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**RACISM THROUGH RALPH ELLISON'S *THE  
INVISIBLE MAN*:**

An analytical study of *THE INVISIBLE MAN* during the JAZZ  
AGE(1920-1930).

A Dissertation Submitted to the department of Foreign Languages in Partial requirement for  
the Fulfilment of Master degree in English language: Civilization and Literature

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June 2015

## *Dedication*

*I dedicate this dissertation:*

*To my beloved parents*

*To my dear sister Belkis, sweetheart Rahil,  
and my two brothers, Yacine and Souhaib*

*To my deceased grandmother and my dear  
grandparents*

*To Mr. Hani Zirari*

*To my precious family, and my dear friend*

## Acknowledgments

Praise be to **ALLAH**, his majesty for his uncountable blessing, and best prayers and peace be unto his best messenger **Mohamed**, his pure decedent, and his family and his noble companions.

First of all, I am deeply grateful to **ALLAH** Almighty for the divine blessing through the years.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor **Mrs. Nadia Betka** for her precious guidance and advice, also for her patience and kindness. I am equally grateful to the department of foreign languages at **Mohamed Kheider University**.

I am most grateful to my proponent family for their consistent moral, emotional and financial support. Thanks to my parents, **Abderahman** and **MessoudaFellous**, my sisters and brothers, **Yacine, Souhaib, Belkis**, and **Rahil**.

I am sincerely grateful to my best friends, **Randa, Imen, Lina, Sahar, Boutheina, Lynda** and **Meryem** for their unconditional love and support.

Finally, I would like to thank all my uncles and aunts for their emotional and financial support.

## **Abstract**

The present study focuses on the issue of racism in America and its impacts on the life of African American individuals during the late of 1920's and the beginning of 1930's. It also investigates the blacks' identity and their American experiences through Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* and the aspects of racism in this novel. It examines whether the novel written by Ralph Ellison is a narrative text that mirrors the conditions of black Americans during the Jazz Age and their struggle with racism and how the historical events and the themes of the novel interconnected, and to express the internal relation between historical events and the novel's theme. Finally, this study demonstrates different facets of racism and its consequences on the African American protagonist through his memories and experiences.

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# **General Introduction**

## **Introduction**

Literature is pieces of writing that are valued as works of art, especially novels, plays and poems. In most cases literature is a production of sociological, political, psychological and historical views which are interpreted literally to different pieces of writing. In fact, history is a part of literature; it is interpreted, shaped and transformed with an artisticity into novels, plays or poems. As a result, the relation between literature and history is a mutual relationship.

Usually writers produce works of literature in order to portray real events artistically, it is useful means to enjoy the reader, at the same time it makes him aware of the real historical events that is created to criticize the events happened in the society in specific time and place.

For many writers literature is useful tool to face life problems and to defend on their rights, as a good example the minorities who were ignored by the majorities, they produced literature to seek their rights and their equality with the majority.

## **1. Background to the Research**

Racism in the United States has been a major issue since both the colonial and the slave era. Formal racial discrimination was largely banned in the mid twentieth century, and it came to be perceived as socially unacceptable and morally repugnant as well.

Since the beginning of the century, the American population has passed through several cycles in its evolution until the early 1920's owing to the massive inflow of immigrants. After this great wave of immigration, racism was widely spread because during that time there were a lot of minorities and ethnic groups. The blacks or the African Americans are one of them; they were the second most numerous ethnic minority. The blacks struggled a lot from the past

or the slave era until the emergence of racism which is just another term or synonym of slavery (Pauwels, 2002: 71).

This issue or phenomenon led to the spread of a lot of black American writers. Among the latter is Ralph Ellison, who treats this issue by his own style of writing through his novel *The Invisible man*. A glimpse into the events of the novel offers the reader an image of the blacks' conditions in a racist American society, and demonstrates the reasons that cause the narrator to be invisible.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The researcher in this study focuses on the issue of racism in America, and its impact on the life of African American individuals. It also investigates the blacks' identity and their American experience through the analysis of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible man*. It examines whether the novel written by Ellison is a narrative text that mirrors the conditions of the Black Americans and their struggle with racism, or it is a fictional work that has no connections with the real events in history.

## **3. Research Questions**

The questions that this research seeks to answer are:

- What are the different facets of racism and how does *The invisible man* depicts them or how does Ralph Ellison approach racism in *The Invisible man*?
- To what extent are the historical events present in Ralph Ellison's novel (*The Invisible man*)?
- What are the effects of racism on the life of the narrator, and how does he escape these different forms of segregation?

#### **4. Hypothesis**

This research claims that juxtaposing the events in the novel with the historical realities of racism proves that the novel is a mirror of the historical events at that time; it is treating through an artistic literary view, as a social phenomenon which the American society lived and suffered from.

#### **5. Methodology**

This research will be based on data collected from the library and the Internet. It employs two sources of data, the primary data (Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man*) and secondary sources of data (journals, textbooks, and Websites). Since the researcher will not follow one style or set of ideas he will use the eclectic approach: New Historicism and Psychoanalytic approach.

The New Historicism saw that the literary text not as somehow unique but it is a kind of discourses situated within both historical and cultural ones (religious, political, economic and aesthetic) which both shaped it and in their turn were shaped by it. While the psychoanalytic literary criticism applies the specific psychological principles to the study of literature, it analyses the psychology of the writer, the character, the reader, or even the literary text itself (Parker, 2008; Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, & John, 2011).

#### **6. The Research aims**

This research aims at:

- It examines the issue of racism in America (during the Jazz Age ).
- It further explores the aspects of racism in Ralph Ellison's *The invisible Man*.
- It also investigates the relation interconnection between the historical events and the themes of the novel.

- Finally, it explores the consequences of racism on the narrator and analyses the way he uses to escape his segregation as an individual.

## **7. The Research Structure**

The work split to a General Introduction, three core chapters and a General Conclusion. The General Introduction defines the aims of this research and the questions that it will answer. As well as the methodology and the structure of this study, in fact, this introduction is an overview of the research issue. Chapter one represents the theoretical framework of the research. It proceeds with introducing the issue of racism in relation to many theories (New Historicism and Psychoanalytic) and a glimpse on the African American minor literature in addition to the author's biography. The second chapter deals with the historical events which existed at that time. Chapter three is the practical part which represents the interrelationship between the historical and psychological analysis of the novel. Finally, The General Conclusion summarizes the issue, and the outcomes of this research, and comments on the hypothesis.

## **8. The significance of the research**

- This research will be a medium for future students, who are interested in the literature of minorities.
- It will convey the importance of Ralph Ellison's writings.
- The conclusion of this research may be the beginning of a new study on the same novel, however with a new concept. Indeed, it may be itself a problematic for another research.

# **Chapter One**

## **Literary Approaches to the novel**

### **Introduction**

Racism is a debatable issue, which covers the most fields of studies. A lot of research has been carried out on this crucial subject, which destroys the sense of humanity. Various Approaches have been adapted to reveal the effect of this phenomenon on the lives of minorities and their miserable experience. This study is however associated with one particular group who the African American Minorities are. In the light of this concern, this chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework to the study of racism issue; it is devoted to the adopted theories for the analysis of the novel, from the New Historicism view with the historical analysis of the novel and The Psychoanalytic approach through the analysis of the narrator psychology. This chapter will introduce the literary approaches and how they will interpret this literary work and how the African American minorities built their own literature identity. Finally, it concludes with the author's background, his life and career.

### **1.1. The approaches applied in the novel**

#### **1.1.1. New Historicism**

New Historicism offers a critical method of interpretation of literary works. It emerged at the end of the eighteenth century with German writers and continued to twentieth century philosophers. Merriam- Webster Dictionary defines the New Historicism as: "a method of literary criticism that emphasizes the historicity of a text by relating it to the configurations of power, society, or ideology in a given time". The literary text is not unique; but, it is complex of culture; religion, politics, economy, and aesthetic discourses. This approach shows that the literary work is not just a reflection of the author's time and circumstances, but it is

influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices. It focuses on the literary text as a part of social and historical context with a relation to the modern reader towards that work. (“Merriam- Webster”, 2015; Parker, 2008: 219-220).

New Historicists see literary studies from a new perspective in which “literary texts influence the sociohistorical world that influences the literary texts, so that the textuality of history and the history of texts shape and reshape each other in continuous cycle of mutual influence”. In fact, literature and history are joined together with interchangeable influence.. By contrast, Old Historicists believed that literature is reflecting only history at the level of flat contrast between text and background. As a result, Old Historicism limited the necessity of meaning which every text carries. (Parker, 2008: 219-220).

New Historicism attempts to describe the culture of the texts with the consideration of many different dimensions of cultural, political, social, economic and aesthetic concerns. In other words the cultural and social events can be explained by history. So, history is complex as literature. New Historicism based on the literary criticism of Stephen Greenblatt and influenced by the philosophy of Michel Foucault.

The term New Historicism was coined by the American critics Greenblatt with his book *Renaissance Self –Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), which is regarded as its beginning. In that book, Greenblatt provides a series of British Renaissance writers and shows how their culture design their sense of selfhood or subjectivity. *Renaissance Self- Fashioning* argues that at the sixteenth century self – consciousness increased in the fashioning of human identity as an artful process. The self is always a construction that is never achieved by our identity. Self - fashioning is the product of an interaction between the manner of presenting ourselves -through the stories we recount and our actual presentations- and the power relations which we are part of.

The problematical process of self-fashioning presented in the literary Renaissance works and its non – literary realities which proves the mutual influence relation between text and context. Thus, the text is not a passive representation of cultural reality but it influences and produces the cultural reality (Parker, 2008; Guerin et al.,2011).

The New Historicism was influenced a lot by the poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault; perhaps the most general direction in which Foucault influenced the New Historicism was in his unique writings. He emphasized on how social and political powers works with the guide and the restriction of the social institutions. The central theme of Foucault's works was about the modern society and who controls the human subject, through institutions; hospital, prison, education, and knowledge. He shows how people are manipulated by discourse of illness, criminality, and madness. In other words, he considers the production of ideologies and political systems in which various cultural, political, and social discourses operate as vehicles of power. In this context, power works through discourses.

As a consequence, literature does not simply reflect relations of power, but also participate in the building of discourses and ideologies. Literature is actively making history rather than simple producing it. As a result, New Historicists concern themselves with the political function of literature and with the concept of power. (Parker, 2008; Guerin et al.,2011).

### **1.1.2. The Approach to the novel**

*The Invisible Man* can be seen as a metaphor of the historical, social, economic, and politic circumstances of the novel's events which took place from 1920 to 1930.To achieve that, this study adopts the New Historicism approach which allows the researcher to analyse this literary work not only with the eye of history but also to social, political, and economic eyes.

Through this work the researcher applies the New Historicism approach to analyse this novel with emphasis on Stephen Greenblatt and Michel Foucault views. In other words, the events of the novel will be interpreted to show how they reflect to the real events of that time (Jazz Age).

### **1.3. Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism**

Psychoanalytic approach is one of the critical approaches, which emerged during the twentieth century; it views and interprets literary works through the lens of psychology. The basis of this approach was adapted from Sigmund Freud's theories, and the Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist Carl Jung. The critics use Psychological Approach to interpret authors, characters, and audiences. They apply specific psychological principles to the study of literature.

#### **1.3.1. The different psychoanalytic perspectives towards literary works**

During the twentieth century the psychoanalytic approach associated with Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), he contributes to the building of this approach with his theories of psychology. As Freud's view, we cannot comprehend even ourselves, why we behave and act as we do. As a result, he set a number of theories and principles, which help to understand human behavior. In fact, the Freudian theories contribute to the analysis of literary works from the psychological point of view through the interpretation of the authors, characters, and audiences or to interpret literature for itself.

The Psychoanalytic Approach focuses on the psychology of characters in a play, a novel, a movie or a story and treats them as if they were people or human beings. This approach analyses the psychology of the characters through asking a set of questions which are: What forces are motivating the characters? Do any of the characters correspond to the parts of the tripartite self? Do the theories of Freud or other psychologists apply

to this work? To what degree? The reader or the researcher cannot answer these set of question without knowing the Freudian theories. First, the psychological understanding of the mind: repression and the unconscious; Freud discriminated between the level of conscious and unconscious mental activity, he emphasizes on the unconscious aspects of the human psyche. As a result, Freud hypothesized that everything forgotten must have been somehow distressing. So, any powerful impulse or instinct which was embarrassing continued to work and exists in the realm of the unconscious (excluded from the conscious awareness) where it hides its full energy. This instinct reflects in the production of neurotic symptoms. This process that Freud called repression, which is the primary mechanism of defense that is produced by the ego that was obliged to protect itself from any danger, with another terms it against our drives when it feel threatened by them.(Parker, 2008;Guerin et all.,2011).

Freud split the mental processes to three psychic zones: the id, the ego, and the superego, they work together to create complex human behaviors. The personality consists of three elements: id, ego, and superego.

The id is the only component of personality, which existed from birth, Freud considers it as a pleasure principle, which is entirely unconscious it includes the instinctive and primitive behavior. According to Freud, the id's function is to satisfy our desires and instincts without the conscious of the social conventions or moral restraint. By contrast, the ego is governed by the realistic principles, it regulates the instinctual desires of the id and satisfies this desires in realistic and socially appropriate ways. In the other hand, superego is the aspect of personality that adopts the moral standards and ideals, which are acquired from the society. It represents the moral restrictions which repress the desires or the id's drives because those impulses are unacceptable in the society (superego). The superego acts to civilize and idealize our behaviors; it transforms the ego's principals from realistic to idealist. As a result, the ego

is the balance between the id and superego; it satisfies the id desires in the social context (Parker, 2008).

Second, the interpretation of dreams: Freud gave much attention to dreams; he believed that the interpretation of dreams is like the interpretation of literature. Freud argues in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* that dreams are a fulfillment of a wish. He shows that the dream represents the satisfaction of the impulse. However, the ego focused on withdrawing energy from all the interests of life and upon repression this energy relaxed, the unconscious impulse takes this opportunity to dive inside consciousness via dreams.

Finally, Freud and literature: in his paper *Creative Writers and Day- Dreaming* (1907) Freud viewed the works of art as dreams, both of them are the production of imaginary satisfaction of unconscious wishes, while Carl Jung views that people used dreams as a way to communicate and introduce themselves to the unconscious, they were a way of revealing something about themselves, their relationships with others, or their situations in everyday life (Parker, 2008; Guerin et al., 2011; “Dream Analysis,” 2015).

### **1.3.2. The Approach to the protagonist in the novel**

Characters are the life of literature; they are not simple objects in literary works. The novelist Henry James argues, “What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?” with another words this quotation refers to the mutual relationship between the characters and the plot (Bennett & Royal, 2004: 60).

As a result, this study focuses on the psychological interpretation of the character. With another words, it focuses on the protagonist who is the unnamed narrator. Thus, the researcher interprets and analyses the character’s psychology; his dreams, the causes and effects of his depression, disappointment, and the feeling of alienate through the novel’s events.

## **1.4. Literature and Racism**

Racism has been a major issue in the United States; it was largely spread in the mid twentieth century with the massive inflow of immigration. The African American were the most miserable minorities, they suffered a lot from the slave era and the emergence of racism, respectively.

Literature was a weapon used by the blacks to fight racism. As a result Minor Literature and the New Negro movement had emerged to eradicate the unfair treatment of minorities and to destroy the stereotypical ideas about them.

### **1.4.1. Minor Literature**

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, two French philosophers, have attempted to create a manifesto for what they call a minor literature in their book *Kafka: Toward a Theory of Minor Literature*, this book describes the characteristics of Minor Literature. This literature did not come from minor language but it constructed by minorities within a major language. The Minor Literature differentiates from other literatures, according to these characteristics: deterritorialized language, the immediate connection between individual and political concerns, and the collective assemblage of enunciation.

In other words, for Deleuze and Guttari Minor Literature is a deterritorial, political, and collective. First, the deterritorialisation of a major language through a minor literature, the minor writers' works written in a major language or with the use of the colonizer's language, in the case of formally colonized countries. The African American writers are a good example; they use the major language or English language rather than their mother language, in order to deliver their message through their literary works. The second characteristic of minor literature is that everything is about politics. This kind of literature is a connection between the individuals and their political concerns; which means that the individual interests

are only about politics. This literature is political by nature; as a result it focuses on the political themes. Finally, the individuals speak in a collective voice, they revolt against the majority and ask for their rights through literature.

One of the most important themes in 20th century American history is the struggle of African Americans for their human and social rights. The Minor Literature, specifically the African American Literature deals with the issue of racism. The black writers talked about the experience of black people in American society. Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* (1952) is classified among the African American Minor Literature's works which deals with the minorities' issue; this novel portrays the miserable situation of the blacks in a racist country (Deleuze&Guttari, 2003).

#### **1.4.2. Harlem Renaissance (The New Negro Renaissance)**

Harlem Renaissance refers to the African American cultural movement of the 1920s and early 1930s, it centered in Harlem neighborhood of New York City. Primarily, it embraced only literature, then it spread to cover musical, theatrical and visual arts.

The Harlem Renaissance emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Great Migration was the social foundation of this movement, hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved from the South to the North looking for better conditions of life. As a result, the level of literacy raised and the blacks became more educated and socially conscious, those blacks settled in New York neighborhood of Harlem which became the political and cultural center of black America. This movement is a literary and artistic movements; it has close relationship to civil rights and reform organizations.

The African culture from the South of America to the North with the African American immigration and settled in Harlem. This cultural movement performed the African American

literature and arts. For instance, the transformation of Jazz and Blues music with the blacks' to the Harlem's bars and cabarets.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was the main factor that contributed to the decline of Harlem Renaissance. In the mid-1930s the economic pressure increased on all sectors of life. For this reason, the blacks' interests shifted to the social and economic issues. The concerns of African American writers who built the New Negro Movement with their arts, moved to the social and economic interests. As well as, their themes and topics which were only about the Great Depression, the decay of the American Dream, and the miserable situation of the American society. In spite of the end of this movement, it still exists in the works of modern African American poets and hip hop artists who were influenced a lot by the Harlem Renaissance (Hutchinson, 2015;Rowen& Bruner,2002).

#### **1.4.2.1. African American Literature**

The African American literature is a literature produced in the United States by the African American writers; it emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. During that period, the African American literature dealt with the slave issues. Despite the end of slave era, the blacks still suffer from another phenomenon; which is racism. The African American writers have used their art to defend their rights and to eradicate this new phenomenon. The African American literature focuses on the interests of the black people like their position in the American society. In fact, their problems through the history started with the issue of slavery before the Civil War and continue with the issue of racism, freedom, and the equality with the whites.

African American Literature played a major role in Harlem Renaissance's movement. The writers used different styles of literature to represent their African American experience. In other words, the African American literary works whether prose or poetry shared specific themes, such as the subject of roots in twentieth century and the blacks' experience in Africa and America, beside that the quest of equality with white Americans.

In spite of the disappearance of this movement, more than fifteen volumes of fiction and poetry were published by black writers from the mid- 1920s through the mid-1930s. The Harlem Renaissance inspired a lot of African American writers from the late 1930's until today such as Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright (1930- 1940), Toni Morrison and Alice Walker in the 1980's and 1990's.

As we said before, Ralph Ellison was influenced a lot by the Harlem Renaissance movement and its principles; he adopted the message of this movement. Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* reflects the Harlem Renaissance concepts of literature. Ellison represents the African American experience and their struggle in America through this novel.

We conclude that, Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is classified among the minor literary works, which were inspired by Harlem Renaissance movement (Andrews, 2015).

### **1.5. Ralph Ellison's Biography**

Ralph Waldo Ellison, an African American writer and literary critic. He was born in March 1, 1914, in Oklahoma City. Ellison was a grandson of slaves, his father; Lewis Alfred Ellison was a construction worker, and he died when Ralph was three years. His mother; Ida Millsap was a domestic servant. During his childhood, Ralph shows an abiding interest in jazz music; he studied the cornet and trumpet. In the late 1930's, he won a scholarship to study music. Thus, he left Oklahoma to attend the Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama which is now called Tuskegee University. The Institute was founded in 1881 by Booker T. Washington, one of the well-known black figures in American history, later on this institute became one of the nation's most important black colleges. In Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, this college was depicted as the model black college the narrator attended.

In 1936, Ellison left the Tuskegee and moved to New York City and settled in Harlem. He studied photography in addition to sculpture. Ellison befriended the most important

modernist figures; the African American writers, such as Langston Hughes and Richard Wright, in addition to the socialist Albert Murray. Ellison's most important, complicated, and long relationship would be with the author Richard Wright, it considered as the starting point in Ellison's career as a writer. Wright motivated and guided Ellison to the writing and supported Ellison to write for him.

During the outbreak of W.W.II, Ellison served in the segregated army as a cook in Merchant Marine from 1943 until 1945. At the end of this war Ellison started writing *The Invisible Man*, and in 1946 he married with Fanny McConnell, who was a greater supporter to Ellison, she supported him financially and spiritually. From 1937 to 1944 Ellison had more than 20 book reviews, besides short stories and articles. In 1952, he published *Invisible Man*, and in the next year he won the 1953 U.S. National Book Award for Fiction. Ellison wrote for the Communist party, before the betrayal of this party towards African Americans just with the beginning of the W.W.II. In 1955, Ellison went to Europe where he wrote his Essay *A New Southern Harvest*. In 1958, Ellison returned to the United States and became a teacher at Bard College, he taught American and Russian literature, and he started writing his second novel, *Juneteenth*. During 1950, he met with his friend the writer Albert Murray. Later, they published *Trading Twelve*, which are selected letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray.

In 1964, he began to teach at Rutgers University and Yale University, at the same time he was working on his novel, *Shadow and Act*. In 1969, he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 1975, Ellison was elected to The American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 1984, he received the New York City College's Langston Hughes Medal. In 1985, he was awarded the National Medal of Arts. In 1986, he was published his collection of essays, *Going to the Territory*.

Ralph Ellison died on April 16, 1994 of pancreatic cancer. Following his death a lot of manuscripts were discovered in his house, resulting in the publication of *Flying Home and*

*Other Stories* in 1996, and his novel *Juneteenth* in 1999. On January 26, 2010, the last work of Ellison *Three Days Before the Shooting*, was published by Modern Liberty.(Abbot, 1993; Ward, Philips, & Katie, 2002)

## **Conclusion**

In short, through this research Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* will be interpreted and analysed from New Historicism and Psychoanalytic literary criticism point of view, to help the researcher in analyzing the novel from different aspects and prove his hypothesis.

Ralph Waldo Ellison, an African American writer whose novel *The Invisible Man* is classified among the works of minor literature, it was inspired by the Harlem Renaissance's movement, Ellison deals with the blacks' issues; he treats the phenomenon of racism artistically.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Jazz Age's Historical realities (1920- 1930)**

#### **Introduction**

From the slave era and the emergence of racism, the quest of blacks' rights is one of social phenomena which America has been suffering from. Through the years, the blacks were ignored, oppressed, and possessed by the whites who thought that they are the chosen race and their mission is to civilize the others. The blacks are one of whites' victims. During the seventeenth- century they were slaves and they were buying and selling by the whites as a goods. After the Abolitionism Movement and the end of slavery the blacks became free, but this freedom was just an illusion for them. After the end of slavery, the blacks' rights, freedom, and equality with whites are a mirage because they have been facing another face of slavery. With another words, racism and slavery are two faces of the same coin. As a result, the blacks' freedom and their equality with the whites is just a dream. Although the blacks achieved their goal which was the eradication of slavery, racism still exists.

From the slave era the blacks settled in the United States by force, they were a cheap labors and a source of wealth for the Americans who oppressed them. As a result, The African Americans are the second largest group of minorities in the American society. Despite the end of slavery, the blacks are still struggling for their rights. Under the concept of racism which allows treating the people who belongs to different race unfairly, the Americans had stereotypical ideas about the African Americans. The Americans did not forget the African Americans origins, for that reason, they treat them as slaves. As a consequence, the blacks are victims of racism which restricts their freedom in all fields of life. In this context, this chapter focuses on the historical events that happened in the American society and its impacts on the African American lives.

## **2.1. The end of slavery and the widespread of racism in America**

### **2.1.1. Slavery in the United States**

The Oxford Dictionary 2011 defines the slave as “a person who is the legal property of another and is forced to obey them», while the Vocabulary Dictionary 2015 mentions that “Slavery is the brutal practice of forcing someone to work hard without paying them a fair wage, sometimes without paying them at all. «Slavery is a legal under which people are treated as property and treats them as a good under the slave trade which was a successful economic system (“Oxford Dictionary”2011: 415; “Vocabulary Dictionary”, 2015).

During the seventeenth century, Portugal and Holland had dominated the African slave. In 1619, Dutch traders brought the Africans in Jamestown, Virginia; these Africans were the first group who settled forcibly in North American British colonies as involuntary laborers in order to aid the production of crops such as the Tobacco which became the chief crop. Slavery has played a central role in the history of the United States; it had been practiced from early colonial days when America was a British colony. The African American slaves assisted built the economic basis of new nation; they were skillful in agriculture, farming, and mining.

The African slaves were called the Black Gold; they were so valuable to the European slave markets. The practice of slavery prospered from 1646 to 1790, the merchants brought slaves from the west coast of Africa such as Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Mali. Slave trading journey called the triangle journey which usually began in European port months earlier towards western ports in Africa to load kidnapped Africans in exchange for goods such as molasses (this is the first leg of the triangle journey), then these ships travel across the Atlantic to North America and the Caribbean where they were sold into slavery. Finally, the “Middle Passage” which was the final leg of the journey, it was the longest and the most dangerous part of the journey of the slaves ships. The European ships returns to their European home port to begin the process again.

Hugh Brogan said in his book *The Penguin History of USA* “For the blacks; slavery was a regime of sorrow, of degradation, of unremitting toil, dreadful personal insecurity and perpetual frustration». Enslaved African Americans had little hope of freedom; they worked hard, earned no money. By the end of American Revolution, slavery dying out in the North and even in the South, their jobs as farmers became useless because of the drop of tobacco prices. After 1790s cotton became a major crop. In 1793 Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin increased the demand for slave labor increased and slavery became profitable again. In the early 1800’s American law did not protect enslaved families. Enslaved women as well as men were obliged to do heavy fieldwork. Even their children by the age of 10 were considered ready for fieldwork. Despite the Congress had outlawed the slave trade in 1808, slavery remained legal until the emergence of Abolitionism movement (Sage, 2010: 5, 19, 23, 40-41; Brogan, 1999: 280- 290).

### **2.1.2. Abolitionism**

The early 1800’s was a time in American history when a variety of reform movements that broke out in the country in order to improve the lives of all Americans. The Age of Reform (1820- 1860) was discussed the social issues during that time in the hope of improving the American society to live in a better conditions. The spirit of reform that occurred in America was not limited in the improvement of education and expanding the arts. It also included the efforts of abolitionists who worked to abolish, or end slavery which was one of the most important social issues at that time.

Hugh Brogan claims that “Abolitionism, as distinct from anti-slavery, emerged as a clear movement in 1831, the year in which William Lloyd Garrison (1805- 79) founded his journal, the *Liberator*, in Boston”. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Abolitionist Movement began in the North of the United States of America, it emerged in order to end slavery in a nation that valued personal freedom and believed that all people are equal. During the British

colonial period and before the emergence and the spread of this movement, there were separate efforts against slavery. The first attempt to end slavery in English colonies was in 1652, by Roger Williams and Samuel Gorton, who made slavery illegal in North America, specifically in Rhode Island. In 1688, the first American protest against slavery is organized by Quakers in Germantown, Pennsylvania, and New York slave revolt in 1712 when 21 slaves are executed. In 1775, the first abolitionist society in the United States is organized in Philadelphia. After the war of independence, Northern states abolished slavery. In 1807, Jefferson as a president of the United States signed the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves; it had no effect until 1808.

The white abolitionist movement was led by social reforms in the North. William Lloyd Garrison, founder of the American Anti-slavery society. Also it led by free blacks such as Frederick Douglass. Anti-slavery northerners and free blacks had started helping slaves to escape from South to North America via the Underground Railroads. In 1820, The Missouri Compromise settles the issue of slavery in the areas obtained by the Louisiana Purchase. Missouri joins the Union as a slave state, while Maine balances it as a free state.

The American antislavery movement took on new life. It became a pressing social issue for reforms. Before 1833 the Antislavery movement in America was unorganized. In 1831 abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison of Massachusetts founder the newspaper The Liberator. Garrison set up the New England Antislavery Society in 1832. In the next year he joined with Lewis Tappan, they set up the Antislavery Society. By 1838 the Antislavery societies Garrison started had more than 1,000 local branches. In 1848, the former member of Democratic and Whig (the two old political parties) set up the Free Soil party which allied in 1854 with Whig to oppose the extension of slavery into Kansas.

The abolitionist saw that their goals realized through violence of the Civil War (1861-1865), this movement was an important factor leading to this war. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment

slavery is abolished (1865), the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment made blacks citizens of the USA(1868), and the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment allowed African American to vote (1870). However, slavery is abolished the southern freeman didn't back their rights until the Civil Rights movement (1950- 1960) ((Brogan, 2001:292- 300; Curry, 2015).

### **2.1.3. The Interrelationship of Slavery and Racism**

The Urban Dictionary defines racism as:

Discrimination against someone based on their race. It is very commonly thought that racism is only when "white" people discriminate against "black" people. The truth is that anyone of any race can be racist. "White" people are constantly being called racist and can't seem to do anything involving "black" people without someone going crook. "Black" people are rarely, if ever called racist.

"Black" people often accuse "white" people of being racist when things don't go their way or when they want something(Monkey,2006).

While The Oxford Dictionary 2011 defines racism as: “unfair treatment of other races; belief that some races of people are better than others” (2010: 361).

In other words, is the unfair treatment of people, who belong to different race and treat them cruelly. The racist doctrine expresses the superiority of one human group over the others, in the biological appearance, social and cultural concepts which transmitted hereditarily. Racism is associated with power which covers the institutional, political, economic, and social fields. It split up into four types; Racial Discrimination, Institutional Racism, Economical Racism, and Cultural Racism.

First, Racial Discrimination is the separation of people through a process of social division, when treating a particular group in society less fairly than the others. Then, Institutional Racism known as structural racism or state racism. This type committed by governments, corporations, religions, educational institution, or the other organizations. While

Economical Racism concerning the unfair treatment of people according their race during the Spanish colonial period when it developed an economic system based on race. Finally, Cultural Racism

During the period of Renaissance and Reformation the European were increasing contact with the African, Asian, and Americans people. The slave trade emerged during the Eighteenth century; the Europeans were enslaving African people. During this period of time the ethnologists believed that the human beings naturally subdivided into three to five races.

The idea of race entered the scientific enterprise in the early 1800s. At that time, the scientists were focus on the classification of human beings; they classified the Europeans in the top of the scale and Africans in the bottom. This categorization maybe related to ethnocentrism and cultural chauvinism. When the English people practice slave trade, they did not care about their skin color. At that time the humanity were divided according these concepts; English and non- English, Christianity and heathenism, or civilization and barbarism.

The Nineteenth century was an age of emancipation for the blacks, the nationalism and imperialism were spread. These factors contributed to the growth of racism and racist ideology in Europe and the United States. Despite the emancipation of blacks from slavery and Jews from the ghettos and the supports that received. These reforms contributed in the intensity of racism of racism rather than diminish it. The Capitalism and Darwinism emphasis on “the struggle of the existence” and “the survival of the fittest”, all of theme led to the development of a new racism. The Nationalism contributed in the growth of culture- coded variant of racist thoughts, especially in Germany and the situation of Jewish people in Germany. In the nineteenth century “Scramble of Africa” under the western imperialism which allowed the Europeans to rule the Africans and Asians.

Shah 2010 defines the racism in his article as:

Racism is the belief that characteristics and abilities can be attributed to people simply on the basis of their race and that some racial groups are superior to others. Racism and discrimination have been used as powerful weapons encouraging fear or hatred of others in times of conflict and war, and even during economic downturns.

Racism is a recent word which first used in 1900s. It has been a major issue since both the colonial and slave era. White Americans are superior to the others; Native Americans, African Americans, and Latin Americans. European Americans were granted all their rights such as voting right, citizenship, and education. African Americans are the most ignored group; they suffered a lot from the slave era until the Civil Rights Movement. Although the slave trade ended and the abolitionism movement eradicated slavery, the blacks did not get their rights as American citizens, the Americans still treated them as slavery.

However, the slavery disappeared in the United States; the racist views towards blacks still existed. The stereotypical ideas about the blacks stuck in American's mind (Shah, 2010; Selfa, 2002).

## **2.2. African American minorities and The Jazz Age**

### **2.2.1. From South to the North**

United States is land of immigrants. This nation witnessed successive waves of immigration. More than sixty million new comers have entered the country since the past. Those immigrants left their homeland in order to settle in America to find political, religious or economic freedom, to live better life. America is a melting pot society, a large numbers of people and ideas are mixed together. All Americans are immigrants or had immigrant roots. Even the Native Americans or Indians had immigrated to America from Siberia during prehistoric times. As a result, America is a notion of immigrants who came from all over the

world, from different places, times, and different circumstances, but they shared the same aims; to find political, religious or economic freedom.

30,000 years ago, during pre-historic times the Indians or Native Americans had immigrated to America. During the colonial period America witnessed two different waves of immigrants. The first wave included the voluntary immigration; they were the immigrants who settled in America during the colonial period from the 16<sup>th</sup> to late 18<sup>th</sup>. Various European, mainly Spanish, French, and Dutch were the first settlers of this new continent. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Spanish established outposts in the South, while French people travelled toward this country for economic reasons, and British settlers who left their home for religious reasons. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the English Puritans, a group of Protestants were established in the east coast new settlement. The British immigrants were established permanent settlement, later on they were joined by other northern Europeans (Germans, Swedes), and this wave of immigrants was by whites voluntary, most of them were Protestants who escaped from the reformation in Europe at that time. Second, the forced immigrants or involuntary immigrants, this wave appeared with the emergence of slavery and slave trade. The Blacks were forcibly settled in the United States, they were labor force and the second largest race group which formed the American society.

During 1840, Europe witnessed economic and political problems such as Ireland's potato famine. As a consequence, United States received a vast wave of immigration, between 1820 and 1860 about 5 million newcomers of which 9/10 of them were English, Irish and German. After the civil war, different races and nationalities chose to immigrate and settle in the United States, great number of Scandinavians, Asians, Norwegians, Italians, Russians, and Chinese. From 1880's the Americans changed their attitudes toward the vast waves of immigration to their country, as a result they established anti-immigration sentiment, later on the government regulated immigration.

Immigration is the process of coming to live in another country that is not your own. Unlike the migration which is to move from one place to another inside the frontiers of any country. The African Americans are a good example; they left the South and moved to North (Harlem) during the Jazz Age. By the early 1830's immigrants were arriving at the rate of 50,000 a year.

The increasing of racism and the lack of job opportunities led many African Americans to hope new life in the North. Jim Crow Laws allowed the unfair treatment toward the blacks and kept them separate from the whites. As a result, from 1916 to 1970 more than 6 million African Americans moved from the rural south to the cities of the north. Unfortunately, northerners did not welcome African Americans. This great wave of migration had affected on the North's population, these cities were over crowded with blacks. As a consequence, the access of housing became major source of problems; the northerners adapted the residential segregation which kept the blacks out of predominantly white neighborhood. The African Americans created cities- within- cities during 1920s such as Harlem which is the largest one; there 200,000 African Americans lived in a neighborhood that had been completely all of whites 15 years before.

The blacks escaped from harsh segregation laws, and the unsatisfactory economic opportunities. They were attracted by the South's better conditions for instance, more job opportunities and adult man could vote. While in the reality the racism was widespread even in North America, the African Americans working in poor conditions, the whites oppressed them as cheap labors, they were refused to live and communicate with them as a human being without the racist stereotypes toward them.

During 1920, with the growth of the black artistic movement "Harlem Renaissance" there were enormous changes happened in the North. This movement attracted the blacks and motivated them to move and settled in the North which led to the rapid growth of North's

population. Even the white were affected by this artistic movement, they were listening and dancing on jazz music. This movement did not only effect on the North of America but also on the South which lose its workforce (Pauwels, 2002: 43-45, 71-72; Maameri, 2010: 77- 85, 257- 262; Novkov, 2007).

### **2.2.2. Jazz Age**

The 1920s saw the continuation of African Americans migration from south to North America. During this great wave of migration the African Americans brought with them their culture. This wave of migration created a new culture which born out the American north unfair society. The widespread of Jazz music in the North and the culture that produced offered a new American way to interact with “race”. As a result, the Whites routinely attended Jazz clubs in order to listen to African American performers like Louis Armstrong. Mooney defines Jazz Age “a period in American history (the 1920s and 1930s) during which many Americans reacted to the misery and needless destruction of World War I by engaging in an excessive pursuit of pleasure. This period witnessed invention of new forms of music and dancing, as well as new forms of technology such as radio broadcasting, air travel, and the telephone” (Mooney, 2006: 5).

“The Jazz Age” is a term coined by F. Scott Fitzgerald, in his book *Tales of The Jazz Age* (1992). This term refers to the Jazz music which flourished in the 1920s. In other terms, the Jazz Age represented the ten years after the World War I from 1920 until 1930. Jazz music and dance were the creation of black Americans, its roots from slave songs and rhythms.

During post first world war, the United States of America witnessed a radical changes; starting with the widespread of Jazz music and its effects in the American society and their new way toward race. From 1920 until 1930, this period called “Jazz Age” or “Roaring Twenties” when the American society changed drastically; in condition of life, attitudes, and

values. The economic prosperity affected on the American society; such as the car invention made life better, and the introduction of electricity into homes made life easier and quicker like washing machine's invention and other inventions which offered a domestic comfort entertainment such as the radio which invaded the Jazz music into American homes. Later on, this means of entertainment became a major source of information.

Moreover, the women entered the 1920s strongly. After their WWI experience when they entered the labor market when most of men joined the war and left their workplaces empty. Despite they were not worked on an equal basis as men, they refused to give up their jobs which was a symbol of freedom for them. They wanted to achieve social, economic, and political independence. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment pouched them to struggle in order to gain more rights; the right to vote was not enough for them.

Flappers, was a new emancipated women who rebelled against the social values and traditions; they interested in modern ideas and enjoying their life; went out until night, wear short dresses and skirts, cut their hair. Also they imitated man; drunk and smoked in public. Finally, the Great Depression of 1930 destroyed everything (Maameri, 2010: 257- 262; Maloney, 2002; Early, 2010;Henderson, 2013).

### **2.2.3. The African American Dream**

“The American Dream” this term was first used by James Truslow Adams in his book *The Epic of America*, which was written in 1931. He claims that the American Dream is “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.” While the Investopedia Dictionary defines the American Dream as “The belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone.” In other words, the American Dream is the social standards and values which people try to achieve in the United States of America during the

Jazz Age. These standards and values included democracy, equal rights and wealth. This dream achieved through sacrifice and hard work, not randomly or by chance.

The Declaration of Independence held the principles of the American Dream, which states, “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.”

Under the concepts of this declaration, all Americans are equal and they had the same opportunities. Even the immigrants, who had different nationalities and belong to different ethnic groups, all of them are equal in the social, economic, and political opportunities. Unfortunately, the American Dream’s concept was only for white, democracy and equality were just an illusion and the blacks still suffered from discrimination which was widely spread and covered all sectors at that time (Schudson, 2004; Truslow, 1931: 404-405, 411-412, 416; “American Dream,” 2015; “The Declaration of Independence,” 1776).

#### **2.2.4. The typical conditions of African Americans during the Jazz Age**

After the Civil War, formerly enslaved African Americans hoped to live in better conditions. Unfortunately, some of white Americans welcome them while the majority ignored them; they refused to accept the blacks as American citizens. As a consequence, racism and segregation were widely spread; American society still suffered from the issue of equal rights between African Americans and white Americans. By 1900, new laws passed which had created segregated American society in both North and South. The features of racism, discrimination, and segregation covered all aspect of public life in the South, such as at schools, prisons, and armed force. While in the North segregation was generally de facto; it was existing as a fact and it may not be legally accepted as existing, which means that they were segregated in reality, but not by law or de jure. The blacks continued the fight for equal rights until Civil Rights Movement 1964 (Maloney, 2002).

### **2.2.4.1. Education**

Years ago, after the abolition of slavery, the constitution passed three Amendments to grant the African Americans' freedom. Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth provided citizenship, and the Fifteenth outlawed right to vote. Later on, between 1873 and 1883 the Supreme Court passed a series of decisions "Jim Crow Laws" which separated the blacks from whites by law in public places in both North and South states. These decisions were also applied in South American schools. In 1896 the Supreme Court legislated that "separate but equal" or with another words, the legal separation of races.

The school segregation in the United States had a deep root. From the slave era, education was prohibited for the African Americans slaves. Despite the abolition of slavery, school segregation still existed in the United States, when Jim Crow Laws separated between races which led to the establishment of separate schools the African Americans and white Americans attended different schools under "separate but equal" doctrine. While in the reality "separate and unequal" for the reason that the services and facilities reserved for whites were always of high quality than those reserved for the African Americans. African American schools received less public funding per student than white Americans schools.

Jim Crow Laws declared the official segregation between blacks and whites. According these laws the Supreme Court passed a court case in 1896; *The Plessey V. Ferguson* which stated that the segregation between blacks and whites was legal and both of them received equal services. The American used also the idea of "separate but equal" in schools. In 1909, the organization of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAAP) was founded to struggle the racial discrimination and segregation from America. In 1954, this decision was replaced by the case of *Brown V Board Of Education of Topeka*, which stated that segregation in schools was illegal (Lawson, 2010; "Racial Segregation in the American South: Jim Crow Laws," 2007).

#### **2.2.4.2. Work**

The racial segregation was a system created by white Americans to keep African Americans unequal and lived apart from whites. During the slave era when most African Americans lived in the South, it was not necessary to set boundaries to separate the blacks from them.

From the past, the African Americans were oppressed and they struggled a lot in order to work in better conditions. After the civil war things began to get worse for blacks, they migrated to the North (Great Migration). As a result, racism and segregation were widely spread and took various forms. Racism and segregation were the features of American society after the abolition of slavery. Even the work places held the racism and segregation features. The racial discrimination widely spread in factories and all work places. The blacks workers are exploited and oppressed more than any group, they never held the same job in the same workplace as white Americans men; they were almost in low skill jobs, for instance servants in hotels and restaurants with lower wages. After 1960, the Civil Rights Movement made the discrimination in employment illegal (Jancken, 2010).

#### **2.2.4.3. Politics**

The First World War had cruel consequences; minorities faced social segregation and job discrimination, political and economic problems started to develop. All of them prospered with the Great Migration to the North (1910- 1940). During First post-World War, the political parties dealt with the issues of that period, each party according its principles tried to solve these problems.

In 1919, the communist party was born in Chicago. It opposing racism and fighting it in workplaces. In the late 1920, the party emphasized on of self-determination for the Black Belt. In other words, the African Americans who lived in the Black Belt (The term referred to

the larger region between Maryland to Texas, but the center of the Black Belt in the Deep South; Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana) wanted a separate state from the United States. During the years before the split of socialist party; it did not attract the African Americans. After that some African Americans joined the communist party, while the others chose to belong to the African Blood Brotherhood.

The African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption established in 1919 by journalist Cyril Briggs in New York City, it was a radical U.S. black liberation organization, with ties to the communist party, both of them against the issues of racism, colonialism, self-determination for the Black Belt, and capitalism. They believed that capitalism oppressed the poor people of all races. In 1920, the African Blood Brotherhood was dissolved; its members joined the Workers Party of America, and later into Workers Party of America (D'amato, 1997;Pecinovsky, 2010).

## **Conclusion**

The main conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that the slavery has played a central role in American history; it had been practiced from early colonial days until the emergence of Abolitionism Movement which led to the Civil War.

Slavery and racism are two faces of the same coin. Despite the end of slavery, the white Americans still had racist views toward them which led to the wide spread of racism. The African American continued their struggle to achieve their rights as American citizens. Jim Crow Laws allowed to treat the blacks unfairly and kept separate from the whites. These laws motivated the blacks to migrate from the south towards north hoping to find democracy and equal rights. Unfortunately, the African American Dream achieve their American dream turned to nightmare, they found themselves in unfair society full of racism and segregation in all aspects of life.

## Chapter Three

### Features of Racism Through Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*

#### Introduction

Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a search for identity novel, it was published in 1952. It recounts the story of an anonymous young black man; it focuses on a nameless protagonist called the invisible man. The novel is a first person narrative told from the protagonist point of view, he narrates his black experience in the American society.

John S. Wright claims that the *Invisible Man* is "a novel about innocence and human error, a struggle through illusion to reality." (Wright, 1988: 158) The novel sheds light on the issue of racism and its impacts on the African Americans lives. It emphasizes the period of Jazz Age or Roaring Twenties (1920- 1930) when the features of racism and segregation spread in all sectors of life. The novel explores the struggle of a nameless black man in order to survive in a society refuses to see him as a human being, he feels misplaced and traumatized by the injustice and inequality in South Harlem .As a result, he withdraws from the society to a basement, escaping the stereotypical ideas towards him which barred the invisible man from enjoying his life.

Ralph Ellison split his novel into three elements; the prologue, twenty five chapters, and the epilogue. The first part of the novel focuses on the protagonist as an individual, while the second one deals with his relationship with the society.

The author introduces his work with a prologue when the narrator starts telling his story with the statement that he is "an invisible man." Now the narrator is 40s, he recalls a time when he was a naïve young man, he told the story in a series of flashbacks in forms of memories and dreams; starting by recalling his college days, then his experiences and

memories when he was a worker at the Liberty Paints, after that as a member in the Brotherhood. Finally, Ellison used the epilogue, which is the last part of the novel, it is a conclusion to what has happened when the narrator recovers his personality. He becomes more responsible; he decides to come out and face the whole world.

The main focus of this chapter is on the historical analysis of the novel and how the events, places, and characters reflect the period of 1920 to 1930. It also deals with the psychological analysis of the narrator's dreams and identity (Abbot, 1993: 15-20; Ward, Philips, Heine, and Boomie, 2002: 3-6; "Invisible Man Book Summary," 2014).

### **3.1. The Role of Invisibility and Anonymity**

The narrator is the invisible man of the title; some critics view him as the narrator while the others refer to him as the invisible man. "That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality. This anonymous young black man narrates how he became aware of his invisibility and how the people refused to see him. The idea of invisibility, and the anonymity does not come randomly; each word of them has a specific role and meaning transmitted by the author" (Ellison, 2014: 3).

The invisible man struggles with white people's prejudice, he introduces the prologue with "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." His invisibility is related to people's stereotypical ideas towards blacks. Invisibility means separation from a society where people do not recognize black individuals (Ellison, 2014: 3).

The anonymity of the narrator is the most significant aspect of his invisibility; the others cannot notice him because he is nameless. As a result, he achieves his freedom from his invisibility "I am one of the most irresponsible beings that ever lived. Irresponsibility is

part of my invisibility; any way you face it, it is a denial. But to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me? And wait until I reveal how truly irresponsible I am”. Anonymity is part of his invisibility, remaining unknown means that he is still irresponsible (Abbot, 1993: 21-22, 45; Ward et al., 2002: 11, 18; Ellison, 2014, p. 12).

Ralph Ellison said in his 1955 Paris Interview:

All novels are about certain minorities: the individual is a minority. The universal in the novel—and isn't that what we're all clamoring for these days?—is reached only through the depiction of the specific man in a specific circumstance.

In the quotation context, Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* reflects this passage; the narrator recalls his memories that took time in the late 1920s or early 1930s. This unknown or anonymous man refers to all African Americans minorities who have suffered from racism and segregation, they were invisible and the society ignored them. The nameless invisible protagonist is every black man, in other words he symbolizes the situation of all blacks during that period and their struggles in the racist American society (Chester & Howard, 2015).

### **3.2. Racism as an Obstacle to the Black Identity**

As we have previously seen in the second chapter that despite the abolition of slavery in America the racist views towards the blacks still exist, the stereotypical ideas stuck in white American's mind. The novel's events took place at the end of 1920s and the beginning of 1930s. At that time, segregation laws were introduced, while racist views towards African Americans covered all sectors of life in America, particularly, in the south to the north.

The narrator is similar to many other ones who live in racist societies and search for true individual identity that is the central subject of the novel. In fact, the problem of the narrator's invisibility is within the American society and the stereotypical images of whites towards him, the narrator's accident, which is mentioned in the prologue, when he accidentally bumped into a white man, suddenly, the invisible man became visible “because of the near

darkness he saw me and called me an insulting name” the white man has insulted him for the reason that he has not the same color of skin. For a moment and with the effect of light his invisibility was dominant again “right there beneath the lamplight in the deserted street, holding him by the collar with one hand, and opening the knife with my teeth -- when it occurred to me that the man had not seen me”. In the next day, the narrator saw his picture in the *Daily News*, it published about this accident; an invisible man bites a white man. While in the reality the white man was not bitten by the black man but by his ideology and stereotypes “Something in this man's thick head had sprung out and beaten him within an inch of his life.” In other words, whites have fixed ideas about blacks such as the idea that all blacks are by nature violent and savages which is in fact just a stereotypical image (Ellison, 2014: 4-5; Abbot, 1993: 46-47; Ward et al., 2002: 17).

The invisible man tries to escape from the south to the north hoping to build his identity out of the restrictions of the segregation laws which became one of the American south norms. Unfortunately, he did not reach his goal. North America adopted a crucial system; the protagonist is a victim of these racist laws. From the south to the north, the invisible man struggles to arrive at a conception of his own identity. During this adventure, the narrator finds himself passing through series of communities from the Liberty Paints Plant until joining the Brotherhood. He has undergone psychological evolution: first, from a modest student at a Southern Negro College, next as a naive laborer in a Northern paint factory and finally, as an orator in the Brotherhood. These decisive events have strongly influenced the development of his identity standard which changes with every new identity.

The invisible man has developed a complex personality similar to his life. Out of his experience within both black and whites minorities, the protagonist discovers his identity. He assumes various identities that aid him to discover his real African American identity. “He gradually assumes a mask of invisibility in order to rebel against this limitation”, from this

quotation it is clear that the protagonist tries to find a refuge in the mask that makes him invisible in this community. After the narrator's psychological growth, he realizes to what extent the social roles hinder him from discovering his individual identity. Finally, the narrator becomes more responsible; he decides to come out and face the whole world. Even the barriers and obstacles that the central character has faced, his maturity helped him to rediscover the values of his African American heritage (Abbot, 1993: 46-47; Ward et al., 2002: 17; "Invisible Man Summary and Analysis of Prologue and Chapters 1-2,"2015; Ward et al., 2002: 12).

### **3.3. "Harlem"**

The title of this part is taken from a poem entitled Harlem (1951) by the African American writer Langston Hughes. The Invisible Man can be read as a response to this poem; it addresses one of the most common themes that created a debate during the twentieth century -the limitations of the American Dream for African Americans. The title refers to Harlem neighborhood of New York City; many African Americans moved there from the South to the North and made it their cultural center during the period of Harlem Renaissance (As we have previously seen in the first and second chapter). In this context, the novel depicts the poem; all of which the protagonist has been through; the protagonist's complicate experience reflects the work very well ("Harlem Summary,"2015).

Ellison is both realistic and symbolist writer; and thus the novel's setting is important. The events take place in real settings; however, these settings always stand for something beyond themselves. Chapters 1 to 6 take place in the South, while Chapters 8 to 25 in the North, with Chapter 7 as a transition. The protagonist growing up in the South and later moving to the North America; he escapes from the restricting bonds of the South to the greater flexibility of the North in Harlem (Abbot, 1993: 38-41).

The American Dream settles in the hearts of all Americans, it attracted the people all over the world with its concepts. Even the African Americans were attracted by its false principles of liberty, equal rights, and the same opportunities for all Americans without restriction of class, religion, race or ethnic group. As a result they migrated to North America to enjoy their life.

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
Like a syrupy sweet?

In Hughes' words with reference to the American Dream, he imagines it as drying up, festering, stinking, and crusting over. Through the protagonist's experience and adventure in the American society from the South to the North, he demonstrates the restriction of the American Dream which turns to African American nightmare. The narrator American Dream festering and stinking with his migration to Harlem when his dream crusting over (Hughes, 1951).

The myth that the North is the land of freedom for black Americans: the invisible man escapes from the South segregation laws hoping to find equal opportunities with whites, without restriction of the racist laws. His experience at The Liberty Paints plant serves as an extended metaphor for racial inequality in America. The narrator works at a paint manufacturing plant known as Liberty Paints, its slogans were emphasizing on the concepts of whiteness and purity, imply the moral superiority of their whiteness. When the narrator arrives at the Liberty Paints plant a huge electric sign attracts him "Keep America Pure with

Liberty Paints”, normally, the slogan refers to a country supposedly founded on liberty and equality but in fact, ironically, it symbolizes the racial tensions that existed in Northern states, as well as Southern states.

The myth of equality in North America: The Northerners adopt stereotypical ideas; they apply the restriction of class, religion, and race. In fact, the scene of Liberty Paints is a well performance of the myth of the American Dream. The “Optic White” slogan: When Mr MC Duffy sent the invisible man to work for a Mr Kimbro who inspects the paints before it is loaded to work and he shows the narrator how to work. The paints looks brown before they are mixed, but after that the colour brown disappeared and the paint turns white. The Optic White slogan symbolizes the superiority of their white paint, which refers to the racism of the American society and that is only concerned with white people and ignored the blacks. The dark colour die out into the swirling mixture, and the emergence of gleaming white paints how no trace of its true components is. The situation of the black workers within the plant manifest a similar pattern: black labourers perform all of the crucial labour, in contrast the whites sell the paint and make highest wages. The narrator’s dream was to be like Dr. Bledsoe, to achieve economic successes; had good salary, power, and authority. The narrator’s American Dream is to gain money and power.

The African Americans were never granted the social or political equality, because they were always restricted by whites’ racist ideas and laws which differentiate between people who belongs to different class, religion, race or ethnic group (Abbot, 1993: 76-79; Ward et al., 2002: 19-20, 41-44; Mesood,2015).

### 3.4. Images of Racism through *Invisible Man* Experiences

Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a representation of African American history. It is about the reality of racism and the problem of black identity from the late 1920s until the beginning of 1930s. The key to understanding *the Invisible Man* is through the protagonist's experience with the racist American society and his escaping from the segregationist south to the racist north.

Ellison uses heavy irony that allows the reader to see things that the narrator misses. The first flash back of the novel in the first chapter in South America is about the narrator's high school and college days; he attends a southern black college, where they force him to fight in a "battle royal" in which he is pitted against other young black men in order to obtain scholarship. The narrator is chastised by the college president, Dr. Bledsoe who giving him seven letters of recommendation; he addressed to the college's white trustees in New York City, and sends him there in search of a job. The brutish white man cheats the naïve protagonist, because the letters of recommendation are of no help. At last, the narrator goes to the office of one of his letters' addressees, a trustee named Mr. Emerson. There he meets Emerson's son, who opens the letter and tells the narrator that he has been betrayed: the letters from Bledsoe actually portray the narrator as dishonorable and unreliable. During his experience in the "Battle of Royal", the narrator does not learn to see behind the masks, behind the surfaces of things, and behind the veils put up by white society. In this scene the narrator recalls delivering the class speech at his high school graduation; the narrator accidentally says "social equality" rather than "social responsibility," the white men angrily demand that he explains his behavior. "Social equality" for "social responsibility" in his speech underlines Ellison's Point. The men act with malevolent toward the narrator when he embodies their idea of the model black citizen, they show their true faces when he threatens white supremacy. In other words, this scene refers in one way or another to the limitation and

the restriction of blacks' opportunities with the segregation's laws which prevent their social advancement even in the education field (Ward et al., 2002: 30-24).

Another important significant event in the protagonist's adventure is when he woke up in the paint factory Liberty Paints hospital; he temporarily lost his memory and ability to speak. He has been treated for the injuries that he sustained in the accident. He undergoes some sort of choke treatments that cause him pain and suffering "the people were so remote, the pain was so immediate", he found himself in white cold chair, the doctor asks him many questions; about his name, his mother name and about Buckeye The Rabbit, but the narrator he forgets everything related to his identity (his semi-conscience) (Ellison, 2014: 233).

The narrator's experiences in the hospital symbolize the racist behaviors towards blacks even in public places, the narrator claims that "I was sitting in cold white reject chair, a man was looking at me out of a bright third eye" this description refers to the white men who are whites and cold like the doctor who gives him some electric shock treatments, he enjoys and said that the blacks had a rhythm dancing. Furthermore, the doctor questions about his name and the rabbit song related to his origins; it is from the ancient African culture. The doctor wants to remind him to his African origins and his slave roots (Abbot, 1993: 80-81; Ward et al., 2002: 44-47; Ellison, 2014: 231).

The Brotherhood experience is one of the most important events that reflect the reality of the American society. This organization focuses on social activism, banding together to fight for people who have been "dispossessed of their heritage." In joining the Brotherhood the narrator's position within the organization provides him with the opportunity to impassioned public speaking, he becomes the Brotherhood orator. The narrator soon realizes that the organization does not care about individuals, but only about its benefits. It uses the invisible man as means to achieve their goals, it using him as a means toward its own ends.

The Brotherhood evaluates the narrator not as an individual human being but rather as an abstract symbol of his race.

Foley argues, that the Brotherhood is a stand-in for the US Communist Party, “with which Ellison was closely associated in the 1930s and early 1940s. As such, the text has become something of an anticommunist classic, using a sophisticated array of rhetorical strategies to link radical politics with white racism and ultimately promote an ideology of American exceptionalism”(Foley, 1997).

Indirectly, Ellison criticized the communist party that pretended that the party fights for justice and equality for all people; however, it exploits blacks and uses them to promote its own political agenda, similarly, to the novel’s event when the narrator was exploited by the Brotherhood organization and used him as means to achieve their goals (Ward et al., 2002: 50-58;Prudchenko, 2012).

Ellison’s protagonist experiences and memories with the racist American society illustrate the powerful social and political forces that conspire to keep black Americans in their place.

### **3.5. Underground to Manhood**

As we have previously seen in the above titles, the protagonist symbolizes African Americans during that period and their struggles in the racist American society. They were like schizophrenic person who suffers from split of personality; it is a mental illness in which frequently changing his mind about something or holding opinions about something that seem to oppose each other. Similarly, in the protagonist identity, his experiences have strongly influenced the development of his identity standard which changes with every new identity.

From underground to manhood; the protagonist built his identity from naïve person to mature one. The invisible man's adventure in the racist American society aids him to discover his real African American identity after assuming various identities.

The narrator finds himself passing through series of events; he has gone underground in order to write his story. As a young naïve man he lived in the South, later on he moves to the North where he faced troubles with the Liberty Paints until he joined the Brotherhood. Because of his innocence during his adventure the people around cheat him easily. However, his experiences in the hospital mark an important transition for the invisible man; it reveals a new rebirth in the protagonist's life. After this accident, becomes like a newborn child; he is semi- unconscious with no memory and inability to understand speech. The doctor's questions about the narrator's folklore help him to recover some of his memory and rediscover some of his African identity. Despite the narrator's reborn his heritage follows him into his new life.

After the narrator's rebirth in Chapter Eleven, his relationship with Mary represents his second childhood which rebuilds his identity. Mary plays the mother figure; she helps and prepares the protagonist for in reclaiming his Southern heritage to face the society. After living with Mary for a few months, the narrator embraces his heritage with eating baked yams which symbolize Southern black culture. In contrast, the Brotherhood tries to break his past and creates a new identity for him (Abbot, 1993:80-94; Ward et al., 2002: 44-52).

Finally, the Invisible Man has sought to define the meaning of experience; he succeeded to define his own identity without any interference from others. From these experiences the protagonist's naivety was transformed into maturity which aids him to rediscover the values of his African American heritage which reflected in his personality, it gives him the power to face the whole world.

### 3.6. Beyond the Invisible Man's Dreams

Dreams play an important role in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*; we are able to look into the hidden meanings of dreams by interpreting them through the theories of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung.

In the Prologue, Invisible Man has a very long and strange dream; he describes his experience of being under the influence of marijuana. In this surrealism scene the narrator smokes weed and listens to Luis Armstrong "what did I do to be so black and blue", the narrator hallucinate; he is semi-conscious, ignoring his principles, the moral standards and ideals, which he acquired from the society. Automatically, his desires and instincts are more energetic, he makes a trip into his unconscious. The protagonist imagines series of dreams: the first one was when he met with a black preacher, who was shouting "my text this morning is blackness of blackness" it is the pure blackness, it represents the black's pride of their origins (Oral traditions). Later on, he meets with an angry woman, her anger was due to the death of her master whom she loves. The narrator surprised when she told him about her love while she should hate him, she says that "because I love my sons I learned to love their father thaw I hated him to"; she hated him because he enslaved her and loved him because he gave her sons. She poisoned him to prevent her sons from murder and prison, as they wanted to slit and throat him. This event refers to the 30's when the women were dependent and restricted, both the narrator and this woman were suffering, they want freedom. In spite of the abolition of slavery, the minorities still suffer from the stereotypes and racist ideas towards them. According to Freud's theories the protagonist fulfills his wishes via these dreams, his hope is like all the African Americans, they want to live in an equal society without any restrictions of racist laws in which the American accepted their origins ( Ellison, 2014:9- 12).

In Chapter 01, the narrator has a dream that involves his grandfather:

That night I dreamed I was at a circus with him and that he refused to laugh at the clowns no matter what they did. Then later he told me to open my brief case and read what was inside and I did, finding an official envelope stamped with the state seal; and inside the envelope I found another and another, endlessly, and I thought I would fall of weariness. 'Them's years,' he said. 'Now open that one.' And i did and in it I found an engraved document containing a short message in letters of gold. 'Read it,' my grandfather said. 'Out loud!'

" 'To Whom It May Concern,' I intoned. 'Keep This Nigger-Boy Running'

This passage reveals on the narrator's dream which refers to his grandfather thoughts and beliefs. This dream symbolizes the narrator's grandfather believes in which the clowns represent the whites, who are trying to make him laugh and with his reaction shows that he will not give into what the whites want him to do, in fact, the narrator's grandfather choose to keep calm and not laugh. Additionally, this dream mentions another scene which revealed some information about his future, when the narrator handed a letter in an envelope that says to keep him running. According Jung's beliefs this dream refers to the invisible man's relationship with the others in the fact the Invisible Man's dream expose some information that became part of his life, in other words the letter represents the Invisible Man situation with white society that he actually conforms to them, the letter's envelope refers to the white standards which he believes in them. The letter tells the whites to keep the Invisible Man running away, later in the novel, the Invisible Man keep running from the whites where he reevaluates his life and goes to the basement for seclusion (Ellison, 2014: 33)

In Chapter 16, the Invisible Man has a dream of becoming an important figure in the society and in the Brotherhood. He believed that his dream could be transformed into reality with a lot of hard work and determination, he says that "It was no dream, the possibility

existed". Through this dream, Ellison motivates the blacks to defend for their rights to reach an important position in both society and politics ("Dream Analysis in Invisible Man,"2015).

## **Conclusion**

Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a search for identity novel that focuses on the images of racism through the protagonist experiences and memories. The protagonist's flashbacks; experience and memories reflect the feature of the racist American society when the segregation and racist views towards the blacks cover all sectors of life. Furthermore, this unnamed protagonist represents all blacks during the novel period of time; he suffers from his invisibility which followed him in the course of his life, starting in the South and continuing in the North.

## General Conclusion

This study focuses on the issue of racism in America, and its impacts on the life African American individuals. It investigates the blacks' identity and their American experience through the analysis of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*, which sheds light on the unnamed protagonist's experiences and memories within the racist American society that refuses to see him. As a result, he was misplaced and traumatized by the injustice and inequality of this society.

Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a representation of African American history. It is about the reality of racism and the problem of black identity from the late 1920s until the beginning of 1930s. The key to understanding *The Invisible Man* is through the protagonist's flash backs; memories and dreams. A glimpse into the events of the novel offers to the reader an image of the blacks' conditions in a racist American society, and demonstrates the reasons that cause the narrator to be invisible. The events in the novel mirror the historical realities of that time; it did not only reflects history, but also portrays the social, economic, and politic features that took place in the late of 1920 and the beginning of 1930.

The analysis of *Invisible Man* from New Historicism and Psychoanalytic literary criticism, the novel was interpreted and analyzed from the angles of these approaches, which aided the researcher to prove his hypothesis. The juxtaposing of the events in the novel with the historical realities of racism proves that the novel reflects the events historically at that time; it treats through an artistic literary view, a social phenomenon that the American society was suffered from.

The narrator is like many other individuals who live in racist societies and search for self- identity. He refers to all African American minorities who have suffered from racism and segregation. This literary work is not just a reflection of the author's times and circumstances,

but it is also influenced by his environment, beliefs, and prejudices. The protagonist's flashbacks; memories, and dreams reflect the real circumstances, beliefs, and prejudices of that time; first, the Invisible Man's memories: he recalls a time when he was a naïve young man, the protagonist growing up in the South and then moved to North America; he escaped from the restricting bonds of the South to the greater flexibility of the North in Harlem, he refers to the Great Migration of African Americans from south to north America, when they were escaped from the cruelty of Jim Crow Laws, the blacks hoped to find democracy and equal rights. Unfortunately, all these hopes turned to nightmare. Second, the Invisible Man's dreams: these series of dreams mirror the blacks' conditions during that time, the protagonist's dream to become an important figure in society specifically in the Brotherhood, and the surrealism scene when he smoked weed and listened to Jazz music. All of them represent the dreams of all African Americans during Jazz Age when the Jazz music was widely spread and the Harlem Renaissance emerged, this helps the African Americans to defend on their rights, and enjoyed their lives like all American citizens without the stereotypical ideas towards them which stuck in whites' mind.

In fact, history influenced literature; As a result, Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* demonstrates how the author was influenced by the circumstances of the novel's period of time (1920- 1930). The novel adopted the message of both Harlem Renaissance and Minor literature, when the African American literary works dealt with the issues of minorities, they shared specific themes about African American minorities and the quest for their rights and equality with whites through the experience of black people in the American society, like the black protagonist in *The Invisible Man*. Furthermore, Ralph Ellison's political interests were reflected in his writing; the Brotherhood is a symbolism of his position towards the communist party at that time, he criticized the party with reference to the novel when the party betrays the African Americans.

Literature and history are joined together, where both of them influence each other; Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* was influenced and affected by real historical events that occurred during the novel period of time; thus literature is not only a reflection of history and real events, but it is also a weapon that the writers use to convey their messages and defend the rights of their people as well as their own rights.

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## ملخص

تتمركز هذه الدراسة حول قضية التمييز العنصري و تأثيراته على حياة الافر امريكيين من نهاية 1920 الى بداية 1930. كما أنها تسعى إلى البحث عن هوية الأفارقة السود و تجربتهم في المجتمع الأمريكي العنصري من خلال الرواية المعنونة The Invisible Man للكاتب الافروامريكي رالف اليسون و تجليات التمييز العنصري في الرواية. و تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم ما إذا كانت الرواية عبارة عن نص سردي يعكس ظروف الافرامريكيين خلال فترة Jazz Age , و صراعهم مع التمييز العنصري ' و طبيعة العلاقة بينا الأحداث التاريخية و موضوع الرواية' أو أنها مستنبطة من الواقع الخيالي. و أخيرا هذه الدراسة تهدف إلى إيضاح المظاهر المختلفة للتمييز العنصري و نتائجه على بطل الرواية الافروامريكي من خلال ذكرياته و تجاربه.