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Imposed abandonment, emasculation and muteness of Cholly Breedlove in Toni Morrison's
The Bluest Eye

Abstract

Toni Morrison assayed fiction from the beginning of her literary career, *The Bluest Eye*. She was an expert in Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner who were the master of experimentation in the genre of Novel. Morrison expressed and explored the untouching genre of the cycle of oppression which never ended in the African American society. The cycle of oppression is the outcome of the external and internal racism shovelled into them by the European Americans and by their own community of African Americans. The oppression experienced by Cholly Breedlove, father of the protagonist Pecola of *The Bluest Eye* is a typical representation of wilful oppression. He was oppressed mentally; the oppression developed into trauma and later into a psychological drawback in his character finally taking

its shape as a threat to the family and society. Oppression looks like a simple word suggesting a simple problem. But its effects on a character's psychology are enormous. The objective of this paper is to throw light on the uncared and uncured oppression on Cholly and its after effects which demands a real concern to be shown on the oppressed to avoid the future psychological effects.

Morrison's critics exclaimed her as poetic writer paying tribute to her lyrical charm. She was known for her technique, the diverging hostility that unwinds the lyrical modernism of Zora Neale Hurston and existential naturalistic experimentation of Richard Wright. She approached race and imagination with urgency and rigorous open-mindedness.

Cholly Breedlove was the father of Pecola the protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*. Cholly's wife was Pauline Breedlove. The family was named as Breedlove by Morrison. It was ironically depicted by Morrison. They never bred love throughout their life. The husband-wife relation, mother-daughter relationship, mother-son relationship, father-daughter relationship, sister-brother relation hardly bred love. They live as a family for the society's sake. But they take delight in their own interests and run the family with no much commitment and responsibility. The other interesting fact was Cholly, the antagonist was named as Charles Breedlove by his aunt, but Morrison changed it Cholly in the due course of the novel resembling her original name with slight change in the spelling and pronunciation. This might be the reason that Morrison does not want to neither dehumanize nor justify him. She never intended to dehumanize any of her characters. Instead she wanted to analyse and put out the reasons and circumstances that made Cholly behave brutal. He has to be regarded as a hateful character instead Morrison portrayed him as a sympathetic figure tracing back to his early influences which created a psychological set back at an early stage, without being counselled or treated he grew out to continue his trauma which developed into a great psychological black mark and threat. Cinch villainy was portrayed in Cholly which was

rashly done by Morrison. He was a complex character integrated with the American's racist history.

Cholly Breedlove was the representation of the typical conflict in black man between undertaking the family responsibility and escaping from them. He was romanticized as Morrison's first mobile man. Cholly emblemized the tragedy of muteness and inarticulateness of black man under the oppression of whites. Cholly was portrayed as an immoral example of a fatherly figure, condemned greatly for raping his own daughter twice. But penetrating deeply into his personal history and psychological issues would help to figure out the reason for his immorality. It was never a justification of his cruelty but it was only an effort to trace out reasons which pushed him to undertake such mean dissolute behaviour towards his own daughter. He who was responsible for safeguarding her from others instead himself became a threat for her.

The life of Cholly was an anthology of abandonment, emasculation, isolation and muteness. They were foisted off on him by three important factors: racist, capitalistic, and patriarchal society. Cholly's continuous abandonment by the most prominent closely related mother, father, aunty, father surrogate, lover, wife and finally his children made him suffer from muteness and isolation. Morrison traced his childhood with a typical pity feel left over for him.

Cholly was abandoned by his parental father, Samson Fuller while he was a foetus in his mother's womb. He was abandoned by his parental mother on the fourth day of his birth. She left him in a junk heap yard wrapped in two blankets and with a newspaper, left to die in the railroad tracks who was later rescued by his Great Aunt Jimmy who raised him with care and affection. She substituted the mothers place but was by fate short lived. It was not sure whether it is her destiny or Cholly's she died, but definitely the future Cholly became a big question mark. The death of his aunty remarked a sunset in the life of Cholly.

Cholly received hints from others of the town that his mother was insane. His father skipped the town when Cholly was in the womb of his mother. He may or may not know about the baby formed. After the birth of Cholly his mother also abandoned him in the junk heap for Cholly's lucky survival. If his fate was strong and lucky he would survive with the help of someone. But in case if his fate was brutal and luck did not favour him, he must be put to death out of starvation or would become an easy prey for any wild animal. Cholly was unlucky to be tamed and taken care by his biological father and mother.

Cholly was rescued by his great aunt Jimmy. She showed motherly care and yet could be claimed only as a poor substitute of mother. In her death bed Jimmy contemplated and realized that she spent her life useless serving the white men. The white men were cruel enough to beat up the black men, and the black men showed their anger and oppression on the other black women. She felt the purpose of living for the sake of whites was the fate of the blacks and hates it at the death bed. She was a first symbol of anti-oppression but the realisation was too late. As Shakespeare said in Macbeth, "What's done is done", the fate of blacks was done by whites. The writings of Blacks Authors have undone the fate in the present scenario. Great aunty Jimmy could be exclaimed as only a poor substitute of motherly figure of Cholly's life. But she was a great supporter of Cholly- physically, emotionally and psychologically. She was an emotional anchor of Cholly's life. The death of such motherly figure shook Cholly to his foundation and made him feel weak at all aspects. Cholly was unknown of his parental father and mother but enjoyed care under Great Aunt Jimmy. After her demise, the search of love started to bloom in him Cholly who started to Macon to find his father as per her information.

Cholly was undertaking a job at Tyson's working under an old man Blue Jack. He was kind hearted, nice behaving, strong and treated Cholly well. He shared his personal experiences which Cholly enjoyed as if they were tales. He took pleasure in Blue Jacks

Company irrespective of the age and learnt from him. He was impressed and took him as a surrogate fatherly figure. He was forced to leave the job and Blue Jack to proceed in search of his parental father.

The Funeral of Great Aunt Jimmy was the turning point in the life of Cholly. After mourning for the motherly figure, he moved on with his cousin Jake. They both had conversation about girls and walked over finding group of girls. They mingled with each other moving to the nearby field near a house to pick grapes and eat. The boys started the game of throwing the plucked apples on the girls. The girls attempted to escape from them by running around. In such act, Cholly chose Darlene chased her, moved out of the group. They ran until their last breath falling on each other, paying way for engaging in a sexual act. Cholly wanted his first experience a memorable and unexpected one but they were interrupted by the two white men who insulted Cholly's sexual act by kidding and laughing. They were armed throwing flash lights on the couple compelling to engage in their pleasure. Cholly and Darlene felt humiliated and insulted. She covered her face in the act and Cholly grew crueler inwardly out of this humiliation. Yet he felt helpless as they carried guns who had the freedom to kill the blacks for which none could raise any question. In order to save his life Cholly grew brutal and showed his oppression on the weaker woman Darlene. She in turn was the weakest who had no option than covering her face and had no guts to provoke against neither Cholly for his brutal sexual intercourse nor against the armed whites. The chase would be equated to the maiden's loath suggested by John Keats in 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. The white armed mens actions could be interpreted to 'What mad Pursuit' as they demanded for intercourse, it is definitely mad to demand a holy union on compulsion. Keats 'What struggle to escape' matched perfectly with Cholly and Darlen as they were unwilling to perform it in their presence, yet they were compelled and internally they wanted to escape from them, struggle against them, yet in vein. 'What wild ecstasy' stood for the mindset of

both white men and the couple. With respect to white armed men, it was inhuman to watch love making and find ecstasy in it. With respect to the couple they were unwilling and performed brutally without enjoying the pleasure. Therefore it was a Wild ecstasy.

The death of aunt has shaken him emotionally. He was excited on the other hand to find his father and get his parental love back which was in turn a stress for Cholly. In addition to these, he has encountered a biggest hit on his psyche that is the interruption of his first sexual exploration. All the three had a combined effect of isolation, emancipation and oppression on Cholly. In spite of such psychological strike, he gained his strength and moved on with his journey to meet his father, Samson Fuller who abandoned him before birth. He was also internally assuming that he might be responsible for the pregnancy of Darlene and thus wanted to escape from it by searching his father. Cholly met his father in an alley in Macon, when he was shooting craps. The way Cholly inquired about Samson Fuller, made him understand that Cholly was a creditor. To escape from him, his father spoke harsh and rushed him to move away. When Cholly wanted to explain the truth behind his arrival, Fuller unwilling to believe started to chase him out. Cholly run to reach a safe place, out of frustration on his pathetic situation instead of tears oozing out he defecated. It was a great symbol of the injured psyche of Cholly.

The death of the surrogate mother, Aunt Jimmy was the initial and primary psychological isolation faced by Cholly. The oppression in the hands of white men on weaker Cholly was in turn showed on Darlene, who was less weak to him. It was his chief strong psychological oppression. The most trusted and expected fatherly figure chased him out of his territory making him to defecate was the second succeeding psychological depression. Cholly left emasculated during this humiliating and frightening experience due to the perverse cruel and malicious white men. Cholly adopted a dangerous survival of misdirection of anger, hatred and frustration. As Emmerson Mnangagwa, the President of Zimbabwe,

exclaimed “Racism will never end as long as white cars are still using black tyres. Racism will never end if people still use black to symbolize bad luck and white for peace. Racism will never end if people still wear white clothes to weddings and black clothes to funerals. Racism will never end as long as those who don’t pay their bills as blacklisted not whitelisted. Even when playing snooker, you have not won until you’ve sunk the black ball, and the white ball must remain on the table”, the effects of racism in 1970 was pictured and documented by Morrison through *The Bluest eye*.

Cholly experienced a painful childhood as an abandoned child with a less affection. His adolescent disillusioning sexual adventure plunged him into the abyss of loneliness, separation, frustration and impotence. The discarded callous abandonment done by his parental father, devastated him, regressing into an infantile rage. He was emotionally made immature and laid curled for hours together in a foetal position with fists in eyes. Cholly assumed and believed that his parental father would bring spring in his life, so he started to seek him to Macon. But his rejection left him mute. The total rejection he faced in his life made him lose prelapsarian innocence. It made him take a diversion to the extent of becoming dangerously free. Morrison portrayed him mute after all his abandonments.

Cholly needed a partner with whom he wanted to prove his manliness. He married Pauline and lived a caring and compassionate life with her until they were in Kentucky. Cholly made her feel complete thereby he regained and retained his lost masculinity. Their relocation towards North made him an unemployed. He could not provide food for his family. His restored manhood as a patriarch and provider became a challenge under the competition of white men. His economic insignificance routed to become an inauthentic life leader, sadist love maker, violent and brutal in domestic life and offensive alcoholic. The husband and wife relationship started to shake, Cholly irresponsiveness was hated by Pauline, he could not cope up for the fancies of Pauline. The life of the couple became an unhappy one. They neither had

love nor affection and attraction towards each other. Their interests differed which was one of the reason for their unhappy life. The other factors were the unclean habits of Cholly, his irresponsible behaviour towards his wife and family, his least care in taming the children. They quarrelled often, Cholly quarrelled like a coward, Pauline quarrelled like a man. He was again emasculated, isolated and muted by his wife.

Cholly had Pecola and Sammy as his children. He never behaved as a father to them as there was no role model fatherly figure to reciprocate the same to his child. He was helpless and he was forced to cover his incapacity of being a father. He turned arrogant and violent towards his children. He had no feeling for them; he reacted through drunk and confused state of mind to them. He communicated violently resulting in total absence of parental love, creating havoc on their psyche. Once, Sammy reacted violently hitting him screaming to kill, whereas, Pecola responded like a cocoon. They wanted him to die, when he was bleeding. Cholly thus became a hatred clear testimony to the complex psychological conditions. It reached its heights by his brutal behaviour towards Pecola.

Cholly felt tenderness for Pecola at her helplessness, hopelessness and unhappiness. He wanted to earn respect from her by making her smile. But as a drunkard, he was confused with the tenderness that he possessed for his daughter and the passion for his wife. Cholly physically and psychologically raped Pecola. Cholly completely became an incarnation of evil in performing the above brutal act.

Cholly's isolation, abandonment, emasculation and muteness paved way for his psychic imbalance towards his family and profession. He was a victim of the economic system, frustrating racist system, overpowered capitalist system, inauthentic drunkardness and white system of patriarchy. Cholly was dealt with self-hatred, oppression and portrayed as evil as possible when he raped his own daughter twice and burnt his own house. A history

of distortions of primary relationships and rituals of life was hidden behind his 'bad-nigger' persona.

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