MORRISON'S USE OF SYMBOLISM: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BLUE EYES IN *THE BLUEST EYE*

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ABSTRACT

The symbolic and psychological meaning of blue eyes in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye is critically examined in this analysis with a specific emphasis on the destructive effect of Eurocentric definitions of beauty on Black identity and self-esteem. Through the tragic Pecola Breedlove, Morrison lays bare how cultural definitions of beauty specifically the idealization of Whiteness and blue eyes result in internalized racism, self-loathing, and mental breakdown among African Americans. The study examines how these ideals are sustained in literature, the media, domestic life, and text materials to create a cultural discourse whereby Blackness is belittled. Blue eyes are used by Morrison not just as physical appearance but as Whiteness, acceptance, and worth attributes denied Blacks in the segregated world. By analyzing Symbolism, form, and periodization in the novel, this volume argues that The Bluest Eye is both a caustic critique of racialized codes of beauty and an imperative to rewrite cultural values on terms friendly to Black dignity, worth, and personhood.

Keywords: Eurocentric beauty standards, internalized racism, The Bluest Eye, racialized symbolism, Black identity.

ABSTRAK

Makna simbolik dan psikologis dari mata biru dalam The Bluest Eye karya Toni Morrison dianalisis secara kritis dalam penelitian ini dengan penekanan khusus pada efek destruktif dari definisi kecantikan yang bersifat Eropa (Eurocentric) terhadap identitas dan harga diri orang kulit hitam. Melalui tokoh tragis Pecola Breedlove, Morrison menyingkap bagaimana definisi budaya tentang kecantikan—khususnya idealisasi kulit putih dan mata biru—mengakibatkan rasisme internal, kebencian pada diri sendiri, dan gangguan mental di kalangan orang Afrika-Amerika. Studi ini meneliti bagaimana idealisme tersebut dipertahankan melalui sastra, media, kehidupan domestik, dan bahan bacaan untuk menciptakan wacana budaya yang merendahkan keberkulitan hitam. Mata biru digunakan oleh Morrison bukan hanya sebagai penampilan fisik, tetapi sebagai simbol kulit putih, penerimaan, dan atribut nilai yang ditolak bagi orang kulit hitam dalam dunia yang terpisah-pisah. Dengan menganalisis simbolisme, bentuk, dan periodisasi dalam novel, penelitian ini berargumen bahwa The Bluest Eye merupakan kritik tajam terhadap kode kecantikan yang berorientasi rasial sekaligus ajakan untuk menulis ulang nilai-nilai budaya dengan cara yang menghormati martabat, nilai, dan kepribadian orang kulit hitam..

Kata Kunci: *Standar Kecantikan Eurocentric, Rasisme Internal, The Bluest Eye, Simbolisme Yang Berorientasi Rasial, Identitas Kulit Hitam.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The pervasive influence of cultural symbolism in shaping individual identity has long been a subject of critical inquiry in literary and social discourse. Among these symbols, few are as potent and deeply rooted in societal constructs as the idealization of physical beauty, particularly within the context of racial identity. Toni Morrison's seminal novel, *The Bluest Eye*, exemplifies the profound impact of such ideals on marginalized communities, revealing how notions of beauty are intertwined with power, acceptance, and self-worth. Morrison, a Nobel laureate renowned for her incisive exploration of African American life and identity, employs the narrative to critically examine the destructive effects of Eurocentric beauty standards on Black individuals, especially women and girls.

At the heart of *The Bluest Eye* lies the symbolic motif of blue eyes, which functions as a tangible representation of societal expectations, internalized self-hatred, and the yearning for racial acceptance. Morrison's deliberate choice to foreground this symbol underscores the pervasive erection of whiteness as the pinnacle of beauty and worth—a standard that impoverishes and erodes the self-esteem of Black characters, most poignantly Pecola Breedlove. The motif of blue eyes thus becomes a lens through which the novel interrogates broader themes of racial identity, psychological trauma, and cultural valuation.

The rationale for studying this symbol stems from its capacity to encapsulate the complex interplay between individual psychology and societal hegemony. By examining how blue eyes symbolize internalized racism, Morrison's critique extends beyond individual characterization to encompass the systemic perpetuation of racial hierarchies. Such an analysis not only illuminates the novel's thematic depth but also contributes to ongoing dialogues about racial representation, beauty standards, and identity formation.

This research aims to explore the significance of blue eyes as a symbol within *The Bluest Eye* and to analyze how Morrison constructs and deconstructs these ideals through literary symbolism. Central research questions guiding this study include: How does Morrison utilize the motif of blue eyes to critique Western beauty standards? What psychological and social implications does this symbol carry for Black characters? And how does this symbolic framework influence broader perceptions of racial identity and self-worth?

The paper is structured into four main sections. The first offers a contextual overview of Toni Morrison's life and the novel's cultural significance. The second examines the symbolic role of blue eyes within the narrative and societal context, emphasizing how this motif reflects and propagates racialized standards of beauty. The third analyzes the psychological consequences of internalized racism as depicted in the novel, with particular attention to Pecola's character. Finally, the concluding section synthesizes the findings, discussing the implications for understanding race, beauty, and identity in American literature and society. Through this structured inquiry, the study seeks to deepen understanding of Morrison's

critique and contribute to ongoing debates about racial aesthetics and their psychological impact.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

a. The Symbolism of Blue Eyes and the Erasure of Black Identity

Toni Morrison in The Bluest Eye, addresses the issue of how internalized racism, Eurocentric beauty ideals, and the legacy of slavery negatively affect the identity of the black people, especially among young girls such as Pecola Breedlove. The novel, which is set in the town of Lorain, Ohio, opposes strong families such as the MacTeers against the tormented Breedloves, thereby showing how the devaluation of the Blacks in the society leads to hatred of one own self. Pecola is too preoccupied with having blue eyes and her obsessive need is symbolic because she needs to be loved, accepted, and beautiful in a world where Whiteness is synonymous with value. Naming, hair politics, and allusions to Hollywood ideals like Imitation of Life show how institutional oppression, internalized racism, and cultural implications of beauty influence the perceptions of the Black woman, the reproduction of trauma, and the marginalization of identity in Black women, Morrison (Sarulatha & Geetha, 2015; Bellinger, 2007; Al-Abbood, 2019; Moses, 2006; Morrison, 1970).

b. Dreams Despair and Racial Trauma in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye

Toni Morrison presents different issues in The Bluest Eye such as dreams, despair, and racial trauma to portray the lives of African Americans, especially Pecola Breedlove. The fact that Pecola is in love with the idea of having blue eyes also represents her wish to be loved, accepted, and to be appreciated by society where whiteness is what makes people beautiful and worthy. Morrison shows the extent to which cultural norms and beliefs about Black identity are damaging and unhealthy: the family and community Pecola lives in are a part of the process that makes her isolated and self-hating, the abuse of her father and further pregnancy demonstrate how devastating the effects of the generations of accumulated traumas can be. Dreams in the novel, be it the dreams of Pecola, or of Pauline and Cholly, represent impractical hopes which are determined by the same systemic oppression, and recurrent narrative patterns, including the division of seasons, social stratification, or Hollywood ideals, emphasize psychological and cultural influences in shaping the life of the African Americans. Morrison, through the experiences and the voice of Pecola, shows the widespread nature of racial trauma, internalized self-hate and neglect by society, how Black girls are socialized to equate beauty and belonging with whiteness and how it feeds into alienation, despair and marginalization (Morrison, 1970; Erkol, 202 C.E.; Sarulatha & Geetha, 2015).

c. The Destructive Nature of Colorism and Internalized Racism

In the book, The Bluest Eye, Toni Morrison (1970) unveils the tragedy of colorism, as well as internalized racism among the Blacks. Pecola Breedlove wants to have blue eyes because she seeks to quit Blackness, and the cultural icon, such

as Shirley Temple, supports this idea. Pecola is not paid attention to, even though intra-racial discrimination is evident as the light-skinned peers are praised. Whitening characters such as Geraldine, Pauline, and Cholly internalize white ideals, perpetuating self-hatred and passing along trauma across generations, as seen in the brutality of Cholly and the refusal of Pecola by Pauline as ugly, which demonstrates the effect of this on the family life. Even Claudia MacTeer opposes these values, yet even her defiance actions are indicative of the boundaries of disobeying within the institutionalized oppression. Morrison points at how white standards of beauty pervert Black identity and result in the cycle of racial trauma (Fanon, 1952).

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach centered on close reading and textual analysis of Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. The focus is on examining how the motif of blue eyes functions symbolically within the narrative to critique racialized beauty standards and their psychological effects. Key scenes, quotations, and descriptive passages related to blue eyes will be identified, with patterns and variations analyzed to understand how Morrison constructs and challenges the idealization of whiteness and Eurocentric beauty. This process involves analyzing Morrison's narrative techniques, imagery, and character responses to uncover the deeper cultural and psychological implications embedded in the symbol.

The selection of The Bluest Eye is justified by its central theme concerning internalized racism and beauty standards, with blue eyes serving as a powerful symbolic device. To deepen the analysis, secondary sources from race studies, feminist theory, and cultural criticism—such as works addressing beauty norms and racial hierarchies—will be incorporated to provide contextual frameworks. The analysis will involve systematically identifying relevant scenes and patterns in language, then interpreting how Morrison's use of the blue eye motif critiques societal ideals and exposes the damaging impact of systemic beauty standards on Black identity.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. The Symbolism of Blue Eyes and the Erasure of Black Identity

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison explores the black community's perception of beauty and the psychological damage it inflicts on black women. The novel is set in Morrison's hometown, Lorain, Ohio, where the black community is segregated from the white upperclass society, particularly in areas like Lake Shore Park, where blacks are excluded unless they work for white families. Morrison contrasts two black families: The MacTeers, who possess the inner strength to endure poverty and the racism of a prejudiced society, and the Breedloves, who lack such resilience. Pecola Breedlove, an African American child growing up in the 1940s, yearns for love and acceptance not only from her community but also from a society that devalues and rejects her race, using an Anglo-Saxon standard of beauty as its reference. Pecola believes that if she had blue eyes a symbol of white beauty she would be as adored as Shirley Temple and become everyone's favorite (Sarulatha & Geetha, 2015).

The element of slavery Is responsible for immense changes in the lives of African American people. It is indeed a traumatic experience for those who were once enslaved to witness the devastating forces of slavery. The upheavals brought about by conflicts between whites and blacks destabilized, damaged, and strained traditional societal structures. Toni Morrison's fiction delves deeply into the traumatic effects on African American identity and its people. Her novel *The Bluest Eye* reflects the traumatic consequences of the clash between two cultures. The novel explores the destiny of black people under the influence of Western values. Through the novel, readers gain insight into the palpable legacy of slavery. Ironically, the fruits of freedom and independence remain elusive as people reflect regretfully on the myriad sacrifices made during their struggle (Sarulatha & Geetha, 2015).

Pecola's quest to have blue eyes results in madness. She refuses to accept the reality that she cannot have blue eyes. Additionally, she believes that if she acquires blue eyes, her parents would stop fighting and live together happily. However, these desires affect Black women both physically and in how they perceive their own sexuality. The novel depicts a constant oscillation between desiring something and wanting its opposite. Black women struggle to see their own race as beautiful because they associate beauty with Whiteness. They seek their identity in Whiteness due to fear of discrimination from their surroundings (Sarulatha & Geetha, 2015).

Morrison employs "signifying" a Black cultural tactic of subtle ridicule or insult in Pecola's naming (Moses, 2006). By referencing "Peola" (a light-skinned character from *Imitation of Life*), Morrison highlights Pecola's desperate quest for Whiteness. The name is used ironically, as it underscores her futile struggle to meet white standards of beauty. Unlike Peola, Pecola's dark skin renders her irreversibly "other" in a society that rejects her and makes her desires unattainable (Morrison, 1970). This double naming further perpetuates her systemic abuse and marginalization.

Morrison satirizes internalized oppression through the ironic Symbolism of Pecola's name. Pecola names herself after *Imitation of Life*'s Peola, a lightskinned Black woman who abandons her Black mother to "pass" for white (Morrison, 1970). However, Pecola's dark complexion prevents her from achieving proximity to Whiteness, making blue eyes and the societal acceptance they symbolize a tragic impossibility. Her name, given by her mother Pauline, reflects the violent denial of her self-determination. Pauline, who equates physical beauty with virtue (Morrison, 1970), names her daughter after a movie heroine who conforms to white values, revealing her internalized anti-Blackness.

The film's message that Whiteness equals beauty resonates with Pauline's trauma, as films temporarily soothe her self-hatred (Morrison, 1970). Ironically, Peola's on-screen portrayal as "selfish" for abandoning her Black mother critiques the very system that upholds Whiteness. Thus, Morrison uses Pecola's name as a site of internalized shame and systemic violence, illustrating how racialized beauty standards dehumanize Black individuals.

Morrison reveals Pauline's tragic duality: while she understands Peola's need to conform to white beauty standards to survive (Morrison, 1970), she perpetuates the same harmful logic by naming her daughter Pecola, tying her to an unattainable ideal. Pauline's choice reflects the broader cultural association of Whiteness with "beauty and worth" (*Imitation of Life*). By projecting Pecola's identity onto Hollywood fantasies, Pauline internalizes and perpetuates the toxic lie of racism: that Blackness must be erased to gain acceptance. Morrison thus portrays the act of naming as both a maternal gesture and a racial betrayal, demonstrating how systemic oppression dismantles Black kinship and selfhood.

In America, Black hair is marginalized because it does not align with Eurocentric standards of beauty. Black women, particularly, are bombarded with enormous pressure to straighten their own natural kinky or curly hair. This starts very early on young children are three or four years old before they are told what “Good" hair should look like, and that usually involves hair that seems European, like long straight hair. This early understanding leads to a social hierarchy based on hair texture that can have a negative effect on Black women's self-esteem and their views about beauty in themselves (Bellinger, 2007).

Besides that, Black women are usually raised being informed that their natural hair is "nappy" or "unacceptable." These messages usually come from their immediate families or those around them, who might mock their tightly coiled hair. Consequently, most Black women feel like they need to straighten, relax, or chemically manipulate their hair in order to fit into society's notion of beauty, which favors Eurocentric hair. This pressure conveys that natural Black hair is not good enough or presentable within the broader society (Al-Abbood, 2019; Robinson, 2011).

b. Dreams Despair and Racial Trauma in Toni Morrison’s The Bluest Eye

Toni Morrison integrates the themes of dreams and dreaming throughout her writings to fully reflect the lives of African American people. She exploits the same motifs to anticipate violence and highlight the moral complexity of those who

commit it. In the selected works, she addresses the tension between leaving the past and forging ahead into the future. In her art, she utilizes dreams to both deny and contextualize violence.

In her debut work, The Bluest Eye, the female heroine, Pecola, has a dream about blue eyes. Her ambition is to be loved by everyone, both white and African American. She believes that "if those eyes of hers were different, she herself would be different." If she were lovely in another way, Cholly and Mrs. Breedlove might be as well (Morrison, 1970). Furthermore, "every night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes" (Morrison, 1970). After being raped by her father, Cholly, she entirely falls into a fantasy state, where she converses with an imagined acquaintance and believes she has finally obtained blue eyes.

Pauline has her own ambitions: to become a recognized employee of the white Fisher family and to impersonate white ladies. Cholly desired to be a powerful man capable of wreaking revenge on whites. All of the major characters try to accomplish things in their dreams that they were unable to do in reality. Toni Morrison merges the themes of dreams and dreaming to underline African Americans' horrific history. She also attempts to reawaken memories of the past in her readers, making them feel connected to the hidden truths of bygone civilizations. Her literature depicts the dreams of shattered humans.

Dream and dreaming motifs examine the African American mental landscape. Her smart exploitation of these issues reveals African Americans' entire social journey, identity, and the pervasiveness of white supremacy in sociocultural and identity matters. In her literature, Morrison revisits her culture's history and strives to move forward from it (Erkol, 202 C.E.).

The Bluest Eye is conceptually divided into four sections: autumn, winter, spring, and summer. Morrison beautifully illustrates the little girl's psychological collapse by treating each season as a separate chapter. The novel begins in autumn with a description of the events that will occur and ends in summer, when the young girl gives birth as a result of being raped by her own father. As a result, the work is both a stunning piece of anti-racist writing and a story of a woman's coming of age.

The tale revolves around the main character, Pecola Breedlove, a young girl enamored by blue eyes who believes they would provide her beauty, respect, and happiness. The desire for blue eyes is a metaphor for cultural perception gaps between Anglo-Americans and African Americans. The piece unflinchingly focuses on these two cultures, exposing their psyches. The desire for blue eyes reflects Black people's yearning for unattainable American ideals (Erkol, 202 C.E.).

Morrison begins the book with a paragraph that appears three times throughout. The words move closer to one another each time. The repeating sequence illustrates three residences from different social strata. The gaps between the words represent their social rank. For example, the original edition, published in double spacing, presents Dick and Jane as an idealized, middle-class, satisfied American family. The second edition, written in less accessible language, centers on the MacTeer family, who are struggling to survive under the weight of racial prejudice. The final version, which has little space at all, symbolizes the raw and

suffocating reality of the lower classes just as the words are crammed together with little room to breathe, so are these people (Erkol, 202 C.E.).

Pecola's family is an excellent representation of marginalization and self-hatred. Self-hatred has an indirect influence on Pecola, eventually making her a victim of racist society. All she wants from her family is sympathy, which every child deserves. Her parents, who have never known what it's like to be loved and cared for by their family or welcomed by the community from which they are exiled, are unable to provide a warm home environment for their children. As a result of their race's tyranny, the Breedlove family has been relegated to the unseen, uncomfortable outskirts of society, isolating them from their own selves. They eventually cause their child's horrible life as a result of their rigid attitude toward their own fate.

In a world where children are disregarded and alienated, the parents are unable to build a secure sanctuary and a true identity for their children. They remain puppets; they have bodies but no souls, which makes them loathe themselves. This self-hatred is absorbed and then translated into wrath, which is targeted toward one's own people. Finally, Pecola is raped by her own father and made pregnant (Erkol, 202 C.E.).

The rape can be regarded from numerous perspectives. Morrison presents the story of each character in full. Remember her father's history and childhood. The white man's disapproval in his first sexual encounter may have caused Cholly to misinterpret sexuality or driven his self-hatred to the point where he rapes his own daughter. In fact, he rapes not just his daughter, but also his past, legacy, and all of the awful and demeaning memories linked with his blackness.

Pecola becomes the scapegoat for her parents' sadness. They are powerless to free her from the limiting forces of race, gender, and class. Pecola desires to be loved, yet they cannot provide love or a nurturing environment because they have never experienced it. Their low self-esteem inhibits them from feeling valued (Erkol, 202 C.E.).

> "Can you imagine? Something like that happening to a person, and nobody but nobody saying anything about it? They all try to pretend they don’t see them. Isn’t that funny?"

In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, the quote "Can you imagine? Something like that happening to a person, and nobody but nobody saying anything about it? They all try to pretend they don't notice them. Isn't that funny?" pretty much brings out the intimate relationship between self-loathing, alienation, and racial trauma within Black individuals, notably Pecola's existence. The "something" is Pecola's physical and emotional agony, most abysmally her rape and psychic disintegration.

The community's inability to see her sorrow takes the form of a cycle of erasure Pecola is not just abandoned but practically eliminated from society. This silence is sustained by racial trauma, passed down via the generations of Black people schooled to internalize white ideas of beauty and de-value themselves. Hence, people like Pecola and her family come to fundamentally loathe themselves, believing that they are not acceptable, ugly, and unnoticed.

The sentence "they all try to pretend they don't see them" relates to the truth that society, having been conditioned to prejudice, avoids noticing the pain of non-conformists. Pecola is the symbol of such abandonment so rejected that even her trauma gets denied. The sardonic aside "Isn't that funny?" shows the painful truth: there is nothing comical in a world which won't recognize Black suffering.

Using this quotation, Morrison laments about a culture that inflicts wounds, preaches self-hatred, and then looks aside from the impact.

> "If there is somebody with bluer eyes than mine, then maybe there is somebody with The Bluest Eyes. The Bluest Eyes in the whole world."

In Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye, the statement "If there is a person with bluer eyes than mine, then perhaps there is a person with The Bluest Eyes. The Bluest Eyes in all the world." reveals the severe psychological impact of internalized self-hatred, racial trauma, and isolation.

Uttered by Pecola, the following is an expression of her highly compulsive yearning for blue eyes, which she feels will endow her with love, acceptance, and worth in a society that does not appreciate Blackness. Her yearning for "The Bluest Eyes" is not merely a want for beauty but also a desperate endeavor to escape suffering with being poor and Black in an obsessive white society.

This system of belief is the product of racial trauma the cultural and historical causes that educate her that whiteness is better and Blackness is missing or ugly. In comparing herself to an impossible standard, Pecola becomes further estranged, not only from society, but from self. She does not prize her own natural self; she conceives of one who might be cherished if only she were different.

The word "The Bluest Eyes in the whole world" emphasizes that even blue eyes would not be enough there will ever be somebody else who is better, who is more worthy, who is accepted. Such continual comparison is proof of how self-loathing originates in a culture predicated on racism and exclusion.

Morrison uses Pecola's voice to uncover the damage ensuing from a society that socializes young Black girls to see beauty and belongingness as being related to whiteness.

> "We saw her sometimes. Frieda and I, after the baby came too soon and died. After the gossip and the slow wagging of heads. She was so sad to see. Grown people looked away; children, those who were not frightened by her, laughed outright."

In The Bluest Eye, the above passage "We saw her sometimes. Frieda and I, after the baby came too soon and died. After the talk and the gradual wagging of heads. She was very heartbroken to see. Grown people looked away; youngsters, those who were not afraid by her, laughed outright." movingly portrays the solitude, self-hatred, and racial pain that deconstruct Pecola's life.

This is a time that is experienced after Pecola has been raped by her father, becomes pregnant, and miscarries the occurrences that reflect the entirety of intergenerational violence, abuse, and trauma against Black females.

Rather than being provided care or sympathy, Pecola is instead gossiped about and vilified even within her own culture. The "slow wagging of heads" and

people "looking away" reflect the ultimate social alienation she is outcast and pitied, treated as something filthy instead of someone wounded.

Children who laugh at her indicate how such rejection becomes prevalent, even among the innocent. The isolation of Pecola is not only physical but also psychological: without love, dignity, and identity, she loses grip on reality.

The incapacity of the community to protect or soothe her is indicative of a cycle of racial trauma, where Black pain is dismissed or mocked instead of being healed. The reaction reinforces internalized self-hatred Pecola justifies her suffering and erasure to herself.

Morrison quotes this to reveal the horrific end of a culture that not only harms its most vulnerable but also turns away from them, making their brokenness spectacle or disgrace rather than a call for justice and mercy.

c. The Destructive Nature of Colorism and Internalized Racism

Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) illustrates the destructive power of colorism and internalized racism within the African American community, as it illustrates how white supremacist beauty ideals warp Black self-conception. The novel criticizes the prevailing color-coded hierarchy of light skin and Euro features, as it illustrates how the Black characters internalize and transfer such harmful conceptions.

Pecola Breedlove's obsession with the color blue eyes is symbolic of her desperate wish to rise above her Blackness, which is additionally compounded by cultural signs like Shirley Temple and "Mary Jane" candy wrappers that identify beauty with whiteness (Morrison, 1970). When Pecola's friends, like Maureen Peal a light-skinned Black kid are getting compliments, dark-skinned Pecola does not even get one, thus delineating the self-destructive nature of intra-racial discrimination (Morrison, 1970).

Morrison's Geraldine, who enforces respectability politics by suppressing "funkiness" and Black cultural expression, also illustrates how internalized racism arises in the form of self-hatred (Morrison, 1970). Through such depictions, *The Bluest Eye* illustrates that colorism is not just externally perpetuated by white culture but is also reproduced within Black culture, thereby generating circuits of oppression.

The novel also describes how African American subjects like Cholly and Pauline Breedlove internalize race-hatred, transmitting trauma across generations. Pauline, being a maid to the whites of the Fisher household, imitates the culture of cleanliness and beauty of the Fisher whites and prefers the cleaner whites' house compared to her dirty house (Morrison, 1970). Her insistence that Pecola is innately "ugly" at birth demonstrates how far she has absorbed white ideals of beauty and how she feels obliged to reject her daughter (Morrison, 1970).

Similarly, Cholly's brutality arises from his own racial degradation his first sexual experience is interrupted by white males, leaving him with a sense of helplessness, which he then seeks to inflict on his family (Morrison, 1970). His assault on Pecola is framed as a monstrous act of love, illustrating how internalized

racism deforms family life and intimacy (Morrison, 1970). Morrison's images of the Breedloves are consistent with Frantz Fanon's theory in *Black Skin, White Masks*, that colonized people will internalize the dehumanizing presumptions of the colonists (Fanon, 1952). By depicting Cholly and Pauline's passing on of self-loathing to each other, Morrison depicts the cyclical nature of race trauma.

Pecola's devastation is the downward spiral into racial trauma, whereas Claudia MacTeer is a symbol of resistance, resisting the blue-eyed ideal that pervades the novel. Claudia, unlike Pecola, resists white notions of beauty from the beginning, burning white baby dolls in protest (Morrison, 1970), the superiority of whiteness (Morrison, 1970). Claudia's narrative also holds the group guilty of complicity in the destruction of Pecola, in that they are aware that Pecola is the group's self-hatred scapegoat (Morrison, 1970).

The marigolds' failed symbolism, as Claudia and her brother plant them in hopes that their flowering would preserve Pecola's baby, is also used to show the impossibility of Black beauty surviving under systems of oppression (Morrison, 1970). Although Claudia's act of rebellion serves as a moment of optimism, Morrison eschews neat resolution, instead illustrating the massive internalized wounding.

Lastly, *The Bluest Eye* is a scathing indictment of colorism that compels readers to confront the devastating heritage of white standards of beauty and their lingering consequences for Black identity.

E. CONCLUSION

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison is a masterful examination of the fatal effects of internalized racism, colorism, and Eurocentric standards of beauty on Black identity, especially that of Black adolescent girls such as Pecola Breedlove. In Pecola's fatal downward spiral into madness, Morrison outlines how institutional racism and white supremacist cultural narratives warp one's conception of self and destroy agency.

Blue eyes as a literal and metaphorical phenomenon are a constructed ideal that manufactures whiteness and renders Blackness invisible, undesirable, and inferior. Morrison not only disrupts American society's hegemonic aesthetic values, but she also uncovers the deep psychological traumas imposed on African American subjects by institutions, media, and families.

The Breedloves' acceptance of their own "ugliness" shows us the way that self-hatred is ingrained in generations when society does not sanction it. Conversely, characters like Claudia MacTeer offer a paradigm of rebelliousness, opposing white beauty standards and testifying to Black self-acceptance as a possibility.

Finally, *The Bluest Eye* is a scathing indictment of the cultural, historical, and psychological processes that replicate racial hierarchies. Morrison calls readers to witness the legacy of race beauty standards and to consider the necessity of re-imagining beauty, identity, and value through expansive, affirming narratives. Her novel remains an urgent call to excise structures of oppression and to insist upon the humanity and dignity of Black lives.

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