

# Immigrants & Minorities

Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fimm20>

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To cite this article: Mehdi Ghasemi (2021): A Study of Double Consciousness in Lauri Lemberg's *St. Croix Avenue* and Paula Ivaska Robbins' *Below Rollstone Hill*, *Immigrants & Minorities*, DOI: [10.1080/02619288.2021.1916475](https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2021.1916475)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2021.1916475>



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Published online: 23 Apr 2021.



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# A Study of Double Consciousness in Lauri Lemberg's *St. Croix Avenue* and Paula Ivaska Robbins' *Below Rollstone Hill*

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, I analyse the Du Boisian concept of 'double consciousness' and offer an overview of its different implications. I then approach Lauri Lemberg's *St. Croix Avenue* and Paula Ivaska Robbins' *Below Rollstone Hill* from the perspective of this concept. A comparative study of these novels enables me to detect and contextualise cases of double consciousness within both texts as related to Finnish immigrants in the United States. I also argue how this 'double consciousness' affects the lives and ethnic identities of Finnish immigrant characters. In line with a contextual analysis, a textual analysis in the form of close reading will also be undertaken in order to offer a better understanding of the functions of 'double consciousness' for Finnish characters in both literary works.

**KEYWORDS** Finnish American literature; Du Bois; double consciousness; twoness; ethnic identities

## Introduction

Lauri Lemberg (1887–1965), born in Kangasala, Finland, moved to the United States in 1903. He started his career as a socialist journalist and later worked as a publisher in Duluth. He also acted as a cultural promoter, distinguished playwright, actor and theatre director and represented the Finnish Playwright Federation in North America between 1929 and 1945. In New York, Lemberg married Rosa Clay,<sup>1</sup> a renowned African-descent artist, actress, theatre director and cultural activist in the Finnish American labour theatre. The cultural collaboration between the couple was beneficial for the Finnish American community. In his plays, Lemberg started with political and Finnish immigration themes but later moved to romantic comedies and musical plays. Unlike Lemberg, Paula Ivaska Robbins (1935–) was born in Teaneck, New Jersey, to ethnic Finnish parents. She

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changed her career several times, eventually receiving a PhD in Management from the University of Connecticut. She has also served as a medical and botanical editor and writer with several published books on botanical history. In addition, she wrote two historical novels wherein she draws mostly upon Finnish immigration, culture and history.

*St. Croix Avenue*, which is considered Lemberg's only novel, was serialised after his death in the Finnish language newspaper, *Industrialisti*, during 1967 and 1968. In 1992, the novel was translated into English by Miriam Leino Eldridge and published in Wisconsin by Työmies Society.<sup>2</sup> The novel depicts the life and times of a Finnish family, encouraged by their relatives and friends in the USA to move to America at the turn of the twentieth century, including Saara and her husband Tapio who move to join their uncle. They buy a farm near Duluth, Minnesota, and work on it, but right after Tapio loses his life in an accident, Saara desperately sells the farm and buys a restaurant in the St. Croix Avenue, Duluth, and converts some parts of it to a boarding house. Despite her difficult financial circumstances, she sends her daughter, Johanna Serafina, to a high school, which was impossible for many Finnish immigrants at the time. After graduation, Johanna Serafina, who changes her name to Gloria, finds a job in an American law firm. However, unfortunately, she is raped and impregnated while drunk by James, the youngest shareholder of the firm. When helpless Gloria unexpectedly enters James' residence to inform him of her pregnancy, she finds out about his furtive relationship with his new secretary. She furiously throws a heavy trophy cup at James, and when he ducks to avoid it, he loses his balance, and his head strikes the fireplace, resulting in James' death and Gloria's long-term imprisonment.

Robbins' *Below Rollstone Hill*, like Lemberg's novel, is a work of historical fiction and the life of Helmi, her husband August and three kids who move to the US. Helmi and August are enticed by the letters they receive from Aunt Lempi Salo, Helmi's favourite sister, who lives in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. They sell their flat in Tampere and move to Fitchburg; however, due to August's unemployment, they have to squeeze themselves into a tiny flat wherein Aunt Lempi and her family also reside. August begs his wife to return to Finland despite their hardships there, but his wife strongly resists. Following Aunt Lempi's suggestion, Helmi buys an old house and converts it to a boarding house, but August, who always thinks of men as breadwinners, sees this as shaming himself. He finally resorts to alcohol, commits acts of mindless vandalism and fights

with people while drunk, and consequently, he is occasionally arrested and jailed by the police. He, who becomes a cause of shame for the whole family, eventually dies due to liver problem. Like Saara in *St. Croix Avenue*, Helmi operates the whole business alone, but unlike Saara, she does not send her children to high school. Aino, her youngest daughter, has big dreams, and to attain them, she moves to New York where she contracts syphilis following a risky relationship with a Finnish sailor, and she eventually ends up in a mental hospital for the rest of her life.

Although *St. Croix Avenue* and *Below Rollstone Hill* have been written at different times and by two different authors, and despite their differences in characterisation, setting and structure, they both cut a slice across the 'Great Immigration' of Finns to the USA at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> They portray the living and working conditions of some Finnish immigrants before they leave their homeland and touch upon some of the sociopolitical and economic push factors catalysing the migration flows. The novelists also depict Finnish immigrants' horrendous transportation experience of long and exhausting voyages, tiny, overcrowded cabins, the lack of proper meals, 'seasickness for two weeks' and the 'awful smell of vomit and urine all over the ship.'<sup>4</sup> Moreover, they reveal some of Finnish immigrants' harsh living and working conditions, unemployment, discrimination, marginalisation and problems caused by the language barrier along with their social, political and cultural pursuits in the new environment. Accordingly, the novels are examples of the literature of immigration, which narrate the Finnish immigrants' relocation process from their home country to the USA, where, despite challenges, they have to adapt themselves to the new culture and setting.

In their novels, Robbins and Lemberg represent several cases that reflect Du Bois's notion of 'double consciousness' for Finnish immigrants in the USA. I should note that numerous attempts have been made to explore Du Bois's theory of double consciousness, and the concept has long been part of debates among scholars in different fields, including political science (Reed 1997; Allen 2002; Shaw 2004; Gooding-Williams 2010), sociology (Rawls 2000; Brand 2018; Alston 2018) and philosophy (Eze 2011; Kirkland 2013; Meer 2018). My survey shows that all these studies situate and confine Du Bois's conceptualisation of double consciousness to Africans' experiences in America. However, there are a few scholars who have added a different dimension to the notion. For example, Mark Q. Sawyer has invoked the theory in relation to Latin American racial politics, believing that double consciousness is 'a key idea in anti-

racist struggle that crosses national boundaries.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Jason Adam Wasserman and Jeffrey Michael Clair use the term to discuss the problems of homeless people in the United States, while James M. Thomas situates the theory within the sociopolitical contexts of antisemitism in Western Europe.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to political science, sociology and philosophy, a number of literary scholars have contextualised Du Bois's notion in literature. However, based on my study, they have used the term to analyse some of the literary works produced by African Americans. For example, in *The Dilemma of Double-Consciousness* (1993), Denise Heinze approaches Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *Jazz* from the perspectives of double consciousness, showing how the African American characters experience two distinct ways of life at the same time.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, in his 'A Most Disagreeable Mirror: Race Consciousness as Double Consciousness' (1998), Lawrie Balfour analyzes a couple of James Baldwin's novels and demonstrates the black characters' inability to see themselves as both African and American.<sup>8</sup> In addition, Kristof Hoppen frames his study of two contemporary African American crime fictions, including Chester Himes' *Cotton Comes to Harlem* and Walter Mosley's *Devil in a Blue Dress*, based on the theory of double consciousness.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Danny Sexton exercises double consciousness in the verse play, *The Darker Face of the Earth*, by African American writer Rita Dove,<sup>10</sup> and in his doctoral dissertation, David C. Jones applies the term to some of the literary works by four African American authors, including Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin and Lorraine Hansberry.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I frame my study of two Finnish American novels based on Du Bois's theory of double consciousness. My intention is to show how this double consciousness influences the living and working conditions as well as the ethnic identities of Finnish immigrant characters in the United States as represented in the novels. I also aim to demonstrate that the Du Boisian idea of double consciousness has the potential to address these Finnish American novels, too. To this end, I first elaborate on the theory of double consciousness and some of its implications. Then, I examine both novels and relate them to the theoretical paradigms of double consciousness as experienced by Finnish immigrant characters, who are torn apart not only between their home and adopted countries but also between the American society and their ethnic communities. I focus on two main aspects of the theory of double consciousness, including 'looking at oneself through the eyes of others' and 'two souls and double ideals.'<sup>12</sup>

In order to offer a better understanding of the functions of double consciousness in the case of Finnish immigrant characters, a textual analysis in the form of close reading of the novels will be conducted in line with a contextual analysis, which touches upon the social, political and historical conditions.

### **Double Consciousness: Looking at Oneself through the Eyes of Others**

The notion of double consciousness has several layers. It originally addresses the negative effects of white supremacy on the lives of African Americans and how systematic racism ostracises African Americans from the mainstream of American society. It also reflects how the racialised African Americans perceive themselves from the perspectives of white Americans and internalise racial oppression and inferiority. Moreover, double consciousness unveils a sense of twoness which brings about internal conflicts for African Americans and situates them between being African and American. According to Du Bois, this sense of twoness, which can be individual and communal, would present itself when one 'always look[s] at one's self through the eyes of others' and 'measure[s] one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity.'<sup>13</sup> Based on this outlook, Danny Sexton believes that double consciousness refers to African Americans' two souls: an outward self which is created based on the ways white Americans perceive them, and an inward self which is formed based on their true self and reality.<sup>14</sup> Here I argue that this two-soul state should not be confined to Africans in America, since it can also be traced in members of other immigrant and/or ethnic minority groups, especially those who have racial, cultural, lingual and ideological differences with members of their host societies and believe that they are looked down upon, ignored and discriminated against. It is worth stressing that I do not overlook the major differences that exist between the forced immigration of black slaves to the United States and the voluntary immigration of some other immigrant groups, including Finnish immigrants who moved to the United States in search for a better life. Rather, irrespective of how immigrants arrive in their new environments – either by force or by choice –, they might experience double consciousness, and it depends to a great extent on the differences they have with the host societies and the race-based discrimination that they face there.

In *Below Rollstone Hill* and *St. Croix Avenue*, many Finnish immigrant characters feel double consciousness. The differences they have with the white native-born Americans affect their lives and careers. Moreover, the difficulties encountered mainly by the first generation of the Finnish immigrant characters in acculturating to the American mainstream exclude them from the host society and compel them to form their own communities. Unlike the first generation, the second-generation characters, who wish to enter the mainstream, frequently look at themselves from the perspective of Americans and attempt to reduce their differences, especially in appearance, with the Americans. For example, in *Below Rollstone Hill*, before moving to New York, Aino and Aili – the Finnish second-generation teenage characters – buy dresses that conform to typical American codes.<sup>15</sup> They do so even though as job seekers they are in a fragile financial situation, and their savings can cover their train tickets to and living costs in New York for only two weeks.<sup>16</sup> Giving priority to clothes based on the mainstream culture signifies that they aim to remove any racial etiquettes that might make them look unusual or different from indigenous Americans. They are aware that they are different from members of the dominant society and seek to embrace the dominant cultural and social conventions of their new environment.

In a similar manner, in *St. Croix Avenue*, immediately after some people have laughed at Hannes' clothes in Duluth,<sup>17</sup> he buys some American clothes to look like an 'American gentleman,' believing that 'I'd be ashamed to [appear in public] in my old-country clothes.'<sup>18</sup> Hannes' remarks show that he wishes to leave behind his Finnish origins and achieve assimilation. He also changes his hairstyle: 'In the style of Tampere his hair was combed back and up into a pompadour, but now he let the barber part in on the left. That was the American style, and it was very becoming.'<sup>19</sup> Moreover, he does his best to 'speak unaccented English so that no one could point a finger at him and call him a "foreign immigrant."<sup>20</sup> His endeavours reveal that he wishes to remove any sign of foreignness, which in his case underlines consciousness of ethnic and class inferiority and which could postpone his integration in his adopted home.

As Robbins and Lemberg show, the second generation of Finnish immigrants and those who immigrated in the early stages of their lives adapt themselves to the new environment and adopt its cultural codes faster than the first generation of the Finnish immigrants and newcomers. Here Hannes, just like Aino and Aili, wishes to hide his differences so that

he is not looked on with amused contempt by Americans. Double consciousness can be here applied to these teenage characters of Finnish origin whose 'norms are at odds with the implications of acting in line with the norms of others or the converse.'<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, they constantly measure their speech, behaviour and composure against the norms of the dominant society and attempt to adjust their clothes, accents and conduct to fit the American ideals lest they create a feeling of disdain or pity in the eyes of beholders. In this climate, double consciousness can catalyse racial passing, urging some members of ethnic groups to reconcile their traditions, beliefs, lifestyles and values with those of the native-born white Americans.

In yet another example, double consciousness in ethnic identity occurs in *St. Croix Avenue* when Johanna Serafiina and her mother visit the Central High School to enrol. When the principal asks Johanna Serafiina her name, she replies, 'Gloria' changing her name immediately 'to a more elegant one, a more American one' as she declares.<sup>22</sup> Changing her name can be interpreted as her quest for Americanisation, cultural assimilation and integration. Gloria is embarrassed by belonging to an immigrant community and fears being viewed as uncivilised. As William Høglund writes, 'Finns came to be described in the popular imagination as phlegmatic, taciturn, inclined to melancholy, dominated by emotions, quick to anger, revengeful, unimaginative, and persistent.'<sup>23</sup> Gloria feels that immigrants, carrying such stereotypical labels, have less chance to improve their conditions and more difficulty of being accepted in the dominant society. Her mother, however, feels 'as if someone had hit her over the head with a log,' reacting by saying, 'What foolishness is this, girl? ... Your name is Johanna Serafiina, not "Klooria."'<sup>24</sup> It can be said that attitudinal differences between the first and second generations raise questions of double consciousness for children of Finnish immigrants in both novels, because the children are entangled between the American society and their families. In her 'One Culture, Two Cultures? Families of Finns in the United States in the Twentieth Century,' Johanna Leinonen notes that 'the tensions between immigrant communities and the dominant society' made the children of Finnish immigrants keep distance from their parents' culture.<sup>25</sup> As Gloria informs Hannes, 'Äiti [mother] and I live separate lives ... She has her own ideas and her pictures of what her life is supposed to be, and I have mine.'<sup>26</sup> Gloria's words highlight the gap that exists between the first and second generations of Finnish immigrants. Like Gloria, Robert



Vihervuori, a young Finnish man with an academic degree in Law from Valparaiso University, known as 'the university of the poor,'<sup>27</sup> changes his name to Robert Green.<sup>28</sup> Changing his name helps him to camouflage his Finnishness and ethnic identity and adopt Americanness. From another perspective, some Finnish names such as 'Vihervuori,' which contain diphthongs and the juxtaposition of the /i/ and the /h/, are not easy for English native speakers to pronounce leading to some characters changing their names.

Unlike the second generation of Finnish immigrants, the first generation, due to various factors, including language barriers, cultural differences, racial conflicts and discrimination, prefer to live and work within their Finnish communities. In *Below Rollstone Hill* and *St. Croix Avenue*, 'Yankees wouldn't rent to [Finnish] immigrants,'<sup>29</sup> and thus, 'the Finns made up their own world, a kind of community within a community.'<sup>30</sup> In his *Guarding the Golden Door*, Roger Daniels notes that '[m]any Americans had long held hostile feelings toward immigrants in general and certain types of immigrants in particular.'<sup>31</sup> In such an anti-immigrant and xenophobic environment, Finnish entrepreneurs have to serve Finns and be served by them. Thus, several Finnish characters, such as Helmi and Saara, develop localised businesses to both earn money and provide services to their country fellows. The St. Croix Avenue – a Finntown, located in the central district of Duluth, known as one of the areas with the densest concentrations of Finns in the entire United States by the early 1900s – represents one of those communities within a community. From one perspective, the Finntowns can be seen as a form of lingual, ethnic, cultural, political and commercial segregation, which cut off their residents from the mainstream society, limited their connections and prospects and postponed their integration. From another perspective, the tendency for groupness and aggregation is to enhance mutual interaction and 'bounded collectivity with a sense of solidarity, corporate identity, and capacity for concerted action.'<sup>32</sup> Historically speaking, having a common language, culture, nationality and marginalisation experience were key factors that made Finnish immigrants stay together. Like Finns, several other immigrant communities, including Swedes and Germans, built their own towns, namely Swedetowns and German towns, in the USA. Such towns helped the immigrant communities 'to escape the scorn of' the dominant 'society by living and working as ... self-segregated ... working class.'<sup>33</sup> Based on this argument, residing and resorting to their comfort zone are means to avoid measuring themselves by the codes of

the American society and to keep themselves immune from being looked down upon and despised.

Because of the community within a community, most of the Finnish male and female characters in both novels prefer relationship and intra-marriage within their own ethnic group. Both novelists show that many Finnish girls, who prefer to hold relationships with Finnish men, lead better lives. Accordingly, many Finnish girls prefer to build relationships with their male fellow citizens, who play protective roles against men of other nationalities. Leinonen writes that 'Finnish women were usually expected to marry a man from their own ethnic group. Men had more leeway when choosing a partner – their courtship of foreign women rarely aroused public disapproval.'<sup>34</sup> Leinonen later adds that 'because of the experiences of marginalization, lack of language skills, cultural preferences, and the tightness of Finnish communities, most Finns married inside their ethnic group in the early twentieth century.'<sup>35</sup> Owing to double consciousness, elder Finnish characters prefer not to mix with people outside of their ethnic community and prevent their children from marrying members of other communities, and as both writers portray, intermarriage across ethnic boundaries for the second generation is unwelcome.

According to Varpu Lindström-Best, serious fights took place between different nationalities over women. Finnish boys thought they had exclusive rights to Finnish women and 'just couldn't stomach seeing a Finnish girl under the arm of some kielinen (one who speaks the [English] language).'<sup>36</sup> In one case when an Irish boy, Patrick, shows an interest in Katri Kiiskinen, who works as a chambermaid at the St. Louis Hotel, Kalle has a violent fight with Patrick, and after hitting him, Kalle – who promotes the image of Finns as good fighters – asks Katri, 'Such a pretty girl as you are, how in the world have you ended up in the clutches of that redheaded Irishman?'<sup>37</sup> Even some Finnish girls, including Gloria, believe that '[i]t's a shame and a disgrace that a Finnish girl goes around with an Irishman.'<sup>38</sup> Kalle's and Gloria's statements disclose the perceptions of the Finnish immigrants' position in the American social order, thinking that they stand higher than Irish immigrants but lower than the white native-born Americans. Their position in the American social order is another source of double consciousness, making the Finnish immigrant characters look at themselves from the eyes of the Americans and with their own perceptions of other immigrant communities, including the Irish.

It is worth noting that many Irishmen in the United States were seen as unskilled, uneducated and violent people who used to 'display a special interest in and talent for street fighting.'<sup>39</sup> Kerby A. Miller states that 'the Famine Irish usually entered the American work force at the very bottom, competing only with free Negroes or – in the South – with slave labour for the dirty, backbreaking, poorly paid jobs that white native Americans and emigrants from elsewhere disdained to perform.'<sup>40</sup> Likewise, in his *How the Irish Became White*, Noel Ignatiev states that the Irish immigrants laboured for low wages on the rail beds, docks and canals under very dangerous conditions, and even 'they were occasionally employed where it did not make sense to risk the life of a slave.'<sup>41</sup> As a result of their low positions and incomes, they had to socialise and cohabit with black Americans in some notorious districts. Owing to their close relationship with black Americans, the Irish were called 'niggers turned inside out,' and the black Americans were sometimes referred to as 'smoked Irish.'<sup>42</sup> Despite having white skins, Irish immigrants, due to their negative portrayals and positions, were perceived as non-white. Arguably, the status of the undesirable but white Irish immigrants offered a new interpretation of whiteness.<sup>43</sup> All these features made them fail to secure a higher position in the American society, and they stood just above black Americans, Filipinos and Japanese and below several other ethnic groups in the American pecking order.<sup>44</sup> Like the Irish immigrants, the Finns occupied an inbetween position between Asiatic races and the white Americans.<sup>45</sup> It can be said that the Irish and Finnish immigrants 'are white without actually *feeling* white; they are alienated from other whites,' and 'they feel themselves treated as non-whites,' and thus, their 'whiteness does not amount to privilege.'<sup>46</sup> To take distance from their inbetween ethnic status and identity, the Irish and Finns had to go through 'the processes of "becoming white" and "becoming American."<sup>47</sup> This shows that, as sociopolitical constructs, whiteness is ethnically heterogeneous and it is a fluid rather than a monolithic conception.

Unlike some Irish immigrants, a major number of Finnish immigrants were skilled workers. For example, as 'burn beaters,' they used their land-clearing techniques, cleared forests and turned wilderness into farming areas<sup>48</sup> and 'contributed to the development of America's log-building traditions.'<sup>49</sup> In addition, compared to immigrants from many other countries, the rate of literacy among Finns was exceptionally high. The high literacy and skilfulness made Finns think of themselves more highly than some other immigrant communities. Despite that, as Leinonen writes,

'Finns often engaged in the most menial jobs.'<sup>50</sup> The inconsistency between the Finnish immigrants' high literacy and skills and their engagement in the most menial jobs is another source of double consciousness and a source of disappointment. This manifests itself in the Finnish immigrant characters' arguments about the roots of their problems and unsatisfactory positions in the USA. They are mainly divided into two groups and have different and opposing positions. On one side, there stands a group of Finnish immigrants, who blame themselves for their lack of progress. As they assert,

we live in the worst part of town, in our own ghetto like Jews in Germany, we drink and we fight, we don't learn English, we don't apply for citizenship, and we don't try to get into unions. We need to clean off our own doorstep and show, by our work and our achievements, that Finns are ambitious, honest, and altogether proper people. In brief we must raise ourselves to American levels of working conditions, housing and social life.<sup>51</sup>

This group points at their own passivity, misbehaviours and disunity for their unacceptable positions in the American society. On the other side, there stands a group of Finns who believe that '[Americans] had ingrained prejudices against European immigrants and their descendants. They were uncivilised rabble who had come to snatch the bread out of the mouths of American workers because of the low wages they would work for and their low standard of living.'<sup>52</sup> Unlike the first group, the members of this group blame the Americans for hindering the Finnish immigrants' progress with their racist, discriminatory and exploitative measures. The positions of two groups clearly reveal the duality in their thoughts and strivings. Their responses also reflect how they view themselves from the perspective of the Americans, for example, as 'uncivilized rabble,' violent drunkards who cause inconvenience and lazy people who refuse to learn English. The internalisation of the Americans' anti-Finnish sentiments not only creates an element of internal and external conflict for the Finnish immigrants but also affects their identities. Such sentiments urge the Finnish immigrants to limit their contacts with the Americans so as to reduce their sense of double consciousness, but it is my contention that their lack of connection with the mainstream society keeps their double consciousness intact longer.

## Double Consciousness: Two Souls and Double Ideals

The Du Boisian notion is not confined to observing and measuring oneself as a member of an ethnic minority from the standpoint of others. As Du Bois writes, double consciousness happens when '[o]ne ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro,' and it includes 'two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.'<sup>53</sup> He further explains the term when he writes:

From the double life ... must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality, and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence. The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or revolt, to hypocrisy or radicalism.<sup>54</sup>

The traits of double consciousness, as detailed by Du Bois, represent a status of mental duality. As a result of this, some immigrants and minorities frequently oscillate between two opposing worlds and eras and areas, ideals and ideologies and compare their conditions both in their home countries and adopted homes. This is 'to live with one foot in the homeland and the other foot in the host society.'<sup>55</sup> In this light, transnational immigrants reside both inside and outside their host countries. Whereas they are physically present in their new environments, they face some challenges that prevent them from mentally settling down there. In this condition, their identity is disjointed and divided between two countries and their social, political, cultural and economic systems. As a result, they do not feel wholeness. They are entangled in drawing comparisons between their own conditions and those of the natives in the dominant society, separated from each other with a veil. The situations on the two different sides of the veil vary, and since immigrants frequently look at themselves through the eyes of others, the changes are more noticeable to them. Despite this, some people on both sides resist to adjust themselves to the recurring changes, and their resistance to changes causes bewilderment and conflict.

When this aspect of double consciousness is applied to Finnish immigrant characters in these novels, one finds that they are mentally in constant motion and oscillation between Finland and the USA. Several characters in both novels are engaged in making comparisons between

their present and past status, their level of freedom and socio-political systems as well as their job positions and incomes in Finland and the USA. Based on their measurements, they regret or favour their decisions. In this climate, they are always in the state of having two opposite or contradictory tendencies, opinions and poles. One character who is always involved in such comparisons is August in *Below Rollstone Hill*. He who was 'an active member of the Socialist Workers' Party, was dissatisfied with the conditions in Finlayson, the large cotton mill in Finland, where he worked long hours as a foreman in the dye room.'<sup>56</sup> After 'some of his friends had gotten into trouble with the government because of their complaints,' he urges his family to move to the United States.<sup>57</sup> As his daughter Aino states, '[t]he idea that there was freedom of speech in America was very appealing to [him],' believing that 'in the New World there might be an opportunity to create workers' democracy.'<sup>58</sup> Aino's remarks clearly reveal her father's exhaustion with the political and working conditions in Finlayson and his high hopes for freedom and democracy in the New World. Raija Taramaa notes that August has a firm belief in the 'socialist schema meant to achieve better working conditions for the workers in America and around the world.'<sup>59</sup> However, his failure to reach his dreams makes him exhausted with the sociopolitical conditions of the New Country. August's disappointment not only makes him regret his decision of moving to the United States, but also engages him in a frequent comparison between the two countries and their sociopolitical systems. The internal conflict between his two warring ideals reaches its zenith when he fails to find any jobs and continues even after he gets a menial low-paying job as an unskilled labourer at a lumber camp, which does not match with his schooling and skills. As a fierce socialist, he, who frequently compares his work conditions as a foreman in his home country and as a menial labourer in the USA, directs a harsh criticism against the capitalist system and resorts to violence. Thus, between 'pretence or revolt,' and 'hypocrisy or radicalism,'<sup>60</sup> August adopts revolt and radicalism.

By the same token, in *St. Croix Avenue*, several characters who are unhappy with their labour exploitation believe that American capitalists 'suck as much out of [their] workers.'<sup>61</sup> Karen Brodtkin draws upon a duality in the case of these immigrants. While they are perceived as outside the circle of civil society, the capitalist system obscures its economic dependence on their labour to 'make them extremely vulnerable targets of exploitation.'<sup>62</sup> In such an exploitative climate,

socialism is appealing to many Finnish characters of both genders, and they, who feel exhausted with their exploitative and harsh working conditions, develop their critique of capitalism as the dominant ideology. Their desire to improve their living and working conditions encourages 'Finns to join the labor movement in large numbers,'<sup>63</sup> which causes more conflict between the capitalist Americans and socialist Finns and make the veil between them thicker. The veil, made of incompatible interests, ideologies and ends, minimises the relationship and understanding between the racialising American employers and the racialised Finnish workers and forms partitions within the society. Paul Gilroy refers to this conflicting condition as 'unhappy symbiosis.'<sup>64</sup>

The failure of Finnish immigrant characters in building a happy symbiotic relationship with the white native-born Americans provokes them into 'the double life.' In another essay, entitled 'The Conservation of Races,' Du Bois refers to this double life as a 'dilemma,' and believes that 'it is a puzzling one,' mainly because many African Americans ask: 'What, after all, am I? Am I an American or am I a Negro? Can I be both?'<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the Finnish immigrant characters face such a puzzling dilemma and dichotomy in their daily life and always ask whether they are Finns, Americans or both? In order to be more naturalised and achieve greater stability, a number of them in both novels apply for the US citizenship. However, having dual citizenship increases their sense of double consciousness. As both stories reveal, in order to be eligible to apply for the citizenship, the applicants have to live for five years in the USA prior to their application. They also have to pass an English proficiency test and prove they have not been anarchists. In addition, to be eligible for US citizenship, Finns had to win a court case to prove their Europeanness and whiteness.<sup>66</sup> These requirements prevent some Finnish immigrant characters from obtaining the US citizenship. Since they fail to maintain a sense of belonging to the USA, they move back and forth between their Old Country and the New Country. As a result, they feel less secure and stable in their new environment and face the challenging question of self-identification: shall they identify themselves with America or Finland? Double consciousness shows itself in the dual terrain of fitness and unfitness and the form of belongingness and non-belongingness for such immigrants in America without American citizenship. The exclusionary account of citizenship or the status of noncitizen assigns an inferior position to some Finnish immigrant characters. This sense of alienation

and displacement is felt stronger by those Finnish immigrants who, upon seeing the Statue of Liberty, 'tossed [their] passport overboard, exclaiming, "I don't need that kind of paper anymore!"'<sup>67</sup> This action can be interpreted as the shedding of their identity to allow for further growth and to remove parasites that may have attached to their old identity. It also shows their optimism and firm belief in America as an ideal land where they would attain all their deferred dreams.

It is my contention that double consciousness is not limited to those Finns who fail to obtain American citizenship. It also stirs up dual consciousness for their naturalised Finnish American brethren who successfully obtained American citizenship. They who are also caught between Finnishness and Americanness, struggle to reconcile their identity as a Finn and an American citizen and experience an identity dilemma. Taramaa writes that '[t]heir cultural relations to Finland were fading away, but the assimilation to American society was not yet happening.'<sup>68</sup> Such characters are 'precipitated into a state of "in-betweenness," belonging to neither one place nor the other,' and they are "homeless both in [their] own home and in [their] adopted home, and thus, it can be said that they 'illustrate the notion of "double homelessness."<sup>69</sup> In this climate, Finnish immigrants' identities, both for those who manage to obtain American citizenship and those who fail, are mobile and fluid between two countries and cultures. Since their identities consist of cultural, religious and national elements from both countries, they own 'hybrid identities; identities that sometimes concur and sometimes clash.'<sup>70</sup> The hybrid identities are revealed when some Finnish characters living in the USA financially support their home country. For example, in *Below Rollstone Hill*, Carl and Aino found a Finnish Relief Committee to raise and send money to Finland. As Aino says, 'We spent every minute of our spare time working to raise money and send help to Finland.'<sup>71</sup> Carl's and Aino's charity shows their affection and affiliation to their home country despite their physical distance and that they are still connected to the Old Country.

As a result of the fluidity between the two countries, when a serious problem occurs to some Finnish immigrant characters in the United States, they immediately decide to return to Finland. For example, when the Great Depression negatively affects the lives of several Finnish characters in both novels, they think of returning to their home country. For instance, in Lemberg's novel, after Hannes develops his watchmaking business, the tough economic depression makes him unable to pay



even his monthly loan instalments, and he desperately offers his shop for sale and is determined to return to Finland; however, no buyer appears, and consequently, he has 'to put out of his mind any thoughts of returning to Finland.'<sup>72</sup> This shows that the Finnish immigrant characters have a double life and mindset and, owing to dual consciousness, some of them under duress have the possibility of moving back and forth between Finland and the USA. It is worth noting that 'homing' is natural, and with the passage of time, some immigrants might forget about the problems in their homeland which made them leave in the first place.

As both texts illustrate, this sense of duality comes to the surface again after the US entry into the First World War. As Aino narrates, 'Our Socialist Finnish newspaper, the *Raivaaja*, editorialized that the war was only a conflict between capitalist powers over empire, and that working people had nothing to gain.'<sup>73</sup> Accordingly, many Finnish immigrants do not support the war and teach their children 'to sing the anti-war song, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier;"' however, at school, they are taught to chant patriotic slogans supporting the war, such as 'When Johnny Comes Marching Home.'<sup>74</sup> This state of facing two opposite or contradictory forces causes some conflicts within the households of Finnish immigrants. In Robbins' novel, despite his mother's disagreement, Antti enlists in the US army and is sent to France in April 1918. In response to his mother's question that 'Why should you go and fight for the capitalists?' Antti retorts, 'This is our country now, and as long as the United States is in the war, it's our responsibility to serve.'<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, some Finnish young men voluntarily register for military service in World War I. It is interesting to note that some Finnish young men moved to the USA due to their fear of being recruited in the Russian army however, some of them later joined the US army to fight in the war. Here another trait of Du Boisian double consciousness, namely 'double duties,' is traced. To become accepted by the host country, the Finnish young men voluntarily accept a duty – shedding blood for their new country – which they had avoided by leaving their home country. As the novels show, such involvement positively affects the hetero-image of young Finns and help some of the second-generation Finnish immigrants to improve their living and working conditions. According to Odd Sverre Lovoll, '[i]t was especially the second generation that promoted their ethnoculture as being compatible with American ideals, values and norms.'<sup>76</sup> Like Finnish young men, some

Irish men served in the Union army, and as Noel Ignatiev notes, they had two main aims: 'to establish their claim to citizenship, and to define the sort of republic they would be citizens of.'<sup>77</sup> Their participation in the war, signifying their commitment to their adopted home, was a part of the process of elevating their status and becoming white and American over time.

Just like their social and political involvement, schooling helped some of the young generation of Finnish immigrant characters to improve their conditions and careers in the American society. However, schools run by American system make the children of Finnish immigrants experience double thoughts, double ideals and double words. Thus, while schooling enables the Finnish young generation to improve the quality of their personal and working life, it makes them feel twoness at the same time. As Aino says, '[b]ecause our parents never learned much English, they could not share our American experience in school, and as children we lived two separate lives, a Finnish life and an American life.'<sup>78</sup> As a result of their double consciousness at home and school, as Aino adds, 'the language that we spoke with each other at home and with our friends was not really Finnish at all, but Fingliska,' a language 'derived by the addition of Finnish case ending onto English words.'<sup>79</sup> Jon Saari also emphasises this fact: 'They created a new language of Finglish alongside the language of the Old Country. They watched their descendants quickly turn into partial strangers.'<sup>80</sup> While American schools help the children of immigrants to acquire English and American culture, they also create a fractured and a troubled symbiosis between them and their parents.

Entanglement in the double thoughts causes a fracture between other individuals in the novels, too. One example in *St. Croix Avenue* is Gloria, who loves Hannes and promises to wait for him until he graduates from Valparaiso University, but at the same time, she wishes to marry her rich American boss, James McGrath, who would grant her wealth, high social class and luxury life. Here another trait of Du Boisian double consciousness – double minds and double social classes – is applied to Gloria. As expected, in this process she faces a dilemma: to wait for Hannes as she solemnly promised or to opt for James? She manifests her duality when she asks, 'Can a woman love two men at the same time? Could she divide her heart – her being? Could she give her loving, tender soul to Hannes and her just-blossoming body to McGrath?'<sup>81</sup> Her words reveal her 'doubt and bewilderment' as other features of double consciousness. Unlike Gloria, Hannes avoids any duality of thoughts in this regard, and while

he has the possibility of starting relationships with some of his female classmates, he remains loyal to Gloria. He has a motto, received from his mother before departing Finland: 'remember to live a clean life.'<sup>82</sup> Like Gloria, Aino in *Below Rollstone Hill* faces double consciousness in her personal life. In New York, as a result of her excessive trust in all men, she starts a serious relationship with Lauri, who 'had recently come from Finland.'<sup>83</sup> The relationship leads to her contracting syphilis, and as soon as Lauri learns about this, he leaves New York without informing Aino. The disease and her mental distress negatively affect her mind about men and turn her from an optimist to a pessimist. Aino's attempts to engage Aino with some social activities later moderate her views about men. However, her double thoughts and doubts about men do not leave her.

## Conclusion

As already discussed, Paula Ivaska Robbins' *Below Rollstone Hill* and Lauri Lemberg's *St. Croix Avenue* draw upon several individual and group cases of double consciousness experienced by Finnish characters in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. The double conscious sentiments reflect the fact that two different and, in some cases, opposing American and Finnish cultures, sociopolitical trends, ideologies, values and practices influence the lives and identities of Finnish characters in the USA. The younger generation of Finnish immigrants attempts to distance themselves from their traditions and ethnic identities and struggles to integrate in the American mainstream. To this end, they change their hair styles, clothes and accents, but they cannot entirely move from the cultures and ideologies which they have grown up with and have deeply rooted in their minds.

Unlike the second generation, the first generation of Finnish immigrants does their best to maintain their cultures, traditions and ideologies in their Finnish communities. They can neither Americanise their Finnishness nor can they adopt the American system as it is. As a result of their failure in reconciling two different parts of their identities, many of them experience double consciousness and suffer from disintegration and marginalisation. In consequence, this sense of duality imposes an identity dilemma upon them in the USA. In addition, seeing oneself through the eyes of the dominant citizens shapes their mentality as the subordinated members of society and results in their self-humiliation. Since they live in a society that represses and devalues them, they suffer

from the misperceptions towards and discrimination against them, and since the reality is different from what they imagine before moving to the USA, they feel disappointed and frustrated.

As detailed in this paper, in literary studies, Du Bois's vision of double consciousness has mostly become canonical within African American literature. This limitation motivated me to situate the Du Bois's theory in Finnish American literature with a focus on Lemberg's and Robbins' novels. This is to show that the insight can also apply to other immigrant groups, including the Finns and the Irish in America, as represented in these two novels. Furthermore, it is my contention that the concept should not be confined to a particular period, such as early twentieth century. Rather, I believe that the idea can expand to different times, even the recent times, and to any immigrant or immigrant community that has lingual, racial, cultural and ideological differences with their host societies and who, due to such differences, suffer from duality, seclusion and discrimination.

## Notes

1. Rosa Clay (1875–1959) was born in south-west Africa, but at the age of four, she became the foster daughter of Karl and Ida Weikkolin, who were missionaries of the Finnish Mission Society in southwest Africa. A few years later, she moved to Finland along with her foster family and lived there until 1904 when she moved to the United States with a Finnish passport. See, for example, Rastas "Talking Back." 187–207.
2. Since I do not have access to the original text, published in the *Industrialisti* newspaper, I use the English translated version as my reference in this paper.
3. The years between the 1870s and the 1920s are referred to as the Great Immigration of Finns into America wherein the American Fever – the successive waves of mass immigration to the United States – had also spread to all parts of Finland. During that period, a wide array of issues, including World War I, Russian oppression, lack of freedom, 'economic pressure and hope of a better life in a new environment with new possibilities' motivated more than 350,000 Finns to move to America. See, for example, Kero, "Migration from Finland to North America." 42–3.
4. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 2.
5. Sawyer, "Du Bois's Double Consciousness versus Latin American Exceptionalism." 86.
6. Adolph Jr. Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (Oxford, 1997); Ernest Jr. Allen, "Du Boisian Double Consciousness." *Massachusetts Review*, (2002); Todd C. Shaw, "Two Warring Ideals." *Journal of African American Studies*, (2004); Robert Gooding-Williams, *In the Shadow of Du Bois* (Cambridge, 2010); Anne Warfield Rawls, "Race as an

Interaction Order Phenomenon: W. E. B. Du Bois's Double Consciousness." *Sociological Theory*, (2000); Anna Livia Brand, "The Duality of Space' Double Consciousness." *Society and Space*, (2018); Brandon Alston, "Glances Curiously and Walks On – Racializing Visibility and Double Consciousness." *Socialism and Democracy*, (2018); Emmanuel Eze, "On Double Consciousness." *Callaloo*, (2011); Frank M. Kirkland, "On Du Bois. Notion of Double Consciousness." *Philosophy Compass*, (2013); Nasar Meer, "W. E. B. Du Bois, Double Consciousness and the 'Spirit' of Recognition." *The Sociological Review*, (2018); Jason Adam Wasserman and Jeffrey Michael Clair, "The 'Homeless Problem' and the Double Consciousness." *Sociological Inquiry*, (2012); James M. Thomas, "Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the 'Jewish Question'" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (2020).

7. Denise Heinze, *The Dilemma of Double-Consciousness* (Athens, 1993).
8. Lawrie Balfour, "A Most Disagreeable Mirror." *Political Theory*, (1998).
9. Kristof Hoppen, "The (Double) Consciousness in African American Crime Fiction – Popular Literature as Platform for Social Criticism": <https://www.grin.com/document/112119>.
10. Danny Sexton, "Lifting the Veil." *Callaloo*, (2008).
11. David C. Jones, "Apart and a Part: Dissonance, Double Consciousness, and the Politics of Black Identity in African American Literature, 1946–1964." file:///C:/Users/shaki/Downloads/FULL\_TEXT.PDF.
12. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 7.
13. Ibid.
14. Sexton, "Lifting the Veil." 778.
15. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 87.
16. Ibid.
17. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 62.
18. Ibid., 79.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 169.
21. Kirkland, "On Du Bois' Notion of Double Consciousness." 141.
22. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 52.
23. Høglund, *Finnish Immigrants in America 1880–1920*, 125.
24. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 52–3.
25. Leinonen, "One Culture, Two Cultures? Families of Finns in the United States in the Twentieth Century." 287.
26. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 159.
27. Ibid., 168.
28. Ibid., 292.
29. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 7.
30. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 31.
31. Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and immigrants since 1882*, 7.
32. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 12.
33. Thomas, "Du Bois, Double Consciousness, and the 'Jewish Question'". 1336.

34. Leinonen, 'One Culture, Two Cultures? Families of Finns in the United States in the Twentieth Century,' 286.
35. *Ibid.*, 288.
36. Lindström-Best, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Immigrant Women in Canada*, 64.
37. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 127.
38. *Ibid.*, 71.
39. Barrett and Roediger, 'The Irish and the "Americanization" of the "New Immigrants" in the Streets and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900–1930,' 8.
40. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 318.
41. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 2.
42. *Ibid.*, 41.
43. Whiteness, its definitions, boundaries and modifications have received a significant amount of attention, and thus, the scholarship on whiteness has become vast. Most notable studies on the subject are David R. Roediger's *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) and *Working Toward Whiteness* (2005), Theodore Allen's *Invention of the White Race* (1994), Noel Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1995), Charles W. Mills' *The Racial Contract* (1997), Matthew Frye Jacobson's *Whiteness of a Different Color* (1999), Neil Foley's *The White Scourge* (1999), Thomas Guglielmo's *White on Arrival* (2003), George Lipsitz's *Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (2006), to name a few. A major number of studies on whiteness conducted in the Nordic countries draw upon Nordic whiteness. Among them, I can mention Kristin Loftsdottir's and Lars Jensen's *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region* (2012), Catrin Lundström's and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum's 'Nordic Whiteness: An Introduction' (2017) and Jana Sverdljuk et al.'s *Nordic Whiteness and Migration to the USA* (2021).
44. Barrett and Roediger, "The Irish and the 'Americanization' of the 'New Immigrants' in the Streets and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900–1930." 9.
45. See, for example, Kivisto and Leinonen, "Representing Race."
46. Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 276, 277 & 278; italics in original.
47. Barrett and Roediger, "The Irish and the 'Americanization' of the 'New Immigrants' in the Streets and in the Churches of the Urban United States, 1900–1930." 6. As James Barrett and David Roediger inform, this ethnic inbetween status was not limited to the Irish and Finnish immigrants, and Greeks, Italians and Serbo-Croatians had similar experience. However, as Roediger notes in his *Working toward Whiteness: How America's Immigrants Became White*, the racial inbetweenness was not permanent, and some of these ethnic groups whose whiteness was under question and were apart from the American society worked towards whiteness and eventually became a part of the dominant society.
48. Kostiainen, "Politics of the Left and Right." 30.
49. Alanen, "Finnish Settlements in the United States." 57.
50. Leinonen, "One Culture, Two Cultures? Families of Finns in the United States in the Twentieth Century." 287.

51. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 318.
52. *Ibid.*, 315.
53. See note 12 above.
54. *Ibid.*, 155–6.
55. Kivisto, “The Transnational Practices of Finnish Immigrants.” 298.
56. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 2.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Ibid.*, 3.
59. Taramaa, *Stubborn and Silent Finns with ‘Sisu’ in Finnish-American Literature*, 130.
60. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 156.
61. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 81.
62. Brodtkin, “Work, Race, and Economic Citizenship.” 116.
63. Kostiainen, “Politics of the Left and Right.” 132.
64. Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 127.
65. Du Bois, “The Conservation of Races.” 22.
66. See, for example, Kivito and Leinonen, “Representing Race: Ongoing Uncertainties about Finnish American Racial Identity.”
67. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 28.
68. Taramaa, *Stubborn and Silent Finns with ‘Sisu’ in Finnish-American Literature*, 172.
69. Ghasemi, *Quest/ion of Identities in African American Feminist Postmodern Drama*, 100.
70. Ghasemi, “Hyperhybridism: Postmodernism is Old but Not Old Fashioned.” 167.
71. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 124.
72. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 396.
73. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 56.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*, 57.
76. Lovoll, “In the American Matrix: Norwegians in Chicago in the Nineteenth Century.” 139.
77. Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*, 89.
78. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 25.
79. *Ibid.*
80. Saari, “Updating and Rethinking the Finnish American Story.” 7.
81. Lemberg, *St. Croix Avenue*, 214.
82. *Ibid.*, 12.
83. Robbins, *Below Rollstone Hill*, 95.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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