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Aspects of Black Identity
In Ralph Ellison's *"The Invisible Man"*

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Dedication

This work, first of all, is dedicated to my passed away Father " Mohamed " and my uncle "Said Mezouar ": though they passed away But they Still live within each one of us

To my caring and supporting Mother Khadidja Mezouar; I would not become what I am today without yourSupport and affection,

To my Brothers and Sisters: Fares, Ahmed Chaouki, Hamza, Halima, Karima.

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my cousin: Nesrine and my wonderful Best Friends Ouissam, Rihab,Maroua for being there for me

And to all my family (Rekbi and Mezouar) who contributed directly or indirectly in accomplishing this work.

Hayat Rekbi

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation: to my dear parents, mamy Fatima and dady messouad

To my sweet sisters Oudjdane, Farah, djanat elferdouas, and my brothers Alaa el dine, Abed el mouïz, Dakir

To my heart, my husband Amine ,To my grandmother mama mani ,To my friends, To everyonehelp me one day . Thank you

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Abstract:

The African-American traumatic experience with slavery, segregation, and racism aroused another battle with identity along the way. Many African-American writers like Ellison dealt with the issue of identity. In African-American literature, Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a highly symbolic novel. Ralph explores and highlights the existential inquiry into identity-what it means to be socially or racially invisible. This present study is divided into two chapters, The first one offers the issue of identity from a Marxism approach and sheds light on the African American literature from the Jazz Age till the Civil Rights Movement. The second chapter examines the Aspects of Black identity through Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*.

Keywords: Aspects of Black identity ,The Invisible Man, Segregation, Racism, Marxism

Résumé:

L'expérience vécue par les afro-américains avec l'esclavage, la discrimination raciale et le racisme était une autre raison de leur combat identitaire. Plusieurs écrivains afro-américains se sont exprimés sur leur souffrance à cause de leur identité à travers la littérature, comme par exemple Ralph Ellison dans son roman "l'Homme Invisible". Ellison y a explicité les concepts de la réalisation de soi et de l'identité et le sens d'être "invisible" sur le plan social et racial. La présente étude se scinde en deux chapitres : la première traite la notion de "l'identité" en se basant sur la théorie marxiste et la littérature africaine pendant l'ère du Jazz et du mouvement des droits civils. Quant au deuxième chapitre, il étudie les aspects de l'identité des Noirs à travers "l'Homme Invisible" roman de Ralph Ellison en se référant à la théorie Marxiste.

Mots clés: Aspects de l'identité des Noirs, l'Homme Invisible, Ségrégation, Racisme, Marxiste.

ملخص:

كانت تجربة الأمريكيين الأفارقة مع العبودية، التمييز العنصري، و العنصرية سببا في إثارة معركة أخرى مع الهوية على مدار الزمن . العديد من الكتاب الأمريكيين الأفارقة مثل رالف إليسون تعاملوا مع قضية الهوية في الأدب الإفريقي الأمريكي، من بينهم رواية " الرجل الخفي " التي جسدت معاناتهم. سلط رالف إليسون الضوء على التحقيق الوجودي للهوية و معانيها و ماذا يعني أن تكون غير مرئي اجتماعيا أو عرقيا. تنقسم هذه الدراسة إلى فصلين ، الفصل الأول يتطرق إلى مفهوم الهوية استنادا على النظرية الماركسية . كما يسلط الضوء على الأدب الأفريقي خلال عصر الجاز و كذا فترة حركة حقوق المدنية . كما يدرس الفصل الثاني جوانب هوية السود من خلال رواية "الرجل الخفي" لـ رالف إليسون. استنادا على النظرية الماركسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : جوانب الهوية السوداء, الرجل الخفي, , التمييز العنصري, العنصرية, النظرية الماركسية

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General Introduction

Introduction

Literature is described as pieces of writing in which the writer can expose his beliefs, ideas, and emotions. It is common to find similarities between the events, the characters, and the author, his background, or even the society he lived in, which may indeed affect the production of a given literary. Usually, writers produce literature and use it as a tool to face real-life problems or to fight for a cause. African-Americans are not an exception to this fact; as one type that is considered with the transmission of the critical and psychological issues from which African-Americans suffered from ages.

Usually, writers produce works of literature in order to portray real events artistically, it are useful means to enjoy the reader, at the same time it makes him aware of the real historical events that are created to criticize the events that happened in the society in a specific time and place. African American literature, in particular, is regarded as an outstanding kind of literature that sprang from the suffering of Blacks from segregation and enslavement and ill-treatment of the whites that stripped them of any rights. Negro writers have always been involved in their writings with the theme of identity that comes to the surface due to discrimination and segregation. Ralph Ellison's work *The Invisible Man*, for instance, depicted the social realities of that the blacks, and their dilemmas they get encountered within a world dominated by white's values and ideologies from which they were marginalized.

Background to the Research

Racial discrimination in the United States has been a major issue since both the colonial and the slave era, and writing on the racist history is not the only task of historians, but it is also done by creative writers now, who write about the past in order to establish a tradition for the present. The novel *The Invisible Man* took Ralph Ellison a good amount of time to craft his only masterpiece, *The Invisible Man*. It is known for its richness in Black folklore, the use of metaphor and symbolism to depict the racial discrimination in the United States. Due to this, the novel claimed its position in American literature and become a reference for the African American culture and history. Since the beginning of the colonial and slave era, segregation becomes a prevalent problem in the United States. Racial segregation was spread widely after the wave of immigration. Furthermore, the study focuses on social and psychological problems facing Black Americans.

It touches on racism and conflict of identity through the analysis of Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. Ellison's inclusion of a racial as well as a psychological aspect of identity imparts his text with a rich and dynamic commentary on social conditions, standards, and how human interaction dictates and contributes to our overall sense of identity. He builds his themes on the assumption that in a racist country, Blacks are granted no true identity.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis is to present racism, segregation, and its effect on individuals' identities. Also, it touches on the aspects of Black identity through the analysis of Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. To achieve full depth in the analysis we use the Marxist theory

Research Questions

The main question which the dissertation raises is:

what are the aspects of Black identity and Racism throughout Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*?

Other sub-questions that this dissertation entails are:

How do segregation and racism affect the individual identity of the oppressed people, throughout the novel?

How is the protagonist's identity established and maintained?

Hypothesis

This research describes the hardship of the Black and the racial discrimination the Black suffered in the United States in *The Invisible Man* and shows that a colored man will always find obstacles. Also, It proves that the novel is a mirror of the historical events at that time.

Methodology

This study will be based qualitative method data collected from the library and the Internet. It employs two sources of data, primary data Ralph Ellison's novel *The Invisible Man* and secondary sources of data (journals, textbooks, dissertations, and Websites). We will use a Marxist approach. descriptive analytical corps based.

The Research Aims

This research aims at:

- It further explores the aspects of Black Identity in Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*.
- It examines the issue of racism and segregation, and its effect on Black Americans

Structure of the Dissertation

The work split into two chapters; the first chapter is entitled literature review: Marxism Critical Accounts discusses the Marxism theory and African American literature in general. The second chapter is devoted to the aspects of Black Identity in “ *The Invisible Man* ” using Marxist Reading through the narrator. It also sees how Ellison authentically dealt with the problem of the black identity and how he represented it in modern America.

Definition of Key Terms

Upon to Urban Dictionary:

Racism: Prejudice or discrimination based on skin color, origin, and/or religion.

Segregation: Something that separates people by their race or color

Marxism : A pyramid scheme masquerading as a quasi-sociopolitical economic theory, first developed from the various writings of Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, and later embellished upon by intellectual luminaries such as Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Josef Stalin, Mao Tse Tung, and Chee Guevara.

Chapter One:
Literature Review:
Marxism Critical
Accounts and a Socio-
Historical Context

Part1. Marxism Critical Accounts

Introduction

Literature with its works of drama, story, poetry, plays, fiction, and nonfiction reflects a language or a people representing their culture and tradition Literature. More recent theorists of the last century argued that literature is not innocent of the ideological and cultural factors that might indeed affect these works. This chapter aims to provide a theoretical framework to study Marxism theory; also it is devoted to studying a Socio-Historical Context of African American literature from different periods (Jazz Age, Civil Rights Movements, Harlem Renaissance Movement). Finally, it concludes with the meaning of identity in African American literature.

1. Principles of Marxism Theory

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles¹.

Marxism is a structural theory that adopts the macro-sociological perspective, and as such emphasizes the ways that people are shaped by the society in which they live. Marxism was developed toward the end of the Revolutions of 1848 by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It is a radical philosophy, a revolutionary theory of social change. It sees progress as coming about through the struggle for power between different social classes, which are between (upper/ruler class, Bourgeois, and proletariat.). The aim of Marxism is to bring about class society, this class struggle that is commonly expressed as the revolt of a society's productive forces against its relations of production results in a period of short-term crises as the bourgeoisie struggle to manage the intensifying alienation of labor experienced by the proletariat, albeit with varying degrees of class consciousness. The differences that exist within the context of the novel.

“All I know is that I am not a Marxist.” The interesting fact that Marx said, but one cannot infer from this that Marx rejected the main tenets of his doctrine. The interpreters of Marxism say that Marx never claimed that he had presented a clear and correct view about the social-political and economic conditions of the world.

¹ Marx K., and Engels F., *The Communist Manifesto*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967, P.11.

The main principles of Marxism are The Means or Mode of Production, social classes, economic, Capitalism, Profit and Labor, Ideology, and political conditions especially in the capitalist states of the world.

Marxism is based on a materialist understanding of societal development, taking at its starting point the necessary economic activities required by human society to provide for its material needs. The form of economic organization, or mode of production, is understood to be the basis from which the majority of other social phenomena including social relations, political and legal systems, morality, and ideology arise. Marx distinguishes social classes on the basis of two criteria: ownership of means of production and control over the labor-power of others.

In addition, the central subject of Marxism is a capitalist society; it is not simply to analyze the capitalist society, but to change it. Marx has said that the philosophers have interpreted the world, but the real task is to change the world or society. In a capitalist economy, there is a division of labor which means that labor produces a single or small part of an article. The capitalist system has introduced this division of labor to have better results. But its harmful consequence is with the passing away of time man is gradually alienated from the whole production system and finally the society. The division of labor no doubt helps the progress of industry of capitalist society. But man is the victim of its harmful effects. In other words "Marxist Theory (or "Marxist Ideology") argued that profit margins are actually largely located in labor, thus labor has economic value. Capital may belong to the capitalist, but labor belongs to each man or woman him or herself. The working class is exploited in the form of profit: what the laborer rightly earned is given to the capitalist. This is key: no man can own or control the value of another man's labor or the relationship is inherently exploitive and, thus, immoral."²

1.1 Marxism in Literature

In literature, it is necessary for readers to understand the background before analyzing any text. There are many theories that let readers analyze the literary text from different sides; Marxism is the targeted theory in our study. For Marxist theorists, Literature is not simply a matter of personal expression or text; it is related to the social and political conditions of the time.

Marxist thinkers interpret and analyze the literary context as an expression of contemporary class struggle; All in all, they focus on the "content".

² https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/engl_258/Lecture%20Notes/marxism.htm

Marx called the economic conditions of life the base or infrastructure. The base includes everything from technology and raw materials to the social organization of the workplace. This economic base has a powerful effect on the superstructure, Marx's term for society, culture, and the world of ideas. Literature, for Marx, belongs to the superstructure along with law, politics, and so on. The challenge, then, is to see how it is influenced by the economic base.

A good Marxist reading draws our attention to details in the literary context that we might have glossed over otherwise.

1.2 The Concept of Identity in Marxism

Identity "refers to how individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities. Search for finding identity can make us more sensitive about the environment, ourselves, and the society in which we live. According to Marxist thinkers, identities are shaped by the classes conflicting with each other. They view social class, as the foundation of identity. Overall, identity in Marxism depends on which social class you are. The social classes and Capitalism had a great effect on building identity and know who you are.

PART2.A Socio-Historical Context

2. African-American literature

We black people tried to write ourselves out of slavery, slavery is even more profound than mere physical bondage. Accepting the challenge of the great white Western tradition, black writers wrote as if their lives depended upon it ³.

(GATES, 1985)

African American Literature is defined by William L. Andrews as a "body of literature written by Americans of African descent". African-American literature is regarded as an outstanding kind of literature that is very peculiar to its people, their literature is an accomplishment of people who suffered and yearned in silence for the first two decades. The primary character of African American literature is that it speaks to the African-American experience in the United States, a country with a history of slavery and segregation laws.

³ GATES, Henry Louis. Editor's Introduction: Writing "Race" and the Difference It Makes. *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 12, no. 1, 1985

Because of this focus, many literary works are about individuals struggling to understand themselves in a white-dominated society. Some African-American writers made "fringes" characters, such as criminals, tricksters, and those of non-mainstream sexuality the primary protagonists in their novels.

The first African-American novel published in the United States is Harriet Wilson's "*Our Nig*" which discusses the struggle of Blacks who want to live freely in the North. A genre of African-American literature that developed in the middle of the 19th century is the slave narrative, accounts written by fugitive slaves about their lives in the South and, often, after escaping to freedom. They wanted to describe the cruelties of life under slavery. This literature came as a response to the common controversies and those theories about the Black race that legislated slavery; for the reasons that a Negro is mentally unable by any means to produce an adequate literary work as the white man. The Negro found himself from the start a prisoner of these prejudices, therefore his literature served as a double standard first, to reclaim his equality with the white, and second, to defend and justify his humanity. African-American literature has been from the beginning literature of necessity. At the beginning of the 1950s; Ralph Ellison published his novel, *Invisible Man*, and immediately became acclaimed by the critics. He tells the story of a black man who drifted and was ignored by the United States. This accurate depiction of African American cultural elements is what distinguishes "*The Invisible Man*" from ordinary novels. We can't just say that "*The Invisible Man*" is a great novel and continues to develop. This novel brings the existence of Black Americans in a precise way and in a new way. This distinction is so important. In a way that challenges the stereotypes of the times, Ellison reveals his own experience in the relationship between African American culture and mainstream American culture. For example, Black Americans do not have the same knowledge and life experience as mainstream Americans. Ellison believes that writing in this way is his own responsibility to improve his own culture and promote the development of American culture in general. It is this interaction between the main national and personal views that are at the core of anthropology.

2.1 The Jazz Age

Novelist F. Scott Fitzgerald referred to the period that emerged in the United States of America between the end of the Great War and the Great Depression as the Jazz Age in his book "*tales of the jazz age*". The term "Jazz" is credited to African Americans as they used it to describe a genre of music that quickly became popular among middle-class Americans. Jazz is not a lonely art.

Its form not only manifests itself in music. Jazz has found many other forms of expression, including powerful narratives that cover jazz literature. Jazz chronicles people's emotional response to oppression in all its forms, expresses the artistic abilities of African Americans, and provides a voice for those who have been hit. For African Americans, the Jazz Age was also home to a movement known as the Harlem Renaissance.

By the end of the First World War, African Americans expected better treatment in an equal society with white people; however, they faced a different reality. The United States of America during that time was a place of racism and segregation. African Americans were excluded from participating in most of the fields. White-owned business often refused their patronage, discrimination in jobs and education denied them the potential of earning the money required to purchase consumer goods.

Jazz music is also the starting point for Ellison's important position in American society. In his article "*Living with Music*", he affirmed that jazz music has the ability to send you into an ecstatic rhythm and memory, and brassy affirmation of the goodness of being alive and part of the community. Basically, for Ellison, jazz music is a kind of ecstasy in the face of hardship and pain. Critics also are well aware that jazz has had a significant impact on Ellison, and critics treat Ellison on the basis of his passion for music.

Briefly, the Jazz Age flourished in different aspects of American society and becomes the reason for raising the voice of black writers.

2.2The civil rights movements

Migration of the Blacks toward the north increased over the years and reached a peak during the Second World War. During this period Black people left the racism and lack of opportunities in the south and remained in the northern cities like Chicago where works in industries and factories were available. This mass migration gave a sense of independence to the Black communities which in its turn empowered the rising Civil Rights Movement. American Civil Rights Movement, the mass protest movement against racial segregation and discrimination in the southern United States that came to national prominence during the mid-1950s. Civil Rights Groups came up and fought for equality in employment opportunities, voting rights, education, and housing. Civil Rights Activists engaged in various activities to challenge the draconian customs and laws to obtain equality for all Americans.

The novel "*The Invisible Man*" promoted the Civil Rights Movement in the country. The rich description of social conflicts and the moving life of its anonymous narrator touched future generations of students. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was born. Out of the need and desire of African Americans and other people of color for equality and freedom. Almost a hundred years after the abolition of slavery, widespread segregation, discrimination, and deprivation of Civil Rights and racially motivated violence have penetrated all personal and structural aspects of Black life.

Local and state "Jim Crow" laws prohibit African Americans from entering classrooms and restrooms and leaving theaters, trains, juries, and legislatures. During this period of time, in order to eliminate such discrimination and injustice, radical activism activities continued to emerge. . Activists work together and use non-violent protests and specifically targeted civil disobedience actions such as the Montgomery bus boycott and the Greensboro Woolworth seat to bring about change. Most of this organizing and activism occurs in the southern United States. However, people of all ethnic groups and religions across the country joined the ranks of human rights defenders to express their support and commitment to freedom and equality. For example, on August 28, 1963, 250,000 Americans arrived in Washington and headed to the southern United States. However, people of all ethnic groups and religions across the country joined the ranks of human rights defenders to express their support and commitment to freedom and equality. For example, on August 28, 1963, 250,000 Americans came to Washington, DC to participate in the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom" parade. They heard their own voices and heard the speeches of many Civil Rights Leaders, especially Martin Luther King who delivered one of the most influential speeches in history. Ellison has an extraordinary ability to condense the history of African Americans through stories, allusions and symbols, and interactions between characters.

2.3 Harlem Renaissance Movement

The Great Migration is also known as Black Migration was the relocation of millions of African-Americans from the rural, agrarian Southern cities towards the urban, industrialized Northern states to flee the economic exploitation that accompanied life as southern farmers, as well as violent and pervasive racism during the 1920s. This Great Migration of people brought with it the migration of intellectual brilliance and awareness that led to the birth of the Harlem Renaissance Movement. It is an undeniable era for the Black flourishing literary and artistic innovations.

African Americans from various parts of the country and social classes joined together in Harlem, which became a focal point of the African American culture: Jazz, blues, art, theatre, fiction, and poetry. Harlem became also the pioneering of African American institutions like the Advancement in of Colored People, the National Urban League and W. E. B. Dubois The Crisis magazine.

The Harlem Renaissance was characterized during the 1920s and 1930s by an outpouring of literature and intellectual thought from Black artists and activists who helped define Black pride and identity in a society dominated by Whites.

Harlem played an important role in the development of ideas, styles, language, and culture. It looked to Africa and Black American culture for inspiration. Overall, we believe that the Harlem Renaissance was the time of increased awareness and a search for an identity for African Americans. As black Americans believed that in White America the Black slave history was holding back their progress and that they would not be recognized as equals in America, Africa.

3. Identity in African-American literature

Many African American writers pushed identity as the central theme for their artistic works and novels. These works were merely a reflection of the bitter reality the Blacks were forced to cope with as many minority groups in the United States as Jews, Hispanics, homosexuals, and women. Blacks were the most to suffer from this marginalization mainly because of their skin color which is very distinctive and easily spotted in the crowds. The elements of African American culture that Ralph Ellison chose to describe in "*The Invisible Man*" are very important and allude to the struggle that many Blacks have lived through during this time and continue to this day. Ellison hopes to fight between these two cultures to create public awareness.

During this period in history, many Black Americans faced a decision one way or another: choose to retain their past cultural identity or to abandon and embrace the dominant American cultural identity. Many people could argue that the same struggle for survival exists today. Ellison demonstrates through his novels that this separation of identities is almost impossible and has an adverse effect on those who attempt to do so. Ellison painted the conflicting aspects of African American culture in his time. He brings out emotions of inwardness and regret, illustrating that his character tries to distinguish various aspects of his culture and his own identity.

In doing so, Ellison stitched together previously separate intellectual identities with rural Black Americans in the North and South. His purpose in doing this is not only to challenge the mainstream views of Black Americans but also to bridge the cultural gap between the two conflicting aspects of cultural identity in the Black community. It can be concluded that as the identity of other countries, this is not natural. It is not a conscious fascination and unconscious acceptance of them, but for Americans, it is a kind of fascination, a passion, and a passion. Search for. The issue of identity has always been an important theme in American literature. In other words, the search for identity is primarily an American subject, with various relevance and broad meanings.

The imposed identity on the African-Americans did not end with the abolition of slavery, but it carried on till the twentieth century; as James Baldwin says in his book *Collected Essays*, “The missing identity aches, one can neither assess nor overcome the storm of the middle passage. One is shipwrecked forever, in the Great New World⁴”. He boldly articulated the issue of race and democracy and American identity. He argued the Africans lost their sense of self, the moment they stepped on the shores of America which was the starting point of all their dilemmas.

Black Men were not the only victims who suffered from the identity crisis but also women and at times it was a lot worse since they were not only oppressed as blacks but also as women. Black women’s literature has been constantly double standard; novels such as *The "Color Purple"* by Alice Walker, and *"Beloved"* by Toni Morrison. Black women are silenced both as black and as female. But it is precisely this doubled otherness that might help us begin to move beyond racial essentialism, beyond the repressive politics of identity.

In *Beloved* Morrison links ‘memory’ with identity; the character in the story Sethe was forced to kill her daughter Beloved in order not to suffer as she did in slavery, but the memory haunts her all her life. These awful experiences in the past are what construct the persons in the present; memory here is tightly linked with identity since it is the main thing that helps to shape it. In other words, our experiences in life are what shape our identity and our personality.

⁴ Baldwin, J. (1998): *Collected Essays*. United States: The Library of American. Print. 04 April 2017

Conclusion

The main conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that Black writers use literature as their weapon to convey their voice. Black writers were inspired by Marxist thinkers and novelists in treating the situation of Black people. Also, they contributed to the shaping of the Black identity, Black literature, and helped to portray what is like to be Black in a White-dominated society.

Chapter Two:

Aspects of Black Identity in

Ralph Ellison's

***“The Invisible Man”*: a**

Marxist Reading

Introduction

“Now, though I was a stranger, I was home”, James Baldwin said. This is a perfect definition of what it means to be African-American in America. When an author creates a narrator they are also creating their voice, tone, and even theme in certain instances. As an African American writer, Ellison is able to examine the universal human struggle of finding one’s identity while living one’s life in a world one feels worthless, displaced, disavowed; and that this world is built upon restrictive ideologies and stereotypes. Thus, throughout the novel, the search for identity becomes the dominant concern of the narrator’s journey to identify who he is in this world and to escape from stereotypes and racial inequalities. In the prologue, the narrator recalls and meditates upon the events of his life. He tries to elicit out of the confusions of his experiences some pattern of meaning and essence of identity.

This chapter explores the aspects of Black identity and the effect of racism, segregation, marginalization, and alienation on the personal growth of the character through the novel *The Invisible Man* and how these external factors did influence the development of the personal identity of the African American individual through *the Invisible Man*; using Marxism theory to analyze the effect of oppression and racism on the identity of the blacks due to racial discrimination.

1. Plot summary

The novel *Invisible Man* highlights the narrator’s physical and psychological journey as expressed by Ralph Ellison; from purpose to passion to perception. *The Invisible Man* has been acclaimed as a twentieth-century masterpiece of American fiction and has established Ralph Ellison as one of the major American writers of the century. *The Invisible man* is a novel narrated in the first-person point of view, by a nameless character that undergoes his journey from the south, toward the north to seek opportunities and better life. The nameless character captures the full attention of discerning individuals. Supposedly, this is not the sort of attention he craves. What he really wants, he tells us, is for others to take an interest in him, but. /not only so as to better determine if he is a useful tool or a dangerous threat. Unfortunately, “no one really wished to hear what he called himself ⁵”

⁵Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Vintage International, 1995p .573

"I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me"⁶. The form of *Invisible Man* expresses its content. It is about a specific character, in a specific circumstance, at a specific time. Throughout the novel, the invisible man consistently yields to the whims of more authoritative powers that surround him, but he questions their purpose and his role in society.

The unnamed narrator told the story in a series of flashbacks in the 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. The unnamed character keeps asking him, who am I? How I can be a true man? When I get my right as a human? These were most questions he asked at every stage in his life. His reaction to the advice of his grandfather. It not only reveals his current state but as a reader also, structurally, foreshadows plot development of the novel story. The protagonist accepts his grandfather's advice, because "grandfather had been a quiet old man who never made any trouble, yet on his deathbed, he had called himself a traitor and a spy"⁷ from first he blinds himself to reality.

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 narrator has constantly haunted his grandfather's advice, who tells him to always obey Whites to get a better life and succeed. Before he going to college, he was challenged and forced to participate in a battle called " the Battle Royale: was a group of black people must fight in a boxing ring for the enjoyment of the White men " against other Black people to get the opportunity to have a scholarship. After he was forced to leave the college when he takes an important guest to the wrong place. Dr. Bledsoe the president of the college cunningly betrays him by giving him a recommendation letter that was supposed to open job opportunities for him, after convincing him to move to New York, but he soon discovered that he did the opposite.

After all these difficulties and inhuman experiences, the unnamed narrator joins an organization that claims to defend minorities called the Brotherhood. The narrator was soon betrayed since they used him just to promote and bring a better picture to the organization. A riot breaks out and one of the members gets killed by the police, the protagonist gets confused and finally refuges to underground and rejects both, his grandfather's advice and that of the society that tried to define him.

⁶Invisible Man, p.10

⁷Ibid.p.16

He sees his life as impossible in this world, so, he is in search of the new world, he is living in a dream world, he wants to be far from this unreal world, the struggle is meaningless, he says:

for me this was not a city of realities, but of dream; perhaps because
I have always thought of my life as being confined to the south. And now as
I struggled through the lines of people a new world of possibility *Suggested itself to me faintly, like a
small voice that was barely audible in the roar of city sounds. I move wide-eyed, trying to take the
bombardment impressions. Then, I stopped still*⁸.

2. Segregation in *The Invisible Man*

American Racism is reflected in many aspects, including education, employment, voting rights, immigration, citizenship, and so on. Racial discrimination in the United States has been a major issue since the slave era and the colonial era. *The Invisible Man* is Ellison's masterpiece. It uses rich symbolism to illustrate the racial discrimination in America and the problem of black identity from the late 1920s until the beginning of the 1930s. American Racism is reflected in many aspects, including education, employment, voting rights, immigration, citizenship, and so on. Jim Crow Laws a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. It has a great impact on the increase of racial segregation in the United States. Its purpose to keep Black people always inferior. Overall, Jim Crow Laws forbade African Americans living in White neighborhoods. The narrator in *The Invisible Man* lives in a segregated racist south. Where Blacks are still poisoned by the ideology of slavery.

The novel's main theme is the protagonist's struggle to shape his individual identity in American society; Ellison incorporates his pen in order to deliver his message to his audiences. As a Negro living in a White-dominated society, it's unavoidable for the protagonist to go through racism and discrimination from the Whites. After going through a lot of outrageous experiences the narrator experienced shock while he searches for his identity. In the growth process, the Black youth began to know the definition of visibility and invisibility and transformed himself from visible man to invisible man again and again.

From the young's inner change, the author presented the issue of racial discrimination again and again.

The idea of equality is unbearable for Whites, but Black Americans continued their struggle to achieve their rights as American citizens. Jim Crow Laws allowed them to treat the Blacks unfairly and kept them separate from the whites.

⁸Invisible Man, p.132

These laws motivated the Blacks to migrate from the south towards the north hoping to find democracy and equal rights. Unfortunately, the African American Dream achieve their American dream turned into a nightmare, they found themselves in an unfair society full of racism and segregation in all aspects of life.

2.1 Segregation Reflected in Social Life

By the end of the 19th century, Black Americans had long been out of the shackles of slavery, but they felt that the majority white population had not accepted them as freemen, entitled to progress and compete for their place in the society.

The racial segregation greatly affected the social life of African- Americans, as they were subjected to persecution and disgrace imposed on them in all public and administrative facilities and even in schools, not for nothing but because they are black, so they were classified as second-class citizens and were also denied the practice of prestigious professions such as education, law, medicine, and many others. Tired professions with low income so that they cannot advance and do not increase their status in society, and as the narrator said with a sigh of relief at his reality: Many of the men had been doctors, lawyers, teachers, Civil Service Workers; there were several cooks, a preacher, a politician, and an artist. One very nutty one had been a psychiatrist. Whenever I saw them I felt uncomfortable. They were supposed to be members of the professions toward which at various times I vaguely aspired myself, and even though they never seemed to see me I could never believe that they were really patients⁹.

Overall, American society broke the wings of African- Americans and frustrated their resolve, so they began to live without goals or plans to improve their situation because racial segregation tied their hands and stripped their dream, as the narrator said disappointed. “I would work hard and serve my employer so well that he would shower Dr. Bledsoe with favorable reports. And I would save my money and return in the fall full of New York culture¹⁰.”

3. Racism as Obstacle for Black Identity in Invisible Man

Racism is the dominant topic for all Negro writers. Ellison like many African-American writers adopts the issue of racism in his novel “*The Invisible Man*“, and how it affected the problem of black identity in American Society which they considered as a barrier to their advancement and proving their abilities.

The narrator in *The Invisible Man* is a black boy from the south of the United States. He is not a slave, but he is not enjoying all of his rights like the Whites.

⁹ Invisible Man, p.35

¹⁰ibid,p.156-157

From here the story of the protagonist starts with racism. On his school days, he so suffers. He respects all the rules and follows the order of his teacher; he serves the Whites to be accepted by them. 'The apparent function of the college to which the narrator is sent only to confirm the roles for the blacks already determined by the whites. On the college grounds, the young hero observes the founder's statue¹¹', "...his hands outstretched in the breathtaking gesture of lifting the veil that flutters in hard, metallic folds above the face of a kneeling slave, and I am standing puzzled, unable to decide whether the veil is really being lifted, or lowered more firmly in place; whether am witnessing a revelation or more efficient blinding¹²". When the protagonist starts gradually understand his society and himself, the American racist system makes the boy weird grow up.

African Americans, like Whites, aspire to a decent job and a prestigious position, as well as to highlight their abilities in various fields, but they do not find that opportunity because of the racism that dominates American society. The Invisible Man tried to prove himself by traveling from the south to the north, but racism was always the reason behind his failure to show himself in white society Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is a representation of Black identity politics. Racism, ideologically spelt as identity politics, is an oil-shoot of cultural politics, where the individual identifies with the native culture. Ellison feels that unless human beings recognize the mutual identity shared by independent individuals, no one can universalize these desires for identity into a true human vocation. As the novel's central motif indicates, the protagonist's painful but enlightening journey from the state of visibility to invisibility is a dominant metaphor in the life of the African-American. It is suggestive of the imposition of an alien culture on the Africans whose culture is devalued and whose identity is blotted out. Invisibility also suggests the plight and trauma which a man suffers when his fundamental rights are violated and his psyche is subdued by the dominant cultural group.

"He is forced to live in a hostile environment that makes him sterile and timid. He is stripped of his basic human dignity and is made to live under the threat of annihilation of his culture¹³".

In a clear way, Racism has discouraged African-American ambitions in highlighting their identity and even considered everyone who tries to change his mind to have abandoned his black identity and tried to break his wings "It's simple, you've known it a long time. It goes, 'Use a nigger to catch a nigger Hang the lying traitor, Ras shouted¹⁴".

¹¹<http://www.ijim.in/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Vol-2-Issue-X-67-70-Paper-14-27-Amrita.pdf>

¹² Invisible Man, p.37

¹³Amrutha TV(february2018.RALPH ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN : A CULTURAL RESISTANCE)Guest Faculty Sreekrishna College

¹⁴ibid, p. 483

On the other hand, the African-American elite seeks to develop themselves, go out into society, and impose their presence and identity despite all the obstacles they face. knowing now who I was and where I was and knowing, too that I had no longer to run for or from the Jacks and the Emersons and the Bledsoes and Nortons, but only from their confusion, impatience, and refusal to recognize the beautiful absurdity of their American identity and mine...I was invisible, and hanging would not bring me to visibility, even their eyesbetter to live out one 's own absurdity than die for that of others, whether for Ras's or Jack's¹⁵

Overall, Racism is still an obstacle to black identity, but the insistence on distinction and not allowing whites to detract from the value of Blacks.

3.1 Images of Racism through Invisible Man Experiences

The narrator in *The Invisible Man* is a black man who lives in South America. As we know, the Blacks are not slaves now, but they are still poisoned by the ideology of slavery. In their mind, the white is their lord. They have to serve white men without any hesitation. In the period when he was studying in college, the narrator suffered a lot. He was obedient to the arrangement of the teachers in the school and the rule of Whites in the Whites club. When he began to understand the world and himself step by step, American Racism and apartheid policies of the United States make the boy's growth alienation. He prove racism when he said:

About eighty-five years ago they were told that they were free, united with others of our country in everything pertaining to the common good, and, in everything social, separate like the fingers of the hand. And they believed it. They exulted in it. They stayed in their place, worked hard, and brought up my father to do the same¹⁶.

This is the real image of racism in America. This saying summarizes the social life that African Americans live in the white racist society, as they do not have any powers or privileges. The only goal in society is serious and continuous work to ensure the well-being of Whites and obtain their satisfaction. It is worth saying that they did not get rid of the remnants of slavery, but rather disguised themselves in a new uniform, which is racism.

The narrator's ambition was great and his eagerness to show himself in the white community was his ultimate goal, as when he joined the Brotherhood and started working in it, he forgot his black origin and that his ambitions are restricted within the limits of what whites allow. On the other hand, other Blacks were an obstacle for each other when he receives a message that came to him from a friend who did not mention his name was his message of alert in order not to be shocked :

¹⁵<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7972&context=rtd>

¹⁶ibid, p.8

Brother, This is advice from a friend who has been watching you closely. Do not go too fast keep working for the people but remember that you are one of us and do not forget if you get too big they will cut you down you are from the south and you know that this is a white men's world. So take friendly advice and go easy so that you can keep on helping the colored people. They don't want you to go too fast and will cut you down if you do. Be smart¹⁷.

Another image of racism in the narrator's experience in the paint factory was a clear picture of the cruelty of the racism he was subjected to, as no matter how much he redoubled his efforts to draw attention, he remained invisible in the eyes of whites." Our white is so white you can paint chunk coal and you would have to crack it open with a sledge hammer to prove it was not white clear through¹⁸". This saying has an essential meaning, as the white Americans only see the outer surface of things, which is the white color, while they forgot that every painting has a seed that covers it. If we paint the coal white, they will only see the white color on the surface, while if they wanted to know the truth they would need a hammer to break the white To reach the coal and this is what the Blacks seek to prove since we cannot deny the merit of the Blacks in the prosperity of the white society.

4. Marxism in the Invisible Man

Starting from Karl Marx's thoughts, this theoretical approach requires us to consider how literary works reflect the social and economic conditions of the time when they were written. This text tells us about the content of contemporary social classes. How does it reflect classism? , This is the American hierarchical curriculum system, requiring everyone to take an external curriculum seriously. He highlighted the cracks in this system mainly through the character of *The Invisible Man*, in which class differences are integrated into the United States.

For example, the novel questions why the protagonist of the novel is invisible: Is it because of his high education, or because of his African-American ancestry, or his blackness that he is considered a lower class? What happens when people of different classes (for example, black and white) develop relationships?

The literary analysis that prevails within the 10th chapter of the book is a Marxist criticism. The chapter focuses on describing the class structure and social and economic differences that exist within the context of the novel.

¹⁷ Invisible Man, p.332

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 195

The chapter depicts the division between the upper and working class and the racial separation that dominates the era. The narrator starts working at a paint factory and begins a whole new chapter of his life after getting kicked out of college. The narrator tries to conform to the new environment he is in and tries to follow everything that he is asked to do, as Kimbro tells him, “You just do what you’re told¹⁹”. He then becomes more exposed to the division between classes

Ellison gives a strong symbolic meaning here

“many of the men had been doctors, lawyers, teachers, Civil Service workers; there were several cooks, a preacher, a politician, and an artist. One very nutty one had been a psychiatrist. Whenever I saw them I felt uncomfortable. They were supposed to be members of the professions toward which at various times I vaguely aspired myself, and even though they never seemed to see me I could never believe that they were really patients.²⁰”

The ambition of the narrator is desperate, because Black people in industries such as chefs, lawyers, doctors, teachers, and artists are still marginal members of society.

All existential theories have in common is simply the fact that an individual can attain genuine existence only in the contest with this external relationship with others. Existentialists answer the fundamental questions of human existence in terms of subjective idealism which Marxists do in terms of objective and socialist realism. These different but basic concepts of Marxists and existentialists regarding human existence thus juxtapose. The Marxist premise is that humans do not create themselves from nothingness, but rather, out of the raw materials of the concrete historical epoch that has been thrown off the flywheel of the dialectic. The development of reality through several stages and in several forms is more complex than that one the preceded is the sole source of meaning and order in human history.

Human existence is not independent of social relations of dominance and subordination which govern the social and economic order. A particular phase of human history will in some sense determine the whole cultural life of the society. Society is full of contradictions. Existence through struggle in such a society is the Marxist concept. The struggle between the exploiting class and the exploited class is a perpetual affair because each one fights for its own existence and victory. After the final overthrow of Capitalism by the proletarians, the men will be free and get real existence in a classless society.

¹⁹ Invisible Man , p. 200

²⁰ Ibid, p.35

But Sartre and other existentialists broke from Marxist thought insisting that man is not the simple resultant of the material, biological and social conditions in which he finds himself and they give first place to what is actually experienced by the individual. They strongly oppose the Marxist determinism on human existence and freedom. Sartre asserts, "Man is nothing else but what he makes of himself". That is the first principle of existentialism²¹."

To read a work from a Marxist perspective, one must understand that Marxism asserts that literature is a reflection of culture and that culture can be affected by literature. Taking the novel from the oppressor and oppressed viewpoint, Karl Marx and Engels observed that every oppressed nationality contains the reactionary elements that are in league with the ruling classes of the oppressor's nationalities and collaborate with them in the oppression and exploitation of the working people of their own nationalities.

They claimed that the exploitation of one nation by another should be put at an end and the exploitation by another too should be put at an end and the only antagonism between them vanishes:

In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end²².

Claiming the novel, *The Invisible Man* oppressed by power politics, John Hersey says that the politics of white society did not understand the human value. Without understanding human sentiment the whites motivated Blacks because they have power. Here his ideas are similar to Foucault's ideas of power and discourse. Using their power whites made a distinction between blacks and Whites.

John Hersey says:

Much of the rhetorical and political energy of white society went toward proving itself that we were not human and that we had no sense of the refinement of human values. But this in itself pressured you're motivated you to make even finer distinctions, both as to personality and value. You had to because your life depended that you do so. You had to identify those values which were human and preserving of your life and interest as against those which were human and destructive.

²¹Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Common Condition of Man. The Modern Tradition: Background to Modern Literature.* Ed. Ellmann and Feidelson. New York: Oxford UP, 1965, 868-870.)

²²Prakash Kattel (2009). *Quest for Black Identity in Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man.* University of Tribuwan July, 2009

To the Marxists, men make their own history but do not make it as they please, but they do it under circumstances already determined for them by history and their social conditions, society is full of contradictions. Existence through struggle in such a society is a Marxist concept. Something exists because it goes under certain struggles internal and external.

Human history, up to now, is a history of struggle for existence as Karl Marx points out, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle" Manifesto 32. The slaves struggled against their feudal lords because they wanted their proper existence in contemporary society. In our own epoch, proletarians have been struggling against the bourgeoisie for their respective presence, after all for an 'existence'. In the process of development, many old social barriers come to obstruct its flow.

The exploiters resist the movement of proletariats. From particular fights, the exploited class is drawn into a general fight against the exploiting class in order to change the old system. The struggle between the exploiting class and the exploited classes is a perpetual affair because each one fights for existence and victory.

At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator when arrives at the hotel is forced to participate in a brutal blindfolded boxing match with nine of his classmates, an event, which he discovers, is part of the evening's entertainment for the "smoker». The entertainment also includes a sensuous dance by a naked woman and the boys are forced to watch. The boxing match is followed by a humiliating event. The boys must scramble for what to be gold coins on an electrified rug. Then, the narrator now bruised and bleeding, is finally allowed to give his speech in front of the drunken white men who largely ignore him until he accidentally uses the phrase, "social equality" instead of "social responsibility" to describe the role of blacks in America. This sentence further,

"That was all I needed, I'd made a contact, and it was as though his voice was that of them all. I was wound up, nervous. I might have been anyone, might have been trying to speak in a foreign language. For I couldn't remember the correct words and phrases from the pamphlets. I had to fall back upon tradition and since it was a political meeting, I selected one of the political techniques that I'd heard so often at home: The old down to earth, I'm sick and tired of the way they've been treating us approach. I couldn't see them so I addressed the microphone and the Cooperative voice before me²³,

²³Invisible Man, p.36

It illustrates the difference in political philosophy between the narrator and the Brotherhood. He rejected the fraternity way of speaking and achieved great success. Furthermore, this passage illustrates the extreme personalization of the narrator: he tells himself that he must express the voice of cooperation in the crowd, not some kind of abstract collective.

Ellison believes that without equal rights, Blacks cannot achieve economic progress by consistently showing that whites in "*The Invisible Man*" hinder the narrator's economic progress. One of the main purposes of whites to manipulate Blacks among '*The Invisible Man*' is money. This manipulation is repeated throughout the book. One of the first scenes to show this theme was Battle Royal, where the narrator was forced to: engage in physical confrontations with other black students to entertain the whites with money guarantees, and from the electrified carpet grab money. In this scene, it is clear that these Blacks are being controlled by money. Whites are using the money to get black students to boycott each other because they Whites

Furthermore, Ralph Ellison presents in his novel "*The Invisible Man*" the body of ideas that sees all African-American people's history as the history of class struggle. In particular, he is concerned to analyze the dynamics and contradictions of the capitalist system and showing how the working class has the historical potential to overthrow capitalism and establish a classless, socialist society. Ellison stands or falls by his ability to interpret existing society and to mobilize all of the American people black and white to change it. Because of that, we can that Ralph Ellison uses the Marxist theory in his novel.

5. Invisibility and Blindness in the Invisible Man

As an anonymous and therefore generalizable figure, the Invisible Man's narrative reveals the visual status of black people in a white society that refuses to recognize them as human. The opening pages of the Prologue continue with the theme of invisibility narrator confesses his identity on the very first page of the prologue:

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allen Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood movie ectoplasms. I am invisible; understand simply because people refuse to see me. ...

When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination indeed, everything and anything except me ²⁴

²⁴ Invisible Man, p.3

Blindness and Invisibility is probably the most important motif in the Invisible Man. In the Invisible Man, blindness and invisibility are often represented by metaphors and symbols. The passage of the Battle Royal when the Whites blindfold the boys resembles this idea in a very clear way. Critics like Muyumba agree with this and state that «Ellison blindfold the boys to play his themes of blindness and invisibility in the context of white viewership» (Muyumba, 2009: 60).

Therefore, when they «allow themselves to be blindfolded with broad bands of white cloth» (Ellison, 1952, in Nina, 2003: 2086), two different kinds of blindness are found: a literal and a metaphorical one. Through their literal blindness and their white cloths (note the color), Ellison portrays the figurative blindness of both the boys and the Whites. Consequently, their mutual invisibility is also reflected.²⁵ Ralph Ellison can be seen as an attempt to shed light on the invisible phenomena related to the social difficulties faced by blacks. At the center of this attempt is the issue of invisibility and blindness. Ellison portrays the Barbaric behavior suffered by Blacks through allegories, thus showing these different physical and mental states on different levels. The title of the novel itself is very enlightening and conveys the symbolic meaning of the protagonist's life. Invisibility is actually a metaphor for black America.

The emptiness and the indifferent world around the protagonist deny his existence, making him almost a non-entity. His deep understanding of the state of existence keeps him awake and alive. It has no name in the world. First, a person's name gives a person a sense of identity. Since the protagonist of *the "Invisible Man"* does not have a name, this reaffirms the fact that he has no identity.

The protagonist sits in a hole in the basement of an old building, feeling that he is a ghost in nightmare. Just like the pain in the heart of a person who dreams of walking, the pain in the soul, and the pain in his conscience, he walks into the past. It is cut off from the world and hides in a dormant state. Its invisibility greatly illuminates the hole.

²⁵Ralph Ellison. "Ralph Ellison, The Art of Fiction No. 8" Interview by Alfred Chester and Vilma Howard. The Paris Review, Spring 1955. <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5053/ralph-ellison-the-art-of-fictionno-8-ralph-ellison>, Accessed on 28/04/2019.

In an interview Ellison had in Paris in 1954 he was asked about the issue of identity in the American society, and his answer was:

Identity is the American theme. The nature of our society is such that we are prevented from knowing who we are. It is still a young society, and this an integral part of its development²⁶.

And that what is his first and last novel "*The Invisible Man*" is about. The novel is about the search for one's identity as an individual and as a part of the collective group.

Ralph Ellison starts his novel "*The Invisible Man*" with a prologue where he introduces the concept of invisibility and its causes. The invisible man presents the main themes that define the rest of the novel. The metaphors of invisibility and blindness allow us to study the impact of racism on victims and perpetrators. Because the narrator is black, Whites refuse to regard him as a real three dimensional person. Therefore, he presents himself as invisible and describes himself as blind.

He explained that his invisibility was not due to biochemical accidents or reasons, but because other people did not want to notice him because he was black, "Without light I am not only invisible but formless as well; and to be unaware of one's form is to live a death. I myself, after existing some twenty years, did not become alive until I discovered my invisibility²⁷. However, invisibility doesn't come from racism alone. Just as poisonous for the narrator are other generalized ways of thinking about identity ideas that envision him as a cog in a machine instead of a unique individual.

The invisible man insists that he is invisible only because others decline to see him. He explains that his condition stems from an unusual construction of people's inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality²⁸. To illustrate the consequences of this problem, he recounts his encounter with a blond man. When the narrator accidentally bumps into the man and hears the man curse him, he demands that the stranger apologized. The narrator's description of the man as a blind fool and his suggestion that he is part of the vast group of sleepwalkers cleverly hints at the meaning of Ellison's metaphor of blindness²⁹.

²⁶ Invisible Man, p.10

²⁷ ibid, p.6

²⁸Michael D. Hill Lena M. Hill. Ralph Ellison's "Invisible Man": A Reference Guide.(London: Greenwood Press, 2008) p. 91.

²⁹ <https://fr.scribd.com/document/74391929/Merleau-Ponty-s-Invisible-Man>, JelenaStankovic le Dec 01, 2011

According to the narrator's logic, the failure to see correctly arises from psychological impenetrability rather than physical deficiency, a truth responsible for his confused assessment of himself and the people he meets on his journey of discovery. The loss of identity and the vision of invisibility are deeply underlined in the hospital scene. The narrator can't even remember his name, or his family's. He is ruled by and dependent on the doctors' mercy.

After being released from the hospital, the narrator feels himself quite in a different way: 'I was in the grip of some alien personality lodged within me'. He is no longer afraid; he accepts things as they are. He has undergone some change in his personality; so, he has become indifferent and cold like most people of the mid-twentieth century as is emphasized in the philosophy of human existence.

He is no longer worried about his identity; he accepts the role of a society's plaything and is satisfied with it. At the same time, he suffers the split of personality: 'My mind and I – were no longer getting around in the same circles. Nor my body either'; which means that he is still at a loss, unable or too weak to understand what has happened to him. Towards the end of the novel, the narrator undergoes a positive development via critical self-understanding, and this carries him further from a group identity towards a personal one the blind man cannot see past the stereotypes used to categorize Black Americans. Similarly, for much of the narrator's life, he is not psychologically equipped to envision the white man's conception of him. With this beginning, Ellison hints at the importance of overcoming inner blindness, or psychological confusion, to understand identity.

Many other writers discuss the issue of blindness such as Charles W. Mills. This reading of Ellison's novel is highly consonant with Charles W. Mills' book, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race* (1998). Evidently strongly influenced by Ellison, Mills begins his text by defining black subjectivity in the west as a form of 'sub-personhood.

Mills shows that it is necessary for the reproduction of this two-tier social structure that its normative rationale is concealed: White experience is embedded as normative, and the embedding is so deep that its normativity is not even identified as such. For this would imply that there was some other way that things could be, whereas it is obvious that this is just the way things are. A relationship to the world that is founded on racial privilege becomes simply the relationship to the world³⁰.

³⁰JING Jing (2016). *Racism Reflected in Invisible Man*. University of Changchun, China

Overall, the Blacks are exploited and their needs are disregarded rendering them down to invisibility in a blind society. Secondly, the narrator himself is white-oriented and feels inferior and ashamed of his dark skin color. He is a part of the crowd of people who comply with the rules and customs prescribed by white society. The invisible man is truly a thought-provoking novel. It often causes readers to question the legitimacy of the author's message of invisibility, while it allows other readers to truly see the complexity of invisibility in society.

Despite the opinions of critics, Ellison seems to convey the message that invisibility is the condition of not being acknowledged as an equal; invisibility can only be escaped through empathizing with another invisible folk. While doing this, Ellison also implies that women are a group that does not receive enough attention for being invisible. All in all, Ellison made his message clear; there is a vicious cycle of invisibility that everyone in society is guilty of.

6. The Quest for Black Identity in Invisible Man

"I was looking for myself and asking everyone except myself questions which I, and only I, could answer"³¹

Invisible *Man* presents the instances of white racism and the loss of identity of the black folks in the United States. By presenting the experiences of an unnamed narrator it also serves the function of, as Singh holds, consciousness-raising attempts aimed primarily at black readers that expose the risk of a life lived on borrowed definitions. For the first twenty years of his life, the narrator has looked to others to answer questions of self-definition. He is subservient and seeks the praise of the white folks for his humility. He endures humiliation, torture, and suffering for scholarships to study in the state college for Blacks. He realizes that he is an invisible man or has no identity as others do not recognize him as an individual but as a stereotyped black. He is puzzled to remember his grandfather's statement as to how he spent his life in relation to the whites and his advice to his father and the black folks to work as a spy and traitor. He is disturbed by "the old man's words as he has been praised by the powerful white men for his meekness. But late on he carries out his grandfather's advice"³².

The quest for identity has been always a controversial issue in shaping the history of African Americans. Blacks were always desired to challenge the dominant white society. The main theme of Ellison's *The Invisible Man* is the protagonist's struggle to search for his individual identity in which throughout his entire journey the narrator is confused and lost not knowing to which society and group he belongs.

³¹ Invisible Man, p.7

³² Rajendra P. Tiwari: ELLISON'S INVISIBLE MAN: A JOURNEY FROM INVISIBILITY TO SELF DEFINITION

According to Parr and Savery, Ellison believed that true identity could be revealed by experiencing certain endeavors and overcoming them

Our identities continue to evolve throughout over lives and the people we are at old age are probably not the people we are as children. Nevertheless, even if that identity remains the same time it had been challenged over and over by different aspects of life so that the identity that remains is the true one ³³.

By the end of the novel, the Invisible Man starts his adventure wearing his true identity while shaking off the old identities society imposed on him. We are going to discuss the aspects of black identity through Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*. The nameless narrator is a naïve black boy who makes a journey from the South to the North in an effort to discover his identity. He learns through suffering and interactions. As Ellison says in his interview with Chester and Howard that the novel is "about innocence and human error, a struggle through illusion to reality³⁴".

The whole novel, from the start, is wrapped in the nameless character who takes his journey from the south to the industrial, modern north in order to seek opportunities just as any black individual at that time. Toward his adventure, the protagonist goes through a psychological journey to discover his true identity. Like their anonymous narrator, many African Americans in the 1940s sought identity in white-dominated societies. His concerns were ignored. They have suffered an identity crisis because society has promised to incorporate them all into a common culture completely different from reality. As Ellison noted: Blacks are desperately searching for a black person. By refusing to give them second-class status, they feel alienated and have been searching for answers all their lives: who am I, what am I, and where am I?.Efforts to establish one's identity is the focus of Ellison's novel.

"*The Invisible Man*" records the narrator's transformation from a complacent messenger at his black high school in the South to a street troublemaker, or a transition from fantasy to reality, showing the protagonist's initial journey from ignorance to maturity. The next part focuses on the analysis of the initial process of the protagonist losing and regaining his identity. Identity here refers to personal identity, cultural identity, and social identity.

³³ Susan R. Parr, P.Savery (1989). Approaches to Teaching Ellison's Invisible Man. New York : Modern Language Association of America,

³⁴ "Ralph Ellison, The Art of Fiction No. 8" Interview by Alfred Chester and Vilma Howard. The Paris Review, Spring 1955. <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/5053/ralph-ellison-the-art-of-fictionno-8-ralph-ellison>, Accessed on 28/04/2019.

The identity of a person is his perception of his identity and the relationship with the people around him and is approximately composed of those attributes that make him unique and distinctive. This is the way a person sees or defines himself or the essential truth of a person. In the novel, the protagonist struggles to earn his identity and is accepted by the white-dominated society, but is disappointed when he searches for his identity and finally realizes his invisibility. This is a process from innocence to maturity. He was initially an ignorant college student, did not know much about society, and accepted his identity as an invisible person at the end of the novel. At the beginning of this novel, the protagonist is completely lost, believing that he will get his help in obedience.

As an African American writer, Ellison is able to examine the universal human struggle of finding one's identity while living one's life in a world one feels worthless, displaced, disavowed; and that this world is built upon restrictive ideologies and stereotypes. Thus, throughout the novel, the search for identity becomes the dominant concern of the narrator's journey to identify who he is in this world and to escape from stereotypes and racial inequalities. In the prologue, the narrator recalls and meditates upon the events of his life. He tries to elicit out of the confusions of his experiences some pattern of meaning and essence of identity.

After he was tracked down by society, he breaks free from people's expectations and restriction that was imposed on him, whether his own black community or the Whites

All my life I had been looking for something and everywhere I turned someone tried to tell me what it was I was looking for me and asking everyone except myself the question which I, and only I, could answer my expectations to achieve a realization everyone else appears to have been born with: That I am nobody but myself. But first I had to discover that I am an invisible man!³⁵

Through deciding to be himself, it enabled him to set himself free from his past and his grandfather's advice of living with two identities and embrace himself as he is and not what society told him to be. Even though living in the basement might seem like a prison, for him it was a resort from the world and the exterior conditions that may influence his decisions, and finally his identity.

³⁵Invisible Man, p.12 .13

So after years of trying to adopt the opinions of others, I finally rebelled. I am an invisible man. Thus I have come a long way and returned and boomeranged a long way from the point in society towards which I originally aspired³⁶.

The protagonist has been struggling to establish his true identity and place in society in his project of the quest he is bound to work in a factory. In the factory he finds machines being circulated in that period he thought his body being circulated like that machine. He had no desire to destroy himself he wanted freedom, not destruction, but it was too difficult for him to escape from the factory and be free, but another thing was that till now he had not recognized who he himself was.

First, he had to discover who he was and only he could be free, he expresses the situation in the following way:

I fell to plotting ways of short-circuiting the machine. Perhaps if I shifted my body about so that the two nodes would come together- no, not only was there no room but it might electrocute me. I shuddered. Whoever else I was, I was not Samson. I had not desire to destroy myself even if it destroyed the machine; I wanted freedom, not destruction. I was exhausting, for no matter what the scheme I conceived, there was one constant foe-myself. There was no getting round it. I could not move escape then I could think of my identity. Perhaps, I thought, the two things are involved with each other. When I discover who I am, I'll be free.³⁷

Overall, the main character's intentions he is heroic, and wishes to prove it, but his actions are craven, in fact, whatever he chooses to do puts him into further crisis. In the novel, we find that the protagonist is in a crisis of his existence. He does different works, goes to different places in search of his authentic self. But he is not successful either. His decision to move from one place to another show. The invisible man is puzzled by the question of who am I, the undefined anonymous narrator of Ralph Ellison's acclaimed novel *Invisible Man*. Throughout the story, the narrator embarks on the mental and physical journey to seek what the narrator believes is 'true identity. The narrator's life is filled with constant eruptions of mental traumas. The biggest psychological burden he has is his identity, or rather his miss identity. Though he takes on several different identities and none he thinks, adequately represents his true self, until his final one as an invisible man.

³⁶Invisible Man, p.444

³⁷ Ibid, p. 198

Conclusions

To conclude, African American literature has long been noted for its outspokenness of racial issues. Many African American writers are challenged because of raising these issues. Ralph Waldo Ellison creates a wonderful image of how to be black in a white society and describes the problem of racial discrimination through the unnamed narrator's experience. Furthermore, this unnamed protagonist represents all Blacks during the novel period of time and how they suffer from the spread of racism. Ralph Ellison wanted to show and to represent the black, allegorical struggle for identity without end and it should not be restricted to race or culture.

General Conclusion

African-American literature can be defined as writings by people of African descent living in the United States. It is highly varied. African-American literature has generally focused on the role of African Americans within American society. Accordingly, African American authors selected racism and identity as their main themes in order to give a voice and defend the rights of these minorities. Among these African American writers, we find Ralph Ellison. He is an African American novelist and a winner of the National Book Award. By writing his novel the *Invisible Man* he challenged the traditional views and ideologies that limited the perception of individual identity in the United States, instead, he wanted to show the universality of identity and it should not be restricted to race or culture.

All Ellison's works tackle themes of race, identity, and racial discrimination. His most known novel *The Invisible Man* is a representation of African American history and prints an image of the reality of racism and the problem of Black identity. It also denotes the quest for identity and alienation within the white dominant culture. The novel had inspired more than twenty book-length critical studies and many Negro writers were influenced by his writings such as Toni Morrison and Kurt Vonnegut.

The aim of our research is to focus on the issue of racism in America, and its impact on the life of Black American individuals, and the novel was interpreted and analyzed from the angles of Marxism theory. In addition, Through our study of the issue of aspects of Black identity, we conclude that identity has many manifestations and is established through various ways, such as the relationships between individuals and their interactions as well as, the influence of society. As we also found that racism and segregation had a great impact on the formation of the Black identity and it has stood as an obstacle or barrier in front of them.

We argue that there is a gap in that literature work, Previous Negro works have only focused on Blacks and how they were treated as slaves, But they failed to address the suffering of the white woman were treated like a doll and that the problem of the whites is not on the color, it is about how they raised and their behaviors.

We are confident that our research will serve as a base for future studies on the work of Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man* can be interpreted through other theories such as Cultural Materialism and so on .

The conclusion of this research may be the beginning of a new study. Indeed, it may be problematic for another research.

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