

Pauline saw the beauty of life through the colors of her childhood down South. Her fondest memories were of purple berries, yellow lemonade, and "that streak of green them june bugs made on the trees the night we left down home. All them colors was in me"¹. Pauline and Cholly left the colors of the South when they moved North to Ohio to begin their life together. Through Cholly, Pauline hoped to find those colors of beauty that she left "down home".

For a while she did find her colors, her beauty, in the eyes of Cholly. He released in her all the colors of life which were sealed down in her soul. Everything about their early married life was described in vivid colors. This was true even of her sexual experiences with him. Everything was fine, ordered and beautiful in both Pauline and Cholly's life until they moved "up North".

Once they moved North everything changed. The colors went out of Pauline's life. "I missed my people. I weren't used to so much white folks...Northern colored folk was different too"². Cholly only became "meaner and meaner and wanted to fight all of the time"². He did not help the situation and contributed to his wife's dissatisfaction and disillusionment by not coming home. He found his satisfaction through other people, thus he neglected Pauline.

To make up for this neglect and her own insecurities, Pauline sought comfort through movies. Here she would sit and watch the perfect "white" world of Hollywood. Here she would find her colors on the "silver screen". She had a longing for these colors which was going to affect her life and the lives of her family until it destroys them, especially Pecola.

When Pecola was born, a major change occurred in Pauline's life. According to Susan Willis, "Adjectives become substantives, giving taste and color and making it possible for colors to trickle and flow and finally be internalized..."³. She now wished to live her life like this, through the colors in herself.

Right after Pecola was born Cholly again began to pay attention to Pauline again the way he used to when they lived down South. The only problem was that the colors had dimmed in Pauline. By working for a white family, she found her order and her colors again but not with the intensity that she once did. There she could order her life in a way she felt she could never achieve at home. As Willis points out, "Polly [Pauline] Breedlove lives in a form of schizophrenia, where her marginality is constantly confronted with a world of Hollywood movies, white sheets, and blonde children"⁴.

It is here in the "white" home, that Pauline takes the new identity, Polly. She separates from her physical self, and enters into a world of the neat ordered white person, where she forgets her family, characterized by disorder, and blackness [ugliness]. She sees the "white" world with her vivid colors, while she sees the "black" world, where she comes from, in plain ugly black and white. In her "black" world, she sees no possibility of order, neatness, or color. This is because she stopped looking for them. She found a substitute for her family; a substitute that will bring the colors back into her life.

Through this "schizophrenia", the real damage to her family lies within the "white" world. It is from this world, in which she finds her "colors", that Pecola obtains her desire for "the bluest eyes".

Pauline and Pecola are not the only ones who are preoccupied by the idea of whiteness. The character of Claudia is also aware of order and beauty as seen through the eyes of the "white" world. The children are bombarded with visions of blonde children with bright blue eyes. Shirley Temple and Jean Harlow in movies; the figure of a little blonde Mary Jane, on the candy they eat, and the blond baby dolls they receive as gifts, are all ways of reinforcing the stereotype of beauty and goodness that a black child could ever hope to achieve. This dilemma is offset, in Claudia's life, by the attention she receives from her loving parents, that have showed her to love herself. This is a love of support that is not present in Pecola's life.

This is not to say that the love and support that Claudia received from her family does not offset the feeling of hate and confusion that she feels towards the

white role models that she encounters everyday. She learns, as does Pecola, at a very young age, that the world looks differently on those with lighter skin. It is for this reason that Claudia destroys the white baby doll she receives. Through the destruction of the doll "...she is striking out against the horrifying dehumanization that acceptance of the model implies - both for the black who wears it as a mask and for the white who creates commodified images of the self"5.

The lie of beauty and perfection, in the "white" world, is reinforced each day, for the children, in the schoolroom. Claudia, with the help of supportive family, was able to understand that the fantasy world of "Dick and Jane", from the elementary reader, is a perfect world that does not exist and can never exist within their black community.

It is also quite clear that Pauline was not capable of understanding that perfection does not lie within the white world she so desperately wants to enter. She is also unaware that she is not a part of this world. In her mind the little white girl, whose family she works for, is her own perfect child. To make up for the dissatisfaction and disillusionment in her own life she "...gives their [her employer's] child a love she with holds from her own...6". This is felt deeply by both of her children but played out to a greater degree in the life of Pecola.

Unlike Claudia, Pecola does not have the family support to draw strength from and realize her own black identity. She gets no positive input from her parents because they are trying to realize their own true identities.

This lack of parental support causes Pecola to, "search painfully for self-esteem as a means of imposing order on the chaos of her world"7. Having no family base to lean on, she must retreat to her own fantasy. It is in this fantasy that she seeks her blue eyes. It is with these eyes that she believes she will become beautiful

and will be accepted by society. It is with these same blue eyes that she hopes to gain the attention and love of her mother which is not present in her life now. "...for Pecola to feel acceptable, she must insure herself by possessing not only blue eyes but the bluest eyes created"8.

It is not fair to say that Pecola was not loved by her father, for he did love her in his own strange and twisted way. He was not able to show love for anyone because of his pent up anger towards white society. The times did not allow a black man to vent anger in the direction of the white community so he took his anger and frustration out on his family.

One of the major acts of his frustration manifests itself in the burning of the family home. It is through the colors of the fire that Cholly is able to release some, but not all, of his anger towards the white mans world. Another way that Cholly expresses his anger but, also his love, for Pecola is by his rape of her in the kitchen. It is here that the colors of his early marriage to Polly, and the happiness he felt, again enter his life. The same colors of happiness that Polly felt during their early marriage, Cholly, in his drunken state, again felt. Only it was not with his young wife that he "saw" the colors of happiness, but with his young daughter.

It is also through the rape that the world of Pecola and the whole Breedlove family turns black. Through his actions, his way of showing his daughter love, Pecola becomes, "the town's scapegoat and places her in company with the books other outcasts; the prostitute Miss Marie and the quack mystic Elihue Whitcomb, dubbed "Soaphead Church"9. It is through the whispers about Pecola and the shunning of her that the town justifies the image of good and beautiful. It is because Pecola becomes pregnant with her father's child that she no longer has the ability, if it ever existed, to be beautiful in the eyes of society. The pregnancy has also destroyed her chances of receiving her mothers love and approval forever because she is dirty in everyones eyes.

