

Self and identity in the color purple



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In Afro-american texts, inkinesss are seen as fighting with the patriarchal universes they live in order to accomplish a sense of Self and Identity. The texts I have chosen illustrate the jeopardies of Western faith. Rape. Patriarchal Dominance and Colonial impressions of white domination ; an intend to demo how the supporters of Alice Walker's The Color Purple every bit good as Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye. header with or crumble due to these issues in their battle to happen their individualities. The hunt for self-identity and self-knowledge is non an easy undertaking. even more so when you are a black adult female and considered a mule and a piece of belongings. Supplying an in depth analysis of these texts. this essay attempts to exemplify how both of these Afro American authors depict and resolve their several protagonists' battles.

Religion is believed by many to function as a agency to accomplishing or happening self or individuality. However. in the Euro-influenced Christian faith particularly. straight after ' finding one's self' . one is called to deny one's ego in the name of a white ' God' . ' Humble yourself and project your loads to God' they say. for ' He will do all wrongs right' . Logically nevertheless. one must ask...what involvement does the white God (who is particularly portrayed in African-american Hagiographas such as The Color Purple and The Bluest Eye as a farther extension of Patriarchal values) have in black people? Moreso. if the Christian Bible is so to a great extent influenced by white adult male. what involvement does the God it portrays have in black adult females?

In The Color Purple. Celie's original intended audience is a white. male God who does non listen to her supplications. and her letters remain anon. . Celie

explains that she stopped composing to God because he gave her ‘ a lynched dada. a brainsick mamma. a lowdown Canis familiaris of a measure dad and a sister [she] likely won’t of all time see once more. ’ Celie distrusts a white male God because he does non listen to ‘ poor coloured adult females. ’ Shug encourages Celie to reject ‘ religious beliefs which reinforce male chauvinist and racialist domination’ and insists on ‘ the primacy of a religious life’ . If Celie looks for God in a white church or a white written Bible it is inevitable that she will meet a white God. therefore she must look at her immediate environment for counsel. Celie so accepts and employs Shug’s political orientation that ‘ God is inside you and inside everyone else. ’

In her rejection of the Euro-central God who doesn’t listen to her supplications. Celie liberates her ‘ Self’ and finds individuality – evident in her sign language of her letters which she now addresses to Nettie. For the first clip in Celie’s life. the color people (purple) are recognized by God and she is liberated with the belief that the coloring material purple/people is/are noticed as a portion in God’s olympian composing. and that this God is everything and everyplace. It is therefore possible to place Celie with the colour purple by recognizing that she has gone unnoticed and is eventually being noticed as she asserts her being. This existential philosopher epiphany becomes manifest when Celie writes. “ I’m pore. I’m black. I may be ugly and can’t cook. a voice say to everything hearing. But I’m here. ”

In *The Bluest Eye* nevertheless. the Europocentric images and influences of the Western God have a permanent negative consequence on many of the black characters. There is color people playing a portion in this God’s

composing. alternatively. focal point is on the coloring material blue – that his eyes are portrayed to be. This color suggests coldness and sightlessness towards people non sharing in His whiteness. Pecola Breedlove is the premier character that is influenced by these negative images of God. and the influence of the Western religion's ' values' shown in the fresh pushes her into an unfortunate type of deficiency of ' Self' . This comes approximately in this novel due to the interactions with white and pseudo-white characters who have subscribed to the idealised impressions of white high quality. The first case of this is Pecola's brush with Mr. Yacobowski – the tradesman. who fundamentally ignores her being because she is black. his attending alternatively focuses on a image of the Virgin Mary.

This leaves Pecola with the position that it is the white God itself ignoring her being through the symbolic Mr. Yacobowski. as he is said to be spiritual but ignores her very presence. This negative image of the Western God lends greatly to Pecola's ego hatred and her eventual devastation. If she is non even acknowledged by the white people in her community so she must hold no worth. She sees this as a state of affairs in which she can non thrive therefore get downing to detest herself and her colour. as. if these supposed ' representatives' or followings of this white God won't accept her. who is she to believe that He will?

This position is strengthened when Pecola visits the pseudo-white character Geraldine's house. whereby she is cursed by this adult female and chased from her ludicrous ' Dick and Jane' manner place. Home is where the ' heart' is. but all Pecola sees as she flees from this topographic point she admires is a " portrait of the [white] angelized Jesus looking down at her with sad and

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surprised eyes...” This white figure of Western faith is possibly “ unable to assist her” as she is non of his sort. therefore giving substance to Pecola’s belief that she has no deserving nor hope for credence by this idealized white universe and its ‘ God’ .

This Euro-influenced faith with its patriarchal God may therefore be found guilty of a dianoetic colza of the values of black people. and to a greater extent – black adult females. This is another critical facet in these illustrations of African-american literature. as colza is no alien to the black adult females in these texts – guilty of sabotaging their sense of ego as good taking to a loss of individuality. whether the colza is dianoetic. or existent. Bell Hooks holds that colza is portrayed as a positive force in The Color Purple because Celie ‘ accedes to the misdemeanor of her organic structure in order to protect her sister Nettie from the sexual progresss of their stepfather’ .

Squeak besides uses her organic structure to assist free Sofia from gaol. giving her organic structure in attempts to help Sofia’s fortunes although Sofia knocked her dentitions out. This colza in peculiar – of a black adult female by a white adult male is depicted. harmonizing to Hooks. as a positive force because ‘ even though it acts to reenforce sexist domination of females and racialist exploitation’ . it is besides ‘ a accelerator for positive change’ . Not merely does the act free Sofia ; it besides empowers Squeak. as. when Harpo says “ I love you. Squeak” (84) she stands up for her ain individuality by answering “ My name Mary Agnes” (84) .

In the instance of *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's colza by her male parent leads to her going "the town's whipping boy and places her in company with the books other castaways; the cocotte Miss Marie and the quack mysterious Elihue Whitcomb, dubbed 'Soaphead Church'". It is through the susurrations about Pecola and the spurning of her that the town 'justifies' the image of good and beautiful. It is because Pecola becomes pregnant with her father's kid that she no longer has the ability, if such of all time even bore a distant opportunity of being, to be beautiful in the eyes of society. The gestation has besides destroyed any opportunities of her of all time having her mother's love and blessing everlastingly, as she is now even dirtier than earlier in her community's eyes.

The colza by her male parent is the concluding grounds Pecola needs to wholly believe that she is an ugly, unlovable miss. While in most modern instances a male parent figure is one to whom small miss should be able to look to for counsel and blessing, Cholly is the exact antonym. He hurts Pecola in a physical manner that in one effort measures up to the old ages of hurtful jeer. He took off from her the one thing that was absolutely and wholly hers. After the colza, Pecola was ne'er even remotely the same: her visual aspect was met with extreme disgust. Adults looked off; kids, those of which who were non frightened by her, "laughed outright" (204). The harm done was huge and she spent her yearss, walking up and down her caput jolt to the round of a drummer so distant merely she could hear. Elbows set, custodies on shoulders, she flailed her weaponries like a bird in an ageless, monstrously ineffectual attempt to wing. Beating the air, a

winged but grounded bird purpose on the blue nothingness it could non make – could non even see – but which filled the vale of the head (204) .

In short. after the colza. Pecola went insane. Her ‘ discursive rape’ was delivered at the custodies of the society in which she lived. where her inkiness was met with disgust. This colza made her wish to be white – to possess bluish eyes. as this was the recognized quality of ‘ beauty’ in her society. the physical colza merely serves to farther push her wholly over the border. Pecola’s society is in bend ‘ raped’ by Colonialism and constructs of white domination. taking them to move with ‘ insane’ disgust towards their ain inkiness and to draw a bead on for their ain ‘ bluest eyes’ i. e. Geraldine and her house/way of life.

Martha J. Cutter. in her article Philomela Speaks: Alice Walker’s Revisioning of Rape Archetypes in The Color Purple. argues that Like Pecola Breedlove. who ends the fresh “ flail [ing] her weaponries like a bird in an ageless. monstrously ineffectual attempt to fly” (204) . Celie besides appears to hold been “ driven into semiotic prostration by the colza. ” She notes that The Color Purple besides uses bird imagination imagination to “ connect Celie with her mythic paradigm. Philomela every bit good as to revise the mythic prototext. ” Cutter is of the position that the ancient Greek narrative of Philomela has resonated in the imaginativeness of adult females authors for several thousand old ages ... grade [ing] the continuity of a powerful archetypical narrative explicitly linking colza (a violent lettering of the female organic structure) . hushing. and the complete erasure of feminine subjectiveness.

Cutter holds that in *The Color Purple*, Walker “ paradoxically [utilizations] ... birds ... [in the undermentioned scene] ... [as a] positive symbol to Celie of how nature persists in exposing its beauty despite the despoiling forms of humanity. ” The illustration Martha Cutter high spots is

where Celie tells Albert that she loves birds (223) . and Albert remarks. “ ” you usage to remind me of a bird. Way back when you foremost come to populate with me... . And the least small thing go on. you looked about to wing away” (223) .

Cutter concludes. “ Unlike the archetypical narration. so. Walker’s fresh utilizations bird ... imagination to propose Celie’s metabolism non from human to subhuman. but from victim to artist-heroine. ” Therefore the fresh differs from the myth every bit good as from Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. as it commences instead than terminals with the incident [s] of colza and that “ the colza becomes non an instrument of hushing. but the accelerator to Celie’s hunt for voice. ” By composing about her colza. Celie externalizes her experiences therefore get awaying devastation whereas Pecola internalizes (in the signifier of a duologue with an fanciful ‘ friend’) them and is therefore inadvertently destroyed. Thereby Walker “ revises the archetypical paradigm [which] depict [s] colza as an event that encapsulates adult females in patriarchal secret plans as the site of silence. absence. and madness” therefore giving her back her sense of bureau and voice.

Besides apparent in the texts is the subject of migration. whereby characters emigrate to the North from the South in order to get away. or better themselves – therefore farther happening or losing their sense of

individuality and ego. Harmonizing to Elena Shakhovtseva in her article « The Heart of Darkness» in a Multicolored World. “ Walker retells a mythic narrative of the motion from the South to the North as an ideal incarnation of freedom. and back to the South for rapprochement. ” Shakhovtseva argues that Celie’s eventual move to Memphis symbolically marks the black community’s 20th century migration to the North with the accent both on the economic release the North provides (Celie’s “ folkpants” concern) every bit good as the menace it presents to black cultural individuality (efforts to alter Celie’s idiom. etc.) .

Therefore. the return of Celie to the South through her successful concern and attainment of a place. Shakhovtseva notes. “ represents Walker’s statement for black renewal of a Southern fatherland. ”

Celie’s migration to the North represents both release and possible loss of individuality. This is seen when her employee. Darlene. makes an attempt to ‘ improve’ Celie’s idiom. to do a more ‘ refined’ (different – one time once more positions tainted by white domination) individual out of her. However. Celie is largely disinterested and maintains her Creole manner of address. proposing comfort in her sense of individuality. When she returns to the South. Celie accomplishes a ‘ wholeness’ of her physical and religious being. and reclaims the household place. farm and shop in Georgia. which she truly claims after her stepfather’s decease. In kernel. Celie migrates from oppressed ‘ slave’ to her hubby. to strong. independent. black adult female – land and store-owner nonetheless. Walker’s obvious inversion of race and gender.

Walker is accused by many of overthrowing realist constructs. her novel's ending... missing verisimilitude. It can be argued that she appears to hold been influenced by Shakespeare's love affairs. possessing a similar Utopian and slightly unrealistic vision. The antonym is seen in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. where when Pecola's parents – Cholly and Pauline. moved North everything changed. The colors went out of Pauline's life. She states " I missed my people. I weren't used to so much white folks...Northern colored common people was different excessively. "

Additionally. she continues by stating that their matrimony became " shredded with quarrels" as she developed a desire for new apparels which Cholly disapproved of. money going the " focus of all their treatments. hers for apparels. his for drinks" (118) . To do up for the disregard and her ain insecurities. Pauline sought comfort through films as she sat and watched the perfect " white" universe of Hollywood. Here she attempted to re-find her colorss on the " silver screen" (124) . However. the colors she does happen and hold a yearning for terminal up holding a negative consequence on her life and the lives of her household until it destroys them. particularly Pecola.

In decision. utilizing the two texts studied. with accent placed on their several supporters. this essay has attempted to exemplify the intervention of Self and Identity in African-American plants. demoing the similarities every bit good as profound differences between the two authors used to exemplify the jeopardies to. and responses to black ego and individuality – viz. that of the black adult female whose battle is most critical. Morrison holds strong to the African-american form of devastation of black female by Patriarchal society and the white domination ' values' it holds beloved. therefore

denying their ego and losing their individuality. Walker on the other hand, a small excessively fabulously, provides an inversion of these forms in the signifier of an about incredibly (Utopian) happy stoping for her black female supporter, who overcomes all the jeopardies she undergoes, happening her ' Self' and strong sense of individuality – coming out on top in a brutal, patriarchal society. The Epistolary signifier Walker uses provides an “ instruction” to her readers every bit good as to her supporter Celie, seen besides in the epigraph by Stevie Wonder provided

Show me how to make like you

Show me how to make it (1) .

Whereas Morrison utilizes the Eurocentric primer of a white atomic household that is burned into the heads of black kids, as she distorts and fragments it to exemplify the confusion white political orientation causes in the heads of inkinesss as it contrasts aggressively with their ain lives. Removing the punctuation, so using this primer to the narrative of inkinesss and viz. Pecola's lives, proves that the narrative is far from the truth and gibberish. In a sense, by rushing up the machinery of the Dick and Jane narrative to demo how it does non work, Walker proves that it degenerates into nonsense under any sort of examination. But in the descent into inanity, it besides parallels Pecola's descent into lunacy – a crisp contrast to the likewise Euro-influenced and patriarchal epistolary signifier used by Walker – a crisp contrast because, Walker's protagonist utilizes this... the lone signifier available for her, the voiceless, to get the better of the patriarchal subjugation and bit by bit happen her ' Self' .