



A CRITICAL READING OF THE METAPHOR OF VEIL IN W.E.B. DU BOIS' *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK* AND RALPH ELLISON'S *INVISIBLE MAN*

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ABSTRACT

This paper offers a critical reading of the veil metaphor as articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk* and by Ralph Ellison in *Invisible Man*. Through close comparative analysis of language, narrative voice, and rhetorical stance, the paper shows that Du Bois's veil functions to mobilize collective historical consciousness and political claims, while Ellison's reworking dramatizes everyday concealment, interracial tension, and the paradox of being visible yet misrecognized. The study underscores key continuities that both authors have deployed the veil to interrogate access to self-knowledge, the limits of representation, and the labor of being seen under regimes of racialized perception.

The current research work intends to portray how Ralph Ellison transforms Du Bois' veil from barrier to a medium of self-realization and empowerment. This piece of scholarship employs a qualitative research approach and draws on New Historicism, Critical Race Theory, and Psychoanalytic literary criticism as interpretive frameworks.

Keywords: Invisibility, veil, metaphor, double-consciousness, identity.

Résumé

Cet article propose une lecture critique de la métaphore du voile telle qu'elle est formulée par W.E.B. Du Bois dans *The Souls of Black Folk* et par Ralph Ellison dans *Invisible Man*. Par une analyse comparative approfondie du langage, de la voix narrative et de la posture rhétorique, l'étude montre que le voile chez Du Bois sert à mobiliser une conscience historique collective et des revendications politiques, alors que chez Ellison il dramatise la dissimulation quotidienne, les tensions intraraciales et les paradoxes d'une visibilité mal reconnue. L'étude souligne des continuités essentielles qui ont permis aux deux auteurs d'utiliser le voile pour interroger l'accès à la connaissance de soi, les limites de la représentation et la difficulté d'être vu sous des régimes de perception racialisée.

Cette recherche a pour but de montrer comment Ralph Ellison a transformé le voile de Du Bois vu comme un obstacle à un tremplin de réalisation de soi et d'autonomisation. L'approche qualitative appuyée par trois théories littéraires a été adoptée dans cette étude.

Mots clés : Invisibilité, voile, métaphore, double conscience, identité.

INTRODUCTION

The American literary landscape reflects a diverse and culturally rich tapestry, highlighting the significance of diversity within American culture. The emergence of the 'New Negro' movement during the late 1920s to the mid-1930s infused the arts and intellectual pursuits with optimism and potential. This era witnessed the ascent of a group of talented writers who contributed fictional narratives, theatrical productions, and poetic creations by enhancing the depth and quality of Afro-American literature.

African Americans with ancestral ties to Africa aimed to convey their experiences and challenges through creative expressions. Their objective was to capture the multifaceted essence of the American experience, drawing from both ancestral recollections and the challenges they faced in their lives. This burgeoning group of black writers among which are W.E.B Du Bois and Ralph Ellison. They collectively rejected prevailing narratives of black suffering and victimhood, asserting the importance of the South as a region where African Americans could rise above perpetual victimization by white individuals. At the forefront of these long strides towards freedom, W.E.B Du Bois and Ralph Ellison have sifted through the rich African American artistic production, and publish *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) and *The Invisible Man* (1954).

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is an artistic feat that testifies to the abiding presence of double consciousness in African-American narratives. However, double-consciousness acquires with Ellison a more complicated dimension due, in large part, to his attempt to review the concept so as to reflect exactly the meaning intended by Du Bois. But while it is true that Ellison treats this concept in an ambivalent way that conjures up Du Bois' use in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), his dramatization of the concept reveals its inherent complexity in an unprecedented way. The present study purports to identify the different aspects of the novel that reflect double-consciousness and to show how double consciousness is an accompanying trait of the novels in every part of them.

While there is a sea of literature addressing Ralph's and Du Bois' masterpieces, to best of my knowledge, a previous study which focuses on a critical analysis of the metaphor of veil in both novels is hardly available. That's why, I have decided to work on: **A critical Reading of the Metaphor of Veil in W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.** The current research work could permit any reader to apprehend the veil as an interface where trauma is translated into tactic and where misrecognition is turned into counter-vision. This paper matters since it enriches African American literary criticism with an interpretive model that honors ancestral traditions as stepping stone for identity building and social critique. This piece of scholarship is still significant since it provides Instructors with concrete lenses for teaching *The Souls of Black Folk* and *Invisible Man*.

The Reading materials used to study: **A critical Reading of the Metaphor of Veil in W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*** is classified into primary sources, which are the novels understudy, and secondary sources, which include: Internet sources, journals, books, theses, essays, poems, and articles. A qualitative research method has been used and it is supported with three literary theories namely New historicism, Critical Race Theory and Psychoanalytic literary criticism. The reason behind using these theories is to dissect and analyse the novels using different and diverse comprehensions to provide a solid understanding of themes, symbols, and even the characters in the novels.

In this paper, terms like 'black people' and 'black individuals', 'Negroes' are used to depict African Americans' experiences and struggles in the two novels. It is important to underscore that these terms are utilized solely within the context of scholarly

discourse and literary analysis. Their usage does not, in any manner, intend to perpetuate or endorse racist ideologies or discriminatory attitudes. Instead, they are used to explain the novels' underlying themes and socio-cultural aspects.

1. Literature Review and Methodological Framework

1.1. Relevance of the Selected works

Pointing out some previous scholars who have worked on this topic is crucially important because it helps to critically analyze the existing data and identify the possible gaps.

Bouhadjela(2024) in his Master thesis depicts the protagonist's physical and psychological metamorphosis at the hands of his racist and hostile society. Bouhadjela uses Critical Race Theory, and Psychoanalytic Criticism in his work to both highlights the protagonist's relationship with his society, and to delve into the protagonist's psychological transformation. Besides, his paper describes "the protagonist's transformation trajectory from his metaphorical invisibility and blindness to maturation and self-enlightenment." (Bouhadjela, 2024, p.iii). Bouhadjela's paper will certainly inform my own.

Beulah's (2014) analysis in his article is important in many ways. In fact, in his paper, the Invisible Man uses invisibility to deconstruct the visible white code of invisibility to reveal the truth of the black man's fundamental and constitutional right to be treated as equal, to be recognized and identified as an American and the freedom to contribute to the riches of his African Americanism, and to the prosperity of the American nation. (Beulah, 2014, p. 754) As Ellison told writer Roger Rosenblatt in 1973, "That the Invisible Man writes a story at all makes a social statement. The protagonist's story is his social bequest. And I'll tell you something else. The bequest is hopeful." (Ibid., p.754)

Xiong and Wang (2025) give in their piece of scholarship a full analysis of the metaphors and symbols as key writing techniques used in *Invisible Man*. Their paper specifically raise the tension embedded in the metaphors and the sarcasm conveyed through the symbols. For them, metaphors can be subdivided into three categories: "active metaphors, dormant metaphors, and rigid metaphors" (Xiong and Wang, 2025, p.2). Their article will help me to grasp the underlying message of the novel understudy so as to effectively address my topic.

Xiaohong (2023) explores and summarizes in his research work the symbolism in *Invisible Man* by analyzing static symbols such as color, character, objects, and music, as well as dynamic symbols like speech, behavior, and vision. For him, the author uses symbolism to express the invisible man's thoughts and feelings, including the symbols of colors, objects, words, actions, identity, visual symbols and blues music. This writing technique enables any reader to have a better understanding of the novel (Xiaohong, 2023, p.4). Xiaohong's paper is worthy of our study and reference.

Badhuli(2024) on his part, tries to explain the real sense of the veil of Invisibility in his article. For him, the novel unravels the complex correlation between freedom and the formation of black identity, surpassing the narrative and encompassing the broader socio-cultural milieu. (Badhuli, 2024, p.147) The use of invisibility as a metaphor highlights the double aspects of outside marginalization and the internal process of self-discovery. The protagonist's journey is intricately woven with various encounters, ideologies, and historical contexts, stressing the inherent bottlenecks linked with the formation of black identity and the pursuit of freedom. (Ibid., p.148)

As far as Ritchane (2019) is concerned, he offers in his paper a rich piece of art in which double-consciousness is dramatized in an unprecedented way. In fact, the novel can be considered as an attempt at rethinking the concept of double-consciousness altogether. What seems original about *Invisible Man* in its connection with this concept is that its author has for the first time dramatized the concept, as will be shown, in a way that has provided a resolution for the tension of the African-American's 'warring souls'. And if there is a work of art that has best reflected as faithfully as possible Du Bois' concept of double-consciousness, it is unarguably *Invisible Man*. (Ritchane,2019, p.396).

As for M. Lento (2021), he offers an in-depth analysis of the concepts double-consciousness and Negro Spirituals. Through this paper we learn that double-consciousness can not only be perceived as the source of gruesome hardships Black people endured during slavery but also a life jacket which enable them to survive in a violent and hostile world. Moreover, if double consciousness was Blacks' life jacket, Negro spirituals were Blacks' 'safety net' which enabled them to sing hardships and hope. In short, this means that: "for black slaves, and indeed, for most people living under oppressive conditions, the identities embedded in double consciousness can be oppressive as well as liberating. (Lento,2021, p.13). This paper will put more weight to my arguments.

Somewhere else, Pinn (2023) exposes in his work the manifest of Black religion and its impact on former slaves' lives. As a matter of fact, DuBois pushes religious studies to recognition the manner in which: "religion arises out of the struggle to obtain ultimate meaning through a process of "becoming." (Pinn,2023, p.4) Religious experience, therefore, entails the shaping of the individual's sense of ultimate meaning (complex identity) in light of community. (Ibid., p.4) Pinn's essay will inform my own.

Last but not the least, P. Zuckerman (2019) unravels in his article the underlying philosophy of Black religion in the New World. This paper underscores with strong details the tremendous role played by the black church in a racist and hostile world. In other words, Black church has been a safe heaven for millions of African Americans. Thus, Zuckerman confesses that:" Du Bois stressed the ways in which religious institutions can be recognized as social, communal centers which provide this-worldly rewards and comforts." (Zuckerman,2019, p.250) He implicitly argued that religious

involvement need not solely be explained as a quest for cosmic communion or psychological compensation, but as an avenue for communal refuge and social bonding. This work like the precedent will corroborate my study ideas.

1.2. Critical Appreciation of the Selected Works

Bouhadjela highlights in his Master thesis the protagonist's physical and psychological transformation in his society where he is doomed to live at the borders. The symbolism in *Invisible Man* is worthy of our study and reference. It perfectly expresses the theme of the novel, deepens the idea of the work, and is thought-provoking and evocative. The author's study covers only one novel, this research work will start where he stops and expand it to other literary works.

Beulah x-rays the concept of invisibility in the novel. The author not only dissect the underlying ideas of this concept but he celebrates Ralph Ellison's artistry and literary techniques as well. Though the novel receives timid audience during the times of its publication, eventually it has gained the intellectual and philosophical acceptance of the White Society and Black Society. Ellison's "Invisible" representation permits him to cut above all the Afro American writers in representing the issues of Race and in bringing everlasting pride for Black culture and identity. Despite this laudable achievement, the author of this paper does not give us the complete sense of "Invisibility" expected by Ellison. This study will strive to fill this gap.

Xiong and Wang give in their work a full analysis of the metaphors and symbols as key writing techniques used in *Invisible Man*. They portray the tension embedded in the metaphors and the sarcasm conveyed through the symbols. The authors fail to give us solution for this tension.

Badhuli displays in his paper a broad picture of the protagonist long journey for the quest of identity and freedom. By depicting the central character's pursuit of self-discovery within the barriers of invisibility, reflects the fundamental human yearning for independence and self-identity in the face of adversity. Badhuli's piece of scholarship should be praised for providing a lasting testament to the enduring impact of literature in illuminating and inspiring individuals and fostering ongoing dialogues on the fundamental aspects of human existence. This study will surf on this article valuable insights so as to broaden the topic through other scholars works.

Ritchane sketches in his article a broad analysis of the concepts of 'Invisibility' and 'double-consciousness'. At the end of the novel, the protagonist is obliged to blend the past and the present that is behind the narrator's existence. Thus, this blending is final indispensable equilibrium of double consciousness as he is constrained to think, act, and reason dually, a condition which cannot be successfully achieved except by the blending of his two selves torn between the past and the present. Ritchane's work is a boon for ours. His work is a starting point of ours in which we will enlarge the debate by setting new perspectives.

Lento sifts through his piece of scholarship the existing literature so as to unravel the underlying meaning of the two concepts 'double-consciousness' and the Negro Spirituals. The author pinpoints the huge role played by negro spirituals at the times of slavery and after slavery. Though Lento's work is inspiring, his analysis is too narrow. Rather, he fails to tell us clearly how these Negro Spirituals contribute to the Black people self-enlightenment and Identity building.

Pinn portrays in his essay the importance of Black religion and its impact on former slaves' lives. We learn from this article that, Religious experience, could be a stepping stone for one's quest for self-realization and thereof, the community complex identity building. This piece of scholarship will bring more valuable insights to my own.

Zukerman depicts in his research work the leading role played by the black church during slavery and post-slavery eras. W.E.B. Du Bois' work on religion has received little attention for a long time. His exclusion from the canon has had serious drawbacks for the development of the sociology of religion. Whatever may be said, Du Bois' work is significant since it stresses the ways in which religious institutions can be recognized as social communal centers which offers rewards and comforts. Thus, Du Bois urges us to note that religious involvement need not solely be explained as a quest for cosmic communion or psychological compensation, but as an avenue for communal refuge and social bonding. Du Bois' sociological study on Religion is too narrow and limited. This paper generates greater scholarly appreciation for valuable inputs.

1.3. Methodological Framework and Literary theory

1.3.1. Research Design

In the frame of this study, qualitative research method has been applied, using documentary research as mean of data collection. A qualitative research method or interpretive reading is a close contextual interpretation of texts—attentive to symbolism, form, voice, and cultural meaning. It aimed at producing thick insights rather than numerical generalizations. Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* and W.E. B Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* have been used as primary sources. Out of novels, previous scholars' works including articles, essays, memoirs, dissertations and theses have been critically read and appreciated. Thanks to the above existing literature, this research work has attempted to highlight the hidden messages behind the metaphor of veil in W.E.B Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*.

1.3.2. Literary Theory

Critics use literary theories as different lenses to study literature; these lenses allow them to study works of art based on certain conventions, and those conventions come from theories which adopt particular aspects of an important work. Literary theory's chief purpose is to x-ray the nature of literature and its context, whether about society, language or culture. It connects the writer and his work to better understand a piece of literature, allowing writers, readers, and scholars to dive into its deeper meaning and connotations.

1.3.2.1. *New Historicism*

New Historicism emerges as the literary theory that focuses on an in-depth appreciation of research works dealing with history. It studies every work within the context. It is also, reading literature as embedded in historical discourses, institutions, and power relations. The major scholars and their pieces of scholarship supporting this theory include: (Greenblatt 1980); (Foucault 1969); (Gallagher, Greenblatt 2000). New Historicism has made it easy to effectively read the novels having the past in memory so as to uncover the underlying messages of both novels.

1.3.2.2. *Critical Race Theory*

Critical Race Theory is an intellectual and social movement that originated in the United States of America, dealing with issues related to race and racism. "It was a response to the inequality and the oppression faced by minorities, especially the African American people; it was a long struggle for social equality for colored people to gain justice from the United States laws." (Bouhadjela, 2024, p.18) Professor Derrick Bell from Harvard Law University and Alan David Freeman from the University of Buffalo Law School are considered pioneers of this theory. Critical Race Theory provides a solid understanding that American policies resort to relying on white people to neglect colored peoples' rights. The main goal of Critical Race Theory is to challenge and eliminate all sorts of social injustice, including racism and inequality. It can be seen as an interdisciplinary approach used by scholars to face race, racism and power. Researchers, politicians, and specialists use Critical Race Theory to comprehend socially constructed racism so as to achieve more justice, with race as the cornerstone of the analysis. By employing this theory, we can gain a deep understanding of how societal racism and internal struggles intersect to define the characters of the *Invisible Man* and *The Souls of Black Folk*.

1.3.2.3. *The Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism*

Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism is used to interpret a literary work through the lens of psychology. It aims to discover and study the unconscious motives, desires, internal conflicts, and symbols rooted in the literary work; it also examines characters and their relationships throughout the narrative, delving deep into their emotions, thoughts, and dreams (Parker, 2015, p.77). This theory aims to offer an in-depth analysis and understanding of characters in literary work through the lenses of psychology and the concepts of Sigmund Freud. In Freud's view, "we cannot even comprehend ourselves, why we behave, and what we do" (Amari, 2015, p.8). Therefore, he establishes several theories and principles that contribute to understanding human behaviors. As a result, these theories and concepts shaped how to analyze a piece of literature through the interpretations of characters, authors, and even the literature itself. This theory will enable us to dive into the protagonists' emotions, thoughts and dreams in order to better appraise the psychological impact on the narrative. It will also help us to have a

better appraisal of how societal racism and internal struggles intersect to define the characters of the *Invisible Man* and *The Souls of Black Folk*.

2. Results and Analysis

2.1. Metaphor of the veil as seen in W.E.B Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Before tackling this part, clarifying the term "Veil" may be helpful. It is crucially important to start from the religious representations. Generally, some holy scriptures make it compulsory for women to cover their head with a veil. For instance, some Muslim women and some Christian Nuns wear veil. The term Veil refers to a garment that covers the head and the face. It is also an object that is used to hide something or someone's beauty.

In the frame of this study, the veil is used metaphorically. It is more than a mere object but a symbol of blindness. In this line of thought, Ralph Ellison confesses in his masterful work, *The Invisible Man*: "I am invisible, understand, simply because, people refuse to see me" (Ellison, 1952, p.20). Unlike Ellison, the metaphor of veil in Du Bois' masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk* could be interpreted as that shimmering membrane between the seen and the unseen, the human and the stereotypes, the self and the society. That is blatantly fictionalized in Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*:

In all things purely, social we can be as separate as the five fingers, and yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." This "Atlanta Compromise" is by all odds the most notable thing in Mr. Washington's career. The South interpreted it in different ways: the radicals received it as a complete surrender of the demand for civil and political equality; the conservatives, as a generously conceived working basis for mutual understanding. So, both approved it, and to-day its author is certainly the most distinguished Southerner since Jefferson Davis, and the one with the largest personal following (Du Bois, 1903, pp. 46-47)

Du Bois does not consider Booker T. Washington's ideology as the perfect if not as a way of covering the reality. From the above extract, one could easily understand that the veil that separate socially, economically and politically cannot be torn apart by a mere accommodationist philosophy. In fact, Booker Washington through his Atlanta Compromise, urges his black fellow people to accept industrial training, material progress and the Status quo. Worse, President Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery through the 13th Amendment but the Negroes are still not free. Besides, the former slaves were re-enslaved through Jim Crows Laws in the south. In short, the newly free slaves are living in a racist, segregated world where the veil of opportunity between the Whites and the Blacks is too large. What is the use of political emancipation without economic emancipation?

Still talking of the veil, Ralph Ellison questions the originality of so-called freedom. Even if slaves have been freed after the different rededications, Ralph Ellison thinks that African Americans are not wholly free. He just finds this freedom as a veil that does not allow African Americans to discover that they still remain slaves. Most of them are happy to hear that song of freedom but after all they are not treated like real

American citizens. As a matter of fact, ninety years (90) after Emancipation yet, blacks have failed to cash their freedom cheque because of insufficient fund. African American is still living in a divided society which refuses to see him as a complete human being. Furthermore, the legal rights guaranteed to black people through the 13th, 14th, and the 15th Amendments are just mere dreams. Ralph Ellison has ironically depicted African Americans' predicament in his novel *Invisible Man*:

I laughs too, but I moans too. He promised to set us free but henever could bring hissself to do it. Still I loved him . . ."
"Loved him? You mean . . ."
"Oh yes, but I loved something else even more."
"What more?"
"Freedom."
"Freedom," I said. "Maybe freedom lies in hating."
"Naw, son, it's in loving. I loved him and give him the poison and he withered away like a frost-bit apple. Them boys woulda tore him to pieces with they home make knives." (Ellison, 1952, p 9)

Playing with his words, Ralph Ellison portrays what the majority of Black Americans feel even after the abolition of slavery. Ralph Ellison does love and hate the champions of that so-called freedom at one and the same time. In one-word, African Americans disillusionment is total after Emancipation proclamation. In this line of thought, W.E.B Du Bois hammers in his masterpiece *The Souls of Black Folk*:

Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt, and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows...Alas, with the years all this fine contempt began to fade; for the words I longed for, and all their dazzling opportunities, were theirs, not mine. (Du Bois, 1903, pp. 6-7).

Du Bois is bewildered to note forty years after Emancipation proclamation, his society refuses to see him as a complete Human being, and he is still not equal to his white counterpart. Du Bois is astonished to notice forty years after the Emancipation proclamation, he is refused to go to school, jail, church, court, leisure centers ... together with his white fellow person. Du Bois is beyond belief to remark that forty years after Emancipation proclamation, he is still living in a society with an ocean of opportunities where an island of poverty still prevails. If only Du Bois could tear apart that veil! But, alas!

2.2. *Double consciousness*

An in-depth analysis of the concept of double consciousness developed by W.E.B Du Bois is crucially important in the frame of this study. Etymologically the term **double consciousness** is made up of two words. Starting with the adjective "double", means two or a duplicate state of something. Du Bois uses the term "**two ness**" instead of **double-consciousness** (Du Bois, 1903, p.13). Through a close reading of *The Souls of Black Folk*, one could easily understand that this two ness or double consciousness

refers basically to the double identity of Black Americans: How can someone be an African and American at one and the same time?

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true selfconsciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois, 1903, p.38)

How is it possible to be born with a veil? Literally, it seems to be impossible. Of course, Du Bois does argue the possibility of being born with a veil as a material object. It is just a metaphor to emphasize ambivalence and unstable identities. The above extract portrays with strong details the Negro's burden to paraphrase Frantz Fanon a Negro with a 'black skin and a white mask'. The Negro is still bearing this burden forty years after the abolition of slavery. Forty years after emancipation the Negro is still seeking answers with the following questions: Who am I? What am I? Why am I? Where am I? How did I get there? Forty years after emancipation is still thinking and looking at the world through the lens of the dominant culture. Forty years after emancipation, the Negro is still despising his black skin. In short, the 'veil' instead of being a stepping stone for Blacks 'enlightenment and empowerment, is a stark hindrance. Thus, they are left in a dilemma trying to understand how someone can be a black person and an American at the same time, leading to a psychological warfare. That is why, the unnamed protagonist of *Invisible Man* declares:

And, let me confess, you feel that way most of the time. You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you're a part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you. And, alas, it's seldom successful (Ellison, 1952, 4-5)

After reading the above excerpt, one can state with no slightest doubt that the novel protagonist is living in a society where his fellow person refuses to see him as a complete human being. The duty bearers put in place a system which prevents him from enjoying the bonus of his country independence. Rather, the declaration of Independence: "We hold this truth to self-evident that all men are created equal and they are endowed with some inalienable rights among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." (Jefferson,1776); is far from being a reality.

Ralph Ellison uses the right literary devices in his seminal work, *Invisible Man* to recast the concept of double-consciousness. Indeed, the novel protagonist's odyssey is a desperate quest for identity that submitted him to various sorts of humiliation and self-hibernation by persons who do not care a fig about his individuality. Part of the narrator's misadventure is attributable to his double-consciousness which endows him with two selves, a successful merging of them is not always guaranteed. Throughout the first different stages of the novel, the narrator has always sacrificed his

individuality: "to accommodate the others' preferences; his flaw was that he did not, in his first stages, succeed in merging successfully his two selves, his two warring souls, to use the language of Du Bois" (Ritchane, 2019, p.397). Unlike Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ellison's *Invisible Man* is a work of art in which a harmony between Du Bois' two warring souls is finally achieved, turning double-consciousness, ultimately, into an asset.

2.3. Influence of Du Bois ideology on Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

The negro's plight during the post emancipation and the pre-civil rights eras has been the major motif of many African American writers, one of whom is W.E.B Du Bois. The struggle against racism, social injustices, and racial discrimination has changed the battlefield. Thus, the battle has been transferred on pieces of writings. In other words, Black writers' pens and pencils have become mighty swords which have prompted many changes. Ralph Ellison like his senior brothers and sisters has sifted through the existing literature before writing his novel. As this research work focuses on a close analysis of two different authors including Ralph Ellison and W.E.B Du Bois, it is worth comparing their ideals. Through a perusal of *Invisible Man* and *The Souls of Black Folks*, it easily appears that Ralph Ellison's storyline is influenced by W.E.B Du Bois philosophy. Known as one of the incredible writers and defender of African American causes, Du Bois has used not only the concept of Double consciousness but also the metaphor of the veil as a mean of raising African American's awareness.

Somewhere else, Ralph Ellison knows for certain this "double-consciousness" lies at the heart of African American artistic production. That is why, like Du Bois and Douglass before him, never allowed himself to fall prey to historical amnesia and throw into oblivion his past which is a precious part of his life. Indeed, "Ellison embraces the multicultural richness of his heritage, and we can see in all his work the artistic potential in the double consciousness" (Ritchane, 2019, p.404) and by so doing, he refused to sacrifice any of the two selves composing, necessarily, the African-American's self. Ellison seems to be highly aware of the feeling resulting from the experience of double-consciousness exactly as it is delineated by Du Bois; this is why Robert "Stepto regards *Invisible Man* as the apotheosis of the African American tradition of 'ascent' and 'immersion' narratives that has its first full flowering in DuBois." (Ibid., p.404) The African heritage is unquestionably, then, an indivisible part of the African American's double-consciousness through which he struggles to cope with his peculiar condition in America. It is in this peculiar condition of being in-between, spatially and temporally, that the African-American's self find a sort of equilibrium, because for him "[e]very vision must be double, must be, for example, both integrationist and nationalist." (Ibid., p.404)

3. Discussion

W.E. B Du Bois and Ralph Ellison through their masterful works appear as the mouthpieces of millions of African Americans. Lynched, tortured, raped, racially segregated, denied of any humanity, Negroes have and still suffered the martyrdom in America despite emancipation proclamation. Both Du Bois and Ellison have surfed on that Blacks' hideous past to produce their pieces of scholarship which gained notoriety worldwide. Du Bois and Ellison by publishing their novels *The Souls of Black Folk* and *Invisible Man* on the threshold of Civil Rights Movements are laying the cornerstone of a new Black activism, of which Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X etc., have leaned on, to bring tremendous changes in many African Americans' lives. From this angle Du Bois and Ellison's novels have the same goal.

Coming to the use of the metaphor of veil in their novels, what differs them?

Du Bois in *The Souls of the Black Folk* theorizes the veil as a structural barrier of recognition while Ralph Ellison stages it in *The Invisible Man* as a medium of self-realization and empowerment. Rather, invisibility is first imposed, and then chosen. It is by embracing strategic opacity that Ellison's novel protagonist escapes the coercive scripts of visibility and cultivate a counter-vision. In short, within the veil, he refashions identity and strategy. In other words, Ellison, instead of treating the veil as a static obstruction, he transforms it as a dynamic medium that Ellison manipulates to stage perception, performance, and self-fashioning. In short, within the veil Ellison succeeds in merging Du Bois' 'two warring selves' into one true 'self'.

By critically rethinking the concept of double-consciousness in Du Bois' masterpiece, is Ellison really different from his senior brother?

A close reading of *The Souls of the Black* enables us to appraise the concept of double-consciousness in two levels. Double consciousness could be both seen as a source of Negroes' evil experiences, and the condition that enabled them to fashion new discourses of resistances in order to express their desire to escape slavery. In fact, Du Bois by pinpointing the importance of Negro Spirituals during slavery, positions these songs as the best weapons with which the oppressed can reshape new aspirations in life. In short, double consciousness appears to be the condition of possibility that enable humanity to command multiple identities that can be deployed as and when it is necessary. An act of rethinking the range of meanings that can exfoliate from the concept of double consciousness brings us to a closer understanding of the essence, elasticity of Negro Spirituals as popular culture through which "subtle messages about what is 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate', 'desirable' and 'undesirable', 'good' and 'bad'" (Sellnow, 2010,p. 2) are sifted and engendered in the various responses by the oppressed against those who seek to lessen the dignity of African American people in America, their home. From this angle, W.E.B Du Bois and Ralph Ellison are the same side of the same coin.

CONCLUSION

So, eighty (80) years after the Emancipation proclamation, African Americans are still not free; eighty years after Emancipation, African Americans are still looking at the world through the lenses of the dominant white culture. W.E.B Du Bois and Ralph Ellison pieces of scholarships should be celebrated for sifting through the socio-political backdrop to craft characters who are grappling with various challenges in their quest of freedom and identity. Ellison and Du Bois have obliged the white society to reexamine the project of "Humanism" upheld with pride since then. The twentieth century was a momentum which has witnessed a radical revision of "Humanism" that has tried to accommodate the problems of Race, Class & Cast.

This study has made it possible to have a better understanding of the complex dynamics involved in the pursuit of freedom and the formation of black identity within a broader socio-cultural framework. This paper provides a lasting testament to the enduring impact of literature in illuminating and inspiring individuals and fostering ongoing dialogues on the fundamental aspects of human existence. Last but not the least, Du Bois and Ellison's masterful works offer cautious avenues for future research. Future scholars could compare Du Bois and Ellison's veil dynamics with those in works by Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, or Paule Marshall. These further studies should underscore how the proposed framework might travel across the African American canon and the broader African diaspora.

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