Double Consciousness in Andrea Levy's *Never Far from Nowhere* and Isidore Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name*

Chibuzo Onunkwo & Andrew Chig
Faculty of Arts,Department of English and Literary Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
Email: chibuzo.onunkwo@unn.edu.ng

Abstract In *The Souls of* Black *Folks* (1903) W.B.Du Bois examines the Negro (black) problem of double consciousness. Double consciousness is a psychological condition exhibited by blacks as a result of their interaction with the white race. This concept was originally proper to the social sciences especially psychology, where the psychological conditions of real human beings were analyzed. With Du Bois, double consciousness describes a peculiar condition common among the blacks in America due to their racial orientation. In other to assert their self esteem, blacks in America have to resort to the strategy of double consciousness which according to Cook is the "conscious splitting of the inner self in an attempt to create a character that would be accepted into the mainstream society" (Cook 1). Contrary to Du Bois assertion, this paper sets out to discuss double consciousness as it is represented in two novels: *Never far from Nowhere* and *Call me by my Rightful Name*. *Never far from Nowhere* is concerned with the experience of Jamaican immigrants in London and *Call me by my* Rightful *Name* with the experience of African American in America. This paper interrogates the phenomenon of double consciousness through the categorization of psychoanalysis of Freud, because double consciousness deals with mind perception. The result of this paper shows that double consciousness is a problem of black man wherever he is in contact with the White race; it is not a peculiar problem to blacks in America as posited by Du Bois.

Key words Double consciousness; colour politics; identification; displacement; Other

Authors **Chibuzo Onunkwo**, Ph.D., is Lecturer at the Department of English and Literary studies, University of Nigerian, Nsukka, specializing in literary theory and criticism. **Andrew Chigbu**, Ph.D., is currently Lecturer at the Department of

English and Literary Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His research interest is on American literature.

Introduction

In "The Significance of Race, Gender and Class to Identity Formation," Julia Bock looks at the coming of age process of Olive and Vivien (the major characters in Andrea Levy's *Never Far from Nowhere*) who "live in an environment that constantly asserts their difference" (Bock1). She examines the challenges the girls go through as a result of their race (black), class (working-class), and gender (female). Her analysis begins from the period of the migration of the Caribbeans who left the island for their "mother country on the MV Empire Windrush as a result of the poor condition of their economy. Rose Charles the mother of the girls and her husband Newton Charles are among these immigrants and the "pigmentocracy" prevalent on the island has not prepared them at all for the serious racial prejudice void of "shade consciousness" that exists in their "mother country," England. But even though how lighter the shade of one's dark skin is, is not considered in London, Rose Charles does not come to terms with this new reality and tries to impose her own view on her daughters who were never with her in the "shade conscious" Jamaica.

Bock also unearths the generational conflict found in Levy's novel, where mother and daughters constantly disagree because they won't do things the way she wants them to—the way they were done in her days back at Jamaica. She doesn't allow them stay out at night with their friends, for instance, and does not see any reason why she should accompany Vivien to school on her first day at college.

She further looks at the relationship between sisters—a recurrent theme in Levy's fiction. Vivien and Olive grow up being alienated from each other because of their different skin colours and the uncomfortable atmosphere set up by their mother at home. Their relationship, "while not specifically affected by lies, is certainly characterized by a lack of communication which contributes to their failure to empathize with each other" (Bock 68). While Vivien suffers inferiority complex as a result of her working-class position and is engrossed with "social climbing,"Olive feels she is the sole bearer of the racial prejudices in London because of her dark skin colour. But instead of these sisters going through these together, they lose touch with each other's life and are alienated from each other as a result of the gap created by lack of communication.

Bock also considers their relationships with white men as Vivien and Olive's

strategy of "attaining social advancement through marriage" (Bock 80). We read in her essay that "Olive's hopes concerning her future with Peter also seem to reflect a desired social mobility" and again that

> The fact that Olive realizes that she loves Peter after he has presented her with a car is not related to material wealth as much as to her general desire to escape her frustrating life as a shopkeeper and "black sheep of the family" (6). Peter appears to hold the promise of a brighter future, although Olive's reliance on him is naïve and certainly contradicts her self-identification as "a strong black woman." (Bock 86)

By the same token, Eddie is working-class but white, and, therefore, his class seems not to matter to Vivien initially since he is of the desired race. But as she climbs higher on the social ladder into college, she becomes uncomfortable with him around.

What Bock has done is, according to her, to bring to "awareness […] the multitude of challenges faced by those who, in their formative years and beyond, experience a conflation of racism, sexism, and "classism" (Bock 98).

A job well done, notwithstanding, Bock's analysis does not touch the area this paper is set to explore, which is the direct effect of racism on the psychic make up of these characters and how they respond to it individually.

Bettina Von Staden, in her "Immigration to London: Hard Facts—Literary Solutions?",walks into the mind of Rose Charles and exonerates her from her racist attitude because she has been—and still is—a victim of racism herself. Here, we are told that Rose's maternal responsibility is complicated because she herself has been affected by racism and "to avoid existing with a "contemptuous view" of themselves, [she] tries to convince her family that they are not the ones discriminated against" (Staden 24).

Staden unveils the situation of immigrants" children who go through the harsh realities of their racist environment on the one hand and that of their parents who would rather be in denial of these realities, on the other hand.

We also see in Maike Brehends's "Writing on the Poverty Line: Working-Class Fiction by British Women" the relationship between education and class in Levy's novel. Here, instances are drawn from Vivien and Carol's experiences as they are about to enter the sixth form from their working-class families. Vivien is black while Carol is white but the latter's race does not exonerate her from the realities of her class-conscious society as they are both told to take up typing lessons, which

suggests that they are already seen as potential typists (a working-class job).

The essays examined here have, no doubt, explored very significant themes in Levy's novel, and have even come close to our concern in this study. But because "the work of art is an inexhaustible source of new critical discoveries" (Frye 17), there is still room wide enough for this study to not only continue but to make relevant contribution to the world of literary studies.

Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name* has equally pulled critical weight on itself. Carlo Germeshuys declares it "a novel with an overt political purpose" (Germeshuys 1). The novel, for him, is "a literary manifestation of the Afrocentric discourse, which posits the rediscovery and reclamation of African history and culture as an essential tool for empowering Africans and members of the African Diaspora" (Germeshuys 1-2). What we have here is a view of Okpewho's novel as an argument for the understanding of Africa on its own terms as opposed to the "Western colonialist view of Africa" (Germeshuys 2).

Germeshuys tries to figure out to what extent Okpewho's work "validate[s] the Afrocentrist reclamation of African history and culture" (Germeshuys 2), which is, according to him, the main focus of the novel. He further considers the view of language presented in the text and finds it a language "rooted in the real" and not merely abstract or symbolic as is illustrated by Otis Hampton's involvement in the Yoruba culture in order to become fully aware of the language, being that language and culture are intertwined. He equally relates language with Africa in the text and, for him, Africa serves here as a symbolic enabler of language and "the purpose of the novel is to construct a language through which the diasporic experiences can be articulated" (Germeshuys 5). On the question of language, Germeshuys concludes that *Call me by my Rightful Name* "achieves its aim of making Africa a productive enabler of language and expression for members of its diaspora , but […] fails to fully engage with and question of the problematic aspects of the culture it celebrates" (Germeshuys 2-3).

We also find in Germeshuys that "Africa functions as a psychological surety for diaspora blacks" in Okpewho's novel. Categorizing the novel generally as a "narrative of return," he sees Okpewho's "use of Africa as a symbolic destination in a narrative of return," and that "the condition for being part of a diaspora is the "inalienable right to wish to return to reclaim connections to a lineage" (Germeshuys 5).

After raising some "unanswered questions" in Okpewho's work—that Okpewho should have presented "[a] truly radical test of vision" (Germeshuys 18) by allowing Otis to fully identify with all the oppressed people he encounters

so that his judgment of the new culture he has encountered, in relation to the one he is already used to, can be fully analysed—, Germeshuys boldly proclaims it an unfinished project.

In his "A Cultural Diplomacy of Difference in the African Novel: a Reading of Isidore Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name*," Damlegue Lare announces Okpewho's novel as having brought "a new understanding of what cultural diplomacy in a 21st century globalised world means" (Lare 322). He examines what is according to him, Okpewho's call for a transition in cultural politics; from cultural imperialism theory to cultural inclusion theory. His interest is in how Okpewho's work advocates for "cultural plurality."

Generally, for Lare, the work is a criticism "against the cultural imperialism imposed by first world nations, and the novel's title […] is an apt metaphor appealing to cultural denigration cancellation" (Lare 327). He sees it as a clarion call on blacks to take actions towards taking their "rightful" position in the affairs of the world.

Using the identity theory and critical discourse analysis, Mary Okolie, in her "The Discourse of Imposed Identities in Isidore Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name* and Richard Wright's *Native Son,*" plunges into Otis Hampton's behavior in relation with the social structures around him and sees Otis as a helpless victim of forces higher than him, and who decides to embrace his fate in total compliance. She is interested in how Otis responds to social structures, and social structures here include the white society and his African roots which have imposed themselves on him irredeemably. And she observes that Otis complies with the one that makes the higher demand, for he abandons his white sympathies to answer a call of destiny while the supernatural forces from his African roots keeps pulling him.

This paper seeks to explore double consciousness in Andrea Levy's *Never far from Nowhere* and Isidore Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name* with the aid of the psychoanalytic theory. Studies on double consciousness before now have been mostly directed towards the African American situation alone. Including, the situation of the Caribbean immigrants in London deviates from the already popular pattern. Again, these novels have not been studied under the concept of double consciousness .*Never far from* Nowhere and *Call me by Rightful Name* ,have until now been studied together or compared. This study is also an attempt to bring Levy's *Never far from Nowhere* to lime light, given that it has attracted the least critical response among all her novels since its publication in 1996. There is also an attempt to divert attention from Otis Hampton in Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name*, on the grounds that almost all the studies carried out on the text so far have

focused on him.

Theoretical Perspective on Double Consciousness

Double consciousness is, according to W.E.B.Du Bois, the "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" (Bois 3).Since its conception by W. E. B. Du Bois in his *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), double consciousness has been understood and argued differently by various scholars. While some are in favour of the concept, the likes of Ernest Allen have criticized its short comings, ranging from the fact that Du Bois does not pursue the argument further to the claim that his analysis is a mere "enigmatic [reference], seductive prose largely lacking in analytical fortitude, as well as[…]internal logic" (Allen 9) and empirical verification.

Rutledge Dennis, who sees Du Bois as one of the founding fathers of the sociology of race and ethnicity begins his analysis of Du Bois's concept by wondering why Du Bois "elevate[s] the idea of double consciousness as one of the major themes in his *Souls of Black Folk* and then, without an apparent second thought, simply abandons the concept" (Dennis 1). He asserts that Du Bois "apparently made no effort to validate and support his assumptions" (Dennis 1) and proposes that critics should move beyond Du Bois's generalizations to discover whether his concept is "an accurate description of *actual behavior* or […] merely a supposition of *expected behaviour"* (Dennis 19).

In Dennis, double consciousness is described as "one of the pillars of [Du Bois's] sociology of race" (Dennis 13), because it is concerned with using the past to both structure and explain the present. He claims to be taking "an even sharper and more critical look at the concept" (Dennis 13) in order to "describe the racial identity dilemma and to assess racial status and power relations between blacks and whites" (Dennis 13). It is against this backdrop that he explains Du Bois's analysis as revolving around "the idea of what is meant to be a minority group within a majority culture with […] unique socio-historical experiences and, secondarily, what might be the long lasting consequences of this experience" (Dennis14).

Dennis tries to link the origin of double consciousness to the psychological theories and literary traditions back to before Du Bois, and then goes ahead to analyse how Du Bois has attempted to strip double consciousness of its nineteenth century psychological and literary contexts in order to concentrate it on the African American situation in relation with European Americans.

Standing on Du Bois's definition of double consciousness, Booker Cook gives

his own definition as "the conscious splitting of the inner self in an attempt to create a character that would be accepted into mainstream society" (Cook 1). He reveals that Du Bois's "this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of another" (Du Bois 3) implies that "a stripping of one's identity has taken place"(Cook 1) and that "replacement information has been internalized by African Americans. This replacement information is the master narrative whites have long presented to the world about blacks, that they are "foul, dark or dirty in purpose, malignant, sinister and wicked" (Takaki qtd. in Cook 1). Cook calls the replacement information "miseducation" (Cook 1), which, having been internalized by blacks, has "resulted in the[ir] loss of African generational heritage, self-identity,and [ultimately] the development of double consciousness" (1).

Cook further calls double consciousness "the state of being cognizant of two experiences that impact life"(Cook 2); and that "[these] experiences are the African characteristics on the one hand , and the American characteristics on the other, with the hope that both will merge to create a union that is better than the experience each provides as a single unit" (Cook 2). His interest is in ways through which blacks can recover from double consciousness and attain "oneness." On this note, he proposes with Du Bois that a true knowledge of history is a step towards attaining an egalitarian American society and goes ahead to present "historical truth" as the panacea for double consciousness. By this he means a thorough education of the masses (African Americans), so that they can regain and internalize the history of Africa before colonialism.

Marc Black, in his "Fanon and Duboisian Double Consciousness,"finds a connection between Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* (1952) and Du Bois's double consciousness, saying that Fanon's work shows how double consciousness is also a condition of colonized people, and also strengthens the claim that African Americans are colonized within their own country. He makes a distinction between "unilateral double consciousness" (experienced by the oppressed) and "multilateral double consciousness" (experienced by both the oppressed and the oppressors) and offers the latter as the solution to the problem of racial segregation. By this he means that the colonizers and white Americans need to embrace "the perspectives of the subjugated, marginalized and silenced population,'that is, become aware of what the "marginalized" think of them, so that they can experience "white double consciousness" (Black 399).

Black's position is on the positive effect of double consciousness if it can be experienced equally by both blacks and whites. He asserts that if "the cultural exchanges were engaged equally by all parties, […the] harm of unilateral double

consciousness would be prevented [and] then, all parties would be both hosts and guests, sharing the challenges of measuring up to each other's cultures" (400).

Double Consciousness in Literary Studies

In "A Struggle for Peace in the Warring Soul: the Double Consciousness and Psychoanalysis of Passing,"Nikita Chaudhri sees Du Bois's idea of double consciousness as "strikingly similar to Freud's idea of the characteristics of the id, ego, and superego" (Chaudhri 1), and uses both to "analyse the relationship between Clare and Irene's dynamic characters in Nella Larsen's *Passing*(2)where we see the struggle of the "New Negro Woman" among "African Americans who migrated to the North following the emancipation of slaves" (Huggins qtd. in Chaudhri 2).

Chaudhri sees in the novel the desire of African American women—represented by Clare and Irene—to pass for whites in order to avoid the challenges they face as a result of their race and gender. She locates Du Bois's double consciousness in Irene "who struggles between acting according to her established consciousness and conflicting subconsciousness, represented by Clare" (Chaudhri 4). In Clare she sees her subconscious desire for "security," "passionate conjugal love," and "risks of passing." But while Clare can easily pass for a white because of her light skin colour, Irene finds it difficult because she is dark-skinned and also wants to maintain the good-wife-and-mother role that is expected of the "New Negro Woman." While wanting to secure her home, Irene is at the same time in dire desire of the kind of freedom Clare enjoys, having set Clare's life as the model for hers.

Chaudhri discovers the complexity of double consciousness in the case of Irene and Clare, for "as Irene's subconscious, Clare is a part of her double consciousness that cause[s] the psychological struggle of women in the Harlem Renaissance" (Chaudhri 13).

In their "From Chaos to Order: Re-reading Du Bois's Double Consciousness in Toni Morrison's *Paradise* and *The Bluest Eye*," Chigbu and Uzoma "re-examine the representation of […] double consciousness in African American literature." They see double consciousness "not merely as a psychological state but more as a socio-historical condition that can be appreciated against the supremacist ideologies that gave rise to it" (Chigbu 85). Instead of just as the "conflicting personality" experienced by African Americans, double consciousness is presented in their paper as "an identity maker that encourages the discovery of the salient qualities of the human spirit" (Hidden Name qtd. in Chigbu and Uzoma 86). And they go ahead to show how "historical retentions at the level of ideology, do not only make literature a place of meaning but a field of emergence meaning" (Chigbu 86).

Their interest is in the supremacist and racist ideologies in the United States which present a "master-slave paradigm" (Chigbu 93) that becomes internalized by African Americans as seen in Morrison's *Paradise* and *The Bluest Eye*. However, instead of the characters under study merely identifying their conditions and wallowing in self-hatred of self-pity—as is usually the case with victims of double consciousness—they are seen as going through the process of reconstruction of self which transforms them into "bearers of revolutionary energy"(Chigbu100) and agents of change. The characters are presented as conquerors of their double consciousness who are going through the process of attaining "psychic wholeness."

Methodology

For a proper understanding of double consciousness, we need to approach it with the conceptual tool of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is "a systematic accounting of the psychic apparatus and a theory of the mind and human psychic development" (Castle163). Being developed by the Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud, in the twentieth century, psychoanalysis was originally proper to psychology as "a procedure for the analysis and therapy of neurosis" (Abrams and Harpham 290). It was, however, later "expanded […] to account for many developments and practices in the history of civilization" (Abrams and Harpham 290).

The emphasis of psychoanalysis is that the human mind hardly forgets anything; that childhood incidents and other experiences , especially unpleasant ones, are stored in what Freud calls the "unconscious" mind or the "id." He developed various models of the human psyche and the particular model in which the id is discussed is called the tripartite model, where we have "the id," "the ego," and "the super-ego" (Freud 60). "The irrational, instinctual, unknown, and unconscious part of the psyche"(Bressler 123) is what Freud calls the id , and it contains our "secret desires," "darkest wishes" and "most intense fears" (Bressler 123). The id wants the immediate satisfaction of what is called in Freud "the pleasure principle,"and it is this pleasure principle that controls it. The ego, on the other hand, is the rational and logical part of the conscious mind, which regulates the uncontrollable desires of the id, in agreement with the reality principle. The super-ego "acts like an internal censor, causing us to make moral judgments in light of social pressures" (Bressler 123). It operates according to the morality principle "[r]epresenting all society's moral restrictions [and] serving as a filtering agent, suppressing the desires and instincts forbidden by society and thrusting them back into the unconscious" (Bressler 123).

The ego, which works according to the reality principle, and the super-ego,

which represents the morality principle both try to suppress the id (the pleasure principle). But the workings of the id still manifest through dreams, fantasies, slip of tongues, and those actions that are not within the reach of self-control. This is the most popular aspect of Freud's theory that relates to our study. Freud, however, is not the sole developer of psychoanalysis. Many scholars took up from him and developed their own aspects of the theory. While some built on Freud's foundation, others disagreed with him and developed their own principles. Among the exponents of psychoanalysis are Carl Jung, Jacques Lacan, and many others who shall not be discussed here for want of space.

Carl Jung the Swiss philosopher, psychologist, psychiatrist, and physician was Freud's most famous pupil (Bressler 126) who developed his own principles after expressing dissatisfaction with Freud's emphasis on sexual instincts as the sole propeller of "all human behavior, including dream" (Bressler126). In *his Symbols of Transformation*, Carl Jung "asserts that dreams include mythological images as well as sexual ones" (Jung 126). This assertion led to his banishment from the psychoanalytic community for the following five years, during which he "formulated his own model of the human psyche, which would become his most important contribution to psychology and literary criticism" (Jung 26). He agrees with Freud that the unconscious exists but disagrees with him on the contents of the unconscious. And instead of Freud's id, ego, and super-ego, Jung's model "comprises the personal conscious, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious" (Jung 126).

The personal conscious is the image one is conscious of at any given moment; the personal unconscious is the store house of the experiences of the personal conscious, while the collective unconscious "houses the cumulative knowledge, experiences, and images of the entire human species" (Jung 127). The memories in the collective unconscious exist in form of archetypes which result from "repeated human experiences." It is from this that Northrop Frye developed archetypal criticism.

Jacques Lacan also developed his own psychoanalytic principles. He deviates from Freud's principles at the point where Freud states that the unconscious is chaotic. For Lacan, the unconscious is structured very much like the structure of language. He asserts that "language shapes and ultimately structures our unconscious and conscious minds and thus shapes our self-identity" (Lacan cited in Bressler 129). And like Freud and Jung, Lacan also developed his own model of the human psyche which equally consists of three parts: "the Imaginary," "the Symbolic," and "the Real." The Imaginary order is the realm in which an infant

within his first six months functions and this is the part of the psyche which, just like Freud's id, contains our wishes, fantasies and images. From the Imaginary order through the "mirror stage" (between six and eighteen months) the child sees himself through his mother's image before he progresses into the Symbolic order. The Symbolic order is the point where he opens himself to language and the discourse of the Other, and is allowed to hear from the Other what he recognises as his desire. The Symbolic order is dominated by the father. Finally, we have the order of the Real where the child begins to experience things for himself, and not just by mere imaginary or symbolic representation of them.

Though this brief account of the development of the psychoanalytic theory leaves off the contributions of many other scholars and researchers, it has taken into account the contributions of the major psychoanalysts who laid the foundation of the theory.Having looked at the development of the theory, we are now left with the task of narrowing it down to the particular aspect that suits our study. This will take us back to Freud's tripartite model. And here we are still confronted with the question, what is the relationship between Freud's tripartite model and the analysis of double consciousness? This is how it works.

Double consciousness is, according to W.E.B Du Bois, the "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" (Bois 3). Now, there is a self which looks at itself through the eyes of others. The psyche of this self is made up of the id, the ego, and the super-ego; and the reason for this looking at one's self…is—according to Du Bois's analysis and as shall be seeing in our selected texts—racial prejudice. The id, which is the pleasure principle, represents here the "desires" of total freedom from the racist society which this self would have wanted. And again it represents the "darkest fears" of the impending embarrassment that awaits the self when it comes in contact with racial prejudice. The super-ego represents society—which is in this case racist—that serves as a restriction to the kind of freedom that the id of this self longs for. The ego, finally, is the conscious self which tries to maintain a balance between what the id wants and what the super-ego presents. We shall use selected characters to illustrate this in the paper.

In *Call me by my Rightful Name*, we shall focus on the characters of Mr. Hampton, Otis, and Melba, while in *Never Far from Nowhere*, the characters to be analysed are Rose, Olive, and Vivien. Our interest in these characters is to confirm them sufferers of double consciousness and to reveal the various mechanisms of defense they have each employed as a resistance strategy.

Textual Analysis of *Never Far From Nowhere* and *Call Me By My Rightful Name*

While standing before a white man I had to figure out how to perform each act and how to say each word. I could not help it. I could not grin. In the past I had always said too much, now I found that it was difficult to say anything at all. I could not react as the world in which I lived expected me to; that world was too baffling, too uncertain.—Richard Wright

Double Consciousness in *Call me by my Rightful Name*

In the text, we are presented with a middle-class African American family who seem to have all going well with them in terms of racial prejudice. Mr. Hampton

was always proud enough of his background to believe that he deserved his place in the white man's world. The son of an Augusta sharecropper and grandson of a slave, he learnt early in life to know his place but to also believe in his innate worth (16).

He believes he has worked hard enough and attained a financial and social status that should place him above racial prejudice and make him a bonafide member of the white man's world. The reader also goes along with this belief until we are told of the experience he has had way back in his childhood days, that has shaken the foundation of his knowledge of himself as a black man in the United States. During a music concert participated in by young Hampton and his sister, Ella Pearl, "a young member" of a white "string quintet" walks up to him and compliments him for his wonderful performance. But what follows this compliment becomes the major deciding factor of Mr Hampton's attitude towards the reality of his blackness in his later years. The young member of the white string quintet walks up to Mz Odetta, Hampton's mother, and continues, saying, "I think though that he needs a few lessons in cord control. But of course that's something we white do so much better than you niggers. If you could maybe, scrub some of that black off his skin, he could *conceivably* get closer to being a white man and, *maybe*, do better on his cord control" (17-18). And we are told that young Hampton "never forgot this sobering encounter and the resolve it inspired in him: to be proud of his black self and in his dealings with the white man, to cultivate a style that struck the right balance between firmness and discretion" (18). This incident registers in his unconscious mind and controls his reactions "[a]s he grew older and the realities of race revealed themselves to his maturing mind" (18).

With the knowledge of this childhood experience of Mr. Hampton's, one begins to appreciate his attitude towards racism in his adult life. Mr. Hampton, instead of turning to black Americans against whites, as one would expect, does not

want to have anything to do with blacks. "Whenever he was invited to contribute to a black cause, he did so, but asked that neither he nor his contribution be publicized. He had worked too hard and come too far to be drawn back by anything that might link him to the past" (63). He sort of builds a wall around himself and his family, so that, being a member of the middle class and not a poor working class black, he assumes superiority over his own race, and, at the same time, equally aware that he is not white yet. Because he is aware that whites abhor blacks, he rejects his identity in order to be accepted into the white community. He sees blackness as a past he has overcome and hopes he is now what the whites want him to be. In this attitude lies "the conscious splitting of the inner self in an attempt to create a character that would be accepted into mainstream society" (Cook 1), which is Booker Cook's explanation of Du Bois's double consciousness.

It is stated in the text that Mr. Hampton is well-to-do, "being a member of the growing cadre of middle class blacks in Boston [who is] satisfied with the privileges his position conferred on him" (59). This situation obviously is better than that of working class blacks in the United States. But because racial prejudice is no respecter of class, we are told that "[a]lthough he has done well in the white man's world and would sooner forget his past, every time he comes face to face with a white man who gives him cause, his mind goes back in a flash to that moment so many years ago" (63) when he has the "sobering encounter" that made him resolve to be proud of his black self. But because he is in denial, rather than accepting and confronting his situation, Mr, Hampton tries to repress this memory back into his unconscious. He is not comfortable in his black skin, and would rather be in the company of whites. He is, in fact, wearing a "black skin, white mask,'to borrow Frantz Fanon's term.

This attitude of Mr. Hampton's towards his identity is, however, a "struggl[e] with the psychological process of identity formation" (Ibieta and Orvell 158) which results from his being under the constant—though covert—scrutiny of white eyes. He is aware of his blackness but rejects it because white has presented itself as the better option. This is why he is in denial, accepting neither his situation as African American nor the fact that he does not fully belong to the mainstream white culture. There is another instance in the text that helps illustrate this point. When Mr. Hampton suggests that his son, Otis, sees a psychiatrist, the later asks him, "This Dr Fishbein, is he…black or white?" (49). Though he has lived in the United States all his life, the young man understands that he does not fully belong here. His father, however, who is in denial, tries to cover up and says, "Think about it, son. An African psychiatrist may be good for an African. But, you are not…What I"m trying

to say is, all your life you've grown up…An African American, yes, but still an American" (49). But the truth of Otis's fears surfaces when they get to Dr Fishbein's office. We are told that "Hampton has been obliging white people so long that he answers each question with the appropriate grin" (52). This reminds one of Richard in Richard Wright's *Black Boy*, who "had to figure out how to perform each act and how to say each word […] while standing before a white man" (172). Mr. Hampton eagerly plays the role expected of a black man in the presence of a white man at Dr Fishbein's office. The role of "the frightened trembling Negro, abased before the white overlord" (Fanon 43).

Otis is another character in Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name* through which the argument of double consciousness can be sustained in the text. He is described as a very tall and attractive young man, who is a popular basketball player doing well for his team. He is first encountered in the text at his twenty first birthday party organized by his teammates. And, also, as the only child of a middle-class black American, he seems not to have any worries in terms of class and race. Even his indifferent attitude towards the fight against marginalization by black students at his school also points towards the direction of his being in a comfortable condition. No one would have thought that he is also "hunted by a galaxy of erosive stereotypes, [and in] a state of profound inner insecurity" (Fanon 55).

But then, it is from him we hear that "being raised in a black middle class family, there was some embarrassment about identifying with Africa for all sorts of silly reasons" (215). It is also through him we get to know that "it's quite easy in America to go sleepwalking through life and do not know what you are doing [because] there's always somebody telling you who are and where you are supposed to be or go" (212). With this, it becomes open that Otis equally suffers from double consciousness. He is also a victim of "measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Dubois 3).

The first encounter of racial discrimination that Otis has in the text is when he has a spasm during a basketball game with the team from Princeton. As he loses balance, a Princeton defender tells him, "Got ya, monkey face" (23). Now the emphasis on this abuse is "monkey face." Coming from a white fellow, the name calling touches the part of Otis's heart that he would rather leave unvisited, and because he has this internal inferiority complex that comes with racial stereotyping, "he maneuvers a contact with the abuser, and there is a scuffle"(23).

During the trip to Yoruba land in Africa in search of cure for Otis's spasms, we also witness how the presence of a white person inflicts double consciousness on the blacks around him. While Mr. Hampton, Otis, and Dr. Fishbein are on their

way to the lodge made ready for them by the American embassy in Nigeria in the company of Bigelow, a white American ambassador, the two blacks, Mr. Hampton and Otis, become uncomfortable with Bigelow's presence for some reason. Before long, however, it becomes clear that beneath the seeming atmosphere of friendliness among the passengers in the car lies the great white/black dichotomy which makes blacks always conscious of their actions and always on their guard, since they are aware they are under constant surveillance by white eyes that are always ready to point out symptoms of blackness from their character. Bigelow soon confirms their fears by screaming, when Otis unconsciously drives through the thick bush, "Dr Fishbein, you better talk to your friends. I'm through with this shit. I have no part in their primitive mumbo jumbo stuff. They can go ahead and kill themselves over some old slave history. That's none of my business" (119). With this, the fear that lurks in the heart of the two black men in the car is justified.

Through the above incident, Otis's stand on the conditions of blacks in the United States is also revealed. He confesses that, "if what [he's] seen recently with Bigelow […] tells him anything, it's that there are aspects of [his] life [he] should never shut his mind to, whatever [his] preoccupations happen to be at any point in time" (170).

Otis, like his father, reacts to double consciousness with the defense mechanism of denial. But his own denial is milder than that of his father. His is tilted more towards indifference until the circumstances surrounding his existence force him to acknowledge the fact of his otherness. Equally significant is the character of Melba, Otis's mother, who has grown up with the harsh realities of being black in the United States and with the knowledge that her parents were murdered in cold blood because they were black and helpless. She, like her husband and son, does not accept Africa, but while Mr. Hampton and Otis's defense mechanisms are each denial, Melba's is more of identification with the oppressor. She has so identified with the whites that she has "notions about Africa [as] land of darkness and the devil" (80). As a matter of fact, when preparations are being made for Otis to be taken to Nigeria to seek solutions to his problem, Melba asks, "What sense does it make to send him over there into pagan country where the devil himself lives with all his angels? You thought about that?" (80)

It is surprising how Melba turns against Africa even though she knows the whites have been the source of her agony all through her life. With Freud's analysis, however, we become aware that this attitude of hers is a defense mechanism of identification with the oppressor. We also find displacement in her behavior for it can be argued that her abhorrence of anything African now is a transfer of the

built up aggression in her, following that she has grown up with the bitterness of the knowledge of the fact that her parents died as a result of their helplessness implicated in the fact of blackness, as Fanon puts it.

Double Consciousness in *Never Far from Nowhere*

In Levy's novel, we meet another set of blacks in a different setting but with the same problem. Here we have Mr. and Mrs. Newton and Rose Charles who have migrated to England from Jamaica where they give birth to their two daughters Olive and Vivien. Newton is not among the focus of our analysis here because he dies shortly after he is introduced in the text. Vivien, the younger daughter, describes each member of the family at the beginning of the text and through her we learn that while she and Rose, her mother, are light skinned, Olive is dark skinned. This is very fundamental to the colour politics that goes on in the text.

Rose is not one of the narrators here, but through Olive and Vivien's narration, she is featured as a middle aged, light-skinned Jamaican woman who lives in London with her two daughters. She is portrayed as a colour conscious individual whose attitude towards colour prejudice is rooted in pigmentocracy—the colour stratification pattern that prevails in Jamiaca where she has migrated from. Now the point is: Rose is black (in the racial sense of the word) but is fair-skinned because her mother "married a man who descended from Scottish farmers" (2). She is, therefore, mullato, though "with strong African features" (2). Influenced by the "mythical norm" (Audre Lord qtd inTatum n.p) of white superiority, she places herself above dark-skinned people; "[chooses] to accept and live within the confines of the white side of double consciousness [. . .]; represents the best of white culture, [and is] constantly struggling to gain acceptance among whites" (Dennis 20). And these she does in quite an extreme manner.

Rose is not only in denial of the fact of her blackness, but also displaces the aggression of racial prejudice on any black she finds around her, while strongly identifying with the oppressor (whites). In other words, her resistance strategy against her condition as a black woman among racist whites in London encompasses three defense mechanisms: denial, displacement and identification. Instances from the text shall help illustrate this point.

From Olive, we read:

> My mother didn't believe in black people. Or should I say, she tried to believe that she was not black. Although she knew that she and my dad were not the only people who came over here from Jamaica in the fifties, she liked to think that because they were fair skinned they were the only decent people who

> came. The only ones with "a bit of class." And she believed that the English would recognise this. (7)

One would have expected that Rose would be milder with her hatred for blackness considering that she has a black child, Olive. But the situation gets complicated here because she cannot help her Negrophobic orientation, and does not just know what to do with Olive. She makes life unbearable for Olive at home, calls her "the black ship of the family"(6) and keeps saying that "she's the devil's child, the devil's" (42). The foremost depiction of denial in Rose is that she looks Olive in the face and tells her that she (Olive) is not black. Let us listen again to Olive:

> She used to talk to me about what she thought of the black people here, looking me straight in the face, telling me how they were like this and like that—nothing good of course. But she sat looking in my black face telling me. And I thought if anyone looking at us sitting at the table talking had to describe the scene, they'd say, "there are two black women talking." But my mother thought we weren't black. (7)

There couldn't have been a better example of identity crisis. They are black, and the racial consciousness of their white dominated environment does not respect how close to whiteness one's blackness may be. And this is amazing because unlike African Americans who are not sure of their ancestry or history, Rose is not ignorant of the fact that she is from Jamaica. Jamaicans have a slave history, all right, but she at least has a home outside London; she has a place where she has come from. Because she has got the "formation and crystallization of an attitude and a way of thinking and seeing that are essentially white" (Fanon 114), it becomes difficult for her to reconcile these facts.

Olive continues:

> "I"m black," I used to say, when I was old enough to but in.
> "Don't be silly, Olive, you're not coloured."
> "No, Mum, I"m black."
> "No Olive, you're not black, and that's enough of this stupidness."
> "Well I"m not white, I have to be something."
> "You're not white and you're not black—you're you."

And one might want to ask, "What are you?" Young Olive who has been in London

all her life is not confused about the fact of her blackness and she knows that there is no shying away from that fact. But Rose who has grown up in Jamaica has the exact opposite of Olive's attitude. All these hinge upon the fact that whites have presented their colour as the better option—the "mythical norm"—and Rose, having bought this myth hook line and sinker, sees herself through the eyes of the whites.

Even in her relations with people outside her family, Rose does not fail to display this attitude of whiteness, and most times in quite an embarrassing manner. For instance, when Eddie, Vivien's boyfriend, offers her a bottle of Jamaica rum in celebration of Vivien's admission to college because he thinks "everyone from Jamaica liked rum" (230), Rose replies, "Not me, I prefer a nice cup of tea" (230). And this is in spite of the fact that she enjoys rum (of course when there is no white person around). This rejection of rum is an outright rejection of Jamaica because rum and tea are the most famous drinks in the popular culture of Jamaica and England respectively.

We are also told that Rose sends Olive to a school full of white people, "[a] nd no black girls. All white" (24). And this is irrespective of the psychic horror Olive undergoes as a result of being the only black person in the midst of a white antagonistic environment. The reason she gives for this act is that Olive should go to "a 'respectable' school with 'decent girls.'" And for her respectability and decency are synonymous with whiteness.

To round off analysis on Rose, it is pertinent that we consider her response to Olive when she is informed that the latter is pregnant for Peter, her white boyfriend. Initially, Rose tells the young mother-to-be that she is not surprised about the out-of-wedlock pregnancy, then adds, "But you have a good man there Olive—there's not many that would marry you. You see you keep him, you hear me nuh" (66). This shows that she does not expect anything good from a dark-skinned person, and she also feels that a black person should be grateful to a white who "offers" to marry them.

Vivien is another character in Levy's novel who has double consciousness. She is portrayed as a character who has this "inner silence and timidity" (Noda 198) as a result of the inferiority complex she has by the fact of her blackness. Though she is light-skinned like her mother, unlike her mother, however, she is aware that she is black. Where denial comes in in her character is that she does not admit that being black in London is a problem. We are told by Olive that,

> Vivien thinks she's escaped, with all her exams and college and middle-class friends. She thinks she'll be accepted in this country now. One of them. She's

> pleased with herself—turned her back on everything she knows. My little sister thinks she's better than me. She looks down her nose at me and thinks I've wasted my life. Nothing can shock me now. But Vivien, one day she'll realize that in England, people like her are never far from nowhere. Never. (273)

With this we see that Vivien's is a case of "having two antagonistic identities" (Black 395) that are pulling at her. Her response to this psychological pull to is identify with the one that "looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Dubois 3). In other words, she imitates white lifestyle in order to have a sense of belonging. She goes out with white friends and tries as much as she can to blend into the mainstream white culture.

From the beginning of the narrative, it is made known that Vivien has the "mythical norm" of white superiority fundamentally ingrained in her consciousness. While describing herself and Olive, she says, "Somehow looking right on our oval-shaped faces; Olive's more refined than mine, more symmetrical. BUT I had a light skin—a HIGH colour. In a dim light I could be taken for Italian or Spanish. Olive was darker. Black. The Caribbean legacy" (1). The idea of white superiority conditions her attitude towards the prevalent colour politics and affects her opinion of herself—light-skinned black—and her sister, Olive—dark-skinned black.

Having accepted whiteness as the benchmark, Vivian loses herself in an attempt to find a place in the white community. She is constantly in the company of white folks who, though tolerate her company, subtly point out to her that she is not one of them, because even though she is light-skinned, the history of blackness stands indelible on her face. These supposed friends of Vivien's constantly make jest of black people, calling them such derogatory names as "wogs" and "coons" right in her presence. And though she is not comfortable with these labels, she remains with them, for her self-worth depends solely on the validation she gets from staying around them. She tells us that while among Carol and her clique, she "smiled, looked horrified or puzzled, whatever was required… [she] did everything like everyone else did. Except that [she] didn't speak… [she] wanted to stay unseen. Because they all hated wogs. And [she] had nothing to say" (29).

We have described her as one who has "inner silence and timidity" a few paragraphs ago. She is almost always mute in the presence of her friends as she is constantly on her guard, trying to make sure she does not say anything that might offend them. As a matter of fact, she has become friends with Carol out of fear. Here is what she says: "I became her friend for fear that if I didn't she might become my enemy" (11). And because getting white people's approval is paramount to her

existence, she not only becomes Carol's friend but also friend to Carol's friends.

According to the natural order of things, a relationship built on fear would be sustained by fear. This is exactly the case with Vivien and Carol's relationship. In their clique, she acts out their definition of her and has no mind of her own at all. For instance, on their visits to the club at the boy's school, Carol makes all the decisions while Vivien accepts them for fear of being seen as stupid. Conversations between them goes thus:

> "Table tennis," Carol said. We'll do that, eh, Viv." I nodded. And drama I wanted to say, but couldn't. I couldn't because I knew that if I spoke, whatever I said would be stupid, dumb, meaningless and Ted would look at me and frown and all those boys would laugh and point and Carol would say, "What do you say that for stupid." (13)

She accepts table tennis, even when she does not know how to play it because she is being careful of the white eyes around her. Just like her mother, Rose, Vivien also goes the extra mile to protect her hard earned delicate white identity. She tells lies about who she is and where she comes from, and even denies her family when she does not want to be embarrassed by their presence. When asked by her white boyfriend, Eddie, where she comes from, here is Vivien's response: "I sighed to myself. I wanted to be from somewhere he would be interested in, not just prejudiced against. "Mauritius," I said (136). She fakes an identity just to please a white boyfriend. We also have a similar case when she meets her new flat mate at the art college. When asked where she has come from, Vivien reveals, I was about to say Finsbury Park, but I looked at Victoria's immaculate red-painted fingernails, her tight, well-fitting jeans with a gold belt running through the loops, her soft pink shirt opening low down her breasts, the delicate gold chain round her neck and gold and stud earrings and said "Islington" (246).

One incident that can be seen as quite despicable in human relationship is that of Vivien rejecting her sister, Olive, who is going through psychological breakdown and longs for sisterly affection. Because Vivien has created and is living a lie, she refuses to let Olive in lest it becomes known to her white friends that she is fake. Olive represents all the truth she (Vivien) cannot confront.

The only member of the Newton family who has a different attitude towards the prevailing colour politics is Olive, for the apparent reason that she is dark-skinned. She is portrayed as a defiant young black woman who is convinced that she is the sole bearer of the problem associated with being black in a white dominated

environment. As she tells us: “The world seemed such a big place but with no room in it for me” (211).

Being the only dark-skinned member of her family, her problem as a black person begins from domestic violence to rejection in the larger London society. Her mother hates her for no fault of hers and makes life quite unbearable for her at every given opportunity. Even when it seems she is about to blend into the mainstream white culture as a result of her marriage to Peter, a white working-class young man, it turns out that Peter’s interest in her is exclusively sex related. We shall need a long excerpt from the text to illustrate this point. Olive says:

> He still wanted to have sex. “I”m knackered,”I’d say, and he’d say. “Why, what have you been doing?” We didn’t even kiss any more, he’d just get on top of me. I didn’t have to do anything. I just lay there and let him get on with it. Since the baby I could hardly feel him inside me, like he wasn’t touching the sides. He said, “You’ve gone all slack.” But it didn’t stop him wanting to do it nearly every night. I just wished he’dleave me alone, especially when Amy is awake. (103)

Peter eventually abandons her for a white single mother, but not until he has called her “a stupid hysterical black cow” (125), which reveals what he has thought of her all along.

Just as Olive’s colour is different from that of other members of her family, she has a distinct personality as well. She has both a resistant and a self-pitying attitude. Her defiant attitude is expressed earlier in the text when we are told that her mother forces her into a school full of only white people. Olive feels totally out of place and a sense of “unbelongingness” pervades her attitude throughout her stay at the school. And the school, which I see as a microcosm of what blacks go through in a white dominated environment, does not help matters either. The school authorities do not believe that a black person can amount to anything good and do not hesitate to make Olive aware of this. But Olive does not allow these circumstances to define her. She vows to emerge as one of the bests, to mortify her teachers. She says, “I passed, even though I didn’t want to go to the school. I just wanted to show them that I could” (25). And though Olive drops out of school at the end, she does so because she does not want life to dictate to her.

In all, we see that Rose, Vivien, and Olive are all aware of the pre-established roles defined by the white people for them to play out. But while Rose and Vivien are on the white side of double consciousness, Olive is on the black side, for in the

end she makes up her mind to go back to Jamaica to live among her fellow blacks.

Conclusion

Double consciousness is a situation which arises when one is confronted with another individual or group better than one's self, especially from one's perspective. This perspective, however, is being conditioned by the pre-existing stereotypical patterns ingrained in the mental processes of the bearer of this double consciousness, whereby the group he sees himself as inferior to has long presented itself as the better of the two. This bearer of double consciousness, as a result, sees himself the way his supposed superior sees him. He constantly behaves the way that is expected of him and is simultaneously trying to live his own life, which is now seen as the Other.

This is the condition of the black man in the United States, according to W.E.B. Du Bois, and as we have seen, it is a universal problem of the black man wherever he is in contact with the white man. Okpewho's *Call me by my Rightful Name* and Levy's *Never Far from Nowhere* are examples of the very many literary works where this situation is played out by literary personages. In the characters of Mr. Hampton, Otis, Melba, and Rose, Olive, and Vivien respectively in *Call me by my Rightful Name* and *Never Far from Nowhere*, we see how this universal problem of the blacks is played out in two different settings: Boston and London. The mentioned characters are established as bearers of double consciousness, and the various defense mechanisms they employ as resistance strategies are revealed.

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