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Racial and Cultural Rootedness: The Effect of Intraracial Oppression in *The Bluest Eye*

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Scholars of Toni Morrison's fiction, from Karen Carmean to Therese E. Higgins, focus on issues with which Morrison concerns herself: race relations, a community of women, and the African worldview. Very few scholars, however, attribute importance to the prevalence of intraracial subjugation by and against black characters; this victimization from within presents a situation in which the African-American acts as both the marginalized "Other" and the oppressor, thereby reversing the role of white postcolonialism as the characters deliberately distance themselves from one another and an authentic African heritage. Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* reveals the profound effect that inter- and intraracial oppression has on the psyche and spirit of the characters, but subjugation from within creates an environment where African-Americans are forced to assume dual and conflicting roles. Morrison couples this disintegration of the self and the community with the pervasive image of the "destabilized flora," a loaded phrase used in association with racial, religious, and sexual perversion and the characters' roots to their past. Floral images are woven throughout the experiences of nearly every black character and illustrate racial and cultural displacement. Ironically, Pecola, the protagonist and scapegoat-savior, embodies a true African heritage; other black characters deliberately placate white expectations so as to remove the stigma of the "Other". In doing so, such characters assume the role of oppressor against their own – an adoption that proves disastrous for the cohesion of the African-American community. I present new scholarship on Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and suggest that black characters in the novel actively create an environment of oppression; this "black-on-black" violence denigrates the psyche of both characters and community, which negates a connection to a true African heritage.

To establish links among perversion, floral images, and degradation, this essay has to begin with a discussion of the black community's victimization by the dominant culture and what scholars of Morrison's fiction have referred to as "black-on-black" violence. The contexts in which black characters actively persecute one another in response to marginalization by white culture will act as a framework for demonstrating the characters' isolation from one another and Africa – an exploration in new scholarship on Morrison's first novel.

While "black-on-black" violence is prevalent in *The Bluest Eye*, scholars of Morrison's fiction pay slight attention to the effect this victimization from within has on the psyche of the characters. Michael Awkward and Karen Carmean focus on racial dominance, with Carmean expounding almost entirely on the victimization of African-Americans by the dominant, white culture. This notion of white postcolonial domination is revisited and reconfigured as scholars place importance on the tension between, rather than within, both races.

In his work on the postcolonial novel and mourning, Sam Durrant addresses the subject of intraracial violence from within the context of a "perverse desire to keep the memory of racial abuse in the family. The traumatic, unspeakable secrets around which each novel is structured are acts of familial, black-on-black violence" (82). These "secrets" that Durrant describes extend far beyond the confines of the nuclear family to the racial community at large. His contention that Morrison's novels are inherently structured around familial violence largely ignores the broader context in which oppression from within produces an environment that contributes to the demise of black people. Tenets of African theology, outlined most notably by theologians such as James Cone, John Mbiti, and Gwinyai H. Muzorewa, detail a system where acts committed against one have a profound effect on others, and thus no one is exempt from persecution: "[w]hatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual" (Mbiti 141 as quoted in Muzorewa 18). While Durrant acknowledges the repetitive pattern of familial violence in Morrison's novels, he fails to assert *how* this victimization fits into broader social and racial contexts and largely ignores the implications of this oppression. Morrison indeed utilizes secrets, for as she writes in the opening line of *The Bluest Eye*, "quiet as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941," the black community is perfectly aware of Pecola's rape and later inability to bear children yet does

nothing to comfort nor console her, forcing her once again "outdoors" to search for that which they have destroyed. Thus, the abuse inflicted on Pecola from within and outside the nuclear family becomes recapitulated in the failure of the community to protect and support its own (6).

Black scholar and critic Doreatha Drummond Mbalia asserts that it is because of victimization by the white dominant culture that blacks oppress one another; adopting and internalizing white ideologies, black characters isolate themselves from one another and associate with their oppressor in order to abolish the damaging depiction of the "Other." Mbalia declares that those who "disgust their blackness" are characters that are the furthest removed from the African community. The implication is that it is only those characters that aspire to be like the dominant culture, either through dress or behavior that are not connected with their heritage. Mbalia uses the Peals and Geraldine's family to illustrate her analysis; however, the remainder of the African-American community cannot be excluded. In fact, the majority of blacks in Morrison's novel act *against* the dominant culture although they have been influenced by their ideals. Pecola remains one of the few characters that associate with whites to escape the violent persecution from within, from her black oppressors. While Mbalia makes a strong case for the Peals and "Geraldine's," the black community in *The Bluest Eye* is as much removed from an African heritage, for it is in their mere and isolation of Pecola's situation that the connection is weakened.

The circumstances of the "minor families" that Mbalia discusses are embedded in what she refers to as "class conflicts," which she believes is overshadowed by racial prejudices (37). Mbalia asserts that Morrison's awareness of racial conflicts and the depiction of the African in the 1960s and 1970s is contained at the core of *The Bluest Eye*, where "the white man" is "viewed as the primary enemy of African people," an association that positions "European versus African" (37). Muzorewa argues that it is not the white man but the outsider or foreigner that is the enemy because "their motives are likely to be alien to the local tribal interest" and that "these unknowns threaten peace in the community" (17). Transferring intent of threat from the white man to the outsider, one could propose that the Breedlove family becomes outsiders as the result of their ugliness and poverty; further, the failure of the community to integrate the Breedloves poses equal threat to the strength of the African community.

Carmean would conclude that this disassociation results from a community depending almost entirely on "external conditions for self-image…and in denying their natural gifts (or, as Morrison calls it, their 'funkiness') in order to placate white expectations, African-Americans accelerate their own destruction" (28). Even with black characters' desire to "placate white expectations," their distinction from the dominant culture remains. This classification by whites as the "Other" does more than create separations: it sets the stage for blacks to assume the role of oppressor against their own, which in turn accelerates "their own destruction." It is in the *failure* of blacks to be seen as a part of, rather than set apart from, the dominant culture that the psyche of the characters and community begins to deteriorate, for it is in these futile attempts that African-Americans actively persecute one another. To assume that whites are the only active agents in black destruction is to neglect a community that has collectively been removed from their roots, since no true African community permits victimization against its tribesmen. In Morrison's novel, Pecola acts as neither tribesman nor valuable member of society but merely a scapegoat used to relieve other blacks from interracial persecution.

Jan Furman in "Toni Morrison's Fiction" corroborates with other scholars in their harsh condemnation of the white community when she proclaims that "the black community is the white community's evil" (15). In much the same way that the black community is marginalized by the dominant culture, Pecola is the shadow of evil in the black community, victimized most heartily from within the confines of the nuclear family and society. In combating the shadow, the group purges itself from the veil of evil that exists between the individual and the community, yet to be successful, the group must have a scapegoat: Pecola (Awkward 112-120 as referenced in Furman 15). Claudia positions Pecola and thereby condemns the black community, one that she is actively a part of, for her demise: "All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed" (Morrison 205). In combating this "shadow," the black community feels vindicated in its victimization of Pecola, yet the veil of evil is not purged for it is merely recapitulated in the "veils" of unclosed eyes, eyes that permit atrocities to continue: "They were disgusted, amused, shocked, outraged, or even excited by the story. But we listened for the one who would say, 'Poor little girl,' or 'Poor baby,' but there was only head-wagging where those words should have been. We looked for eyes creased with concern, but saw only veils" (190). Morrison would contend that this perpetuation of evil, these veils of unclosed eyes,

must remain as such for "they [black people] do not destroy evil…I know instinctively that we do not regard evil the same way as white people do" (Taylor-Guthrie 8).

The black community's hatred of Pecola and her dead baby only keeps evil alive and perpetuates a society ashamed of its own, which in turns sets the community apart from the dominant culture. Pecola, then, represents the "oppositional and connective force in the novel," the character that embodies a community whose value and class systems are abhorred "while at the same time serves to more clearly define the community's alienation, repression, and internalization" (Bjork 40, 41). In fact, this positioning "causes each character to uneasily mediate between the contradictions of image and substance, and thus between the divisiveness of desire and self hatred" (41). Morrison couples this denigration from self and community with the image of flora—the thread that becomes associated with major characters to illustrate those who have internalized foreign ideologies to "placate white expectations" and thus have contributed to their self-destruction.

A black community that allows and perpetuates violence against its members is not connected to an African culture or heritage but rather is a society that has been victimized by postcolonial oppression, has internalized this violence, and has transferred this hatred of whites to one another, thereby creating an environment where blacks act as both the "Other" and the oppressor. Although numerous scholars have expounded on the notion of interracial oppression while some, such as Durrant, have addressed intraracial subjugation, no critical attention has been given to the overtly apparent connection between these conflicting roles, which strip the characters of their worth, self-esteem, and sense of belonging, and the pervasive image of flora. This image, which is thread throughout *The Bluest Eye*, is used in conjunction with an African heritage (a culture and community absent in Lorain, Ohio in 1941) and the psyche of the characters; as "destabilized flora" becomes more insidious, the characters and community fall apart. Either the result of internalizing white ideologies, deliberately removing themselves from Africa and their roots, or substituting Christian religious ideas for traditional African ones, black characters instate a precedent in society that the "Other" is unacceptable and thereby slowly desecrate the psyche and spirit of those who are different: themselves.

Morrison has a deep connection to her roots, choosing to focus almost solely on black characters in her novels and acknowledging the "fourth face of God" in African religion. This face extends beyond the Trinity to include evil and the way in which people deal with this evil. In an interview with Alice Childress, Morrison speaks of this fourth face not in justification for black-on-black violence but as a means of establishing a differentiation between white (Christian) and African (traditional African) cultures (Taylor-Guthrie 8). Further evidence of this distinction exists in Allen Alexander's work on the fourth face of God in *The Bluest Eye*, where he expounds on the characters' conceptions of God and treatment of evil. In traditional African religion, the Creator is not merely similar to but "the same" as the God of Christianity (Muzorewa 9). Morrison adheres to tenets of traditional African religion, but her characters misapply these ideologies and substitute them for Christian ones, which inevitably become distorted within the context of the novel. The concept of God and justice, ancestry, good and evil, and the treatment of humanity are prime areas of interest, for it is through these areas that characters work against one another and the community. Morrison's incorporation (or perverted illustration of) these tenets can be traced throughout *The Bluest Eye* in association with major characters. Each area serves a twofold function: to illustrate a community removed from an African heritage and to serve as a framework for the image of the "destabilized flora."

While "justice is an important attribute of God that is important for an African theology" and that "God preserves justice" and thus "is believed to intervene on certain occasions for the purpose of preserving justice," the God in Morrison's novel fails to deliver justice to those who ask for it (10). As Pauline vehemently denounces Cholly's drunken behavior, she proclaims that she is "not interested in Christ the Redeemer but Christ the Judge" and often pleads with Him to strike down Cholly to satisfy her vindictive aims: "[t]he lower he sank, the wilder and more irresponsible he became, the more splendid she and her task became. In the name of Jesus" (Morrison 42). If the God of Christianity is the same as the God of African theology, then Christ is both the Redeemer and the Judge, yet no redemption comes for Pauline or the Breedlove family. Pecola is not redeemed for the sins committed against her by both her nuclear family and the rest of society, nor does Pauline receive recompense by substituting care and concern for her own for the Fishers. Morrison relies on her knowledge of the African God but deliberately misapplies His qualities to illustrate the characters' removal from their heritage.

Throughout the novel, Pauline uses her "martyrdom" and adherence to the Church as a mask for her ugliness, but even with her insistence on God, she is never relieved from this damaging depiction. She actively uses this ugliness as a weapon to inflict emotional abuse on her family, never appealing to God the Redeemer for assistance. Alexander claims that Pauline never recognizes God's fourth face; "she remains as detached from this concept as she does her family and heritage. Pauline's belief system…leads her to leave behind those persons, including her family members, whom she feels fail to measure up to her standards. She thus becomes an extreme individualist, a person cut loose from her cultural moorings" (2).

The connection that Alexander makes between Pauline's lack of "cultural moorings" and deliberate exclusion of her family can be applied to other characters. Geraldine, the woman who "did not sweat in her armpits nor between her thighs, who smelled of wood and vanilla" failed to nurture her son but took great pains in distinguishing herself and her family from blacks like the Breedloves (Morrison 86). The encounter between Geraldine and Pecola is perhaps the most poignant example of intraracial oppression and her remark "[g]et out you nasty black bitch. Get out of my house" clearly sets her apart from the black community (92). Ironically, Morrison couples this distancing with Geraldine's image of God and conception of religion; however, her "big red-and-gold Bible on the dining room table" and "a color picture of Jesus Christ" does not reflect her religious nature, for in her positioning of European versus African, she isolates herself from her people to associate with her oppressor (89).

This deliberate association with one's oppressor is reversed in Cholly's conception of the Creator, for his alienation of God, who "was a nice old white man, with long white hair, flowing white beard, and little blue eyes that looked sad when people died and mean when they were bad," is juxtaposed with his fascination with the black devil (134). This identification, which reinforces racial stereotypes, illustrates a distinction between racial association and religious perversion; while Cholly aligns himself with the "strong, black devil…blotting out the sun," he connects the black man with evil (134). This connection illuminates Cholly's recognition of his African heritage—the fourth face of God—as well as his awareness of God's role of both deliverer of redemption and justice. With Pecola, however, no such acknowledgment can be made, for in her encounter with Geraldine, she views the flower bordered portrait of Jesus with

his "sad and unsurprised eyes" to be a reflection on her inherent lack of worth (92). There is no redemption for Pecola but merely a pretext that she is deserving of blame, instilled with the fear that she is "not loved by God" (128).

Pecola's fear of retribution from God stems from Pauline's need to bend her children toward respectability, toward fear. In doing so, Pauline distances herself from her children, for their intense discomfort in her presence reflects her inability to nurture and associate with her own. The ancestor in African theology, although traditionally viewed as a deceased member of the tribe, is "charged by God with the responsibility of ensuring the welfare of the people of his or her own tribe…The ancestors are believed to watch over their own folk…and is an attempt to affirm the culture of their own people" (Muzorewa 13). Pauline's detachment from her children and her inability to act as "the guardian of individuals and families" removes her from an African heritage (13).

Pauline's lack of concern for her own allows and perpetuates persecution from within; scholars such as Leester Thomas have discussed Pecola's exclusion from the nuclear family and society, but her rejection from inside the confines of four walls is most damaging. Just as there were "only veils" in place of concern, the evil committed against Pecola is disseminated onto madness. To relieve this internal oppression, Pecola turns to Soaphead Church, "a character who not only rejects his African heritage but who also relinquishes his identity as a human being in favor of the self-generated delusion that is in some sense a god" (Alexander 6). Pecola stumbles into the lair of this misanthrope but rather than sexually molesting her, as he does with other young girls, he offers the final assault to her psyche, driving her to the brink of madness. Soaphead's treatment of Pecola is marginal compared to his sexual perversion and overt disdain for all human life; to him, "the residue of human spirit smeared on inanimate objects was all he could withstand of humanity" (Morrison 165). His remark is powerful for it accurately works against any traditional African sentiment on human relations; central to the African theological worldview, the concept of humanity is "defined in the context of the community" (Muzorewa 17).

Evil promulgated against the individual or the community has serious ramifications for the cohesion of African culture because whatever happens to one happens to all, and with the

persistence of evil from outside "unknowns," peace is threatened. Muzorewa contends that among these unknowns, the African must have a sense of belonging, "serving one's own folk, and kinship;" thus, it is "not enough to be a human being…unless one shares a sense of community, one can easily turn out to be an enemy" (17). It is not arduous to find culprits in Morrison's novel without a sense of community: the black boys who heap insults on Pecola because of the color of her skin; the white store owner, who "with the taste of potatoes and beer in his mouth, his eyes honed on the doe-eyed Virgin Mary," cannot see Pecola "because for him there is nothing to see;" and the "high yellow dream child" who associates the African with ugly—"I *am* cute. And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!" (Morrison 48, 73, emphasis in original). Unsurprisingly, Morrison incorporates these characters into *The Bluest Eye* to demonstrate not only the effect of oppression but how a community can accelerate its destruction. Uprooted from African soil, the characters are transplanted into a society where black is ugly, where the African-American is merely the "Other," and where an attempt to placate white expectations proves disastrous. This forced assimilation into a foreign culture contributes to an environment of oppression, and with each damaged psyche, the image of the destabilized flora becomes more pervasive.

In the afterword of *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison notes the connection between a "minor destabilization in seasonal flora and the insignificant destruction of a black girl;" however, this thread is not merely woven through Pecola's experiences with internal and external victimization but is associated with nearly every major black character in the novel, occurring almost entirely from within a multidimensional context (214). Using the four tenets of African theology as a framework, I will demonstrate how this "minor destabilization" exists alongside racial, religious, and sexual perversion and inevitably accelerates the destruction of the characters.

Morrison begins with the infertility of marigolds, an image that is traced in connection with Pecola's infertility; while the failure of the marigolds to grow becomes synonymous with Pecola's inability to bear children, the metaphor of flora is not limited to the novel's protagonist. Pauline, the character Alexander attributes to failing to see the fourth face of God, creates a conception of the divine that is perverted by admiration of her oppressors, embodied in the "Stranger" who would grant her "redemption, salvation" and "a serious rebirth" (113). Although

Cholly assumes the role of the Stranger, Ivy illuminates his proposed presence in her singing. Appropriately, the name of this insignificant character represents Pauline's poisonous relationship with her husband and damaging adoption of western Christian values. It is not by accident that Morrison foreshadows Pauline's tumultuous life with the brief mention of a woman whose name signifies intense discomfort; like poison Ivy, Pauline's relationship with God, her family, and her community is infectiously uncomfortable.

Morrison connects Pauline with Cholly through his floral image: the watermelon. Cholly consumes the heart of the melon, broken by the "strong, black devil…blotting out the sun" while neglecting the seeds—seeds from the African that become littered on hostile ground. Pauline "seeds" Cholly but later rejects his seeds, which to her do not bear productive fruit (115). Sammy and Pecola are spoiled because of their blackness, their ugliness; they represent to Pauline a condition, that while inescapable, renders them unworthy of concern: "[m]ore and more she neglected her house, her children, her man—they were like the afterthoughts one has just before sleep, the early-morning and late-evening edges of her day, the dark edges that made life with the Fishers…more lovely" (127). Transferring nurturance from her own to the white family for whom she cares starkly portrays Pauline's desperate need to relieve herself of her ugliness by associating with the oppressor. This constant reminder to all the black women testifies to the strength of internal subjugation; Morrison illustrates this persistent tendency by reversing the significance of roots—from an African heritage to racial prejudice incapable of eradication: "Their [Mobile girls'] roots are deep, their stalks firm, and only the top blossom nods in the wind" (82). Geraldine and the other "pretty milk-brown" ladies keep alive internal victimization—a concurrent isolation where the oppressor negates a connection with a true identity and the "Other" becomes further marginalized and devalued on the basis of color (92).

Perhaps the most detested and complex character in the novel, Soaphead Church is not compelled to feign assimilation into white culture because of his mixed ancestry, yet he is excluded from dominant and oppressed cultures because he has deliberately severed himself from humanity. This "cinnamon-eyed West Indian with lightly brown skin" embodies both the "worst side of white religion" and a perverted conception of a traditional African one (167, Alexander 6). Recognizing the duality of God and the persistence of evil (the fourth face) does

not indicate adherence to either racial or religious roots. If Soaphead has any connection with Africa, it is through maliciously depriving young girls of their innocence, which renders them helpless to form an identity that is truly African and human: "[t]he buds. The buds on some of these saplings. They were mean, you know, mean and tender. Mean little buds resisting the touch, springing like rubber. But aggressive. Daring me to touch. Commanding me to touch" (Morrison 179). Soaphead's psyche and spirit escape destruction at the hands of religious and sexual perversion, but young black girls like Pecola who turn to him for assistance are not as fortunate.

"A little black girl who wanted to rise up out of the pit of blackness and see the world with blue eyes," Pecola turns to Soaphead in a last desperate attempt to gain acceptance in both the black and white communities that have so heartily persecuted her; however, in her futility to receive such positive attention and admiration, she descends into a world of madness where "it's much, much, much too late" for redemption (174, 206). "The horror at the heart of her yearning," the desire to ascribe to white standards of beauty, drives Pecola to an "insanity-induced" self-image, but she does not, as Alexander argues, willingly accept as her destiny the "destruction of her true being," nor does she lack "cultural rootedness" (204, Alexander 6). In fact, Pecola's strongest flora image suggests otherwise. Dandelions roots, which are difficult to extract, are "many, strong, and soon;" Pecola finds these "weeds" beautiful, and even with their supposed ugliness, she maintains for them a "dart of affection," for "owning" dandelions makes "her part of the *world*, and the world a part of her" (47, 47, 50, 48, emphasis mine). Pecola is not merely a constituent of society in Lorain, Ohio, but rather a being embedded within a larger cultural context—one that traces back to Africa. Her association with the dandelion, despite its rejection by society, remains the strongest link to a true African heritage and demonstrates a striking contrast from a black community who devalues the weed with the strongest adherence to the soil.

Unlike the other black characters in the novel that pervert traditional theology (Christian or African) to satisfy individual objectives, Pecola modestly relies on religion to escape from internal and external persecution and in doing so remains connected in spirit to her roots: She prays fervently to God (Pecola prays to God, not Jesus), nurtures the MacTeer girls' baby dolls,

feels angry at the victimization of Geraldine's black cat, and loves the whores who are ostracized by the rest of the community. One could argue that Pecola placates African sentiments in order to associate with a community of oppressors that have identified with the dominant culture; however, she does not desire blue eyes to substitute traditional values for those of the white community but rather seeks that will alleviate the intense persecution from within, for the black characters that assume conflicting roles of marginalized "Other" and oppressor have wronged their kinfolk to become like whites. Pecola is the victim—the atrocities committed against her by society permanently damage her psyche but provide the only available opportunity to escape violence. Even in this state, which "protected her from us [the community]," Pecola remains a living ancestor—"searching the garbage" for "the thing we [the community at large] assassinated"—and maintains an inherent connection with her African heritage (206, 206).

Alexander contends that is not Pecola but Claudia who "holds the promise for living an authentic existence…whose telling of the story is a sign in itself that she has come to recognize the value of rediscovering the past;" however, he fails to realize that although Claudia "understands that those who try to measure their world with black-and-white scales…are doomed to lose their grounding…in reality," she makes distinctions between those who are black and those who have associated with whites, including herself—while her world is not measured in ascribing to white standards of beauty, her indignation against Shirley Temple, white baby dolls, and the Maureen Peals of the world forces her to reject all that she is not. However, this rejection does not establish racial or cultural rootedness; rather, it incorporates Claudia within a black community that has actively allowed and perpetuated violence against its members. More importantly, Claudia cannot be exempt from contributing to Pecola's descent into madness, for although she tries to protect her from victimization, she does so within the context of creating a difference from herself and the marginalized "Other" (7, 7).

Embedded within race, class, and culture conflicts are the experiences of blacks who have been marginalized by white society and as the result of such debasement have turned against one another to individually rather than collectively abolish the damaging depiction of the "Other." Thus, the black characters are faced with the arduous task of being both the "Other" and the oppressor, dual and conflicting roles that allow victimization to occur from within in an

attempt to escape persecution from outside. These roles create an environment where "the insignificant destruction of a black girl" becomes almost commonplace as blacks present a blind eye and deaf ear to the plight of Pecola's desperate situation (Morrison 214). In making her scapegoat, the black community seeks to purge itself from the evil that lends to the classification of the entire community as different from the dominant white culture; however, this evil cannot be erased because in keeping secret Pecola's rape and subsequent infertility, the black community fails to combat the shadow and implicates itself as the primary culprit of her demise. Any black community that allows and perpetuates violence against its members is not connected to a true African heritage.

Thus, uprooted from African soil, black characters in *The Bluest Eye* are transplanted into a society where the "Other" is unacceptable, and as a result they deliberately substitute African, traditional values with western, Christian ideologies that are both foreign and a threat to the cohesion of the community. Sadly, this willing assimilation marks a perversion that removes the characters from their roots; Morrison explicitly couples this lack of racial and cultural rootedness with floral images that the absence of African culture and the gradual denigration of both characters and community. Interestingly, the character that becomes ostracized by her family and the rest of society because of her blackness maintains the strongest connection in spirit to her roots. Pecola's floral image of the dandelion signifies such a connection, one that firmly plants her in a heritage far removed from Lorain, Ohio, in 1941. Unlike other characters, Pecola does not distort or reconfigure African values to satisfy individual objectives; rather, she embodies an adherence to a theology that demands separation from black characters that have adopted and internalized foreign ideologies in order to placate white expectations and in doing so have victimized their kinfolk. Pecola does not challenge her oppressors but seeks redemption from a world to which she fails to belong. In the end, Pecola endures a madness that renders her impervious to further persecution and stands as a testament to a black community that has betrayed her but has provided the only option to continue on in spirit.

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