring results that contribute to

the development of the parts involved, and this is a reason to celebrate and learn. The baby is a new coming challenge and the possibility of making things become better and comfortable. It can represent black people's struggle to renew past ideas and to remove old concepts in order to improve their image in society. It can be also viewed, as a feminist protest against the sexist power in order to show that although women have been submitted to male desires for a long time, they have their own power of conducting things, and the bad results of their usual suffering can be a tool for them to get social and political respect. 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 done. Not even the garden 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. (5)

Within this environment, the new generation that was growing learned how to behave in such a repressive society where the prejudice against black people, and also against women, was enormous. According to Claudia, everything that she and her sister had done until that time was not enough to get the respect of the black community and to make them grow with their cultural, social and political experiences. Their "seeds" were not being productive enough to establish a democratization of their rights under a white dominant control. That is her intention when she says that "It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to us that no green was going to spring from our seeds". (5)

Their desire for a more respectful life and their hope of getting a more adequate position in society did not acquire the wanted results. In the same way, Cholly's intention to satisfy his carnal desire did not lead to good results. While in the first case, black people were still being disrespected and dominated by the white's culture, in the second situation;

the momentary pleasure became an anguishing and endless problem. Both situations refer to intention and destruction. The first one is considered a metaphorical struggle in which seeds mean attitudes and the ground represents people's lives. The relationship established here is not complete in terms of meaning because it does not take into consideration the other things that influence the process of humanization. The second situation is ironic because it shows a father destroying his own daughter by using an evidence of creation.

The novel is divided into seasons beginning with autumn, and Claudia's narrative introduces each of these seasons. Her narrative is followed by the third person narrator, in each season, who uses not the seasons but sections of the cipher prologue to introduce it as in "*Hereisthehouse . . .*" (33). This kind of structure can be considered as a counterpoint narrative. In other words, each of the sections overlaps and repeats characters, actions and ideas presented in other sections as though there is one larger theme at work, yet at the same time. Each section of the narrative functions both as a means to move the story along and as a counterpoint to some other section. One could describe the narrative of the other.

It is possible to recognize this kind of counterpoint in some of the songs Claudia's mother sings. For example, when, while staying with Claudia's family, Pecola drinks all the milk in the house, her mother begins complaining about it with a "fussing soliloquy," which Claudia and Frieda find "...extremely painful in their thrust..." and which indirectly insults the world and everyone in it. In this soliloquy, her mother demonstrates her anxieties and Pecola's "greed". It also shows the fear of feeding an extra mouth, of going to the poorhouse, of not being appreciated by her husband and her family, and so on (23 – 24).

Her "fussing soliloquies" are immediately contrasted with her "singing moods" where she would sing about "hard times, bad times, and somebody-done-and-left-me-times" (24-25). What Claudia notes but does not dwell on is, on the one hand, the pure

beauty of her mother's voice and the way it makes her feel, and on the other, the melancholy and despair of the situations her mother sings about:

But her voice was so sweet and her singing-eyes so melty I found myself longing for those hard times, yearning to be grown without "a thin di-i-ime to my name." I looked forward to the delicious time when "my man" would leave me, when I would "hate to see that evening sun go down . . ." 'cause then I would know "my man has left this town." Misery colored by the greens and blues in my mother's voice took all the grief out of the words and left me with a conviction that pain was not only endurable, it was sweet."(25-26)

Here, the music, as a kind of metaphor, counterpoints and chooses the words of their grief thereby making life endurable by making the pain sweet; however there is also the suggestion of "longing" for pain, or at least its "sweet" after-taste, which goes along with enjoying the status of being a victim, of refusing to find ways out of situations which render one a victim, of refusing to take responsibility for oneself. Instead of being a moment of pleasure, singing is here a way of claiming against disillusion and frustrations, nevertheless it is not clear and obvious. Later on, the same moment will be analyzed through the ironical point of view Claudia has.

The comparison between Pecola's drama and the seasons of the year is established by Morrison in a very intelligent and interesting way, as if she had the intention to show the growth of the problem without stating that chronologically or even clearly, although it follows a sequence of events which is determinant for the grasping of the author's message. Morrison does not intend to tell the story by following a logical sequence. Actually, she wants to present a kind of evolution of the problem in a metaphorical way by using the seasonal divisions.

On the other hand, it is possible to see either Pecola's and Claudia's perceptions in each seasonal section of the story, and as it was said before, it demonstrates different



perceptions according to specific levels of maturity the two narrators have. Each section is supposed to have a specific function related to the comprehension of the story and to the message of the book indeed. As Kubitschek points out “every section either presents their experiences directly or explores the reasons that their experiences diverge.”(33)

It is possible to establish here a confrontation between the sections of the book and the tropological movement presented by Hayden White in a discursive representation. In this sense, “Autumn” section can be compared to the metaphorical perception of the problem presented by Morrison in which the individuals cannot perceive anything more than themselves. Later, in “Winter”, metonymic deconstructions of the external elements of the plot are observed which demonstrate a broader perception of the problem. In “Spring” such deconstructions go to synecdochic representations of their superficialities and their supposed essence, which are clearly observed through the confrontation of the girls’ fragility and the adult’s tyranny. Finally, “Summer” represents the ironic discursive representation in which Morrison disassembles the real problem of the novel by saying something else she believes can help their community to change their way of accepting things passively. It is the realization of the problem, its causes and consequences. Therefore it is a reflection on what had happened

Another comparison can be done between Morrison’s text and Piaget’s theory of children’s cognition development in which all the phases (sensorimotor, representational, operational and rational) can be perceived and compared with the seasonal division of the novel. Again, the same representations of reality are gradatively shown in order to make the real essence of the novel come up. However, it is necessary to understand that Morrison is not actually dealing with children behavior but with a whole community and its cognitive development or apprehension of reality, in this sense, the figure of a child is merely a metaphorical representation of the community as well.

“Autumn” shows the relationship both within the MacTeer’s family and in the Breedlove’s family. Although they are black families they present a different behavior and have a different environment at home. While the first ones have a more balanced way of living, the life of the second ones has lots of problems. But what is important for this analysis is that the perception of the world that the black families have are different and it influences a lot on the apprehension they have and on the consequences of it.

Through an overview of this section it is possible to see how the Breedloves, and Pecola herself, can perceive nothing more than themselves and their problems. They do not do anything to change the way of living and keep their range without exposing feelings and desires. So, they can be considered prisoners of their own incapacity of dealing with problems due to the acceptance of several inferiority patterns.

According to White it is a limited perception of things because black people cannot understand that they exist despite the others. This fact enables the statement of their points of view make them fight for their desires and let them free not to accept what is imposed to them. They don’t share, in fact they close themselves in a kind of shell sometimes seeming to be protected, but other times acting as weak and unable to preserve their individualities.

In the very beginning of the section, Claudia introduces her family to the reader and starts to describe the scene in which her mother and the other women were gossiping about Mr. Henry who is a man that comes to live at MacTeer’s house. Claudia does not take part in the conversation but as an omniscient narrator she describes the situation as a scene of a comic book:

It was autumn too when Mr. Henry came. Our roomer. Our roomer. The words ballooned from the lips and hovered about our heads—silent, separate, and pleasantly mysterious. My mother was ease and satisfaction in discussing his coming. (12)

This childish way of seeing things reveals that the narrator cannot perceive the real intention of the women in talking badly about a man who has broken up a relationship

because of a young girl. Such man was coming to live in their house as soon as he does not represent any danger and does not show any interest on them. Such naive behavior demonstrates that the family can only perceive its members but not the others. The external world, with its good and bad points, seems not to exist turning them into silly people at times. The same happens when Mr. Henry arrives at MacTeer's house:

“Hello there. You must be Greta Garbo, and you must be Ginger Rogers.”

We giggled. Even my father was startled into a smile.

“Want a penny?” he held out a shiny coin to us. Frieda lowered her head, too pleased to answer. I reached for it. He snapped his thumb and forefinger, and the penny disappeared. Our shock was laced with delight. We searched all over him, poking our fingers into his socks, looking up the inside back of his coat. If happiness is anticipation with certainty, we were happy. And while we waited for the coin to reappear, we knew we were amusing Mama and Daddy. Daddy was smiling, and Mamma's eyes went soft as they followed our hands wandering over Mr. Henry's body.

We loved him. Even after what came later, there was no bitterness in our memory of him.

(16)

In this passage it is possible to see how naive they are in accepting in their house the presence of a bad renowned man. In fact, when Mr. Henry compares the girls with two white movie stars he is showing what he considers as beautiful or respectful. He jokes in front of them but they do not perceive his personality just because of their limited apprehension of the world, which let them see things through metaphorical lenses. In this sense, for the MacTeers, Mr. Henry is just a good and funny man.

Another evidence of the metaphorical apprehension of things can be clearly noticed when Pecola is at MacTeer's house, drinking milk, and having a conversation with Frieda about the picture of Shirley Temple which is in the blue and white cup Pecola was holding. At First Claudia noticed that Pecola “gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley” as she was

admiring her beauty. Then Frieda and Pecola talked about how cute the young actress was. But Claudia did not take part on the conversation as she explains:

I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley. Not because she was cute, but because she danced with Bojangles, who was *my* friend, *my* uncle, *my* daddy, and who ought to have been soft-shoeing it and chuckling with me. Instead he was enjoying, sharing, giving a lovely dance thing with one of those little white girls whose socks never slid down under their heels. So I said, "I like Jane Withers." (19)

There are many evidences of a limited perception of things in the fragment above. As any other child, Claudia acts as if she was an intimate or a relative of her idols. She takes them and uses them as hers, as they exist just for her and nobody else could have them. Her possessive feeling is strong enough to make her dislike the fact that her favorite idol had danced with someone else instead of herself. She is jealous of her idols, which demonstrates that she cannot understand them as normal people role-playing a character. In a sense, she identifies herself with the characters as a way of having her dreams or childish illusions fulfilled. Again, it evidences a metaphorical perception of life due to the fact that the former seems limited and merely allegoric. The scene that shows Pecola's menstruation is also interesting to be analysed. Despite the biological event, which evidences the sexual maturity of an adolescent girl becoming a woman, menstruation means the blooming of a new person, something that is opening to life, with all its hopes, tenderness, and a desire growing towards the dreams the girl has. Moreover the situation was frightening for Pecola not only because she did not know what was happening but also because she was afraid of the reaction of the surrounding people. First she asked Frieda "Am I going to die?" which shows all her puzzled thoughts. Then while the girl realizes the situation based on Frieda's explanations, she becomes calmer but a little worried about one thing that Frieda has said and that she could not pass over. Such curiosity is revealed when the three girls are laid down in bed and Pecola tries to confirm "very softly" what her friend has affirmed before:

“Is it true that I can have a baby now?” Here it is possible to notice motherly feelings coming up to her mind. Also it reveals her naive and even silly understanding of things. At first she cries demonstrating her pain, then she dreams with the possibility of becoming a mother and living in a kind of fairy tales, with all the happiness she ever wanted.

Claudia, at first, was surprised with the phenomenon that had happened with Pecola. In fact, she did not have any background knowledge about menstruation and she put in doubt Frieda’s diagnosis. She was also afraid about it and, through her childish understanding, such problem could be considered as an illness or something really bad. However, after Frieda’s explanations, actually after her mother’s reaction giving Pecola a bath, she kept calmer and started to admire what her friend was facing. The way the girls see Pecola is also limited because of the unnatural reaction they show. First they were nervous, and then they became proud of her, as if the menstruation was a reason for that.

That night, in bed, the three of us lay still. We were full of awe and respect for Pecola. Lying next to a real person who was really ministratin’ was somehow sacred. She was different from us now – grown-up-like. She, herself, felt the distance, but refused to lord it over us. (32)

In fact what was really going on in Pecola’s mind was not just the fact that she could be a mother, but indeed how she could do that. Her insecurity added to her curiosity makes her think about the whole process of becoming a mother, which seemed totally uninteresting until that time. When she asked Frieda “how”, her voice was “hollow with wonder” revealing her secret desire of understanding things that she could feel without being aware of. The answer given was so instigating that she could not stop asking, “somebody has to love you.” If someone should love her to make her become a mother it meant that she has never been loved or, at least, she should look for someone to love her. Nevertheless she was still in doubt about the process of doing so. Maybe she has just perceived the lack of loving she had in her life and it could be considered a problem for her.

And here it is possible to see something external that she had just realized that never happened in her life, which is an evidence of a metonymic perception of things, according to the theory of tropes. When she continued asking, “How do you do that? it means that she wanted to make something for being loved, which is again a limited idea because nobody has the power to do it. Frieda and Claudia were challenged with Pecola’s question and they escape from answering it because they do not have enough understanding to do it. So Frieda was asleep or pretended to be and Claudia, as she herself admits, “didn’t know”. (31)

Pecola’s idea of family and beauty are in the same way limited and metaphorically demonstrated by her attitudes. Right after the fight her parents had because her father was drunk and did not want to get some coal for the house heating, Pecola was in her bedroom thinking. She was frightened because of the situation, in which she was facing the lack of love and respect that her family had. In order to escape from such reality she asks God to make her “disappear”. And in this imaginary disappearance, Pecola could never get it completely because her eyes have never disappeared. Ryan (2000) argues, “Pecola wills self-disappearance through a longing to possess the eyes of another face. These bodies do not tell a history of capitulation to dominant powers but comprise one part of a larger multivalent narrative of black survival in North America.”(4)

In this sense, since Pecola realizes her weakness, she reacts, as a child who cannot struggle for a better situation and either cannot accept the present position as well. Because of this, disappearing would be the easiest solution for her. At least it is the only one she would like to get. Despite the possible interpretations of it, this intention demonstrates her limited view and capacity of dealing with problems.

Moreover, she escapes from her reality using a dream of having blue eyes. She sits for hours in front of a mirror and instead of reflecting on her problems trying to find out a

solution for them, she pays attention to her physical appearance and analyses it in order to see if she has something good on her. Again, her perceptions do not go beyond the limits of herself:

Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes." (46)

According to her childish perception, Pecola really believes that a pair of blue eyes would give respect to her, more than a change on her way of living or her way of accepting things. It is possible to say that, according to Giambattista Vico and with Hayden White as well, Pecola reveals the first stage of a culture that is characterized by the relations established between the childish view of life and the world created by such a view. Vico calls this stage, as "the age of gods" because of the expected divine miracle that people believe can solve their problems and give them happiness. Also, as White explains, people in this level of perception "are presumed to have projected onto the natural world their conceptions of their own passional and sensate natures, to have endowed all aspects of nature with an animus, or spirit, and to have conceived themselves to be governed by and to have worshiped these products of their own febrile imagination."(200)

Although within this section it is possible to find evidences of the other three tropes, the trope of metaphor, as it could be noticed through the given examples, is predominant and characterizes this section of the book as a first impression or a first perception of the problem discussed throughout the novel. Morrison is showing how silly a person, and even the whole black community, can be by accepting things without questioning them or understanding the limits that exist which control and respect the individuality of each one. Such limits are well established when people get a broader perception of things which helps them to decide, to look for solutions and to analyse the reality as it really is.

All things considered, the “Autumn” section of *The Bluest Eye* is the moment in the novel when Pecola’s understanding of things is limited on her own person. In Pecola’s view, even the external things are considered as part of herself, since she cannot perceive the other. Her view of world is childish and naive as well as the comparisons she makes in order to facilitate her apprehension of certain things. If Pecola is a character who is limited on her perceptions, “Autumn” can be considered the representation of the first stage of human development in which, according to White, the limits of the self are not overtaken.



## Winter – the metonymic apprehension

Outside, the March wind blew into the rip in her dress. She held her head down against the cold. But she could not hold it low enough to avoid seeing the snowflakes falling and dying on the pavement.

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The second section of *The Bluest Eye* is full of external elements that influence a lot in Pecola's problem in terms of her understanding of things. In this section Pecola's perception goes a little bit beyond her and the external world is focused in a way that she starts to compare her individuality with the others. In this sense it is possible to notice a confrontation between different realities, which evidences that Pecola, and the whole black community as well, starts to understand the existence of the surroundings in spite of her.

In "Winter" the narrator testifies the racist damage to the African American community. In this section, two main situations are described. First, the image of Maureen Peal is shown as a representation of white standard of beauty and superiority that brings respect and prestige to the community. Second, Pecola is psychologically injured by her own community, which unconsciously uses internalized racist standards to do it.

Kubitschek says that "Maureen Peal symbolizes a life of privilege based on conformity to white ideals of beauty" which attracts Pecola a lot since she wants to escape from her reality and incorporate another personality in order to be accepted by society. Maureen Maureen Peal, a light-skinned, middle-class child who has just moved near Pecola's house, is a possibility for Pecola to change the way that people see her because the community respects Maureen for many reasons. The white girl is rich, beautiful, well dressed, and smart. The simple gesture of talking with her, or better, walking besides her, is a reason to be proud.

When Pecola was surrounded by some boys shouting and harassing her, Claudia and Frieda came to save her however the boys stopped tricking just when they realize the presence of Maureen. Then Maureen gives the girls the privilege of her company through the way home. Maureen held the conversation while Pecola just followed Maureen's words and sometimes reacted using few words and limited expressions. Sometimes Pecola asked short questions in order to feel her interlocutor in a mixture of admiration of her intelligence and insecurity because of her decreased self-esteem. Maureen asked Pecola if her name was the same of the girl's in the movie *Imitation of Life*. And since Pecola did not know the film, Maureen briefly explained her the plot of it by saying that "The picture show, you know. Where this mulatto girl hates her mother cause she is black and ugly but then cries at the funeral. It was real sad. Everybody cries in it..." (67)

Of course Maureen did not know anything about Pecola's life at that moment, but what is shown here is a demonstration of the destructive and cruel personality Maureen has. If Pecola had not noticed that it means that she would not want to believe on it or maybe her childish perception made her think that it was just a coincidence.

Their conversation can be considered a passive conflict in which Pecola's fear and doubts overlap bringing up to the reader some reflections concerning Pecola's problems. They talked about babies and boys' behavior and Maureen even paid Pecola an ice cream which demonstrates her economic superiority. But when Maureen asked her if she had seen a naked man before, the imaginary castle she had built into her mind started to ruin. Her feelings became puzzled and an argument between the four girls starts which reveals the real personality of Maureen.

Cornel West (1994) argues that "Americans are obsessed with sex and fearful of black sexuality" which is due to "visceral feelings about black bodies and fueled by sexual myths of black women and men"(119). According to West despite the fact that black

people are considered threatening creatures, they have the potential for sexual power over whites, or “harmless, desexed underlings of a white culture”. Since black sexuality is a taboo subject in white and black America, West suggests that a “dialogue about black sexuality between and within these communities is requisite for healthy race relations in America.”(120) But what happens instead is that the competition and the desire of being superior make white people afraid of realising the possibility of black people having something in which they are better. So white community prefers to attack black people instead of accept their non completely superiority.

That is why Maureen showed herself as racist and perverse: “I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!”(73). Concerning this, West explains “one of the best ways to instill fear in people is to terrorize them. Yet this fear is best sustained by convincing them that their bodies are ugly, their intellect is inherently underdeveloped, their culture is less civilized, and their future warrants less concern than that of other people.”(123) Because of all the insults she herd from Maureen, Pecola felt injured, humiliated and emotionally destroyed. At that moment in which she was realizing something good coming from outside herself and also she was understanding it and even interacting with this force as something separated from her, she could perceive that such external force was as destructive as the other she had inside her, which up to that moment was the only one she could perceive. In this way, Pecola’s desire of being at least the same of the white girl was completely destroyed:

Pecola stood a little apart from us, her eyes hinged in the direction in which Maureen had fled. She seemed to fold into herself, like a pleated wing. Her pan antagonized me. I wanted to open her up, crisp her edges, ram a stick down that hunched and curving spine, force her to stand erect and spit the misery out on the streets. But she held it in where it could lap up into her eyes. (73-4)

The impact provoked in Pecola's mind can be explained by the theory of tropes. The deconstructions of metaphorical elements of Pecola's perceptions into metonymic elements of the apprehension of the external reality confounded Pecola and made her lose her sense of things for a while. White argues that the discourse is a "product of all the efforts that human conscience makes in order to establish an agreement with the problematical domains of experience"(5). It means that, in Pecola's case, at that moment that she realizes the environment and its problem contrasting with her weak and innocent personality, the only discourse she could produce was an amount of a confusing feelings and disturbed thoughts. White adds that the move from a metaphorical perception to a metonymic dispersion is not logical:

There is no rule to tell us a possible object of inquiry is complete and when we should proceed to a consideration of the elements, which, construed in their popularity, simply as parts of an as yet unidentified whole, occupy the domain in question. The shift in modality of construal (...) is tropical in nature. (6)

There is no doubt that Pecola starts at that very moment to expand her perceptions of things and the reality she realized was not what she really expected to find. Once more the feeling of rejection was increased. First she rejected herself, because her world was limited on her. Now she started to feel rejected by the others, since she could perceive that the limits of her world were broader.

The second main point of "Winter" section that contributes to the understanding of how the trope of metonymy can be viewed through the characters apprehension is related to the secondary character Geraldine and her relation with Pecola. Geraldine stands in opposition to other three secondary characters: China, Marie, and Poland. They are not pretentious to false puritan values as Geraldine is and they seem to respect their own race without accepting things imposed to them by the white culture.

It is interesting to point out the way that the narrator has to call Geraldine as they, seeming to use her as a representation of a group that have the same characteristics. According to Kubitschek, it is an evidence of the fact that there are many black people in the same position of Geraldine. It can be considered also a broader perception of things, which reveals the black community perception of different aspects of them outside their individualities. By calling Geraldine as “they”, the generalization is more than an aspect of language, in fact, it is a way of considering such kind of people out of their reality, their ideology, and even out of the genuine black desire as well.

Geraldine’s son, Junior, abused Pecola when he, pretending to be friendly, invited her into his home and then ridiculed her using her visit as a pretext for killing the cat that used to receive all Geraldine’s love and attention. Pecola was to blame of a thing that she actually had not contributed to. People were accusing her from her own group although they were aware that she was innocent. Yet when Pecola starts her deconstructions of the self in an outside reality she realizes that the world she lives in is unjust, immoral, and destructive. Thus such destruction, for her seems to have a divine support because whenever she realizes it, some religious icon appears to give a kind of authority to it: Pecola backed out of the room, staring at the pretty milk-brown lady in the pretty gold-and-green house who was talking to her through the cat’s fur. The pretty lady’s words made the cat fur move; the breath of each word parted the fur. Pecola turned to find the front door and saw Jesus looking down at her with sad and unsurprised eyes, his long brown hair parted in the middle, and the gay paper flowers twisted around his face. (92-3)

The reaction of the girl to the unexpected situation she was involved in reveals that facing a new external reality cannot be a good task for a person who does not have any support to understand it. Pecola has a weak personality in which she does not accept herself. Since her menstruation she starts to enlarge her perceptions and perceive the world

around her. She starts to distinguish the others in spite of her individuality, however she does not have support to understand it, and since she is still a child, she thinks that everything might have the same destructive characteristic that she realized in her school friends, in her teachers, in Maureen and in Geraldine's family. It is a perception that the members of the same group can contribute to the destruction of this group. For Pecola, it was the realization of the same rejection she had inside her, but at that time it was coming from outside.

Hayden White argues that once a human being had observed that the external environment is different from his individuality, the construction of a conscience is the next step in the tropological movement just because he needs to defend himself with his ideas, ideologies and for doing that he needs to make choices. Such behavior reflects a synecdochic perception of things in which the reconstruction of human discourse is done according to the result of the deconstruction of the self in the external world., which means the reading of the self in the other, contrasting the differences and similarities. This procedure can be, sometimes, complicated because the the self can become limited and absorbed by the powerful pattern of the world and of society.

All in all, in the "Winter" section Pecola tried to perceive something beyond her previous limited perceptions. However, when she deconstructed herself on the other, she could not find an external possibility of boosting her self-esteem, which became lower than it was. The "Autumn" is the moment of the novel when Pecola started to open her view of things although the consequences of it were not the expected ones according to White's theory. Instead of growing she became emotionally confused because of the problematic situations she realized.

### **Spring: the disastrous synecdochic reconstruction**

The first twigs are thin, green, and supple. They bend into a complete circle, but will not break. Their delicate, showy hopefulness shooting from forsythia and lilac bushes meant only a change in whipping style. They beat us differently in the spring. Instead of the dull pain of a winter strap, there were these new green switches that lost their sting long after the whipping was over. There was a nervous meanness in these long twigs that made us long for the steady stroke of a strap or the firm but honest slap of a hairbrush. Even now spring for me is shot through with the remembered ache of switchings, and forsythia holds no cheer.

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According to White, the third stage of the discursive movement is tropologically considered synecdochic. After a metaphorical limited apprehension of things, within which the perceptions are restricted to the self, the metonymic apprehension is characterized by the reconstructions of the self in the external world, which is considered a separated element of the environment. Then, human perceptions acquire a stage that allows the reconstruction of the investigations done towards an ironic reflection which will be the next stage of discursive movement.

Piaget calls that third step operational, because at this stage of children's cognitive development they take the elements or the results of the previous experiments and make some kind of analysis, characterizing them according to the choices they have made. So, if children are able to make choices, it means they can build their sense even though not complete or selective enough to be considered reasonable as adults. Children assimilate some aspects of their life, build their opinions on those, which become too consolidated in their minds, and a hard work to be broken down.

Following such theoretical approaches, the “Spring” section can be understood as the stage in the novel where reconstructions of the synecdochic apprehension and metaphorical representations are decisive for the plot of the novel. It seems that the “Spring” section has a double function. First, to show the fragility of young girls within a brutal environment. Second, to deal with the problem of adults, that instead of representing protection for children, contribute to a frightening environment for those ones.

In “Spring”, through Claudia’s narration, Morrison relates Pecola’s extremely serious sexual experience of being raped by her own father and emotionally abandoned by her mother. Within this situation, Pecola falls prey to Soaphead Church, who promises her beauty, and besides that, prestige and respect, by giving her blue eyes. In fact, it is within this section that Morrison confronts the childish perception of the characters, especially Pecola’s, with the adult’s moral disease which is a product of their past experiences.

The first conflict shown in this section is between Frieda and Mr. Henry at the MacTeer’s house, when he harassed her by putting his hands on her breasts, which made her feel afraid of him. However, as she told them what had happened, she was supported by her parents, and even the neighbors helped to drive Mr. Henry out of the MacTeer’s place. That way, Frieda could feel protection and respect around her in a moment when she was feeling herself insecure and unable to deal with a perverted man, who had pretended to be a friend of the family up to that moment.

Such conflict is placed right before some others that happened at Pecola’s house, which induces the reader towards a comparison between both realities. Frieda’s reaction by calling her mother for help is an evidence of the security Mrs. MacTeer represents to her daughter and also an example of a union between the members of the family. On the other hand, the conflicts that Pecola faced evidences that she does not have any support at home,



since they have happened between Pecola and her parents. Her family roots are completely dead and she does not have any trust, love or protection at home.

At this point it is clear that because of the emotional support presented in the MacTeer family, which is completely none within the Breedloves, Frieda and Pecola have completely different ends. During her reconstructions of reality, the first one finds protection, love and warmth that help her to balance her mind and feelings through her sinecdochic apprehension. Pecola, by her part, does not have explanations to what was happening with her and the people who should give her the needed answers were deeply involved in the causes of her doubts. Pecola's reconstruction of reality, in this sense, can be considered incomplete, distorted and damaged.

Pauline Breedlove, Pecola's mother, is particularly vulnerable to racism, like her husband Cholly, but for a different reason. As a child, she acquired a permanent limp that set her apart from the rest of her family. Initially she loved Cholly and enjoyed their sexual life. Gradually she became influenced by the racist ideas that she absorbs from movies that she used to go to in order to get into Northern urban women's circles. She also absorbed the racist ideas of female beauty and learned to dislike her own appearance starting to think about the possible happiness she could get for being white.

White men taking such good care of they women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses with the bathtubs right in the same room with the toilet. Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard. I don't know. I 'member one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine. Apart on the side, with one little curl on my forehead. It looked just like her. Well, almost just like. Anyway, I sat in that show with my hair done up that way and I had a good time. (123)

When Pecola was born, Pauline unconsciously hated herself so much that she is unable to love any part of herself, including her daughter. According to Kubitschek,

“when she looks at her new-born daughter, Pauline knew she (the baby) was ugly, for she sees herself in her child.”(38) Furman adds “Pauline in some sense is as culpable as Cholly for Pecola’s destruction. Cholly’s love is corrupt and tainted, but Pauline is unloving.” (18). Her husband Cholly has never been part of a family, and he has suffered a lot because of this fact, which facilitates, or better, does not protect him against sexual racist humiliation. Pauline, also has suffered from isolation. Although her family had been a normal one, she lost both her family and her black community when Cholly and her moved north in order to get better economic opportunities. Pauline and Cholly loved each other at the beginning of their marriage, however their love could not stand poverty, racism, and isolation from the community.

Pauline and Cholly feed the worst in each other. Paraphrasing Kubitschek Pauline uses her religion, which she is not totally devoted to, as a weapon to consider Cholly as a lazy, drunk and evil. They acted separated from each other day after day and their relationship became a succession of unfortunate events that contributed for a feeling of rage and disgust between them.

In her loneliness, she turned to her husband for reassurance, entertainment, for things to fill the vacant places. Housework was not enough; there were only two rooms, and no yard to keep or move about in. The women in the town wore high-heeled shoes, and when Pauline tried to wear them, they aggravated her shuffle into a pronounced limp. Cholly was kindness still, but began to resist her total dependence on him. They were beginning to have less and less to say to each other. He had no problem finding other people and other things to occupy him-men were always climbing the stairs asking for him, and he was happy to accompany them, leaving her alone. (118)

Pauline dedicates herself to her job as a housekeeper in a white family’s house, the Fishers. It is possible to say that she emotionally abandons her own household and children in favor of the Fishers in order to escape from her responsibilities and also from poverty.

Pauline is the most influenced character by the white standards of beauty, and she concentrates an amount of tension on herself because of the tendency she has in submitting her community to white interests. To make things worse, Pauline really agrees with such interests, as if they were the best for everyone, which shows she does not have any feeling of black identity and her rage against her own race is demonstrated in her family relationship, and in her interaction with the white family. The way she treats white people is an evidence of her admiration of a standard of living that she wants to have.

All of those aspects related to Pauline's personality justify some points of White's theory of tropes concerning her perception of world. Pauline has a normal family in her childhood which enables her to grow up understanding her self-world of perceptions and the external different realities she had around her. However, her marriage is problematic either for her satisfactions as a woman or her reconstruction of perceptions acquired through the previous experience she has had in her life. Her capacity of association and choice is not fully respected which has made her reject her own life because her rejection of her marriage.

Here, it is possible to see the unbalanced human behavior highlighted by Hayden White, which demonstrates their natural savagery. Since Pauline does not have any of the three guarantees given by Christian institutions (sex, sustenance and salvation), she assumes a lascivious personality without any awareness of it, just acting and reacting as someone who needs to hurt people in order to protect herself and to forget her own hurts. The rage she has against black people, against Cholly and against Pecola is her animal way to protect herself from things she considers destructive. In order not to be destroyed and to stay in a more superior level, Pauline prefers to destroy what she thinks is the reason for her unhappiness. All of her disillusionments are transferred to her children through the way she uses to bring them up, which makes them continue the feeling of rage against life:

Pauline kept this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it into her storefront, or to her children. Then she bent toward respectability, and in so doing taught them fear: fear of being clumsy, fear of being like their father, fear of not being loved by God, fear of madness like Cholly's mother's. Into her son she beat a loud desire to run away, and into her daughter she beat a fear of growing up, fear of other people, fear of life. (128)

Pauline put the blame on Pecola because of her frustrations and disillusionments in life. So Pecola does not have a participative mother concerning her needs as a child. Actually Pecola is more than taken for granted, she is accused all the time for every problem, she is humiliated in her own house and she is hated by her own family. And this is perfectly seen in the very moment Pecola let a hot pan drop down the floor splattering blackish blueberries everywhere. Once more Pauline overflew her rage, hit the girl, and said bad words at her, while her daughter was crying because her legs were burnt which again was taken for granted.

Pecola never calls Pauline differently from Mrs. Breedlove, which creates a kind of distance between them. And when Pecola let pie pan fall down in the kitchen floor it was caused by the insecurity provoked by the way the Fisher's girl called her own mother, who reveals the difference of treatment and proximity between the girls and their mothers.

Before explaining the influence of Pauline's problems in Pecola's synecdochic perception, it is important to analyse Cholly's problems, which also has a strong influence on Pecola's broken mind and on the distorted view of reality she has.

Cholly was abandoned by his parents and grown up by one of his great aunts until her death, when he was just thirteen. Cholly had met a girl, Darlene, at his aunt's funeral, with whom he began to enjoy a sexual experience. His first sexual experience was a kind of disaster. White hunters, who forced them to continue the sexual intercourse while being

watched by them, interrupted Darlene and him. Kubitschek explains that while “Darlene removes herself emotionally from the scene as a passive victim, Cholly focuses his rage and humiliation on Darlene rather than on the armed white men, who could kill him for any sign of resentment.”(37). That is why Cholly directs his hatred of racist oppression to black women instead of to white men.

The worsening of the situation is given by Cholly’s impossibility to deal with an institutionalized family although he had married Pauline. According to Kubitschek, Cholly does not have any foundation on which to build his family because “he has never experienced parental love or had a male role model.”(38) Moreover, poverty and oppression made family life difficult for him and provoked Cholly’s escape to drinking and led to the physical abuse of Pauline. All of those factors generated a confused mix of emotions and feelings with which he has extreme difficulties to deal with, and explain his animal attitude when he raped his daughter.

Morrison presents in a sequence of metaphorical events, how people’s animal instinct acts in order to get their prey. First, Cholly “was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him.”(160) Such event reveals the ebullition of conflicting feelings inside the predator who was starting to look for a way to fulfill his increasing desire of satisfying his needs. In Morrison’s words:

...had he not been alone in the world since he was thirteen, knowing only a dying old woman who felt responsible for him, but whose age, sex, and interests were so remote from his own, he might have felt a stable connection between himself and the children. As it was, he reacted to them, and his reactions were based on what he felt at the moment. (161)

Then, one day, when his animal impulses were uncontrollable, Cholly started to surround his prey, his own daughter Pecola. His wild instinct was so strong that at the very first moment, according to Morrison, “... he wanted to break her neck – but tenderly.”(161) It shows how unbalanced and uncontrollable his feelings were. This mixture of feelings

went from “his hatred of her slimed in her stomach and threatened to become vomit” to “a desire to cover her foot with his hand and gently nibble away the itch from the calf with his teeth”(162). So, he raped her with tenderness.

A limited perception of the problem only pays attention to the violent act committed, but in addition to that it is possible to see that, for Pecola, who represents the weakest part of the black community, this rape is a kind of self destruction of the group she belongs to, in which respect among the members is something simply taken for granted. For Cholly, who is the representation of the dominant part of the community, it is a way to reinforce his power or to demonstrate his conflicting feelings through a forbidden act, which gives him more prestige for having done what nobody usually does.

Such attitude works as a demonstration of human wildness in situations individuals cannot control their animal instincts, which come over their feelings and dominate their acts. Since Hayden White points out that every human being is capable to be out of control of their animal side over their rational one, Cholly’s behavior disturbs people’s feelings a lot due to the identification established between his animal side with their others. In other words, although people tend to criticize his attitude, it is not possible to say that every human is strong enough to control such inner impulses, present in everyone. What varies here is the motive that provokes such reaction and the importance people give to their feelings.

Another contribution to the eclosion of Pecola’s collapsing mind is given by the religious representation in the story characterized by an Anglican Church Priest, Elihue Micah Whitcomb, who was called by the town’s people as Soaphead Church. Elihue came from a Caribbean island and Kubitschek explains “his formal education confirms the self-hatred implied by his family’s desire to marry only those lighter in skin color.”(39) Because of racism again, he could not get the professional job his education merits, so he

emigrates to the United States where he supports himself by pretending to be a “hoodoo man”, Soaphead had sexually failed in relationships with mature women, so he used young girls to satisfy his sexual desires.

Although he did not sexually abuse Pecola, he used her in order to show an apparent power he had in talking to God. He promised to carry out her dreams of being beautiful by giving her blue eyes and to do so he uses a kind of persuasive discourse, full of interesting metaphors to be analysed in order to notice that as he was the representation of God on Earth, he has the power to control everything, even the damage provoked by racism, which makes him superior and respected by others.

First, he said that he was not a “magician” who demonstrates that his acts will be more than real or divine actually. And he continues this way:

I can do nothing for you my child. I am not a magician. I work only through the Lord. He sometimes uses me to help people. All I can do is offer myself to Him as the instrument through which he works. If He wants your wish granted, He will do it. (174)

The language that he uses within his discourse has a clear intention of involving Pecola through her innocence and to use it not for her benefit but against any belief out of his intentions. It demonstrates how religion can control people through its ceremonies involving visual apparatus and discursive persuasion. Thus, it puts on question the validity of some religions, which promise to solve all people’s problems if they dedicate their lives to their practice without questioning the procedures used. Soaphead Church is a kind of mind controller who gets an easy prey in Pecola due to her weakness and faulty personality.

Further, he goes on by telling her that, in order to get in touch with God, they need to have some contact with nature, and maybe through “a simple creature He will speak” (175) with them. That is when he convinced Pecola to give some poisoned food to a sleeping dog. They should analyse the dog’s reaction in order to notice if Pecola’s wishes would be

“refused” or not by God. Obviously after eating the food the dog feel down on its feet and died, which made her feel a mix of fear, disgust and surprise, maybe believing that Soaphead was powerful enough to make her dreams come true.

What is important here is beyond the murder of an animal, in fact it is the murder of hopeness, freedom and desires Among many different interpretations of the symbolic role of the dog, according to Chevalier & Gheerbrant, many different cultures agree that a dog is a representation of sexual desire, jealousy, fidelity, and confidence. Death, by its part, is considered to be the definitive end of something positive; it is the destructive aspect of existence. It is the irremediable and the preceding guider to a doubtful life.

Pauline, Cholly and Soaphead have their own contributions to Pecola’s destruction, which is the result of her problematic apprehension of world that is synecdochic and based on her destructive feelings, as well as on the destructive environment she lived in. In the “Spring” section all the reconstructions Pecola did in order to state her position in life were completely disturbed by the elements that should be helpful instead of destructive and predatory. Her madness was the only way Pecola could take to preserve her dreams, because there, in her own ideal world, she could make them come true.

As far as it has been presented, in “Spring” the novel shows the confrontation between Pecola’s childish point of view and the adults’ tirany and moral illnesses. When Pecola tried to reconstruct herself, according to the results of her individuality and the environment she lived in, she could not do it in the expected way. Here, White’s tropological sequence worked on the other way round. Instead of building a critical point of view in relation to the situations of life, she returned to her own limited world in order to protect herself against all the destructive forces surrounding her. In fact, she came back to the metaphorical stage of human perceptions in which the self is the limit of her apprehensions.



### **Summer: the climax of irony**

Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. We are wrong, of course, but it doesn't matter. It's too late. At least on the edge of my town, among the garbage and the sunflowers of my town, it's much, much, much too late.

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*The Bluest Eye* works as like a billboard denouncing the prejudice faced by black people within their own community, problem that affects the weakest representative of the group such as children and women. Also, the matter of exclusion, instead of destroying just the element affected directly by its action also destroys the identity of the group and their respect within human society, which can be explained by the simple fact that if a group does not respect its components, this group does not deserve the respect of humanity. That is exactly the point carried out by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye*, which is an attempt to call black people's attention to their own problem as well as show how they contribute to its improvement by establishing the prejudice among the community.

The "Summer" section and the whole book as well is full of irony not just concerning language used, but also concerning ideas, reflections, and attitudes. It is irony that guides the reader to a reflection on the sections of the book and the problems discussed on them. At the same time, the tropological movement from sinecdochic reconstructions of apprehensions done to the ironic analysis of them makes the reader understands what is behind the aspects shown, which is an evidence of an ironical apprehension of the book.

Irony, here, should not be understood just as a mere figure of speech. As White states, it is a broader perception of things, not necessarily verbal, but represented by a situation, an object or a combination of different facts. It is the stage in human beings' relationship with the environment in which people are aware of their choices and they have their critical sense developed working in favor of their ideologies.

Each beginning of an important part is opened by an epigraph from the first part of the prologue section, reminding the reader the breakdown in Pecola's mind. A dialogue between the epigraphs and the following texts challenges the reader to a reflection on the aspects shown and, in the same way, it is ironic in order to make the text intriguing and unique. The prologue itself is ironic since, as it was said before, it shows a text out of the standards imposed by white culture. Toni Morrison is suggesting a creation of a new kind of text, which is original on itself, but can be considered as non sense if it is superficially analysed.

The first part of the section shows the very moment of awareness in the novel in which Claudia makes some considerations about Pecola's ruin. Through her words it is possible to notice the level of consciousness she has when she understands the seriousness of the problem as something more than a daughter who was raped by her own father. She could realize that people were not as sorry about the problem as she expected them to be. In fact Claudia realizes the lack of unity, feelings and humanity her own community has. Claudia's words are illustrative:

Our astonishment was short-lived, for it gave way to a curious kind of defensive shame; we were embarrassed for Pecola, hurt for her, and finally we just felt sorry for her. Our sorrow drove out all thoughts of the new bicycle. And I believe our sorrow was the more intense because nobody else seemed to share it. They were disgusted, amused, shocked, outraged, or even excited by the story. But we listened for the one who would say, "poor little girl", or,

“poor baby”, but there was only head-wagging where those words should have been we looked for eyes creased with concern, but saw only veils. (190)

Awkward (1977) discusses this “purgative abuse” of Pecola in terms of the black community’s guilt about its own inability to measure up to some external ideal of beauty and behavior. According to him Pecola objectifies this failure (which results in self-hatred) and must be purged. She becomes the black community’s shadow of evil (even as the black community is the white community’s evil). “In combating the shadow (...) the group is able to rid itself ceremonially of the veil that exists within both the individual member and the community at large. To be fully successful, such exorcism requires a visibly imperfect, shadow-consumed scapegoat”(112) like Pecola.

Moreover, the breakdown in Pecola’s mind represents the breakdown in black community since they perceive they are not working in order to preserve their race, their culture and their desire and they are contributing for their destruction, instead. Claudia reveals her awareness and also accepts her culpability and contribution to the destruction of the community identity. Behind her words, it is possible to see the sadness of the author in facing such reality as well as her criticism on the guilty attitudes, which reveal the prejudice within the community as a result of the acceptance of white people’s prejudice against black culture, as Claudia puts it:

It was a long time before my sister and I admitted to us that no green was going to spring from our seeds. Once we knew, only fights and mutual accusations about who was to blame relieved our guilt. 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. (5-6)

The way that Claudia puts herself as the only one to blame for the problem of exclusion is also an evidence of her ironic perception of reality. She is showing that

individuals have their own faults and each one should be aware, in order to change attitudes, helping their community to be more respected by the whole society.

“Summer” can be considered the climax of irony not just because it is frequently presented throughout the novel, being more evident in this section, but mainly because “Summer” shows the result of a behavior, sometimes imperceptible, that can little by little destroy the cultural identity of a social group, even by their own members of the same group. Such behavior involves different aspects that are relevant for the formation of new cultural standards over the old ones considered inferior.

Ownership, class structures, and consumerism are ideas illustrated by Morrison throughout the novel and in the characters' identities. Many of the characters identify themselves based on material possessions, such as the simple ownership of a car, the use of consumer products, and property ownership. Although African Americans may take these things for granted now, in the early 1900s this would be considered a major accomplishment.

Cosmetic industry and advertisers, for instance, have successfully exploited the cultural psyche of Black women and Black men and have given a peculiar insight into Black life. Being Black, especially if the person was particularly dark, was loaded with negative stereotypes. Several products, promising miraculous transformations, were manufactured and marketed specifically to the Black community. Their sales pitch implied that the use of the right product would eliminate the social conditions that defined Black life.

There is an apparent contradiction of class status among the characters illustrating how beauty determines social prejudice. Morrison places each person in the class hierarchy based on how close they are to the white standard of beauty, which is also ironically shown. The Fishers, the white family Pauline is employed by, are at the top of the class

stratification. The only upper middle class family is white and they are the ultimate models of the blonde and blue-eyed standard.

Rosemary Villanucci, for whom the girls also have a feeling of jealousy, is on the same class level as Frieda and Claudia, except that her Italian features classify her as white. Rosemary's phenotype is white yet she is also a minority. In the opening scene of the novel she is "sitting in a 1939 Buick eating bread and butter." (9) Claudia and Frieda are characterized as envious:

We stare at her, wanting her bread, but more than that wanting to poke the arrogance out of her eyes and smash the pride of ownership that curls her chewing mouth. when she comes out of the car we will beat her up, make red marks on her white skin, and she will cry and ask us do we want her to pull her pants down. We will say no. We don't know what we should feel or do if she does, but whenever she asks us, we know she is offering us something precious and that our own pride must be asserted by refusing to accept. (9)

It is possible to notice the feeling of envy shown in the beginning of the novel which evidences how consumerism and ownership evoke competition. Rosemary views herself as better than the other people because she owns more material appliances than the others. Although Rosemary is viewed as white, she is still part of the working class. Yet, Rosemary looks down on Claudia and Pecola because her father owns a store as well as a car. Rosemary is their next door neighbor, however material ownership, as well as white features, sets her apart from them. Rosemary's superiority complex is fostered by a society, which views ownership and race as symbols of success.

On the other hand, the way that Claudia expresses her feelings against Rosemary is an evidence of an ironic perception in which she criticizes Rosemary for accepting white standards of living and refusing her own race. Actually, that can be considered as a criticism to all black community members that usually do the same.

The contrast of different patterns of living is exposed by Morrison in order to prove how the white standard, which is more valued in society, disturbs black community's life and make them feel themselves excluded and diminished by the opposite forces. Sometimes, this feeling becomes a self-rejection experienced by the members of the community, ironically revealing way how black people can contribute to the prejudice against themselves:

Later we walk home, glancing back to see the great carloads of slag being dumped, red hot and smoking, into the ravine that skirts the steel mill. The dying fire lights the sky with a dull orange glow. Frieda and I lag behind, staring at the patch of color surrounded by black. It is impossible not to feel a shiver when our feet leave the grave path and sink into the dead grass in the field. (12)

Geraldine, who does not possess any white features, will do anything to get rid of the stigma of being African American. Geraldine would like to be seen as a "high yellow dream" woman, and treated as though she is close to the dominant race. Her family is classified as lower middle class. Geraldine increases her status by "going to land-grant college, normal schools, and learn how to do the white man's work with refinement" (83). Geraldine takes every precaution to advance to the next class level. Geraldine only allows her son, Louis, to associate with the white children or colored children. Colored children were acceptable because they were "neat and quiet," whereas "Niggers were always dirty and loud" (87). Geraldine denies Louis his childhood because of her own insecurities.

Irony is here demonstrated through the way that Geraldine conducts her familiar life. Her son Louis could be the possible one that would avoid the exclusion by letting himself reaffirm the race through his social interaction. He is actually taught to control his natural behavior just because of his mother's insecurities. Such repression is indeed an evidence of self-rejection. Otherwise, the interaction among the individuals in society would be

considered normal and not avoided. In fact, Geraldine teaches her son to be rude with black people in order to keep distance from them.

In an interview with Morrison conducted by Bessie W. Jones, Morrison states, "Being Black is something you have to choose to be." Geraldine clearly does not choose to be black, however she cannot escape from her racial origin. Morrison portrays Geraldine as a white person trapped in a black person's body. Geraldine feels as though she is being forced to wear the blackness, which is parallel with Pecola's ugliness. Geraldine despises herself because she has been brainwashed by whites to believe black is associated with ugliness and negativity. Geraldine embodies what white culture wants minorities to believe, that they are inferior. Geraldine's inferiority complex creates inner conflicts and the need to conform to the "dominant" culture. Peach (1995) points out that she believes "the closest way to align herself with whites is to aspire to a higher level in the class hierarchy"(37).

At the bottom of the hierarchy according to Willis (1989) is the Breedlove family who does not meet the white standard of beauty. They are described as having "small eyes, low, irregular hairlines, keen but crooked noses, insolent nostrils, high cheekbones, their ears turned forward, and shapely lips" (38). The Breedloves believe their working class status is based on their ugliness. Morrison chooses these class structures to express what an important role beauty plays in success. If the Breedloves "were more attractive or closer to the 'norm' they would not be subject to such a nullified existence."(175) The narrative depicts how African Americans have to look white to gain economic access.

In addition to class structures, ownership and material possessions are instrumental in the characters' self-worth. Each character possesses something that determines how they are placed in society. The Breedloves associate the fact that they do not own anything of value with the idea that they are worthless people. They must live in the storefront not

because they are really ugly, but because "they accepted their cloak of ugliness without question" (39). They believe they deserve their lifestyle and cannot do anything to change their destiny, which is also ironic because if they accept their lack of importance in society it means that they are weak. However, how can they be considered a power of work if they have enough strength to destroy themselves. That is contradictory and ironic.

Geraldine, who takes every precaution to change her fate, will do anything not to be associated with blackness; she uses consumer products to "get rid of the funkiness." She is extremely neat and proud in her appearance and her possessions. Morrison describes Geraldine as one of those women who are constantly "washing themselves with orange-colored Lifebouy soap, dusting themselves with Cashmere Bouquet Talc, cleaning their teeth with salt on a piece of rag, softening their skin with Jergens lotion, and straightening their hair with Dixie Peach" (82). Many of the items described are essential in maintaining the essence of neatness. Geraldine consumes famous brand products in hopes of separating herself from her race. Morrison portrays Geraldine as a compulsive neat freak who constantly cleans herself. She writes "wherever it erupts, this Funk, they wipe it away; they find it and fight it until it dies" (83). Geraldine hopes to kill the blackness inside herself by ridding herself of all "germs" associated with blackness. She can only cleanse herself of what she considers the funkiness, but will never be able to get rid of the blackness.

Thus, the consumption of products used by whites happens in order to modify the physical appearance of black people, which is yet ironic because it is a way that Morrison uses to show the natural influence of white culture in black people's behavior. The attempt to modify physical appearance is an external way to modify something that is inner, in fact.

Morrison describes Maureen as impeccably neat because she has the most "white" features. Maureen was not born with the funkiness, which Geraldine is attempting to rid herself of. Maureen's cleanliness and impeccable outfits create in her a sense of superiority



towards the other children. Claudia enviously describes Maureen's "fluffy sweaters the color of lemon drops tucked into skirts with pleats so orderly they astounded us" (62). Claudia's fascination over Maureen's clothing illustrates how consumer culture places an emphasis on material wealth. Claudia, Frieda and Pecola place Maureen on a pedestal because of her outward appearance. Like Rosemary, Maureen feels superior to them because of her resemblance to whites. The fact that Maureen owns nice things differentiates her from the lower classes. The images in magazines that the three girls see cause them to envy Maureen for embodying the ideal image.

Although Morrison titles the novel *The Bluest Eye*, there is no such thing as the bluest eye. Society creates an atmosphere in which people compete to be the best. The creation of the consumer culture fosters an environment in which someone has to be categorized as the worst. The scale of judgment has been modified to white standards, therefore forcing African Americans to be judged inadequate. However, African Americans will never be white, just as Pecola will never obtain blue eyes.

Morrison writes this novel to illustrate how the African American community has lost itself within popular culture's false ideals of beauty and success. Willis discusses that the migration from the south to the north is not the only reason African Americans became fascinated by consumer culture. Yet, that migration is significant because African Americans have forgotten the importance of family and community in the fast paced life affiliated with urbanization. "Being capable of affording property and products forces African Americans to work harder and longer to attain a nicer standard of living." Unfortunately, according to Willis, quality family time is replaced with monetary gifts. Consumer culture does not embrace people who do not have money. The majority of African Americans of this time period are just beginning to be capable of purchasing property. "Consumer culture condemns African Americans, placing the white race at the

top of the social stratification. African Americans' behavior of consumer culture only divides their strong communal ties.”(193-4)

Morrison also focuses on another way of demonstrating the black community's rage against their own race, which is related to sexual unbalanced behavior. It is possible to notice that many characters of the novel have sexual problems, thus they need to replace such natural and animal behavior by another animal instinct that can be somehow destructive. Pauline did not have her sexual desires fulfilled because her marriage has failed. Cholly did not have an ideal sexual initiation which injured his integrity for the rest of his life. Soaphead Church is another character that does not have a normal sexual life. All these three characters transfer their repressed desires to the people they live with. This way, Pecola becomes a victim of all that overflow of rage and animal instinct coming from the adults she is closer to her which is explained by the idea of wild man discussed by White and also by Cornel West when he says that “the search for sexual power (...) usually results in a direct confrontation with the order-imposing authorities of the status quo by social institutions”.(128)

When Cholly father rapes Pecola, the author suggests self-hatred by black people besides the sexual violence presented, which comes closer to White's ideas explained before on the wild essence of any human being. The feeling that Cholly has for his daughter reveals how people lose their self-respect when life exposes them to humiliation and abandonment. The disgust he felt was the same he experienced when he was having sex for the first time in his life and some white hunters forced him to do it in front of them. Since he was not able to react against the hunters, because of being just a boy, he transferred his hatred to the woman he was with: Darlene.

During his whole life he has never been the male figure in his house and his marriage with Pauline was not something that could satisfy his desires. When he saw his daughter in

the kitchen a mixture of confusing feelings came to his mind. He felt desire and disgust at the same time. While a need of protection made him become sexually involved with her, as man and woman, his hatred blinded him to the consequences of his act, so he did not worry and left his instincts work according to his desires. West points out that “the black male search for power often reinforces the myth of black male sexual prowess – a myth that tends to subordinate black and white women as objects of sexual pleasure.”(128) Despite of that, he was still confused and disturbed, which reveals a feeling of guilt and shame because of the position he assumed against the moral and social values of his family and community:

Removing himself from her was so painful to him he cut it short and snatched his genitals out of the dry harbor of her vagina. She appeared to have fainted. Cholly stood up and could see only her grayish panties, so sad and limp around her ankles. Again the hatred mixed with tenderness. The hatred would not let him pick her up, the tenderness forced him to cover her.  
(163)

Once Cholly hurts a member of his own social community, in this case his own daughter, he also hurts the principles of integrity and respect that any member of the community should preserve. In the special case of black community, the oppression they have suffered from the white colonizers made them closer to each other in order to protect themselves and not to make them their own victims.

According to Claudia’s ironical point of view, Cholly was “alone with his own perceptions and appetites” which “alone interested him”(160). So it is a demonstration of how he himself is aware of his acts and its consequence and the negative idea that it provokes among the characters, and the readers as well. That is explained by White as an evidence of people’s wild essence which, in a sense, establishes an identification with such act. Cholly is dominated by his animal instinct, in which he concentrates all his rage and love, “...He wanted to break her neck – but tenderly”(161). Indeed, it is an ironic figure of

representing the black community's love and wonder of self-destruction. His animal behavior represents the tension established between the living animal inside him and his consciousness about the rape. And the narrator ironically describes his body reaction this way:

The hauntedness would irritate him – the love would move him to fury. How dare she love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? What could his heavy arms and befuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love? His hatred of her slimed in his stomach and threatened to become vomit. (162)

Actually, what is being vomited here is the African American identity besides the natural animal instinct human beings have. It is a way of showing the destruction of a culture and the contribution to it. And although, according to the narrator, "the hatred would not let him pick her up" after the intercourse, Claudia's irony highlights that "the tenderness forced him to cover her."(163)

All of the aspects discussed here contribute for the breakdown in Pecola's mind shown in "Summer" section, which is indeed the breakdown of black community identity and a creation of an imaginary or illusory world in which they live in. As with Pecola, the only dialogue established among the participants of such world is a non sense conversation between the destroyed self and the dreamed personality. Pecola has become insane as insane is considered the whole black community according to Morrison, and this is the most ironic event of the novel which reveals black people's blame concerning the depreciation they have faced in society.

In the final passage, Claudia considers the lasting damage to Pecola. "A little black girl yearns for the blue eyes of a little white girl, and the horror at the heart of her yearning is exceed only by the evil of fulfillment."(204) In a symbolic representation of her ongoing isolation, the still-crazy Pecola continues to live at the edge of the town that has rejected

her and is still doing it. The distance people keep from her is another evidence of the ironic perception Claudia has, which is in fact the distance people keep from their responsibilities in order to forget their blame:

We tried to see her without looking at her, and never, never went near. Not because she was absurd, or repulsive, or because we were frightened, but because we had failed her. Our flowers never grew. I was convinced that Frieda was right, that I had planted them too deeply. How could I have been so sloven? So we avoided Pecola Breedlove – forever. (205)

Toni Morrison's text reflects upon itself since it is all a discussion on a real problem that affects the whole black and white society. Thus, it is a reflection on people's attitudes and the irony of life that involves everybody in the same environment seeming to provoke a conflict between the differences that exist within a social group. The most ironic thing is the way people use to deal with such differences because instead of solving problems, they create new ones and, instead of unity, they instigate separatism and social unfairness.

However, it seems that *The Bluest Eye* was not completely understood as Toni Morrison wanted. That is why the author decided to add an afterword section in 1993 in which she gives some explanations concerning the purpose of the book and the message of it. It seems that people were not apprehending as much as she wanted from the message, and maybe it is a demonstration that the people to whom Morrison wrote still had a limited understanding of things, or, according to White's theory, were still in the metaphorical stage of perception of reality.

Morrison points out the problem of beauty, which is a reason for pleasure and destruction at the same time, in a capitalist and racist society. According to her "Beauty is not simply something to behold; it is something one could *do*." (209) Twenty years after the publishment of the novel, Morrison was still wondering about how Pecola learns the necessity of being different in order to be accepted. Also, if the author was still worried that means the way people were living had not changed much.

Morrison was not meant to find a guilty person for Pecola's destruction, or for the destruction of black identity. What she really wanted was to contribute to a move within the system. However, she found out two problems on her project: one is related to the narrative strategy she used and the other concerning language. She realized that many readers did not reassemble the parts in which the narrative was broken in order to instigate a constant questioning on the events and the reality people live. On the other hand, the language used "tried to hit the raw nerve of racial self-contempt, expose it, then soothe it not with narcotics but with real language". (211) her intentions were misunderstood or misinterpreted though.

In the afterword section, Morrison gives all the explanations needed to a better understanding of the novel as another way to call people's attention to the necessity of changing values and beliefs in order to instigate the idea of humanity, integrity, unity and social identity without dispute or prejudice. That way, the afterword section is also ironic because it is still showing that a considerable part of the society do not have a broader perception of things although they can realise the problems their community have and even be touched by them. However, the neglect can be a contribution to the problems and submission is an evidence of lack of dignity.

In conclusion, *The Bluest Eye* and its afterword section are an attempt to make people reflect on their attitudes and the way they can be contributing to the destruction of their own society. Therefore it is an invitation for a change in the way society have been imposing things over people according to the interests of a dominant group. The main idea is to establish the respect among the different cultures and the necessity of the differences in order to enrich the relationship among people.

## Conclusion

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* is a novel published in 1970 but adapted to an environment in 1941. It shows the relationship within two black families, the MacTeers and The Breedloves, and their relationship with the community they live in. The social issues of racism, prejudice, abandonment, physical appearance and sexual harassment are discussed throughout the novel and the character Pecola Breedlove is the focus of all the tensions shown.

Pecola is a nine years old girl who does not have any emotional support to understand life. So in her limited perceptions she cannot understand the way people humiliated and exclude her from her community and even from her family. Pauline Breedlove, her mother, blame her for all her frustrations and disillusions. Cholly Breedlove, her father, is a drunk and perverted man who has suffered from sexual humiliation in the past and never could balance his life at all. Pecola suffers because of the unbalanced sexual desires her father has which make him rape her in a moment of uncontrolled feelings. Thus she suffers because her mother demonstrates all the time her hate for her. The black girl wanted to be more beautiful by having blue eyes which, according to her, would bring her respect and admiration from the others. Because of the lack of support and the realization of the dirty and destructive society she lives in, Pecola becomes completely insane and emotionally destroyed.

The perceptions of reality the characters of the novel have and their particular way of dealing with the problems faced throughout the novel evidence different levels of understanding which characterizes different levels of maturity. While Pecola seems to be the weakest character, Claudia, on the other hand, represents the strongest one. And the way of apprehending things these two characters have are completely opposite.

At first Pecola can only perceive herself and the things related to her as she was the limit of her perceptions. Then, she starts to open the limits of perceptions but the reality she faced is worst than the one she had inside herself. When she confronts these two realities she become completely lost and her sense of self –steem completely disappears. Without any kind of guidance or explanation, she escape from reality by becoming insane.

Claudia demonstrates a broader perception of things all the time. As an omniscient narrator she can understand what is going on inside the character's mind. And she is the only character that can clearly perceive that the breakdown in Pecola's mind is a result of the lack of feelings and respect people have, including herself. In fact, since the problem with Pecola is a representation of the problem black community faces in real life, what Claudia highlights is people's attitudes which contribute for the destruction of their own community.

Hayden White in his theory of tropes explains the movement that the discourse of people have which demonstrate their level of apprehension of things. For White, discourse is a mediator between human beings and the environment through which people express themselves and demonstrate their apprehension of reality. White points out that the movement the discourse makes towards a broader understanding is tropological since it deals with the tropological perception of reality. The first stage of this process is related to the trope of metaphor which evidences a limited perception of things focusing the self. The second stage reveals a perception focused on the other inspite of the self , and that is why it is considered the trope of metonymy. The self perception of the first stage and the deconstruction of the self in the other maks necessary a reconstruction of the elements perceived which is a result of the confrontation between the self and the other. This is the third stage of the process which is related to the trope of sinecdoche. The final stage of the discursive movement is represented by the trope of irony in which the human being can



analyse the conclusions get from past experiences and build their critical point of view according to the intentions and ideology he/she has.

Hayden White compares his theory with Piaget's theory of children's cognitive development which states four stages of children development (sensori-motor, representational, operational and rational) that are in the same way tropological and not logical. Thus White points out the discussion Giambattista Vico made on history which divided into four stages according to the relationship human beings had with the world.

Vico affirms that there were four main tropes from which all the figures of speech came, and which analysis gives the base for a more adequate comprehension of the cycles of the human development. He divides history into four stages which he calls "the age of gods", "the age of heroes", "the age of men", and "the age of decadence". Each one of these ages represent the level of sociability human beings have and according to White are clearly represented by the four main tropes (metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony)

This thesis tried to demonstrate how the theory of tropes could be applied to Toni Morrison's novel since it deals with people's apprehension of reality and the development of their perception which sometimes can be frustrating as it was to Pecola. In this way a comparisson between the four tropes presented by White and the four sections of the novel was proposed in order to analyse the characters' perception of reality and their reaction. As it could be noticed, this thesis made an emphasis on the metaphorical and ironic apprehension since they are predominant in the novel as well Claudia and Pecola were focused since they were responsible for most of the tension and reflexions caused.

The "Autumn" section can be compared to the trope of metaphor since within it the perceptions of the characters, mainly of Pecola, were predominantly limited on their individual world. Even the external facts are considered part of themself because their understanding cannot cover anything more than their own desires and feelings. In this

section it is shown the different reality within the MacTeers and the Breedloves as a comparison between them which makes the reader analyse the difference between Claudia and Pecola concerning their way of seeing things. In this section Pecola's limited perception is demonstrated through the way she shows her own rejection of her appearance and her desire of having blue eyes.

Right at the very moment Pecola starts to realize people's individualities despite her own one, she starts to reconstruct herself on the others which characterizes the trope of metonymy that is predominant in "Winter" section. In this part of the novel Pecola confronts her individuality with Maureen Peal, a white rich girl who pretends to be her friend but after on shows her crudelity and prejudice against black people. Besides Pecola realizes the prejudice from people that belong to black community as well. In Geraldine's and in her school friends she could realize the rejection her own race have against themselves. All the deconstructions of herself on the others she interacts were completely unsuccessful.

Pecola starts to reconstruct herself according to the experiences she has passed and starting to make her point of view of things which evidences the trope of synecdoche. In "Spring" she is understanding the world and making choices according to her needs and desires, but right in this very moment some relevant confrontations are presented. Some facts related to the past of Pecola's parents and of the religious representative Soaphead Church are explained in order to the reader understands the present. The confrontation between Pecola and her mother makes evident Pauline's rejection of her daughter. The rape scene represents the uncontrolled feelings Cholly has over his animal desires and her disrespect of her own daughter. The confrontation between Soaphead and Pecola reveals the lack of support by religion, and in Pecola's understanding, by God.

Irony is presented throughout the whole novel and it is demonstrated by Claudia's perception of reality. Moreover, irony is presented in the reflection the text makes upon itself which starts in the prologue section and comes to a climax in "Summer" section in which Pecola's insanity is described. It is ironic the fact that the black community have contributed to their under valorization in society, and it is ironic the way people sometimes are aware of this but they do not change their attitudes.

Thinking about this, Toni Morrison added an afterwork section in 1993 which reveals her preoccupation about the misunderstanding of the message she was trying to say. She found out two things she considered her faults which could have contributed to it. One is related to the narrative structure and the other concerning the language. At the time she wrote the novel she thought that the narrative would instigate the readers to a constant reflection on the text, and language would help them on it. But she had to explain her real intentions which were not to find out a guilty for Pecola's destructions but yet to point out the real need of changing attitudes in order to respect and preserve the cultural identity of black community, specially concerning its own members.

The need of the afterword section is ironic since it is an evidence that if people have understood the message of the novel they have not perceived the need of changing their values in order to preserve their cultural identities or maybe they have perceived but their omission reveals their lack of dignity which demonstrates a limited perception of things and at the same time is ironic because reveals that human beings still live their individualities instead of contribute for the development of the collectivity.

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