

TRAUMA AND EPIGENETICS IN TONI MORRISON'S THE BLUEST EYE

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, I argue that epigenetics is a relevant tool in underscoring and examining Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) while affirming that racial trauma can be inherited or transferred from parents to their wards who are victims of racial psychological trauma that have been unavoidably inherited from the environment. In the quest to underscore and examine racial trauma in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, who should be blamed for Pecola's continuous yearning for the bluest eye? Why will Pecola yearn for the bluest eye? Moreover, who constructed the notion of beauty as white or black? Compounded with curiosity about what other authors have done in the novel necessitated my essay, hinged on reading the novel using epigenetics. Epigenetics though a more recent approach to examining literary works could be a biological and social science term that describes how characters or humans are affected by the traits inherited from their parents and environment and how these traits grossly impact their lifestyle and pose a threat that necessitates psychological challenge, which could afterward lead to trauma. In my reading of *The Bluest Eye*, I will be paying critical and close attention to various instances through character, characterization, setting, and narrative techniques to establish how the author has intrinsically weaved these elements in the novel to depict the psychological brain disorder in the novel that necessitated to racial trauma. I argue further that racial trauma can be incorporated and encoded into the culture, which is unconsciously assimilated and inherited by the members of such an environment or community. The essay concludes with facts from the novel that trauma can be epigenetically inherited from parents and the environment. As for Pecola's self-racial loathing, her community also contributes to her psychological disorder because her parents are members of the same community who have also inherently inherited this trauma. Pecola's madness results from intrinsic and extrinsic anomalies that have crept into her brain from both her parents and community.

Keywords: Trauma, Epigenetics, The Bluest Eye, Racism

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BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Toni Morrison is the first female African-American writer to win the Nobel Prize. She was at the forefront of addressing the critical discourses affecting African Americans until her death on August 5, 2019. She categorically and frankly depicts in her novels the daily experiences of the Blacks in America after the Great Depression. No wonder most of her early works and even her last novel, *A Mercy*, center on the various subjects around the Atlantic world through the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, regardless of when the novels were published. Through her literary writings, Morrison made it her mission to be the “gods” spokesperson by seeking justice against the racially discriminated and subjected Blacks, especially Black women who are victimized in African American and American society.

Toni Morrison is engrossed with how women are victims of social and economic issues, stereotypes, and their struggles through the Atlantic passage and slavery across many centuries. She replicated these ugly experiences as racial beauty in *The Bluest Eye*. She says in the *Afterword*, “The reclamation of racial beauty in the sixties stirred these thoughts, made me think about the necessity for the claim. Although reviled by others, could this beauty not be taken for granted within the community? Why did it need wide public articulation to exist?” (210). I strongly feel that these questions genuinely asked by Morrison pushed for the public articulation of these issues. At that time, not many African American women novelists had written about the damaging effect of racial prejudice, not to mention the devastation of this demonic and toxic racial self-loathing on a child who is the most vulnerable in any society.

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison describes the story of three Black girls, Pecola, Claudia, and Frieda, in 1940s America set in Ohio. The story revolves mainly around the Breedloves and Pecola, their daughter, whose family and the community have failed. It describes the traumatic experience of Polly and Cholly's daughter. She is subjected to all forms of trauma ranging from rape and racial discrimination, leading to a self-loathed hatred and gender subjugation due to her race. Claudia and Frieda seem to be the author's voices in fighting this society's demonic and cancerous ills by making an affirmation and scrapping the idea of accepting societal validation of who we are and what we represent. Through these two characters and their family, the author launches the family as a sacred place that must breed self-love and, above all, nurture the young wards; if not, they will be threatened and left in ruins like Pecola, who finally runs mad as a result of lack of family and community supports as she sojourns in her quest for the bluest of the bluest eye to validate her beauty and acceptance in the community.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Mahaffey Paul Douglas opines that *The Bluest Eye* is an essential literary work of adolescent literature that interrogates race, class, and gender issues. He further backs up his claim by asserting Vickroy (1996) and Bouson (2000), whose work examines psychological trauma in adolescents and how these negative racial loathings and gender adversely affect the adolescent mind. (Mahaffey 2004)

One of the notable authors who has contributed to this discourse is Jerome Bump (2010); he argues that *The Bluest Eye* can be used as a critical text to evaluate the practice of ethical emotive criticism where it is imperative to question how the feelings connected to thought, especially when it has to do with psychological models of racism. He also identified shame as the primary anger emotion. Bump further examines the stigma extended by this loathing feeling as experienced by the young female character in the novel. Bump questions how feelings of Ugliness can enable white readers to identify with Pecola, making the young girl child more conscious of the impact of racism (Bump 2010:150).

Bump compounded that the underlying attributes of an emotive feeling of hate, disgust, and guilt are embedded in what he calls "negative shame," which is a result of "I am a mistake" in his words, "Guilt is based on the awareness that 'I made a mistake,' but negative shame is the fear that 'I am a mistake'" (153). Well, as much as I agree with his stand that one's acceptance or conviction of belief in naysayers they are a mistake based on other people's judgment or validation, I firmly believe that we must also question what initiated or birthed this personal conviction. One may begin to question the genesis of this overburdened cross.

Furthermore, Bump identifies "*things*" (163) as the primary cause of Pecola's sense of shame in her community. He summarizes Pecola's pain as consciously inhabiting the sufferings and pain directly and opening willing it to herself. Even though Bump's summation reflects the word *Thing* as the basis of Pecola's pain, I argue that the *Thing* being referred to by Toni Morrison is nothing but an inherited racial loathing from her immediate family, which is aggravated more as a result of the society that they live in; I, however, believe that the catalyst that spearheads this action into existence is nonetheless but their immediate "community and family." A community where racism has eaten deep like cancer and a parasite that feeds on its host can breathe nothing but ruin and racial self-loathing.

Many critics who have underscored *The Bluest Eye* have skillfully paid critical attention to Pecola Breedloves' willful acceptance of society's validation of her being. No one talks about the crux and bane of this "willfulness" that the young girl has woefully accepted. There is little or no discourse on how Pecola could inherit this trauma from her parents or immediately. Again, there is little or nothing on how the Breedloves could be victims of an inherited traumatic racial system.

One may begin to imagine the kind of child that would have been nurtured by Pecola, whose frame of mind has been altered by the society and the family that is supposed to serve as nature to her and her parents, who should have served as a source of her inspiration and also nurtured her, have woefully failed in their task as parents instead they have assimilated and internalized this trauma as well.

In this essay, I argue that trauma can be passed down epigenetically from one's parent or inherited as phenotypical traits resulting from compressed emotions that emanate from the immediate environment using Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. In addition, these compressed emotions are encoded and handed down to the offspring unconsciously. According to Claire Hanson, "Epigenetics is also of major interest to the social sciences, as epigenetic mutations are seen as responses to the psychosocial as well as the physical environment, a means by which experience gets under the skin" (Hanson:18). While research in this area is in its early stages, there is evidence that 'social insult' and the experience of trauma and violence are epigenetically mediated and that such epigenetic changes can be reproduced across generations. In other words, epigenetic refers to experiences that result from insulting that are alien to the body and can be defamatory to the skin, i.e., skin sensitivity; I see this as a negative effect on the brain that can lead to mental or psychological challenge that can bring about trauma, and this trauma, if internalized, can therefore be hereditary and transferred from one generation to another. On the other hand, the environment has the willpower to cause a change, whether positive or negative. If negative, such an individual is at higher risk of being disadvantaged (Hanson, 2020:18).

Other scholars have also viewed epigenetics as a biological or genetic transmission model that assumes that trauma is inherited through genes from parent to child in the same way a hereditary disease is transmitted (Kellermann, 2001). Yehuda, Halligan, and Bierer: Epigenetics explains trauma by suggesting the traumatic event changes one's genes that are then passed onto offspring. Yehuda et al. (2000) used cortisol levels to measure Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Two empirical studies support this model. One study found low cortisol levels in children of parents with PTSD. Also, Connerton (1989) posited that our experience of the present depends on our knowledge of the past. This is relevant to the role of mass historical trauma on the collective conscience of a cultural group.

Furthermore, Second and third-generation survivors reported significantly higher levels of secondary traumatic stress (STS), lower levels of differentiation of self, and poorer family communication compared to control groups. Giladi and Bell (2013) explored whether differentiation of the self and family communication styles were protective factors against secondary traumatic stress. A more significant differentiation of self and better family communication was associated with lower levels among controls. Kellermann (2008) attempted to identify the demographic factors that increased the likelihood of developing psychopathology due to parental traumatization. These risk factors included being born soon after World War II, being only children or first-born, and being replacement children for those

who had perished in the Holocaust.

Most of the research studies in this area used quantitative methodology. They focused on the adverse outcomes of being an ancestor of someone who experienced mass trauma (Kristen et al., 2017; Giladi and Bell, 2013). While it is understandable that adverse effects are associated with this dark time in history, there is little research about how race and class can be a yardstick to measure trauma through epigenetics using a literary text.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, has been termed anti-Bildungsroman because of its unfortunate ending, which is against the ethos of Bildungsroman or the coming-of-age novel where its protagonist is specifically meant to undergo an irrevocable positive growth all around (Mahaffey 2004:164). The novel explicitly portrays the hardships and suppression resulting from psychosocial and environmental factors such as adverse childhood experiences, race, poor economic and social status, and depression, all associated with chronic stress and pain.

Ugliness as a Metaphor for Traumatic Experiences

The first form of acute trauma in the novel is Breedlove's acceptance of the description of them as "ugly" by the community; the anonymous narrator describes this in the first few pages of the novel, showing the Breedloves as a failed Black family and regarded as "ugly" which I shall therefore refer to as the "ugliest of the ugliest," this appellation that they have willingly accepted without objection can be said to be one of the most potent forces that built an intra-racial hatred within the Breedloves' the narrator says that:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realize that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious, all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people." They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement;

They saw, in fact, support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance. "Yes," they had said. "You are right" (39).

Here, Morrison represents the internalization of trauma as the foundation of their racial loathing. Their ugliness cannot be sourced as the source seems unknown to the narrator. The only person pointed to have bestowed this title on them is the "master." No one knows who the master is and where the master comes from. Still, we can say that the master here is a metaphorical and symbolic representation of their community, considering the novel's setting. Again, their conviction came from everything surrounding them, including "billboards," "movies," and every stare. I try to picture them walking on the street while everyone stares at them because of the shade of their skin, with no compliments but a

derogatory look as if they have committed a felony. Nothing kills faster than one's inner acceptance of other people's validity and impression of them; this is the basis of Pecola's trauma in *The Bluest Eye*.

In the spring of the novel, Pauline Williams is described as an already repressed and marginalized individual because of a physical deformity she sustained on her feet as a child. The wound is said to have left her with "a crooked, arch less foot that flopped when she walked" (110). This deformity makes her distance herself from other children; even among her eleven siblings, she is different and isolated. She was not nicknamed. She, however, blames her general feeling and "separateness" and "unworthiness" on her foot (111).

Trauma Encoded in War

It is worth noting that the Great War hurt the Williamses. During World War I, many people were displaced. At the same time, some families migrated from their initial settlement to another. Kellerman Natan (2008) has rightly noted some factors that could necessitate psychological Trauma in an individual. One of them is that if one is born before or during world wars, such an individual tends to be traumatized. Near the beginning of World War I, the Williamses discovered from their returning neighbor and kin the possibility of having a better life in another place, which can also be a result of the great war; "they migrated and in six months and four journeys to Kentucky, where there were mines and millwork" (112).

As a fifteen-year-old teenager, Pauline was also traumatized. The war already hurts the life of Pauline's parents through migration and their struggle to get a better source of income while working in the mines. Considering Pauline's age at that time, it is worthy of note that a child of fifteen years already has an idea of the happenings at that time. The child could internalize this happening, replaying it in her unconscious mind. I believe that Pauline has no hold on it and could have probably passed it to her daughter. Cholly meets Pauline; while they get along, she explains how her new environment negatively transformed her life. This point takes us back to our earlier stated fact about epigenetics as a combination of the environment and the parents. Her affirmation suggests that a domain can be an enabler of racist moves.

This means that environmental factors have causal effects on any human being. The way humans behave and react is dependent on their environment. Pauline recounts her experience about how her immediate environment made her lonesome and how the white and even colored members of her community made her feel less worthy of herself, and this she never expected. She recounts how her community makes her unsafe and inferior:

Up north, they were everywhere—next door, downstairs, all over the streets—and colored folks were few and far between. Northern

colored folk were different too. Dicty-like. No better than Whites for meanness. They could make you feel just as No-count,' cept I didn't expect it from them. That was the loneliest time of my life(117).

From the above excerpts from the novel, being Black is worse than being Colored. The racism experimented in this discourse is of three levels or hierarchy; in fact, let me say that there is a hierarchy to this thing called racism. The Colored, according to Pauline, seems meaner than the Whites even though, in comparison, they were fewer than the Whites. The brutalization that comes with the Colored, making you feel less human than yourself, is meaner to her because they do not even belong to the mainstream. However, they segregate themselves from the Blacks, which can only make poor Pauline lonesome.

Nurture and Nature

Furthermore, on Cholly's part, as a failed father, both his parents have failed, and Cholly lacks both nature and nurture. Fox Keller, a longstanding critic of gene-centric reductionism, argues that there is no gap between nature and nurture and that both factors are essential for a child's development. At the same time, Fausto-Sterling believes that "we are always 100 percent nature and 100 percent nurture" (Keller 37). This means parents and the environments are solid foundations and mental building for a sane child. Nature represents the external environment, while nurture stands for the family; family is expected to nurture us, adore, love, and tolerate us. When one of these two factors or even the two are absent in one's life, one could be subjected to psychological imbalance or disorder, which can eventually cause birth trauma.

Although research on epigenetics is still in its early stage, Hanson says that "there is evidence that 'social insult' and the experience of trauma and violence are epigenetically mediated and that such epigenetic changes can be reproduced across generations". Looking at the Life of Cholly, a boy whose "insane" mother dumped nine days old as trash with no name, no father, and nothing more, according to Aunt Jimmy. The stories surrounding his birth cannot be wholly understood. He searches for his father, Samson Fuller, whom we later learn he rejected for a crap game during their first encounter. The rejection is said to have caused great pain: "But then the trace of pain edged his eyes, and he had to use everything to send it away. If he were very still, he thought and kept his eyes on one thing, the tears would not come" (156). I firmly believe this is one of the catalysts that ignited Cholly's existing and inhibited trauma. His trauma seems to have been mediated and uncalculated. He could not have dealt with it for someone who has just lost his caregiver, Aunt Jimmy, and as a result, Cholly is thrown into the world unprepared. Cholly's pain is such that it gets into him in a despicable manner:

While straining in this way, focusing every erg of energy on his eyes, his bowels suddenly opened up, and before he could realize what he knew, liquid stools were running down his legs. At the mouth of the alley where his father was, on

an orange crate in the sun, on the street full of grown men and women, he had soiled himself like a baby (157).

A brief description of the fecal incontinence that Cholly experienced above could not be rightly processed due to the shock that came with his father disowning him. The nerves that were supposed to restrict this movement have been forcefully relaxed due to this shock. Cholly can be described as the psychopath freedman who now lives in his world, void of care, love, and attention, and above all, there is nothing to lose after his significant loss. Again, the combination of two already traumatic human beings, Pauline and Cholly, who lacked parental care and community acceptance, is the foundation of Pecola's madness and the quest for approval or validation.

Furthermore, Cholly's abandonment by his parents is an already established source of trauma. He is abandoned as trash. Cholly does not what it looks like to nurture a child because he was never nurtured, which makes him unwelcoming to the appearance of children when Pauline starts to have babies. He cannot comprehend this aspect of life because he has been alone since he was thirteen. He further mounts his compounded trauma on his daughter by raping her. The narrator describes the ridiculous rape act that will forever traumatize Pecola all her life. Despite raping her, his hatred for her is mixed with tenderness as he abandons his fainted daughter. What could be more damaging for an eleven-year-old girl who needs nothing but love and ends up psychologically and physically damaged due to her father's inability to process his inherited and societal-inflicted trauma?

The environment as an instrument of trauma in *The Bluest Eye*. There is a systemic error in the community where Pecola finds herself aside from her family as an agent and victim of internalized and inherited trauma; the community is also filled with racial discrimination, damaging one's psyche. The environment is first the source of Pecola's parent's trauma, and the same domain is also her source of trauma, which doubles her trauma in the novel. Pecola undergoes strong resentment from the members of her community. First, in her school, Pecola is carried away by her depth of ugliness as she stares at herself in the mirror to undercover the root of her mess. This puzzle seems hard to crack.

The trauma is described so that she is isolated from every class member; she is an outcast that must not be associated with; after all, she is an ordinary Black ugly girl. She has been distanced at all costs by arranging the seats in her classroom so that nobody shares seats with her, "Breedloves," while others are partnered on their double desk. She is just an ordinary eleven-year-old girl despised and ignored by her teachers and classmates at school.

Is not the school supposed to be a learning and associating ground for a child? No, the school for Pecola is where hatred is bred, built, and mounted as a psychological disorder. The school is an enabler or agent of trauma. The narrator says:

She was the only member of her class who sat alone at a double desk. Her last name's first letter forced her to always sit in the front of the room. But what about Marie

Appolonaire? Marie was before her, but she shared a desk with Luke Angelino. Her teachers had always treated her this way (45).

Bullying as an Agent of Trauma

Through the child narrator Claudia, we get to read about how Pecola is bullied by some boys, namely Bay Boy, Woodrow, Cain, Buddy Wilson, and Junie Bug. This group of boys took turns physically harassing and calling her names, which left Pecola in tears as she struggled to regain herself until her rescuers, Claudia, Frieda, and Maureen Peals, came to the scene. This scenario depicts how children who should be innocent with a free mind and a support system have unconsciously inherited the racial loathing and prejudice inhibited in society towards a child like them. This also shows that the act of racism can also be learned and imbibed; the children at school have already imbibed this and see Pecola as a lesser being.

Claudia, the child narrator, describes the name-calling scene as "Black e mo Black e mo Ya daddy sleeps nekked. Stch ta such ta tastach ta ta ta ta ta" (65). Pecola's father is being ridiculed right before her eyes; she is made to believe that she has seen her father's nakedness solely because they live in a bedroom apartment. This allegation seems more psychologically damaging to Pecola as she refutes this claim.

Another instance of bully is narrated in the novel. Pecola is subjected to and repressed by Junior and her mother, Geraldine because she is Black. Pecola is simply a walking corpse as she is always head bowed while walking within the community. This racial loathing gets into her system, and she is ashamed to raise her head above the waters. The narrator describes how Pecola is tricked by Junior into their house only to be accused of killing Geradine's kitten. Pecolahas become Junior's prisoner. She cries as she tries to regain her freedom. We read that Junior proclaims her his prisoner: "You can't get out. You're my prisoner" (90). What could be more depressing than seeing a child like one calling another name and a "prisoner" because of the former's identity? She is only but an ugly Black girl. Junior's mother adds to Pecola's trouble when she finally gets to her and sees her kitten lying helplessly on the floor. Nobody else could have killed the kitten but the "little Black bitch" (92). Pecola heads out again with her down.

Considering the illustration and instances of bullying in the novel, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) establishes that bullying can negatively impact a child's or teen's self-esteem, relationships with others, and academic performance. It can also cause mental health issues like depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and even suicidal thoughts and actions (NCTSN: 2018). This means that bullying can also be an agent of trauma transfer, as depicted in the novel by some of the child characters stated earlier and this is a constituent of the environment. The connection between bullying and trauma is nuanced. Traumatic stress reactions, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, can result from bullying. For instance, a 2012 study (Idsoe et al., 2012) discovered that among all pupils who had experienced bullying, 40.5% of females and 27.6% of boys had PTSD ratings that fell within the range they are considered to be clinical. In other words, Pecola's case is not exceptional, having fallen under

one out of the 40.5% of females who have been estimated to experience bullying.

Throughout the novel and before Pecola's rape by her father, this damaging insult, an attribute of a bully, continues to surface, which is how some of the novel's characters describe Pecola's father's nakedness. This single incident can also be a source of underlying and accumulated trauma in Pecola's life. From the harassment meted out to her by the group of boys, we can see that the boys continue to reference Pecola's father's nakedness. Afterward, Maureen Peal asks Pecola if she has seen a man's nakedness, as she questions, "Who wants to see a naked man? (71). No one can say the reason behind the questioning if it is not to ridicule and shame Pecola's family since they live in a small apartment with no separate rooms for the children or is another way to ignite her pain psychologically, making her uncomfortable, sad, and helpless. As that was not enough, Maureen goes further to heap insults on the Black girls, including Claudia and Frieda, even though Pecola happens to be her target. She screams at them, "I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!" (73)

Yes, Pecola is the target, but Frieda and Claudia are also Black girls; they also get to share in this insult as Claudia expresses how this insult sickened them all. It seems inexplicable as Claudia tries to question why Maureen Peal's last words sunk into them differently. She narrates, "We were sinking under the wisdom, accuracy, and relevance of Maureen's last words. If she was cute-and if anything could be believed, she *was* – then we were not" (74). The environment is the architect of the ugliness they find themselves in. This ugliness was instituted before Black girls were born, and because they are Black, they are ugly. They would not be ugly if they were White, so Maureen seems right. Claudia further questions what makes them ugly and concludes that Maureen Peal was never their enemy and did not deserve their hatred.

The "*Thing*" to fear was simply the "*Thing*" that made them ugly, while Maureen is beautiful. The "*Thing*" here, metaphorically, is the society, their community (74).

Familia Support

Comparing the McTeers with the Breedloves, these two Black families are opposite sides of a coin. The former can fight and defend their daughters regardless of the societal constraints placed on them. At the same time, the latter do not have the willpower to protect and do not hesitate to support their children as they are battling their own internalized trauma. Frieda experiences abuse from Mr. Henry, her parents go after him by throwing punches and their old tricycle at him to defend their daughter Frieda. She tells Claudia that "daddy saw him come up on the porch, he threw old tricycle at his head and knocked him off the porch" (100). The parents do not stop at Henry alone; when Miss Dunion sees Frieda as being ruined and insists that she needs the doctor, Frieda's mother yells and screams at Miss Dunion.

As for Pecola, what did she get in return for splitting the pie juice, insults, and beatings?

Her mother would instead console the crying little girl in pink, who calls her by her name, "Polly," while her daughter calls her by her last name, "Mrs. Breedlove." What would make a mother yell and insult her only daughter if not that the mother herself is mentally and racially damaged? She curses at Pecola, "Crazy fool...my floor, mess...look what you...work...get on out ... now that...crazy...my floor, my floor...my floor" (109). When Pecola is raped by her father, rather than receiving empathy and sympathy built in love from her mother, she gets a beating. While she regains consciousness, she notices bruises both on the face and between her legs as she is said to try "to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her" (163).

The last few pages of *The Bluest Eye* are the peak of the novel and describe the height of Pecola's trauma as she sojourns to Soap head's church for a permanent solution. How this scene is described calls for a critical concern and depicts how traumatic and psychologically battered Pecola is. It looks like Pecola is aware of her trauma. She heads out to Soap head, seeking the bluest eye as Soap head extends one of the cards describing his expertise. These lines on the card are more profound than anyone could imagine. An eleven-year-old girl is trying to break through societal confinement. She reads the card, "Remember, I am a true Spiritualist and Psychic Reader, born with power, and I will help you" (173). Soap head's affirmation of himself as a psychic reader and spiritualist gives the readers the confirmation of Pecola's ill health as a mentally derailed individual. Pecola is stuck here, having to negotiate her way through how to solve her trauma. Soap head also on his card states that he can help the "discouraged" and "distressed" (173); even if the individual has bad luck, he can help. This is Pecola's predicament.

In addition, Pecola is an ugly little girl searching for beauty that she believes can only be gotten from blue eyes. Pecola is aggressive in her search for the societal construction of beauty; she struggles to rise above all these restrictions and impediments placed on her being from the pit of the black world in order for her to see the world differently, at least with her bluest eye. Soap head responds, "I can do nothing for you, my child. I am not a magician" (174), showing that all Pecola needed was 100% nurture and 100% nature, which are affection, love, and kindness from her family and environment.

CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* is emphatic about how the story ended while Pecola runs mad on the street in the novel. She simply says that the community failed Pecola and her household because things could have been better with Pecola. Still, this segregation couldn't be curtailed because of the racial segregation and disparity among the various cadres or classes in the novel. Hence, it affects the tiniest and the innocent of the being of the community. It is Pecola's story, a fictional representation of one out of five Black girls in the American community who face problems they do not know their genesis.

Reading Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* while dissecting trauma through the lens of epigenetics, we can infer that trauma can be inherited internally from the parents and externally from the environment. Again, when a series of traumatic experiences are laid upon without any effort to identify its origin, there is an impending doom that such a fate as that of Pecola can be that of the individual. Pecola's madness in *The Bluest Eye* shows that racial trauma can be encoded in Black culture due to the intersectionality in that community.

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