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METANARRATIVES AND MINOR NARRATIVES IN TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

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ABSTRACT

*Subsequent to modernism, postmodernism is skeptical about the ideas concerning certainty, determination, and universality. Among postmodern thinkers, Jean-François Lyotard is the one who believes in incredulity and skepticism toward certainty, authority, and uniformity of grand narratives or metanarratives of the modern era. Lyotard, states that postmodern era is the time when metanarratives and standards of major societies have lost their own credibility and authority. Discouraging the metanarratives of dominant societies, Lyotard believes in the minor narratives and local standards of minor communities. Accordingly, Toni Morrison, the African-American she-novelist, implies that the black people's standards and doctrines of life and beauty, being considered as minor narratives in the white grand society of America, are as important as the white standards – metanarratives – of life and beauty. This essay attempts to deal with study and explanation of Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* based on Lyotard's idea of metanarratives and minor narratives.*

KEYWORDS: *incredulity, metanarratives, minor narratives, postmodernism, skepticism.*



1. INTRODUCTION

Jean-François Lyotard, one of the famous postmodern theorists, denies metanarratives, contending with norms and standards in which main and major groups, nations, or people believe as the most important standards in a location in a special period of time. In spite of metanarratives, Lyotard states that there are minor narratives which local and minor communities, groups, or people believe in. Rejecting totality, stability, and universality of metanarratives, Lyotard affirms that minor narratives are different local and situational narratives, being incapable of being unified and without making any claim to be universal in order to be followed by other communities. Therefore, minor narratives of a local community are important to that community. As a result, in postmodern period, some narratives or metanarratives have lost their own stability, totality, and universality- some of features of modernism- and there are multiplicities of different local or minor narratives, existing in the same importance without any supremacy of one over the other.

In this sense, this research strives to discuss Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, in the light of Lyotard's theory of metanarratives and minor narratives. Furthermore, as Toni Morrison herself states "Black is Beautiful" (Bouson, 2000, p. 16), through studying the novel, the researcher focuses on white standards of beauty of white American society- metanarratives- and black standards of beauty of black community in Lorain Ohio in America- minor narratives. The black standards of beauty, containing the beauty of blues music, the violin tone and rhythm being played by grandfather, the local songs being sung by grandmother in the kitchen, the way of narrating story by black people, defending and supporting children- especially MacTeers' daughters- by parents against others and saving them from being hurt by young boys, feeling and expressing sympathy for other people- especially a black child, Pecola- by MacTeer family, and to name just a few are minor narratives which come next to and against the white standards of beauty, including blue eyes, white skin, blond hair, tall slender woman with blue eyes and blond hair, the house of white people, their situation of their house in the city and their tools and furniture in their house, their family relationship and nursing children and so on- metanarratives. Accordingly, the essay remarks that minor narratives, such as black standards of beauty, are as important and valuable as metanarratives, such as white standards of beauty, in order to be followed in a society and no metanarrative has superiority over a minor narrative.

2. METANARRATIVES AND MINOR NARRATIVES IN THEORY

The term metanarratives consists of two parts: the prefix 'meta-' and narrative. The prefix, meta-, defines something or some concept of higher rank and degree. Simon Malpas, in the book, *Jean-François Lyotard* (2003), says, "...the prefix, 'meta-', denotes something of higher order" (p. 24). The second part is 'narrative' which designates for the story of a community standing for its own past, present, and future and its standards of the community's life. Malpas (2003) mentions:

For Lyotard, narratives are the stories that communities tell themselves to explain their present existence, their history and ambitions for the future. Although the term 'narrative' is commonly associated with literary fiction, all forms of discourse employ narratives to present their ideas. Examples of this

