



A review about Racial discrimination in *The Bluest Eye*

by **Toni Morrison**

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Abstract : Morrison describes the bluest eye as a "narrative of female violation shown from the vantage point of the victims or could-be victims...the girls themselves" (Afterward). Young black girls represent the helpless and weak in the book, but they also serve as a lens through which to examine issues of power, internalised racism, and reparations. What happens if people who were formerly outside the normative formation become the norm? Instead of dwelling on Pecola's internalised self-loathing, I decided to highlight the ways in which her physique, her desire for blue eyes, and her need for community all function as tools for redress and resistance. Drinking milk, buying sweets with Mary Jane on it, and using a Shirley Temple cup become means for a black female kid to express not just her identification as a black girl, but also her knowledge of her place as a black girl in a white society. To her, blue eyes are a panacea for the systemic abuses — including poverty, domestic violence, and starvation — that she endures. These types of reparation might help her make sense of her experience of racism, ease the suffering caused by the severe violence she witnesses, and inspire her to construct a new politics.

Key words: The Bluest Eye; internalized racism; cultural ideals; white-defined beauty; cultural influence

Introduction : In order to fully appreciate *The Bluest Eye*, a familiarity of American history is required. Despite being set in the 1940s, the book was written in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the seeming lack of connection to real-world events, her story is reflective of the late 1960s and early 1970s, a time when African American culture was becoming firmly defined and accepted as an integral component of the previously dominantly white American society. However, racism was and remains pervasive in American culture, and it even took novel forms in the 1940s. Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* presents an alternative to the standard white-on-black bigotry. She admitted that the vast majority of individuals are oblivious to racism both external to their own culture and internal to their own self.



A society without racial hierarchy is described as a "dreamscape" and unachievable by Morrison in her essay ("Home," 3). Her works don't take place in some made-up utopia, but rather recognise the reality of racism inside different cultures. For instance, differences and tensions exist often between the black middle class and the black working class. Some of the characters in *The Bluest Eye*, such as Geraldine, Junior, and Maureen Peal, stand in for the affluent segment of black culture, and Morrison uses them to highlight the differences within and conflicts between the various segments. In contrast, the MacTeer family and the "relentlessly and aggressively ugly" Breedlove family stand for the less fortunate group (*The Bluest Eye* 38). Throughout the book, such portrayals effectively convey the underlying tension of African American culture as depicted by Morrison. Morrison paints her protagonist as the doomed victim of Lorain's systemic racism, a city that has internalised and propagated demeaning prevailing cultural beliefs about attractiveness and worth. This is seen firsthand at Pecola's home. Pauline, Pecola's mother, has a hard time fitting in and is lonely. Her violent and abusive marriage to Cholly just serves to reinforce her self-esteem issues and the notion that attractive people are the only ones worthy of romantic attention. From the time Pecola was born, she was exposed to ideas that her blackness was synonymous with ugliness and worthlessness. As she nurses her newborn daughter Pecola, she remembers that special time in the storey. She claims that Pecola was "straight off what to do...[she] realised she was unattractive," and that she was a "right clever baby." She had a full head of beautiful hair, but my God was she an uglit. As cited by (Morrison, 128).

Racial discrimination in *The Bluest Eye*

In recognition of her exceptional contribution to English writing, Toni Morrison, a leading figure in modern Afro-American literature, was awarded the Nobel Prize. *The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison, is a famous unpublished work with a similar topic of beauty. Morrison proposes an idea of beauty that is socially produced, which she uses to critique Western ideals of beauty. Morrison also illustrates that the worth of blackness is decreased if whiteness is utilised as a standard of beauty or anything else. In *The Bluest Eye*, the protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, is an eleven-year-old black girl who desperately desires blue eyes because she thinks she is unattractive and is treated as such by the other characters. This tale takes a look at the catastrophic consequences of putting white American beauty standards on young Pecola in the early 1940s. Toni Morrison exemplifies how such norms



limit the worldview of young black girls and make people of colour feel inferior. Since the 1930s and 1940s were decades marked by overt and acute racial tensions in the United States, the book opens with a discussion of the difficulties faced by a black lady living in a largely white society. The white norm at the time was that blacks and whites are unequal and should never be treated as such.

In a society where black people are looked down upon, Pecola Breedlove's damaged looks is emblematic of the defective ideal of beauty that permeates her environment. The white child actress Shirley Temple, who has the desirable blue eyes, represents the ideal of beauty to which her classmates aspire. Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl, is deeply affected by the storey as she seeks love and acceptance in a society that consistently rejects and devalues individuals of her own race. She's a youngster who has been abandoned, mistreated, and even despised. Everyone in her life, including herself, judges her to be an unattractive and worthless waste of space. But Pecola believes she has discovered the solution to her unattractiveness. She would be considered stunning if her dream for blue eyes came true. Pecola experiences racism at the hands of both members of her own race and non-Hispanic whites.

Pecola's racial self-hatred is on full display in her conviction that she might achieve acceptance by altering her looks. Pecola is certain that only a person with blue eyes can cure her state of distraction. The main reason she wants blue eyes is so that her family would treat her differently; she is a very lonely and rejected young woman. This is shown by the following passage from the collection: "If she looked different, lovely, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too." Perhaps they'd comment, "Why, look at pretty- eyed Pecola. We can't risk doing wrong in front of those lovely eyes. Affirmative (Morrison 44)

Pecola's pregnancy highlights the community's and parents' callous disregard for black life. Morrison hints that Pecola would get pregnant when he writes, "We had placed our seeds in our own small plot of black earth just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt." (Morrison 10)

Nobody cares about Pecola or offers to assist her. Due to her pregnancy, Pecola is expelled from school and shunned by her peers; she also becomes the focus of adult rumour.



Morrison writes that people had a variety of reactions to the storey: disgust, humour, horror, anger, and excitement. Nonetheless, we listened to the one who would remark, "Poor little child;" we searched for eyes furrowed with compassion, but saw just veils. That's what the research shows (Morrison, 190). 10 Furthermore, Pecola is labelled "the other" due to the fact that she is considered very unattractive because of society's predetermined beauty norms. (Bloom 86)

Exposure of Community :

At the beginning of the book, Claudia serves Pecola graham crackers and milk from a blue and white Shirley Temple cup, which she devours with ferocity. For what it's worth, Claudia has it on good authority that Pecola "was a long time with the milk," during which time she admired the silhouette of Shirley Temple's chubby face with a smile. She and Frieda have a touching exchange about how adorable they found Shirley Temple. Because I despised Shirley, I was unable to share in their affection (Morrison, 19). Maybe Pecola is Shirley Temple-obsessed because in Shirley Temple she finds the qualities she lacks: beauty, purity, and innocence. Indeed, Shirley Temple personified the perfect representation of a young American woman. The significance of the milk in the cup, however, cannot be overstated. In the next chapters, we discover that Pecola consumes three gallons of milk every day. The colour white is now often associated with milk. Mrs. MacMeer, the mother of Claudia and Frieda, accuses Pecola of being selfish and says that her penchant for guzzling milk is indicative of an underlying wish to be seen as white. Pecola believes that the more milk she drinks, the whiter she will become, and that this would make her more attractive. I'd like to interject and suggest that maybe this consumption of whiteness is a way to turn the other cheek. Consuming whiteness in the form of milk from a Shirley Temple mug and chocolates featuring Mary Jane is a sort of resistance to the black body's status as a continual object of the white gaze for consumption and objectification, but not in the sense of really becoming white. As extreme as it seems, her urge to "eat the sweets is somehow to eat the eyes, eat Mary Jane" might be seen as a type of symbolic cannibalism (Morrison, 50).

Conclusion

In contrast to Pecola, Morrison uses Claudia to show that there is a conscious effort to subvert the white beauty concept. She fights against the White ideal of beauty, which is



often accepted as referring to people with blue eyes, blonde hair, and white complexion. The author uses her own blackness and poverty as a means of expressing her point, yet her efforts do not materially alter the White beauty construction of her day. In a society where Whites continue to wield sway, Claudia has little chance of ever unseating those in authority over her. Morrison shows how the idea of beauty is socially created, challenging Western ideals of beauty in the process. Morrison also illustrates that the worth of blackness is decreased if whiteness is utilised as a standard of beauty or anything else.

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