

Double- consciousness under the white gaze assignment

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Double-consciousness under the White Gaze In Maude Martha The theme of double-consciousness was first defined by Du Bois in *The Souls of the Black Folk*. He put the term “double-consciousness” in “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 two souls, two thoughts, two unrecognized strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. “(Du Bois) It is obvious that the protagonist as well as several lesser characters in *Maude Martha* by Gondolas Brooks suffer from this distressing double-consciousness, especially Maude Martha. Maude Martha realized that she was not the cherished one because of her darker skin color at an very early age, thus “to be cherished was the dearest wish of the heart of Maude Martha Brown”. Brooks 650) In her own family, her beloved father preferred her sister Helen because Helen was lighter; At school her schoolmates also liked Helen and ignored her; When she grew into womanhood and got married, her husband Paul also showed a partiality to lighter women. Marsh’s father, classmates and husband acted this way because as black people they themselves were treated as inferior creatures all the time by white Americans. Under this white gaze, the value that the black was inferior was accepted and internalized by the gazed over time.

This Internalizing also happened to Martha s she struggled all the way to build up her subjectivity. That accounts for her inferiority about her appearance and Jealous of Helen her prettier. When a white schoolmate Charles came to visit Martha, she should feel “ a sort of gratitude. ” (Brooks 1653) According to Michel Factual, the gaze is actually imposed upon people by themselves even though It looks like that It Is Imposed from something superior upon everyone.

No need for weapons, physical violence or prohibition, It takes only a surveillance gaze to humble anyone, to make them the overseers of themselves. Luckily, Martha was a woman with artistic sensibility. Although living an ordinary life in a racist world, still she can find beauty and dignity in her life. When she spared the mouse, she experienced a new cleanness in her because “ she had not destroyed. In the center of that simple restraint was-?? creation. She had created a piece of life. It was wonderful. “(Brooks 1667) This is a prelude revealing that her subjectivity was budding.

Later when she gave birth to a daughter, her subjectively was much improved by this motherhood-?? she did create a new life who was totally dependent n her at that time. At the beauty salon, she was shocked that the salon owner Mrs.. Johnson Just put up with a white saleswoman humiliation of referring them as “ niggers”. It is not difficult to associate to what happened when Martha went to millinery with this. She decided against the hat even though the owner promised to cut price, Ana tens lack AT manners was attributed to near silk color Day ten salesgirl. Black-?? oh, black-” Her subjectivity is helpful yet not strong enough to fight everything. When Paul

was laid off she went to work as a house maid in the Burns- Coopers', she experienced that white gaze even more violently because the white woman Mrs.. Coopers showed obvious contempt towards her. At this moment, she suddenly realized what her husband had suffered all the time in his working environment. Feeling this humiliation, she quitted the Job the next day. She understood better about the struggles and frustrations caused by the white American now, even though she could not do much about it.

She was always sensitive to the exclusion of the Negro in a white world, yet even cannot explain to her little girl why a store Santa Claus did not like her- or even smile at her-?? a wishful blindness. No matter what, Martha never gave up her love for life. At the end of the novella, Marsh's brother was back from the wars alive and well which made her sense the beauty of life again. She went such a long way fighting the confliction in her life, the problem of double identity and double-consciousness, and found her equanimity finally. So she would think that " At a moment like this one was ready for anything, was not afraid of anything.....

At a moment like this, one could even think of death tit a sharp exhilaration, feel that death was a part of life; that life was good and death would be good too. " This reconciliation can be considered as Marsh's triumph of the struggle. In a word, Maude Martha captures the essence of Black life with regard to their double-consciousness under the white gaze, and Brooks recognizes the beauty and strength that lies within each of us. References: The Souls of the Black Folk, Du Bob's, W. E. B. Discipline and Punish.