

## TO GET RID OF "FUNKINESS": CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN MORRISON'S *SULA* AND *THE BLUEST EYE*

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### Abstract

The present paper attempts to briefly analyze Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye* with a Cultural and Postcolonial viewpoint. The study tries to illustrate the problems of being a black in a multicultural society like America. The distinctive feature of this study is deep analysis of the sense of alienation and self-hatred as consequences of being marginalized in a popular culture. To make a better understanding of the cultural clashes and pressures imposed on black people, these cultural pressures are broken into three categories (The cultural clash between Black and White culture, Cultural clashes within black subcultures, Cultural clashes between Black culture and other non-black subcultures in White American society).

**Keywords:** Cultural Studies, Postcolonialism, Afro-American Literature, Cultural Clash, Alienation, Self-hatred.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

As Guerrine (2005) said Cultural Studies is not a discrete approach, but a set of practices. Cultural Studies dates back to the social turmoil in 1960s, and have with it the elements from Marxism, Poststructuralism, Feminism, Gender Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Race and Ethnic Studies, etc. Questioning inequalities within power structures and attempting to reconstruct relationships between dominant and “minority” or “subaltern” cultures and discourses, it has always been politically engaged. Cultural Studies has an emphasis on the cultural and social forces that “cause the creation or alienation of a community within a dominant culture”(Guerin, Labor and Morgan)

According to Bressler (2007), when two cultures clash, one culture empowers and proves itself as the dominant culture and superior to other. African culture when first came to the American continent, was a new culture which has with it many cultural aspects different from the

dominant white American culture. This phenomenon of being marginalized along with the effects of slavery tradition which is still being felt in multicultural society of America, led to the advent of a new branch in Cultural Studies Criticism, that of African-American Criticism (Bressler).

African-American theorists considers a variety of concerns while analyzing a literary text, issues like **marginalization of blacks**, their **social, political, ideological, and literary oppression**, their **ties to the African language and culture**, and the **slavery** as a past historical event and its effects, are their most important common concerns (Bressler).

The present study attempts to analyze Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* taking into account its postcolonial aspects and show the effects of the cultural conflicts and clash between two cultures, i.e. the dominant white American's culture and hegemonies and the subaltern culture of African-Americans, and also keeping in mind the most important questions a Cultural Critic may ask himself/herself while reading a literary text.

Throughout history, African-Americans were treated like outsiders within the white society. When two cultures clash, one identifies itself as superior and makes dominant its ideologies and hegemonies; on the other hand the other culture(s) is oppressed by the popular culture, as well as all its ideologies, values, and hegemonies. Those who do not conform to the dominant hegemony are considered as "Other" by the dominant culture. This feeling of otherness and being marginalized causes many social, psychological, and personal conflicts. This study is mainly focused on investigating self-hatred and alienation in the characters of the two selected novels.

To facilitate the understanding of the cultural oppressions and conflicts in the texts (herein *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*), the cultural pressures in the novels, are broken into three categories according to their nature. The word "clash" here means the clash between the cultures, one as oppressor and the other the oppressed. The categorization is presented as follows:

1. The cultural clashes between black and white culture
2. Cultural clashes within black culture
3. Cultural clashes between Black culture and other non-black subcultures in white American society

Herein is provided a summarized list of the most important and most commonly raised questions in this field of study. Since answering to all questions in depth, does not fit the limited scope of this paper; and to provide a more detailed and in depth investigation of the texts, the scope of this study is limited to just studying a few concepts and answering to just a few key questions in this area. Regarding the Cultural Studies agendas, Morrison's works provide for the reader worlds full of meaning and concepts, the inclusion of all in a single study is (if not impossible) really difficult. Some of the questions that a cultural critic should keep in mind while analyzing a text could be (but not limited to):

1. What authorial biographical facts are relevant to the text?
2. How does the work ideologies support/ undermine the prevailing power structures of the time and place in which it was written/ interpreted?
3. What happens in the text when two cultures clash? When one culture finds itself as superior to other(s)?
4. Describe two or more cultures exhibited in the text? What does each value and reject?

## 2. A Cultural Reading of *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*

### 2.1. Authorial Biographical Facts

While analyzing a text, disregarding our theory and point of view, our analysis always seems imperfect without taking into account the authorial biographical facts surrounded the text and the author. To fulfill this a brief authorial background of the personal and literary life of Toni Morrison is provided.

Toni Morrison was brought up in North, but she was repeatedly told stories about the harsh situations of black life during Reconstruction era. Her maternal grandfather lived in Kentucky; but due to the harsh situations made by racism and poverty in the South, he moved to Ohio. In this period the southern states were politically restructured and restored. Her father George Wofford was a strict person with harsh pessimistic views of white people, but her mother Ramah was less confrontational. Toni Morrison was brought up in the multicultural environment of Lorain, Ohio. In Ohio racism was not intensely felt, but one with a black root can easily feel the sense of exclusion and being marginalized and Morrison was not an exception. She grew up in a family that transmitted their children, the oral traditions of black history, the tales of the perils threatened them and the horrors experienced by them. She was also educated in an educational system that easily ignored the contribution of nonwhite students and black talents (James).

She was brought up in a nurturing, religious environment, Morrison herself says about her family: "We were taught that as individuals we had value, irrespective of what the future might hold for us." When Morrison began writing her first novel, she was divorced with two small sons and had to work full-time, and according to her words, as a therapy for her depression and isolation, she wrote *The Bluest Eye*: "I wrote like someone with a dirty habit. Secretly-compulsively- and slyly." While writing *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison was surrounded by "Black Is Beautiful" movement of the late 1960s. Maxine Leed Craig (2002) defines the "black is beautiful" expression as a reference to "the new practices of self-presentation and the newly expressed appreciation of dark skin and tightly curled hair that became widespread in African American communities in the late 1960s and early 1970s." (Craig)

In the second chapter of her book *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race*, she attributed four contexts to the emergence of "black is beautiful" movement. The first might be the widespread disparagement of dark skin, curled hair, and other African facial features like full lips etc. A new standard of beauty was developed celebrating dark skin, kinky hair, and full lips that gave a new sense of beauty to the African American women who had been disparaged earlier by the past beauty standards. A second context could be an African American culture of presentation-of-self that considers good grooming as a way to achieve respect. A third context was the influence of sociological and psychological theories of black self-hatred. And finally the last was the patterns of privilege based on skin-color within black communities. During the 1960s these were the most important suppositions behind the beauty of black women (Craig).

### 2.2. Cultural Conflicts

#### 2.2.1. The Cultural clash between Black and White culture

Ron-Ki Chen in a paper named Toni Morrison's *Sula*: A Hybrid Novel of Africa and America has written a beautiful paragraph:

"It is in this American earth that all kinds of plants—vegetables, fruits, grasses, flowers, trees and so forth—can bud, grow, and bloom. Whether the seeds are imported from

Africa on purpose or by chance, they take roots in this fertile soil. Some die, others survive, and still others have intercourse with other seeds of many species in America. In the long run, a new hybrid one belongs to and differs from those of America. It is a miracle in the earth because this one flourishes well, produces flowers with unusual beauty, spreads its special fragrance far and wide, and bears sweet, juicy fruits in all parts of America—art, music, sport, politics, literature, etc.” (Chen).

According to Bressler (2007), in each society or culture there is a dominant cultural group which determines the cultural ideologies or, according to Marx, its hegemony - that is, “its dominant values, sense of right and wrong, and sense of personal self-worth. All people in a given culture are consciously or unconsciously asked to conform to the prescribed hegemony. Throughout history, African-Americans were treated like outsiders within the white society. In this part the effects of the cultural conflicts and clash between two cultures, i.e. the dominant white American’s culture and hegemonies and the subaltern culture of African-Americans are shown (Bressler).

In general, when someone immigrates from one place to another in search of better opportunities, wealth or even to save his/her life, or for whatever reasons, they all have one thing in common, they all escape from something in search of something better, but throughout this process of escaping from the harsh situations, as well as being marginalized and as “Other” in the new culture, they also became alienated from their values and practices institutionalized in them during generations (culture). This feeling of alienation will be manifested in different ways, dependent on the social, political, and psychological situations of the person and the society in which she/he lives. One of the manifestations of this sense of alienation in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* is through self-hatred. This sense of self-hatred is one of the social and psychological agents for “Black Is Beautiful” movement of the late 1960s. Almost all the characters in the novel with a few exceptions (Miss Marie, and Claudia to some extent) have a negative feeling toward their African features and their black cultural heritage, they not only disparage their cultural background and black social practices they also admire the standards and norms imposed on them by the dominant culture.

This sense of self-hatred is shown in Pecola at its most intensity. The intensity of this feeling is to the extent that leads to her madness. Her sticking to the destructive wish for blue eyes, the ideology that was promoted in those days in the American society, can be considered a psychological defense against this sense of self-hatred. As a child she conforms to the popular culture ideology by accepting its agenda that blue eyes, blonde hair, and white skin are beautiful and if she has blue eyes she will be differently treated and looked by her parents and peers. This way of conformity is the most unrealistic and brutal in comparison with other forms of conformity to the popular culture shown in other characters; thus, finally leads to the character’s ruining.

Pauline, Pecola’s mother is an example of someone who never managed to live in close proximity to whites. Raised in segregated south, alienated Pauline, like other characters in the novel, shows a sense of self-hatred, and finding herself in solace, she decides to work for Fishers a rich white family in whose house, she can satisfy her desire and love of order, beauty and the nickname she always lacks (they call her Polly). Morrison powerfully shows Pauline’s self-hatred in a scene in which Pecola and the MacTeer sisters came to see her at the Fishers where Pecola accidentally spills a dish of berry cobbler all over the floor which was just cleaned by her mother, she burnt her bare legs with the hot juice; instead of soothing her daughter, Mrs.

Breedlove slaps Pecola repeatedly. She speaks to Pecola with words Claudia describes as “hotter and darker than the smoking berries,” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*). The hatred and aggression she shows while slapping Pecola, is such that she is slapping herself, her soul, her cultural background, her individual identity, and all that connects her to the African features. In fact she is not slapping Pecola, she is slapping all her blackness, her ugliness, her “funkiness”.

“Mrs. Breedlove yanked her up by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola directly and Frieda and me by implication.

“Crazy fool...my floor, mess...look what you...work...get on out...now that...crazy...my floor, my floor...my floor.” Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries, and we backed away in dread” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

The concept of alienation in *Sula*'s black characters, however intensifies with white's seizing their land and properties.

Morrison begins the novel with a short prologue about the Bottom, this prologue illustrates a change which is happening:

“In that place, where they tore the nightshade and blackberry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion City Golf Course, there was once a neighborhood. It stood in the hills above the valley town of Medallion and spread all the way to the river. It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom” (Morrison, *Sula*).

The Bottom got its name from a cruel trick played on a black worker by his white farmer boss:

“A good white farmer promised freedom and a piece of bottom land to his slave if he would perform some very difficult chores. When the slave completed the work, he asked the farmer to keep his end of the bargain. Freedom was easy--the farmer had no objection to that. But he didn't want to give up any land. So he told the slave that he was very sorry that he had to give him valley land. He had hoped to give him a piece of the Bottom. The slave blinked and said he thought valley land was bottom land. The master said, "Oh, no! See those hills? That's bottom land, rich and fertile." "But it's high up in the hills," said the slave. "High up from us," said the master, "but when God looks down, it's the bottom. That's why we call it so. It's the bottom of heaven--best land there is.” (Morrison, *Sula*).

The hilly bottom land were not fertile because of endless erosion, since rain washes the soil and the seeds down. After the town prospered and “the streets of Medalion were hot and dusty with progress, those heavy trees that sheltered the shacks up in the Bottom were wonderful to see” (Morrison, *Sula*).

This bottom land which was once useless, now becomes a beautiful place for white people. By using this very first deconstruction, Morrison wants to prove her saying that: "Evil is as useful as good. Sometimes good looks like evil and evil looks like good."

One of the most common ways through which a culture makes its hegemonies dominant and superior is using binary oppositions. Deborah E. McDowell explains that *Sula* is full of binary oppositions. Binaries like black/white, male/female, good/bad will work here. For instance the paradox and ambiguity in the prologue that describes the setting, the Bottom, which was actually located in the top(Bloom). Using this very first paradox in introducing the Bottom, Morrison tries to challenge all the constructed binary concepts imposed on black people by white society;

she also tries to show how easy black people are tricked by giving them the worthless land of the Bottom, and how easier they get deprived of the properties, once they are given.

“The black people would have disagreed, but they had no time to think about it. They were mightily preoccupied with earthly things--and each other, wondering even as early as 1920 what Shadrack was all about, what that little girl Sula who grew into a woman in their town was all about, and what they themselves were all about, tucked up there in the Bottom” (Morrison, Sula).

As the novel proceeds this sense of alienation manifests itself differently in that of mother line interruption, motherly love, and sexual fear. Alienation from motherly love and motherly roles is another point which can be seen in both texts with different severity. Black women who lived as subalterns in white societies, due to different reasons were deprived of their motherly roles, for instance before the abolition of slavery, many black women were enslaved by white people and were separated from their children. On the other hand, black children are also alienated from motherly love. Girls not receiving the necessary love from their mothers, they themselves will be future mothers unable to accept motherly roles. And it will become a vicious circle and this sense of alienation is regenerated in generations.

The aforementioned sense of self-hatred could intensify the women’s alienation from their own children and their motherly roles. Some black mothers devote their motherly passion to white children instead, like Pauline Breedlove, and some to even animals like a cat (Geraldine).

Both senses of being alienated from motherly roles (in black mothers) and motherly love (in black children) can be evidently seen in both novels. The most representative examples of mothers being alienated from motherly roles in *The Bluest Eye*, are Pauline and Geraldine. Geraldine is a black middle-class migrated to the north in search of a better life. Geraldine like all other women who migrated to the north, on the one hand, carries a deep love for their past; “soak up the juice of their home towns and it never leaves them” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*); on the other hand, to be respectable, she tries to throw out of her love the qualities associating her with that past, what the narrator calls “the dreadful funkiness of passion, the funkiness of nature, the funkiness of the wide range of human emotions” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*). Geraldine loves order, discipline, and cleanliness; she has a cat and gives an excessive love to her. The needs of her son, Junior, are fully met as long as they are physical.

“Geraldine did not allow her baby, Junior, to cry. As long as his needs were physical, she could meet them—comfort and satiety. He was always brushed, bathed, oiled, and shod. Geraldine did not talk to him, coo to him, or indulge him in kissing bouts, but she saw that every other desire was fulfilled. It was not long before the child discovered the difference in his mother’s behavior to himself and the cat. As he grew older, he learned how to direct his hatred of his mother to the cat, and spent some happy moments watching it suffer. The cat survived, because Geraldine was seldom away from home, and could effectively soothe the animal when Junior abused him”(Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

Pauline Breedlove, on the other hand fulfills her motherly roles by devoting her motherly passions to a “little pink-and-yellow girl”.

“The little girl in pink started to cry. Mrs. Breedlove turned to her. “Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don’t cry no more. Polly will change it.” ... As Pecola put the laundry bag in the wagon, we could hear Mrs. Breedlove hushing and soothing the tears of the little pink-and-yellow girl...“Hush. Don’t worry none,” she whispered, and the honey in her words complemented the sundown spilling on the lake.”(Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

The displacement of motherly love in both Pauline and Geraldine might be rooted in their sense of self-hatred which was promoted by the popular culture of the time. On the other hand, black children who do not receive the necessary motherly love, are always shown in the novels whether as victimized or showing serious psychological problems. Andrea O'Reilly refers to Motherhood as a key concept in Morrison's fictions. Morrison illustrates a broad vision of African American mothering built upon the experiences of black women on motherhood. Morrison's viewpoint of black motherhood are in many aspects different from the dominant concept of motherhood in the culture; she tries to show motherhood as a source of power for black women (O'Reilly).

O'Reilly in her book states that mothers pass on to their daughters what is called mother line. Mother line is "the ancestral memory and ancient properties of traditional black culture". This, O'Reilly believes, helps "the child to develop a strong and authentic selfhood as a black person" and if this cultural bearing is cut, the process of self-empowerment in children will be interrupted. Morrison is particularly concerned with the disconnectedness of women from the mother line, the how and reasons why this disconnection occurs and also the costs and consequences of these disconnections for mothers and daughters. Pecola and Sula are two examples that seriously suffer from the lack of motherly love. In fact Sula is a matured version of Pecola brought up under those conditions of negativity and self-hatred. In fact, both Pecola and Sula become disconnected from their ancestral memory through identification with "normative gender ideologies" (O'Reilly).

In *Sula*, this normative definitions revolves around the concept of unconditional mother love, and disconnection occurs when Sula accidentally hears Hannah saying: "...I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference. She only heard Hannah's words, and the pronouncement sent her flying up the stairs..." (Morrison, *Sula*). What Hannah meant was that a child became a separate person with a different and unique personality. Although mothers always love their children—"can't help loving your own"—they may not like their personality of their adulthood." (O'Reilly). Sula, as a result of misunderstanding Hannah's words, avoids the teachings of her mother as a daughter and separates herself from her (O'Reilly).

Samuels and Hudson-Weems (1990) agree that Sula lacks a positive role model who teaches her a domestic lifestyle or security, neither Eva nor Hannah could manage to fulfill this (Samuels and Weems). They continue: "Hannah, who had not found Eva to be a loving mother, comes up short on the nurturing yardstick". "Hannah's remark," they continue, "damages Sula's childhood" and "lead[s] [her] to the independence she strives for" (Morrison, *Sula*).

Another example in *Sula* which worth mentioning is Helene Sabat. Nel's mother according to Carmen (1999) suffers a kind of sexual fear. Her mother Rochelle was a prostitute and Helene was raised by her grandmother and lived in a house with four Virgin Marys, since her childhood she was disconnected from her mother in order to not inherit "any sign of her mother's wild blood." (Carmen).

"The grandmother took Helene away from the soft lights and flowered carpets of the Sundown House and raised her under the dole some eyes of a multicolored Virgin Mary, counseling her to be constantly on guard for any sign of her mother's wild blood." (Morrison, *Sula*).

All she lacks in her own childhood, she tries to compensate for her daughter, Nel. Helene marries the right ("Wright") man in order to stay as far as possible from her mother's life, she keeps a perfect house and devoted most of her energy to her daughter, Nel. Seemingly, Helene is a model mother and citizen. Her great conformity to the dominant ideology of good grooming which was then promoted by the popular culture is noteworthy. However, as the novel proceeds, Nel understood that she has known only one side of her mother's personality. In their trip to New Orleans Nel saw another side of her once-powerful and respected mother. When the white conductor addresses Helen as "gal", once in a while Helene remembers all her past, the whorehouse's red shutters which reminds her of her mother's being prostitute. "All the old vulnerabilities, all the old fears of being somehow flawed gathered in her stomach . . ." (Morrison, Sula).

Nel realizes that, under her powerful and respected mother's character is a weak and vulnerable personality. Due to her mother's being prostitute, Helene developed a sense of sexual fear and passed this sense to her daughter. Nel who was raised up by a mother with excessive protective behavior learned as a result to give just motherly love, even to his husband, Jude who was then struggling to get a job on the New River Road, despite all his efforts to get the job, he did not succeed. He chose Nel because she was the most suitable character whom he needed in that situation of mental crisis, Nel was the most mother-like girl that he knew; one who was seldom "seemed hell-bent to marry" (Morrison, Sula). Nel was the best option for Jude in that moment because she was the best woman Jude can "shelter her, love her, and grow old with her". This development of sexual fear which has been passed to Nel by her mother might be a reason for Jude's later tendency to have an intercourse with Sula.

These senses of alienation and self-hatred are just tips of the iceberg. Regarding the complexity and variety of the problems the people encounter in the process of acculturation and in dealing with cultural clashes, I just suffice to this much of this vast discussion.

### **2.2.2. Cultural clashes within black subcultures**

In the second chapter of her book *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race*, she attributed four contexts to the emergence of "black is beautiful" movement that last of which was the patterns of privilege based on skin-color within black communities. During the 1960s these were the most important suppositions behind the beauty of black women (Craig).

There are always groups of people within the black communities that tries to separate themselves from the rest of the society, from those the call 'Niggers'. Geraldine is a representative of this type of characters. According to Douglas (2007), Geraldine is one of those who lost her cultural identity in order to get rid of the "funkiness". The distinctive feature of "these brown girls" Douglas adds is that they know "how to get rid of their funkiness". According to Douglas, this quality of funkiness is assumed to have been already lost in white people, and this loss may be what makes them white. "In this struggle, it seems as if culture as learned behavior might combat an inherited, biology-derived identity." (Douglas).

"One such girl from Mobile, or Meridian, or Aiken who did not sweat in her armpits nor between her thighs, who smelled of wood and vanilla, who had made soufflés in the Home Economics Department, moved with her husband, Louis, to Lorain, Ohio. Her name was Geraldine. There she built her nest, ironed shirts, potted bleeding hearts, played with her cat, and birthed Louis Junior." (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

The most representative behaviors of Geraldine indicating her attempt of distancing herself and her son from the black community is her hostile behavior towards Pecola and not letting her son play with black children.

“... his mother did not like him to play with niggers. She had explained to him the difference between colored people and niggers. They were easily identifiable. Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. He belonged to the former group: he wore white shirts and blue trousers; his hair was cut as close to his scalp as possible to avoid any suggestion of wool, the part was etched into his hair by the barber. In winter his mother put Jergens Lotion on his face to keep the skin from becoming ashen. Even though he was light-skinned, it was possible to ash. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant.” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

Another character who tries to distance himself from the black people, is Soaphead Church, the misanthrope. Soaphead’s parents were among those who marry people of mixed racial background to distance themselves from their African descent. Through serving as a “Reader, Adviser, and Interpreter of Dreams.” he could freely choose to be part of the community or separated from it. When Pecola meets him to wish for blue eyes. He just sees an “ugly little girl” who “wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*). Thus instead of giving her a realistic outlook he causes her going further into madness.

“Take this food and give it to the creature sleeping on the porch. Make sure he eats it. And mark well how he behaves. If nothing happens, you will know that God has refused you. If the animal behaves strangely, your wish will be granted on the day following this one.” (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*).

### **2.2.3. Cultural clashes between Black culture and other non-black subcultures in White American society**

America has always been received many people from all over the world with various cultural and ethnic background. The phenomenon of multiculturalism in American continent is not a new event. In addition to black people there are many people immigrating to American lands in search of better life and wealth, and there has always been cultural clashes and overlapping between black people and these “newly-arrived-people”. The interesting and the common point among those immigrants is that although they are considered themselves as subaltern, they developed a kind of superiority over blacks. These sense of superiority could be a response to their own marginality in their proximity to the popular culture; these “newly-arrived-people” see no way but conform to the popular culture’s values and disciplines; thus they see no escape but to copy the behavior of the dominant culture toward blacks. There are some scenes in the texts that reveals this sense of superiority of minor non-American groups over the African-Americans.

For instance in *Sula*, Jude despite his severe struggling to get a job on the New River Road, did not succeed. In a paragraph illustrating his unsuccessful effort, the narrator refers to “bull-necked Greek and Italians” who succeeded to grab the job opportunity.

“Work had already begun on the New River Road ... His [Jude’s] arms ached for something heavier than trays, for something dirtier than peelings; ... after he stood in lines for six days running and saw the gang boss pick out thin-armed white boys from the Virginia hills and the bull-necked Greeks and Italians and heard over and over, “Nothing else today. Come back tomorrow,” that he got the message.” (Morrison, *Sula*).

In *Sula* Morrison shows Irish boys annoying repeatedly Sula and Nel, Irish people are themselves regarded as subaltern by dominant white Americans in the new homeland. It is noticeable that there has always been a double burden on the shoulders of black people, they are colonized, humiliated, and marginalized not only by Americans but also by other immigrant minorities and subcultures, and the way they resist against these subcultures and agendas is artfully shown by Morrison in the part that Sula cut the tip of her own finger in front of the Irish boys and “ducked them away for weeks”. She said: ““If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I’ll do to you?” (Morrison, *Sula*).

### 3. CONCLUSION

According to Bressler (2007), when two cultures clash, one culture empowers and proves itself as the dominant culture and superior to others and makes dominant its ideologies and hegemonies; on the other hand the other culture(s) is oppressed by the popular culture, as well as all its ideologies, values, and hegemonies (Bressler). Those who do not conform to the dominant hegemony are considered as “Other” by the dominant culture. The cultural pressures on the specific cultural group under study (here blacks) are divided into three categories: 1. Cultural conflicts between blacks and dominant white Americans, 2. Cultural conflicts within the black community itself, 3. Cultural conflicts between blacks and other subcultures (e.g. Irish people). The members of a subaltern community when they live (whether voluntarily or by force) in a society with a different history and cultural background, develop a sense of otherness and being marginalized. To escape this sense of marginalization, blacks and other ethnic backgrounds show different reactions. In the selected texts, some characters develop a sense of self-hatred, and others try to distance themselves from their own cultural agendas and members of community; however, there are few characters that try to resurrect their culture despite being marginalized by the members of their own community. The sense of alienation is deeply studied in the study with a focus on the alienation from motherly roles (in black mothers), and alienation of motherly love (in black children). This sense of alienation from motherly roles have various reasons due to the cultural problems of black communities, but what is noteworthy is that this sense is being regenerated and inherited from a generation to the next. Girls not receiving the necessary love from their mothers, they themselves will be future mothers unable to accept motherly roles. And it will become a vicious circle and this sense of alienation is regenerated in generations.

There are also non-black subaltern groups that show a hostile behavior towards other marginalized groups (mostly blacks) in the society. This behavior is the result of their own marginalization and can be considered as an action of conformity to the agendas of popular culture. To whatever reasons or in whatever society, these cultural conflicts cause different social and individual problems for the members of minority groups and culture. Problems from being marginalized in educational system to personal psychological problems one deals with in his/her personal or social relationships all can be the consequences of marginalization of one or more groups and superiority of others.

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