Contributions in Black Studies
A Journal of African and Afro-American Studies

Volume 9 *Special Double Issue: African American Double Consciousness* | Article 2

1-1-1992

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Recommended Citation
Estes-Hicks, Onita (1992) "Cross-Cultural Explorations of Du Boisian Double-Consciousness: Jean Rhys and Jean Toomer," *Contributions in Black Studies*: Vol. 9, Article 2.
Available at: http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cibs/vol9/iss1/2

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Onita Estes-Hicks

CROSS-CULTURAL EXPLORATIONS OF DU BOISIAN DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS: JEAN RHYS AND JEAN TOOMER

W. E. B. DU BOIS' FAMOUS reflections on the "peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others," has almost universally been considered applicable to a plight peculiar to the souls of black people. (Du Bois, 1903) Initially constructed in the 1880's when psychology was yet in its infancy in America, this legendary contribution of Du Bois has become known to most readers by an essay appearing in the classic *The Souls of Black Folk* published in 1903. Du Bois' description of double-consciousness implied that such duality of vision was constant ("always looking at oneself") and shaped by the imperatives of color, a black self forever imprisoned in the negative projections of the white other. Often quoted, but rarely mediated, the passage discussing double-consciousness contains multiple concepts, expressed in a lyricism whose poetic language and elegiac tone must be carefully deconstructed in order to penetrate the multi-layered nature of Du Bois' complex vision:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 3)

Double-consciousness as discussed here by Du Bois in fact refers to different forms or moments of consciousness. That is, the celebrated passage from the first essay of *The Souls of Black Folk*, significantly entitled "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," itself contains the very duality it expresses. This often-quoted formulation on double-consciousness captures, on one hand, the phenomenon of alienated consciousness, in which the self, in this case a black subject, perceives itself only through the lens of the other, here

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specifically, a white perspective. In this interpretation, angst and anxiety mark the black psyche in its experience of deprivation and an under-developed personality. On the other hand, double-consciousness refers to the African-Americans' awareness of and responses to that dual status captured in the group's hyphenated name which characterizes membership in two cultures, "an American, a Negro, two warring souls in one dark body." This rendering of double-consciousness implies a genuine two-ness of being or the consciousness of "two warring souls in one dark body," expressing the existence of self as self and self as seen by the other. Both versions of double-consciousness are held to be tragic; the first, because it blocks self-knowledge and self-identity, the second because it additionally results in "the contradiction of double aims" (p. 4) with an accompanying waste of energy and confusion of goals.

As a permanent state of being, alienated consciousness is indeed as tragic as Du Bois'elegiac tone bemoans it to be. This lack of true self-awareness and self-knowledge is reminiscent of inhabitating a world as shadowy as Plato's cave, where things, in this case the projections imposed by a hostile white world, stand between the world and the self. It was this form of refracted, alienated being that Richard Wright pinpointed in his creation of Bigger Thomas, who suffers from this deprivation of self, this understanding by Wright captured also in his haunting poem, "Between the World and Me." Characterized by reaction rather than action, experiencing the world as object rather than subject, victims of alienated consciousness, of being for others, however, are not, as unmediated readings of Du Bois suggest, unrelentingly at prey to that introjection of "the amused contempt and pity" of the white environment. For even the classic case of alienated consciousness as seen in Bigger Thomas yielded Wright's victim possibilities of freedom and choice outside the control of the other, an insight which prompted Baldwin's famous denunciation of *Native Son*. Indeed, reconsidering Du Bois with the aid of Sartre's contributions to the psychology of consciousness suggests that possession by the other to which Du Bois alludes in the first form of double-consciousness is part of the journey of self discovery, or of being for self. (Sartre, 1956) In this mediated version of Du Bois, even the most pernicious form of alienated/ double consciousness is not perennially and eternally tragic, but can pinpoint a catalytic moment in that movement from consciousness to self-consciousness.

Just as a considered exploration of the first form or alienated mode of consciousness discussed by Du Bois promises the possibility of reprieve and lessens the tragic vision of the concept, a thoughtful examination of the second form of double consciousness—twoness of being—unravels creative and redeeming possibilities which Du Bois himself clearly understood. Dual consciousness, or awareness of self as "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts" is itself, as Du Bois later clarified, not a fixed frame, but a fluid phenomenon, marked by that drive toward self-consciousness, self-knowledge and self-possession which engenders *all* spiritual strivings. Pointing to the motivating force contained in this form of consciousness, Du Bois himself described this duality of being as rife with that tension and energy which propel its possessor to seek, in Du Bois' words, "to attain self-conscious[ness]... to merge his double self into a better and truer self..." Calling into being heroic abilities, this struggle is illuminated by the light of that second

sight which Du Bois characterized as a special gift—"*gifted* with second sight" (emphasis mine)—empowering its possessors with special abilities. Following the frequently quoted passage from "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," the title of the essay itself indicating that energy contained in strife and struggle, the subsequent paragraph reveals the potential high moments of self-discovery in the struggle of the "two warring ideals": "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, —this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self." (Du Bois, 1903:4)

Later in this fascinating essay, Du Bois makes note of that "leisure for reflection and self-examination," which begins the move to "dawning self-consciousness, self-realization, self-respect." (p. 8) Highlighting that precious moment which marked the dawning of African-American consciousness, Du Bois yoked that faint vision of self with a distant sense of mission, establishing the pre-conditions of the journey toward self-consciousness: "In those sombre forests of his striving his own soul rose before him, and he saw himself, —darkly as through a veil; and yet he saw in himself some faint realization of his power, of his mission." (p. 8)

That mission of struggling for genuine self-consciousness is the universal drive for self-knowledge which marks *all* spiritual striving, to "rend the veil" and to move out, not only from the shadows cast by the veil of color, but from all shadows that stand between the self and the realization of authentic being. Culled from Du Bois'own rich and enlightening double identity with his African-American roots, and his New England, Harvard, and Heidelberg experiences, double consciousness is another manifestation of the self vs. society struggle. Moreover, the concept has cross-cultural applications which suggest that marginality as well as melanin shapes one's experiences of the racialized self. As illustrated by reference to other passages in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," Du Bois well understood that as a form of consciousness, double-consciousness, by its very nature, is situational and not static, its movement quickened and propelled by the very forces that bring consciousness into being.

Two modern masters of the theme of consciousness—Jean Rhys and Jean Toomer—provide rich literary materials for a cross-cultural exploration of Du Boisian double consciousness, offering intriguing literary insights into the experience of racial double-consciousness by both black and white characters. In *Wide Sargasso Sea,* Rhys, a white woman novelist reared a numerical minority in the Black Caribbean, shows the "peculiar sensation" experienced by a white character, Antoinette Cosway, who sees herself "crossways" through the eyes of the black majority and later through the cold gaze of her English husband. (Rhys, 1966) Set primarily in slave-ridden Jamaica shortly following the emancipation of slaves and focusing on a white family declassed as a result of the loss of its slave-based wealth, the story illuminates the youthful central character's introjection of the blacks'negative perceptions of herself as a declassed poor white, a "white cockroach," who begins to dislike her whiteness, envying the blacks. While Rhys' handling of character illustrates that marginality as well as melanin lies at the root of the racial double consciousness experienced by Antoinette Cosway, the African-American experimental writer, Jean Toomer, shows that the "peculiar sensation" dreaded by Du

Bois is temporal and educative, a stage in the development of the spiritual liberation of his young African-American student, Paul. In "Bona and Paul," from the masterful, multifaceted *Cane*, Toomer reveals the bracing self-knowledge and self-acceptance which come to Paul as a result of his encounter with the "amused contempt and pity" of the white world, which, when confronted and exorcised with Hegelian negation, yield Paul genuine identity. (Toomer, 1923)

The striking similarities between Toomer's short story and Du Bois' essay can be traced to the influence of the New Testament in each work. Set in Chicago between 1918-21, Toomer's "Bona and Paul" establishes its concern with questions of shadow, self, seeing and seeking in the selection of its main character's name, which takes readers back to the New Testament of Paul and his preoccupation with the soul's ultimate achievement of seeing "face to face," rather than "through a glass darkly." This language from Paul additionally influenced Du Bois who alluded to this same famous passage from Paul—"darkly as through a veil"—and to other passages in the New Testament with its groundings in the search for a new consciousness which Christianity brought to the dispossessed of the ancient world. Toomer's concentration on the thematics of self-discovery on and the lifting of the veils that obscure self-identity, are additionally adumbrated in the symbolic structure of this profound work, which is permeated with images of shadows, shades, and other symbols of self-concealment.

From the South with its historical connection to slavery and the shadows of dispossession which mark the African-American's travail in America, Paul, of "Bona and Paul," has come to Chicago to attend a white physical education college. In this pre-integration world of educational discrimination, the light-skinned Paul has gained entry to this school and made life in this all-white environment more bearable by shrouding his racial identity in mystery, a historical reality of educational life, which Gunnar Myrdal has noted marked educational careers of many like-skinned African-Americans. (Myrdal, 1944)

A multiplicity of margins marks Paul's educational mission. Geographically isolated from his homeland in the South, racially marginalized by being African-American in a white school, where his racial identity is ambiguous, Paul, additionally, is a poet in a jock environment, thrown back on himself by his talent and temperamental difference from the other "phys ed" students in the school. Constrained by these complex psychological factors, Paul initially appears passive and ambiguous, a shadow person, virtually managed by his white roommate, Art, who, unburdened by the psychological strains which attend Paul's pursuit of an education, has time to live the madcap life of a traditional college student and to run Paul's life as well. A ball of energy and confidence, Art manages Paul's affairs and arranges Paul's dates: "Say, Paul, I've got a date for you. Come on. Shake a leg will you?" (Toomer, 1923:72). He also takes care of minor, but revelatory matters: "Here's your hat. Want a smoke? Paul! Here. I've got a match." (p. 72) Art orders dinner for the two of them: "Bring me some soup with a lot of crackers, understand? And then a roast-beef dinner. Same for you, eh, Paul?"

Paul's "red-brown face" intrigues the other students, who are curious about his ambiguous racial identity. This ambiguity made him the object of gossip and a focus of

speculation, factors which further debilitate him. Attractive to women, Paul becomes the target of a white student from the South, Bona, who initiates a flirtation with him as the two of them work out in the school's gymnasium. To Bona, Paul, the one student who "is out of step" (p. 70) in the drill exercise, is "a harvest moon" (p. 70) and an autumn leaf (p. 70). In the next breath Bona completes this southern syllogism: "He is a nigger" (p. 70). Moved alternately by desire and disdain, by bravado and fear, she corners Paul on the basketball court and "lunges into his body and tries to beat his arms" (p. 71), both pulling him near her and fighting him off in this initial complex gesture that is expressive of the duality of her affections for Paul.

Herself from the South, Bona is curious about Paul's difference; yet attracted to the sameness of their Southern background, which bonds them in the coldness of Chicago. In the relative freedom of Chicago, and with the same aggressiveness shown in Art's handling of Paul, Bona gets Art to arrange a date with Paul, an evening of music and dance at the Crimson Gardens, a Chicago nightclub. Attended by a variety of Chicago types, the Crimsom Gardens is packed with people who stare at Paul in attempts to discover his place in the group of white students. Through the unblemished gaze of the audience, Paul finds otherness fixed upon him. Toomer brilliantly uses the garish Crimson Gardens as a site for a second birth for the elusive Paul, granting him an opportunity to come out of the shadow into the light, his quest for self-knowledge and new freedom here as meaningful as that undertaken by Adam and Eve in the original Garden of Paradise.

Toomer's description of Paul's reception at the Crimson Gardens and Paul's psychological defenses marvelously capture the "othering" world of stares and gestures which have established Paul's double-consciousness. His awareness of his twoness registers when he enters the nightclub and half-sees himself through the eyes of others:

> Crimson Gardens. Hurrah! So one feels. People. . . University of Chicago students, members of the stock exchange, a large Negro in crimson uniform who guards the door. . . had watched them enter. Had watched them enter. Had leaned towards each other over ash-smeared tablecloths and highballs and whispered: What is he, a Spaniard, an Indian, an Italian, a Mexican, a Hindu, or a Japanese? (p. 74)

Even Art, who genuinely cares for Paul, behaves and thinks in patterns that send messages to Paul that he also regards him as the other:

> What in hell's getting into Paul of late, anyway? Christ, but he's getting moony. It's his blood. Dark blood: moony. Doesn't get anywhere unless you boost it. You've got to keep it going . . . or it'll go to sleep on you. Dark blood; nigger? (p. 72)

In defense, Paul, who has already constructed buffers that also blind him to his own reality, manufactures a counter-racial mythology about Art, whom he regards as a friend:

> He loves Art. But is it not queer, this pale purple facsimile of a red-blooded Norwegian friend of his? Perhaps for some reason, white skins are not supposed to live at night. Surely, enough nights would transform them fantastically, or kill them. And their red passion? Night paled that too, and made it moony. Moony. That's what Art thought of him. (p. 73)

Similarly, Paul's thoughts of Bona reflect his own defenses: ". . . Paul looks down on Bona. No doubt of it: her face is pale. She is talking. Her words have no feel to them." (p. 74)

Inhabitants of the Crimson Garden target Paul with that de-personalizing "look" which Sartre explores as the vicious vehicle which drives a self into the position of the other. However, this time Paul is moved to Hegelian heights to confront "the look" and negate it. Pushed up against himself by the stares of the "owl-eyed hyenas" (p. 75) he generates acceptance of himself, moving from self-denial to self-acceptance, based on his willingness to use "the look" as creative material for rejecting the rejection of himself and claiming his own identity. Ceasing to be for others and making a self of the rejected self, Paul has a new sense of self-acceptance and self-awareness:

> A strange thing happened to Paul. Suddenly he knew that he was apart from the people around him. Apart from the pain which they had unconsciously caused. Suddenly he knew that people saw, not attractiveness in his dark skin, but difference. *Their stares, giving him to himself, filled something long empty within him, and were like green blades sprouting in his consciousness. There was fullness, and strength and peace about it all. He saw himself, cloudy, but real. He saw the faces of the people at the tables round him.* (p. 75; emphasis mine)

Seeing and accepting himself, Paul simultaneously begins to see beyond the shadow cast by others, to see not only himself but also the external world, rather than projecting his fears and myths against it to protect himself. This primal perception is marked by that pleasure attending the discovery of reality: "White lights, or as now, the pink lights of the Crimson Gardens gave a glow and immediacy to white faces. The pleasure of it, equal to that of love or dream, of seeing this." (p. 75) Paul's liberation brings his companions to him in a new perspective. Looking at the white students, he grants them an autonomous and independent existence apart from his needs and fears, lets them be who they are, as he now accepts himself for what he is. The world changes for Paul and he risks testing his ability to see "face to face": "Art and Bona and Helen? He'd look. They were wonderfully flushed and beautiful. Not for himself; because they were." (p. 75)

Paul's education and knowledge come to him, while his friends, however, remain, so to speak, in pre-Crimson Garden consciousness. Paul attempts to move these relations to a higher key, to match what he now knows with what he now does. However, Bona yet wants merely to seduce Paul for all the wrong reasons. He, in contrast, braves to know Bona in other terms, giving himself the privilege of establishing friendships on his own terms, discarding his former passivity:

> Queer words, aren't these, for a man who wears blue pants on a gym floor in the daytime. Well, never matter. You matter. I'd like to *know* you whom I look at. *Know*, not love. Not that knowing is a greater pleasure; but that I have just found the joy of it. (p. 7; emphasis mine)

Paul's ruminations on knowing reflect his move from fear to freedom, from ignorance of self and others to celebrating the fact that he had "just found the joy of it [knowing]" both himself and others. This knowledge leads him to a reconciliation of racial double-consciousness on the understanding that beauty and being are properties of both the black and the white worlds. Choosing to defend his new knowledge of the cross-cultural nature of beauty and being, Paul risks losing Bona, with whom he has left the Crimsom Gardens, when he returns to confront the doorman with the truths of this new double consciousness. Moving from consciousness of *two*ness to an awareness of *too*ness, Paul, instead of seeing tension between the two, now poetically sees that "white faces are petals of roses" and that "dark faces are petals of dusk." (p. 78)

Toomer's resolution of double consciousness in "Bona and Paul" roots both forms of being in nature and attributes beauty in difference to each. Declaring that in their flushed red condition, white faces "are petals of roses" and that in their dusky blackness "dark faces are petals of dusk," Toomer decries any choice which would select red roses over the evening's dusk: each *is* part of nature and shares that bond of being and necessity that lives in the natural world.

Like Toomer in "Bona and Paul," in *Wide Sargasso Sea* Jean Rhys establishes her themes of self-knowledge beyond an alienated consciousness in the choice of her main character's name. Based on Rhys' identification with the alienated Bertha Mason, "the mad woman in the attic" of Charlotte Bronte's classic 19th century novel, *Jane Eyre*, Rhys revises Bronte's book both to restore Bertha her rightful name and to render her consciousness. Née Antoinette Cosway, a white Creole from the Caribbean, this main character became Bertha upon her ill-fated marriage to Rochester, a penurious younger son, who married Antoinette to gain the fortune which the inheritance laws of England denied him.

Set in England, in Jamaica, and in one of the Windward Islands in the 1830s, shortly after the Emancipation of slaves changed the fortunes of the slaveocracy, this multifaceted novel traces the de-personalization of the vulnerable Antoinette. Charting her separation from the Caribbean which nurtured her, it follows her removal to England as Rochester's first wife where she disintegrates under the control of her uncaring husband. Locked away in Rochester's attic as a deranged and dangerous woman, in both Bronte and Rhys, Antoinette/Bertha burns down the manor, killing herself in this last act of defiance against that subjugation and dehumanization which deprived her of herself.

Like Toomer's Paul, Rhys' Antoinette is made vulnerable to the other by the multiple margins on which she lives. Reared in the Black Caribbean, where she and her family are in marked numerical minority, Antoinette additionally has inherited all of the moral and ethical conundrums of the unbalanced plantation system. Both her father and uncle, in the fashion of many slaveowners, had children by native women. This knowledge of her blood relations to the black population poses a challenge to Antoinette's

racial identity, a highly significant fact virtually unrecognized in feminist critiques of Antoinette's search for identity, such search evidenced by Antoinette's habit of constantly looking at herself in a mirror. Following the loss of the family's fortune, Antoinette's mother retains a few faithful unremunerated slaves to help maintain the crumbling home and her vain identity as lady of the manor, who "still rode about every morning not caring that the black people stood about in groups to jeer at her, especially after her riding clothes grew shabby." (Rhys, 1966:18) A beautiful and dependent woman who was much younger than her deceased husband, Mrs. Cosway yet attempts to cavort as a plantation lady, ironically needing her former slaves' free labor and false obeisance to help her retain her sense of superiority over them.

This attempt to continue the social symbolic behavior of the slaveowners turns the blacks against the Cosways, who come to be known as "white cockroaches" (p. 23) by the natives, their knowledge of the family's poverty and pretense vented in open contempt and in bitter language which cut the young Antoinette to the quick. Internalizing the disdain of the blacks who outnumber her and who know of her blood relations to members of the black population, Antoinette falls prey to the sense of herself as an outsider, an other. She begins to resent her whiteness, longing to be like the black people around her, especially her close friend, Tia, with whom she shares the culture of the Black Caribbean, which Antoinette additionally imbibes from the servants in the Cosway household, spending "most of my time in the kitchen" (p. 20) with them.

Antoinette's experience of racialized double-consciousness is rooted both in her sense of herself as a person who shares the blood and culture of the Black Caribbean, and as a person on the margin overwhelmed by the projections of the majority. Reading the story from the perspective of the double-consciousness theme not only helps us understand the cross-cultural applicability of Du Bois' notion of double-consciousness as we follow the imposition of double-consciousness on a white woman, but additionally the framework of double-consciousness opens up new-dimensions in the novel itself.

The mother's fear that Antoinette will become too much like Tia and the other local blacks drives Mrs. Cosway to find a second husband to restore the family to its pre-emancipation style of life, saving them from being "white niggers." (p. 132) Indeed, Rhys centers the exact moment of Mrs. Cosway's determination to seek a second husband in the mother's fear that Tia's shadow has too closely touched Antoinette, who adores the impoverished but empowered Tia, identifying with Tia's culture: "I met her nearly every morning at the turn of the road to the river . . . We boiled green bananas in an old iron pot and ate them with our fingers out of a calabash." (p. 23) Losing her dress to Tia in a contest, Antoinette returns home wearing the poor but lively Tia's tattered dress. This appearance becomes a moment of horrific double-consciousness to the mother, who then decides she must break Antoinette's relationship with Tia and restore Antoinette to her putative racial/social superiority. Through a calculated marriage to Mr. Mason, a newcomer from England who has contempt for the blacks, the new Mrs. Mason has her family's social position reconstructed, which entails Antoinette breaking her identity with Tia. Additionally, Antoinette, who had once recognized her "coloured relatives," "my cousin Sandi," begins to break with them because "Mr. Mason's lectures had made me shy about my coloured relatives."(p. 51)

Fracturing her Caribbean-based consciousness, Antoinette undertakes an imitation of life, distancing herself from the blacks, who assist the distancing by rebelling against the superiority of the new Mr. Mason, burning down the family's refurbished English-style home. Rhys records Antoinette's lost of her Caribbean consciousness on the night of the blacks' attack, when Antoinette and her black double, Tia, are forced to take opposing positions, fragmenting their friendship and Antoinette's identification with the population. In the fires of the insurrection, Antoinette spots Tia "not so far off":

> I saw Tia and her mother and I ran to her, for she was all that was left of my life as it had been. We had eaten the same food, slept side by side, bathed in the same river. As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her. Not to leave Coulibri. Not go to. Not. (p. 46)

However, the political implications of the family's new attitude toward the blacks split the two friends and fragment Antoinette's consciousness:

> When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on her. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass. (p. 46)

Having lost the consciousness of herself as part of the white and black Caribbean world around her, Antoinette falls victim to a new form of consciousness, taking on the personality of an English girl, the transformation that eventually results in her marriage to the cold, money-seeking Rochester and leads to her ultimate undoing. Celebrating this shift in consciousness, Antoinette conspires in her own fate, her eagerness to shed her Caribbean identity to become an English woman leading to her destruction: "We ate English food now, beef and mutton, pies and puddings. I was glad to be like an English girl . . . " (p. 35) Under the tutelage of Mr. Mason, Antoinette finds new cultural models for herself, participating in her own othering by the Englishman:

> So I looked away from her at my favorite picture, "The Miller's Daughter," a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders. Then I looked across the white tablecloth and the vase of yellow roses at Mr. Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. (p. 36)

Set up by by her English stepfather, Mr. Mason, who bestows a handsome dowry on her, Antoinette falls prey to Rochester, overwhelmed by his Englishness and by her loss of identity as a Caribbean woman. Remnants of this identity return to give her some sense of the danger which Rochester represents, sending her warnings in telling dreams whose language she in her alienated state can not decipher. Yet it is this complex Caribbean identity which the one-dimensional Rochester hates, Antoinette's resemblances to the blacks contributing to his rejection of her. Having married Antoinette, whom he is now beginning to drive insane by denying her the melodious name of

Antoinette and re-naming her Bertha, Rochester reflects on the multiplicity of otherness he hates in Antoinette and in the natives around her to whom, he recognizes, she belongs:

> I was tired of these people. I disliked their laughter and their tears, their flattery and envy, conceit and deceit and I hated the place. I hated the mountains and the hills, the rivers and the rain. I hated the sunsets of whatever colour, I hated its beauty and its magic and the secret I would never know. I hated its indifference and the cruelty which was part of its loveliness. Above all I hated her. For she belonged to the magic and the loveliness. (p. 173)

Finally cut off from the protective Christophine, the remaining servant who would save her, and who advises her to "have spunks and do battle for yourself" (p. 116) and fight Rochester's attacks on her personality, Antoinette becomes totally dependent upon Rochester, as he begins his calculating crusade to turn his wife into a "red-eyed wild-haired stranger" (p. 149), who becomes a stranger even to herself. Antoinette recognizes his strategic methods of undoing her, pitifully protesting the loss of her name and the identity it signifies: "Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into something else . . ." (p. 148)

Rhys carefully establishes the connections between Antoinette/Bertha's enslavement by Rochester and the enslavement of the blacks in the island by using the language of imperialism and its imposition of the consciousness of the other. Step by step by step, readers see the veils of otherness descend on Antoinette, who when taken to England where she becomes the famous "mad woman in the attic" is described as wearing a veil, a Du Boisian evocation of self-separation and imprisonment by the other. Recalling her initial entry into Rochester's English manor where she became consigned to the attic as a dangerous other, Antoinette/Bertha remembers: "At last I was in hall where a lamp was burning. I remember that when I came. A lamp and the dark staircase *and the veil over my face*." (p. 188; emphasis mine.)

In England, veils and shadows continue to shroud Antoinette's vision of herself and to block her identity. as she, locked away in Rochester's attic, hears the merriments of social life in the very mansion her fortunes helped Rochester purchase. Her final bout with the shadows that have possessed and dispossessed her comes when she experiences a revisitation of her Caribbean consciousness, which arrives to make her realize that defiant death would be more preferable than life in the darkness of Rochester's attic. Seeking the fire and color of her Caribbean past, Antoinette gains assistance from Tia, her black double, who gives her the energy and courage to rebel. Glimpsing her former identity, she brings together the mutual oppression of the black and white Caribbean worlds:

> I sat there quietly. I don't know how long I sat. Then I turned around and saw the sky. It was red and all my life was in it. . . . I saw my doll's house and the books and the picture of the Miller's Daughter. . . . But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? . . . I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke. (p. 190)

Led by Tia, Antoinette comes out from under Rochester's shadow. Leaving the attic of her captivity, making her way "along the dark passage," (p. 190) she muses, "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do." (p. 190) Choosing defiance and death, she finds a candle and burns down the mansion of her madness, destroying herself in the destructive flames. Uniting the destiny of Antoinette/Bertha with the destiny of the Caribbean blacks who had rebelled against Antoinette's family, Rhys ends Antoinette's story on an image which evokes the burning of the family home in the Caribbean, a return to and canceling of that fatal break in Antoinette's consciousness as a Caribbean woman.

While Toomer had found a tentative harmony in bridging double consciousness. Rhys, on a more tragic note, resolves that the forces of marginality were too great for Antoinette to overcome except in heroic death. Opportunities for resolving double consciousness by accepting their place in the post-Emancipation Caribbean world were presented to Antoinette's mother by her faithful servant, Godfrey, who warned Mrs. Cosway against continuing her search for a pre-Emanicipation style of life based on privilege. "When the old time go. let it go," (p. 18) the black Godfrey had advised. "No use to grab at it. The Lord make no distinction between black and white, black and white the same for Him. Rest yourself in peace for the righteous are not forsaken." (p. 18)

Grabbing at a return to the past which the arrival of the imperial Mason, a prototype of Rochester, made possible, Mrs. Cosway unwittingly chose a deadly duality, identifying with a dangerous other, imprisoning herself and her daughter in madness and death.

Du Boisian double-consciousness in Rhys and Toomer illustrates the cross-cultural applicability of the concept. Additionally, analysis of the works suggests "free moments" available when characters can experience significant transformations, by negating the control of the other and risking a move into the forum of freedom. Comparing and contrasting the choices presented and chosen by Paul in Toomer's "Bona and Paul," and by Antoinette in Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, evoke the wisdom of Hamlet's ruminations: "Conscience [Consciousness] doth make cowards [or champions] of us all."

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