

Internalization and
externalization of
color in the bluest eye
and the color purp...



Internalization and Externalization of Color

In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, Pauline experiences the beauty of life through her childhood 'down South,' extracting colors in which translate into her most fond memories. This internalization of color serves as a pivotal action, providing insight into Morrison's ideals of beauty and self-image. Steven Spielberg's film, *The Color Purple*, utilizes rather the externalization of color to highlight character development and major themes.

Although a stark contrast in technique is present, both works succeed in providing a clear fluctuation in character worth and image while ultimately overcoming the notion of prejudice. Morrison allows this sense of internalization to exist overtly. As Pauline describes purple berries, yellow lemonade, and "that streak of green them june bugs made on the trees the night we left down home," she continues on to state "all them colors was in me" (Morrison 34). Morrison continues to describe the accumulation of colors, detailing how Cholly releases in Pauline all the colors of life which were "sealed down in her soul" (Morrison 34). The description of their life in early marriage is vivid; true even of Pauline's sexual experiences with Cholly, suggesting a both orderly and beautiful life.

A move in location disrupts this process, as Pauline and Cholly eventually choose to reside in the state of Ohio; although, it is obvious that despite the geographical contrast, the 'colors' Pauline acquired 'down home' hardly persist to be accessible. The movement and separation of Celie and Nellie in *The Color Purple* mirrors this. In this case, because the colors are externalized rather than internalized, Celie loses all sense of their beauty

very quickly. She finds self-worth an image through validation of the outside world and those surrounding her. While both Pauline and Celie find themselves to be somewhat lost due to separation, there is a distinct difference in the avenues they choose to lead them back to identity. The alteration of Pauline's surroundings causes her to struggle; she fails to generate new sources of beauty and color after moving up North, although, it is important to note that rather than all color draining from Pauline's life, she rather longs for her old home, reminiscing on the environment that provided such a beautiful blend of stimulus: " I missed my people. I weren't used to so much white folks...Northern colored folk was different too" (Morrison 57). Furthermore, Pauline notes that Cholly only became " meaner and meaner and wanted to fight all of the time"(Morrison 62). This instability serves as a strong contribution to Pauline's increasing dissatisfaction and disillusionment; a neglect that results in compensation by watching the ' silver screen-' providing a new outlet in which Pauline internalizes color. The perfect ' white' world of Hollywood eventually creates an entirely new sense of longing, which carries an unbelievably negative impact.

A strong parallel exists between Celie and Pauline at this point in the development of both characters. While vivid color fills the beginning of Pauline's life, these colors fade and become less prominent as the plot progresses. Celie's beginnings are dark, accumulating color and light as the film unfolds. At the midpoint of each work, both Celie and Pauline are on the brink of major transformations, although in opposite directions. The birth of Pecola highlights that, while the colors have not completely disappeared within Pauline, they are not nearly as intense as they once were. As Willis

noted, “ Polly Breedlove lives in a form of schizophrenia, where her marginality is constantly confronted with a world of Hollywood movies, white sheets, and blonde children” (Morrison 76).

It is in the ‘ white’ home, that Pauline takes a new identity: Polly. She separates from her physical self, and enters into a new, neat and orderly world. This new perception challenges what she knows and feels concerning her family, characterized by disorder. The previous environment in which once brought a plethora of life and color is now a mere black and white. As Pauline ceases to search for these colors, Celie begins. It is through Pauline’s new outlet that Pecola obtains her desire for “ the bluest eyes;” yet it its Celie’s outlet that fuels a pride and acceptance of culture and self-identity. Both Spielberg and Morrison use colors as a catalyst of character development, serving as a foil to the meaning of the work as a whole. In both cases, the focus on specific colors plays into a much deeper meaning; the color in which one sees with his or her eye is only a reflection of what was not absorbed. This contrast of externalization and internalization ultimately stresses the importance of equality and self-worth.