



## House and Family : Outdoors in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye

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# House and Family: Outdoors in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Lingling Wang

## ◆Abstract

The African American Nobel Prize laureate Toni Morrison had been writing continuously during her life. *The Bluest Eye* is her debut work, which deals with black people's identity issues. It tells a story about an eleven-year-old black girl who longs for blue eyes because she wants people to love her but finally goes mad. Morrison successfully uses her vivid imagination and plots to show readers the life conditions of black people and indict the ghettoed situation of black society within the majority white world. Generally speaking, a house should give them a sense of security, belonging, and safety. In the case of African Americans, a house may also provide the opportunity for building a healthy family, which may provide them with the power to build a strong, positive identity. Family experience can have a considerable impact on an individual's growth and adult life. Family is an essential theme of this novel, Morrison describes the condition of all main characters' families, and their family experiences greatly influence their psychology. Studying families' interrelationships is essential in understanding the black family's history and development. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the family relationship in exploring the novel. This paper will start from an analysis of the *Dick and Jane* reader, then analyze the form of families in this novel. Also, the impact of the Dick and Jane family model on the characters in this novel will be analyzed. Throughout these analyses, this article will examine Morrison's views about the Dick and Jane pattern family and what she believes to be an ideal family. This paper will also focus on the outdoors or the near homeless people, like Pecola, throughout the paper to figure out the root of her misfortune.

**Keywords** : *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison, Family, Home, Outdoors

## Introduction

Toni Morrison was an African-American writer whose works focused on the life of black American people. She had written eleven novels in her life, and all her books concern the destiny of her people. *The Bluest Eye* is Morrison's first novel, published in 1970. *The Bluest Eye* tells a story about an eleven-year-old black girl who longs for blue eyes because she wants people to love her. Sadly, the poor girl can only get her blue eyes in her imaginary world. *The Bluest Eye* brings a black girl to the public in the literature world for the first time. Before Morrison, there were numerous black male writers, such as Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright, whose works had a profound impact on Afri-

can-American literature. However, their writings are mainly concerned with the fate of black males. Children and women are stereotyped in the work of black men. Before *The Bluest Eye*, black girls were invisible in black literature. Morrison creatively makes Pecola, a little black girl, the novel's heroine, raise concern for the most vulnerable members of society. Despite Pecola's efforts to reach the white beauty standard to get attention from others, she ends up being invisible within her community.

Morrison's childhood experience inspires the main plot about a black girl who wants to have blue eyes in this novel. One of her girlfriends told her that she wanted blue eyes. Morrison felt shocked and angry about the unreasonable desire. Morrison wondered "who made her feel that it was better to be a freak

than what she was” (206). It is difficult for Morrison to understand why a black girl would wish for blue eyes when she was a child. Morrison was born into a working family, and her parents moved to Lorain, Ohio, for a better life. Though her family was not wealthy, her parents never let her feel inadequate. Her parents filled her childhood with black songs and folk stories, which later became the writing materials of her works. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison explained how a little black girl gets the destructive idea of changing her eye color and points out that Pecola's tragedy is rooted in her family and the community in which her family lives. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation set all enslaved black people free. However, black people were still spiritual slaves of white people at that time. They were free from slavery, but discrimination was still dreadfully evident in the white-dominated society.

Cholly's rape is not the only reason that leads to Pecola's madness. Pecola's dysfunctional family is one of the primary reasons that cause Pecola's insanity. In an interview, Morrison pointed out that the nuclear family is not strong enough to raise children healthily, and she claimed in the afterwords of this novel, “you need a whole community to raise a child” (206). Morrison used her unique writing skills to describe the life of the black community and show readers the dilemma black people face in the white-dominated society. Meanwhile, Morrison gave her answer for black people to build self-confidence and keep their black tradition. A healthy family is vital for children to grow healthily, but only one family is not enough. It needs a whole community to bring up a child. Therefore, other families are equally crucial for answering how Pecola's tragedy happens. If black people want to survive in a white-dominated society, they should build a supportive community composed of healthy families. At the same time, she called on black people to reflect on themselves and rebuild their self-identity by making a healthy traditional black family. Family as a social unit has an essential effect on individuals. Studying families' interrelationships is essential in understanding the black family's history and development. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the family relationship in exploring the novel.

## Dick and Jane

The novel starts with an excerpt from the *Dick and Jane* reader, written by William S. Gray and Zerna

Sharp. The reader was used to teach children to read from the 1930s to the 1960s in America. The background of this novel is set in the 1940s, while this reader was popular in primary school. If only look at the text, people will find that there is no clear description of the family's race. Nevertheless, even people who do not know the *Dick and Jane* reader will consider Dick and Jane are from a white family. The *Dick and Jane* reader is considered a tool white man uses to oppress black people. The heroine, Pecola, finds her life is different from Dick and Jane's. She is confused and struggled, and finally lost her mind. However, she does not know that the ideal family in the reader is not realistic for a white family either. According to Radhi Shaimaa, “after careful reading to the quoted text, you can find what you assume to be the perfect world is just a fake, i.e. you find an American family where mother, father, Dick and Jane live happily, but at the same, Jane is alone. No member of this happy family answers her need and play with her. Then, the white culture is just a veneer without essence” (7). Carole Kismaric and Marvin Heiferman also confirms this condition in their paper, “by the early 1960s, it was clear to almost everyone—including the first-graders who were reading the books—that Dick and Jane were out of touch. No one looked or talked like Dick and Jane. No one got along with their brother or sister larger numbers. Daddies were dying in rice paddies in Southeast Asia. The world of Dick and Jane was coming apart at the seams. No. No. NO! Say it isn't so” (134).

The Dick and Jane family is too good to be true, and the early versions excluded black families though the later version adds a black family, which is just a black version of the white middle-class family. This reader gradually drops out of use in the late 1960s, while people realize that society needs to embrace different families rather than promote an ideal family pattern. In this novel, no family fits the ideal pattern. The black family is, needless to say, and the white family has their problems too. The Dick and Jane family has more effect on minority children who try to identify with the book's characters.

Morrison used the *Dick and Jane* excerpt three times in primer but in a different format. Morrison also used the excerpt as subtitles at the beginning of each chapter to indicate what will happen in the continuing part.

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has

a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play. (3)

Here is the house it is green and white it has a red door it is beautiful here is the family mother father dick and Jane live in the green-and-white house... play jane play (4)

Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddooritis-veryprettyhereisthefamily...playjaneplay (4)

Most people consider the change of the three versions refers to the breakdown of Pecola's mental condition. This paper believes those changes are related to the different life experiences of people from different classes and races. Roseman states, "Morrison's three versions correlate to the three different families presented in the text—the Fishers, the MacTeers, and the Breedloves, respectively." He adds, "The different iterations of the passage demonstrate Morrison's critique and commentary concerning the damaging effects of the master narrative's prescriptive details for a successful live" (3). The change of the three versions can show how black people or mulatto are confused by the ideal white family model. Black families and their lives are nothing like what the *Dick and Jane* reader depicts. Actually, no black people are living in the green-and-white house. Usually, black people can hardly own a house. Innocent children like Pecola or Claudia will fall into trouble to identify themselves while they have mother, father, sister, or brother, they do not live in the green-and-white house. However, the ending of the two girls is somewhat different. Racial discrimination is one reason they share the same destiny, but a dysfunctional family is the dividing factor.

The first version is written in the standard format, and readers can easily understand it. The construction

of the first edition is like the traditional white middle class, and their life mode is easy to understand. Their lives are believed to be happy, even though not all white families are wealthy and happy. The image of a white middle-class family is always a family that lives happily in a beautiful big house. The second version moves every punctuation mark, which makes it difficult to read. It is like black families who stick to their black tradition. Their lives are far from perfect, but they are happy. Even sometimes, the white culture overwhelmed them. They always know who they are and what they should do. The third one, with no punctuation and spacing between words, is hard to read and confusing. It is like the life condition of black and mix-blood families that cannot nurture any love in their families. All family members in the Breedloves suffer from being poor. At the same time, they do not know how to love, so they cannot support each other. They surrender to the white culture but only find themselves neither accepted by the white society nor by the black community. A mix-blood family, such as Mrs. Geraldine's and Soaphead Church's, are relatively wealthy and probably live a similar life to a traditional white family. However, their families lack an essential element to building a healthy family. The adverse effects show on their mental health, and they deal with their psychological problems by finding themselves an outlet.

## White Families

Although the Dick and Jane family penetrates this novel, Morrison was not an advocate of this kind of family. As mentioned before, this pattern was unrealistic at that time. Also, America is a multicultural and multiracial country, and one happy family cannot represent all American families. Two white families have been described in this novel. They are the two families Pauline has worked for. They are all white and wealthy families, but Pauline's attitude towards these two families is quite different.

The narrator does not tell readers the name of the first white family because they are not worth remembering to Pauline. Pauline describes them as "a home of a family of slender means and nervous, pretentious ways" (118). Pauline despises them very much, but she would continue working for them if Cholly did not come over her workplace drunkenly. Pauline's contempt can be referred from her self-narration, "but

I holt on to my jobs, even though working for that woman was more than a notion. It was not so much her meanness as just simpleminded. Her whole family was. Couldn't get along with one another worth nothing. You'd think with a pretty house like that and all the money they could holt on to, they would enjoy one another" (119). Even though they are white and better off than her, She still thinks this family is miserable. While the white woman forces her to choose between Cholly and her work, Pauline chooses Cholly. Even Cholly cannot provide her with the money to buy gas, she still loves Cholly at that time. She thinks the white women do not know what love is, as she says, "She married a man with a slash in his face instead of a mouth. So how could she understand?" (121). Pauline thinks this family is a mess, and their family has no love. However, it is what she felt before she has her baby and before her own family became a mess.

The second white family Pauline works for is the Fishers. Pauline gets this job shortly after Pecola is born because she has to earn money to support her family. With the pressure of the Great Depression, Cholly gives up on finding a job and always comes home drunk. Pauline starts to ignore her own family and devotes herself to the Fishers. It is a turning point in her life. When working for the Fishers, she discovers that this family has every component to build her dream family, like those families in the movies she has watched. Pauline likes this white family very much. As the narrator says: "It was her good fortune to find a permanent job in the home of a well-to-do family whose members were affectionate, appreciative, and generous" (127).

The changing scenery on Claudia and Frieda's way of searching for Pecola shows a vast difference in living conditions between the white middle class and blacks.

We walked down tree-lined streets of soft gray houses leaning like tired ladies... The streets changed; houses looked more sturdy, their paint was newer, porch posts straighter, yards deeper. Then came brick houses set well back from the street, fronted by yards edged in shrubbery clipped into smooth cones and balls of velvet green. The lakefront houses were the loveliest. Garden furniture, ornaments, windows like shiny eyeglasses, and no sign of life. The backyards of these houses fell away in green slopes down to a

strip of sand, and then the blue Lake Erie, lapping all the way to Canada. The orange-patched sky of the steel-mill section never reached this part of town. This sky was always blue. (105)

Although the Fishers live in the same town as the protagonist, their house and living condition are quite different. Their windows are shining, and the sky over their house is always blue. The Fishers live in "a large white house with the wheelbarrow full of flowers" (101). Everything seems perfect in this family. The house is white and clean, and the people are affectionate and kind. They are much like the family depicted in the *Dick and Jane* reader. Pauline feels the power, praise, and luxury in this household. More importantly, the Fishers offer her an opportunity to be a "mother" of white children. However, if reading carefully, readers will find out it is a family with a white girl and her housekeeper living in a large white house. Pauline usually works twelve to sixteen hours a day. It can be speculated from those clues that the Fishers are not home mostly, and the little girl stays with her housekeeper most of the time. When Pecola visits the Fishers' house, the Fishers are not there. When Pecola accidentally turns over a pie and burns herself, Pauline scolds Pecola and soothes the white Fisher girl. Pauline functions as a mother in the Fishers other than in her own family. Like Pecola tries to get her imaginary blue eye, Pauline tries to get her imaginary family in the Fisher's house. Pauline appreciates the praise from the Fishers, "we'll never let her go. We could never find anybody like Polly. She will not leave the kitchen until everything is in order. Really, she is the ideal servant" (127).

As mentioned above, no family fits the Dick and Jane pattern, including the white families appearing in this novel. All families in *The Bluest Eye* have their flaws. The mainstream white culture, the mass media, and everything around the black people blind their eyes and make them fail to see the truth. Pauline thinks her family is hateful because they are ugly and poor. Pauline considers herself a family member of the Fishers. This is because they are kind enough to give her a nickname, and they offer her almost everything she has wished to have. However, she forgets the most important thing that she is just a servant and nothing in the Fishers' house belongs to her. She is lost in the vanity that the Fishers offered her and does not realize

that she is just an ideal servant rather than a family member to the Fishers, and what she does makes her own family fall apart.

## Geraldine and Soaphead Church

Besides the black family, Morrison also introduced two mulatto characters and their families to readers. Geraldine is a middle-class brown woman, and she is the representative of a specific type of woman. "These particular brown girls from Mobile and Aiken are not like some of their sisters. They are not fretful, nervous, or shrill; they do not have lovely black necks that stretch as though against an invisible collar; their eyes do not bite" (80). It is hard for black people to enter the middle class at that time. But if black women have some "luckiness" to bear mix-blood children with white men, their children may get the chance to become a middle class member. Geraldine is one of these women, and she marries a white man to keep the whiteness even though she does not love her husband. On the other hand, white men do not love those kinds of the women either.

Certain men watch them, without seeming to, and know that if such a girl is in his house, he will sleep on sheets boiled white, hung out to dry on juniper bushes, and pressed flat with a heavy iron. There will be pretty paper flowers decorating the picture of his mother, a large Bible in the front room. ... Her hips assure them that she will bear children easily and painlessly. (84)

For a white man who marries a brown woman, what he needs is a woman who can take care of his house and bear him a baby. Geraldine is the perfect housewife and has given birth to a boy for her white husband. Her family is comparable to a white family, except that she is not white. Geraldine is overjoyed with her family because she has a lovely home, a white husband, and a black son. However, she does not love her husband and her son. She spends most of her time in the household or staying with her cat. She loves her cat, which is as neat and quiet as she is. On the other hand, "Geraldine did not talk to her son, soothe him, or indulge him in kissing bouts" (84). For Geraldine, her son is more like a necessary component to building a perfect family than her child.

Geraldine's son, Louis Junior, is an average little boy who wants to play with other boys, no matter their skin color. The narrator describes how he wanted to play with black children as the narrator says, "Junior used to long to play with the black boys. More than anything in the world he wanted to play King of the Mountain and have them push him down the mound of dirt a droll over him" (85). It is human nature that children want to play with people of their kind, but Geraldine does not allow him. Having a well comfortable middle-class life, Geraldine does not want to slip down the social hierarchy. She teaches her son how to deal with blacks and wants him not to risk their positions by associating with niggers. Geraldine has to make sure her son knows the difference that shows they are superior to niggers, so she keeps telling him that he is different from other black boys.

Since Louis Junior is not white, he cannot play with white children either. So, he ends up lonely, for he does not have many friends, and his mother seldom talks to him. The only outlet he can find is to abuse her mother's cat. He hates the cat because his mother's affection all goes to the cat. However, he does not have much chance to disabuse the cat because her mother is seldom out of the house. One day, he finds another objective to abuse—Pecola. He allures Pecola to his house and abuses the cat in front of Pecola to make her terrified and scream. He enjoys abusing the cat and bullying the little black girl. When his mother returns home, he accuses Pecola of killing the cat. Geraldine says to Pecola, "you nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house" (90).

Geraldine is not only angry about the cat. More importantly, Pecola reminds Geraldine of her black community in which she never wants to exist. "She had seen this little girl all her life... Hair uncombed, dresses falling apart, shoes untied and caked with dirt. They had stared at her with great uncomprehending eyes. Eyes that questioned nothing and asked everything" (89-90). To her, blacks are niggers. Brown women like Geraldine know they are not white, so they will go all out to set and keep clear boundaries with niggers. Even though they have tried their best to wash away their black features, deep down, they are afraid of their black origin. So, she is afraid of girls like Pecola and forbids her son to play with black children.

In Pecola's eyes, Geraldine is a decent woman living in a beautiful house. When she visits Geraldine's house,

she wonders how beautiful the house is, and she wants to watch the house slowly. However, there is no nice lady in this house. What she gets is a storm of abuse. Pecola has been denied all her life, so she is very vulnerable, and Geraldine's mean words break her heart badly. Then Pecola sees how gently Geraldine treats the injured black cat with blue eyes. It is similar to the scene in which Pecola's mother comforted the blue-eyed white girl. It makes her even more convinced that she needs blue eyes to get people to love her. While Pecola cannot change her eyes, it is possible to try changing their culture. It is precisely what the character Geraldine tries to do. She is described as part of a group that works to deny their race by suppressing what the narrator calls funkiness. Pecola is the scapegoat of characters like Geraldine. Only by differentiating themselves from black people like Pecola can they feel themselves becoming whiter than before. Pecola's ugliness makes them more beautiful. Claudia notes in the story's epilogue, "all of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us" (203).

Geraldine and Pauline have a lot in common though they have different skin colors and belong to different classes. Firstly, both of them like cleanness. Geraldine is lucky to marry a white man who can offer her a middle-class life, so she can enjoy doing household in her own house. She is more fortunate than Pauline in this sense. However, similar to Pauline's situation, the white man marries her because she is good at housework. Pauline also finds her place in the Fishers. They all spend most of their time in the household rather than caring for their family, especially their children. Secondly, both of them try to be more like white women, except Pauline realizes she has no way to be like a white woman and accepts the concept that she is ugly when her front teeth fall. Lastly, their indifference to their children causes their children's mental illness. Her attitude toward black people confuses Louis Junior, who is a colored boy and is not allowed to play with black boys. However, his lighter skin gives him more power than nigger children and enables him to bully. Pecola, a black girl from a low-income black family, is more vulnerable than Junior. When bullied, she has no choice but to suffer in silence. Even if she turns to her mother for help, her mother will do nothing for her. This situation is revealed by the conversation between

Pecola and her imaginary friend. When Pecola tells her mother about Cholly's first rape, her mother does nothing for her. When Cholly has raped her for the second time, Pecola does not tell her mother because she knows her mother will not believe her.

Soaphead Church, whose real name is Elihue Micah Whitcomb, is a light-skinned West Indian. He is a misanthrope and pedophile. His perversity is related to his family tradition, which they are proud of. He is raised in a family proud of their mixed blood. His family members always tried to marry other light-skinned people, and if unable to do so, they just married each other. Intermarriage causes some harmful effects on their offspring. Those adverse effects show on Soaphead Church's grandfather, a religious fanatic, and one of his sons becomes a schoolmaster known for the precision of his justice and the control of his violence. His family members are good at self-deception, so they will not blame the flaw on the white part of their blood.

Soaphead Church's mother, a half-Chinese, died soon after he was born. Since his mother died early, he has no chance to be nurtured by his mother. He is raised by his father and "had nonlife under his father's belt" (170). Without an accompaniment with a mother and living in fear of being whipped by his father, he soon learns the art of self-deception and develops a fascination and revulsion for dirt and decay. Also, he learned that he is a misanthrope when he was young. His name first appears in the conversation between Claudia and Frieda, and Claudia says Soaphead Church scared her. It shows his image in a little girl's mind. Though he claims he is a misanthrope, he has a particular interest in little girls. Since he is good at self-deception, he can always find a good reason for his behavior. In his letter to God, he explains that his molestation of little girls is out of love. He argues, "if I'd been hurting them, would they have come back?" (179). When he wishes the dog to die, he explains his wish as humane without realizing it is just his selfishness.

Soaphead Church once had a chance to build a family with Velma, a girl with intense affection and zest for life, and she tried to change him once by marrying him. Velma is to rescue him from the "nonlife" he had learned on the flat side of his father's belt. When she finds out how important his melancholy is to him, she chooses to leave him. Soaphead Church, too, lives in his imaginary world and refuses to accept reality. Velma's leave left a cave in Soaphead's heart, and his

father fixed it by reminding him of the family's reputation and Velma's questionable one. Though Soaphead Church is well educated, he cannot find a good job like a white man. A white man with the same education level could find a decent job in a big city. Because only a few white-collar occupations are available to black people, regardless of their noble bloodlines, in America, irrespective of their obsession with white blood, they cannot be accepted as white in the white-dominated world. However, it does not bother him too much. He finally finds a suitable job for himself—a minister. He is not interested in earning money and dislikes touching people. Also, this job made people consider his unnatural behavior as a supernatural thing. The complicated family environment and life experience made him a complicated person. He is described as a misanthrope who likes to molest little girls, a person who has a revulsion for dirt and decay but likes to collect used stuff. This contradiction occurs because he is a hypocrite. He is good at making an excuse for his abnormal behavior, and his profession makes people incline to believe he is eccentric because of religion.

Like Geraldine, Soaphead Church is another example of how the obsession with whiteness can ruin black people's life. Soaphead Church even thinks he is more excellent than God by giving Pecola blue eyes. When desperate Pecola asks him to give her blue eyes, he thinks it was at once the most fantastic and logical petition he had ever received. He agrees with Pecola that she will become beautiful with blue eyes. Then he decides to "help" Pecola by coaxing her to poison the dog that bothered him for a long time. In his letter to God, he tells about this case and claims he is better than God. Soaphead Church has no holy power, but things happened just like what he tells God. "I, I have caused a miracle. I gave her the eyes. I gave her the blue, blue, two blue eyes. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right out of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after" (182). However, it is not a miracle at all. Soaphead Church can predict Pecola's destiny because he knows society is hostile to girls like Pecola. Like Geraldine and Soaphead, Lorain's black people demonize other blacks—the three whores and poor black families like the Breedloves. That is why he is confident that Pecola will get her blue eyes. In one sense, he helps Pecola to get her imaginary blue eyes. Otherwise, Pecola may be crazy without her blue eyes.

Geraldine and Soaphead Church's cases show that white blood cannot bring them happiness. In some sense, it makes their spiritual life more miserable. Their white blood gives them the false illusion that they are superior to niggers. However, they are rejected by the white community and are reluctant to be connected with the black community. As a result, they are marginalized by the boundary which they set to differentiate the nigger and the colored people.

## The Breedloves and the MacTeers

The Breedloves and the MacTeers are the two core families in this novel. The analysis of the two families is essential to explain the tragedy that happens to Pecola. The two families live in the same community and are both black and poor. The differences between the two families lead them to different destinies. At the beginning of the story, Cholly burns down their rented house. So Pecola has to live with the MacTeers for a while. The MacTeers take her in and treat her the same as her daughters. The economic condition of the Breedloves is worse than The MacTeers. They never have a house of their own. The first house the Breedloves live in is burned down by Cholly, and the second one is a storefront.

The large "store" area was partitioned into two rooms by beaver board planks that did not reach to the ceiling. There was a living room, which the family called the front room, and the bedroom, where all the living was done. In the front room were two sofas, an upright piano, and a tiny artificial Christmas tree which had been there, decorated and dust-laden, for two years. The bedroom had three beds: an arrow iron bed for Sammy, fourteen years old, another for Pecola, eleven years old, and a double bed for Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove. In the center of the bedroom, for the even distribution of heat, stood a coal stove. Trunks, chairs, a small end table, and a cardboard "wardrobe" closet were placed around the walls. The kitchen was in the back of this apartment, a separate room. There were no bath facilities. Only a toilet bowl, inaccessible to the eye, if not the ear, of the tenants. (34-35)

It is clear that their economies are not well. How-



ever, their poverty is not only caused by the great depression. As Claudia says, black people will try hard to buy a house. The Breedloves are different. They have no interest in the family. The omniscient narrator says, "they lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (36). In the beginning, The Breedloves still have some hope for their life. When they move into the new rented house, they buy a new sofa for themselves. However, the sofa arrived ripped open, and the store will not compensate them. They accept the sofa unwillingly because they have no courage to fight against the white man. Suddenly, the house lost its appeal, and both Pauline and Cholly put their energy into something else. The mother, Pauline, spends most of her time doing household in a white family. The father, Cholly, is always drunk. What is worse, Cholly has burned down their rented house and makes their children become "outdoors". According to Claudia, a house is a critical standard to define whether a person is "outdoors" or not. Claudia also shows her fear of being "outdoors", she says, "Outdoors, we knew, was the real terror of life" (17).

A house can show the family's economic condition and race too. For example, white people always live in nice big houses. On the other hand, black people can hardly own a house, and even if they do have one, it will be dark and cold.

Propertied black people spent all their energies, all their love, on their nests. Like frenzied, desperate birds, they overdecorated everything; fussed and fidgeted over their hard-won homes; canned, jellied, and preserved all summer to fill the cupboards and shelves; they painted, picked, and poked at every corner of their houses. And these houses loomed like hothouse sunflowers among the rows of weeds that were the rented houses. Renting blacks cast furtive glances at these owned yards and porches, and made firmer commitments to buy themselves "some nice little old place." In the meantime, they saved, and scratched, and piled away what they could in the rented hovels, looking forward to the day of property. (16)

Black people will put all their energies into earning a house. Like the MacTeers, they are trying their best to live better, even though they are poor. Nevertheless,

the Breedloves are different. While Cholly is always drunk, Pauline puts all her energies into the Fisher's house. As Claudia says, they are "heartless enough to put one's own kin outdoors" (17). Putting one's family outdoors is unreasonable, even for poor black people. Even a nine-year-old girl knows it, but Cholly does not know. Because Cholly is "dangerously free" (159). He does not know what is right and what is wrong. He does things that he wants to do. Cholly's behavior is closely related to his early experience. The narrator says Cholly is "abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested" (158).

Cholly is lucky to have his Aunt Jimmy to save him and bring him up. Aunt Jimmy is the only mother figure in Cholly's whole life. After Aunt Jimmy's death, Cholly has a chance to get a new family. Jimmy's brother O. V. is ready to take him in. Cholly has always been curious about his father. After Jimmy dies, he takes the money his uncle left and goes on a journey to find his father. In his mind, his father is supposed to be like Blue. However, his father never knows him and does not remember his mother. Unfortunately, his father is not as well as he imagines. "Cholly had always thought of his father as a giant of a man, so when he was very close, it was with a shock that he discovered that he was taller than his father" (153). His father is a gambler, and he never knows about his existence. Being rejected by his father, "Cholly was free" (157).

After that, Cholly meets Pauline and falls in love with her. When Pauline is pregnant, he panics. However, he shows affection by coming home early and drinking less. "He began to drink less and come home more often. They eased back into a relationship more like the early days of their marriage, when he asked if she were tired or wanted him to bring her something from the store" (119). Since Cholly begins supporting his family, Pauline resigns from her job. At the same time, Pauline starts to watch movies and indulge herself in the white man's movies. Being unsatisfied with the differences between reality and the film, she begins to hate her own family and push Cholly away. It is when Cholly becomes "free" again. At the end of this novel, he is free enough to rape his daughter.

Pauline thinks her family is hateful because they are ugly and poor. She is lost in the vanity that the Fishers

offer her and does not realize that she is just an ideal servant rather than a family member of the Fishers. However, the more she focuses on the Fishers, the further her own family goes away. What she has done finally makes her family fall apart. Pauline had a big family when she was a child. However, her childhood is nothing better than Cholly's. Pauline's family members ignored her. Pauline was always alone, and her only company was her household before she met Cholly. She has a happy life with Cholly for a short period. After they move to the south, things begin to change.

Moreover, things are getting worse since Pauline is pregnant for the first time. Before the boy Sammy was born, Pauline had once accepted her ugliness. "I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly. I still went to the pictures, though, but the meanness got worse. I wanted my tooth back" (121). She has wanted to reject the fact once by looking forward to having a beautiful baby. However, Pecola fails her by being born an ordinary black baby. She has looked forward to Pecola's birth. As she says, "When I had the second one, a girl, I 'member I said I'd love it no matter what it looked like" (122). Pecola's birth makes Pauline finally accept her ugliness. She names her baby Pecola which probably comes from a movie she watched, as Maureen mentions when she knows Pecola's name. After Pecola's birth, she finds a new job in a white family and devotes her amount of time to the white family. In the movie *Imitation of Life* (1959), the mulatto girl Pecola hates her mother because she is black and ugly. While Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* loves her mother, even though her mother is always mean to her. On the other hand, Pauline hates her daughter very much because Pecola makes her uglier and makes her reassure that she is born to be ugly.

The Breedloves family is a dysfunctional one. Cholly is abandoned by his parents in the physical sense, while Pecola is spiritually abandoned by her parents. Her father's rape may be the reason leading to her insanity. However, her final breakdown is caused by her mother's attitude and the rumor rolling over the community. The community gets to know the incest when Pecola gets pregnant. Sadly, nobody stands out to protect the poor girl. People have become meaner to her, and her mother does not talk to her anymore. She does not know what happened. Pecola believes she got blue eyes because it is the only excuse she can find to explain what happens to her. She thinks it is because

people are jealous of her blue eyes. Since she cannot go to school anymore, she loses the chance to talk to other people. She makes herself an imaginary friend and keeps asking if she has bluest eyes. In her mind, blue eyes are supposed to make her beautiful, and people should love her for her beauty. However, in reality, people around her treat her like garbage. She has to find a reason for that. Finally, she concludes that her eyes are not blue enough.

The MacTeers are living in the same neighborhood as the Breedloves. Their family composition and economic condition are very similar. The MacTeers own a house and even have a spare room to rent. However, they are far from being wealthy. They still need their children to collect coals that fall on the train rail to keep their house warm, and their house is not like Dick and Jane's. Claudia says, "Our house is old, cold, and green. At night a kerosene lamp lights one large room. The others are braced in darkness, peopled by roaches and mice" (11). Except for their living condition, the MacTeers are quite the opposite of the Breedloves. The MacTeers try hard to support their families and buy themselves a house. Claudia's mother is not like the mother in Dick and Jane family, who is very friendly and always smiles at her children. She seldom laughs and is very strict with her children. In young Claudia's memories, they get beat a lot. She mentions that "if we cut or bruise ourselves, they ask us, are we crazy. When we catch colds, they shake their heads in disgust at our lack of consideration" (12-13). In fact, the strictness is her way of expressing her love. When Claudia generated a silhouette of warmth, her mother did not ask how she felt. Instead of verbal concern, she carefully rubbed medicine and cleaned the puke for Claudia.

Mrs. MacTeer and Aunt Jimmy share many characteristics. They are typical black females. They adore their children, even if they are adopted. Both of them are closely connected with the community. Their neighbor Mr. Buford runs out with his gun to help them after Frieda is insulted by Henry. When Aunt Jimmy gets sick, women in her community come to her house to take care of her. Their community isolates the Breedloves. When Pecola gets pregnant, the people around them separate them. No one shows any sympathy for the poor girl. They even want to throw Pecola out of school. The Breedloves are alone in this community from the beginning of the story. When they lose their house, their children have to stay with strangers.

They have no relatives or acquaintances to whom they can turn. In the end, they become a stain on the black community. People in the community do their best to seclude them, and they do not want to be contaminated by the Breedloves, which is ugly.

## China, Poland, and Miss Marie

Besides traditional families, which consist of parents and children, there are some non-traditional families in this novel—for example, Cholly and his Aunt Jimmy and the three whores. Morrison presents a question: Is a blood relationship necessary to form a family? Morrison explores the pure female family model that is restricted by patriarchal culture in *The Bluest Eye*, which exposes the oppression of women by patriarchal culture. The three whores' case shows that women cannot eliminate patriarchal culture's influence on them, but by sticking together, they can survive in a hostile society. China, Poland, and Miss Marie are the three whores who lived above the Breedloves. They used to be "outdoors" in society. Fortunately, they meet each other and form a special family.

Morrison's description of them is positive. She considers them "three merry gargoyles. Three merry harridans" (55). Morrison used negative words like "gargoyles" and "harridans" to represent them because they are considered immoral and undignified by others. At the same time, they are happy. Whores are usually considered immoral, but the three whores are not the typical whores in the novels or movies of the times. They choose to be whores of their own will and judge people by their morality rather than skin color. Ironically, when so-called decent women like Geraldine fail to do their duty as responsible mothers and loving wives, the three whores know who they are and keep their black tradition. The three whores compose another family model put forward by Morrison. The three whores might also have some absent father or some silent mother. However, their dysfunctional family does not bother them much because they find themselves a new family where they help each other. There is no kinship between them, but they live together and support each other like real sisters. Mahaffey claims that "the sisterly bond that the prostitutes share is very similar to the sisterly bond between Claudia and Frieda" (161). Pecola even wonders if they are real because they are friendly to her, and they do not quarrel.

Pecola receives more from the three prostitutes than she can receive from her own family. Thus she looks up to and admires these women, exposing herself to their influence. However, their life experiences do not apply to Pecola because Pecola is an innocent girl. "They are not able to provide any positive information for Pecola, who only seeks to know how to be loved by her parents and the community. Neither can they offer her constructive advice on what it is like to grow up black and female in a society that privileges whiteness and men" (Mahaffey 161). Pecola is brought up in a loveless family and a hostile community. So, she cannot become a strong woman like the three whores.

While the MacTeers family is Morrison's ideal family model, the three whores are the second choice for black people. There are no father, mother, or children in this family. They are sisters who have no blood relation. What makes them a family is the love between them. They support each other in facing the hostile world. Being black whores, they face more malice than Pecola. However, they are not alone and helpless like Pecola. They help each other and build their self-confidence to face hardship in a hostile society. The harsh life forces them to be whores, but they do not lose their identity in a white-dominated society. They are still proud of their own culture. The three whores are marginalized people in society. However, they respect women who dedicate to their family and despise the woman who cheats on their husband. Maybe they will never marry and build a traditional family with a man, but they appreciate people who try their best to keep their family. They do not judge people by their skin color. They do not look down upon themselves because of their occupation. They do not despise Pecola or take her as a scapegoat for their unfortunate.

## Conclusion

The Dick and Jane family is an illusion created by white men and an idea imposed on black people through education. The white family is not necessarily happy. However, poor black people cannot see through the surface because the mass media easily convince them. They admire white people's appearance and life and try to erase every difference that makes them different from white people. Readers understand that a beautiful house does not equate to a happy family. However, Pauline and Geraldine are obsessed with

white people's idea of nuclear home, so they surrender to the white culture. They believe that the more they live like white people, the happier they will be. Mulatto families may have better-living conditions than the average black family. Still, money and social status cannot bring them happiness as they try to discard their black identity and work very hard to integrate themselves into white society. Finally, they find themselves neither welcomed by black society nor white society. However, they will choose to neglect reality and deceive themselves. Geraldine refuses to accept the fact that she is not happy. Like Soaphead Church denying that he is a child molester and pretending he is superior to God.

*The Bluest Eye* reveals two black girls' different fates to readers through the description of the two different black families, the Breedloves and the MacTeers. Both Pecola and Claudia face the same condition, and they all have to fight against sexism, racism, and poverty. Claudia is lucky enough to grow up in a family full of love. Her mother is a traditional black woman who does not blindly follow white standards. She is always there for her children when they need them. For example, when Claudia is sick and as it is when Frieda is assaulted by Henry. Pecola's abnormal behaviors are the result of her dysfunctional family. While Pecola is driven insane by her family and society, Claudia grows up to be a decent woman with the backing of her family. The Breedloves is like an island in this community. Their self-denial keeps them from communicating with the community. There are many chances for them to reconnect with their family and community. However, the conception of their ugliness keeps them from doing so. This conception is generated from their discriminatory environment, strengthened by themselves, and passed on to their children. Pecola grows up in a family with no love and is isolated by their people, so it is tough for her to build self-confidence. What is worse, the denial from her mother and society finally makes her go mad. Ironically, those days when Pecola is left to the MacTeers by her mother are probably the happiest time in Pecola's life. She gets two friends of her age that she has never had before. However, the happy time ends too soon. Before she could understand Mrs. MacTeer's love for her children, she went back to her own home. So, she does not know that she does not have to become white to get love.

One of Morrison's purposes in writing this novel is that she wants readers to understand that the weak-

ness of black society kills Pecola indirectly. Everyone in that community is responsible for Pecola's tragedy. The black community failed to give a hand to this miserable family. Suffering from white supremacy, the black community needs an outlet to release pressure. They need a scapegoat for them to feel good about themselves. Finally, weak people like Pecola will easily become the scapegoat of the black community. Being suppressed by white people, many African-Americans discard their old traditions. A family that can keep their black culture is closely related to their black community. It is harder for black people to keep their traditions in the North. Parents who, like the Breedloves, do not know what responsibility is. They marry for romantic love and fail to turn it into familial love. Pauline fails to be a supportive wife for Cholly, so Cholly is finally "free" again.

On the other hand, the MacTeers make their best effort to support their families. Though they are inevitably affected by the prevailing white culture, their children dare to question white beauty standards. When Claudia dissects the white doll, Mrs. MacTeer scolds Claudia and says that she had cried her eye out for getting a white doll. However, when Claudia grows up to be a mother, she may not impose a white doll on her child. Families like the MacTeers are the hope of black society. Those families can bring up children with self-confidence, and these children will pass on their confidence to their children. So, the black community will grow stronger and stronger. Only by inheriting the blacks' cultural beliefs can the black parents make themselves an indispensable part of the black community group, which will help them create a healthy family environment and find out how to deal with discrimination. Only through learning their parents' active living tactics can the black children learn to live and grow up healthily in the harsh racial society. The black parents' giving up the black culture will bring confusion to themselves and leads to their children's tragedy. In order to stop those kinds of tragedies, the black community has to be stronger. Since families are important components of society, all black families must fight for their shared future by forming harmonious families and passing on their great traditions to their offspring.

Black people took a long time to wake up and start a fight for themselves. Discrimination will not vanish overnight, and it will take generations to eliminate discrimination. A century has passed since the Emanci-

pation Proclamation was issued, and black people have won many achievements while fighting for real freedom. Though it is too late for Pecola, the idea of a functional family is crucial for the black community, and is still meaningful for the whole black society. Claudia'

s children will grow up in a healthy family and have a less confused childhood than Pecola's. The black community will become more robust generation by generation.

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(大阪公立大学大学院文学研究科大学院生)

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## 家と家族: トニ・モリスンの『青い眼がほしい』におけるアウトドア

王 玲 玲

ノーベル賞を受賞したアフリカ系アメリカ人女性作家トニ・モリソンは、生涯を通じて執筆活動を続けた。彼女のデビュー作である『青い目がほしい』(1970)は、黒人のアイデンティティの問題を扱った作品である。11歳の黒人の少女が、人に愛されたいために青い目に憧れ、ついに狂ってしまうというストーリーである。モリソンは豊かな想像力と巧みなプロットで、黒人文化を白人社会に紹介している。一般的に、家は人に安心感、帰属感と安全感を与えるものである。特にアフリカ系アメリカ人の場合、家を持つことで健全な家庭を築き、強いポジティブなアイデンティティを形成するパワーを得ることができるかもしれない。家族はこの小説の重要なテーマであり、モリソンはすべての主要登場人物の家族の状態を描き、彼らの所属する家族における体験は彼らの心理に多くの影響を与える。家族というものは、個人の成長及び成年後の生活に大きな影響を与えられる。家族と個人の相互関係を研究することは、黒人家族の歴史と発展を理解する上で不可欠な意義を持っている。したがって、この小説を探求する上で、家族関係に注目することが必要である。本稿では、「ディックとジェーン」リーダーについての分析から始め、この小説に登場する家族について分析する。また、ディックとジェーンの家族がモデル家族としてこの小説の登場人物に与えた影響も分析する。これらの分析を通し、ディックとジェーンの家族についてのモリソンの見解および彼女が考える理想的な家族像を考察したい。そのうえで、本稿は全体を通して、アウトドアであるピコーラに焦点を当て、彼女の不幸の根源を探る。

キーワード: 『青い目がほしい』, トニ・モリソン, 家, 家庭, アウトドア