

**One Body Possessed by  
Two Souls: Mixed-Race  
Characters in Jean  
Toomer's *Cane***

*Dr. Mohamed Ali Abdel-Baseer  
Lecturer of English Literature  
Faculty of Arts  
Assiut University*

Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) is one of the landmark works of mixed-race fiction in that it strives to depict the struggle for racial identity in American life. This paper investigates the in-between figures of the novel through the lenses of varied paths of race and mixed-race discourses represented in Du Bois' concept of double consciousness, Althusser's theory of interpellation, Barthes' notion of 'Neither/Norism' and Sollars' 'Neither black nor white, yet both'.

**1- Race Discourse and Ideology**

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. initiates the 'Introduction' of *Race, Writing, and Difference* with the following question: "What importance does race have as a meaningful category in the study of literature and the shaping of critical theory?" (2). The question

signifies how race has come to be seen not as a biological determinant but as an ideological apparatus in literary studies. Race finds its earliest significant study in W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). For Du Bois, the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line (239). At the opening of *The Souls* Du Bois describes the alienation of some African Americans "in a bitter cry, why did God make me an outcast and a stranger in mine own house?" (214).

Du Bois articulates what would become the hugely significant and influential concept of "double consciousness"<sup>1</sup>:

born ... 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, or measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body (11).

The blackman in America is presented as a problem for whites. Whites view blacks as part of a race problem not as human beings like them. There is a sense that being black is, in and of itself, a performance of difference or otherness that is constantly, viewed by the dominant white culture. Du Bois formulates double consciousness as a visual measurement of one's own value. The African American's vision of himself is mediated through the eyes of the main stream world which Du Bois describes as a measuring tape. By implication, the tape quantifies a numerical value for the soul of a human being. Thus, double consciousness is not just a mode of seeing and being seen in society. The main stream's view of black culture is blocked by the obscuring veil and the African American's own view of himself is altered by the mirror of main stream culture.

African Americans are viewed by others (i.e. the overwhelming white establishment) as a group of cultural outsiders who lack opportunities "to define what it means to be

Americans and the rest must simply fit in" (West 256) the set criteria.

Du Bois's concept of 'double consciousness' for African Americans incorporates a sense of split consciousness. The effects of the split between the idealized culture of the centre and the marginalized culture of others are evoked. Hence, a devaluation of a marginalized culture's values arises in favour of a co-existent dominant culture's ideals. All systems of ideology valorize one superior image while simultaneously devaluating "others" whose reflections do not match that idealized image. The mirror image<sup>2</sup> is pertinent to Louis Althusser's theory of ideology and his concept of interpellation.

Althusser offers a theory regarding the interaction between individuals and their social environments. He defines ideology not as the imaginary representation of the real conditions of existence, but, instead as a representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (55). For Althusser, there is no practice except by and in

ideology, and there is "no ideology except by the subject and for subjects" (57), and "there are not subjects except by and for their subjection" (60).

Althusser's explanation of the structure and function of interpellation stems from Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony<sup>3</sup>, where "a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate class to the system that ensures their subordination" (Fiske 310). The Althusserian theory accounts for the manner in which ruling or dominant and hegemonic discourses perpetuate the necessary consent for their dominance. The oppressed subjects either recognize, and adopt an ideology to conform to the dominant culture (i.e. to be interpellated), or resist the interpellations of the dominant ideology.

## **2- Mixed-Race Discourse**

Du Bois's concept of double consciousness where African Americans are caught by 'two souls', two warring ideals is pertinent to the culture of the black community and addresses only a portion of the identity of the mixed race population. On

the other hand, the recognition and adoption of an ideology according to the Althusserian theory of interpellation (i.e. to conform and be interpellated to the norms of the dominant ideology) fail to consider or depict the dual interpellation of the mixed-race populations where they are forced to choose between two conflicting ideologies and are rejected by both. The mixed-race character depicts or rather incorporates Ronald Barthes' notion of 'Neither/Norism' that consists of "stating two opposites and balancing the one by the other so as to reject them both" (143). Mixed-race characters are in-between figures caught between two opposite poles, the poles of black and white. Mixed-race subjects are seen as black and their interpellation into blackness is often combined with a simultaneous rejection from authentic blackness. By the same token, Werner Sollars in his comprehensive study, *Neither Black Nor White*, explores prominent themes that have been included in mixed-race literature from the biblical curse of Ham and the close knitting of miscegenation and incest to passing and the tragic mulatto

stereotype. He concludes that interracial literature is most often themed "for a black-white contrast of 'either/or' than for an interracial realm of 'neither, nor, both, and in between" (10).

The image of the mulatto, technically the Afro-American character who has one black and one white parent, has been the focus of most recent social, cultural and literary studies. Racially admixed persons are identified as mulatto, quadroons, octoroons, mestizo or mixed.<sup>4</sup> The word 'mulatto', a term originally used to signify a 'mule', stigmatizes the mixed-race character as stubborn, ignorant, barren and denies its humanness:

It describes a creature that will, happily, not be able to continue its unnatural line; a being that will die without offspring so that the categories ('horse' and 'donkey', 'white' and 'black') will return to their former state of purity. (Scales-Trent 100).

The mulatto is a product of two races and two cultures and is caught somewhere between the white and black races and

attempts to find his place in the world while battling ingrained racism and rejection by whites and blacks alike.

The mulatto's divided heritage symbolizes the very idea of the Afro-American as uprooted from his native soil and transplanted in alien and unfriendly territory and living among hatred and bigotry:

The mulatto psyche is a constant battleground of warring elements which control his actions and destiny. He is not a psyche which develops and grows as a result of the sum total of his experiences; it is, instead, bestowed upon him by his literary creators based on the assumption that instability and wretchedness are intrinsically part of his being. In almost every instance, the mulatto is depicted as the victim of persistent longings and unattainable desires aroused by his mixed blood.

(McLendon 7-8)

In the words of Iain Chambers, the mixed-race character's sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this (post) modern condition (27). Mixed-race



characters are in-between figures caught between two opposite poles, two conflicting ideologies: black and white. Hence, they experience a sense of alienation and isolation. They linger between societies seeking a meaningful position for their existence. They are in danger of having no identity at all. According to Naomi Zack, one distinguishing factor of mixed race identity is its 'a priori' or exponential 'alienation' in that

normally, one is alienated if one is different from one's present surroundings because one has been separated from another place and culture in which one had not been not-alienated or "natural" ... But the American of mixed black and white race has no previous context from which he can be said to have been separated, so he is even alienated from normal forms of alienation. (142)

Jean Toomer's personal racial ambivalence as well as that ambivalence found in *Cane* have made the novel one of the most intriguing texts in the twentieth-century literature. And in order to understand and provide a possible palatable explication for *Cane*, as Darwin Turner once observed, "one must look into

Toomer's life" (5). Nathan Eugene Toomer was born December 26, 1894, in Washington D.C. His mother, Nina, was the daughter of P.B.S. Pinchback, who, during Reconstruction, served as acting governor of Louisiana. Toomer's parents, Nathan and Nina, separated when he was an infant. Because Nathan Toomer was too dark, Nina was frequently reminded of her error in marriage. In 1905, the family moved to New York when Nina Pinchback remarried. Still, young Toomer remained lonely because he was unable to feel close to the man his mother had married and because he felt betrayed by her marriage. When his mother died in 1909, following surgery, Toomer returned to Washington with his grandparents. He blamed his grandfather for his father's desertion and for his mother's marriage and death.

Toomer's ambivalence finds an answer in his biography<sup>5</sup>. As a teenager he lived in both the white and black worlds and saw their problems from the inside. He witnessed the unhappy union between his bourgeois mother and his darkskinned father. Thus Toomer came to see himself as one person with two

different sides: a black side and a white one and lacking an integral sense of belonging to either (Lieber 180). In a 1929 letter<sup>6</sup> to the editors of *The Liberator*, Toomer points to his status as a mulatto elite and spills his feelings of being a man suspended between two races and two cultures who never found out who he was:

... racially, I seem to have (who knows for sure) seven blood mixtures ... I have lived equally amid the two race groups. Now white, now colored ... I have strived for a spiritual fusion analogous to the fact of racial intermingling. Without denying a single element in me, with no desire to subdue one to the other, I have sought to let them function as complements. I have tried to let them live in harmony. ( qtd. in Bontemps 21)

Even Toomer's inter-racial marriage to fiction writer Margary Latimer was an attempt to fuse his two warring identities inside. Days before his marriage in October 30, 1931, Toomer released a notice to the press in which he proclaimed that the "old divisions into white, black brown, red, are outworn in this country" and

that his marriage to Latimer heralded "the birth of new order, a new vision, a new ideal of man" (Rusch 105).

### 3- The Form of Toomer's *Cane*

The text of *Cane* is congruent with the paradoxes and the warring tensions of Toomer's two selves that he has attempted to reconcile. *Cane* is so hard to classify as its author. Critics do not seem to agree on the genre of *Cane*. It is a "miscellany of stories and sketches interspersed with poems, and culminating in a one-act play ... It belongs to no genre; it simply is...." (Bone 3). According to Jack M. Christ, *Cane* has defied analysis partly because it behaves like a mob of imagistic poems masquerading as a novel (311).

Published just a year after James Joyce's *Ulysses*, *Cane* has been assumed to be an experimental novel of the 1920s. This is "but the same type of argument that still centres on James Joyce's *Ulysses*" (Blackwell 437). Most critics have rightly seen that the generic status of *Cane* is so baffling and frustrating. Brogan and Wagner-Martin find an affinity between Toomer's *Cane* and

Hemingway's *In our Time* and they see *Cane* and ... *In our Time* as a collage (a basic technique of synthetic cubist paintings and writings). A cubist or fragmentary or an experimental novel, *Cane* is definitely a 'sui generis'. There is no central character that dominates and unifies the work as a novel. Indeed, there is no central plot nor conflict. However, images and themes unify the sketches and short stories of *Cane*.

*Cane* is a three-part work which incorporates a collection of character vignettes and short stories interspersed with occasional lyrics among them and a closet novella in the form of a play. The first and third sections are set in the rural south distinguished by the raising and processing of sugar cane. The second part is set in the urban north.

#### **4- Toomer's *Cane*: A Metaphor for Mixed-Race**

##### **Characters**

The text of *Cane* places mixed-race characters in the centre of its narrative. On nearly every page of the novel, people of mixed race are regulated as inferior status and in danger of

having no identity. The three short stories, "Becky", "Esther", and "Blood Burning Moon", of the first section of the text, end tragically. The tale of "Becky" shows the consequences of miscegenation. The story begins with Becky "the white woman who had two Negro sons" that is followed by an announcement of her death; death in-life "She's dead". Having a relation with a 'Damn buck nigger', the white community considers her 'insane white shameless wench' whereas the black folks see her as a 'poor-white crazy woman'. When Becky gives birth to her first son, the white folks said they'd have no more to do with her. And black folks, they, too 'joined hands to cast her out'. The first son's birth reveals her violation of a code of behaviour and transgression of boundaries that society dictates based upon race. Becky refuses to leave the town and she bears the burden of society's vision of the wrongness of race mixing. The community ostracizes her, yet she is provided with a place "on the narrow strip of land between the railroad and the road" (5)<sup>7</sup> to live in. The location of the home, that the community provided Becky

with, on a 'narrow strip of land between the railroad and the road' is a symbol of her social isolation and containment between two worlds: White and Black.

Becky gives birth to a second son but the community does not care if "white or colored?" because, for them, "Becky now was dead" (6). The house collapses upon her as the train rolls by and no one dares get near her: "Through the dust we saw the bricks in a mound upon the floor. Becky, if she was there, lay under them. I thought I heard a groan" (6-7). Even Becky's sons are locked in between and alienated from both white and black community that "had cast out their mother because of them". The sons become symbols of rejection, degradation; they suffer social ostracism from white and black society that denied their birth and existence and when they leave town, they loudly and passionately condemn both the white and the black members of the community. They "drifted around from job to job ... they answered black and white folks by shooting up two men and leaving town.'Godam the white folks; Godam the niggers,' they

shouted as they left town" (6). The story ends, as it begins with "Becky was the white woman who had two Negro sons. She's dead; they have gone away" (7). In Toomer's hands, Whites and Blacks are implicated equally in hypocrisy and in their inhumane response to Becky and her sons.

The sketch of "Esther" chronicles the ways intra-racial color and class prejudices drive a young woman to develop a neurotic and paranoid life of fantasy. Esther is the daughter of the richest colored man in town and as such is afforded some status in the town. Esther's ancestry is established, because of her difference from a normative folk identity, as mixed and she is described as near white or looking "like a little white child". She believes herself to be unappealing to men, "white and black men loafing on the corner hold no interest for her" (20). Because of her family's insistence on the primacy of class, Esther dreams of herself back into the folk through fantasies about King Barlo as a representative of the folk: "Black. Magnetically so. Best cotton picker in the country, in the state, in the whole world" (23).



When Esther is nine she encounters Barlo, and is obsessed with him, dreaming of having his child. When she is an old maid of twenty-seven, after sixteen years of watching him, Barlo returns to the town as a prosperous man driving a fancy car. When she approaches King Barlo, insinuating her desires, she is rebuffed with shouts of "so thats how th dictie niggers does it". She is mocked and rejected by the very folk from whom she seeks acceptance, "This aint th place fer y. This aint th place fer y". Esther runs out of the building and we are left in dejection: "She steps out. There is no air, no street and the town has completely disappeared" (25). Thus Esther experiences insult and rejection from members of both races and must accept that she belongs neither with whites nor with blacks. Without fixed roots in either the Black or White world, Esther remains an unassimilated stranger, both to herself and to others.

...Played out in the cane fields of Georgia the vignette "Blood Burning Moon" details the death of two men, one is black and the other white, who compete for a mixed-race woman.

Louisa, whose "skin was the color of oak leaves on young trees in fall" (28), is loved by Bob Stone, the son of a wealthy white family that used to be slave owners: "He went in as a master should and took her ... his family still owned the niggers, practically" (31). Being white and racist, Bob wants Louisa as his mistress. On the other hand, this relationship necessarily separates Louisa from the status of her pre-slave African heritage.

In a similar way, Louisa is loved by Tom Burwell who thinks that slavery has been abolished and the codes of inter-racial behaviour have changed, "An then besides, white folks aint up t them tricks so much nowadays. Goddamn better not be. Leastawise not with y. cause I wouldnt stand f it. Nassur" (30). Louisa loves Tom but she also loves Bob; she cannot choose between her African-American side and her European American one. Her inability to choose between the two results in a fight on the night of a full moon and the death of both: Bob is knifed to

death and Tom is lynched and buried alive inside a cotton factory.

As in the first section, the love story of the two tales of part II, "Bona and Paul" and "Box Seat", ends in fading away. The piece "Bona and Paul" delineates a doomed infatuation between two southern students at the University of Chicago -- a mulatto youth and a young white woman whom he attempts to court. Paul, a light-skinned man descended from a slave and a white planter, falls in love with Bona, a white woman. Paul thinks that by mating with Bona, he can overcome the difference that people see when they look at him, "he knew that people saw, not attractiveness in his dark skin, but difference" (75). Bona expresses her love for him and they go out on a date and when they dance

The dance takes blood from their minds and packs it tingling, in the torso of their swaying bodies. Passionate blood leaps back into their eyes ... They know that the pink-faced people have no part in what they feel ... As the blackman swings the

door for them, his eyes are knowing. Too many couples have passed out, flushed and fidgety, for him not to know. (77-78)

As they leave the restaurant together, Paul runs back to inform the doorman "that white faces are petals of roses and that dark faces are petals of dusk. That I am going out and gather petals" (78). Once Paul has accomplished this mission, he attempts to rejoin Bona but he discovers that Bona has departed without him. Mixing race petals and dusk petals distorts rather than affirms a union between a mixed race youth and a white woman. Because of Paul's sense of double consciousness and Bona's lock into the confines of social expectations, they remain isolated and estranged.

"Box Seat" describes an abortive love affair between two mixed raced characters -- Dan Moore, a young man who is obsessed with his African heritage and Muriel, a young woman "whose soul has atrophied as a result of her lonely, frigid life in a city house with iron-hinged storm doors" (Schultz 300). The home of Mrs. Pribby where Muriel lives stands as a symbol of

repression and a physical barrier separating and disabling (preventing) her from expressing her true feelings. The house is "a sharp-edged, massed, metallic house. Bolted ... Bolted to the endless rows of metal houses". The seats in Mrs. Pribbys's home are tight and restrictive: when Mrs. Pribby sits down, "There is a sharp click as she fits into her chair and draws it to the table. The click is metallic like the sound of a bolt being shot into place" (57). Dan and Muriel are not able to communicate or express their inner most being: "Dan is hot on one side. Muriel, hot on the other. They straighten. Gaze fearfully at one another. Neither moves" (60-61). They are caught in the grip of social restrictions. Muriel does not feel free to love him. A battle ensues within her when she realizes that the love she feels for Dan conflicts with her public image: "I wont let myself ... the town wont let me love you, Dan. Don't you know?" (58-59).

When Dan and Muriel arrive at the theatre they discover that the seats are slots. The seats are bolted houses and the people seem to Dan to be able to be "a bolt that shoots into a slot and is

locked there. Dan's ambivalence toward Muriel begins when he feels that she is given a class position among the black community and her attainment of box seat's status is an indication of her corruption: "Muriel presses her coat down from around her shoulders. Teachers are not supposed to have bobbed hair. She'll keep her hat on. She takes the first chair". Dan sits among the less privileged members of the black audience: "He has to squeeze past the knees of seated people to reach his own seat" (61). Dan's feelings are thwarted in an alienating environment. This is further demonstrated in Dan's interest in the black woman who sits next to him and the old black beggar whom he sees shows his inability to fuse conflicting ideologies or reconcile the warring tensions of his two selves.

A telling example of his search for proximity to and search for primitive African roots is embodied in the black woman sitting beside him in the theatre and the sight of the figure of the old beggar. Sitting among the crowded seated people, Dan "shrivels close beside a partly Negress whose huge rolls of flesh

meet about the bones of seat-arms. A soil-soaked fragrance comes from her ... Her roots shoot down. Dan's hands follows them. Roots south ... Dan's heart beats violently ... From either aisle, bolted masses press in. He does not fit" (62). Encountering what he considers to be authentic blackness in an attempt to capture some of its essence, and place his hands upon its soil to cool the fever and restlessness he experiences, Dan realizes that he, like the woman does not fit within the boundaries and confines of the city. The figure of the old man that Dan sees "was born in slavery" and his eyes "were bloodshot and watery" (65). The strange force that drew Dan to the old man is the force of the return of the suppressed memory and search for his African primitive roots.

Dan and Muriel are entertained by two dwarfs "dressed like prize-fighters, foreheads bugling like boxing gloves" (64). The scene takes on a caricature tone as dwarves fight each other for the chance to sing a love song to the audience. Engaging in a box match in an elegant theatre is not exactly the norm. The

winner of the contest sings to Muriel, offering her a white rose he has kissed with his bloody lips. Muriel remains entangled between social pressures which dictate that she must accept a blood-spattered rose offered and her desire to express her true feelings of revulsion at the offer: "Muriel, tight in her revulsion, sees black, and daintily reaches for the offering" and as her hands touches it, "Dan springs up in his seat and shouts: 'JESUS WAS ONCE A LEPPER!'" (66). And Dan, disgusted by Muriel's act of subjugation, leaves her and the theatre. And another love story ends in fading away. Dan has attempted to respond to his surroundings but he fails to produce tones consistent with the feelings it stirs in him. Dan finds himself in surroundings that demand a response he cannot give because it is alien to him. Dan and Muriel are alienated from normal alienation.

The third section of *Cane* is the most cohesive, and well-knitted part consisting of a single story which shifts in format from drama to poetry to short story. It is about Ralph Kabnis, a mixed-race man who has recently come from the south to teach



black children at a rural industrial school in Georgia. In fact, Kabnis came to the south seeking his roots to better understand and connect with his origins in the rural south. Toomer's proclamation that "Kabnis is Me" (211)<sup>8</sup> has encouraged critics to explain that part in light of Toomer's autobiography. Charles Scruggs contends that, "Kabnis / Toomer is the son who searches for a geneology, for a father who can authenticate the son's existence" (190)<sup>9</sup> . The story of Kabnis may share some similarities with Toomer's own biography based on Toomer's experience in Georgia having an identity crisis as a mulatto.

The first two thirds of the narrative are devoted to establishing Kabnis, a lemon-colored northerner who has taken a job in Georgia as a teacher but he is quite uncomfortable living in the rural south. Near the beginning of the story, Kabnis says, "If I could feel that I came to the South to face it ... If I, the dream (not what is weak and afraid in me) could become the face of the South. How my lips would sing for it, my songs being the lips of its soul" (81). Inability to face and establish a harmonious

relationship with themselves and with others plagues mixed race characters. Lewis sees Kabnis as "a promise of a soul-soaked beauty; uprooted, thinning out ... the soil whose touch would resurrect him (96).

Kabnis is cracking up due to his fear of being in the south. He is terrified of being lynched and feels threatened, "He sees himself yanked beneath that tower. He sees white minds, with indolent assumption, juggle justice and a nigger ... (83). Kabnis loses his job because he is unable to tolerate the restrictions imposed on him as a school teacher, he goes with his friend, Halsey, to work in his wheel-making shop. Lewis, another mixed- race character who understands the complexities of mixed race, is struck by the beauty of Carrie, Halsey's sister, who brings food for the men everyday. Lewis sees Carrie's beauty is fading away" He sees the nascent woman, her flesh already stiffening to cartilage, drying to bone. ... Her rich beauty fading (101) and wonders "what Kabnis could do for her" and what she could do

for Kabnis (102-103). Lewis thinks that Carrie could "mother him" (103), but is Kabnis able to accept her mothering?

When Carrie comes to get Kabnis so he can go to work with Halsey, he calls her "a child, dear sweet little sister." When she touches him in an attempt to offer comfort he is "violently shocked at her touch" and responds by going on a tirade about sin:

the only sin is whats done against the soul. The whole world is a conspiracy + sin, especially in America, an against me. I'm th victim of their sin. I'm what sin is (115).

The mixed-race people are "a muted folk who feel their way upward to a life that crushes or absorbs them" (105). They are destined to be crushed or absorbed, destroyed by or assimilated into the culture they are forced to share. As Father John begins to preach, Kabnis is unable to understand the connotations of his words whereas Carrie is moved by his words. Carrie attempts to comfort him: "He thinks to his knees before her, ashamed, exhausted ... Carrie is about to lift her hands in

prayer, when Hasley, at the head of the stairs, calls down" (116). Halsey's voice provides the discordant note that breaks the connection Kabnis moves away from her with his bitterness and frustration intact Kabnis sounds a note of the utter failure of racial reconciliation. Kabnis comes to the south seeking his roots but finds himself "cut off" from his people.

To conclude, *Cane* breaks from traditional stereotypes of the literature of the blacks and the black writers. The mixed-race characters are placed in the centre of the narrative of the novel. Becky, Esther, Louisa, Kabnis, Bona and Paul certainly boast the characteristics of the in-between figures. They are portrayed as the victims of persisting longings and unattainable desires aroused by their mixed blood. They are transplanted in alien and unfriendly environments with which they cannot come to terms with. They are compelled to choose between two conflicting ideologies; when they try to 'interpellate' they are rejected by both. They have moved beyond an either/or choice to Barthes' neither/norism. Their eyes and ears, like the reaper in the poem

"Harvest Song", "are raked with dust of our fields at harvest time" (69), conveying a definite sense of alienation. Toomer's mixed-race characters are alienated even from the normal forms of alienation.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Critics have noted that Du Bois draws on several prior sources which mention "double consciousness". In Emerson's 1843 essay "The Transcendentalist", Emerson employs the term to refer to the need for the transcendentalist to negotiate between the transcendent divine and the demands of the ordinary world, two strains of thought which were not easily reconciled. Bruce, Dickson D. Jr. "W.E.B. Du Bois and the Idea of Double Consciousness". *American Literature* 64.2 (1992): 299-309 (300). As a medical term, double consciousness was well known by the 1890s as the experience of dual personalities within one individual (303). Cynthia D. Schrager adds that Du Bois' double consciousness intersected with African and African American folk beliefs in the occult. She gives an excellent account of William James's own researches into the possession of one body by more than one soul, of which the title of this paper is taken, in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (569) "Both Sides of the Veil: Race, Science, and Mysticism in W.E.B. Du Bois". *American Quarterly* 48.4 1996: 551-586

<sup>2</sup> In Lacan's "The Mirror Stage", the infant's recognition of his reflection in the mirror presents a unifying image of the self while radically dividing the infant's experience of himself from his image in the mirror seen as if through another's eyes. Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I." *Ecrits: A Selection*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1977: 1-7. According to Žižek, "to achieve self identity, the subject must identify himself with the imaginary other, he must alienate himself -- put his identity outside himself, so to speak, into the image of his double" (104). Žižek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. New York: Verso, 1989. It is seen also in Virginia Woolf's explanation of female subjectivity men's superiority to women. Woman's self reflection in the same ideological mirror will be half the size it should be: "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflection the power of man at twice its natural size" (35). Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own 1929*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Gramsci. "Hegemony", in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, Maldon: Blackwell P, 1998, p. 277.

<sup>4</sup> The word 'mulatto' is possibly derived from the word 'mule' and it can be traced to the Arabic word muwallad which means mestizo or mixed (Werner Sollors, ed. *Interracialism:*

*Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature and Law*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 (127-128).

<sup>5</sup> For a comprehensive account of Toomer's life see: Cynthia Earl, and Richard Eldridge. *The Lives of Jean Toomer: A Hunger for Wholeness*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Darwin T. Turner. *In a Minor Chord: Three Afro-American Writers and their Search for Identity*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971: 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Jean Toomer. *Cane* 1923. New York: Liveright, 1975. Hereafter all references to the sketches and stories in *Cane* will be cited parenthetically in the text.

<sup>8</sup> Qtd.in Alan Golding, "Jean Toomer's *Cane*: The Search for Identity through Form," *Arizona Quarterly* 39 (Fall 1983) 211.

<sup>9</sup> Scruggs, Charles, and Lee VanDemarr. *Jean Toomer and the Terrors of American History*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998, 190.

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