

The Colonial Legacy of Beauty and Shame: A Post- Colonial Exploration of Toni Morrison`S The Bluest Eye

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v3i2.642>

Abstract

Post-colonial world is enriched with discrimination, violence of people, based upon race, religion, identity, family and all the destructive structures present in imperialist (White) cultures. Therefore, the current study investigates the colonial as well as post-colonial destructive legacy of shame and beauty existed in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) where the African-American characters extremely suffer from the catastrophic violence committed upon them being black. Eurocentric beauty ideals and systemic racism have marginalized Black identity, leading to self-hatred, fractured families, and societal exclusion. Through the tragic experiences of Pecola Breedlove family, Morrison exposes the internalized inferiority and cultural disintegration resulting from colonial oppression. Employing a narrative style rooted in Black oral traditions, Morrison challenges the dominant White discourses and calls for the reclamation of Black cultural values. The novel serves as a critical postcolonial text, illuminating the enduring psychological and social impacts of racism and advocating for the affirmation of Black identity and self-worth.

Key words: Beauty, Legacy, Shame, colonialism, Segregation, Black, Marginalization, Ugliness and Identity.

Introduction and Review of Knowledge Creation On Theoretical Underpinning

Since historical times, standards of beauty, legacy, and shame have not been static but fluid, constantly evolving across different cultures and periods, based upon their own spatial, temporal societal based standards and socio-economic or colonial condition, some bodies (colored/black) were considered inferior, dehumanized-slaves, unworthy of living, shameful, and some posed themselves superior (White/European), and demanded to be treated beautiful, prettier. Thus, still, the same is going on, and white the powerful, race became a symbol of beauty, and powerless bodies based upon their race and color (black) emerged as ugly, and his social construction of being ugly and shameful played very pivotal part in the lives of blacks. Hence, concentrating on twentieth first century, the current studies emphasis upon colonial impacts in early twentieth first; based upon economic and political manifestations, which leaves profound psychological spots on the colonized or once colonized characters. Among them, one of the insidious legacies is the system of internalization of Eurocentric ideals, particularly in connection with the standards of beauty and shame which privilege white as superior or beautiful, and marginalize black(s) based upon their color being considered not beautiful or shameful. Tonni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) questions how these colonial deposits shape self-worth, images of identity, beauty and

societal relationships in African American society in the twentieth century. The select fictional work set in the racially segregated American society, where Morrison's discourses expose destructive psychological impressions of aspiring to unattainable ideals imposed by an imperialistic white supremacist culture. By the tragic characters of Pecola Breedlove Morrison foregrounds how the colonial structures of beauty and shame, after the era of formal colonization keep on dictating standards of desirability and humanity. This article examines *The Bluest Eye* through a post-colonial lens, arguing that the novel critiques the lingering colonial legacy of beauty and shame. It contends that Morrison not only exposes the violence of internalized racism but also seeks to reclaim and reassert black identity and beauty against the toxic remnants of cultural imperialism. Morrison herself black in color, was born in Lorain in Ohio in February 18, 1931 being part of black working-class family. Her family was forced to do work in industries, her grandfather was born-slave. Her father, George Wofford and mother Ella Rama, were migrated from South, both were doing ordinary jobs. Morrison did graduation from Howard University and master in English Literature from Cornell University in 1995. She was the first black writer who received Nobel Prize in 1993 for her literary distinguishing style and depth of highlighting black's socio-political issues through fiction. Being black, her aim was to make the audience aware about the problems of the black community. Morrison preserves the unique culture of the black race through her work. She represents African American culture and their struggle for equal rights in white community. After the assassination of Black Muslim leader Malcolm X in 1965, Black artists and activists raised their voices against white violence, refusing reconciliation and striving instead to preserve their own culture. Morrison wrote the novel *The Bluest Eye* during this period, portraying the marginalization of African Americans and offering an unflinching depiction of both Black and white American realities. Therefore, this movement has a great impact upon her.

In colonial period, there has been a deep impact on the indigenous communities across the African continent, and even after the decolonization, left an undeniable, and severe imprint on economics, culture, politics and social norms, effecting the racialized subject. In the same context, Quijano (2010) asserts, "In spite of the fact that political colonialism has been eliminated, the relationship between the European – also called "Western" – culture and the others continues to be one of colonial domination" (p.23). Boahen states (1987) "the most negative serious impact of colonialism has been psychological. This is seen, first, in the creation of colonial mentality among the educated Africans, in particular, and also among the populace in general (pp. 107-108). Similarly, Tintiangco Cubales (2008) has defined imperialism as a nation extending power and hegemony through systematic control over political and economic life of another nation. Liw and Kim T et, al (2022) has considered shame, as negative concepts and feelings about the overall self when an individual defies social or cultural norms, in which one may feel worthless, inferior, and rejected (pp 90-99). Deliovsky (2008) asserts that around the globe, Eurocentric standards of feminine beauty such large eyes, proportionate pointed nose, fair and white skin, thinness, have been constantly point of leading beauty narratives. These ideals are reinforced through the intersections of capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, which collectively uphold the reproduction of whiteness as the universal aesthetic. Such structures are instrumental in maintaining hegemony within social constructs of femininity (p.48). In the same scenario, Silverstrini (2020) interviewed American college students, where it is highlighted that the overwhelming influence of race and skin tone in shaping American beauty standards. Participants emphasized the hypervisibility and desirability of whiteness, particularly white women, as consistently portrayed and valorized in media representations. Women who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (have been historically excluded, underrepresented, or demeaned in mainstream media. Mis-education was a major tool of implementation of colonial structures in Africa, however this still haunts the lives of colored people in America, according to Rodney (1982) through education systems the relics of

which still remain in most of parts of colonized Africa, were aimed at transforming the mentality of the African people, where the blacks were trained to deny their native culture and think like the Europeans. However, there were another issue, “those who had the most education was to be found the most alienated Africans on the continent”, p. 248).

Discussion

The select novel serves as a thoughtful examination of the postcolonial legacy of beauty and shame, portraying Eurocentric beauty standards perpetuate the psychological oppression of African Americans. The novel examines whiteness has been constructed as the aesthetic ideal, marginalizing Blackness and imposing cycles of shame and self-loathing within Black communities. Morrison’s depiction of Pecola Breedlove’s tragic desire for blue eyes epitomizes the internalization of colonial ideologies, where whiteness is equated with worthiness and humanity. Morrison portrays the struggles of Black women, who bear the compounded burdens of racism, sexism, and classism. By focusing on female characters like Pecola, Claudia, and Pauline, the novel highlights how Black women are disproportionately marginalized, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. This marginalization is not only a result of systemic oppression but also an inheritance of colonial constructs of femininity, where Black women’s bodies are commodified and their identities erased. As Morrison herself observes in her article for *The New York Times*, the roles and responsibilities of Black women were often reduced to survival within oppressive frameworks, while white women’s identities were elevated by these same systems. The concept of shame, as experienced by Morrison’s characters, reflects the broader postcolonial condition described by theorists like Frantz Fanon. For Pecola, the desire for blue eyes symbolizes an aspiration to escape the humiliation tied to her Blackness, a condition imposed by the hegemony of white cultural dominance. Morrison uses Pecola’s perspective to reveal the psychological violence inflicted by internalized racism, demonstrating how Black individuals are alienated from their own identities. This aligns with Howard Curse’s observation that Black individuals are marginalized physically and intellectually, denied the opportunities necessary to assert their identities.

Moreover, Morrison’s portrayal resists the colonial legacy by reclaiming Black culture and identity. As Henry Louis Gates notes, *The Bluest Eye* Bridges Black feminism and Black aesthetics, situating Morrison within a tradition of writers like Zora Neale Hurston, who similarly reclaimed Black women’s voices and experiences. Through Claudia’s resistance to societal norms and Pauline’s complex relationship with beauty, Morrison critiques the adoption of white-centric values by Black individuals, encouraging a return to the cultural principles rooted in Black heritage. Morrison also critiques the structural mechanisms of whiteness that maintain its dominance. The media, societal norms, and education systems perpetuate the myth of white superiority, further alienating Black individuals from their cultural roots. By representing these dynamics, Morrison not only critiques the legacy of colonial beauty standards but also calls for a collective awakening to the necessity of preserving Black identity.

Through its poignant portrayal of Black women’s experiences and its incisive critique of Eurocentric beauty standards, *The Bluest Eye* becomes a vital text in understanding the postcolonial legacy of beauty and shame. Morrison’s work not only exposes the destructive impact of these legacies but also asserts the value of Blackness, challenging readers to confront the enduring influence of colonial ideologies on contemporary notions of identity and worth. Class consciousness and racism form the central concerns of the Black Arts Movement, a spirit Toni Morrison captures powerfully in *The Bluest Eye*. The Black community was historically marginalized by the White colonizers, who deemed them inferior. Black writers, including Morrison, responded by raising awareness of this oppression, emphasizing the need for a distinct

Black identity separate from White standards. Morrison narrates the Black experience through a traditional Black storytelling style, influenced by the Black Power Movement and her personal experiences. The novel's protagonist, Pecola Breedlove, embodies the deep psychological scars of internalized racism. Traumatically desiring blue eyes, Pecola equates whiteness with beauty and worth, a belief reinforced by societal rejection and even her own family's disdain. Her mother, Pauline, admires the White family's lifestyle she serves, while her father, Cholly, also suffers from racial humiliation. Morrison poignantly depicts systemic racism fractures Black families and instills deep shame, particularly among Black women and children. Pecola's loneliness, rejection, and ultimate psychological collapse symbolize the devastating impact of the colonial legacy on Black identity. As Morrison suggests, true survival for the Black community lies in reclaiming their cultural values and rejecting White-imposed standards. Through *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison not only critiques racial segregation but also advocates for cultural pride and the liberation of Black women, key aims of the Black Arts Movement, ultimately challenging the hegemony of White beauty standards and restoring dignity to Black existence. She is suffering from inferiority complex. She thinks white color standard beauty and considers herself mean and ugly. Her life is very difficult there is conflict between her parents they used to fight to each other. Her brother Sammy usually runs away from home. He thinks that being black he is inferior and ugly. Pecola spends most of the time alone at home and feels sorry for her present condition. She was not loved by anybody she has a strong desire to have blue eyes so that she would be loved. She was conscious of her status and believes that she is rejected because of her black complexion. When she goes to the shop the shopkeeper looks at her contemptibly. "She looks up at him and sees the vacuum where curiosity ought to lodge. And something more. The total absence of human recognition-the glazed separateness." (p.48) Pecola looks at the shopkeeper and feels shame of her. She notices that he does not consider her a beautiful child. Even he does not consider her a human being. The white boys and girls were laughing at her. Even Pauline, her mother calls her "nasty little black bitch" and also beats her. her mother was also suffering with the same racial issue. She does work as a servant of the white rich family. She likes the living standards of the White and their residence on other hand hates her own house. Her father Chilly was also humiliated by the white community. He has no interest in his life and also does not take care of his family. By portraying the black family and their encounter with the white race the novelist wants to highlight the problems of the black. The blacks are colonized by the white. The racial segregation is highlighted in the novel. Only due to their skin color the black were marginalized. According to Morrison the black community survives only if it maintains its own values instead of accepting the monopoly of the colonizers. Morrison describes the issues of the females, their frustrations and unwillingness to live in strict boundaries of their race. The novelist focuses on the women's liberation that are the characteristics of the black art movement. The activist of the black art movement wants to give the black race similar status to the white society. Even prefers the black to maintain their own cultural values and do not desire to adopt the culture of the white. Morrison suggests that to her the black females have their own status they should not have desire to become white and should not consider themselves inferior to the male. Toni Morrison depicts the harsh reality of the black race and highlights the miserable condition of the black in order to create awareness. In the novel major characters are black they are discussed in contrast to the white characters. The characters are in search of their identity. There is description of Breedlovs and the Mac Teer family that is opposite to the Breedlovs. Mr. and Mrs. Mac Teer take care of their children and they are also hard worker. Their children Claudia and Frieda play important role in the development of narrative. Claudia being the narrator of the novel, Pecola is ignored no one has affection for her. She thinks that she is ignored by everyone because she belongs to inferior class. She considers herself inferior. She thinks that there is no room for her in this world because she belongs to lower class. Pecola satisfies

her desire of blue eyes by keeping with herself the dolls having blue eyes. She was disappointed with her existence her life becomes more miserable when she is being raped by her own father.

Toni Morrison draws a clear picture of African American people in order to educate the black race that they their own status and should not inclined towards the white. The novelist describes the social and political condition of the black race by portraying different characters in the novel. By describing the miserable condition of the black race Morrison wants to discuss the hegemony of the white race. The novelist makes the readers to know about the domination of the white over the black race. Through the character of Pecola Morrison reveals the fact that the black is humiliated and colonized by the white. The pressure of the colonizers undermines the black race. The black is discriminated by the colonizers. Morrison awakens self-esteem of the black race. She hopes that black race can establish their identity through self-confidence. Morrison condemns the hegemony of the colonizers The protagonist fights against her present condition and her impression about life and beauty seems based upon falsehood. Toni Morrison encourages the black race to be proud of their identity and culture, do not consider themselves inferior. The novelist wants to make the black community stronger and provide equal rights to it. Toni Morrison criticizes the whites' concept of beauty that one must not desire for white color and it must not be considered sign ugly. The black women were also compelled in the profession of prostitution because they were considered mean creatures. She describes this issue also in the novel. Pecola is wrongly used by her own father it shows that the black female has no status in the society. Morrison describes worrisome condition of the black women. In the novel the black community leads less than normal life and feels itself helpless. Morrison finds out the reason behind this miserable condition. Claudia describes the miserable condition of the black community. As she says; "since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how." (P; 6) The great dilemma; the black characters are not agreed to accept their present status. They are not able to see themselves as black. They do not accept their African American heritage. They desire to adopt the white community that is dominated and the values of the black are demolished.

Pecola suffers greatly; she desires to have blue eyes and is unwilling to accept her Black heritage. Her parents, Cholly and Pauline Breedlove, also face immense difficulties in fulfilling their dreams of a happy life. They are denied equal opportunities to meet even the basic necessities of living. On the other hand, they are ridiculed by the White community and are unable to lead a normal, dignified life. Cholly fails to fulfill the responsibilities of the family; he cannot satisfy their needs and, completely disillusioned, withdraws from family life. He becomes a drunkard, while Pauline earns a livelihood by working as a servant for a wealthy White family. However, she too is unable to fulfill the family's needs and eventually neglects her duties. They lead a life of extreme misery: "No zinc tub, no buckets of stove-heated water, no flaky stiff grayish towel washed in the kitchen sink, no tangled black puff of rough wool to comb" (p. 127). Pauline is acutely aware of her social position; she recognizes the vast gap between the White and Black classes. Discouraged by these class differences, she internalizes a sense of inferiority, knowing well that the racial divide is not easily overcome. Both Pauline and Cholly become increasingly frustrated and disheartened by the oppressive circumstances they endure. They understand that achieving the White community's standard of living is impossible for them. This profound frustration ultimately leads to intense domestic disputes: "Pauline was one of the few things abhorrent to him that he could not touch and therefore hurt he poured on her his fury and desires" (p. 42). Morrison, through the Breedlove family's struggles, exposes the colonial legacy of beauty and shame that haunts African Americans. The internalized inferiority, the failure of economic survival, and the fragmentation of familial bonds are direct consequences of the imposed Eurocentric standards and systemic racism, vividly portrayed in *The Bluest Eye*. The Black community was not allowed to obtain good jobs; as a result, they were forced into labor and servitude for the White population. There was nothing

in the lives of the Breedloves except disappointment and frustration. The White community's dominance was so overwhelming that the Breedloves even lost the charm and intimacy of their domestic life. In contrast to the Breedloves, Morrison presents another Black family, the MacTeers. Although they too live under the control of the White community, they work hard and face the hardships of life with resilience. They manage to fulfill the basic needs of their children, as Claudia describes her father "He worked day and night to keep one from the door and other from under the windowsills" (p. 61).

Through these contrasting depictions, Morrison highlights the different ways Black families responded to the pressures and shame imposed by a racially oppressive society. Claudia's family is the ideal family of Morrison. They are not colonized by the white colonizers. They have desire neither to have white complexion nor to lead life under their command. They maintain their own cultural values unwilling to reconcile with others customs or family structure. In the novel importance is given to the black heritage. Main concern of the black art movement is also to give values to the African American culture. In the novel major focus is given to awake the colonized race that they have their own cultural values. A community must not compromise with its values. As the black race has already victim of the white race now it is an intense need to have their own identity

Morrison wants to demolish the concept of white as a standard of beauty. The black community considers the white its ideal. Breedloves family considers life nothing without the attributes of the white culture. Throughout the novel there is contrast between Claudia and Pecola as well as their concept of life is concerned. Pecola was influenced by the white beauty all the time she dreamed to have blue eyes. The atmosphere in which she survives is boring as a result her hate for the black community and desire to have white beauty becomes more serious. On other hand Claudius has no desired to be white, but she hates the white. When she receives a blue-eyed doll at charismas, she is not pleased to get it as she says; "I had one desire: dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that has escaped me, but apparently only me. Adults, older girls, had agreed that a blue eye, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (P 20)

Claudia is well aware about the racial elements around her that the white community abolished the identity of the black. She knows that the destruction of the black community is the dominance power of the white. Even she says the white are responsible for the death of Pecola's child. "Certain seeds it will not nurture certain fruit it will not bear and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live." (p. 206) According to Claudia that Pecola's child died because it was hated. It was considered that there is no room for it and he has no right to live. The novelist challenges the concept of beauty and proves that white as a standard of beauty is not universal standard it is socially constructed. If the black race remains under influence of the white and apply their values in life the identity of the black race will be spoiled. Morrison claims that blackness has its own beauty. Pecola a little girl is not satisfied with color when she sees white fellows with blue eyes, she becomes disappointed. Presence of Dick and Jane; who belong to white race tortures her more. Morrison also depicts the negative aspects of racism. Racism or class consciousness is the important issue in the novel. Education system is also based on racial concept. Education is only limited to the white race. The blacks are not allowed to get education in good institution. The novel begins with a white boy Dick reads an assignment. Dick and Jean are the white and enjoy life on other hand Pecola, Claudia and Frieda are black and cannot enjoy life. School assignments are only for the white children, the blacks are denied to get good education. Even the blacks have no right to indulge in the society. Pecola has black color therefore she is victimized by the white. Everyone considers her ridiculer and sometime jokes at her. She

encounters many people in her daily life they have ill feelings about her. Those who have light color consider superior and hate the black. The black hate themselves, Morrison describes many black characters that hate their race and feel shame of their color. Pecola's parents and class fellows hate their black color. They "contempt their own blackness" (p.65). Bilal Ahmed et.al (2024) asserts in relation to post-colonialist context, "sovereign entities like judicial systems, law enforcement agencies, in dictatorial regime reinforce systematic socio-civil death wherein she is denied legal recognition and reduced to a disposable subject." (p.41)

According to Fanon racial issues that are the product of colonialism gain attention in psychoanalysis. Morrison depicts colonial concept of racism by analyzing the psychologically. Psych of Pecola reveals to us. Being African American girl she is degraded by the society. She wants to know the reason of this degradation. When she looks at the mirror, she is worried to see that her eyes are not blue and realizes that she is discriminated because of her black complexion. Racial differences torture her she wants to overcome this gap by having blue eyes and light complexion. In the same way Claudia also wants to know the reasons of her exploitation ultimately realizes that she lacks white beauty. According to Lane; "We cannot comprehend ethnic and racial disputes without considering the implication of psychic resistance"

Both Claudia and Pecola realize their draw back that they lack beauty. On other hand they react against this concept differently. Pecola wants to overcome this difference by having the same characteristics of the white community. On other hand Claudia resists against the colonizers, she does not want to adopt their values. Claudia knows that she will not become beautiful forever and when realizes the difference between her and the other white community feelings of hatred and jealousy developed in her. Ultimately, she refuses to accept the values of the white. As Geraldine describes the difference between white and black race by teaching her son "Coloured people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud." (p.57) Pecola's white school fellow is over confidence of her white complexion. She considers Pecola inferior and ugly. Here Morrison criticizes the hegemony of the white race. Pecola is neglected by the society no one loves her; even her own mother shows no affection to her. She wants to be loved but no one shows love for her. When she looks at the she realizes that she lacks blue eyes therefore others attitude towards her change. She longs for blue eyes so that she will be loved. She was completely disappointed about her race. The surrounding appears to her disappointed and sad. She is not only rejected by the white race. But the other black neighbors also condemn her because of her thick dark skin. Pecola's family is neglected not only because of its color differences but also because of its poverty. On account of its poverty the family is not able to survive in America. Cholly failed to face the society as a result he lost interest in life and abandoned the responsibilities of the family. He is humiliated by the dominant society; he became drunker and unable to lead normal life. Pauline became servant of the rich white family. Morrison has discussed the issue of slavery as in African American were enslaved by the white colonizers. Here Pauline is enslaved by the colonizers. She is under the command of the colonizers. Summy was also disappointed of poverty he usually left the house in frustration. Pecola remained at home all alone and used to think about her social and economic position. These poor family members want to lead luxurious life like the white community. They are unable to mix-up with the higher community, who consider themselves superior to the black race. Pecola's parents are conscious about their status they know they are socially inferior to the white. The white has dominant force, their culture has hegemonic power. Dick and Jane are overwhelmed on the black children their culture and education system is different from the black. The black children desire to lead life like them but there are many hurdles in their lives. They are oppressed and denied from all the luxuries of life.

In order to depict the black identity Morrison portrays Mac Leer family. it maintains its identity despite dominance of the colonizers. They know that it is harmful for them to adopt the values of the white nation. Claudia; shows indifferent attitude to Shirley Temple and the white doll that are the symbol of the white beauty. Actually, hates the western stander of beauty not these objects. Children of the Macleer family are satisfied with their black color. As they say; We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated our scars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness” (p.99) By depicting the Mac leer family, the novelist wants to show that it is possible to challenge the colonized nation through adopting values of black culture. On other hand Pauline, Geraldine, Peal and Pecola failed to maintain their identity they are marginalized. They are under the influence of the white culture. White`s physical beauty, pictures, movies, and books have controlled their minds. Their lives are insecure without having their rights in the society. They become victim of double consciousness. They failed to lead happy lives even in their own homes. The effect of the dominant white is so powerful over them that the black turn to hate themselves. They judge themselves through the point of view of the white people. The effect of the white power destroys the very existence of the black community. The white considers the black ugly and uncivilized. The blacks are so humiliated that they are frustrated and develop feelings of hatred for themselves. Pauline dislikes the black complexion and she starts hating her own daughter Pecola. Pecola also hates her black eyes and dark skin. She has created a white image of beauty in her mind. A few characters as Pauline, Geraldine and Pecola are too much influenced by power of the white colonizers that they develop strong desire to adopt their values. Morrison condemns the domination of white over the black. She also criticizes the black race in the novel that instead of adopting its own values gives importance to white culture and prefers their standard of beauty. The novelist wants to preserve the black culture. She struggles to alive the African American identity. By challenging the racism, she paves the way for the coming generation to establish their cultural status. The characteristics of black art movement are found in *The Bluest Eye*. Black Art Movement makes it easy to understand the novel.

Conclusion

In summary, Toni Morrison unveils the colonial legacy of beauty and shame, which has profoundly damaged the African American psyche. By depicting the tragic life of Pecola Breedlove and her family, Morrison shows how Eurocentric beauty standards and systemic racial oppression lead to deep-rooted feelings of inferiority, self-hatred, and fragmentation within the Black community. The Breedloves’ internalization of White ideals and their resulting misery reflect the devastating effects of a society that privileges whiteness and marginalizes Blackness. Through her vivid storytelling rooted in Black cultural traditions, Morrison challenges the dominant narratives that equate beauty and worth with White features, urging her readers to recognize and resist these destructive constructs. Ultimately, Morrison’s work stands as a powerful critique of the postcolonial structures that continue to shape identity, self-perception, and social status. By presenting the resilience of families like the MacTeers alongside the downfall of the Breedloves, she emphasizes the need for the Black community to reclaim and celebrate their own cultural values and identities. *The Bluest Eye* not only exposes the enduring wounds inflicted by colonialism and racism but also calls for a redefinition of beauty, rooted in self-acceptance and cultural pride. Morrison’s novel remains a profound testament to the struggle for dignity and the importance of preserving the richness of Black identity against a history of shame and marginalization.

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