

## ANGLAIS

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*Commenter en anglais le texte suivant et le traduire de [l. 10] « Slight as it was ... » jusqu'à [l. 27] « ... paints and crayons. ».*

*Pauline Williams, a poor African American woman living in Alabama, looks back on her life.*

The easiest thing to do would be to build a case out of her foot. That is what she herself did. But to find out the truth about how dreams die, one should never take the word of the dreamer. The end of her lovely beginning was probably the cavity in one of her front teeth. She preferred, however, to think always of her foot. Although she was the ninth of  
5 eleven children and lived on a ridge of red Alabama clay seven miles from the nearest road, the complete indifference with which a rusty nail was met when it punched clear through her foot during her second year of life saved Pauline Williams from total anonymity. The wound left her with a crooked, archless foot that flopped when she walked—not a limp that would have eventually twisted her spine, but a way of lifting the bad foot as though she were  
10 extracting it from little whirlpools that threatened to pull it under. Slight as it was, this deformity explained for her many things that would have been otherwise incomprehensible: why she alone of all the children had no nickname; why there were no funny jokes and anecdotes about funny things she had done; why no one ever remarked on her food preferences—no saving of the wing or neck for her—no cooking of the peas in a separate pot  
15 without rice because she did not like rice; why nobody teased her; why she never felt at home anywhere, or that she belonged anyplace. Her general feeling of separateness and unworthiness she blamed on her foot. Restricted, as a child, to this cocoon of her family's spinning, she cultivated quiet and private pleasures. She liked, most of all, to arrange things. To line things up in rows—jars on shelves at canning, peach pits on the step, sticks, stones,  
20 leaves—and the members of her family let these arrangements be. When by some accident somebody scattered her rows, they always stopped to retrieve them for her, and she was never angry, for it gave her a chance to rearrange them again. Whatever portable plurality she found, she organized into neat lines, according to their size, shape, or gradations of color. Just as she would never align a pine needle with the leaf of a cottonwood tree, she would never put  
25 the jars of tomatoes next to the green beans. During all of her four years of going to school, she was enchanted by numbers and depressed by words. She missed—without knowing what she missed—paints and crayons.

Near the beginning of World War I, the Williamses discovered, from returning neighbors and kin, the possibility of living better in another place. In shifts, lots, batches,  
30 mixed in with other families, they migrated, in six months and four journeys, to Kentucky, where there were mines and millwork. [...]

In Kentucky they lived in a real town, ten to fifteen houses on a single street, with water piped right into the kitchen. Ada and Fowler Williams found a five-room frame house for their family. The yard was bounded by a once-white fence against which Pauline's mother  
35 planted flowers and within which they kept a few chickens. Some of her brothers joined the Army, one sister died, and two got married, increasing the living space and giving the entire Kentucky venture a feel of luxury. The relocation was especially comfortable to Pauline, who was old enough to leave school. Mrs. Williams got a job cleaning and cooking for a white minister on the other side of town, and Pauline, now the oldest girl at home, took over the care  
40 of the house. She kept the fence in repair, pulling the pointed stakes erect, securing them with bits of wire, collected eggs, swept, cooked, washed, and minded the two younger children—a pair of twins called Chicken and Pie, who were still in school. She was not only good at housekeeping, she enjoyed it. After her parents left for work and the other children were at school or in mines, the house was quiet. The stillness and isolation both calmed and energized  
45 her. She could arrange and clean without interruption until two o'clock, when Chicken and Pie came home.

When the war ended and the twins were ten years old, they too left school to work. Pauline was fifteen, still keeping house, but with less enthusiasm. Fantasies about men and love and touching were drawing her mind and hands away from her work. Changes in weather  
50 began to affect her, as did certain sights and sounds. These feelings translated themselves to her in extreme melancholy. She thought of the death of newborn things, lonely roads, and strangers who appear out of nowhere simply to hold one's hand, woods in which the sun was always setting. In church especially did these dreams grow. The songs caressed her, and while she tried to hold her mind on the wages of sin, her body trembled for redemption, salvation, a  
55 mysterious rebirth that would simply happen, with no effort on her part. In none of her fantasies was she ever aggressive; she was usually idling by the river bank, or gathering berries in a field when a someone appeared, with gentle and penetrating eyes, who—with no exchange of words—understood; and before whose glance her foot straightened and her eyes dropped. The someone had no face, no form, no voice, no odor. He was a simple Presence, an  
60 all-embracing tenderness with strength and a promise of rest. It did not matter that she had no idea of what to do or say to the Presence—after the wordless knowing and the soundless touching, her dreams disintegrated. But 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.

Toni MORRISON (1931-2019), *The Bluest Eye*, 1970.

Examen ou Concours

Série\* :

Spécialité/option :

Repère de l'épreuve :

Épreuve/sous-épreuve :

(Préciser, s'il y a lieu, le sujet choisi)

Numérotez chaque page (dans le cadre en bas de la page) et placez les feuilles intercalaires dans le bon sens.

Note :

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Appréciation du correcteur (uniquement s'il s'agit d'un examen) :

\* Uniquement s'il s'agit d'un examen.

Version

Légère comme elle l'était, cette déformation lui rendait évidents de nombreux éléments qui, autrement, auraient été inexplicables : pourquoi elle seule parmi tous les enfants n'avait pas de surnom ; pourquoi il n'y avait pas d'anecdotes ou de blagues rigolotes sur des choses drôles qu'elle avait faites ; pourquoi jamais personne ne faisait attention à ce qu'elle aimait manger, ne lui réservait l'aile ou la cuisse ni ne préparait les pois dans une autre casserole sans riz parce qu'elle n'aimait pas le riz ; pourquoi personne ne la taquinait ; pourquoi elle ne se sentait bien nulle part, ni nulle part à sa place. Son sentiment quotidien de marginalité et d'indignité, elle l'imputait à son pied. Enfant, enfermée dans le cocon de son cercle familial, elle cultivait des plaisirs secrets et apaisants. Elle aimait plus que tout bien disposer les objets, bien les aligner en rangs (les pots bien alignés sur les étagères, noyaux de pêche, brindilles, pierres, feuilles sur la marche) et sa famille la laissait faire ces expositions. Quand, par inadvertance, quelqu'un faisait voler en éclat ses rangées, il s'arrêtait toujours pour les lui remettre en place et elle ne se mettait jamais en colère puisque cela lui donnait l'occasion de les redresser dans un autre ordre. Quelle que fut la quantité d'objets trouvés qu'elle pouvait prendre, elle les mettait en lignes bien droites selon leur taille, leur forme ou leur couleur. De même

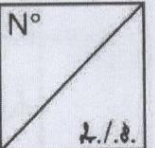
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qu'elle ne mettrait jamais sur une même rangée une aiguille  
de pin et la feuille d'un peuplier, de même elle ne mettrait  
jamais les pots de tomates à côté des haricots verts. Pendant  
toutes ses quatre années d'écolière, elle adorait les chiffres  
et détestait les mots. Elle passa à côté de la peinture et des  
crayons sans savoir ce qu'elle manquait.

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## Commentaire

"Six millions and more. I will call them my people; whom who have no people. I will call them my beloved, whom who are not beloved."

This is the epigraph of Beloved written by Toni Morrison. The aim of this epigraph, taken from the Bible, is to honour the "six millions and more" of Africans victims of slavery or/and racism in America.

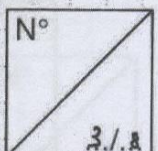
Toni Morrison, like other writers of post-colonialism literature, wants to unveil the muffled voices of the poor African Americans through art. Thus, this is one of the main aspect of this extract of The Bluest Eye (1970).

Indeed, the pivotal element of this passage is the retrospection of Pauline Williams' life, a poor African American. One follows the analepsis through her childhood facing meaningless of apartheid and the violence of history. The text is a plea for otherness at a time where the reality of the apartheid and slavery were stifled in America. Thus the tension between the reality of the events and the fictionalisation of the novel is what it is interesting to question.

First, I shall show how the text is a recollection of a scattered identity and furthermore of a scattered community. Then, I shall highlight the aims of the fiction which is to partize the unspoken of apartheid. Last, I shall examine the biblical background and the syncretism between Africans' history and Jews' history.

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The text is the portrait of a fragmented "I" which embodies the history and the fragmentation of all a community. This fragmentation is underpinned by different aspects. It is just a spatial fragmentation, a real seclusion as Pauline Williams lives "seven miles from the



nearest road" (25). Such a spatial isolation is reinforced by a social isolation - the two, in fact, are linked. Indeed, it is the portrait of an outcast which emerges from the first paragraph when the narrator explains that "she never felt at home anywhere, or that she belonged anywhere" (216). This fragmentation is magnified and is seen as a result of physical one. Indeed, not only the character has a "cavity in one of her front teeth" (24), but also her foot, which has a pivotal role, is distorted: it is "a crooked, archless foot" (29). So the fragmentation of the character is far more dramatic than it is like a kaleidoscopic fragmentation. The scattered identity is moreover mirrored by a crisp style, juxtaposition and accumulation of monosyllabic words and consonance which echo the violence of her existence and make for the rhythmic quality of the text: "peach pits on the step, sticks, stones" (219).

Thus, Pauline seems to be the object of Fate, she seems passive ("the wound left her with a crooked foot" (29)). The text is, therefore, an attempt to recollect her identity and a mean "to find out the truth" (22) and explain the "incomprehensible" (21). The internal focalisation and the juxtaposition of parataxis "why..." (212-16) suggest that she is striving to make sense and to decipher the enigma of her life: why is she an outcast? The anaphora "why..." is here redolent of a Jeremiad. Finally a physical deformity seems to be the cause of all her social predicaments. This deformity is her foot, such as the Greek hero Achilles. Moreover the text questions the destiny of a woman. Indeed, the fact that "her family let" her arrange the things (220) heralds her destiny as a woman, her daily tasks: "arrange and clean" (245) the house. Looking back on her life is thus a heuristic way to decipher her meaningless life.

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dans

la  
partie  
barrée

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The fictionalisation of the reality of the apartheid is a mean to poetize it through stylistic devices. Indeed, the reality of the apartheid remains an unspeakable in the text and is never explicitly named but only suggested for instance by the yard "bounded by a once-white fence" (234). The fence evokes the separation between white people and black people and is an index of the racism just like in Nadine Gordimer short story "Once upon a time...". "Once upon a time..." is redolent of a fairy-tale - in fact, it is an anti-fairy-tale. Hence the aims of fiction: poetize an unspeakable, the apartheid and poverty. This contrast between the harsh reality and poetry is encapsulated by the flowers planted by Pauline's mother against the fence. This image is far more cliché-ridden than the flowers are planted by a mother, the symbol of gentleness, fertility and eros in face of thanatos symbolized by the fence.

Therefore the text raises the question of the power of imagination as a mean to escape from reality. If the text is characterized by its realism, the last paragraph stands in sharp contrast. Indeed it is imbued with pastoral echoes ("she was usually idling by the river bank, or gathering berries in a field when someone appeared" (255)). Besides the pastoral echoes, we can draw a parallel with transcendentalism as the text becomes imbued with mystical elements. This last paragraph is like a farewell to childhood. Pauline loses her innocence and becomes aware of what reality is: "she still keeping house, but with less enthusiasm" (248). To face disillusion she refuges

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in her own imagination as in a real daydream. Imagination and fantasy become means to fill the blanks of life and her loneliness by creating "a simple Presence, an all-embracing tenderness" (260) to face the fragmentation of her identity in the violent and chaotic history. Art, fiction and imagination are a redemption of reality.

\* \* \*

Therefore, the main characteristic of the text is the fact that he is imbued with Biblical references which are intertwined with Pauline's history but also with the history of Africans Americans as an account of the origins, as a Genesis. The narrator fuses the history of Africans Americans with the one of the Jews in the Bible. Pauline seems to be the wandering Jew. This syncretism between culture is quite representative of post-colonial literature. Indeed, the migration of Pauline's family "with other families [...], in six months and four journeys, to Kentucky" (230) is highly reminiscent of the Exodus and Kentucky "where there were mines and millwork" (231) and which offers "the possibility of living better" (229) conveys the idea of a new Promise Land. This rewriting of the Bible can, may be, be interpreted as a mean to give sense to what seems to be an intermonse and to give credit to a stifled community.

Besides, the story of Pauline may be likened to the one of Job who must face all the ordeals that the Devil imposes to him. In the case of Pauline we have seen that the ordeals were numerous but, just as Job, she doesn't lose her integrity and her faith. As God finally appears to Job, the "Presence" appearing to Pauline is a real epiphany as it is a real apparition with "no face, no form, no voice, no odor" (259).

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Written at a moment when racism is still deeply rooted in the American society (the 1970's) the text, characterized of post-colonialism, reveals an unspoken and lets the voice to those muffled and stifled in a prosperous America. Realistic and poetic aspects are two important elements of the text. Indeed the harsh reality of apartheid is never explicitly told but is poetized by the fiction. The individual history of Pauline is the epitome of the one of all Africans Americans and the imagination and the fictionalisation are means to unveil an unspoken and to escape reality. Far more, imagination can be a way to find out the truth - as Salman Rushdie once said about *Midnight's Children* the "untruth" is a mean to achieve the "truth".

