

Hughes and blues: double consciousness assignment

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A small yet significant example in *The Big Sea* takes place after Hughes becomes a seaman on a merchant ship at the age of twenty-one and takes his trip to Africa. As the ship arrives along the coast, Hughes writes that the regular crew acquires a 'supplemental' crew of Africans, as the current crew he was with "weren't supposed to be able to stand the sun" (Hughes 320). Hughes states this simplistically, as though that's the only angle to the regular crews' reasoning.

The sentence immediately following this oversimplified statement reads, "Then I had an African boy to do my washing, my cleaning, and almost all my work-as did everybody on board" (Hughes 320). Considering Hughes just used the entire previous paragraph to describe his duties as seaman, it becomes obvious to the reader that Hughes is using the African boy much in the way a white American would employ a minority to tend their house, do their yard- or fieldwork, cook and clean, taking advantage of the boy's need for money.

Hughes then justifies using the African child as a sort of housekeeper by saying everyone else is doing it, and, "The Africans stood both work and sun without difficulty, it seems" (Hughes 320), and with those two lines, Hughes pretty much restates two of the original arguments for slavery. In Rampart's *The Life of Langston Hughes*, Hughes is occasionally depicted as dealing with the internal struggle of double consciousness, such as after the publication of his book of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*.

A collection of poems that, as Hughes describes first-handedly as, "a better book than my first, because it was more impersonal, more about other

people than myself" (Hughes 394). He considered the collection to be an honest glimpse into the world of African-American issues, and white America applauded the book. However, his black critics denounced it as garbage, and proclaimed Hughes to be (Ramped 140) and the ; poet Loretta of Harlem" (Hughes 396).

Hughes' relationship with Charlotte Mason, or Godmother as she liked to be called, is spotted with a few examples of double consciousness. Meeting Mason through Lain Locke, Hughes was immediately taken under her wing in her effort to "elevate African culture to its rightful place of honor" (Ramped 147), and enlisted to create literary works of art. Seduced by the opportunity to work on his poetry and various writings without the uncertainty of poverty, Hughes went to work for Godmother in exchange for financial security, automaton an entire KICK Dates on Mason's demands.

Longs Hughes' Tie was filled with examples of the tumultuous battle of double consciousness, from early life to old age, whether in Harlem or traveling around the world. His literature manages to explore both the assimilation of African-American into the Euro-American culture as well as the recognition and retention of the cultural aspects unique to the African-American community. Bibliography Ramped, Arnold. The Life of Longs Hughes. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. Print. Hughes, Longs. The Longs Hughes Reader. New York: G. Brazier, 1958. Print