Chapter II

Interrogating the "Original": *The Bluest Eye*

Toni Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is an ironic commentary on the female body discourse, questioning one of the criteria of the Anglo-American concept of physical beauty. Historically, women's bodies have been inscribed by adjectives of binary oppositions: beautiful/ugly, black/ white, obese/trim, tall/ short etc. While categorizing one's gendered status on the basis of such "values," considered "original," others, who do not conform to its norms, are kept outside the periphery of universal recognition. These "others" with some different marks/traits visible on their bodies are contrasted with the "normal" and pushed aside in order to maintain the consistency of the dominant rhetoric of beauty. *The Bluest Eye* is the story of a little, black girl, named Pecola, whose most visible bodily marker that sets her apart is her black skin. It is considered as a sign of "ugliness," a term that has acquired such other unfriendly and menacing associations as dirtiness, worthlessness, hatred, violence. In her yearning for a pair of blue eyes so that she can fulfil the conditions of white American beauty, Pecola is continually highlighted and brushed aside until a final stroke brushes her off. Her story not only disgraces the black community she belongs to, but also exposes the widely

disparate attitude of America that defends its status as a critic of racialized nationalism abroad. Morrison's project in this novel is to demystify the hegemonic discourse that fails to provide a space for Pecola in the promised land of success. The novel interrogates the validity of the norms of "original"/abstract values, that dismiss a little, black girl into insanity.

Gennifer Gillan has pointed out in her essay, "Focusing on The Wrong Font: Historical Displacement, The Maginot Line, and *The Bluest Eye*" how Morrison has made a "subtle interplay between [the] profound history of the Breedlove family and its background history of the racial determination of American citizenship" (2). The year (1940-41) the novel is set in is significant because it was when the US decided to take an active role as the crusader against racialized nationalism in Europe. Such intervention on the international front screened the most burning problems of race, class and gender back home. Moreover, when Hitler's atrocity, being the most threatening problem all over the world, came into sharp focus, then the benevolent image of the US as the defender of humanity made its own domestic problem delicately slip into the background. The skilful rendering of the story of the Breedloves makes it amply clear that the novel is not just about an eleven-year-old black girl's identity crisis,

but a story of national identity crisis. *The Bluest Eye* is a novel of historical displacement, questioning the dominant discourse on race in the US. By mocking the grand narrative of white American history, Morrison wants to destabilize the very texture of the "original" in order to make her readers take part in the weeping of a little, black girl: "In a land that loves its blond, blue-eyed children, who weeps for the dreams of a black girl?" (*The Bluest Eye* 1). This novel is an attempt to find out the authenticity of one's identity that does not assimilate the ideologies of a dominant culture but rather sticks to its own cultural roots.

The novel opens with a primer of three visually disorganized versions of the Dick and Jane text and a prologue that announces an unnatural event in 1941, ". . . there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941" with another deviant case, "Pecola was having her father's baby" (9). The first text of the primer, "Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. . . ," conforming to grammatical and stylistic rules and norms in that it is a text with double spacing, capitalized sentence beginning, proper punctuation, metaphorically provides suggestion for the expected standard of identity formation either of an individual or that of a community. The second text, "Here

is the house it is green and white it has a red door it is very pretty here is the family . . . ," which is single spaced, without capitalized sentence beginning and with no punctuation marks at all, seeks to reproduce the first text; it may be taken as a representation of first world identities, a mere simulacrum with no substance at all. The third text, "Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddooritisverypretty hereisthefamily. . ." (7), that reproduces the word order of the first text with neither space nor gaps, can be taken as an implication of the "third world identity" (Grewal 23) in which marks of distinction almost blur. Both the second and the third texts are mimicries of the first text; the feature of the second text is discernible, though the third text lacks it. Morrison's artful use of the primer is a rich trope that illustrates the process of the identity formation of her people through mimicry; the identity formed thus underscores the different classes of people living within the same black community.

Pecola is introduced in the novel as a "'case'...-- a girl who had no place to go". She is placed in the MacTeers family for a few days as her father, the "old Dog Breedlove had burned up his house, gone upside his wife's head, and everybody, as a result, was outdoors." Pecola is not just one of the "outdoors," her status of being a

"case" (17) (emphasized within double quotes in the text) needs an elaborate discussion to explore the living condition of many such Pecolas in the underclass black community, of those whose stories are buried under the heap of indifference and oblivion. Claudia finds out the difference between being put "*out*" and being put "out*doors*" (italics in the text) as a "subtle but final" distinction (18). For her, "Outdoors" is "the real terror of life" (17), "an irrevocable, physical fact . . ." (18). She thus describes "the metaphysical condition" of the "peripheral existence" of the minorities along both caste and class lines: "Being a minority in both caste and class, we moved about anyway on the hem of life, struggling to consolidate our weaknesses and hang on, or to creep singly up into the major folds of the garment." She draws a further line of demarcation between their "minority" status and their status as "outdoors": ". . . the difference between the concept of death and being, in fact, dead" (18). As the story moves on, one notes that it is not only "race" that matters, but also "class" and its different categories/ ranks that determine the identity of these people. *The Bluest Eye* charts several such classes of blacks living in Lorain, Ohio during the 40s. Living in a society that runs by the dominant white ideologies, these people , the marginalized "other," make themselves fit into

the roles of both the "oppressed" and the "oppressor." Alisa A. Balestra has defined this condition as "'black-on-black'" violence (1). In their blind imitation of white ideals, these people come far away from their "own," distance themselves from each other and unconsciously live an alien truth in their own home. Pecola's absurd yearning for a pair of blue eyes calls attention to a certain cause-effect relationship not only around the black community but around any similar group of people anywhere in the world because Pecola's victimization involves ". . . the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought," and that is "physical beauty" (*Bluest* 97).

Through Claudia's third person and the author's first person narratives the novel presents several groups of black people in Lorain. Though the difference between them is noticeable from the way they live their lives, look at and count others, one thing that is common to them all is their blind preference for white ideologies. In accepting the superiority of white power, the black people also accept their disadvantages without any complaints. Their "conviction" of their ugliness/ lacking ("ugliness" being the rhetoric not only of physical beauty but of the black identity in general) has been illustrated by Morrison thus:

> . . . they believed they were ugly. . . . But their ugliness was unique. . . . You looked at

> them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every *billboard*, every *movie*, every *glance*. (italics mine) "Yes," they had said. "You are right." And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it. (34)

The characters in the novel react in their own ways while dealing with such conviction of their "ugliness" and their reactions in the given circumstances help us to categorize each in a particular class, though such categorization includes neither Claudia, who is "caught between two worlds: the working-class world of Breedloves and the educated middle-class world of Geraldine," nor the three whores (China, Poland and Miss Marie) who, though socially condemned, radically deviate from the norms of dominant

culture as well as from middle class propriety and decorum (Grewal 40). The colonizing power of white culture is too pervasive to contradict; the prevailing system of accepting white aesthetics as "supreme" produces a sense of inferiority in the minorities that further degenerates to self loathing, affecting the familial bond, especially the parent-children relationship. It is because of the pervasiveness of power itself that the minorities often collude with the system and exercise it to dominate the less superior/other within their own family or community. Thus the status of the "other" keeps changing, depending on the situation or the subject position, i.e. how much superior the subject is in his/her relation to the object/other in a given circumstance. The global network of colonialism with its mechanisms of domination over the less powerful/other works as if like a chain, each "powerful" entangling the less "powerful," and in this systematized networking of power-on-power culture the women and children are the most vulnerable victims. The most privileged position in this power chain, which is informed by the race-and-class-based social structure, is occupied by the rich whites and blacks still fill disproportionately the ranks of the poorest classes in the US society. By the mid 20th century a sizable black working class and a small black middle class had began to seek their class interests,

finally bringing about Civil Rights reforms. But the benefits won over, remained confined only to those two classes of black community but did not reach out to the black underclass. Grewal has described *The Bluest Eye* as". . . a stinging critique of an educated class of blacks who, in order to avail themselves of the bourgeois privileges of a capitalist economy, have made "individuals" of themselves" (5). While describing the house of the Breedloves, the author says, "The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there *because* they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (*Bluest* 34; italics mine). The Breedloves failed to fulfil the criteria for belonging to the group of "haves" and so occupied the lowest position in the social power structure. They accept the "knowledge" of their masters as the ultimate and absolute reality. They believe that they are inferior because they are "poor" and that they are worthless because their skin colour does not match their masters'. Such acknowledgement breeds in them self-contempt and disappointment that occasionally find an outlet in the form of mutual exploitation. By grudging against each other these people "relieved the tiresomeness of poverty, gave grandeur to the dead rooms" (36). Because

they are socially powerless and because their racial identity is "devalued" (Vickroy 2), the minorities in *The Bluest Eye* go through injustice, insult, humiliation and insecurity in their day-to-day life. In "Self, Society and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction," Cynthia A. Davis examines how such oppression leads up to a "systematic denial of the reality of black lives" (323). While facing grinding oppression as routine in their daily lives, the black adults may pass their failures on to their children and in doing so they teach them "fear," "fear of being clumsy," as Pauline had transmitted on to her daughter, ". . . a fear of growing up, fear of . . . life" (*Bluest* 102).

When Pauline and Cholly came to north, everything seemed to be going well with Cholly working in a steel mill and Pauline with her housekeeping. But gradually everything got changed: Pauline started feeling discomfort in the company of northern black women and whites. These women laughed at the way Pauline dressed, made her hair or talked. Pauline reflects on her experience:

> "'*It was hard to get to know folks up here, and I missed my people. I weren't used to so much white folks. . . . Up north they was everywhere-- . . . and colored folks few and far between. Northern colored folk was different too. . . . No better than whites for meanness. They could make*

you feel just as no-count, 'cept I didn't expect it from them.

The town, "young and growing Ohio town . . . this melting pot on the lip of America" (93)--aroused in Pauline new desires that were too strong to be resisted. In order to match herself with those women in north, in order to get rid of their "goading glances," Pauline wanted new clothes and makeup. New desires needed money which Pauline could manage by taking a day worker's job, but "it did not help with Chlolly," who began complaining about Pauline's purchases: "Their marriage was shredded with quarrels. . . . Money became the focus of all their discussions, hers for clothes, his for drink. The sad thing was that Pauline did not really care for clothes and makeup. She merely wanted other women to cast *favorable glances* (italics mine) her way" (94). The desire for having a "favorable glance" now becomes the sole aspiration for Pauline, which later encompasses Pecola, her daughter. The "favorable glance" epitomizes the ideal of white feminine beauty that reduces a black woman into an object/sight, intersected by varied and multiple gazes of power--political, economical or cultural. The identity formation for a black woman involves a complex procedure in which she has to conceal her real self under the guise of an affected/"normal" one and pass through constant worries while maintaining an

order outwardly. As Katherine Mckithrick has noted, ". . . the characters in Morrison's novel continually "become": ". . . they are embodied processes rather than passive recipients of cultural subjugation" (5). Thus Pauline, while craving for "favorable glances," completes the process of embodiment: "So she became, and her process of becoming was like most of ours: she developed a hatred for things that mystified or obstructed her; acquired virtues that were easy to maintain; assigned herself a role in the scheme of things; and harked back to simpler times for gratification" (100). Instead of creating a space of her "own," she constantly negates it in the fear that any deviation on her part would perhaps unsettle the "scheme of things." Morrison's purpose in this novel is to denaturalise those icons of beauty and worth that have been regarded as "original" down the ages. She wants to rewrite the history of black woman who, to find social acceptance, has always been in a state of flight and flux. Going to the movies is a kind of wish-fulfilment for Pauline. As the light is "cut off" and the screen lights up, she can move "right on in them pictures." By imitating Jean Harlow's hairdo she tries to make herself look "just like her" (97). The dominant criteria of beauty have not only made Pauline its blind follower but also make her collude with its cultural politics. Unaware of the nature of

forces working on her, the black woman becomes a consenting victim of the existing power culture even by surrendering the best of herself, her home, and her children. In her role as an "ideal servant" (100) at the Fishers,' Pauline performs her best to fulfil the conditions of the agent-recipient relationship. She is deluded to believe that it would give her the comfort, security and power she had ever longed for. In return of her dedicated service the masters give her "what she had never had--a nick name--'Polly'" (101). Though the ten other children in the family had their nicknames, she did not have one because of a lack or "deformity" in her—her "crooked, archless foot" (88). This becomes a metaphor for all the shortcomings imposed on her by her society that includes both whites and blacks who lived by the white set of values. The vacuum in her, which could have been filled up by parental love, is now exploited by the dominant power structure for its own benefit. She is deluded to believe that she is part of the white Fisher household and shares its status, whereas in actuality she only "reigned over cupboards" and was "queen of canned vegetables" (101). Blind to the reality of her situation, Pauline ironically refuses to acknowledge Pecola as her own and instead cares more for the Fishers' baby. "In accepting the stigmatized identity," to quote Grewal, "Pauline ends up negating her daughter while maintaining a

social order (the white Fisher household) that recognizes her only as 'the ideal servant'" (31). She goes on neglecting her home and children: "More and more she neglected her house, her children, her man--they were like the afterthoughts one has just before sleep, . . ." (101). Pauline's self-identity thus gets distorted. Her loss of self is brilliantly portrayed in the "fallen tooth" episode during the picture show: "I was sitting back in my seat, and I taken a big bite of that candy, and it pulled a tooth right out of my mouth." In cherishing the idea of romantic love and beauty Pauline forgot the value of her own beauty and so regrets, "I had good teeth . . ." (98). The losing of the tooth might be taken as a figurative hint at the dreadful consequences of clinging to an alien lifestyle. The novel lays bare the sordid reality that the loss of the minority people's true identity can be ascribed not only to the "scheme of things" designed for them but also to their secret connivance with it. Remarkable is Claudia's scathing criticism of adults presenting children with blue-eyed, yellow-haired dolls on Christmas: "Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs--all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. 'Here,' they said, 'this is beautiful, and if you are on this day "worthy" you may have it'" (20). *The Bluest Eye* critiques

the process of identity formation for black people in general and black women in particular in US society that frees (read: alienates) them from their "themselves," imposing on them false values that culminate in an irreparable loss they eventually suffer. In Terry Eagleton's words, "emancipation thus involves the most difficult of all forms of liberation, freeing ourselves from ourselves" (*Ideology* xiii).

Internalization of dominant cultural ideas does not merely provide a false sense of security to the black people, but also becomes a means to affirm their class distinction. Instead of finding ways to question those ideas by cementing the bond between them, they end up at times opposing each other to move up the class ladder. The class status in America has been historically coded in white terms and the black people had no option but to join the race for a privileged status. Like Pauline, Pecola suffers negation as reflected in the gaze of others: the whole world, except her playmates and three whores who befriend her, reject her because of her dark skin and poverty. She is constantly ridiculed at school by her teachers and classmates. Disappointed, Pecola tries to find out the reason for her ugliness by sitting long before a mirror. To her the definition of beauty comes encapsulated in the form of "Shirley Temple" or "Mary Jane"

because the world has certified them as beautiful women. So she loves drinking milk out of a Shirley Temple cup and is fond of eating Mary Jane chocolate: drinking milk out of the Shirley Temple cup gives her an opportunity " to handle and see sweet Shirley's face"(*Bluest* 22) and eating Mary Jane for Pecola is "somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane" (43). Thus her manner of assimilating ideal feminine beauty in the form of Shirley Temple and Mary Jane becomes for Pecola the means of shielding her status from the gaze of white people that reflects " The total absence of human recognition" (42), or from the "uncomprehending eyes" (75) of "sugar-brown Mobile girls" (68) whose eyes "questioned nothing and asked everything" (75). In the face of great material crisis, the only veil that she tries to cover herself with, is the accession of power in the form of "ideal feminine beauty," and so she desperately craves for the possession of a pair of blue eyes. The narrator says, "Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes" in the hope that she would be "different," that Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove would stop fighting because it would be too nasty to do "bad things in front of those pretty eyes" (40). While for Pecola and Pauline the accession of power rests on absorption of the all pervading cultural icon of beauty, for others like Geraldine and Soaphead, it is through a secret

collaboration with the colonizer, as if they were the agents of the White Power. By keeping themselves at a distant and (therefore "secured") position from the rest of the community these people maintain an individual "class" order in the same black community. No wonder Geraldine tries to "get rid of the funkiness" (68) of Pecola by abusing her because she is afraid that Pecola's intrusion in Geraldine's so-called white territory would affect her social position:

> She looked at Pecola. Saw the dirty torn dress, the plaits sticking out on her head, hair matted . . . the muddy shoes. . . . She had seen this little girl (children like Pecola) all of her life . . . crowded into pews at church, taking space from the nice, neat, colored children. . . . Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. And this one had settled her house. (75)

Pecola's ugliness and poverty threaten the "inviolable world" of Geraldine, that she has built "stick by stick,"(69) and in asking Pecola to leave her house Geraldine is attempting to rid herself of her fears of her own evil, of her own unworthiness, of her own shadow of blackness" (Awkward 194). Though Pecola is counted a trespasser in the white zone, she feels comforted in her

own world, i.e. in the world of dandelions and their yellow heads, in the crack that makes her stumble and in other inanimate things. This is one of her ways to keep from the mainstream world order that disturbs her with its signs of authority. The narrator explains:

> These and other inanimate things she saw and experienced. They were real to her. She knew them. They were the codes and touchstones of the world, capable of translation and possession. She owned the crack that made her stumble; she owned the clumps of dandelions whose white heads, last fall, she had blown away; whose yellow heads, this fall, she peered into. And owning them made her part of the world, and the world a part of her. (41)

Thus Pecola creates her own space in a false world that would supposedly never hurt her or cause her to feel the "inexplicable shame ebb" (43). Apparently the network of world never reaches Pecola's periphery, though ironically the freedom of a "dangerously free man" (125) snatches away from Pecola her world and Pecola achieves her own "freedom" by "possessing" a pair of blue eyes.

Cholly's life also raises questions about the superiority of American civilization as a whole. "Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for acrap

game by his father," Cholly develops his "own perceptions and appetites," which interest him. Monogamy and the "accumulation of things," needed to be prosperous materialistically, seem to be unnatural to him. He spends most of his time in stupor, caused by his drinking habit, because "only in drink was there some break, some floodlight, and when that closed, there was oblivion"(126). Claudia's comment on Cholly's "outdoor" status is remarkable: ". . . to be slack enough to put oneself outdoors, or heartless enough to put one's own kin outdoors--that was criminal" (18). This "criminal" side of Cholly denotes both tension and relief in the community because while Cholly threatens the secured status of others, he also makes them feel self-complacent in that they lack Cholly's "criminality" and thus see themselves a bit superior to him. The growing manhood in Cholly was destroyed at the very budding stage "by two white men while he was newly but earnestly engaged in eliciting sexual pleasure from a little country girl" (37) named Darlene, just after the funeral ceremony of Aunt Jimmy was over: "There stood two white men. One with a spirit lamp, the other with a flashlight. There was no mistake about their being white; he could smell it. Cholly jumped, trying to kneel, stand, and get his pants up all in one motion. The men had long gun" (116-117). They forced Cholly to

continue: "'Go on,' they said. 'Go on and finish. And, nigger, make it good'" (37). His "simulation," the "make-believe" action which he "almost wished he could do it," upset his maleness and stamped him with a mark of "failure." In his sexual humiliation, Cholly does not look at the voyeuristic onlookers (the two white men) but at his partner with hatred because she witnesses his impotence and so he misplaces his anger. His failure to save the girl from the gaze of the tormentors, "to cover from the round moon glow of the flashlight" (119), from their "Hee hee hee hee heeee" (117) makes him furious, but instead of attacking the white hunters, who were big, white, armed he triggers his attack on "the one who bore witness to his failure, his impotence" (119). His futile attempt to prove his maleness and the status of a "hero-saviour" for the girl not only degrades him in her eyes but also kills his self-esteem. That sense of self-degradation breeds in him sullenness, irritation, contempt, violence and cruelty, the worst victim of which is his own creation, his daughter Pecola. The author explains: "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" (127). A cold, detached Cholly became "free": "Dangerously free.

Free to feel whatever he felt--fear, guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep" (125). In his total "freedom" Cholly goes beyond all social disposition; being unable to recognize the "facticity" (Davis, A. Cynthia 332) of life for blacks, he rapes Pecola, which results in her subsequent impregnation and the death of the child. Such insidious action is Cholly's reaction to what he feels at the moment, to Pecola's helpless, hopeless condition, so to say: "Why did she have to look whipped? She was a child--unburdened--why wasn't she happy?" He wants to "break her neck--but tenderly," because her "hunched back," "The clear statement of her misery," seems to accuse him (127): "And Cholly loved her . . . but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. The loved one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lover's inward eye," (159-60) Claudia comments sadly. Had Cholly been reared by his biological parents in a substantial family or if somebody (a character like Pilate in *Song of Solomon*) had nurtured him, perhaps Cholly could have utilized his drive ("freedom") for the betterment of his people. But his society has crippled him by its power politics. The character of Soaphead Church is Morrison's sarcastic comment on the educated, middle class black who fails to

create an identifiable space for the less educated. If Cholly is condemned for his act, who himself is a victim of the society, Soaphead is no less culpable in his deliberate hypocrisy, in performing his "miracle" that grants Pecola a pair of blue eyes. The consciousness, involved in maintaining a double-standard, is reflected in the letter he writes to God as self-confession: "I did what You did nnot, could not, would not do: I looked at that ugly little black girl, and I loved her. I played you. And it was a very good show! . . . . I gave her the eyes . . . the blue, blue, two blue eyes" (143). With Soaphead's counselling, Pecola "achieves" the impossible, but at the cost of her mental equilibrium. She is seen talking to herself about her new blue eyes. Her catastrophe teaches Morrison's readers "the reality of madness" (Yancy 319) that lies within the allure of whiteness. In Claudia's growing consciousness as evidenced in her loathing of "the unimaginative cleanliness" (21) in her hatred for white dolls, and also in the characterization of three whores, who never feel ashamed of being "whores in whores' clothing," and who also do not have respect for those "sugar-coated whores" (48) Morrison registers resistance to the imitation of "whiteness."

Rewriting the history of black women in her own way, Morrison is interrogating the prevailing aesthetics of

white norms, whose appeal can hardly be avoided and which distances the black woman from her family and children. While Pauline's story contributes to Pecola's insanity, Aunt Jimmy's network of women in Georgia provides a counter narrative in the form of a healing therapy for the predicament of Pauline and other black women in the north. Aunt Jimmy's women create in themselves a comfortable world by the strength of their mutual bonds. By sharing each other's sorrows, and helping each other, as evidenced in the death scene of Aunt Jimmy, these women carry "a world on their heads" (110). They experience the pain outside the realm of false security and show their resilience and stamina to the end. Thanks to their cohesion, they can transform their humiliation into something usable: ". . . they took all of that and re-created it in their own image" (109). Assimilation and internalization of dominant cultural practices cannot be the solution to the black woman's plight, and this is the lesson *The Bluest Eye* teaches us through the tragedy of Pecola. The self-conscious women in the novel behave in a different way, despite repeated threats to their identity:

> They ran the houses of white people, and knew it. When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from their victim. They beat their children with one

> hand and stole for them with the other. The hands that felled trees also cut umbilical cords. . . . They plowed all day and came home to nestle like plums under the limbs of their men. The legs that straddled a mule's back were the same ones that straddled their men's hips. And the difference was all the difference there was. (109-110)

The inner circles of strength and security enable these black women to redefine their lives. Through Aunt Jimmy and her women Morrison carves out a firm space for black women. In their mutual sharing and cooperation they can rewrite their history themselves without being engulfed by any false values. They are determined to make a new representation of themselves, they would re-create themselves in their own image, form their own distinct identity--and that would make a great difference indeed.