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**Black Invisibilty versus Racial Visibilty in Ralph Ellison ‘s
Invisible Man(1952)**

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Dedication

I express my gratitude to Allah for giving me the power and the ability to finish my dissertation, to my beloved parents Hadje and fatiha for encouraging me in moving forward to finish my studies in perfect way, to my Brothers: Manssour, Hosam and Soufiane for being there for me whether in my studies or in my real life. To my dear sisters: Samira and Sara for supporting me, to my new family, my husband Rachid for encouraging me. to my little uncle Mohamed for being there the time when I needed it him, to my aunts: Hada and Naima for helping me to choose such branch.

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Abstract

The African American literature sprang from the blacks' suffering during and after slavery. At the beginning, the authors faced challenging circumstances; they had to challenge and to change the stereotypes about considering the blacks as invisible, inferior and not able to produce work of literature. The quest for visibility has always represented a central theme in the blacks' writings seeking to shape a new black identity in the white dominant American society. Ralph Waldo Ellison belongs to the twentieth century most important writers who contributed to the shaping of the visibility of the blacks in America. His masterpiece, *Invisible Man*, is still a center of interest after more than fifty years after its first publication. The novel highly depicts racial discrimination in America which made it the most influential book after the Second World War. Ralph Ellison's novel portrays the harsh reality and struggle of the blacks in the white dominant society. The narrator is a black man suffering from racism, facing a serious problem of identity loss and struggling a lot in order to find his real existence. He is being misled and exploited by blacks more than whites. Each time he thinks that he has found his real identity it turns out that he was wrong, starting from his expulsion from college then moving to Harlem, finding a job at the paint factory, being betrayed at the brotherhood and ending up with the race riot. This present research examines the black invisibility versus racial visibility from New historicism approach and sheds light on African-American literature and its writers who took black identity as their central theme, from slavery till the Civil Rights Movement era. The analysis of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* is also tackled from a psychoanalysis point of view.

Keywords: Ralph Waldo Ellison's *Invisible Man*, racism, invisibility, identity, visibility

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General Introduction

The twentieth century modernist literature is known for its split from traditional writing, Ralph Waldo Ellison is one of those modernist writers who helped shaping the African American literature. While reading *Invisible man*, readers feel that the author draws upon his personal experience and cultural history, he strives to investigate the depths of racism as well as the cloaks of invisibility that is placed in the white dominated society on black people.

African American literature, in particular, is regarded as an outstanding kind of literature that grew from the suffering of the blacks from enslavement and ill-treatment of the whites that stripped them of any rights. Therefore, their authors at first wrote to challenge the common controversies that the blacks are not able to produce an equivalent literary work. Negro writers have always involved in their writings the theme of Invisibility that came to the surface due to the racial discrimination and racism. Ralph Ellison's work *Invisible Man*, for instance, depicted the social realities of that of the blacks, and their dilemmas they get encountered within a world dominated by white values and ideologies in which they were marginalized from.

The novel *Invisible Man* claimed its position in American Literature and became a reference for the African American culture and history. Ralph Ellison's portrayal of the protagonist's journey towards his self-discovery depicts the harsh reality where the blacks have less chance to participate in a society that sideline them. The protagonist is a nameless character who claims to be 'invisible' in the opening of the story; he then continues to narrate his journey while he adopted multiple identities in order to fit with the system that is ruled by the whites only. The story shows the personal growth of the narrator who first believed in the American dream ; that hard work can bring success, but he eventually realizes that a

colored man will always find obstacles to gain success and acceptance in society that is culturally hegemonic, and finally he decides to be invisible.

Invisible Man focuses on the problem of invisibility and the impact of racism on the narrator and the black community that was struggling at a particular period of time. The narrator was misguided by people from his own kind who exploited, manipulated and used him for their own benefit to please the whites who were responsible for his self-loss and alienation. This research will answer the following questions: What are the strategies that the narrator used to face the black invisible image drawn by the racist white society? When and how does he discover that his invisibility can serve as something positive? How does it contribute to his self-discovery? Does Ralph Ellison make black America visible? And how is racism part of all this?

The research will also deal with all the developments that occur in the character's personality from the very beginning till the end where he reaches his maturity and discovers his true self. The study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is concerned with a theoretical frame, the approach and the African American literature that emerged in the novel, the circumstances that helped in emerging such literature. The first chapter also includes the main psychoanalytical theories used in the study of the novel and its importance in shaping such literature.

The second chapter 'the white visibility' deals with the major transition in the period of 1950s American history; the historical perspectives and the Civil Rights Movement, and race and racism which examine the effect of racism and alienation on the identity within the psyche of the narrator and how the concept of race is related to racism in which a general definition of racism is given.. The third chapter deals with the aspects of invisibility and how the narrator changed to something positive to be his own freedom and finally the quest for identity in which shows the narrator's journey toward finding his real identity .

Chapter One

Theoretical frame of the Research

Introduction

Literature is the art of the language, the voice of the minorities's works in which it is used as means to assert and resist their works. Literary theory is a method and body of ideas in which we choose to read any literary work to understand the underlying principles, it is the literary theory that formulates the relationship between the author and the work.

Literary theory is more about how the reader understands literature, in which he or she might be interested in the text's function, a literary theory allows the reader to investigate literature from many different aspects. This chapter explores the literary theories such as New Historicism that studied literature within the context of both the history and the author; and the Psychoanalysis theory, also it will discuss the importance of such theories in shaping the African American Literature and producing an intellectual history of black literary texts.

1.2. New Historicism

New Historicism is a literary theory that is based on the idea that literature should be studied and interpreted within the context of both the history of the author, and the history of the critic based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault. According to Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan:

" in the early 1980s a critic named Stephen Greenblatt coined a term for the kind of criticism he was doing, he called it New Historicism and the name stuck, Greenblatt himself went on to question the term, and to rename his own practice Cultural Poetics, but New Historicism was launched"(524). Also, Rafeef Habib assumes: " the ' New' Historicism dates back to Stephen Greenblatt's use of the term in 1982 in an introduction to an issue of the journal *Genre* devoted to the Renaissance"(762).

Stephen's book, *Renaissance self-fashioning : from More to Shakespear(1980)*, is regarded as its beginning. However, similar tendencies can be seen in the works of various critics during the 1970, for example, *J.W.Lever's the tragedy of state :A studyof Jacobean Drama*. This book challenged conservative critical views about Jacobean theatre and linked the plays much more closely with the political events of their era. Every events certainly have some causes, new historicists argue that causes are usually multiple, complex, and difficult to analyze.

New Historicism is a method based on the parallel reading of literary and non literary texts, generally of the same historical period. In other words, new historicism refuses to privilege the literary text. It acknowledges not only that the work of literature is influenced by its author's times and circumstances, but that the critic's response to that work is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices.

New Historicism looks at literature in a wider historical context. Rafey Habib states:" The New Historicists tended, then, to view literature as one discourse among many cultural discourses insisting on engaging with this entire complex in a localized manner, refusing to engage in categorical generalizations or to commit to any definite political stance" (762).The New Historicism theory evaluates literature through a comprehensive analysis of the social and cultural events being described and so much more how these socio-cultural events help to build the event.

It aims to understand intellectual history through literature and literature through the cultural context surrounding historical events, it deals with textuality of history that is the fact that history is built and fictionalized and the history of a literary text is without doubt found within the socio-cultural and political conditions surrounding its conception and

interpretation. According to Rafeeq Habib: " Montrose also points out that the New Historicists variously recognize the ability of literature to challenge social and political authority"(762).

New Historicism tends to examine both how the writer's epoch affects the work and how the work reflects the writer's time.

For new historicists, history cannot be understood simply as a linear progression of events at any given point in history. Any given culture may be progressing in some areas and going backwards or regressing in others. According to Charles Bressler: " Michel Foucault redefines the concept of history by declaring that history is not linear and cannot be explained as a series of causes and effects controlled by some mysterious destiny or an –all powerful deity. For Foucault, history is the complex interrelationship of a variety of discourses ,from his point of view, history is a form of power " (189). History was always viewed as factual and without interference, According to Julie Rivkin and Michael Rayan, " Understanding 'history' as discursively produced allows one to consider the source of a given discourse, its genealogy, to use important to Foucault, and along with source the perspective it might serve"(526).

New Historicism sees history as embedded in literary works and the product of culture and social power. Rafeeq Habib contends: " historicism has been characterized by a number of concerns and features, most fundamentally, there is an insistence, all works of art, and all literary texts must be situated within a historical perspective. In other words, texts or phenomena cannot be somehow torn from history and analyzed in isolation, outside of the historical process"(760). In addition to Merriam-webster that gave a definition to new historicism related to history:" New Historicism is a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicityof a text by relating it to the configuration pf power, society or

ideology in a given time ". Thus, This approach draws the veil on the economic power and social realities of how ideologies are presented in the text to form power in a given era .

1.2. Historical Background of New Historicism

Although no one can give a comprehensive and uncontested history of New Historicism's development, Charles Bressler states: "New Historicism has its historical roots in Renaissance scholarship marked by historical self-consciousness. The English Renaissance's leading literary spokesperson, Shakespeare, blazed an innovative trail across the disciplines of history, literature and politics, often blurring the distinctions among them" (183). Also, he states that New Historicism is the name given to the American branch of Cultural poetics, one of its originating voices, Stephen Greenblatt, along with many other scholars believe that one's culture permeates both texts and critics. Because all critics are influenced by their culture (188).

Charles Bressler makes a distinction between the so called Old Historicism and New Historicism or cultural poetics. He declares that New Historicism or cultural poetics asserts that an intricate connection exists between an aesthetic object - a text or any work of art- and society and that all texts must be analyzed in their cultural context (188). Rafey Habib states: "The New Historicism is marked by a ' methodological self-consciousness ' rather than the old historicist ' faith in the transparency of signs and interpretative procedures"(764).

New Historicism redefines both a text and history, it is the approach to understand literature in relation to history because literature and history are inseparable from each other. History and literature are observed in *Invisible Man* in that the individual history of the narrator is challenging the factual history that society has established to reshape his identity according to the racist historical context of that era.

New Historicism has been described as the closest to the other theories, for instance, Marxism, Feminism, and Cultural Materialism in their being skeptical of the formalist view of literature as an autonomous realm of discourse. However, New Historicism differs from Old Historicism in large measure which is not based on the approach but rather on the characteristics of its historical methodology. According to Simon During:

Ever since 1982, when Stephen Greenblatt gave the term currency, those of us who work in the academic humanities have heard a great deal about the 'New Historicism'. During the second half of the 1980s, it seemed to many young researchers the least mystified, most exciting and productive form of analysis available [...] New Historicism has driven by unified and easily identifiable programmes, aims or interests (171).

Evrin Dogan argues that Greenblatt's later criticism is mostly centered on the drama of early modern period, which appears in *Shakespearean Negotiation*, defines New Historicism

As a turn away from formal, decontextualised analysis (87).

1.3. Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis is a discipline which studies the psychic life. It began by Sigmund Freud. Charles Bressler claims: "without question, the foremost investigator of the unconscious and its activities is the Viennese Neurologist and psychologist Sigmund Freud "(124).

Sigmund Freud had made investigation and analysis of the concept of dreams, slips of the tongue, and other mistakes and errors in everyday life. Carl Gustav Jung who was considered as the heir of Freud's psychoanalysis contends: " According to Freud, the dream, like every complex psychic product, is a creation, a piece of work which has its

motives, its trains of antecedent association ; and like any considered action , it is the outcome of a logical process"(49). From Freud's investigation, he was led to a new conception of the structure of personality .In addition, Charles Bressler states : " According to Freud , the best avenue for discovering the content and the activity of the unconscious is through our dreams" (124).

1.4. Historical background of Psychoanalysis

Sigmund Freud was considered as the founder father of psychoanalysis . In founding psychoanalysis, Freud developed treatment techniques such as the use of free association and discovered transference, establishing its central important role in analytical process. Joseph Palombo, Harold Bendicson and Barry Koch declares : " Freud represents the fountainhead from which most subsequent psychoanalytic development theories have flowed"(24).

Freud looked at literature as a dream because it changes the repressed contexts into virtual created ones; he is known for his concentration on the concept of unconsciousness.

From the psychoanalytical attitude to Freud, each individual is ruled or dominated by the unconscious (the ID) that is completely strange to our consciousness and rational thoughts (EGO). The Unconsciousness is the main responsible part for emotions, guilt, fears and unsolved problems that the individual does not want to remember in order not to feel hurt or overwhelmed by. It is created through repression and defenses. Psychoanalysis helps the individual to increase his understanding of the oppressive emotional meaning.

1.5. The Importance of Psychoanalysis in African American Literature

The era of Harlem Renaissance had produced a body of intellectual work that deployed psychoanalysis as a way to create a productive space for the expression of black interiority. Robert Butler and Hakutani Yoshinobu declares: " *Amiri Baraka's 1981 essay*'

black literature and the Afro-American nation : the Urban Voice ' argues that, from the Harlem Renaissance onward Black literature has been 'Urban shaped' producing a uniquely black urban consciousness (10).

Psychoanalytic theories had shaped the works of important African American literary figures. Badia Ahad argues:

"though the study of psychoanalysis was originally explicated in Sigmund Freud 's 1899 the text *the Interpretation of dreams*, the evolution of American Psychoanalysis produced a series of paradigm shifts throughout the twentieth century that parallel and are reflected in the works of a major African American writers " (3).

Badia Ahad details on how Jean Toomer , Ralph Ellison and other writers had employed psychoanalytic terms and conceptual models to challenge the notion of race and racism in twentieth century America , as she stated that "Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright witnessed the exponential rise of psychoanalysis in the United States during second world war and applied it in their literary production and intimate lives "(3).

The psychological narratives of African American texts had produced an intellectual history of black literary and intellectual negotiations within the concept of race. African Americans, within the social and political context, would state the effectiveness of Freud's ideas in psychoanalytic discourse. According to Claudia Tate: "Psychoanalysis , I believe can help us to not only analyze black textuality but also effectively explain important aspects of the deep psychological foundations of the destructive attitudes and behaviors of racism"(16).

Psychoanalysis enriched many of the whites' works which captured the black intellectuals' attention.

During the Harlem Renaissance till 1950s, the interest was to include the field within the black's literature representing the repressed feeling, racial and sexual prejudice Badia Ahad suggests : " Psychoanalysis emerged within black intellectual and literary history as stratagem to trouble racial logic and interpret racial dialects unique to United States (5).

This means that Psychoanalysis provided the writers to be more aware about the Psycho-analogical damages that are caused by racism. Also, they became aware of their complexes and blackness and they continued using the psychoanalytical approach for decades in their writings.

1.6. African American Literature

African American literature is the literature that purely belongs to the writers of African descent. It gained its strength in the late 18th century with the Harlem Renaissance based in the African American community of Harlem in New York City. It was a part of a larger intellectual flowering of social thoughts and culture. Numerous black artists , musicians and others produced classic works in fields like jazz and theatre.

Robert Butler and Hakutani Yoshinobu states: '*Donald B. Gibson 's'the Harlem Renaissance city : its Multi Illusionary Dimension* ' stresses how black writers used this urban space to create many new directions in black literature , the urban literature of the Harlem , thus grounded in a vision of city life that was complex and many –sided continued to influence black literature long after the end of the 1920s . Gibson argues that the Harlem Renaissance left a legacy for black writers which endures to the present .(13).

Harlem Renaissance or the new Negro movement in the 1920s was the period of transition in the African American literature from the African dialect to a more sophisticated one introducing the black culture as a racial pride. During the Harlem Renaissance, Harlem city was the heaven, a place of self discovery, cultural and literary innovation , several

publications of literature and art sought to reflect Harlem as it is in reality. Artists and writers also shifted their focus in topics related to folk culture, religion and the South in their works. According to Robert Wetzork who gives a relieving definition by classifying the Harlem Renaissance as ' [a] movement of black self assertion against white supremacy ', which also introduced and produced a more positive connotation of the act of passing among people of (mixed) African American heritage themselves (2).

The Harlem Renaissance was an intellectual movement or an attempt to establish a literary school strictly related to African Americans. Among the issues that the African American literature tackled was the issue of the African American as being a part of the large American society, in addition to slavery, racism and equality, including oral narratives, poems and Blues.

The Great Depression of 1930 was one of the factors that led to the end of the Harlem awakening. The economic crisis in all fields of life pushed African American authors to change their themes and to write about social and economic issues .

Robert Washington argues:

" within the black community, the signs of that modernity appeared most dramatically in black America literature. In the confused, helter skelter ideological outlook of the first dominant black literary school, the leading writers were rebelling against what they saw as the lies and distorted beliefs about black American life that earlier literary works had fostered. As seen in the above brash declaration by Langston Hughes, one of the key figures in the new black literary school, these young black writers sought to celebrate blackness, and dismissed the objections of both blacks and whites who felt embarrassed or offended by what they wrote" (14) .

The Black American literature was a subject of change, due to the several historical events that took place, the African American literature focused on how it feels like to be an African American; it also included their position facing the issue of freedom and equality. According to Robert Butler and Hakutani Yoshinobu: "African American literature is to examine the historical experience of black people in America from the very outset, black people were denied imaginative access to pre-urban homeland in Africa because the institution of slavery did every thing possible to stamp out the memory of that world "(11).

The term 'Jazz' is credited to African Americans who used it to describe a genre of music that quickly became popular among middle- class Americans. Mitchell Matza and Peter Mancall defines the jazz as " Jazz Age is brought to mind so as countless images, mostly of 1920s : the music, fashion , prohibition, movies and the rise of automobiles "(xii). This decade was also known as the Roaring Twenties or the Boom that was a period of outstanding prosperities in economic and technological innovations. By the end of the First World War, African Americans expected a better treatment in an equal society with white people; however, they faced a different reality. According to Rebecca Ferguson : " the lives of black people in American have , after all been defined and all too often determined by perception of their Race " (18).

The United States of America during that time was a place of racism and segregation, African Americans were excluded from participating in most of the fields. The whites owned business often refused their patronage; discrimination in jobs and education denied them. Concerning public amusements, owners of white clubs refused to admit African Americans while at the same time they depended on them to amuse their white clients by playing jazz music for them. The jazz Age flourished in different aspects in the American society, Jazz music became a popular culture. Hence music or jazz in particular reflected the hopes of African Americans for finding a new life. According to Kenneth Warren: " the

recognition of African American art simply as art would depend on society's achievement of racial equality" (13).

By the beginning of the 1970s, African American literature reached the mainstream as books by black writers continually achieved best selling and award-winning status. This was also the time when the work of African American writers began to be accepted by Academia as a legitimate genre of American literature. Due to the cultural and socio-political diversity, the United States became the land of opportunities, it has offered the American dream; the chance to all people to build a new successful life. However, this dream was interrupted by slavery and segregation.

The Americans were divided by Jim Crow laws under the notion 'separate but equal' which kept blacks and whites separate. According to Kenneth Warren: "in some ways, Jim Crow has not ended and that in 'the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movements, the most obvious expressions of segregation and discrimination gave way to more covert but equally pernicious manifestation of racism' " (5). Thus racism spread around the country especially in the South where black people did not have full rights as the white citizens. Many blacks have reached an artistic level and produced creative works, African American literature involves poetry and slave narratives.

Nowadays African American literature constitutes a basis in the literature of the United States, and it has become an inevitable part of American literature and culture because of the strong presence of African American literature that has paved the way for the emergence of Native American, Asian American and Chicano American streams of literatures. African American literature has become a means of discovering the reality of the nation; readers have the chance to discover the historical facts of America and re-evaluate their beliefs.

It is only with the significant representation of African American literature that the American society stands to be cleansed from the problem of racial discrimination,

Paul Rosenblatt claims: " is it not all strange that African American novelists would write stories that included experiences with racism " (13).African American literature has examined the problem of racial discrimination in all its philosophical, existential and epistemological aspects, and it still goes through a process of evolution with its subjects being closely related to slavery. Most of the African American writers had dealt with the issue of identity and highlighting its importance in shaping African American personal culture and history. In addition, the quest for identity has always represented a central theme in the blacks' writings seeking to shape a new black identity in the white dominant American society.

1.7. Identity in African American literature

Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary records that " identity is the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others : a sense of national , cultural , personal ,group identity "(770). Thus identity is a sense of uniqueness, and its characteristic demands identification with the ideals of some group that affirms the sense of self.

The notion of identity has been a focal point in African American literature: nations that have been formerly colonized were required to revisit as well as reconstruct the distorted identity in which the westerns have implemented for them. Rebeeca Ferguson states: " 'identity' is thus an important yet particularly elusive term in the context of black American culture, with its multiple dislocations and its long history of destabilizing social and psychological experience "(14). Many African American writers pushed identity as a central theme for their artistic works and novels, the question of identity has been discussed in

various levels. Kobena Mercer states: "Everybody wants to talk about identity. As a key word in contemporary politics it has many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not even talking about the same thing. One thing at least is clear that identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis"(43).

The writers of African American literature tried to revive the different disciplines of academic fields such as religion, philosophy, history, politics, to understand collectively the problems of identity. Blacks were the most who suffered from marginalization mainly because of their skin color. The oppression of the whites, the lack of literacy and language made the blacks in crisis to define themselves or give terms to define the self .

Thus slavery has been the main factor for the crisis of identity in the black man; the black man should pretend to be an obedient slave in order to please the whites , but, at the same time, he should fight against them and deny the false identity , which they enforced upon them . According to Rebeeca Ferguson :

" the history of oppression which Morrison traces often highlights the desire felt by so many black citizens to participate in developments taking place within ' mainstream' white America, and the degree to which that will was betrayed by the reality of abiding racism " (13). Racism was primarily spread from the Southern to the Northern states, Racial discrimination severely influenced the blacks who were all invisible in key representational spaces of American culture during the 1950s .

The color has been always the source of rejection from the racist society, Kadiatu Kanneh states: " the subjectivities we inhabit and the times in which we live, makes dramatically apparent ways in which 'race' has become the founding illusion of our identities "(vii). Therefore, the black people were marginalized and not accepted at all as African citizens, Black identity especially at the wake of the 20th century has been the main concern

as W.E.B. Du Bois expected, his famous prediction that the twentieth century would be the century of color line; according to Kadiatu Kanneh: " W. E. Du Bois wrote in 1903 that ' the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line ' ; that race and its variously linear parameters (borders, passages, journeys ; traditions and origins ; demarcations and discrimination) are still politically central at the end of the century " (vii).

There are paradoxical ways which show the struggles and attempts of African American writers for their ethnic identities. According to Emmanuel Nelson: " thus ethnic identity always remains ethnic in minimalist way and is different from the normative, mainstream American identity this has become a kind of struggle for many contemporary writers"

(1044).

To speak about African American black identity, we need to examine the voice that gave African American black identity its true essence and position, such as Slave narratives which were closer to depict the harsh conditions that hamper the spiritual and physical freedom of African American literature. Besides to how this voice portrays the effects of slavery on the black's mind in an effective way. According to Audery Fisch: " like the slave narratives, critiqued slavery in terms of natural rights and humanitarian principles "(13).

Slave and ex-slave narratives are important not only for what they tell us about African American history and literature but also they reveal to us the complexities of the dialogue between whites and blacks in the last two centuries, particularly for African Americans.

Laura Murphy claims that " these the truth voices , these narratives, are both the truth of slavery and to resolve and vanquish the pain of slavery for freed slaves "(xi) .

Slave narratives were a storage and reservoir of the African American history and documentation of their culture which in a way contributed a great deal in shaping the black identity. Throughout history, the black men suffered from racism as they faced a serious problem of identity loss and they struggled to find their real identity in world 's judgment in which it built a place they should be invisible in without any kind of deserving the right to be human .

The period of slavery is one of the most horrifying periods in the history of human kind , and slave narratives are important because they are a reminder that the society should never let this phenomenon repeat again. Williams Eric argues: "Slavery was not born of racism, rather racism was the consequence of slavery " (7). African Americans have struggled a lot in the history and their accounts consist of awful events they experienced throughout history by raising their faith and action using their pen in creative ways.

It was not easy for black people to get their works published by their conditions when the editors and the publishers were mostly white people. For instance, Frederick Douglass 's *the narratives of the life of Frederick Douglass : an American slave* , where William Lloyd Garrison wanted to write his own preface in order to have control over the form and content of the narratives. Frederick Douglass states: " I have no accurate knowledge of any age, never having seen any authentic record containing it, by far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs , and it is little of most masters"(7).

Frederick' book was a bestseller in the United States and was translated into several European languages, he was considered as orator for the black freedom. In addition, he led the abolitionist movement that worked hard to end slavery and viewed it as anti-humanistic, and he became one of the most famous intellectuals of his time, advising presidents and lecturing to thousands on a range of causes, including women's rights and Irish home rule .

1.9 Conclusion

African American Literature begins with a meditation on the meaning of slavery and freedom. It creates a new narratives by early writers to seek a black community with real identity and began to dream of fuller participation in the American society including political empowerment and cultural self determination.

New Historicism approach reveals the economic and social realities of how ideologies were presented in the text to form power in a given era. Also, the psychoanalytical approach helps us to understand the conflicting white and black psyches as the nature of individual and social powers involved in this existential struggle.

Chapter two

White visibility

Introduction

The American history was witnessing many conflicts. The major conflict was between black people and whites. The African American as human being in America did not have the inalienable right to deserve life under the domination of white visibility that is the term to describe the social, political and historical racist domination over black people. These two conceptions :race and racism show the white supremacy over black skin that make them to feel invisible .

racism has a deep historical roots in the American society sustained through institutional policies and practices where people of color are routinely and systematically portrayed by the whites as invisible, for white people the color represents evil or sin ,racism was the consequence of slavery, the period of slavery is one of the most horrifying periods in the history of human kind

2.1. General Atmosphere of 1920s and 1950s American

American history has been marked by multiple events starting from 1920s until 1950s, The 1920s was a decade of change, the first step which represented an era of growth, learning and exploration, the roaring twenties were a period in history of dramatic social and political change, according to Thomas Steissguth : “ The roaring twenties continues to fascinate historians and students of North American history, for many, it represents the true beginning of the 20th century, a time when cars, automation, and scientific management transformed

daily life"(viii). for the first time, more Americans lived in cities than on farms, and the nation's total wealth doubled between 1920s and 1929s, and this economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar consumer society, people from coast to coast bought the same goods.

Many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy "mass culture" .In fact, for most people in the United states, the 1920s brought more conflict than celebration , however, for a small handful of young people in the nation's big cities, the 1920s were roaring indeed.

During the 1920s, many Americans had extra money to spend, and they spent it on consumer goods such as clothes, home appliances, cars, electric refrigerators..... Michael O'Neal states, "life in the United States from 1920 to 1930 seems as though it must have been lively and carefree. The nation was at peace. The standard of living was rising through much of the period, and Americans seemed to have more than enough Money" (5).

During the 1920s, some freedom was expanded while others were curtailed, the 18th Amendment to the constitution, ratified in 1919 had banned the manufacture and sale of 'intoxicating liquors' to many middle -class white Americans, prohibition was a way to assert some control over the unruly immigrant masses who crowded the nation's cities. Michael states:

"Mention the 1920, and Americans form a variety of pictures. To some, it was the era of big-city gangsters, such as ALcapone. Capone and other mobsters defied prohibition and made fortunes selling illegal bootleg liquor. they were called bootleggers because they and their customers often hid flasks of liquor in their high boots. They were criminal, but their daring defiance of the law turned them into almost romantic figures to many "(6).

Prohibition was not the only source of social tension during the 1920s, the great Migration of African Americans from the Southern country side to Northern cities and the increasing visibility of black culture, jazz and blues music and the Harlem Renaissance, for instance, discomfited some white Americans. In *Invisible Man*, Ellison employs the jazz style and in the early chapters, he employs a direct didactic style similar to that of social realist protest novels of the 1930s and 1940s, also in the last section of the novel ; as the narrator moves toward the apocalyptic race riot in Harlem with which the novel concludes, he emphasizes the dark comic absurdities of the African American existence.

It was clear that the nation was witnessing many conflicts, these conflicts what one historian has called a “ cultural civil war” between city- dwellers and small town residents, protestants and Catholics, black people and the whites. In addition to new women that was called the flapper as the most familiar symbol of the roaring twenties. Michael claims: "still other picture the flapper. this was the name given to a new type of woman who defied the conventions of her mother and grandmother, to her elders, the flapper was shocking because of her poise, boldness, and freedom in dress and manners"(6).

2.2.The Civil Rights Movement

American history has been marked by persistent and determined efforts to expand the scope of civil rights, African slaves as human being in America did not have the inalienable right to deserve life, to live liberty and happiness. Instead, the constitution protected slavery by allowing the importation of slaves until 1808 and providing for the return of slaves who had escaped to other states, following the American civil war, slaves were emancipated in 1865. This meant that slavery was abolished which made black people migrated towards the north mainly Chicago where factories were available. According to Mitchell Haugen :

"After the war. the American economy thrived, and economic opportunities for African

Americans increased with the new demand for industrial workers. Wages increased, and most worker's standards of living improved. The need for industrial workers in large cities such as Chicago, New York, and ST-Louis spurred the movement of blacks from their agricultural jobs in the South to the the new opportunities in the North "(11).

Migration of the blacks toward the North increased over the years and reached the peak during the Second World War, leaving the racism and the lack of opportunities in the South; according to Aldon Morris : " in the cities and rural areas of the south, black were controlled economically, politically and personally"(1).This mass migration encouraged black people to have a sense of liberty in their life as a result, it gave a push for the rise of the civil rights movement.

American civil rights movement was a mass protest movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern United States, Aldon Morris states: " By the 1950s southern whites had established a comprehensive system of domination over black. This system of domination protected the privileges of white society and generated tremendous human suffering for blacks" (1).it has its roots in the centuries: long efforts of African slaves and their descendants to resist racial oppression and abolish slavery. According to Renee Romano: "In the past twenty years, the civil rights movements of the 1950s and1960s has assumed a central place in the American memory" (xii).

Civil rights movement helped black writers to change their themes, messages, principles such as the notion of race and sex. For instance, writers such as James Baldwin and Richard Wright who wrote about the struggle of being a black person in the racist American society, also the civil rights movement gave a rise to black woman's voice, poets and writers, such as Lorraine Hansberry and Gwendolyn Brooks. This latter became the first African American

female who won the Pulitzer Prize for her *book of poetry* (1949). Another novelist who was highly influenced by the change of the African American literature is Ralph Ellison in which he wrote *Invisible Man*, even though the novel has been his only achievement, still its position remained remarkable in the African American literature.

2.3.Race and Racism

Racism is the discrimination between two different races, racial discrimination in the United States has been a major issue since the slave era and the colonial era. The history of American racism is the slave trade, since Columbus discovered the New Continent, the black people had suffered hunger, thirst, and disease.

Invisible Man is a novel of first person point of view; by a nameless character who undergoes his journey from the South toward the North to seek opportunities. The narrator begins telling his story with the claim that he is invisible man. His invisibility as he says, is not physical condition or literally invisible, but is rather the consequence of the refusal of the white people to see him. It was their racist actions and behaviors toward his blackness that caused this refusal as Mitchell Haugen states: " Invisible man, the protagonist's life in the North is played with its own brand of racial challenges"(10).The narrator has been hiding from the world, living underground, far from the other ,and he was not violent at all even when they mistreat him when he says : "I am not so overtly violent. I remember that I am Invisible and walk softly so as not awaken the sleeping ones."(4).he starts to narrate his adventure of self-discovery and experiences that eventually made him decide to become invisible.

Invisible Man as a novel is considered as representation of African American history. It is about the reality of racism and the problem of race from the late of 1920s until the beginning of 1930s. The personal experience of Ralph Ellison with racism and social

inequality where black people suffered severe discrimination, segregation, disenfranchisement, economic exploitation and cruel victimization sparked his motivation to write his novel, *Invisible Man*.

In the novel, the protagonist faces the racist American society from the segregationist South to the racist North; he always confronts the idea of race through experiencing white's racism from the degradation he went through. *Invisible Man* as a novel is deeply tragic and profoundly a soul-searching story of young Negro's baffling experiences on the road of self-discovery. In the period when he was studying in college, the narrator suffered a lot, he was obedient to the arrangement of the teachers in the school and the rule of whites in white's clubs.

In the novel racism was depicted as something positive to the protagonist to be invisible from the world that can bring the internal peace for the narrator as he feels in his life. He realizes that his invisibility is very significant when he says: "I am not complaining, nor am I protesting either. It is sometimes advantageous to be unseen "(3).also when he states:

Several years ago (before I discovered the advantage of being invisible) I went through the routine process of buying service and paying their outrageous rates. But no more. I gave up all that, along with my apartment, and my old way of life : that way based upon the fallacious assumption that I, like other men, was visible. Now, aware of my invisibility, I live rent-free in a building rented strictly to whites" (5).

In his life, the narrator found that the refusal of the other to see him is something positive and he stopped to complain or to fight against their racist behavior while continues whatever he wants to do. For example, stealing electricity from the Monopolized light and power company as he says : "I learned in a time though that it is possible to carry on a fight against them without their realizing it. For instance, I have been carrying on a fight with

Monopolated light and power for some time now. I use their service and pay them nothing at all, and they don't know it"(5).

The narrator's incident which made him understand his invisibility in people's eyes when he accidentally bumped into a white man and all of a sudden the narrator becomes visible as he says : " because of the near darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name(4)."Although, the narrator finds his invisibility positive for him but it has affected his life ; growing up the narrator experienced the spiritual shock repeatedly, the poor black youth kept asking himself, who am I ? where am I from ? his choice to mold himself for the white man's world often hurts him, and he is not enlightened until he truly acknowledges that the only way to be visible, to exist, is to accept his invisibility.

Blacks were not considered as equals as the whites, they were neglected, marginalized and do not have the right to share the same places and positions like them. For example, in the story, the narrator was sitting in the last row although it was vacant, all of these because of the notion of race which was an important issue in all aspects of The American society, instead of being biologically grounded and accepted, it is socially built and used to maintain the interests of the white people.

Racism in the novel was based on the color skin. Black and white colors are the most used in color symbolism due to the immersive hidden meaning. They are used especially to portray the theme of the white dominance over the black people especially in the American society. For example, when the invisible man has to add ten drops of a black chemical to make the paint more white which means that despite the hatred and segregation; white people are still in need for black people.

In the novel, we saw how invisible man is getting lost behind the white control as he says : " In the vast whiteness I which I myself was lost" (238). This a metaphor of how whites'

actions toward him were too racist. For white people, the black color represents evil or negative; as a result, the narrator feels the fear from all the whiteness surrounding him, as the narrator grumbles : " A matter of construction of their inner eyes those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality" (3). The narrator refers to inner eyes to comment on their thoughts on race since he is a black-skinned man, he feels that he is overlooked complaining that the whites are blind to spiritual truth.

One of the most significant events in the protagonist's journey is when he got injured during his work in the Liberty Paints Factory, and he was sent to the hospital there. He fails to understand anything of what doctors are saying as he states : "but still meaning were lost in the vast whiteness in which I myself was lost"(116).The idea of whiteness was stressed in their uniform and hospital walls in the scene where he had was released from the machine.

The narrator was treated as a test object by the white doctors; he temporarily lost his memory and the ability to speak due to the electric shock treatment he received there. In the novel, the narrator's experience in the hospital symbolizes the racist behaviors towards the blacks even in public places. In addition, when the narrator joins the Brotherhood, he believes that he can fight racial equality by working within the ideology of the organization, but he finds that Brotherhood seeks to use him as a token black man in its abstract project. They see him only as they want to see him and the only way to coexist is to serve them without any hesitation.

The narrator endured the unfair treatment he was given by the whites which made him understand the real meaning of racism and the apartheid policies of the United States and feel alienated and decided to live underground as home with his invisibility as he stats : " the point now is that I found a home or a hole in the ground as you will [...] I'm Invisible and live in a hole, I'm dead. I am neither dead nor in a state of suspended animation" (5).To live away

from other people under the surface without enjoying life in the center because whenever the protagonist had to deal with people from the center, he felt marginalized and invisible.

2.4. White Visibility

In *Invisible Man*, Ralph Ellison explores the idea of white visibility domination over the black invisibility. The notion of white visibility has always been source of rejection from the racist white society toward the black existence ; in the story the black man narrates how white people refused to see him and how he becomes aware of his black invisibility and the white visibility.

The narrator struggles with white people's prejudice and discrimination because of the stereotypical mindset towards the black race. He introduces himself in the novel's prologue, white people consider their whiteness as a sign of virtue, purity, beauty, and holiness while blackness was associated with inferiority, sin, ugliness and devil. According to Julien Ispac and Kobena Mercer, " In scopic regime of racism, whiteness secured universal consent to its hegemony [...] by masking its coercive force with the invisibility that marks off the other as all too visible, coloured"(6).

Not only the white people were against the blacks; even the American presidents were the most coercive. Thomas Jefferson who would afterwards become the third president of the United State had drafted his famous lines in the Declaration of independence, " We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.However, despite its apparent promise of universality, the concept of manhood and the attendant conferral of natural rights was highly restrictive. also in his Notes of Virginia, he proclaims: " The difference between the white and the black race is fixed in nature" (97). Jefferson's portrayal confines black people's existence to a range of racist common places

such as their irrational sense of amusement, their bad smell. For the whites, blacks are toys and devices that they can control and use them whenever they want to satisfy their egos.

In the novel, the Brotherhood experience is one of the most prominent events that reflects the reality of white people ; in joining the Brotherhood, the narrator's position within the organization provides him with the opportunity to do public speaking, and thus he becomes the Brotherhood orator. Later on, he realizes that the organization does not care about him as a person but only cares about his benefits. He understands that he used an abstract symbol of his race rather than human being who has a life and opinion. According to Kelly Connelly:

" The narrator attempts to force those around him to see him, by struggling to make himself heard by the crowd at the Battle Royal, by developing an identity through his education or employments and by joining the Brotherhood.the narrator is unable to transcend the role he is expected to play and become visible as himself,rather than as a type, to the community at large"(71).

when the narrator mistakenly utters " social equality"(25) in his speech instead of social responsibility, they went mad and they made him repeat the phrase to assure that he did not do it on purpose and that was just mistake,he says:" whenever I uttered a word of three or more syllabals a group of voices would yell for me to repeat it.I used the phrase 'social responsibility"(24).they remind him," You've got to know our place at all times"(31). The Invisible man was a victim of those racist behavior, the best example that shows the white domination in the American society, in the novel where the protagonist incidentally bumps into a white man in the streets leading the white man to insult him for the reason of not having the same skin color. On the next day, the Daily News published about this accident stating that the white man was beaten by a black man while in fact he was bitten by his prejudices. In their minds the black people are violent by nature, as the narrator says : " If you are white, you

are right"(218).This shows how much the white visibility was dominating. According to Kelly Connelly : " the narrator must either remain hidden in the shadows of a stereotype the community will accept the danger that accompanies a black man's demand to be seen as a vocal individual in a hostile white world"(73).

The narrator's grandfather tells him in order to live in white community; he needs to pretend to be good slave , behaving as his former master's wish by wearing a mask. It was usual way for blacks to fight against racial discrimination. Kelly Connelly states:" The black man can become visible to the white community by playing an expected role, but what the community sees is a devalued inauthentic caricature rather than a whole person" (71) .

Conclusion

Racism has always been a very sensitive term often treated about African American people in USA. The whites practice a racist actions against black people based on their race or ethnicity. In *Invisible Man* , the narrator as African American was struggling in the white community because of the stereotypical mindset towards black race, the white people consider the black skin as a sin,ugliness and devil.

the narrator believed in the American dream vanished as he realized that his white community do not apply fair paradigms to judge others.instead he discovers that the skin color is what matters most in classifying others to those who exist and those do not.Despite the narrator's suffering from white's fetter, he poses great sense of freedom in his soul.

Chapter three

In Favour of Black

invisibility

Intoduction

In *Invisible Man*, the theme of invisibility, the idea that he is simply 'not seen' by his oppressors can serve as advantage in which he feels really existing in his own world, a world that save his identity.

Ralph Ellison starts his story with a prologue where he introduces the concept of Invisibility this allows for the examination of the effects of racism on the narrator's life, the protagonist portrays himself as invisible and he enjoys his invisibility.

3.1. Aspects of Invisibility

During the 1940s and 1950s of the last century, the concept of Invisibility as a new term emerged in the African American literature and it was revolutionary in the perception of racism and social discrimination. Thomas Gibson gives a simple definition to the concept of invisibility as he states: "Modernist conceptions of black 'Invisibility' can be broadly construed as the rejection or elision of Black subjects by white social and cultural hegemonies"(354).

In *Invisible Man*, the narrator remains a voice and never emerges as an external and quantifiable presence. Ironically, though he dominates the novel, the narrator never reveals his name ; the names that he is given in the hospital and in the Brotherhood and the name of his college all go unidentified. The narrator explains that his invisibility owes not to some biochemical accident or supernatural cause but rather to the unwillingness of other people to

notice his visibility as a black person. He says that his invisibility can serve both as an advantage and as a constant aggravation, Being invisible sometimes makes him feel really exist in his own world.

Invisible man is prismatic expression through which the rays of enormous themes and techniques emerge as invisibility and blindness, it is the novel that knitted on the fabric of American culture and it revolves around the racist relationships between the blacks and the whites. Ellison's *Invisible Man* experiences and memorizes the behavior of racist whites with the powerful social and political forces that conspire to keep black Americans in their inferior status. Ellison's aim was to reevaluate reality; therefore, reevaluate the past and the history through the nonlinear events , times and grounds of unnamed narrator in seeking his invisibility that was originated in the South with its segregation system and became perpetual in the North.

The metaphors of invisibility or in other words the white blindness allows for the examination of the effects of racism on the narrator 's life. In the story he portrays himself as invisible and he enjoys his invisibility as he claims : " it is sometimes advantageous to be unseen"(3) .According to Thomas Gibson, " invisibility is a deeply-embedded consequence of ' mutual Invisibility and mutual projection ' across racial lines where in one is not only seen as 'invisible' but also potentially by suspecting himself to be so"(354).

The issues Ellison so powerfully addresses are those which confront everyone, not only racism but the very question of black visibility in a world which is metaphor of blindness.He uses the first person point of view to narrate the events of the story of *Invisible Man*. This technique gives the audience the chance to feel what the narrator may feel, to touch his invisibility in racist society. From the narrator's life experience, he developed a serious and

complex character to adapt with his reality, " he gradually assumes a mask of invisibility in order to rebel against this limitation"(13).

After 20 years seeking his true visibility, the narrator finally understands the difference between seeing through one's physical eyes and perceiving reality through one's inner eyes, discovering how to turn his invisibility to something positive, because the society that he lives with keeps neglecting his existence. Therefore, he decides to assert himself to be a different invisible man; he developed a sense of alienation from his true self to coexist with his invisibility. As he says : " That I am nobody but myself. But first I had to discover that I am an Invisible man ! and yet I am no freak of nature, nor of history. I was in the cards, other things having been equal (or unequal) eighty- five years ago. I am not ashamed of my grandparents for having been slaves"(13). The narrator speaks of his grandparents' freed slaves who, after the Civil War, believed that they were equal and no more slaves to the white people, by achieving equality with whites despite segregation.

Ralph Ellison defines the concept of invisibility in the prologue of the novel as the black people were separated from the society because they were neglected and marginalized by the white American society. He writes: " I am Invisible man, understand simply because people refuse to see me... when they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination- indeed every thing and any thing except me"(3). Also James Lane claims : "the invisible man was emasculated and left rootless by people who either paid no attention to his inner existence or visualized him only as a symbol, as abstraction"(66).

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator describes his living in the basement of an all white building where he discovers how to steal electricity from Monopolated light and power. He states: "Meanwhile, I enjoy my life with the compliments of Monopolated light

and power" (11). He enjoys his alienation from the others, because as no one acknowledges his existence, invisibility affords the narrator the opportunity to take revenge from the white society by illegally draining their resources. The narrator realizes he can live rent free and obtain enough free electricity from Monopolated light and power to fill his hole with light. For the narrator the light represents the truth, hope and happiness; he states : " And I love light. Perhaps you'll think it strange that an Invisible man should need light, desire light, love light. But maybe it is exactly because I am Invisible" (6).

So he supplies his living space with light to feel some sort of importance. In the novel, the importance of light is seen in how it changes the narrator's perspective despite his invisibility; he lives with internal peace as he states : " the truth is the light and light is the truth when I finish all walls then I'll start on the floor. Just how that I will go, I don't know. Yet when you have lived invisible as long as I have you develop a certain ingenuity" (6). With this light, he can see himself clearly without the clouding influence of outside opinion. Also, he contends, " that is why I fight my battle with Monopolated light and Power. The deeper reason, I mean it allows me to feel my vital aliveness" (6). During the Brotherhood speech, the narrator feels important as if everyone is listening to him as he creates an atmosphere with so many lights to feel that he is not invisible. Therefore, people can not deny his existence. This shows how much the light takes part in the narrator's life.

Many forms of Invisibility are presented in the novel. For example, when the protagonist is invited to deliver a speech about freedom in a white party, he is forced to participate in the Battle Royal as part of the evening's entertainment. The Battle Royal symbolizes the social political struggle depicted in the novel. Because of race, class, and gender; these three concepts in which the narrator comes to terms with before he can acknowledge and accept his invisibility as a black man in white society.

In this battle, the narrator and some of his classmates are blindfolded and also forced to fight against each other. The battle is a racist show where he has to fight other blacks with blindfolded eyes; it is humiliating as he says: "All ten of us climbed under the ropes and allowed ourselves to be blindfolded with broad bands of white cloth" (17). The narrator and the other black boys are fighting against each other without realizing their humility; we can say that their blindness which makes them fight each other rather than fighting the white people, "Every one fought hysterically. It was complete anarchy. Everybody fought everybody else. No group fought together for long. Two, three, four, fought one, and then turned to fight each other were themselves attacked" (19). Thus the boys who fight in the battle wear blindfolds, symbolizing their powerlessness to recognize their exploitation at the hands of the white men.

Being invisible, gives the narrator power he can exert on the world and a type of freedom which he can enjoy without suffering from the consequence. He grows his personal freedom behind the eyesight of the white society; his invisibility endows him with an antagonistic self-perception more specifically with a hostile self-identity.

Ralph Ellison explores the idea of invisibility in his novel in which he shows how it shapes the narrator's actions, thoughts, and motivation. It allows him to move forward and do all he can whether the society sees him or not. He truly acknowledges that the only way to be visible, to exist is to remain true to oneself by means of accepting his invisibility. Also, the narrator's thoughts about invisibility are to act as the way the white man wishes not to be visible but to reach the position he wants. He remembers and tries to follow the instructions of his grandfather.

Also, the narrator ties his invisibility to music, 'the jazz music', he was passionate about Louis Armstrong's music in which he declares: "perhaps I like Louis Armstrong because

he's made poetry out of being invisible. I think it must be because he's unaware that he is invisible. And my own graps of Invisibility aids me to understand his music" (7) .The jazz music was considred as form of music that depends on improvisation and spontaneity. It is a form of music that was born among African American musicians. It allows the narrator to break out of his responsibility and cowardice.the narrator compares himself to Louis Armstrong in sharing the same invisibility and a common understanding of jazz, as he states : " invisibility, let me explain, gives one a slightly different sense of time, you're never quite on the beat.sometimes behind.Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its mode, those points where time stands still or from which it leaps ahead.And you slip into the breaks and look around.That's what you hear vaguely in Louis music" (7) . Louis Armstrong's song 'Black and Blue' returns to invisible man his senses in his zone of alienation, perhaps because both are invisible ,indeed, it his condition that allows him to respond so deeply and admires the Negro musician; he says : " And so I play the invisible music of my isolation" (13) . The music serves as a metaphor for the black struggle for visibility in the American society.

The novel treats invisibility ambiguously, it can bring disempowerment, but it can also bring freedom and mobility. It is the freedom that allows the narrator to tell his story, also the narrator, as mentioned above, demonstrates this power in the prologue when he literally draws upon electrical power from his hiding place in underground ;the electric company is aware of its losses but cannot locate their sources.

3.2.The Quest for Identity

During the late of 1940s and early of 1950s, many African Americans were subjected to racism in America, the black people were experiencing the feeling of estrangment and isolation. Being a cultural and racial minority, they felt like outsiders whithin the white

society. Ralph Ellison as black writer is regarded as one of the strongest voices that really captured the real feelings of the blacks because he experienced that period. According to James Pherson : "while *Invisible Man* is a story of one man's attempt to understand his society and himself, the essays outline Ellison's successful struggle to master the craft of the writer and to understand, and then affirm, the complexities of his own rich cultural experience"(361) .The cruel victimization and the discrimination that faced Ellison through his life was his motivation to create a novel that narrates the suffering of the blacks from invisibility to searching for their own identity. Thus he depicts skilfully the misery of the African American people.

Ralph Ellison starts his novel *Invisible Man* with a prologue where he introduces the concept of invisibility. He describes the narrator's life and the society's rejection to acknowledge his existence as an equal individual who holds the same rights and responsibilities because of his blackness. He tries to examine the universal human struggle of finding one's identity. Throughout the novel, the protagonist suffers a lot to understand his position and his true identity; James Phelan declares : " Ellison tackles the situation of an African American trying to find his place in a society dominated by whites, and especially white men"(148).

The protagonist struggles for freedom, self realization and to have a true identity. It becomes the dominant concern of the narrator's psychological journey as he claims: " All my life I had been looking for something and every where I turned someone tried to tell me what it was[...] I was looking for my self and asking everyone except myself the question which I and only I, could answer " (12).

Through the narrator's journey, he experienced many situations that hinder his self discovery and distort his inner vision. As a result, his identity is defined by the dominant

white society. According to John Callahan, " his experiences teach him that the act of meaning is linked inextricably to issues of power and control"(191).Therefore, he finds himself unable to assert his distinct individual identity due to his concept of himself and of the identity imposed upon him by those in power in his community,according to Erich Fromm :

" the black man has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whome he obeys" (120).

The narrator is seen as a victim of himself and of society; he condemns himself because he tries to build his image according to other's eyes as John Callahan states : " when he attempts to live according to the dictates of others, he loses his autonomy and suffers repeated betrayals, he discovers the true meaning of his life only after he assumes responsibility for naming himself by telling his own story"(191). Because the protagonist finds that the world around him has not changed and is still a racist toward his true identity as he says : "And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own.I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself.So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled.I am invisible man"(444). For the narrator, being black means that you are invisible as he says : " it's enough to make you doubt if you really exist"(13). Though the invisible man gains his invisibility by means of others' thoughts, he eventually comes to incorporate his invisibility into his own identity,the invisible man learns to use his invisibility as a powerful means to recognize his identity that was shaped by other's perceptions as he states : " But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me"(14).

The narrator learns many lessons about his identity from his experiences; for instance, the Battle Royal in which he was thrown into the boxing ring and was shaken and bloodied,

symbolically, introduces the struggle among blacks for an elusive prize that often remains beyond their reach. His speech represents the final humiliation, in his heart he knows that he has played the fool. According to John Callahan, "the Invisible Man might have learned from the battle royal episode to mistrust appearances" (194). There is another stage in which the narrator thinks that he found his real identity. He regards Dr. Bledsoe, the Negro president of the college as a model of imitation, success and a leadership as he says :

He was the example of every thing I hoped to be : Influential with wealthy men all over the country, consulted in matters concerning the race, a leader of his people[...] what was more, while black and bald and everything white folks poked fun at, he had achieved power and authority ; had, while black and wrinkle-headed made himself of more importance in the world than most southern white men. They could laugh at him but they couldn't ignore him" (52).

Also he claims :

to us he was more than just a president of a college. He was a leader, a 'state man' who carried our problems to those above us[...] he was our leader and our magic, who kept the endowment high, the funds for scholar ships plentiful and publicity moving through the channels of the press. He was our coal-black daddy of whome we were afraid " (91).

The narrator is extremely impressed with Dr. Bledsoe for reaching the top of the black people until he turns out to be a big fat phony. Dr. Bledsoe is closely related to the narrator's tragic fate is either destroying his first identity or recommending his permanent unemployment; he told him that the black man must show things that please white man. In other words, it is possible to achieve great things by being subservient to white demands even if it means betraying one's own ideal ethics, as in the novel "My Cod, boy ! you're black and living in the South-did you forgot how to lie ?"(107).

Moreover, when Bledsoe told him : " I mean it, son, he said.' I had to be strong and purposeful to get where I am. I had to wait and plan and lick around... yes, I had to act the nigger ! he said, adding another feiry,' yes ! (112).According to John Callahan :

The Invisible man becomes disaffected with the values Bledsoe represents at least in part because they sacrifice the individual for the system.Considering him utterly insignificant, the college president resolves to destroy the protagonist's career.Despite his innocence, in order to save the image of the school. The protagonist finds Bledsoe's himself from the traditional American values Bledsoe embodies in order preserve or create his own identity" (202).

Dr .Bledsoe destroys the narrator's identity that is supposed to be when he said : "I heard the high thin laugh again' you're nobody, son.You don't exist...can't see that ? the white folk tell every body what to think...exept men like me"(112).Also, when he laughed at him : " Hee, hee ! Bledsoe laughed.' Your arms are too short to box with me son [...]. No,' he said, getting up' they haven't been so cocky as they used to' this time I could barly move, my stomach was knotted and my kidneys ached. My legs were rubbery, for three years I had thought of myself as a man and here with few words he made me as helpless as an infant" (113).

He was not accepted in both societies, the blacks and the whites, therefore he was unable to assert his individual identity .The narrator's identity is divided into two sides,American or African identity and that is called double consciousness.Du Bois defines the concept of double consciousness as : " 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 amused contempt and pity.One ever feels his two-ness- an American, a Negro ; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings ; two warring ideals in one dark body" (2-3).Thus the narrtor was suffering from an identity crisis in the American society as he says : " weren't

we part of them as apart from them" (575). John Callahan states : " One might describe the story of Ellison's protagonist as the quest for an appropriate identity. Throughout his life, he encounters figures of authority-Norton, Bledsoe, the Brotherhood who impose false names or unsuitable identities upon him" (191). Although he did not choose to be invisible at the beginning of the novel, he was busy switching identities thrown to him by white people in order to satisfy them. In fact, the narrator faces so many obstacles in which he was obliged to adopt several identities .

Although he was good orator that is able to deliver good speeches during several events, he was looking for personal voice that depicts his own identity. The protagonist attempts to escape to the North as an aspiration to build his own identity , unfortunately, he did not achieve his goal. The tragic event that occurs in the narrator's life is that when Dr .Bledsoe orders him to leave his beloved college and to go to the North promising to help him there, he gives him letters of recommendation, as he says : "I want you to go to New York for the summer and save your pride[...] I'll give you letters to some of the school's friends to see that you get work » he said. But this time , use your judgment, keep your eyes open, get in the swing of things ! the, if you make good perhaps...well, perhaps- it's up to you" (113). the narrator did not suspect that those letters will condemn him, so he goes to New York hoping to get job there with the help of Bledsoe's letters. Yet, the narrator discovers the contents of the letters; in actuality , the letters are addressed to Mr.Emerson and informs him that the narrator has been expelled from the college. Thus, the narrator feels that his life is over losing hope of returning; he says : " Twenty five years seemed to have lapsed between his handing me the letter and my grasping its message.I could not believe it, tried to read again. I could not believe it, yet I had a feeling that it had all happened before"(168).

Also, when he says : " when I could move, my head started to whirl in a circle.The day's events flowed past.Trueblood, Mr.Norton, Dr.Bledsoe and the golden Day swept around my

mind in a mad surreal whirl"(114). Shortly, after discovering the contents of Bledsoe's letters, he wants to get a job at Liberty Paints, a factory which advertises its white colored product with the slogan, "keep America pure with Liberty Paints"(173). The white paint symbolizes America's rejection of the black color and to accept the diversity of its citizens. The American culture did not welcome the blacks and always put them in margin. There he met Lucius Brockway who is an old African American man, like Bledsoe, he resents the narrator's presence and feels threatened by him, Brockway attacks the narrator. In the novel when the narrator claims : " what's wrong with you, old man ? I yelled nervously. 'Don't you know better than to attack a man a third your age ? [...] He had bitten me ! I looked on the floor, seeing the smashed mug and the teeth glinting dully across the room" (176).

It was like the royal battle again, he gets hurt and they take him to the plant hospital," and I was struggling and breaking through, rising up, to find myself lying on my back with two pink-faced men laughing down.' Be quite now,' one of them said firmly. ' You'll be all right'. I raised my eyes, seeing two indefinite young women in white, looking down at me" (180). In the hospital, it was another painful experience, there, he is subjected to a painful series of electric shocks, which leave him feeling strangely disconnected from his body as he says : " I was pounded between crushing electrical pressures ; pumped between live electrodes like an accordion between a player's hands. My lungs were compressed like a bellows and each time my breath returned I yelled[...] I discovered now that my head was encircled by a piece of cold metal like the iron cap worn by the occupant of an electric chair" (180).

The white doctors attempt to perform a lobotomy on him in order to wipe away all his memories and attain a total transformation of his personality, he was struggling to identify himself as he says : " I could no more escape than I could think of my identity. Perhaps, I thought, the Two things are involved with each other, when I discover who I am, I'll be free"(198). His experience in hospital represents rebirth into a new reality. According to Saber

Mohamed : " the hospital experience enables the Invisible man to reach a new realm of existence in which he envisions his identity in relation to the present rather than the past. He finally starts to see beneath the surface of things and realises the intricate relation between attaining his sense of identity and his ontological freedom in a chaotic world" (83).

He tries to accept his blackness as his new identity rather than satisfy the white society as he argues : " Now that I know longer felt ashamed of the things I had always loved, I probably could no longer digest very many of them. What and how much had I lost by trying to do only what was expected of me instead of what I myself had wished to do ?"(222-223). When he realizes his new identity, he starts searching for leader ship to follow, he joined the Brotherhood, there he impersonated a new identity to forget about his past identity, by a new name he thinks that this will lead him to achive his goal. The Brother Jack told him : " What are we doing ? What is our mission ? it's simple ; we are working for a better world for all people.It's that simple. Too many have been dispossessed of their heritage, and we have banded together in brotherhood so as to do something about it "(235).also when he states : " that is why we've brought you into this room.This morning your answered the people's appeal and we want you to be the true interpreter of the people. You shall be the new Booker T.Washington, but even greater than he" (238). The narrator accepts his new identity; therefore, through his role as the new Booker T.Washington, at end, he realizes the big mask game of the Brotherhood that betrayed him. They used him as a tool to achieve their goals not as individual when he claims : " I thought they accepted me because they felt that color made no difference, when in reality it made no difference because they didn't see either color or men"(439).

By the end of the novel, the invisible man starts his adventure wearing his true identity while taking off the old identities that the white or the black society imposed on him because he realizes that all of his life has been living with a self imposed identity by social expectation

as he claims : And my problem was that I always tried to go in everyone's way but my own. I have also been called one thing and then another while no one really wished to hear what I called myself. So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others I finally rebelled, I am an invisible man" (444).

The narrator declares his new true identity which relies on his true self even the other refuse his identity; he states : " I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I and only I, could answer. It took me a long time and much painful boomeranging of my expectations achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with : that I am nobody but myself"(12-13). He decides to be himself .

conclusion

Being invisible gives the narrator the power to assert a type of freedom in which he can enjoy without suffering from the other's refusal to see him. His true identity is in fact invisible to those around him. Only by isolating himself, he can understand himself. Invisible Man is about the process of the protagonist searching an identity that he looks to see himself an African American not as slave .

General Conclusion

Invisible Man discusses one of the complex topics that are essential in the African American literature. It is widely acknowledged as one of the great novels of African American Literature the quest for an identity in a white dominant society that imposed upon the black people to be invisible.

The story shows the personal growth of the narrator who believed that hard work can bring success but the reality was the opposite, he suffered from ill-treatment of the white people. This novel has a bold statement about racism and the cruelty of the whites towards the black minorities. Throughout the novel; the narrator finds himself passing through a series of racist communities from the Liberty Paints plant to Brotherhood in which he finds himself as invisible; but this invisibility brings him freedom and mobility. It is the freedom that enable him to tell his story. Ellison portrays his character's growth through multiple settings to reach an identity. Although the protagonist is urged to adopt different identities to fit in the white society at the end, he realizes that his identity relies on his invisibility. He struggles a lot for freedom, self realization and to have a true identity which becomes his main concern in his psychological journey.

The narrator learns many lessons about his identity from his experiences, the end of the story is his beginning when he realizes that he feels ready to emerge from underground. *Invisible Man* claimed its position in American Literature and became a reference for the African American Literature history.

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ملخص

نشأ الأدب الأمريكي الأفريقي من السود الذين عانو من العبودية وبعدها، في البداية واجه المؤلفون ظروفًا صعبة وكان عليهم أن يتحدوا وأن يغيروا الصور النمطية بشأن اعتبار السود أقلية غير مرئية وغير قادرة على إنتاج أعمال أدبية. إن البحث عن المرئية يمثل دائمًا موضوعًا رئيسيًا في كتابة السود الذين يسعون إلى تشكيل هوية سوداء جديدة في المجتمع الأمريكي الأبيض المهيمن، ينتمي رالف والدو إليسون إلى أهم الكتاب في القرن العشرين الذين ساهموا في تشكيل وجودية السود في أمريكا. ما زالت تحفة *الرجل الخفي* مركز اهتمام بعد أكثر من خمسين عامًا على نشره لأول مرة، تصور الرواية بشدة التمييز العنصري في أمريكا مما جعلها أكثر الكتب تأثيرًا بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية.

تصور رواية رالف إليسون الواقع القاسي لصراع السود في المجتمع الأبيض المهيمن، يعاني الراوي وهو رجل أسود من العنصرية، يواجه مشكلة فقدان الهوية فقد كافح كثيرًا من أجل العثور على وجوده الحقيقي، يتم تضليله والتقليل من أهميته من قبل السود أكثر من البيض، يعتقد في كل مرة أنه وجد هويته الحقيقية اتضح أنه كان مخطئًا بدءًا من الطرد من الكلية ثم الانتقال إلى هارلم ثم العثور على عمل في مصنع الطلاء والتعرض للخديعة في نادي الأخوية وينتهي به المطاف في أعمال الشغب. يحقق هذا البحث عدم مرئية السود مقابل العرق الوجودي حيث يلقي الضوء على الأدب الأمريكي الأفريقي وكتابه الذين أخذوا الهوية السوداء كموضوعهم الرئيسي من العبودية حتى عصر حركة اليمين المدني مع تحليل رواية رالف إليسون *الرجل الخفي* من وجهة نظر التحليل النفسي.

