

Revolutionary Wishes in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*: Toni Morrison's Developing Anti-Capitalist Vision

Antonio Maurice Daniels
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Although Toni Morrison is known to more people for dubbing Bill Clinton “the first Black president,” her salient critiques of capitalism deserve greater attention than the fame she has gained from her ability to speak the unspeakable: the renaming of Bill Clinton’s racial identity. In novels full of discrimination, oppression, and violence, one might overlook Toni Morrison’s Utopian imagination: the ability to find dimensions in the lives of individuals subjugated by capitalism that suggest the possibility of alternatives to capitalism. Characters in Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Sula* (1973) face deeply troubling social conditions, yet they still evince, at some level, a commitment to Utopian thought and to resisting developing elements of postmodernism. In *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson (1991) defines postmodernism as “what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good” (p. ix). Jameson argues that “the question of Utopia would seem to be a crucial test of what is left of our capacity to imagine change at all” (p. xvi). *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula* reflect Morrison’s struggle to resist postmodern anti-Utopian thought. These novels are an attempt to show that the seeds of Utopia lie in our ability to recognize Utopian energies, those Utopian elements that exist in spite of the oppressive conditions capitalism engenders, and that suggest an alternative to capitalism’s oppression and exploitation. Jameson’s theoretical construct helps to unveil the Utopian energies essential to imagining an alternative to capitalism in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*.

In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola Breedlove, an adolescent African-American girl, evinces strong Utopian energies in her ability to imagine an alternative to the limitations of the dominant culture’s standard of beauty. Even as a young child, Pecola is keenly aware of the invisibility of black beauty:

She has seen it lurking in the eyes of all white people. So. The distaste must be for her, her blackness. All things in her are flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread. And it is the blackness that accounts for, that creates, the vacuum edged with distaste in white eyes. (p. 49)

Pecola anticipates a day when she can modify her body in a way that allows her to retain the beauty of her blackness: blue eyes on a black body. Because racism renders Black beauty invisible, Pecola understands that she must have patience and wait for conditions to emerge that will allow her to have blue eyes: “Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that would take a long, long time” (p. 40). By not losing “hope” that a time will come when she can alter her eye color, Pecola demonstrates her ability to resist the capitalist ideology that does not want her to be able think of alternatives to her present

realities. While it might seem problematic that she wishes for a biological feature that is exclusive to White people, she does not want blue eyes simply because White people have blue eyes. The blue eyes will allow Black and White people to see that there is more to her physical appearance than her dark color. By longing for visibility and imagining to herself an alternative body for herself (one with blue eyes), she does not allow her oppressive conditions to defeat her hope that a day will emerge when she will be perceived as beautiful. Bloch (1986) argues that for people to keep their hopes alive they must adopt a Not-Yet-Conscious, a conscious that does not focus on what is possible now, but on what might be possible in the future. Pecola's willingness to envision a day when she is beautiful reflects the Blochian Not-Yet-Conscious, essential to her developing Utopian imagination.

More importantly, by imagining an alternative version of herself, Pecola positions herself to imagine an even larger, collective, alternative to her economic reality. Morrison writes:

The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one has to convince them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. (p. 38)

While the rest of the members of her family accept that their "ugliness was unique," Pecola's wish for "the bluest eyes" is an attempt to transform the way in which she thinks about her physical appearance so that she can instigate a change in the way that her family views their physical appearance. Bouson (2000) contends that:

having internalized the contempt and loathing directed at them from the shaming gaze of the humiliator—that is, the white culture—the Breedloves, have come to comprehend their designated position in the social order. (p. 24)

While Bouson chooses to focus on Pecola's shame, she overlooks Pecola's anti-capitalist imagination that wants to move her family beyond living in a "storefront" (p. 38). In Pecola's growing Utopian imagination, she recognizes that:

If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly [Pecola's father] would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove [Pecola's mother] too. Maybe they'd say 'Why look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes'. (p. 46)

Pecola's willingness to imagine an alternative standard of beauty is significant because it allows her to imagine an alternative economic reality for her family. For the Breedloves, their acceptance of their "ugliness" creates an acceptance of the economic system that is responsible for their ugliness. Pecola recognizes that her individual longing for beauty can only be realized through an alternative economic reality. She begins to entertain the possibility that the way her family treats her may be because of its economic quandaries. The reader is able to see that there is much more substance to Pecola's desire for "the bluest eyes" than selfish gains; she wants her family to move toward Utopia with her. As the Breedloves move towards Utopia, their "ugliness" will no longer matter.

Although Pecola is able to imagine an alternative economic reality for her family, this same family is ultimately responsible for stunting her Utopian imagination. The fundamental barrier that prevents Pecola's Utopian imagination from flourishing is her lack of support. Pecola is a victim of her family members isolating themselves from her. While much of what motivates Pecola's longing for "the bluest eyes" is improved social mobility for her family, this same family attempts to extinguish her Utopian vision. She never receives love from her household. Ultimately, the alienation from her social environment that emerges because of her lack of love makes her unable to handle

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. All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. (p. 205)

The lack of visibility of Pecola's beauty emerges from her willingness to allow her family to take away her beauty to provide them with a sense of beauty. Instead of showing Pecola love, her family uses Pecola as a means of eradicating its frustrations and problems. By using Pecola as a scapegoat, the Breedloves attempt to achieve the "wholesome" life that capitalism does not afford them. Ironically, the "wholesome" life that Pecola's family seeks is the life her anti-capitalist imagination attempts to provide for them. Pecola's only need is for her family to love her. Their lack of love contributes to a waning of her Utopian vision.

Pecola's relationship with her mother, Pauline, however, reveals that Pauline's own past contributes to her difficulty with showing Pecola affection. Jameson (1991) asserts that one of the fundamental tasks for postmodern subjects is to "attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place" (p. ix). Drawing upon Jameson's argument, it is important to investigate Pauline's past to understand the connection between her past and her treatment of Pecola. When Pauline is a very young child, she accidentally suffers an injury that leaves

...her with a crooked, archless foot that flopped when she walked—not a limp..., but a way of lifting the bad foot as though she were extracting it from little whirlpools that threatened to pull it under. (p. 110)

Ada, Pauline's mother, fails to protect Pauline from "the general feeling of separateness and unworthiness" (p. 111) that her physical conditions create for her. With a full understanding of this aspect of Pauline's past, one can see that she has to battle internal demons of her own. Moreover, her mother's lack of response to her feeling of alienation suggests a reason why she might isolate herself from Pecola. Because Pauline never receives the love she needs from Ada, she in turn feels no affection for Pecola. Ada's unwillingness to help Pauline confront her "feeling of separateness" has an impact on the type of love that Pauline is able to show Pecola. Without the love she wants to receive from Ada, Pauline has a void that she needs to satisfy before she can provide Pecola with the physical love that Pecola longs for.

Furthermore, Pauline's efforts to move beyond Ada's lack of affection for her demonstrate her Utopian potential. Pauline seeks friendship as a means of filling the void of love that Ada does not provide. In Pauline's dreams, she longs for a companion who will fulfill her emptiness: "...the Presence would know what to do. She had only to lay her head on his chest and he would lead her away to the sea, to the city, to the woods...forever" (p. 113). The reader is

able to see from Pauline's dreams that she maintains an essential hope that her situation can change, a sense of hope that reflects the Blochian notion of the "Not-Yet-Conscious." This "Presence" that she wishes for is an important Utopian longing because her hope for companionship materializes when she meets Cholly Breedlove, her future husband. Pauline's "Not-Yet-Conscious" allows her to see Cholly as the "Presence" who

...seemed to relish her company and even to enjoy her country way and lack of knowledge about city things. He talked to her about her foot and asked, when she walked through the town or in the fields, if she was tired. Instead of ignoring her infirmity, pretending it was not there, he made it seem like something special and endearing. (p. 115)

Pauline's yearning to find someone who will love her could not be possible without her maintaining the possibility that love is possible. Therefore, when she finally experiences love with Cholly, she is able to recognize it. Pauline recognizes Cholly as her "Presence" because he recognizes that she matters. The attention that Cholly gives to her helps her to fill some of the void that Ada does not. Cholly makes Pauline's "infirmity" a "special and endearing" dimension of her body. This is important because she views her archless foot as a hindrance, but Cholly sees it as a special and endearing quality, thus demonstrating what is possible when one allows a space for hope to make the seemingly impossible possible. Pauline's inadequacy is a source of attraction for Cholly, which is a Utopian suggestion that physical deformities cannot hinder true love.

Although there is Utopian potential in the way that Pecola views the dominant culture's standard of beauty, Claudia's (Pecola's friend and narrator) view of the dominant standard of beauty also reflects an anti-capitalist imagination. Claudia refuses to allow this standard of beauty to inform her of her inability to be beautiful. For a Christmas present, Claudia receives a "blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll" (p. 20). Claudia despises the doll. She hates the fact that the doll has blue eyes, yellow hair, and pink skin: all physical characteristics that she does not have. Claudia wants to have a doll that is more representative of her (p. 20). She refuses to allow a commodity (the doll) to define beauty as a White characteristic. Claudia does not understand why the doll cannot possess the physical characteristics of African-Americans, which none of the dolls that she receives does. Her displeasure with what the White doll represents reflects what bell hooks (1992) calls "loving blackness as political resistance" (p. 9). Claudia's longing to have a doll that is more representative of "blackness" serve as a powerful Utopian wish for more positive representations of Black beauty. Claudia's refusal to accept the White beauty implicit in the doll's "beauty" seems to suggest that she refuses to accept the capitalist ideology of those who are responsible for making the doll. One can arrive at this conclusion by identifying that Claudia finds something deeply vexing about all dolls looking the same—looking like White people (p. 20). Her hope for toys that represent the beauty of blackness is a strong Utopian energy because it demonstrates her ability to imagine an alternative to the commodification of beauty conspicuous in the White doll. Claudia's rejection of the dominant culture's standard of beauty reflects Morrison's notion of "Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something that one could do" (p. 209).

At the end of *The Bluest Eye*, the reader finds two alienated characters (Pecola and Soaphead Church, a pedophile) who find acceptance in their Utopian visions of the lives they both long for. Although Pecola cannot find anyone else to love her, she does not let this fact

hinder her from finding friendship. She finds friendship with Church, who comes from an extensive line of people “proud [of their] academic accomplishments and [their mixed] blood” (p. 167). Of course, during the time the novel is set, miscegenation was forbidden by law. Therefore, the community not only alienates Soaphead for his pedophilia, but also for being a product of an interracial union. Although he lives peacefully in his alienation, and “never relished physical contact,” except for obsession with “little girls,” he sees a need to embrace Pecola and provide her with the love and attention that she needs (p. 167). He comments, “A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of her blackness and see the world with blue eyes” (p. 174). After Pecola leaves his home with his request to terminate the life of his neighbor’s dog, he composes a letter to God, saying, “No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will” (p. 182). Although Soaphead never touches Pecola, he does accept her longing for blue eyes. They both receive something beneficial from their friendship: Pecola removes the burden of the neighbor’s dog from Soaphead’s life, and Soaphead accepts Pecola’s Utopian vision of herself as a Black girl with the bluest eyes. Soaphead’s composition of the letter to God reveals his hope that some force will grant Pecola the bluest eyes she wants. While this is an odd friendship, it does possess Utopian potential in its portrayal of two alienated individuals being able to find love, acceptance, and friendship.

Although Pecola’s anti-capitalist imagination never has the chance to develop further, in *Sula*, Morrison’s 1973 novel, Sula Peace’s subversive resistance to racist ideology makes her Utopian imagination more powerful than Pecola’s. While Pecola’s anti-capitalist imagination has its roots in her yearning to be beautiful, Sula understands that such a focus on the body can reduce it to a mere simulacrum, that is, a simple image or surface that can be commodified or rendered meaningless. Sula uses her body not as an end in itself, but as an agent for engendering social change.

Early in the novel, when Sula and Nel are coming home from school, they encounter a group of white boys who wish to harm them. Sula, however, demonstrates her willingness to act subversively to prevent the boys from attacking them: “Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate toward her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashed off only the tip of her finger” (p. 54). By slashing off a piece of her finger, Sula evinces her willingness to protect not only herself, but Nel as well. Sula “slashed off...the tip of her finger” to show that the cause she represents is larger than herself. Her finger serves as means of sharing a part of herself with Nel and ultimately the African-American community, considering that the motivation for the boys attempted attack is racism. The piece of her finger that she cuts serves as a symbol of what she is willing to do to protect herself, Nel, and community.

Marks (2002) sees Sula’s act as tremendously harmful:

By doing to herself what the boys would do, Sula aggresses the aggressors. By cutting off a piece of herself, Sula reveals that she has internalized a self-loathing so deep that she does not mind causing herself harm in order to deflect harm. (p. 1)

Marks’s argument overlooks the fact that Sula is a truly subversive character willing to shock the consciousness of her White oppressors. Sula’s cutting off of the tip of her finger shocks the boys—evident in their decision to run away. Moreover, Marks misses the significance of this act in revealing collective thinking. Sula’s willingness to “give of herself” is an act of communal sharing, not an act of “self-loathing so deep that she does not mind causing harm in order to

deflect harm.” Fanon (1967) contends that “if I have not risked my life in order to prevent the murder of other men, if I have stood silent, I feel guilty in a sense that cannot in an adequate fashion be understood juridically, or politically[...].” (p. 89). Sula’s decision to cut the tip of her finger to resist attack evinces Fanon’s notion of an essential moment in which one needs to be willing to sacrifice his or her life “to prevent the murder of other men.” Sula refuses to stand “silent” and allow the group of White boys to further spread fear. She does not have to experience the “guilt” that Fanon speaks about because she subversively responds to the potential threat of the group of White boys, instead of allowing them to defeat her. Sula is willing to challenge racism in a much more direct way than Pecola is, and this is the fundamental reason why Sula’s anti-capitalist vision burgeons much more than Pecola’s.

Although racism is Sula’s most significant enemy, her response to gender limitations also contributes significantly to unveiling her Utopian potential. Sula seeks to expose the inherent inequalities and contradictions she finds in the social construction of gender—as that construction is practiced by both Whites and Blacks. Since Black and White men and women believe in the oppressive social construction of gender, this construction frustrates her immensely, considering she is a subversive character who resists the capitalist ideology responsible for this construction. Sula says, “You say I’m a woman and colored. Ain’t that the same as being a man?” (p. 87). From Sula’s comment, one can see that she is able to adopt a view of gender that differs from the one dominant in her milieu.

Since the novel is set when women do not have suffrage, Sula’s attempt to assert the inherent equality of women is a significant demonstration of her anti-capitalist thinking: she is able to imagine a day where gender inequality no longer exists. Capitalism resists allowing individuals to imagine an alternative to gender inequality. Galehouse (1999) contends that “despite any real or perceived limitations imposed by her family, her community, or the era in which she is depicted, Sula does not put any limits upon herself” (p. 340). The ability to move beyond “perceived limitations” makes Sula’s Utopian potential important.

Mbalia (1991), however, posits that Sula is not a character with strong Utopian energies:

Morrison’s weak class analysis at the time she writes *Sula* forces her to create a female character who, because of her oppression, makes individualism supreme over the collective, rather than a female character who struggles to change the oppressive nature of society in order to ensure the full development of each individual, whether male or female. (p. 42)

Mbalia’s argument overlooks the strong class critique Morrison performs in *Sula*: a powerful critique of the way in which race and class contribute to the dilemma faced by the people in the Bottom (the place in Lorain, Ohio where the novel is set) (p. 5). Mbalia dismisses Sula’s effort to imagine a world devoid of gender inequality; this causes her to overlook Sula’s privileging of “collectivism,” not “individualism.” Deeply unhappy with “the oppressive nature of society,” Sula makes every attempt to change the most disconcerting aspects of that society: racism, gender limitations, Black people’s low expectations, and economic limitations. Ultimately, Mbalia’s argument misses how each act that Sula engages in supports some collective end.

Sula also demonstrates her great Utopian potential in the subversive relationship she engages in with Nel. Nel and Sula meet in childhood and form a mutually beneficial friendship as “Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers (Sula’s because he was dead; Nel’s because he wasn’t)” who “found in each other’s eyes the intimacy they were looking for”

(p. 52). Sula is not afraid to initiate a non-heteronormative relationship with Nel. Their relationship is lesbian, but it transcends traditional lesbian relationships. They do not engage in sexual intercourse. The relationship, one of the strongest Morrison presents in her works, works tremendously well because the women set their own rules: "In the safe harbor of each other's company they could afford to abandon the ways of other people and concentrate on their perceptions of things" (p. 55). While Sula does not have a single thing in common with Nel, she still finds a way to overcome their great differences and form a relationship with her. Her effort to establish friendship with Nel is an essential act in moving towards Utopia, for it demonstrates that she embraces the notion of community, essential to achieving Utopia.

While Sula and Nel have a strong relationship, they do experience some serious disagreements that they have to resolve. Their most serious confrontation arises from Sula's affair with Jude, Nel's husband. Nel and Jude marry when Jude realizes that, as a Black male, his ability to select his profession is limited. Jude argues that his masculinity will be reaffirmed by choosing a wife who will "care about his hurt...care very deeply" and that "the two of them together would make one Jude" (p. 82-83). Rather than viewing marriage as a partnership of equals, Jude's internalization of the traditional notion of marriage causes him to view the role of wife as a supporting, nurturing being who will make him a man. When Jude shows interest in Nel, she realizes that "greater than her friendship was this new feeling of being needed by someone who saw her singly," and she marries him (p. 84).

Because Nel chooses Jude as the center of her life, when Sula returns ten years later to Bottom from college and has sex with Jude, who leaves Nel for Sula, Nel cuts ties with Sula. Although Nel mourns the loss of her marriage and her friendship, and is overwhelmed "[to] lose Jude and not have Sula to talk to about it because it was Sula that he had left her for," she feels her greatest loss to be that of her marriage (p. 110). Sula, however, sees the act of having sexual relations with her lesbian partner's husband in different terms. When Nel visits Sula for the last time shortly before Sula's death and asks her why she slept with Jude, saying, "You had to take him away" (p. 145). Sula offers little explanation, but does question Nel's reaction: "What do you mean take him away? I didn't kill him, I just fucked him. If we were such good friends, how come you couldn't get over it?" (p. 145). Sula's believes that "fucking" Jude is not a violation of their friendship. Sula's sees fucking as just a quotidian act that lacks significant meaning; Fucking is not lovemaking for Sula. Nel, however, views Sula's "fucking" of her husband as a violation of their relationship.

Twenty-five years after Sula's death, however, Nel has a double epiphany: that she is not, in fact, the "good one" of the two, and that the source of her unhappiness after Jude left her for Sula was not that she missed Jude, but that she missed Sula. Their relationship thus reveals the value of relationships between women: the source of happiness and the intimacy women share as friends are to be valued rather than cast aside in preference for their romantic relationships with men. This revelation offers one of the strongest Utopian energies in the text, showing as it does that friendships last, even when one does not recognize they do so. One can find the value of friendship, even when a member of the bond no longer exists. Their friendship transcends the ravages of time and death, a strong Utopian gesture since Nel is able to find comfort in the value of their friendship even though Sula is no longer physically present with her.

Just as Nel's and Sula's relationship has powerful Utopian potential, so does Sula's home: a boarding house that serves the communal purpose of providing a number of different individuals a place to stay. The novel never indicates a time when the house is empty, and there always seems to be:

...a pot of something...cooking on the stove; where the mother Hannah [Sula's mother], never scolded or gave directions; where all sorts of people dropped in; where newspapers were stacked in the hallway and dirty dishes left for hours in the sink. (p. 29)

Not only does the home serve as a place where visitors and relatives are frequently welcomed, but it also serves as the site where Sula's Utopian energy is able to burgeon. The house is uncombed, with people constantly moving in and out and a mother who never chastises her daughter (Sula), but gives her money so that she will never lack anything. It is, however, in this house that Hannah learns from her mother, Eva Peace, the importance of providing for a child's necessities, not discipline. While Hannah "never scolded" Sula, and one might see that this could ultimately lead to something negative, the freedom Sula has in her home to develop into the true individual that she wants to be is essential to her developing Utopian vision and resolve to engage in subversive actions—these outweigh any potential negative consequences of a lack of discipline. Through the example her mother and grandmother offer, Sula is able to see the value of privileging collective interests over individual interests; this is what the Peace home has literally come to mean: a communal domicile where all are welcome to the "pot of something" that is on the stove. This communal sharing has strong Utopian implications because this seems to suggest one of the fundamental concepts of Utopia: community.

Moreover, the way in which Sula becomes a productive, subversive, and healthy individual without an oppressive mother controlling every aspect of her life has strong suggestions that Hannah has a developing Utopian imagination. The traditional notion of motherhood involves the mother leading her children through every little step of their progression to adulthood. Hannah, however, finds that it is essential for her to provide Sula with the economic means not only to enjoy the necessities of life, but also to enjoy her wants (p. 37). This type of mothering is subversive mothering, that is, mothering that does not simply conform to traditional notions of mothering to acquiesce to hegemony, but seeks to find alternatives to traditional notions of mothering that will be most beneficial for the child. Hannah's subversive mothering enables Sula to enjoy a life with the liberty to be and to explore herself, to live a life without any personal limitations. Hannah's practice of subversive mothering creates not only a space for her Utopian imagination to blossom, but also a space for Sula's Utopian vision to burgeon.

While Hannah and Sula both have strong anti-capitalist imaginations, it is important to highlight the instrumental role Eva Peace plays in giving birth to their imaginations and how Hannah possesses her own developing Utopian vision. Although Eva's life begins with a vexing marriage to BoyBoy, who leaves her and their three children with "...\$1.65, five eggs, three beets and no idea of what or how to feel," Hannah understands that her "children needed her" (p. 32). Since Eva has more hope than the "\$1.65" that BoyBoy leaves her with, she resolves that her children are more important than focusing on her economic situation. In order to provide food for her family, Eva asks for food donations from the people in her community. These food donations enable her children to avoid hunger and the negative impact of their father's desertion. The fact that Eva is willing to elicit the assistance of the people to help her in her difficult situation demonstrates her communal thinking, essential to any developing anti-capitalist imagination.

Although Eva Peace experiences horrible economic problems after BoyBoy leaves, her ability to find a way to save the life of her sick son, Plum, unveils a strong Utopian energy to

overcome the hardships that capitalism imposes on a poor family. Soon after BoyBoy abandons Eva and their three children, Plum's bowel movements cease. Eva, however, maintains her natural ability to engage in subversive mothering to help Plum assuage the pain that he experiences, despite the absence of BoyBoy's support. Unable to watch Plum experience such tremendous pain, Eva resolves to

..., run her finger around the crevices and sides of the lard can and stumble to the outhouse with him. Deep in its darkness and freezing stench she squatted down, turned the baby over on her knees, exposed his buttocks and shoved the last bit of food she had in the world...up his ass...she probed her middle finger to loosen his bowels. He fingernail snagged what felt like a pebble; she pulled it out and others followed. (p. 34)

Whereas Pecola is unable to have someone touch her (other than her father who rapes her), Eva is willing to touch Plum in whatever way necessary to help her child have an easier experience with his illness. Morrison's use of this most dramatic scene to illuminate the great love that Eva has for her children and her willingness to do whatever it takes to provide for them reveals strong Utopian energies, considering one will not find many individuals, even postmodern mothers, who are willing to go through such extreme measures for their children. Eva's actions highlight what is possible with true love: true love will lead one to do whatever it takes to help his or her fellow family member. Although one can understand that Plum is in more physical pain than Eva, her actions reveal that her emotional pain is strong enough to engage in one of the most unbearable activities. Eva evinces a powerful Utopian energy in privileging another person's interests over her own interests.

The ability to continue to imagine an alternative to capitalism is essential if one is to defeat the oppressive dominance of late capitalism. In writing *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, Morrison discloses her effort to revive Utopian energy in African-American literature. While Pecola Breedlove may seem to be a character whose Utopian energies fail, it is significant to see that she is able to experience Utopian thinking, even in impossibly difficult conditions. Too many readings of *Sula* easily dismiss the heroine's collective consciousness, instead reading her as a character who strives to satisfy her own selfish interests. But a deeper reading that investigates how each of her actions benefits the collective unveils that Sula's "Otherness" contributes to her possessing the most Utopian energy of all of Morrison's characters. The Pecolas and Sulas of the world show that some of the seeds for Utopian possibilities lie in people who have been so marginalized that the watering of those seeds has been neglected.

References

- Bouson, J.B. (2000). *Quiet as its kept: Shame, trauma, and race in the novels of Toni Morrison*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Bloch, E. (1986). *The principle of hope*. Trans. Neville Plaice. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Drummond Mbalia, D. (1991). *Toni Morrison's developing class consciousness*. Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skin, white masks*. Trans. Charles Markmann. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The wretched of the earth*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
- Galehouse, M. (1999). 'New world woman': Toni Morrison's *Sula*." *Papers on Language and Literature* 35, 339-362.
- hooks, b. (1992). *Black looks: Race and representation*. Boise, ID: South End Press.
- Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism or, the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Marks, K. (2002). *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the apotropaic imagination*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Morrison, T. (1970). *The Bluest Eye*. New York, NY: Plume.
- Morrison, T. *Sula*. (1973). New York, NY: Plume.

You may contact the author at:

Antonio Maurice Daniels – daniels3@wisc.edu