

True Blue: Continuum of the Fourth Reich Culture

Kasfia Yasmin Anwa*
Begum Rokeya University

Abstract

Most people, anywhere in the world, are obsessed with fair complexion, blue eyes, and blonde hair. Those who are educated are aware of the politics behind this even if they have a fascination for fair skin, consciously or unconsciously. This obsession does nothing good to mankind. It creates a kind of inferiority complex which hinders the ultimate development of human civilization and because of this many individuals fail to achieve success despite their potential. The imposed ugliness on Pecola Breedlove finally leads her to insanity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. This paper critically analyzes how Pecola's insanity ultimately represents the miserable condition of the larger part of the population trapped in an inferiority complex on account of this myth of "gaze" and politics of white ideologies. It shows how the "Fourth Reich Culture" is nurtured throughout the world even after the defeat of the third German Reich. No doubt that the British have spread this concept of White supremacy through their process of colonization but if a deep analysis is done then it will be seen that they took up this concept mainly from the Germans who claim that they are the true blue blood and, in consequence, this is nothing but a continuation of the "Fourth Reich." The Germans have been defeated in World War II but they are alive and kicking in spreading and establishing their concept of Aryan supremacy.

Keywords: gaze, panopticon, Fourth Reich, racism, true blue, beauty and ugliness

* Lecturer, Department of English, Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur

Introduction

This paper deals with the age-old obsession with the supremacy of white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes, and its adverse effect on the individual psyche. Discrimination within human societies created along with its development, which reached its peak in the recent past among the Germans as “Blue eye aristocracy,” is persistent throughout the world (Marrs 6). This White supremacy, which apparently was an outcome of British colonization but is ultimately the result of the German Reich and can be termed as the “Fourth Reich,” prevails strongly throughout the world even after the defeat of Hitler and his followers, the Nazis, in World War II. There is a long-standing conflict between the oppressed and oppressors where the latter always use the ideology of aristocracy to take advantage over the former. This aristocracy exists in different societies in different forms and hinders the development of humanity. The concept of Blue Blood has such a deep-rooted influence on the human mind and works so powerfully that a large number of people become entrapped within it knowingly or unknowingly. And, in most cases, this entrapment brings immense sufferings. In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, we see the damnation of Pecola Breedlove due to her obsession with blue eyes. She has been told too many times in her life that she is ugly and she can never come out of this complex because she sees others praising the Whites for no better reason than that they are “White” (Morrison 14). This obsession makes her overlook the main factors which establish the Whites as the superior. Pecola is only an example but there are too many Pecolas around the world who believe they are ugly and inferior as they do not have fair skin, and this complex brings nothing good in their life. This paper will deal with the politics of White ideology, also termed as the Fourth Reich Culture, and how this culture causes a permanent psychological damage in human beings.

Weapons of White Ideology and its Victims

This section will isolate and examine extracts from *The Bluest Eye* to show how white ideology operates in different ways by using the media and the education process as its weapon to create inferiority complex among non-white people and hinder their progress. By analyzing these extracts, it will be easier to describe how the concept of white beauty leads Pecola Breedlove to insanity and establish the main argument of this paper.

The novel starts with a primer which the children memorize in their childhood as a part of their learning process. The primer gives a description of a happy family which consists of two loving parents, father and mother and two children, one of them with blonde hair and blue eyes. From the very beginning of the life, children start to have the idea that a happy family is always a white family and they long for this “white happiness” (Morrison 1). They unknowingly start to hate their own blackness. Not only the primer but also the icon of Shirley Temple and Mary Jane contribute a lot to damage to the children's psyche. To Pecola, eating Mary Jane

candy is a kind of transformation which brings her one step nearer to fulfilling her desire to be like Mary Jane. It shows that she accepts white superiority in every sense. To Pecola, “To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane” (Morrison 38).

The adults are also trapped within this politics of the white domination. There are a lot of examples in this novel. It is seen that Mr. Henry uses the name of Greta Garbo and Ginger Rogers, two white American female actresses to praise Claudia and Frieda. He says, “Hello there. You must be Greta Garbo, and you must be Ginger Rogers” (Morrison 10) in their first meeting. Beauty or goodness is always judged in the scale of dominating white concepts and the black people help them to do so. The parents always present their children with dolls that are white and have blue eyes, blonde hair. So, from the very beginning of their life they are taught to believe that white is beautiful, white is adorable, and white is superior through these white icons like Greta Garbo, Ginger Rogers, Betty Grable, or Shirley Temple (Morrison 10). It is seen that Claudia does not like this praise or appreciation for the whites but she cannot do anything without destroying the white dolls as the majority of the society accept White as superior. She says,

I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me. 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. (14)

But a deeper analysis shows that the ugliness or inferiority complex is created by those who are economically powerful and impose this ugliness upon the other only to subjugate them (Ryan 45). Domination upon them is working both economically and psychologically:

They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. (Morrison 28)

This ugliness entangled them so powerfully that they start to believe they are ugly. They do not even have any confusion or question in their mind regarding this. They accept their lower positions as though they deserve it and they are not worthy of any better position. It is actually the power of the social structure or ideology (Barry 157) which shapes the ugliness in the Breedlove family and their belief in that ugliness. They take this ugliness as their clothing. The movie, advertisements, and everything in the society praise the White as beautiful which proves to them that they are ugly:

Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction . . . 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. “Yes,” they had said. “You are right.” (28)

Movies change the life of Pauline Breedlove completely. She fantasizes her world with the idea of romantic love which she sees in the movies and also learns to believe that only the white are beautiful. She becomes so obsessed with whiteness that she cannot love her own daughter. She would rather love the baby of the white family where she serves as a servant. She wants to escape from her blackness and so

[S]he went to the movies instead. There in the dark her memory was refreshed, and she succumbed to her earlier dreams. Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another – physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. ... She was never able, after her education in the movie, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full from the silver screen. (Morrison 95)

When Pecola sees that everyone around her hates her because she is black, and therefore not beautiful, she becomes obsessed with white beauty, especially with blue eyes. The shopkeeper, though he himself is a marginalized person, does not look at Pecola for her exceptional ugliness and hesitates to touch her. Pecola wants the attention and love of the people, and wants to get rid of this reluctance. She starts to believe that if she could have blue beautiful eyes, nothing bad would happen to her or in front of her. She thinks that

[I]f her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights – if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. ... 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.” (34)

She will be able to see the beauty of the world through her beautiful eyes and for her nice eyes everyone will call her a beautiful girl. Pecola does not get her mother's attention and love because of her blackness. Her blue eyes will give it to her. So she starts to pray for blue eyes and wants a miracle to happen.

Pecola sees herself through others' eyes. She believes that she is ugly as the Other sees her as ugly and she wants to be seen as beautiful by the Other. It is the gaze which creates one's identity. Pecola is obviously a victim of “White Gaze.” This white gaze dominates the concept of beauty completely. It works so powerfully that those who have questions about this standard also become confused after seeing the attitude of society. Societal discipline binds them to believe that they are not white; they just do not have the standards for being beautiful. In the novel, it is seen that Claudia is not obsessed with white beauty but still, she has to place herself among

the “lesser” (57). From a structuralist's point of view, every meaning is created through the binaries. But the problem is that in the politics of binary, one becomes superior or positive and the other becomes lesser (Tyson 224). It raises a question in Claudia's mind:

We were lesser. Nicer, brighter, but still lesser. Dolls we could destroy, but we could not destroy the honey voices of parents and aunts, the obedience in the eyes of our peers, the slippery light in the eyes of our teachers when they encountered Maureen Peals of the world. What was the secret? What did we lack? (57)

The acceptance and obsession of white beauty makes Pauline a permanent slave of the white people and leads Pecola to insanity. Claudia does not accept it but the discipline and structure of the society confuse her. Cholly Breedlove and Sammy accept the ugliness and become violent in their behavior. The black schoolboys who tease Pecola ultimately want to hide their hatred for their own selves by teasing her. So, it is clear that almost all the characters suffer because of the white ideologies of the society. But instead of questioning these ideologies, they accept them and instead, turn their hatred of blackness onto themselves.

True Blue: A Means of Domination

History of mankind is the history of survival, fighting against inimical animals, nature's adversity, and other existing enemy groups or tribes. With the growth of civilization, the first two factors have decreased greatly. But the enmity against a group of people arising out of racial, religious, regional, or linguistic differences are still very much existent and dangerously persistent in the modern world. The Fourth Reich culture is the outcome of racism, religious vindication, and extreme nationalist ideology (Marrs 57-58). During World War II, the Nazis, under Hitler's leadership, in the name of German nationalism led the so-called True Blue Conception to its culminating point. The term “Ethnic Cleansing,” though coined recently, was evident throughout history (Marrs 327-328). This term was much used to talk about the recent past political scenario of East Europe but in contemporary history, the perfect example of “Ethnic Cleansing” is the Nazis' activities in World War II under Hitler who, perhaps most desperately and in the most hateful way, initiated upholding the so-called conception of True Blue (Marrs 184). But this concept of the Aryan race is used by the British colonizers; also later on by America and many other countries (Marrs 25).

Nazis were strongly influenced by Darwin's theory in his book *On the Origin of Species*. He suggests that human beings evolved from more creative creatures and some races have developed further than others (Francis 44-45). It gives a scientific mask to the concept of race distinction and at the same time gives space to question the equality of all human beings. James Joll explained the relationship between Darwinism and racism in his book *Europe Since 1870*:

Charles Darwin, the English naturalist whose book *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, and *The Descent of Man*, which followed in 1871, launched controversies which affected many branches of European ... The ideas of Darwin, and of some of his contemporaries such as the English philosopher Herbert Spencer ... were rapidly applied to questions far removed from the immediate scientific ones... The element of Darwinism which appeared most applicable to the development of society was the belief that the excess of population over the means of support necessitated a constant struggle for survival in which it was the strongest or the 'fittest' who won. From this it was easy for some social thinkers to give a moral content to the notion of the fittest, so that the species or races which did survive were those morally entitled to do so. (102-103)

Being influenced by this theory, Nazi German started to expand the idea of aristocracy and Hitler focused on issues like “natural selection,” “selective mating,” and “the struggle for survival between the races,” which are used dozens of times in Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (Francis 29). Hitler's wish was to fill Germany with people who were “white-skinned, blue-eyed, fair-haired, or pure Nordic people” (Marrs 20). He believed that the Aryans are the master race and they are the true Germans. Hitler said that one of the main reasons behind Germany's defeat in the First World War was that the pure German race had been weakened through marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans.

After a lot of bloodshed, the Allies defeated the Axis powers in World War II and the Third Reich was dissolved. But what change this result has brought is really very complicated. The Allies won a victory against the concept of the Aryan Race with the intention of abolishing white supremacy. But the result has been the opposite. The United States emerged as the foremost superpower. The United Kingdom also practiced its power through colonization. Both of these powerful countries have adopted the concept of Aryanism to dominate others and its effect is more devastating than the other three Reich. This is the “Fourth Reich,” which destroys or hampers too many lives in different ways (Marrs 329-330). By using their hegemonic power British colonizers have established that White is superior to any other race, only White is beautiful, adorable, and attractive (Barry 158). It is not that ethnic cleansing has been abolished or that war and bloodshed are uncommon in this modern era, but with the power of ideology, politics of language, and mainly through media, these countries cause so many disasters throughout the world that its effect is no way less horrible than the actual war.

Examples can be seen everywhere in the world. In almost all religious books and myths, the gods and goddesses are described as beautiful and all are fair in complexion. The education system is also completely based on white ideology. Books and art also reflect the white ideology. Not much material from the non-whites' perspective can be found. In *The Bluest Eye*, it is seen that the children are memorizing the primer which has no similarity with their real life. From a very

tender age, they start to believe that white is happiness, white is nice. This results in self-hatred and inferiority complex among them.

Media is the most powerful weapon which is used by the Whites against the non-whites. Nowadays, it is very common to see advertisements which foreground the ideas that, with fair skin, one can get lucrative jobs and have a successful career. This is a newer form of persuasion as previously, the focus was only on being well-liked. Billboards, movies, even candy and mugs, bear the icon of white beauty. It is almost impossible to imagine any beautiful person who is not white. This representation of white beauty in movies and in other media causes psychological damage in such a way that later it becomes quite impossible to come out of this. Pauline Breedlove becomes detached from her family due to her obsession and turns into a permanent slave in her mind (Morrison 95). As there is appreciation only for the whites, the non-whites have no other option but to accept it. Claudia does not like it, and yet she understands that she can do nothing against her family members' beliefs or against society (Morrison 34).

There are many reasons behind the expansion of the idea of white supremacy and aristocracy, the main one being domination. The powerful countries use this concept to secure their power and it is helpful for them if the subjugated people themselves start to believe that they should be dominated, that they should be in a lesser position. The powerful countries also want to dominate others for their own economic interests. The media also have an economic interest in expanding the idea. Different types of beauty products which are used to attain a fair complexion are directly related to this business strategy (Marrs 210-211).

In this modern period, domination is carried out in different ways, ways that cannot be identified so easily. Pecola desires the bluest eye; she and her mother become obsessed with white beauty and believe that whites are superior; they are praised only because they are white. But Pecola and Pauline fail to see the reality that the economic status, the social structure, and the submissive nature of non-white people make the whites superior. But it is not their fault: they are brought up to think like this (Ryan 47). Herein lies the politics of white supremacy.

Conclusion

Pecola is a portrait painted by Morrison – only one of the victims from among millions. But she is not the lone one. She represents the class that has been suffering from the impact of the so-called idea of aristocracy that emerged out of the conspiracy to exploit a majority people by a minority group. This idea of aristocracy has a very deep-rooted origin in the history of mankind. American and British colonizers actually carry out the blue blood concept of the German Reich in more elaborate ways and more successfully. This success is ultimately the success of Germans whose concept has been adopted worldwide even though they were themselves defeated. But the only sorrow of mankind is that this success causes the doom of humanity, human equality, and human development in a greater sense.

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