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The Spatial-Temporal Matrix: A Chronotopic Analysis of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye."

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”المصفوفة المكانية-الزمانية: تحليل كرونوتوبي لرواية توني موريسون العين الأكثر زرقة.”

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الخلاصة:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى إجراء تحليل كرونوتوبي دقيق لرواية "العين الأكثر زرقة" للكاتبة توني موريسون، مستكشفًا كيف تؤثر الأطر الزمانية والمكانية المترابطة للرواية على تجارب الشخصيات وتكشف عن الآثار العميقة لمعايير الجمال والقمع الداخلي. تعتمد هذه الدراسة على نظرية الكرونوتوب لميخائيل باختين لفحص المساحات السردية الهامة في الرواية، بدءًا من عالم "ديك وجين" المثالي، وصولًا إلى واجهة متجر عائلة بريدلوف، وساحة المدرسة، والمناظر الطبيعية. يركز هذا التحليل بشكل خاص على عنصر حيوي غالبًا ما يكون ممثلًا تمثيلاً ناقصًا في التفسيرات الكرونوتوبية الحالية لرواية "العين الأكثر زرقة"، والتي تستخدم عادةً تطبيقًا ثابتًا للنظرية. يسلط هذا البحث الضوء على الخصائص الديناميكية، المتطورة، والمتفككة في نهاية المطاف لكرونوتوبات الرواية، موضحًا انعكاسها للأحوال النفسية للشخصيات ونقد موريسون الثاقب للأطر المجتمعية القمعية، والذي يبلغ ذروته في الانحدار المأساوي لبيكولا بريدلوف إلى وجود زمني ومكاني مجزأ.

الكلمات المفتاحية: العين الأكثر زرقة، كرونوتوب، زمني، مكاني.

Abstract:

This essay gives a detailed Chronotopic analysis of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye." It examines the impact of the novel's interconnected geographic and historical contexts on the characters' lives, illustrating the profound impacts of racist beauty standards and internalized oppression. This study employs Mikhail Bakhtin's Chronotope theory to examine significant narrative locales, from the idyllic realm of "Dick and Jane" to the Breedlove shop, the school playground, and natural landscapes. This research examines a significant aspect that is often overlooked in contemporary chronotopic analyses of "The Bluest Eye," which mostly use a static interpretation of the theory. In this essay, I will discuss the evolution and final disintegration of the novel's Chronotopes. I'll illustrate how they depict how the characters are feeling and how Morrison harshly criticizes repressive societal institutions, which leads to Pecola Breedlove's sad fall into a shattered existence in both time and space.

Key words: "The Bluest Eye", Chronotope, Temporal, Spatial.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The Bluest Eye, the first novel by Toni Morrison, published in 1970, applies the lens of vast, sometimes brutal cultural criticism to the lives of Americans in the 1940s, revealing the profound impact of systemic forces of racial beauty standards and internalized oppression. The narrative centers on Pecola Breedlove, a pre-teen Black girl who believes blue eyes are the key to beauty, love, and acceptance. For

this significant book, Morrison made clear what her chief artistic impetus was. She said that her "project. The impetus for this, my first book, was to explore the life of the person least able to survive such destructive forces, by virtue of race, gender and age. From the novel's layered structure—divided into seasonal sections (Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer)—to the relentless repetition, and building distortion of "Dick and Jane" snippets, the author makes no secret that they want disrupt the flow of time and space, forcing us to hone in on the book's most significant themes.

The Chronotope of Mikhail Bakhtin is a well-articulated analytical category that makes it possible to understand both the structural complexity and thematic richness of the book itself. Chronotope is a derivative of two Greek words χρόνος (time) and τόπος (space). It implies an elemental combination of space and time in a literary work, a "single, deliberately constructed, tangible whole." According to Bakhtin (1981) it is in an artistic Chronotope that "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, history. Then, the "spatial-temporal matrix" acts not just as a passive background, but an active participant informing character agency and perceptions, and moving narrative forward, a "decisive element for events" Chronotopes are not only containers of meaning but also transmitters, acting as crucial "bridges" that link events recorded in documents with the larger social and historical environments they represent. In this paper it is argued that in *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison both employs and destabilizes specific Chronotopes, finely orchestrating the general reality of human life, its more utopian nature, and its metaphysical collapse, as something to the effect of a universal tragedy befalling Pecola. Chronotopic readings of *The Bluest Eye* by literary scholars have begun to examine its shifting center and actual chronology; however, most Chronotopical interpretations are static or global in their application of Bakhtinian theory and thus separate these fixed places into distinct, time-space boundaries. This method, while illuminating in important ways, often overlooks the particular narrative fragmentation of the novel, its transient, transformative, and ultimately dissolving nature of the Chronotopes, which aligns with the characters' mental status and the novel's sharp critique of a repressive social system. Full of such limits is where Pecola and others see the reflection of the nature of the mental state that the pain-stricken soil of these buildings breeds again: *The Bluest Eye*. The feeling of a room or the appearance of a street, may indicate what the protagonists see in their current state, mass despair or a glimmer of hope. The Chronotope relates and affects the affective depth and significance of the narrative.

This study will provide a more dynamic and character-centric application of the theory, elucidating how time and space function not just as backdrops for events but also profoundly affect the characters' emotional struggles, which gradually disintegrate as their world crumbles. This dynamic perspective demonstrates that the novel's chronotopes function not just as narrative components but as critical instruments through which Morrison articulates the deleterious effects of internalized racism and societal apathy.

1.2. Bakhtin's Chronotope: A Theoretical Framework

Bakhtin was born into a venerable aristocracy in Oryol, Russia. His father was a bank manager at/on the move. In his early years, Bakhtin was a child of Oryol, then of Vilnius, and finally of Odessa, where he entered the historical and philological department of Odessa University in the year 1913. In the latter half of the 20th century, Mikhail Bakhtin was one of the most important figures in the study of literature and culture. Bakhtin stressed the sociohistoric embeddedness of literary discourse. Bakhtin is recognized for the numerous basic ideas (such as dialogism, chronotope, and carnival) each have been used as an analytical tool for examination of different phenomena and events. Bakhtin used the word "chronotope," which means "time space," to describe "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically articulated in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84).

M. Bakhtin (1981) insists that there are precise or less precise intersections at which time and space are continuous, co-inexistent, interdependent, and crank at each other. This is made extremely clear by the narrator. And the reason they serve a structural purpose is that these frequent places are where elements of a story and structure often intersect. Chernetsova and Maslova (2019, p. 44) As Bakhtin puts it, "It can be said with certainty that the meaning in the narrative is theirs" (Bakhtin 1981, p. 250).

The relationship between time and space in literature contains a long but turbulent history. In the context of storytelling, the Chronotope is a combination of time and space that they serve the central message of the narrative. The method redirects attention from singular literary pieces to the web of intertextuality

surrounding them. In the of chronotope of the literary creative the specific geographical and chronological indications are this united whole, carefully designed, unit. Basically, time demonstrates, embodies, and achieves artistic visibility; in return, the space becomes saturated and sensitive to the movement of time, narrative, and history. The creative Chronotope is the place of convergence of axes and the intersection of indicators. (Bemong et al., 2010, p. 4).

In the ultimate conclusion, Bakhtin assumes that narrative writings are made up not only of a sequence of diegetic events and speech acts but also, and most importantly, the construction of a distinctive fictive world or Chronotope. Bakhtin argues that the epistemological grounds of this meaning of narrative time and space are connected to the philosophies of Emmanuel Kant and the theory of relativity created by Albert Einstein. (Bemong et al., 2010, p. 4). Bakhtin applied the time as the fourth dimension of space to create his concept of the so-called Chronotope in a literary writing (Bostad, 2004, p. 8). Bakhtin supported the idea of time and space as the basic categories of human experience and the organization of the universe as suggested by Kant calling them inalienable forms of cognition (Morson and Emerson, 1990, p. 367).

1.3. Review of related literature: “The Bluest Eye.”

As seen in the article by Madhavi and Rao (2023), in “The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison, the negative outcomes of internalized cultural norms and the complexity of identity intersectionality are highlighted in the story. The origin of the internalized racism and self-hate that Pecola develops are the struggles that she has to face: she is marginalized and isolated in a predominantly white society. The mess in her family and the beauty ideals of the society favorable to the whites complicate her searching of her identity. The key message of the story The Bluest Eye is the desire of blue eyes, and it positively reflects the destructiveness of social norms. The fact that Pecola wishes that she had blue eyes depicts the harmful impact of social norms and how it can change the self-identity regardless of what the people around her say.

In their article, “Resistance and Beauty in Toni Morrison The Bluest Eye,” Rout, Pati, and Patro (2024) explain the interaction between the concepts of race, beauty, and oppression in 20 th century America using the story of Pecola Breedlove, a young African American girl who longs to have blue eyes, the standard of beauty in the society. The beauty that goes beyond the superficial and the medium of racial superiority and mental instability. This paper explores the nature of the complicated relationship between beauty, racism, and resistance in the work showing how Morrison reveals the detrimental impacts of imparted beauty standards and how she explores a way of resistance in the book The Bluest Eye. Morrison highlights the individual and social values of beauty through the critical consciousness of Claudia and the tragic decline of Pecola as the illustration of its dangers and the potential empowerment when redefined according to the individual standards.

Bangal and Ramanathan (2019) in their article “Destruction of the Blooming Lotus: An Analysis of Toni Morrison The Bluest Eye,” consider racism but also address the issues of class, caste, culture, gender, money, education, family, and society as influencing the success of an individual in their personal and professional life. They view the work in a number of different ways, including literary analysis, systems analysis, feminist criticism, and human rights approach. This book examines the concept of beauty and reasons behind oppression and that the dominant white cultural standards influence black individuals significantly. The hate that engulfed the black community was like a disease that led to many African Americans adopting the white cultural beliefs which made them despise their own race. This book discusses quite a diversity of issues, such as family rules, gender equality, racial prejudice, parental love and marriage love, exterior beauty and interior beauty.

In his 2023 essay, “Interwoven Voices and Visions: Analysing Narrative Techniques,” Kumar presents the academic assessment of the seminal novel of modern African -American literature titled The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison. Kumar also outlines the unusual narrative techniques used in the work and discusses how they affect the plot development and structure of the characters. Kumar asks the question of these various storytelling procedures and their impact on the work through detailed content analysis. The storyline and characters in the novel can be shown to be constructed by the creative approach of narrating used by Morrison. Appropriating the European ideological paradigms as well as the vernacular Black English, Morrison predicts the dialectic between white and black heroes and their different socio

economic milieu. The use of polyphonic, multi-voiced, and multi-layered narrative modes by Morrison enables the work to be distinctive as the author can bring out the key themes she wishes to express with an underwriting touch and intellectual insight.

Dakamsih and Al Hammouri (2022) in the article titled “Analyzing Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in Terms of Bakhtin's Notion of Heteroglossia,” explore phenomena of heteroglossia in the context of the overall novel *The Bluest Eye* and specifically of Pecola Breedlove, her interactions with the cultural notions of beauty, and her ambitions in the book. They insist that heteroglossia is essential in the discovery of the hidden and implicit meanings and intentions that permeated the story of Morrison. It was first used in 1934 by the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin and its literal meaning is somewhat translated into varied-spoken-ness, and is intended to explicate the dynamics of reciprocity of conversation and thus reflect a key organizing feature of language. The studies of the authors are aimed at proving how the use of heteroglossia helps to explain the explicit and implicit intentions of the book in *The Bluest Eye*, especially the intentions related to beauty and human desire. Their major argument is based on the fact that the Blacks are displayed as being ineffective and worthless exactly because of the fact that they are not adhering to the established beauty ideals. Pecola Breedlove, the main protagonist, is sure that having blue eyes would significantly enhance her life and ease the troubles which bother her life.

1.4. A Chronotopic Analysis of Toni Morrison's “The Bluest Eye.”

1.4.1. A Chronotope of Dick and Jane.

Morrison creates strong chronotopes which clearly shows how her main characters are trapped by the strictness of social norms and the resultant internalised hatred of oneself is a side effect of such compartmentalisation. Those are not just environments that observe the tragedy but they are directly engaged in the developing disaster. The stylistic form of the novel narrative includes elements that replicate the rudimentary construction of a Dick and Jane primer: first explained in an traditional language, then twinned with no punctuation, and finally expressed in a terse feature that makes it hard to read. These passages of text represent an idealised object of the white American family, a cultural iconography that idealises beauty, happy times and sanity and is never ceaseingly limited. The gradual removal of these texts to incoherence has an inkling of a phenomenon that goes beyond a stark opposition between the white ideal and the reality of living as a black person. This is a historiographical method that confirms the white paradigm in the mind of the black characters, which generates a sense of disorientation and disintegration, which has a lifelong impact on the characters.

The colonizing operation of the chronotope of Dick and Jane makes its own territory elusive and inaccessible, which then creates the widespread self-rejection. These moments should have something mysterious. It does not consist in the impossibility of its actualization: and the very fact of its existence alters the language and form of reality of people who remained on the fringe. The ideal becomes so broadened outward that it loses its very definition, becoming an oppressive and deafening noise that does not allow people like Pecola to construct a simple, correct and healthy sense of self narrative. This chronotope can be regarded, therefore, as a clear example of the process of the spread of language and ideas.

1.4.2. A Chronotope of Performative Brutality

The playground next to the Washington Irving School serves as an inseparable site of social intercourse and even more so those of racial nature and perceived aesthetics both of which have harmful outcomes on Pecola and her peers. It is characterized by intense racial segregation and constant harassment and Pecola is always in the state of constant solitude: standing alone, always alone, at recess. The important moment in this context is an assembly of Black boys around and harassing Pecola with an obscene chant: Black e mo. Black e mo. yadaddsleepsnekked. Black e mo black e mo ya dadd sleeps nekked. Black e mo...”. This mocking statement is aimed at the color of Pecola and the supposedly bad behavior of their father, thus demonstrating the way in which the disdain of the boys towards themselves being black gives extra strength to the insult. The intimidation is also termed a macabre ballet, a term which transforms the playground not only into a simple setting, but it also morphs it into a chronotope of stage cruelty. With an implication that their endeavors are a macabre ballet, the story creates a theatrical implication that they are acting as a form of imitation of the greater racism in society.

This environment presupposes the role of an ever-changing arena, in which the current process of construction and reproduction of internalised oppression is simultaneously produced and consolidated, thus proving the way in which an alleged so-called external gaze is internalised into personal thinking and eventually turned against the most vulnerable groups. The repeated humiliations in this setting are accompanied by the temporal limits that are characterized by the victim-perpetrator dichotomy that specifically fosters the creation of ugliness that it claims to identify. Therefore, it is not that the playground is a place of cruelty; but this time it serves as a theatre of time and space in which cruelty is ritualised, whereby cruelty is continued and thus it strengthens the spatial-temporal image of oppression in which the young children will be subjected to.

1.4.3. A Chronotope of Deceived Purity and Missed Opportunities

The very first experiences that Pecola receives about the natural surrounding world portray an extreme naivety and a strong sense of connectedness. She notices dandelions as beautiful and questions their being classified as weeds and thus reveals the pure aesthetic eye of her ego that is in stark contrast with the societal standards that demote her to the level of ugly. The fact that she was hugging the groups of dandelions, scattering their white tufts and studying their yellow blossoms, gives her a distinct drawser of being not only a part of the world, but also the world a part of her. This is a chronotope of naive, pure interaction with nature; a moment of short lived, non-filtered time of belonging.

Unfortunately, this union is a shaky one. An embarrassing encounter with Mr. Yacobowski, who does not notice her, leads to a process of internalizing societal considerations to change the way Pecola views dandelions to form the understanding of them as ugly. They are weeds.” The change portrays how it is possible to twist a chronotope of pure unfiltered beauty into something warped by outside society judgments, which explains the internalization of beauty standards of oppression.

This tendency of moving praise to self rejection is categorically connected to experience of rejection by the society. It shows how the negativity of the outside world enters the inside her sense of beauty and belonging and adjusts the way she sees things, thus supporting the fragile state of her identity formation. Lake Erie and the surrounding park are quite important, but it is more directly connected with the community gains and exclusions than the goals of the community. The lakefront homes are also described as the most beautiful with carefully tended gardens and constantly blue sky and contrasted sharply with the steel-mill neighborhoods orange-streaked paradise of sky. Such a visual association identifies the lake with a perfect, untainted, wealthy world an attractive and desirable but unreachable time and space. The park is specifically arranged as the place where no Black people were to be, thus filling our dreams. The lake and its neighboring beauties represent a desired but perpetually inaccessible world to both Pecola and the narrator as a symbolic representation of the racial segregation and barriers that the two undergo. It is a chronotope of desire that is a time of unrealized possibilities that is continually hindered by the racial imperatives of their being.

1.4.4. A Chronotope of Constructed Reality and Disenchantment

To Pauline, the mother of Pecola and the leader of the Breedlove family, the movie theater is an essential chronotope of escapism and fantasy escapism. Part of this audiovisual milieu she identifies as being the place where she felt happy which seemed to be in the movie theater. I always went whenever possible. In the darkness of the movie theater, she says that she was able to immerse herself into those images, where the imperfect became perfect, the blind began seeing again, and the invalid tossed off their crutches. This short break gives her provisional relief knowing her bitter truth and allowing her to take in idealized vision of white beauty and romantic love. She also notes that such representations include white men who are offering great care to their women.

On an academic standpoint, the cinema may be seen as a type of chronotope of artificial reality and ideological re-education where time is suspended in a spectacle giving an active rise to the redefinition of beauty and ideals to Pauline perceptions. Philosophical authenticity of the escapist pleasure given by the theatrical space is very much parallel with the exaggerated fall of disappointment which she lives when returning to her real world, thus creating a vicious circle which further encourages her internalised self-aversion. The final revelation of Pauline in an educational form of cinematographic narratives is a self-disdain of collective pressure on the spouse as an illustration of how uncritically the idealized time-spaces can ultimately damage the ability of a person to value his true time-spatial experience. The cinema is not merely a temporary sanctuary, one that functions as a powerful means of formulating

Pauline in the realms of her interior reality, as one that sets in place an exterior, Eurocentric paradigm of aesthetic and existential ideals which ultimately makes her own lived life wanting and unattractive. The chronotope of escape therefore ends up turning into the chronotope of additional entrapment, in the most paradoxical way, continuing the vicious circle of a self-hostility.

1.4.5. A Chronotope of Pecola's Ultimate Condition

A total disintegration of her own chronotope, this was an irreversible descent of Pecola into insanity to the extent of virulently eliminating the interwoven dimensions of time and space. Her final condition is chilled out details: her head bobbing to the rhythm of some drummer so far away that only she could hear it. The picture of an isolated unreachable rhythm is a symbol of total breakdown of shared reality such that her own clockwork and spatial structure is, in every aspect, subjective and detached. She is presented fumbling with her limbs like a bird in an everlasting grotesquely pointless attempt to fly, obsessed with a blue space it could never have reached, could not even see, but which occupied the valleys of the mind. This blue emptiness serves, not strictly as a metaphor of madness, but as direct picture of a disillusionment of a sense of time and space, and essentially isolates her in any form of unity of perception of time and space. The narrator goes ahead to state in no uncertain terms that the harm inflicted it was beyond repair thus summing up the tragic denouement of the journey to destruction with a world that inexorably suffuses hopelessness.

As a powerful quintessence of the Chronotopic disintegration the novel uses the inability of marigolds planted by Claudia and Frieda to reach their maturity. The marigolds never grew even though they tried so optimistically to create a miracle that Pecola needed to save her baby. This failure is literally blamed on the fault of the earth, the land, our town, and it is defined as unfriendly towards marigolds that year. The lack of fertility of this land is a macro-Chronotope, indicating the desolation of the society- a time-space that cannot support the beauty and innocence of the blacks. The land, which has been oppressed by the history and neglected, acts in the active way that it prevents the appearance of beauty and hope, and the destiny of Pecola is not different. The failure of the marigolds does not represent just a personal failure on the part of Claudia and Frieda, but is a canon of the antagonism of the surrounding world, a Chronotope of sterility that demonstrates how the society is inherently incapable of supporting black life and beauty.

Ontological placement of Pecola in the story is characterized by a predestination liminalism and a stacking up of artifacts abandoned. The readers might note that she is depicted as picking and plucking her way between the rims and the sunflowers, between the coke bottles and the milkweed, among all the garbage and beauty of the world which she was. This image explains how she internalized the margins of the society and metamorphosed to become a living definition of the garbage. In this analytical framework, the event of the psychological breakdown in Pecola is a defensive schema or a deflection system that ended up boring us in the end.

1.4. Conclusion

By using Chronotopic analysis as a lens, this deep read of Toni Morrison's "The Bluest Eye" has demonstrated the gravity of the spatial-temporal dynamics of the text in revealing the danger of the racialized beauty ideal and the consequent internalized oppression. In this paper I discussed Morrison's deft deployment of vibrant growing and ultimately disintegrating Chronotopes as forces that shape character journeys and reveal societal disintegration. Each time-space examined—from the insidious "Dick and Jane" ideal and the brutal schoolyard to the wrecked ecosystems and the cinema that cages us—cumulates to the narrative of annihilation culminating with Pecola Breedlove's plunge into a shattered world. The fact that the marigolds do not take, which is attributed to the land being in a "town that had not once known a Black beauty" and "could not cradle the beauty" of innocence, is a potent symbol of society's failure to nurture Black beauty and innocence. Ultimately, "The Bluest Eye" is a persistent and piercing critique of the social systems that cement individuals in a state of hopelessness, demonstrating how oppression is internalized to the very craft of our gaze. Such a dynamic Chronotopic approach might be applied to other works (not just novels) by Toni Morrison or in histories of the novel such as *The Novel: A Biography* (2010) and *A History of the Novel in 100 Pages* (2013), by modern authors writing possibly in a diaspora framework to explore similar themes of identity, marginalization, and the broad reach of systemic injustice. These new insights would teach us nothing, if not how literature can be diagnosed in social problem.

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