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The Concept of Double Consciousness and Striving for Self-Consciousness in W.E.B. Du Bois's Double Consciousness Formula and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Abstract: The essay examines the appropriation of the double consciousness concept in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. At the time of its publication in 1952, *Invisible Man* was an innovative voice in the debate on double consciousness. Du Bois's original double consciousness formula presents Afro-Americans as almost entirely deprived of agency. The original double consciousness formulation resembles an irrevocable sentence that haunts every African American throughout their lifetime: "Thou shalt have double consciousness." There are few signs of hesitance or tentativeness on the part of Du Bois, who gives to his formula an air of immutability. Du Bois leaves black Americans very little room for maneuver and action, reducing them almost totally to objects of the white world's indoctrination. Ellison, on the other hand, empowers African Americans, allowing them to reclaim agency. Acknowledging existing power relations, the racism of the white world and discrimination against African Americans, Ellison is still emphatic about the fact that African Americans can reject white people's perspective on the world. African American self-perception cannot be manipulated without their acquiescence. Ellison's character, the Invisible Man, is not blind. He rather keeps blinding himself to the stark, unvarnished truth about himself and African American reality. Constantly deadening his sense of perception, the Invisible Man suppresses a vital part of his self, running away from and towards self-consciousness. His intuition alerts him to the manipulations of white people, yet he dismisses all apprehensions. Resenting moments of recognition, he repeatedly slips from sharp awareness to blissful oblivion.

1. Introduction

The essay examines the appropriation of the double consciousness concept in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. At the time of its publication in 1952, *Invisible Man* was an innovative voice in the debate on double consciousness. Du Bois's original double consciousness formula presents Afro-Americans as almost entirely deprived of agency. The original double consciousness formulation resembles an irrevocable

sentence that haunts every African American throughout their lifetime: "Thou shalt have double consciousness." There are few signs of hesitance or tentativeness on the part of Du Bois, who gives to his formula an air of immutability:

> 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 self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of the world that looks on in contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, — an American, a Negro, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Du Bois 1989: 5)

Du Bois leaves black Americans very little room for maneuver and action, reducing them almost totally to objects of the white world's indoctrination. Ellison, on the other hand, empowers African Americans, allowing them to reclaim agency. Acknowledging existing power relations, the racism of the white world and discrimination against African Americans, Ellison is still emphatic about the fact that African Americans can reject white people's perspective on the world. African American self-perception cannot be manipulated without their acquiescence. Ellison's character, the Invisible Man, is not blind. He rather keeps blinding himself to the stark, unvarnished truth about himself and the African American reality. Constantly deadening his sense of perception, the Invisible Man suppresses a vital part of his self, running away from and towards his self-consciousness. His intuition alerts him to the manipulations of white people, yet he dismisses all apprehensions. Resenting moments of recognition, he repeatedly slips from sharp awareness to blissful oblivion. Ellison devotes much more space to the second sight element of double consciousness than Du Bois does in his original double consciousness formula.[1] Sight imagery comes to the foreground in *Invisible Man*.

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[1] It needs to be emphasized that while in the double consciousness formula laid out in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) Du Bois focuses mainly on the altered perception of black Americans, in "The Souls of White Folk" published in *Darkwater* (1920) he highlights the prescience of African Americans: "*We have seen*, you and I, city after city drunk and furious with ungovernable lust of blood: mad with murder, destroying, killing and cursing: torturing human victims because somebody accused of crime happened to be of the same color as the mob's innocent victims and because that color was not white! *We have seen*, — Merciful God in these wild days and in the name of Civilization, Justice, and Motherhood, — *what have we not seen*, right here in America, of orgy, cruelty, barbarism, and murder done to men and women of Negro descent" (Du Bois [1920] 1986: 925, added emphasis). "*We looked at* [the white man] *clearly and saw* simply a human thing, weak and pitiable and cruel" (Du Bois [1920] 1986: 927, added emphasis). "But what of *the darker world that watches*? Most men belong to this world. With Negro and Negroid, East Indian, Chinese, and Japanese they form two-thirds of the population of the world" (Du Bois [1920] 1986: 936, added emphasis).

People of color are placed by Du Bois in the position of subjects of sight, whereas whites are objects of their perception. In the double-consciousness formula African Americans look inside themselves. Here they look outside at the perpetrators of racial crimes. The blindness and arrogance of the white world contrasts sharply with the clear vision, wisdom and experience of the darker world. What do they see? They see primarily the cruelty, exploitation and avarice of white

Du Bois acknowledges the existence of second sight, but overall he concentrates on black people's distorted perception rather than their illumination. Ellison reverses the pattern established by Du Bois in his formula, putting much more stress on second sight. Du Bois dwells on the blurred vision of African Americans, virtually overlooking the problem of the white world's blindness. It is the vision of white people that needs correction.

Du Bois and Ellison envision a different solution to the double consciousness dilemma. Du Bois sees synthesis as a solution to double consciousness, whereas Ellison valorizes division. However, division and mental equilibrium do not have to be mutually exclusive. Du Bois's and Ellison's vision of the self-consciousness at which African Americans are to arrive is also divergent. Ellison's vision of African Americans' self-consciousness does not draw just on African and American consciousness, on being "an American" and "a Negro," but derives from all the wealth of human experience, encompassing multiple layers of identity. Duboisian duality gives way to multiplicity in Ellison's novel. Sketching a complex psychological portrait of the Invisible Man, Ellison probes his internal heterogeneity. All the major differences in Ellison's and Du Bois's approach to double consciousness stem primarily from the fact that Ellison invests first of all in individuality rather than the collective experience of African Americans.

Discussing the differences in Ellison's and Du Bois's approach to double consciousness, it is essential to note that they created their works at different historical moments. Ellison wrote *Invisible Man* almost fifty years after Du Bois proposed the double consciousness formula. The lapse of time may account for the distinctions in Du Bois's and Ellison's approach to double-consciousness. One cannot forget the advances made in psychology and identity studies. In 1923 Freud published *The Ego and the Id*. The anthropological discoveries of the first half of the 20th century contributed to the displacement of Western culture. The Western mode of life became only one of many. Westerners found themselves confronted with the world of diversity. The theory of relativity worked its way into the arts, inspiring the cubists to present the same object simultaneously from two perspectives. It is also significant that both authors were writing in different political circumstances. *Invisible Man*'s publication (1952) precedes by two years the ruling of the Supreme Court in the case of Brown vs. the Board of Education (1954). Only one year later, in 1955, the Montgomery bus boycott broke out. The year 1948 saw the desegregation of the armed forces. It was also in 1948 that the Japanese gained the right to own and lease land (Takaki 1989: 399). The participation of people of color in World War II increased their hopes for enfranchisement. All these socio-historical factors

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people. Du Bois notices that in whites' view, their whiteness entitles them to "the ownership of the earth" (Du Bois [1920] 1986: 924). He also speaks about the "divine right" of white people to steal (Du Bois [1920] 1986: 935). Giving examples of white colonization in various parts of the globe, Du Bois unfolds a vision of suffering triggered by the white quest for power, profit and cheap labor.

had an impact on Ellison's appropriation of the double consciousness formula in *Invisible Man*.

The changing socio-historical circumstances have also contributed to at least a partial sidelining of the very notion of double consciousness today and to the displacement of *Invisible Man* from the canon of American literature by black feminist novels. African American women's experience is absent from Du Bois's double consciousness formula and it is marginalized in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Reflecting on Du Bois's original formulation of double consciousness, Barbara Johnson charges him with employing the masculine pronoun to speak about double consciousness (Johnson qtd. in Reed 1992: 101). Examining the processes of subject construction, Darlene Clark Hines suggests that Du Bois's formula would be much more complex if he had considered the problem of gender: "...instead of writing 'One ever feels his twoness,' he would have mused how one ever feels her 'fiveness:' Negro, American, woman, poor, black woman" (Bell 1996: 87). In *Invisible Man* Ralph Ellison also presents a gendered representation of the African American experience. It is his story, not her story. Women play a marginal role in the novel. Even if they are significant figures, they do not feature prominently and their perspective is not fully displayed.

The interests of different social and political groups frequently influenced a specific reading of double consciousness. With the development of the Black Power stance and militant ethnic pluralism in the 1960s the discourse shifted towards emphasizing positive aspects of double consciousness. Robert Blauner interpreted "twoness" as a vacillation between integration and nationalism (Reed, 96). Furthermore, he did not limit double-consciousness to African Americans, but extended it to other non-European ethnic groups in the United States. Carol Stack looked at double-consciousness as the inspiration for black artists, underscoring the frequent recurrence of the theme in art and sociology. Stack defended the legitimacy of black culture (Reed, 96). To Harold Baron, double-consciousness and all the suffering resulting from it are a source of strength and black pride (Reed, 97).

In the 1970s some scholars went as far as to suggest that double consciousness was disappearing because of growing cultural nationalism. According to Houston Baker, double consciousness endowed African Americans with a sense of privileged distinction from American culture, no longer entailing any internal discordance (Reed, 97). Cultural separateness was a reason to celebrate and not lament.

The decline of nationalist tendencies in the 1980s marked yet another modification in the discourse on double consciousness. The duality of African Americans came to be embraced as an essential feature of their existence in the United States. Calls for isolationism subsided, though cultural nationalism remains an important current in African American social thought today. Synthesis emerged as a solution to the problem of double consciousness. Manning Marable perceived Du Bois's formula as a creative tension providing the basis for the struggle against racism, segregation and other forms of discrimination (Reed, 98). Bettye Gardner and

Waldo E. Martin also concentrated on the positive implications of double consciousness, observing that research on black duality initiated the study of Afro-American history (Reed, 98). According to Robert Williams, double consciousness was a key element in black philosophy (Reed, 99).

The Rodney King rebellion of 1992 showed that many African Americans still perceived themselves as excluded from the heart of American democracy. Even today, after major changes in American race relations, certain elements of the double consciousness formula still remain relevant. The complaints of African Americans against continuing racial profiling and persistent segregation in American cities show that many African Americans do not feel fully embraced by American democracy. Even if socio-historical transformations have contributed to at least a partial displacement of the double consciousness formula and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, both remain seminal touchstones, not only shedding light on the African American experience, but also finding their way into the experience of other American minorities and their literatures.

2. The genealogy of the term "double consciousness"

Before delving into the construction of double consciousness in *Invisible Man*, I find it essential to present the genealogy of the very term "double consciousness" and to place the Duboisian formulation as well as Ellison's appropriation of it in the broader context within which the term "double consciousness" originated. The idea can be traced back to the European Romantics, American Transcendentalists and, most significantly, to Du Bois's Harvard psychology professor and mentor William James, the author of *Principles of Psychology*. Psychological studies of the double consciousness phenomenon will feature first in the genealogical exposition of the term because they were the most contemporary and the most immediate source for Du Bois. One can also note the closest correspondence between the constituent elements of the Duboisian concept of double consciousness and psychological applications of the term. William James published his book in 1890 — at the time when Du Bois attended Harvard University. Double-consciousness is described in *Principles of Psychology* as a medical condition similar to schizophrenia. James explores the problem of "alternating selves," distinguishing between "primary" and "secondary consciousness" (Bruce 1992: 304). Conducting research on the subject, the famous professor of psychology relied on the vast body of studies.

Difficult as it is to unequivocally point to the first psychology-based application of the term "double consciousness," scholars managed to trace one of its first occurrences to the New York journal *Medical Repository*. In 1817 Samuel Mitchell, author of the article "A Double Consciousness, or a Duality of Person in the Same Individual," related the case of Mary Reynolds, who alternated between two different personalities — one rather subdued and the other extremely effervescent.

After a period of vacillation she finally settled into the second state. What seems most striking about this medical case of double consciousness is the disparity between the two divergent mental conditions. The case of Mary Reynolds reverberated in medical literature for a considerable period of time, surfacing repeatedly in different sources. Around 1850 Francis Wayland cited Mary Reynolds's case to expand his general discussion of consciousness. In his 1860 *Harper*'s article William Plumer looked at the case from a broader perspective, approaching it as a medical and philosophical issue (Bruce, 304). Mary Reynolds attracted the most attention; however, she was by no means the only patient suffering from double consciousness. Yearning for a single self, all sufferers appeared frustrated by the fact that they had to wrestle with two conflicting personalities. The resolution did not seem to lie in just opting for one self and discarding the other, since the patients cherished something about both of them. Having chosen her second self, Mary Reynolds pined over the complete loss of the previous one. William James and Francis Wayland claimed that people plagued by double consciousness should strive for synthesis, a fusion of their two selves. Any solution that involved the eradication of one self by another appeared highly imperfect. Only patients who managed to achieve a state of integration reported full satisfaction.

The conclusions reached by psychologists correspond in many ways to Du Bois's views on the problem of double consciousness in the Afro-American community. Like patients suffering from the medical condition, some African Americans experienced anguish over their internal duality. Trying to overcome this dichotomy, they were still loath to subjugate one self to the other. African Americans' longing for "a better and truer self" echoes James's idea of synthesis as a solution to the double consciousness dilemma. Du Bois suggests that black people perform a balancing act in order to achieve internal unity. Dickson Bruce emphasizes Du Bois's attempts to inculcate a positive sense of racial distinctiveness in African Americans (Bruce, 305). Still, Du Bois does not say explicitly enough that blackness does not have to entail a sense of inferiority as long as African Americans disregard the view of the other world and develop their own self-esteem.

Discussing the genealogy of the term "double consciousness," it is vital to bring up the Transcendentalist concept of double consciousness. Ralph Waldo Emerson employed the term "double consciousness" in his 1843 essay "The Transcendentalist" to depict the estrangement of the individual who is torn between the realm of spirituality and the unedifying reality of materialism. The demands of daily life drive the individual away from the spiritual. Looking at life from "moments of illumination," the transcendentalist can see its triviality and futility:

> The worst feature of this double-consciousness is that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which he leads, really show very little relation to each other: one prevails now, all buzz and din; the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise; and, with the progress of life, the two discover no greater disposition to reconcile themselves. (Emerson qtd. in Bruce, 300)

Although Du Bois uses the term "double consciousness" in a different context, there are certain affinities between both ideas of double consciousness. Like Emerson, Du Bois focuses on the problems of internal dichotomy and confusion. Analogies between the two concepts become even more vivid if we take into account that Du Bois repeatedly contrasts black spirituality with the materialism of the white mainstream. Emerson's "-buzz and din-" corresponds to Du Bois's condemnation of "mammonism" and commercialism.

Despite these parallels, the two ideas of double consciousness carry different implications. Du Bois concentrates on the disadvantages of double consciousness, while Emerson offers a much more positive reading of double consciousne. For Du Bois, African American double consciousness is a product and a source of suffering. For Emerson, double consciousness becomes a liberating force. In "Fate," Emerson suggests:

> One key, one solution to the mysteries of human conditions, one solution to the old knots of fate, freedom, and foreknowledge, exists, the propounding namely of the double consciousness. A man must ride alternately on the horses of his private and public nature. (Emerson qtd. in Patterson 1997: 153)

Emersonian double consciousness opens the world of infinite possibilities. Unlike Du Bois, Emerson observes that one can capitalize on the discrepancy between public and private self. Du Bois does not accept double-consciousness, urging African Americans to overcome it, to "merge [their] double self into a better and truer self" (1989: 5).

Du Bois's formula of double consciousness echoes the ideas of European Romanticism. The problem of internal conflict is equally important for Romantics and for Du Bois. Du Bois uses the Goethean term "Sturm und Drang" to visualize African American duality: "So dawned the time of Sturm und Drang: storm and stress today rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world-sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict" (Du Bois [1903] 1989: 10). Du Bois is no less perplexed by division and contradictions than Goethe's Werther or Faust. Werner Sollors relates Du Bois's image of "two souls warring in one dark body" to *Faust:*

> Two souls, alas! reside within my breast,
> And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother. (Sollors's quotation of Goethe cited in Bruce, 302)

Notwithstanding these similarities, the Romantic division is largely self-generated, rather than caused by any external obstacles.

While Du Bois's double consciousness formula intersects at some points with all of the above-mentioned concepts of double consciousness, it shares the most with the psychology-based cases of double consciousness discussed by William James, Samuel Mitchell, Francis Wayland and William Plumer. What primarily connects Du Bois's formulation with the above-mentioned psychology-derived concepts is not only the duality element inherent in the Transcendentalist and

Romantic notions of double consciousness, but first of all the striving for unity and the embracing of synthesis as a solution to the double consciousness dilemma.

3. Sleepwalking towards the appreciation of diversity, multiplicity and division in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*

Ralph Ellison delineates the Invisible Man's journey towards self-consciousness, registering his vacillation between sharp awareness and blissful oblivion, which shelters him from the truth about his own place in the American reality and the place of other African Americans. While in the initial stages of the novel, unfolding in the Southern United States, the Invisible Man is not fully aware of himself and the world around him, he arrives at a significantly higher level of self-consciousness following the Bledsoe episode and his expulsion from college. In the New York section of the narrative, he does not fall prey so much to blindness, but rather to blinding himself. All the gaps in the Invisible Man's consciousness, whether self-inflicted or imposed from without, give Ralph Ellison an opportunity to construct an ironic distance between his authorial persona and the narrator as well as between the narrator and the protagonist.

The Invisible Man's first Brotherhood speech testifies to his ability to see sharply and clearly, capturing at the same time the underlying causes of African American double consciousness. The motif of blindness recurs in the Invisible Man's speech, just as it recurs throughout the novel:

> Perhaps we don't care to look at unpleasantness. They think we're blind — *un*-commonly blind. And I don't wonder. Think about it, they've dispossessed us each of one eye from the day we're born. So now we can only see in straight white lines. We're a nation of one-eyed mice … Someone's afraid that we'll see something … Let's get together, uncommon people. With both eyes we may see what makes us so uncommon, we'll see *who* makes us so uncommon! (Ellison [1952] 1972: 260, original emphasis)

The maturing Invisible Man claims that African Americans are dispossessed of one eye, while Du Bois states that they are born with a veil. It is imperative that African-Americans preserve their own vision. Realizing that white Americans try to create divisions among black people, the Invisible Man urges them to unite. Reminiscent as it is of the double consciousness formula, the Invisible Man's speech misses the formula's crucial element — the power of second sight. Du Bois observes that blacks are born with a veil and gifted with second-sight, whereas the maturing Invisible Man focuses just on their distorted perception. While it is true that the phrase "uncommon people" may not only entail blurred vision, but can also suggest that Afro-Americans are unique and special, the Invisible Man is not at that point explicit enough about their power of second sight. Observations made during the first Brotherhood speech correspond to the thoughts which visit him when he

looks at the statue of the founder, wondering whether he is lifting the veil from the slave's face or rather dropping it.

The maturing Invisible Man encourages others to reclaim their vision, yet before reaching his self-consciousness, he himself is afraid to see. Lying in hospital and mulling over his identity, he says "I preferred not to face it" (Ellison, 184). Confronted with discrimination, the Invisible Man would rather forget who he is: "Left alone, I lay fretting over my identity. I suspected that I was really playing a game with myself and that they [the doctors] were taking part. A kind of combat. Actually they knew as well as I, and I for some reason preferred not to face it" (Ellison, 184). During his speech he tells African Americans that they "don't care to look at unpleasantness." The Invisible Man would also rather forget about his own place in American society and about his inferior position. At the same time, he realizes that African Americans can fight against the prejudice of the white world only if they face reality as it is. Pulled in opposite directions, the Invisible Man is restless to find out who he is. Still, his evasiveness makes him shy away from full self-discovery. The protagonist wavers between craving for self-revelation and longing for self-effacement. On the one hand, he is on the quest for his self-consciousness. On the other hand, he clings to the remnants of his illusions.

After his release from hospital, the Invisible Man thinks that he is transformed. Reflecting on his earlier conversation with the doctor, he realizes that he has finally articulated long suppressed emotions. Self-detachment helps him to put everything into perspective:

> I had the feeling that I had been talking beyond myself, had used words and expressed attitudes not my own, that I was in the grip of some alien personality lodged deep within me … Or perhaps I was catching up with myself and had put into words feelings which I had hitherto suppressed. Or was it, I thought, starting up the walk that I was no longer afraid. (Ellison, 189)

Having seen through rich white people, the Invisible Man liberates himself from the fear of their disapproval. He realizes that a lot of African Americans have their private and public selves. Hankering after the acceptance of the white world and doing their best to match white standards, they are ashamed of their customs, culinary habits, etc. At this point of the novel his private self momentarily takes over his public self. He is aware of how much he has lost by quelling his emotions and becoming a slave to white man's expectations. Walking in the street and eating a yam, the Invisible Man is overcome with a feeling of freedom. He resolves never again to renounce the things he enjoys. The narrator realizes that so far he has been granted virtually no "expressive freedom" (Taylor 1996: 25). As Charles Taylor emphasizes in *Sources of the Self*, expressive freedom is essential for human dignity. Society provides the Invisible Man with ready-made definitions, leaving him no room for authenticity, self-expression and self-fulfilment. When he says "I yam what I am," it seems that he has arrived at self-consciousness, having shed appearances. However, his self-discovery proves illusory and his awakening is only

momentary. Time and again the Invisible Man thinks that he has achieved self-consciousness only to be proved wrong later on. After each awakening he retreats again into slumber. Following the path of repression, he constantly breeches the promise of being no one else but himself.

Real self-discovery eludes the Invisible Man because he defends himself against internal multiplicity and diversity. He keeps negating part of his identity, seeking inner harmony at any price. Being tormented by "contradictory voices," an equivalent of Du Bois's unreconciled strivings, he craves for unity. Du Bois encouraged African Americans to keep both of their selves. The immature Invisible Man thinks that striving for true self-consciousness involves a partial erasure of one's self. He has not yet discovered that internal heterogeneity can be beneficial:

> I wanted peace and quiet, tranquility, but there was too much boil inside … If only all the contradictory voices shouting inside my head would calm down and sing a song in unison, whatever it was I wouldn't care as long as they sang without dissonance; yes, and avoided the uncertain extremes of the scale. (Ellison, 197)

The young Invisible Man is not aware that identity is multi-dimensional and that different dimensions of identity are not mutually exclusive (Taylor, 36). Once accepted, they can exist side by side without putting his integrity in jeopardy. Doctors at the hospital predict that the Invisible Man will "experience no conflict of motives" (Ellison, 180). Still, he wrestles with conflicting emotions and is deeply disturbed by his self-confusion, not realizing that the conflict of motives makes him more human, adding to the complexity of his identity. Du Bois speaks in his double-consciousness formula about unreconciled strivings. Some of those strivings are not only unreconciled, but also irreconcilable and they should remain so if one is to preserve a broad perspective and keep all the layers of their identity. Earlier in the narrative the Golden Day vet calls the Invisible Man a "walking zombie," an "automaton," warning him against blinding himself, against repressing his humanity (Ellison, 86). Unfortunately, for most of the novel the Invisible Man ignores the vet's advice.

Fighting against self-division, he keeps stifling his second-sight, afraid to see things as they are. Just before his first Brotherhood speech the Invisible Man again becomes detached from himself, feeling divided. He is conscious of his second sight, realizing that part of himself is detached and can see everything. This part of his identity tells him to brood over his grandfather's words. Yet he is afraid to recognize this part of himself as essential, preventing it from springing to the surface and flourishing:

> it was as though I stood simultaneously at opposite ends of a tunnel. I seemed to view myself from the distance of the campus while yet sitting there on a bench in the old arena … I would have to take that part of myself that looked on with remote eyes and keep it always at the distance of the campus, the hospital machine, the battle royal — all now far behind. Perhaps the part of me that observed listlessly but saw all, missing nothing, was still the malicious, arguing part; the dissenting voice, my grandfather part; the cynical, disbelieving part — the traitor self

that always threatened internal discord. Whatever it was, I knew that I'd have to keep it pressed down … No more flying apart at the seams, no more remembering forgotten pains. (Ellison, 253–254)

What he calls his traitor self is a crucial part of his self. Instead of learning from his experiences, the young Invisible Man wants to forget them. The internal discord that he fears so much is essential for the existence of second sight. To a great extent his blindness is self-imposed. He dreads acknowledging the power of second sight. The voice of his grandfather symbolizes the Invisible Man's dormant self-consciousness. The grandfather's voice haunts him throughout the novel but he keeps silencing it, just as he keeps suppressing part of his self. He tries to efface the recalcitrant part of his identity, the part that questions instead of blindly obeying and accepting things at face value. The Invisible Man's first Brotherhood speech might indicate that he has achieved a higher level of consciousness. However, his thoughts after the speech prove that he is still groping in the dark. He wonders what he meant by saying that he "became more human" (Ellison, 267). For a while he thinks about his grandfather and quickly dismisses the idea, because according to him an old slave had nothing to do with humanity. Questioning his grandfather's humanity, the Invisible Man reaffirms his blindness, swinging back under the influence of white people. He is not sure whether the achievement of humanity does not entail the negation of one's blackness. All these doubts come to his mind when he recollects the statement made by his old teacher whose words he misinterprets. Professor Woodridge claims that African Americans will create the consciousness of the race only if they start to perceive themselves as individuals, if they reject the labels attached to them by whites. African Americans should strive for individuality, but their individuality cannot be built upon the eradication of their racial consciousness.

The Invisible Man will not allow his second sight to guide him because he would have to make different, much less convenient choices. Second sight opens the eyes of African Americans to the blatant truth, but they often prefer to remain blind to the truth and nurse their illusions instead. Blindness is an easier way out. If you are blind, you do not need to shoulder responsibility for your actions, since you can blame everything on your ignorance. Before joining the Brotherhood, the Invisible Man has numerous premonitions about the organization; however, he dismisses them. During his first meeting with Jack, the Invisible Man suspects that Jack is not frank with him, that he just acts a part like almost everyone else. He senses that the Brothers are no different than the college trustees, intending to exploit him. The Invisible Man is split, wondering whether he should join the Brotherhood. His initial detachment manifests itself on his first visit to the Brotherhood club. Like Nick Carraway inside Tom Buchanan's apartment, the Invisible Man has an impression that he is both outside and within the club. Already before affiliating himself with the Movement, he gets a taste of his invisibility to other Brothers. Throughout the period of his association with the Brotherhood the Invisible Man

keeps blinding himself. Even after discovering that the Brotherhood is a fraud, he still goes to the chief indoctrinator, Brother Hambro, hoping that he will straighten everything out and wrench him out of a bad dream. The Invisible Man joins the Brotherhood primarily out of desperation. After weighing his options, he realizes that he has a limited horizon of possibilities: "if I refused to join them, where would I go — to a job as a porter at the railway station? At least here was a chance to speak" (Ellison, 234). What also prompts him to join the Brotherhood, then, is the need to belong combined with a craving for acclaim from the white world. Suspicious as he is of the Brotherhood, he does not realize that everyone who joins it has to efface themselves as an individual. With all its emphasis on collectivity, the Brotherhood resembles the communist party and is perceived in this way by Christopher Sten, who draws our attention to the fact that words like science and history gain a Marxist coloring in the Brotherhood terminology (Sten 1991: 92). Ellison himself maintains that it was not his intention to create an impression of any affinity between the Brotherhood and communists (Gottesman 1971: 46). Initially, the Invisible Man plans to remain true to himself and only dissimulate total commitment to the Movement. It might seem that the narrator is going to act on the Golden Day vet's advice: "Be your own father" (Ellison, 118), "Play the game, but do not believe in it" (Ellison, 120). However, there are hints from the beginning that he will fail in his resolution — for example, he still plans to pattern his life on the life of the Founder, who was figuratively blind.

The Invisible Man cannot play the game without believing in it. Assuming a ready made identity thrust upon him by the Brotherhood, he breaks the promise of being no one else but himself. The Brotherhood gives him a new name and a new identity to jump into. He hopes that his new identity will replace his old self. Being deeply perplexed by his internal division, he still strives for uniformity. The young Invisible Man perceives the process of identity formation in terms of a contest. His selves compete with one another:

> there were two of me: the old self that slept a few hours a night and dreamed sometimes of my grandfather and Bledsoe and Brockway and Mary, the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights; and the new public self that spoke for the Brotherhood and was becoming so much more important than the other that I seemed to run a foot race against myself. (Ellison, 287)

The immature Invisible Man wants to build his identity upon exclusion, rather than on the inclusion of all its elements. Trying to blot out his past, he consistently attempts to negate part of himself. It does not occur to him that all layers of his identity are equally important. Instead, he introduces a hierarchy of importance, rating his new self above his old self. The Invisible Man is not willing to appreciate the complexity of his experience. Unaware that all his experiences enrich him, sharpening his perception, he cannot capitalize on his misfortunes. Staking claims to his individuality, the Brotherhood engulfs him almost completely. When the Invisible Man says "I am what they think I am" (Ellison, 286), it becomes clear

that he has agreed to look at himself "through the revelation of the other world" (Du Bois [1903] 1989: 5). Allowing others to construct his identity, he practically fuses with the Brotherhood.

The Invisible Man has an illusion of making progress. Real metamorphosis can take place only once he starts to perceive himself as a multiple subject. It seems to him that he has undergone a major transformation, but in reality he is caught in a vicious circle. His life is marked by a hankering to escape from himself and become someone else. Throughout the novel he searches for role models to identify with or emulate. His ideals are: Booker T. Washington, Bledsoe, the Founder. Reflecting on everything that has happened to him since coming to New York, the Invisible Man compares himself to Frederick Douglass:

> he had talked his way from slavery to a government ministry … Douglass came north to escape and find work in the shipyards; a big fellow in a sailor's suit who, like me, had taken another name. What had his true name been? Whatever it was, it was as *Douglass* that he became himself, defined himself. And not as a boatwright as he'd expected, but as an orator. (Ellison, 288)

He deceives himself yet again, thinking that there is really some affinity between him and Douglass. Douglass chose his own name and really defined himself as an autonomous human being, whereas the Invisible Man gets his new name from the Brotherhood and defines himself through the organization. Robert Stepto maintains that the narrator is figuratively illiterate because he misreads Douglass's *Narrative* (Stepto 1991: 185). The Invisible Man replaces Douglass's original phrase "from slavery to freedom" with "from slavery to a government ministry." Unlike Douglass, he gives priority to the pursuit of success over freedom. In the case of the Invisible Man it is freedom of mind that is at stake. Only people who are willing to give up their individuality can truly subordinate themselves to the Brotherhood.

Exulting in his success as a party leader, the Invisible Man becomes mesmerized by the Brotherhood ideology. He is tricked into believing that he is participating in momentous events, getting an insight into the arcana of power and history. Succumbing to the indoctrination of the Brotherhood, he has a sense of achieving real illumination. The Invisible Man considers himself to be one of the lucky few initiated into the secret knowledge vouchsafed by the organization. He feels as if the curtain had been raised for him. It is not surprising that the ideology of the Brotherhood may initially appeal to the Invisible Man. For members of the party "life was all pattern and discipline" (Ellison, 288). Subordination to party discipline gives him a brief respite from the necessity of choice making. "Contradictory voices shouting inside [his] head" quiet down. For a while the Invisible Man attains long desired tranquility because everything is decided for him and he just needs to follow the guidelines of the committee. Taking into account the committee's emphasis on "pattern and discipline," the Brotherhood resembles not only the communist party, but also a fascist organization. His initial enchantment with the Brotherhood makes him believe that the Movement can have an impact

on the world, just as it has influenced him: "everything could be controlled by our science" (Ellison, 288). He gets a spurious sense of action, of changing the fate of humanity. According to the Invisible Man, the Brotherhood prevents people like him from plunging outside history. Therefore, he desperately clings to the organization even when Brothers sideline him. Time and again the Invisible Man blinds himself to reality, making a virtue of necessity. After being delegated out of Harlem, he becomes reconciled to the committee's decision, just as he earlier became reconciled to his expulsion from college. He brings himself to believe that the Brothers want to test his loyalty. Holding all authority in deep respect, the Invisible Man dreads opposing the committee. Whenever things start to go wrong for him, he has sudden flashes of illumination, which he repeatedly dismisses. During the committee meeting, prior to his departure from Harlem, the Invisible Man has an impression that everything has been carefully choreographed and everyone is playing a part in a show.

His fascination with the Brotherhood has to turn into disillusionment unless he is ready to sacrifice his own humanity and individuality. In the end the Invisible Man comes to understand that he has to pay too high a price for his niche in the Brotherhood. The feeling of incarceration in the hospital machine returns when he is brainwashed by the organization. Being told by Jack that he was not hired to think, the Invisible Man cannot help but see that the Brotherhood wants him to be a dehumanized, mechanical robot, who carries out their orders. He also realizes that most African Americans were not affected by their Movement since it did not reach them, thus failing to bring about any changes in their life.

The Invisible Man's break with the Brotherhood is a prelude to his real self-discovery. He has been tricked one time too many. Now it dawns upon him that instead of negating his experience, he needs to learn from it. The Invisible Man achieves true self-consciousness only after he has embraced internal diversity and the complexity of his experience, finally recognizing the importance of all life stages in the evolution of his consciousness. The Invisible Man's experiences compose his identity and no one is able to snatch them away from him. They are his greatest strength and his greatest asset. He can never be dispossessed of his experiences even if he is dispossessed of everything else:

> all past humiliations became precious parts of my experience, and for the first time … I began to accept my past. Images of past humiliations flickered through my head and I saw that they were more than separate experiences. They were me; They defined me. I was my experiences and they were me, and no blind men, no matter how powerful they became … could take that, or change one single itch, taunt, laugh, cry, scar, ache, rage or pain of it. (Ellison, 383)

Eventually, the narrator starts to perceive himself as a "being who is growing and becoming" (Taylor, 50). All his experiences define him, adding to his humanity and individuality. The Invisible Man cannot blot out the past, because this would amount to negating part of his identity. And yet, he has been trying to do it throughout the novel, denying himself the opportunity of full growth. The negation of any

single life stage impedes the process of growing and becoming. The final recognition of all facets of his experience allows him to achieve a feeling of coherence.

The Invisible Man stops striving for uniformity and recognizes himself as a multiple subject who welcomes internal heterogeneity. His conception of identity undergoes a major shift towards the end of the novel. At first he perceives identity as static, monolithic and immutable. As Christopher Sten points out, "the Invisible Man thinks of identity as something he achieves as the result of his efforts … something hard and permanent, a monument, even a fortress against the ravages of time and chaos" (Sten, 86). The immature Invisible Man thinks that he can carve out his identity like a sculptor. Ellison sees identity as something much more ephemeral and not fully articulated. The mature Invisible Man discovers that identity is dynamic, not static, that life is a journey on which one meets their new and old selves, coming across different elements of one's identity. The Invisible Man as the mature narrator no longer wants to eradicate part of himself. He begins to appreciate all parts of his identity: "you could travel … meeting your old selves coming and going and perhaps all at the same time" (Ellison, 385). In view of the above, Ralph Ellison has a much better grasp of human identity than Du Bois. Du Bois concentrates excessively on the duality of African Americans. The double consciousness formula revolves around their "twoness:" "two souls," "two thoughts," "two unreconciled strivings," "two warring ideals" (Du Bois [1903] 1989: 5). Unlike Du Bois, Ellison explores the multiple subjectivity of his character. The Invisible Man is neither one nor two, but many. Du Bois speaks about the "double self" of African Americans, whereas Ellison notes the multitude of selves, realizing that the consciousness of African Americans cannot be reduced just to the African self and American self. Although Du Bois's imprint is omnipresent in *Invisible Man*, Ellison does not become entrapped by his predecessor's essentialist notions. Differences in Ellison's and Du Bois's perception of reality may stem from the different professional backgrounds of both authors. Du Bois was first of all a social scientist and an activist, while Ellison was a fiction writer. In his fiction Ellison poses existential questions: "Who am I, what am I, how did I come to be" (Schaub's Interview with Ellison 1988: 152).

The Invisible Man's acceptance of all his experiences and all parts of his identity marks his appreciation of second sight. At the moment of accepting his past the Invisible Man says: "It was as though I'd learned suddenly to look around corners" (Ellison, 383). All his experiences have an illuminating power. Attempting to wipe out the past, he has been suppressing his second sight. The Invisible Man has been long aware of the existence of his second sight, but only now does he welcome it. He stops perceiving second sight as a drawback and recognizes it as an asset. The recognition of his second sight coincides with the recognition of the white world's blindness: "They were blind, bat blind, moving only by the echoed sounds of their own voices" (Ellison, 383). The gift of second sight empowers the Invisible Man, giving him the upper hand over whites. Influential white people may wield power,

but they are enmeshed in darkness. Unlike the Invisible Man, they remain blind to the reality that lurks behind the glaze of their illusions. The truth would dislodge them from security, from their safe place. Having discovered the power of second sight, the narrator is no longer afraid to take a detached look at himself: "I could approach it [all his experiences] only from the outside" (Ellison, 431). Earlier he thought that detachment posed a threat to his integrity. Now he discovers that detachment can be advantageous, because it sharpens his perception, helping him to put everything into perspective and preserve more impartiality.

The narrator comes to terms with internal division, having understood that life should be approached through contradictions. He no longer strives for unity at all costs, no longer tries to quell contradictory voices inside his head. The elimination of all contradictions involves at least a partial negation of one's identity. Heterogeneity nourishes itself on contradictions. For most of the novel the Invisible Man had a foreshortened perspective, because he was struggling against internal division. Discord is a prerequisite of second sight. Only after giving up the pursuit of uniformity can he achieve the full measure of individuality and humanity:

> all life is divided and only in division is there true health … So it is now that I denounce and defend, or feel prepared to defend. I condemn and affirm, say no and say yes, say yes and say no (Ellison, 435).
> And I defend because in spite of all I find that I love. In order to get some of it down I have to love. Too much of your life will be lost, its meaning lost, unless you approach it as much through love as through hate. So I approach it through division. So I denounce and I defend and I hate and I love. (Ellison, 438)

Internal division not only nurtures his humanity, but also propels his creativity. Ellison's accentuation of division and contradictions is yet another point of departure from Du Bois. Du Bois's solution to double-consciousness relies on "merging" of a "double self" into a "better and truer self" (Ellison, 5). The word "merging" stands in sharp contrast to Ellison's "division." Ellison sees beauty and strength in contradictions, while Du Bois is rather perplexed by them. According to Ellison, it is essential for African Americans to achieve peace of mind, but their equanimity does not have to be synonymous with unity.

Having discovered his invisibility, the narrator comes to understand that he needs to search inside for his identity instead of "looking at himself through the revelation of the other world" (Du Bois [1903] 1989: 5). The Invisible Man's identity must emerge from within. Whites display no concern for his individuality, trying to impose their interpretation of reality upon the protagonist. Accepting ready-made answers to "questions only he could answer" (Ellison, 19), the Invisible Man waived his right to expressive freedom. The narrator realizes that he cannot look for guidelines outside, but must listen to his inner voice:

> I was naive. I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I could answer (Ellison, 19).

> And now I looked around a corner of my mind and saw Jack and Norton and Emerson merge into one single white figure. They were much the same, each attempting to force their picture of reality upon me and neither giving a hoot in hell for how things looked to me. I was simply a material, a natural resource to be used. I had switched from the arrogant absurdity of Norton and Emerson to that of Jack and the Brotherhood, and it all came to the same. (Ellison, 384)

Everyone has a plan for the Invisible Man, conspiring to construct his identity. White people do not treat him as a subject, but as an object, as a device to be utilized to their own ends. Distancing himself from the "trustees of consciousness," the Invisible Man reclaims his right to "expressive individuation" (Taylor, 376). During the Harlem demonstrations he is running away from all parties. Descending underground, he extricates himself from all the manipulators that gamble for his consciousness. Having isolated himself from other people and their empty gaze, the Invisible Man can no longer be created by others. After falling into the hole, he lies torn between dreaming and wakefulness, just as he has been throughout his life. Now, however, he becomes aware of it. Ironically, the Invisible Man wakes up only after withdrawing into hibernation. The one thousand three hundred and sixty nine lights that he has in the basement may stand for his illumination, the awakening of his consciousness. Robert Stepto maintains that the hole is an equivalent of the Duboisian place above the veil (Stepto, 168). Isolation allows the Invisible Man to rise above the color-line divisions. Since the Invisible Man's hole is situated in a border area, on neither side of the color-line, its location is symbolic. Living in a border area, the Invisible Man wants to avoid extremes.

An act of burning a briefcase carries special significance. The items collected in the briefcase represent the external forces controlling the protagonist. Only once the Invisible Man burns the briefcase, does he gain full self-mastery. Sten points out that the things kept in the briefcase "constitute something of an identity for him" (Sten, 88). Thomas Vogler concurs with Sten, claiming that the key to the discovery of his identity is in the briefcase: "he takes on his identity from whatever shape his environment offers until finally he realizes that his once new and clean briefcase, now battered and dirty, is symbolically the container of all the clues that are essential to finding his true identity" (Vogler 1974: 138). On the one hand, the Invisible Man wants to negate his past, while on the other hand, he subconsciously clings to it, cherishing the briefcase as his greatest treasure. He carries the briefcase mindlessly, never analyzing its contents. The final penetration of the briefcase makes him realize that he has signed away his self-control. Ralph Ellison argues that each section of the novel begins with a sheet of paper which defines the narrator (Gottesman 1971: 45). All these pieces of paper can be perceived as equivalents of so called "passes" distributed to slaves so that they could travel without being taken for fugitives. The Invisible Man's passes give him an illusory feeling of upward mobility, enslaving him to the fictions invented by whites to keep blacks in their place. The only briefcase item that comes in handy to the narrator is Brother Tarp's leg shackle. The briefcase also contains the message he receives from his

grandfather in a dream. It reads: "Keep This Nigger-Boy Running" (Ellison, 35). And the Invisible Man keeps running, making hardly any progress, being caught in a vicious circle of obedience and dependence on white people.

The Invisible Man does not try to shift all the blame to the outside world, realizing that he is at least partially to blame for succumbing to the indoctrination of white people and internalizing their racism. Nursing illusions furnished by the white world, the narrator took an easy way out. He admits that "accepting ready-made attitudes made life seem simple" (Ellison, 202). Now the Invisible Man blames himself for shirking his own opinions. Yielding to the dictates of the white world, he exchanged his questioning attitude for blind obedience. Still, it is white society that deserves most of the blame. The roots of his double-consciousness lie in the racism of the white world. While the "political situation" virtually coerced the narrator to make the choices he made, he agreed to conform not only externally, but also internally, conceding to an ideology which was denigrating to black people:

> The fact is that you carry part of sickness within you, at least I do as an invisible man. I carried my sickness and though for a long time I tried to place it in the outside world, the attempt to write it down shows me that at least half of it lay within me. It came upon me slowly, like that strange disease that affects those black men whom you see turning slowly from black to albino … At first you tell yourself that it's all a dirty joke, or that it's due to the 'political situation.' But deep down you come to suspect that you're yourself to blame, and you stand naked and shivering before the millions of eyes who look through you unseeingly. *That* is the real soul-sickness, the spear in the side … only it's worse because you continue stupidly to live. But live you must, and you can either make passive love to your sickness or burn it out and go to the next conflicting phase. (Elisson, 434–435, original emphasis)

Only by writing down the story, does the narrator become fully aware that he was partially to blame. The Invisible Man admits complicity in the process of his racialization. Now that he has extinguished his sickness, he is going to move on.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Ellison gives much more agency to African Americans than Du Bois. Du Bois underestimates the role of black people in the process of racialization. The double-consciousness formula to a great extent reduces Afro-Americans to an object position. Treating whites as agents and blacks as objects, Du Bois becomes entangled in the rhetoric of white people, who usually objectified African Americans. The double-consciousness formula stops short of empowering black Americans. Du Bois fails to underscore that blacks are not only victims of racism, but also active subjects capable of resisting white indoctrination and throwing away confining definitions of the white world. They can reject the "revelation of the other world" and swap it for self-revelation. Du Bois concentrates mainly on the effects of double-consciousness without delving deep enough into its origins. Ellison looks at the problem from a much broader perspective, noticing an interplay of factors behind the phenomenon. *Invisible Man* makes it clear that the perception of African Americans can remain intact. According to the

narrator, whites "are also running," propelled by greed and selfishness. Ellison leaves African Americans much more leeway for action and maneuver. Still, Du Bois's objectification of African Americans may be strategic. Du Bois might have employed mainstream structures to reach the white reading public and arouse its compassion.

The Invisible Man's self-discovery overlaps with his enlightenment in a broader sense. He goes beyond his own self-revelation and explores the nature of interracial relationships. Now he can map out his place in a larger space, not only embracing his internal diversity, but also recognizing diversity as an essential precondition of healthy human relationships. Mutual coexistence should be based on respect for individual differences. The greatest strength of mankind lies in diversity, not uniformity. The Invisible Man speaks out strongly against conformity, understanding that one cannot reduce everything to a uniform pattern. Members of organizations like the Brotherhood would like to make everyone conform. Diversity is embedded in the very fabric of the United States. Instead of trying to escape from diversity, the United States should embrace its multitude of cultures and allow them to thrive. Aware that the negation of one's blackness amounts to an act of self-betrayal, the Invisible Man no longer looks up to white standards and norms. Through the appreciation of diversity the Invisible Man finds his way to integrity:

> Whence all this passion toward conformity anyway? — diversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you'll have no tyrant states. Why, if they follow this conformity business they'll end up by forcing me, an invisible man, to become white. Must I strive toward colorlessness? Think of what the world should lose if that should happen … America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain … Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat. Our fate is to become one, and yet many. (Ellison, 435)

The Invisible Man discovers harmony in diversity, which can help to promote understanding between different racial groups in the United States. African Americans need to keep fighting for their rights even "in face of certain defeat," even if their prospects for success look bleak. At this point we can trace parallels between Ellison and Du Bois. Ellison's warning against striving towards colorlessness corresponds to Du Bois's: "He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism" (1989: 5). Both authors find it essential that African Americans cherish their heritage. However, they also emphasize that black people do not want to be perceived as somehow separate, but as legitimate American citizens. They hope to put an end to their alienation and be treated on a par with other ethnic groups. The Invisible Man is seized with a feeling of displacement whenever he can see the Star Spangled Banner being hoisted: "there was always that sense in me of being apart when the flag went by … my star was not yet there" (Ellison, 298). Stepto suggests that Ellison, unlike Du Bois, steps beyond "tribal boundaries" (Stepto, 170). Du Bois speaks about African Americans in terms of "conformity to ideals of the American Republic" (Du Bois [1903] 1989: 11). Ellison

throws his dice on diversity, not conformity, even if it is conformity to the ideals of the American Republic. How can the Invisible Man treasure national ideals if Afro-Americans are not perceived as part of the nation?

At the beginning the Invisible Man is convinced that reality is linear, that life moves in a straight line, and that he can walk straight towards his goal, disregarding all obstacles on the way. The Brotherhood dupes him into thinking that reality can be reduced to a pattern. The immature Invisible Man discovers that reality is unbridled, it does not yield to any superimposed pattern. Chaos reigns free in reality. Nothing is fixed, everything is relative. Reality is circular, not linear. The human mind must always work against the background of chaos, which gives validity to any plan and pattern: "And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived" (Ellison, 438). The passage quoted above contrasts with the Brotherhood ideology. The Brothers believe that reality can be controlled. They do not realize that they are mere pawns on the checkerboard of history, playing a role in a show directed by forces outside their control. The Brothers, Norton and Emerson refuse to "recognize the beautiful absurdity of their American identity" (Ellison, 422). The narrator comes to see that reality is just as intangible as human identity. Yet writing down his story, he finally manages to give some pattern to his life and chips away at the chaos.

4. Conclusion

Ralph Ellison does not take Du Bois's double consciousness for granted, but assumes a critical approach to it. Ellison makes it explicit that the white world cannot shape the self-perception of African Americans unless they agree to look at themselves through the eyes of white people. The Invisible Man is not blinded by whites, but rather keeps blinding himself. Internalizing the prejudice of the white world, the Invisible Man becomes partially responsible for his indoctrination. Ellison devotes much more space to second sight, exploring it further than Du Bois. Sight imagery comes to the foreground in the novel. Ellison notes that African Americans may be uncomfortable about their gift of second sight. Second sight is useless if they refuse to accept it. For most of the novel the Invisible Man squanders the gift of second sight, harboring instead his illusions. Both Ellison and Du Bois agree that for African Americans striving for self-consciousness should involve no self-abnegation. The Invisible Man cannot countervail the external stigmatization of blackness and starts translating it into internal branding. His internal stigmatization triggers the process of self-effacement. Only after embracing all parts of his identity, does the narrator become really true to himself. The Invisible Man arrives at self-consciousness, but his self-consciousness diverges from that envisioned by Du Bois. It does not draw just on African and American consciousness, but

derives from all the wealth of human experience, encompassing multiple layers of his identity. The consciousness of black Americans gains much more depth in Ellison's novel. The Invisible Man breaks with Duboisian duality and celebrates multiplicity. All facets of his experience are equally important. Du Bois sees synthesis as a solution to double consciousness, whereas Ellison valorizes division. However, division does not have to be mutually exclusive with internal balance.

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